

# CONCEPTUALIZING THE ENEMY IN EARLY NORTHWEST EUROPE

Metaphors of Conflict and Alterity in Anglo-Saxon,  
Old Norse, and Early Irish Poetry



Karin E. Olsen

BREPOLS



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in Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse,  
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In memory of my parents



## PREFACE

This book presents the results of a long-term research project that grew from my joint interests in conceptual metaphor and in the language employed in Old English, Old Norse, and early Irish poetry. Intending to redress a lacuna in the fields of Comparative Literary Analysis, Cultural Anthropology, and Conceptual Metaphor, the study explored the ways in which the metaphorical language of poetic discourse is culture-sensitive and the extent to which such sensitivity can be detected in Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, and early Irish poetry. No cross-cultural comparative analysis that combined approaches from the three research fields for an investigation of the cultural enmeshing of the North Sea world had yet been attempted, even though comparable literary traditions invited such an investigation. Given the comprehensiveness of the project, I restricted my examination to those metaphorical techniques that suggest different conceptualizations of the enemy and culture-specific concepts of otherness in Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, and early Irish poetry. Over the years the project took different turns before it attained its present form as a monograph that applies concepts from Cognitive Science and Cultural Anthropology for the cross-cultural exploration of notions of alterity in three different poetic corpora.

The comparative nature of this work has required some compromises. To accommodate readers who do not specialize in one or more of the literary corpora discussed in the book and to prevent lengthy digressions from the main objective of the investigation, only scholarly discussions of linguistic and contextual features relevant to my analysis have been included. Spelling variants of the words analyzed in the book have been standardized, nouns presented in their nominative forms, and the word order of kennings regularized. In fact, close proofreading and formatting of a monograph that includes Old English, Old Norse, and early Irish terminology has been a formidable task, for which I am grateful to the copy editor, Tim Barnwell. I also owe thanks to everyone else

who supported me in the writing of this book, in particular Antonina Harbus, Jennifer Neville, and John Flood for their helpful comments on the individual chapters, and Robert Olsen for reading the final text. I am especially grateful to Sebastian Sobecki, whose professional views and encouragement have greatly influenced the progress of the project. All this support proved to be invaluable.

## METAPHOR, ALTERITY, AND THE EARLY POETRY OF NORTHWEST EUROPE

### *Introduction*

Metaphor is a widely studied subject that has fascinated philosophers, rhetoricians, literary critics, linguists, cultural anthropologists, and psychologists. The enormous volume of the work produced spans a time period of almost 2500 years, from Aristotle's comments in his *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* to recent treatises on metaphor processing,<sup>1</sup> and includes views of metaphor as mainly a structural or semantic feature, a pragmatic device, and a conceptual phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Aristotle's influential statement in his *Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Fyfe, ch. 21, that 'metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy'. See also Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, trans. by Kennedy, III. 10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> For a recent survey of theories on metaphor, see Rolf, *Metaphertheorien*. See also Gibbs, Jr, *The Poetics of Mind*, ch. 5. See further the seminal study by Ricoeur, *La métaphore vive*. Significant essay collections on metaphor are *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Ortony, and *On Metaphor*, ed. by Sacks. If approaches other than cognitive metaphor theory (CMT) are not discussed here, this is mainly because they shed little light on the study of metaphor and culture. While pragmatic approaches as advocated by Searle ('Metaphor', pp. 92–123) and Davidson ('What Metaphors Mean', pp. 29–46) focus on the divergence of 'sentence meaning' and 'speaker's utterance meaning' (which is usually not recoverable in medieval contexts), theories that analyse metaphor as a semantic phenomenon pay much attention to the (re)construction of meaning (for example, Ricoeur's theory of semantic impertinence in his 'The Metaphorical Process of Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling'; Levin's metaphorical construals of deviant

Various scholars who regard metaphor as essential for the conceptualization of the world around us have, furthermore, investigated the relevance of metaphor for the understanding of culture and society and vice versa.<sup>3</sup> Their research has intricately linked conceptual metaphors to culture, here defined as 'a set of shared understandings that characterize smaller or larger groups of people'.<sup>4</sup> Since conceptual metaphors are firmly embedded in thought, facilitating the comprehension of 'one conceptual domain [target domain] in terms of another conceptual domain [source domain]',<sup>5</sup> metaphors indeed belong to the aforementioned shared understanding of one or more groups.

It is the examination of the relationship between conceptual metaphor and culture that is the focus of this book, and that will take us back in time to early Northwest Europe. As a study concerned with historical languages, it examines both the ways in which the metaphorical language of literary discourse, and more specifically, of poetic discourse is culture-sensitive, and the extent to which such sensitivity can be detected in Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, and early Irish poetry. These issues have not yet been addressed, even though cultural interchange, the geographical proximity of the three cultures in question, and, most importantly, comparable literary traditions invite such a comparative study. In fact, cognitive approaches to literature are relatively

expressions in *The Semantics of Metaphor*, pp. 33–77). Equally limited for the purpose of this study are structural interpretations of metaphor, such as the comparison view first expressed in Cicero's claim that 'a metaphor is a short form of comparison, contracted into one word' (*De oratore*, ed. and trans. by Sutton and Rackham, III. 38) and the substitution view. The latter was first presented in Quintilian's *Ad C. Herennium de ratione dicendi*, ed. and trans. by Russell, VIII. 6, but also resurfaces in Jakobson's theory of the two operations or axes of language. Jakobson associates metaphor with the paradigmatic selection and substitution of signs that 'are linked by various degrees of similarity which fluctuate between the equivalents of synonyms and the common core of antonyms' ('Two Aspects of Language', p. 99). The interaction theory first proposed by Richards in his *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* and further developed by Black (*Models and Metaphors*, pp. 25–47) contains some features that parallel CMT. Black identifies the primary and subsidiary subject of metaphor as 'systems of associated commonplaces', which consist of features correctly or incorrectly attributed to each subject by a certain speech community, and which form a screen through which both subjects are seen. These systems come close to the source and target domains of CMT but lack the conceptual basis of the latter.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*; Quinn, 'The Cultural Basis of Metaphor', pp. 56–93; Quinn and Holland, 'Culture and Cognition', pp. 27–32; Lakoff and Kövecses, 'The Cognitive Model of Anger', pp. 195–221; Turner, *Death is the Mother of Beauty*.

<sup>4</sup> Definition by Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Definition by Kövecses in *Metaphor: An Introduction*, p. 4. The terms 'source domain' and 'target domain' have been added by me.

rare in the fields of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse and still absent in early Irish Studies. Whereas text- and culture-sensitive explorations of conceptual structures in Old Norse and Old English literature have appeared in article form — among others, Britt Mize's and Antonina Harbus's discussions of Old English conceptual metaphors for the mind and Peter Orton's investigation of a number of metaphorical terms for (the composition of) poetry in the Old Norse mythological corpus<sup>6</sup> — monographs are limited to Harbus's recent *Cognitive Approaches to Old English Poetry*.<sup>7</sup> No cross-cultural comparative study that combines approaches from Cognitive Linguistics with approaches from the fields of Literary Studies and Cultural Anthropology and that investigates the cultural dynamics of the North Sea world has been attempted so far.

Two questions inevitably arise concerning the study of conceptual metaphor in the three poetic corpora. How does such a comparative study enrich our understanding of the cultures in which they were produced, and what kind of cultural information can such a comparative study provide? I will investigate these questions for the conceptual domain 'enemy', which is both part of general human experience and culture-specific. 'Enemy' is here defined as a person who is perceived as a hindrance or threat to an individual or a group, while the nature of the hindrance/threat and its target (i.e. what is actually hindered or threatened, such as a person's or group's life or freedom, social structures, cultural values, etc.) varies in different contexts. Socio-economic, political, religious, and other culture-related factors play a major role in the formation of such contexts and will also be relevant for this comparative study. We may expect that the different socio-cultural histories of the Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, and early Irish poets gave rise to different conceptualizations of the enemy and are accordingly expressed in culture-specific metaphors. However, such an assumption is not without its caveats. To begin with, any research on the relationship between metaphor and culture is complicated by the temporal remoteness of the cultures to be studied. While cognitive scientists and anthropologists mainly work with metaphorical conceptualizations in contemporary cultures and can therefore conduct empirical research, this tool is denied to medievalists, who have to reconstruct cultural contexts from the interpreta-

<sup>6</sup> Mize, 'The Representations of the Mind', pp. 57–90; Mize, 'Manipulations of the Mind-as-Container Motif', pp. 25–56; Harbus, 'Travelling Metaphors and Mental Wandering', pp. 117–32; Orton, 'Spouting Poetry', pp. 277–300.

<sup>7</sup> An important electronic research tool that identifies a large number of metaphorical connections between different conceptual domains from the Anglo-Saxon period to the present day is the *Metaphor Map of English* published by a team of researchers at the University of Glasgow.

tion of available written sources and archaeological evidence. Not only are the reconstructed contexts inevitably influenced by our own cultural understanding, but the relationship between a given literary work and its cultural context is not straightforward either. We can never be certain to what extent the created worlds of the poems that were composed roughly eight hundred to a thousand years ago reflect the cultural values of the poets and their time or, to put it differently, whether we deal with culturally embedded metaphors or poetic idiosyncrasies. We can examine the frequency of particular metaphorical expressions, but, given the fact that many poems were lost during transmission, an apparent idiosyncrasy may not have been one after all.

Another complicating factor in an analysis of culturally determined metaphors in Old English, Old Norse, and early Irish verse are the many uncertainties about the composition of that verse. For instance, most poems are anonymous. With the exception of Cynewulf's poetry marked by the poet's runic signature, Anglo-Saxon poems have been transmitted without the names of their authors, and the same observation applies to eddic poetry and the poems in the Irish narrative cycles. Furthermore, even if authorship is known, as in the case of skaldic poetry and some early Irish praise poetry, the authenticity of these poems is not always guaranteed. An obvious example would be the eulogistic verse assumedly composed for prehistoric Irish kings, but also the larger part of the *lausavísur* 'separate verses' in the Icelandic skald sagas that were most likely not the work of the poets to whom they are attributed in the texts.<sup>8</sup> A related problem is dating. Whereas the *terminus ad quem* of the poems must be the date of the manuscripts in which they appear, the determination of their *terminus a quo* is often more problematic. For the Old English corpus, the most controversial poem is *Beowulf*, which has been assigned to the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, and even early eleventh centuries.<sup>9</sup> The dating of a considerable portion of the Old Norse poetry also poses challenges. Particularly the mythological eddic poems are difficult to date,<sup>10</sup> while the *lausavísur* mentioned above

<sup>8</sup> For a brief summary of the debate on the authenticity of the *lausavísur* in the skald sagas, see Gade, 'The Dating and Attributions of Verses', pp. 50–51. See also Meulengracht Sørensen, 'The Prosimetrum Form 1'.

<sup>9</sup> The dating of *Beowulf* has produced a large volume of scholarship. For critical assessments of the various views on the subject, see Liuzza, 'On the Dating of *Beowulf*'; Bjork and Obermeier, 'Date, Provenance, Author, Audiences', pp. 13–28. In 1980 a conference was held on this highly controversial topic in Toronto, which resulted in the volume *The Dating of 'Beowulf'* (ed. by Chase). A second collection of essays with the title *The Dating of 'Beowulf': A Reassessment* (ed. by Neidorf) was published in 2014. See also Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf*, p. 6 n. 38.

<sup>10</sup> For a comprehensive critical study of the scholarship on the dating of eddic poetry, see

as well as many other stanzas inserted in the sagas of the Icelanders were composed by later poets or even by the thirteenth-century saga authors.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the dates of composition of the verse in the prosimetric tales of the early Irish cycles may not necessarily antedate those of the prose segments. In particular, the dating of the obscure verses or rhythmical prose marked by marginal *.r.* (for *rosc*)<sup>12</sup> in the late eleventh-/early twelfth-century *Lebor na hUidre* 'Book of the Dun Cow' (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 E 25, c. 1100 [main text]) has been a subject of controversy.<sup>13</sup> The passages in question are frequently introduced with the archaic *co cloth ní* formula ('something was heard'), which may, together with the archaic diction, suggest the incorporation of older material in the tales.<sup>14</sup> It is equally possible, however, that these features are a manifestation of the poets' command of specialized poetic language rather than of an earlier composition.<sup>15</sup> Following this line of argument, the *roscada* do not bear witness to an older tradition but are contemporary with the prose texts in which they occur, and which are not always easily datable either.

It has to be asked what cultural information the metaphorical language of a poem can provide if its date and/or author cannot be identified, or if — as is also common — its place of composition is uncertain. *Beowulf*, whose origin has been placed in Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Wessex, and Kent,<sup>16</sup> is a

Fidjestøl, *The Dating of Eddic Poetry*. See also Jónas Kristjánsson, 'The Composition of Eddic Poetry'; the most recent attempts at dating the individual eddic poems can be found in von See and others, *Kommentar*.

<sup>11</sup> A notorious example is the poetry of *Gisla saga Súrssonar*, which Foote has placed in the late twelfth century, two centuries after Gísli's lifetime ('An Essay on the *Saga of Gísli*'). On the other hand, Gade ('The Dating and Attributions of Verses', esp. pp. 70–74) has demonstrated on metrical grounds that most *lausavísur* ascribed to the tenth-century skalds Kormákr and Hallfreðr are indeed tenth- or early eleventh-century compositions.

<sup>12</sup> Mac Cana was the first scholar who argued that *.r.* stands for Irish *rosc* and not for *retoiric*, which would suggest external influence on this type of composition ('On the Use of the Term *retoiric*'). His argument was later confirmed by Daniel Binchy in 'Varia hibernica 1'. Binchy points out that the term *roscad* also occurs before obscure passages in the legal texts (pp. 30–31). But see Corthals, 'Early Irish *retoirics*'. The *roscada* are further discussed in Chapter 3, p. 148 n. 206.

<sup>13</sup> The date 1106 marks the violent death of Mael Muire (M), who had continued the copying of the main text of the manuscript. The interpolations traditionally ascribed to H have been dated by Mac Eoin to the mid- to late twelfth century. Mac Eoin, 'The Interpolator H'.

<sup>14</sup> Binchy, 'Varia hibernica 1'; Mac Cana, 'On the Use of the Term *retoiric*'.

<sup>15</sup> Aitchison, 'The Ulster Cycle', pp. 96–98.

<sup>16</sup> Provenance has usually been linked to the dating of the poem. For example, Newton

striking example of the limits of both dialectal and historico-cultural analysis for the establishment of a poem's provenance. Furthermore, whereas scholars have attempted to situate Old English and early Irish poems at least in certain parts of Anglo-Saxon England and early Ireland, eddic poetry can only be identified as either Norwegian or Icelandic.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, such obstacles are somewhat less relevant to a case study that mainly tries to establish cognitive patterns within the three corpora. No attempt will be made to tie the use of specific metaphors to a particular region or province, nor is it necessary to establish more than a rough indication of a poem's date. In fact, some poems discussed in this book are datable (within a century), while others can at least be categorized as 'early' or 'late'. Even those poems that fall outside either of these groups do not pose insurmountable problems to the study. The preference of particular metaphors for the enemy appears to be conventional and conservative and is frequently related to the type of poetry (here: mythological, heroic, occasional) in which the metaphors appear. In other words, the cultural information to be gained in this study primarily concerns cognitive patterns that underlie poetic conventions and that provide us with general insights into the social and cultural environments that nurtured these patterns.

### *Metaphor and Culture*

The observation that the metaphorical language in a poetic corpus sheds some light on cultural practices is based on two premises, namely that all metaphors reflect specific ways of perceiving the world and that they are, as a consequence, culture-sensitive. The first premise was first established by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who in their 1980 study *Metaphors We Live by* illustrated how metaphor is a cognitive phenomenon that shapes the ways we think, speak, and act. Conceptual metaphors enable us to conceive of abstract concepts in terms of concrete experiences: a target domain is understood in terms of a source domain on the basis of correspondences or mappings between the two domains. One of Lakoff and Johnson's many examples is the conceptual metaphor ARGU-

and Girvan proposed seventh-century East Anglia and Northumbria respectively, Whitelock placed the poem in King Offa's eighth-century Mercia, and Frank argued for the tenth-century Danelaw. See Bjork and Obermeier, 'Date, Provenance, Author, Audiences', pp. 13–28. Paul Wilkinson and Griselda Mussett have argued for a Kentish place of composition in their monograph *'Beowulf' in Kent*.

<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, if a poem can be placed in a specific historical context, such as, for instance, the Old English *Battle of Maldon*, the skaldic mythological poems, and many of the Irish praise poems, its provenance is less tentative though still not certain.



MENT IS WAR, which gives rise to such metaphorical expressions as ‘your claims are indefensible’ and ‘I demolished his argument’.<sup>18</sup> To put it differently, cognitive metaphors structure our daily experiences and actions — arguments are perceived and performed in terms of war — and consequently constitute an integral part of our conceptual system. They are ‘metaphors we live by’.

Lakoff and Johnson’s pioneering work was soon followed by further, often experiential studies of conceptual metaphor and its role in human cognition, language, and culture. These included investigations of both metaphor in literature and metaphor variation as a cultural phenomenon.<sup>19</sup> Since metaphor occurs in thought, it is crucial for the conceptualization of intangibles in a culture, such as emotions, moral values, and abstract concepts.<sup>20</sup> Disagreement among scholars has, however, arisen concerning the relationship between metaphor and cultural models for concrete and abstract concepts. Does metaphor constitute such models, a stance put forward by Zoltán Kövecses, or is it only a reflection of them, as Naomi Quinn argues?<sup>21</sup> Quinn’s study of marriage as conceived by Americans and Kövecses’ response may serve as an illustration of the controversy. Quinn argues that the common perception of marriage as ‘shared, mutually beneficial and lasting’ in American culture has given rise to a large number of metaphors that cannot be reduced to one central metaphor. For example, the notion that a marriage is expected to last can be expressed by a multitude of metaphors that identify it as an entity (e.g. a well-manufactured product as in ‘it was stuck together pretty good’), a trajectory (e.g. a continuous journey as in ‘that’s going to keep us going’), a relation (e.g. an inseparable bond between two objects, as in ‘that just kind of cements the bond’), and a container (e.g. a permanent location as in ‘I was able to stay in the marriage’).<sup>22</sup> Kövecses, on the other hand, redirects the focus from the expectational structure of marriage in American culture to the more general perception of it as a union, which

<sup>18</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by*, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*; Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*; Turner, *The Literary Mind*. For a critical survey of recent research on metaphor in literature, including cognitive and non-cognitive approaches, see Semino and Steen, ‘Metaphor in Literature’. See also *Beyond Cognitive Metaphor Theory*, ed. by Fludernik.

<sup>20</sup> Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Kövecses, ‘Metaphor: Does It Constitute or Reflect Cultural Models?’, Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, pp. 193–228; Quinn, ‘The Cultural Basis of Metaphor’.

<sup>22</sup> Quinn, ‘The Cultural Basis of Metaphor’, pp. 66–67, 68–70. The examples are Quinn’s and represent a very small selection of expressions that were used by married couples in the interviews conducted by Quinn in 1979 and 1980.

underlies this expectational structure, and which is grounded in the generic-level metaphor A NON-PHYSICAL UNION IS A PHYSICAL UNION.<sup>23</sup> Kövecses' argument has the advantage that his postulated central metaphor underlies many different culture-sensitive expectational structures of marriage conceptualized by means of a wide range of metaphors. Longevity and mutual fulfilment, for example, may be key elements in the American model of marriage, but they are not necessarily features of other models, such as political marriages or marriages of convenience. In fact, we should not forget that throughout history marriage has been seen as a contract to forge political alliances without much consideration of its duration or the pair's happiness. As Gibbs states, 'all cognition is embodied in cultural situations'.<sup>24</sup>

### *Metaphor and Literature*

Since literary discourse forms an important part of culture, its metaphorical language is bound to be culture-sensitive as well. But what kind of cultural information can such language give us? And what makes metaphors in literature different from their counterparts elsewhere; in other words, how should literary metaphors be defined? This last question has caused much debate among scholars who have offered a number of different approaches to the relationship between metaphor in literature and metaphor in other types of discourse. Elena Semino and Gerard Steen's distinction between approaches 'that emphasize the discontinuity between metaphor in literature and metaphor in non-literary language and approaches that emphasize the continuity between metaphor in literature and metaphor in non-literary language' is particularly helpful.<sup>25</sup> The first group as defined by Semino and Steen comprises studies that focus on the highly creative and original functions of metaphorical expressions in literature, either by regarding literary metaphor as an example of linguistic deviation or by highlighting the unique effects of individual poetic metaphors. Winifred Nowottny, who distinguishes 'between a thought as such and its linguistic manifestation in a figure of speech', claims that metaphor involves a discrepancy between the meanings of tenor and vehicle and that this discrepancy is particularly noticeable in the case of literary metaphor. Literary (and espe-

<sup>23</sup> Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, pp. 217–23.

<sup>24</sup> Gibbs, Jr, 'Taking Metaphor out of our Heads', p. 156.

<sup>25</sup> Semino and Steen, 'Metaphor in Literature', esp. pp. 233–38. Quotation at p. 233. For a bibliography of relevant studies of literary metaphor, see pp. 244–46.

cially poetic) metaphors are different from their non-literary counterparts in their suggestiveness, physical immediacy, and power to express complex experiences that cannot be expressed in 'common language'.<sup>26</sup> Reuven Tsur, in contrast, offers a cognitive approach to account for the special effects produced by literary metaphor. For Tsur, novel metaphors (which may eventually become conventional ones) are created by a logical contradiction of source and target domain that leads to the cancellation of some characteristics of the source and the foregrounding of others.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, poetic metaphors can have an integrated or split focus by either fusing or sharpening the discordant elements of the source and target domains.<sup>28</sup> Poetic metaphors thus require a special approach which is unnecessary for everyday metaphorical language.

Tsur's work sheds light on the cognitive features separating unconventional poetic metaphors from everyday ones. Drawing on the empirical evidence supplied by the psychologist Raymond Gibbs, Tsur further distinguishes between delayed and rapid conceptualization of metaphorical discourse.<sup>29</sup> Gibbs identifies four stages of metaphor processing, namely comprehension, recognition, interpretation, and appreciation. Metaphors used in everyday discourse often require only the first stage of metaphor processing and are not even recognized as such (Tsur's 'rapid conceptualization'), whereas literary metaphors involve all four stages.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the mental processes occurring at stages two, three, and four allow the higher degree of subjectivity, fictionality, polyvalence, and form-orientation that Steen has observed in literary metaphors and their contexts.<sup>31</sup>

Gibb's theory of metaphor processing highlights the connections between metaphors that escape our notice and metaphors that require an interpretative effort. A systematic approach emphasizing such continuity between meta-

<sup>26</sup> Nowottny, *The Language Poets Use*, pp. 49–71; quotation at p. 59. A more recent treatment of metaphor as semantic deviation is given by Short, *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*.

<sup>27</sup> Tsur, *Towards a Theory of Cognitive Poetics*, pp. 245–51; Tsur, *On Metaphoring*, pp. 79–85.

<sup>28</sup> Tsur, *On Metaphoring*, pp. 7, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Tsur, *Towards a Theory of Cognitive Poetics*, pp. 577–81.

<sup>30</sup> Gibbs distinguishes between the 'process' (comprehension), and 'product' (recognition, interpretation, appreciation) of linguistic understanding. His experimental research indicates that metaphorical expressions do not require a special comprehension process; differences between the understanding of literal and figurative occur at the other three stages. Gibbs, *The Poetics of Mind*, ch. 3, esp. pp. 115–19. See also Gibbs, 'The Process of Understanding Literary Metaphor', pp. 65–79.

<sup>31</sup> Steen, *Understanding Metaphor in Literature*, pp. 32–41 (esp. pp. 35–37). Steen discusses Gibb's four stages of metaphor processing on pp. 99–105.

phors inside and outside literary discourse was first offered by the adherents of cognitive metaphor theory. Lakoff and Mark Turner maintain that even highly unconventional literary metaphors are in most instances still based on conceptual metaphors which are defamiliarized by means of four strategies, namely extension, elaboration, composing, and questioning.<sup>32</sup> A fitting example for the first strategy is provided by the generic-level metaphor *PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS* and its extensions in Old English, Old Norse, and early Irish literature. Although any animal could theoretically be used as source domain for the analogy, some animals were more popular than others. For instance, in early Irish texts, heroes appear as hounds, bears, dragons, and boars, while in satirical verse the poets *extended* the metaphor to include geese, mares, and even gadflies.<sup>33</sup> Extension also takes place on a more specific level. A common metaphor based on *PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS* is *MAN IS A WOLF* in all three poetries. In terms of classic Lakoffian cognitive metaphor theory, a number of elements or metaphorical entailments (which correspond to Tsur's foregrounded features) in the source domain 'wolf' are activated and mapped onto the target domain *MAN*. Conventional entailments are 'fierceness', 'cruelty', and 'exile', while other elements in the source domain are ignored. When in the eddic *Sigrdrífumál* 'The Lay of Sigrdrífa' the son of an outlaw is identified as a *vargdropi* 'wolf-dropping' whose oaths should not be trusted (st. 35), the poet has included an element that is usually not considered in the analogy. Wolves have offspring, and since wolf cubs behave like their fathers, an outlaw's son should not be trusted: 'úlfr er í ungum syni' (the wolf is in the young son).<sup>34</sup>

A case of the second strategy, i.e. *elaboration*, can be noted in *Beowulf*, lines 705b to 707:

Ðæt wæs yldum cup,  
 þæt hie ne moste, þa Metod nolde,  
 se s[c]ynscaþa under sceadu bregdan;<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, pp. 67–72. For Lakoff and Turner's discussion of image metaphors, see below.

<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 4, p. 203.

<sup>34</sup> *Sigrdrífumál*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 196. All references to the eddic poems in this and the next two chapters are to the Neckel-Kuhn edition. However, the spelling has been silently normalized. Translated titles are based on the titles used in Larrington's *Poetic Edda*.

<sup>35</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 26. Klaeber's emendation of MS *synscaþa* to *scynscaþa* has been retained for metrical reasons as given by Mitchell and Robinson (*Beowulf: An Edition*, p. 71, note on line 707): 'The MS reading *synscaþa* "evil foe" makes perfect sense and, indeed, is used of Grendel in l. 801, while *scynscaþa* is documented

(Then it was made known to men  
that the spectral/demonic foe could not  
fling them under the shadows, when the Creator did not wish it;)

The metaphorical expression *under sceadu bregdan* 'fling under the shadows' for Grendel's intention to kill the sleeping Danes in Heorot derives from DEATH IS DARKNESS, *sceadu* being an elaboration of the concept DARKNESS, in that it '[fills] in slots in unusual ways rather than by extending the metaphor to map additional slots'.<sup>36</sup> A shadow is partial darkness created due to the obstruction of light by an opaque object; accordingly, when Grendel flings the Danes under the shadows, he (i.e. the opaque object) cuts them off from the light of life (LIFE IS LIGHT) by intercepting its rays. The statement 'We geascodan Eormanrices wylfenne gepoht' (we have heard of Ermanaric's wolfish thought) in *Deor*, lines 20 to 21a, on the other hand, is an instance of a *composite* metaphor. The wolf is endowed with the human attribute of reflection (WOLVES ARE PEOPLE < ANIMALS ARE PEOPLE), a metaphorical concept that is then used to describe the Gothic king. Ermanaric has wolfish ideas (MAN IS A WOLF < PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS), only that wolves do not have ideas. Finally, in the Old English poem *Exodus*, the poet identifies the pillar of cloud that protects the Israelites from the sun during their journey through the desert as a *segl* 'sail' (l. 81) but immediately adds that the travellers could not see any *mastrapas* 'mast-ropes' (l. 82) or *seglrod* 'sail-yard' (l. 83).<sup>37</sup> Here the poet introduces the patristic allegory of mankind crossing the sea of life on the ship of the Church to the heavenly harbour, while at the same time highlighting the shortcomings of the mappings between source and target; in other words, he *questions* the metaphor.

The continuity between metaphors in and outside literary discourse, as illustrated by Lakoff and Turner, is particularly relevant for a study of metaphor in medieval texts, which often do not allow a clear differentiation between more and less conventional metaphors. Not only does the limited source material make such a differentiation in many cases speculative, but the issue is further complicated by the fact that the conventionality of a metaphor depends on how

nowhere else. However, the second element in a compound (*-scapa*) never alliterates alone in *Beowulf*, and the emendation provides the needed alliteration in the first element of the compound. Grendel is described as a *scinna* in line 939.

<sup>36</sup> Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, p. 67.

<sup>37</sup> *Exodus*, ed. by Krapp, p. 93. In line 85, the pillar of cloud turns into *feldhusa mæst* 'greatest of tents', which Lucas in his edition of the poem (*Exodus*, p. 90) interprets as a reference to the Tabernacle.

individual listeners or readers process it. To what extent is the recipient of the metaphor aware of the analogical mappings between source and target, or, to put it differently, to what extent is he/she aware of the fictionality of the metaphor? In studies relating to the contemporary or near contemporary period, these questions can be fruitfully addressed by empirical research on modern reading practices. For the historical periods in question, I would not venture beyond the assumption that certain groups of people (e.g. poets, philosophers, clergymen, etc.) used conceptual metaphors in a creative way. For instance, *under sceadu bregdan* is only attested in *Beowulf*, which at least suggests that the metaphorical expression is poetic and rare. Skaldic verse, with its complex metaphorical kennings, provides another example. It is doubtful that the common man would have been able to understand this type of poetry even if the underlying conceptual metaphors are conventional. The identification of a ship as a 'sea-animal' is easily comprehensible, yet metaphor processing is slowed down by a strained word order and the coexistence of several kennings in the same stanza. The first half stanza (*helmingr*) of Markús Skeggjason's (d. 1107) journey poem with a word-for-word translation illustrates this point:

Fjarðlinna óð fannir  
fast vetrliði rastar;  
hljóp of húna gnípur  
hvalranns íugtanni.<sup>38</sup>

(Of the fjord-snake waded through the snowdrifts  
firmly the winter-old (bear) of the current;  
jumped over mastheads' peaks  
of the whale house the tusk-toothed (bear).)

Although the metaphorical expressions *ffjarðlinna fannir* 'snowdrifts of the fjord snake [SHIP, WAVES]' and *vetrliði rastar* 'winter-old (bear) of the current [SHIP]' may not be too difficult to understand in spite of the tmesis, lines three and four call for additional disambiguation:

jumped over the peaks of the whale house [WAVES]  
the tusk-toothed (bear) of the mastheads [SHIP].

The correct coupling of the kenning elements clearly required an audience to be acquainted with the skaldic tradition and its conventions, which made it possible for them to discern underlying metaphors, such as SHIPS ARE ANIMALS (<INANIMATE OBJECTS ARE ANIMALS) and A BODY OF WATER IS LAND.

<sup>38</sup> Markús Skeggjason, *Lausavísur*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 421. My translation.

As can only be expected in an analysis of inter-cultural variation in metaphor, not general metaphors like INANIMATE OBJECTS ARE ANIMALS or even A BODY OF WATER IS LAND but their culturally embedded instantiations are of most interest for this study. Kövecses has pointed out that in different cultures the source domain of the same conceptual metaphor can have different meanings and can therefore be applied to different target domains (scope of source); conversely, the same target domain can be understood in terms of different source domains (range of target).<sup>39</sup> This observation applies to all conceptual metaphors, but, again, (cultural) variation increases with their specificity. A good example for the illustration of Kövecses' scope of source is provided by the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS in Old Norse and early Irish heroic and occasional verse. In both corpora, the source domain ANIMAL can be instantiated by 'serpent' for the conceptualization either of a slanderous, vindictive, and/or treacherous person (negative) or of a ferocious ruler/champion (positive), but only the early Irish sources present the poisonous nature of a serpent as a heroic asset.<sup>40</sup> Whereas Irish champions are praised for spewing poison against their enemies in the battlefield, such destructive behaviour seems to be exclusively displayed by the hostile, treacherous, and vengeful Brynhildr (see below). Not the emission of poison but intimidating *ormfrón augu* 'snake-flashing eyes' make a ferocious warrior/leader in the skaldic corpus.<sup>41</sup> In other words, the nature of the target depends on which entailments in the source domain 'serpent' are activated in each poetry. The target domain 'enemy' is naturally also conceptualized in different ways (range of target), but one example should suffice to illustrate the culture-specific nature of some source domains. In Old Norse and early Irish verse, the enemy can be perceived as a supernatural entity (PEOPLE ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS): the wicked princess Hildr who causes her father's and husband's deaths is identified as the rapacious sea goddess Rán and a valkyrie in Bragi Boddason's *Ragnarsdrápa*,<sup>42</sup> and Cú Roí's enemies are called *siabrai* 'spectres' by the fictitious poet Ferchertne in the eighth-century *Amrae Chon Roí* 'The Eulogy of Cú Roí' from the Ulster Cycle.<sup>43</sup> In both cases, the authors activate elements pertaining to traditional concepts, such as the

<sup>39</sup> Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, pp. 70–79.

<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, in Old English literature, the terms *wyrm* 'worm, snake, dragon' and *næddre* 'snake' do not denote people. Cf. Chapter 3, p. 137.

<sup>41</sup> See also Chapter 4, p. 172.

<sup>42</sup> Bragi Boddason, *Ragnarsdrápa*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 2. For a detailed analysis of the kennings, see Chapter 3, pp. 112–13.

<sup>43</sup> *Amra Con Roí (ACR): Discussion, Edition, Translation*, ed. and trans. by Henry, p. 189.



goddess, the valkyrie,<sup>44</sup> and the phantom or spectre,<sup>45</sup> which force a reconceptualization of the target domain.<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, no equivalent can be found in Old English verse, as human enemies (for Grendel and his mother, see below) are not depicted as inimical pagan divinities in any of the poems. This absence corresponds suspiciously well to the poor representation of the latter in the whole Old English corpus and will be discussed in Chapter 2.

If generic-level metaphors play a minor role in any study of culture-specific metaphor variation, they are also of limited benefit for the study of metaphor in literature. Tsur is certainly correct to point out that the extent to which conventional conceptual metaphors underlie a large number of creative metaphorical expressions reveals little about the latter's functions in a specific text.<sup>47</sup> When the *Beowulf* poet declares that Grendel cannot 'fling' the Danes 'under the shadows' (DEATH IS DARKNESS), we also need to know why this particular expression was chosen, how it relates to the preceding and following lines and to the whole poem, what it suggests about Grendel's nature, etc. In order to deal with the complexity of the various poems and their metaphorical language, my approach is therefore an ideographic one and includes metaphors ranging from one-word expressions for a perceived opponent to narratives solely constructed to confirm the opponent's alterity. In addition, poets resorted to specific techniques, such as the creation of connotative levels of meaning by means of meta-

<sup>44</sup> In the Old English corpus mention is made of *walcyrige*, a term that, as Audrey Meaney has argued, may once have been used for lesser divinities. The *walcyrian* are listed as the Germanic counterparts of either the classical Furies or the war goddess Bellona in the English glossaries, yet their supernatural nature has disappeared in the few prose texts that mention them. *Walcyrian* occur together with *wiccan*, who could be either human sorcerers or witches (*wiccan & walcyrian*), in a list of wrongdoers in two homilies by Archbishop Wulfstan (d. 1023) and in Cnut's first 'Letter to the English' (written in part by Wulfstan). In the poem *Exodus* (ed. by Krapp, p. 95), *wonn walceasiga* (l. 164a) denotes a traditional beast of battle, the raven, here anticipating a bloody battle between Egyptians and Israelites. Meaney, 'Women, Witchcraft and Magic', p. 17.

<sup>45</sup> Christian demonology has no place in early Irish heroic literature, although *siabair* denotes a devil in other contexts. Examples of the various uses of *siabair* can be found in the *Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language* (eDIL). See also Chapter 3, pp. 154–57.

<sup>46</sup> The notion that similarity between source and target domain can be created had been expressed by Black almost four decades ago ('More about Metaphor', pp. 36–39). See also Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by*, pp. 147–55; Turner, *Death is the Mother of Beauty*, pp. 19–20; Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, pp. 266–67. In fact, as will be illustrated below, the new domain is a blend consisting of elements belonging to source and target.

<sup>47</sup> For Tsur's challenge of Cognitive Metaphor Theory, see his 'Lakoff's Roads Not Taken' (repr. in his *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics*, pp. 577–94).



phor and metonymy, image mapping, and the creative application of conceptual blends. While the exploitation of connotative meaning will be illustrated throughout this book, some further explanatory remarks need to be made on the other two uses.

According to Lakoff and Turner, image metaphors map a mental image (source domain) onto another mental image (target domain) by virtue of a common part-whole structure ('his toes were like the keyboard of a spinet') or attributes, such as shape, colour, light, etc. ('my wife [...] whose waist is an hourglass' [shape]).<sup>48</sup> These metaphors are also called one-shot image metaphors, as they are not conventionalized and do not occur in everyday reasoning. Their specificity, however, does not make them less conceptual. As Lakoff and Turner point out, both image metaphors and conceptual metaphors are based on general structures called image schemas, such as human orientations (up-down, front-back) and bounded spaces.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, image metaphors are capable of prompting conceptual ones. Thus the mapping of a tree onto a person may activate the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS. The problem with this approach is that it is not always easy to determine whether a metaphor involves the mapping of concepts or images. The modern examples given by Lakoff and Turner and also by Peter Crisp in his discussion of T. E. Hulme's and Ezra Pound's imagist poetry are straightforward, but the same cannot be said for skaldic poetry and its many metaphorical kennings. Let us examine Markús Skeggjason's poem once more. The conceptualization of the ship as a bear can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, the image of the bear wading through a snowy landscape and leaping over peaks may be mapped on the image of the ship that moves through an agitated sea and is tossed by stormy waves.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, the ship-bear comparison derives from the conceptual metaphor SHIPS ARE ANIMALS (< INANIMATE OBJECTS ARE ANIMALS), which is highly productive in skaldic poetry. Whereas in Old English poetry

<sup>48</sup> Examples are from Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, pp. 90–91. Of course, the metaphors can only be understood if the audience knows what a spinet and an hourglass look like. Lakoff had earlier published his findings on image metaphors in 'Image Metaphors', pp. 219–22.

<sup>49</sup> Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, pp. 97–100; see also Crisp, 'Imagism's Metaphors', esp. pp. 87–90.

<sup>50</sup> Frank (*Old Norse Court Poetry*, pp. 46–49) has argued that Markús's stanza gives insight into the time frame and the destination of the described sea voyage. According to Frank, the ship left the icy fjords of Iceland in early spring and sailed across the high waves of the open sea before entering the sea lanes between Iceland and Norway and finally arriving at the Norwegian coast.

ships are referred to as horses, in skaldic poetry they can also be reindeer, bears, boars, snakes, lions, and even elephants.<sup>51</sup> Given the systematic nature of the formation of ship-kennings, it is difficult not to see these kennings as realizations of the underlying conceptual metaphor SHIPS ARE ANIMALS, although this conclusion does not preclude image mapping as a secondary process.<sup>52</sup> But even when a kenning base is an image metaphor, the metaphor is usually conventional. The reference to a snake as a band, belt, or ring is no doubt motivated by the similar shape of source and target image and could consequently be classified as an image metaphor. At the same time, the metaphor should not be seen as the product of one poet's imagination, since it occurs frequently in skaldic poetry and occasionally in eddic poetry as well.

So far, I have referred to the mappings of elements from the source domain onto the target domain, as proposed by the adherents of cognitive metaphor theory. However, this approach has its limitations, which become particularly visible in literary analysis. Direct mappings from source to target do not account for the new construct that arises from them. If, for example, a warrior is called a serpent, our conceptualization of him has changed. The source domain 'serpent' contains the elements 'poisonous' and 'fire-breathing', which highlight the warrior's extremely destructive nature and, in this way, generate a modified concept of the warrior. In other words, a new domain with elements from both domains is created. The problem is addressed in blending theory, since this particular theory focuses on mental spaces rather than conceptual domains. In fact, the blending of mental spaces, which Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner have defined as 'conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk', is a basic operation of the human mind.<sup>53</sup> It occurs in conceptual integration networks consisting of at least two input spaces, a generic space with generalized knowledge that maps onto each of the inputs, and a blended space. The counterpart connections (i.e. the mappings) between the input spaces can be, among others, connections of identity, cause and effect, space, time, etc. If they are metaphorical, the input spaces correspond to the 'source domain' and 'target domain' in cognitive metaphor theory, except that blending theory allows for additional input spaces and the newly created blended space(s). These new

<sup>51</sup> Meissner (*Die Kenningar der Skalden*, pp. 209–12, 218–20) lists twenty-five different base words denoting 'horse' and eighteen base words denoting other animals. Poets also used the more general terms *dýr* 'animal', *eykr* 'beast of burden', and *raukn* 'beast of draught'.

<sup>52</sup> For a different view, see Holland, 'Kennings, Metaphors, and Semantic Formulae', pp. 129–30. According to Holland, metaphorical kennings are image metaphors.

<sup>53</sup> Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, p. 40.

spaces can receive their organizing frame from one input space (single-scope network), as in highly conventional conceptual metaphors like ARGUMENT IS WAR; it can include parts of each frame (double-scope network), as in the identification of Cú Roí's enemies as *siabrai*; or it can incorporate multiple frames, as in multi-scope blends like 'Death the grim reaper' (with the input spaces 'death', 'killer', 'reaper').<sup>54</sup>

Since double-scope blends will be primarily investigated in this book, I have chosen Cú Roí's spectral enemies to illustrate blending in more detail. To begin with, the enemy warriors constitute input 2 (= target domain), the *siabrai* input 1 (= source domain). Both input spaces have their own organizing frames, one structured by the frame 'demonic', the other by the frame 'human', while the blended space draws from both inputs by selective projection and therefore has its own emergent structure. The exact nature of the screening, however, is in this case elusive. Do the warriors have a demonic disposition, or do they fight as fiercely as spectres usually do in Irish texts? Either option but also a combination of the two is possible. Blending can be highly creative and imaginative, not the least because integration (i.e. the compression of elements from various input spaces) is always accompanied by disintegration (i.e. decompression):<sup>55</sup> not only do we conceptualize warriors with spectre-qualities, but we also conceptualize and possibly visualize the two groups separately. Still, since the context of *Amrae Chon Roí* indicates that Cú Roí is slain by his human enemies and not by ghosts, the correspondences between the two inputs are metaphorical. Less certain is the nature of such correspondences between the input 'Grendel' and such inputs as *feond in helle* (l. 101b), *wearg gast* 'cursed spirit' (l. 133a), *Godes andsaca* 'God's enemy' (ll. 786b, 1682b), *helle gast* 'spirit of hell' (l. 1274a), and *deofol* 'devil' (l. 1680a). Given his other infernal qualities (e.g. fiery eyes, huge size, and malicious nature), the mappings could be either metaphorical or correspondences of identity so that three different interpretations of the blend Grendel/devil are possible: Grendel may be a humanoid monster with demonic qualities (metaphorical), he may be a demon in human form (literal), or, as I will argue in Chapter 3, his ontological status is intentionally uncertain.

<sup>54</sup> Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, pp. 291–95. As will be illustrated in the following chapters, multi-scope blends often incorporate different kinds of mappings (for example, metaphorical and metonymic) and consist of more than one blended space.

<sup>55</sup> Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, ch. 7.

*Metaphors of Conflict and Alterity in Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, and Early Irish Poetry*

The metaphorical language used in Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, and early Irish poetry constitutes one component of the study; the different conceptualizations of the enemy and culture-specific concepts of alterity constitute the other. According to the phenomenologist Bernhard Waldenfels, we experience alterity in our selves, personal relations, intra-cultural sphere, and in our encounters with other cultures; the Other pervades all of our experience and in fact defines the Self just as much as the Self defines the Other.<sup>56</sup> We may try to appropriate the Other and reduce it to sameness by suppressing differences, and yet we can never be a *solus ipse* or entirely belong to a group or culture. Inclusion and exclusion (*Ein- und Ausgrenzung*) underlie all of our experiences,<sup>57</sup> but which of the two processes dominates inevitably varies. In situations where inter-personal, social, and cultural alterity is recognized or even emphasized, exclusion rather than inclusion will play a prominent role.<sup>58</sup> Marina Münkler and Werner Röcke have developed a system that distinguishes between inter-personal, intra-cultural, and inter-cultural alterity, which in turn can be experienced on each level as minor, moderate, or radical (*kleine, mittlere, große Transzendenzen*).<sup>59</sup> The system is particularly useful because it differentiates between socio-cultural levels of alterity and how these different levels are experienced by an individual or group. For example, modes of behaviour that occur within a group but considerably deviate from the socio-cultural norm(s) of that group can be perceived as more alienating than minor inter-cultural differences. Nor are enemy status and alterity inextricably linked. Two different cultural groups may very well share values and customs, even though they engage in open warfare caused by conflicting political interests. A similar case can be made for individuals whose personal or tribal affinities force them to participate in their groups' hostilities, but who would not do so in different circumstances. Alterity plays a minimal role in such contexts (*kleine Transzendenz*). Conversely, behaviour that violates the socio-cultural norms of their group distances the perpetrators

<sup>56</sup> Waldenfels, *Grundmotive einer Phänomenologie des Fremden*, esp. ch. 6.

<sup>57</sup> For Waldenfels' discussion of the paradox of social 'Zugehörigkeit in der Unzugehörigkeit' and his use of Husserl's concept of *Fremderfahrung*, see *Grundmotive einer Phänomenologie des Fremden*, pp. 56–57, 117–18.

<sup>58</sup> For an examination of the complex relationship between perceptions of the Self and the Other in the Middle Ages, see Classen, 'Introduction'.

<sup>59</sup> Münkler and Röcke, 'Der *ordo*-Gedanke', pp. 713–14.

from the latter and turns them into enemies within. In the three heroic corpora to be investigated in this study, unheroic conduct such as niggardliness, treachery, cowardice, and kin-slaying is criticized or scorned regardless of the trespasser's personal or tribal affiliations. Heremod in *Beowulf*, Brynhildr in the eddic Sigurðr poems and *Guðrúnarkviða I* 'The First Poem of Guðrún', and Bláthnat in *Amrae Chon Roí* are examples of individuals who are condemned by other characters and/or by the poet because they have turned against members of their own group: Bláthnat and Brynhildr against their spouse or in-law, Heremod against his own people. Having violated the cultural norms of the group, they are conceived as different and a threat. Their alterity is moderate (*mittlere Transzendenz*): on the one hand, they still belong to the human community and display human behaviour, but on the other hand, they have alienated themselves from their own group to such an extent that they cannot live in it any longer. Heremod is betrayed to the enemy and subsequently killed, Bláthnat is slain by Cú Roí's poet Ferchertne, and Brynhildr commits suicide. And at least in Heremod's and Brynhildr's cases, it is metaphor that highlights the gravity of the transgression. According to Hrothgar, a *breosthord blodreow* 'bloodthirsty breast-hoard' (l. 1719a) grew in Heremod, which took possession of his mind and turned him into a cruel king.<sup>60</sup> Heremod's reified negative emotions have made him turn into a stranger to his people: instead of distributing rings he unleashes misery and death.<sup>61</sup> Still, Heremod never loses his humanity even when controlled by his *breosthord blodreow*. In contrast, Brynhildr's treachery against Sigurðr is seen as so severe in *Guðrúnarkviða I* (st. 27) that she transforms into an infernal serpent when looking at the dead Sigurðr: fire is emitted from her eyes (*eldr ór augum*), and she snorts poison (*eitri fnaesti*).<sup>62</sup> Her human nature is temporarily suspended in the Brynhildr-serpent blend, which moves her closer to monsters and demons and accordingly to a more radical form of intra-cultural alterity (*große Transzendenz*).

<sup>60</sup> Klaeber's *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 58. See Chapter 3, pp. 123–26.

<sup>61</sup> 'nalles beagas geaf/Denum æfter dome' (not at all did he judiciously give rings to the Danes, ll. 1719b–20a). For detailed studies of the mind-as-a-container motif in *Beowulf* and other Old English poems, see Mize, 'Manipulations of the Mind-as-Container Motif', pp. 25–56 (esp. pp. 28–41 for an examination of the motif in *Beowulf*), and Mize, 'The Representation of the Mind', pp. 57–90.

<sup>62</sup> *Guðrúnarkviða (in fyrsta)*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 206. In *Fáfnismál* 'The Lay of Fáfnir', stanza 18 (ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 183), the dying serpent Fáfnir tells Sigurðr that he snorted poison (*eitri ek fnaesta* 'I snorted poison') while guarding the Niflung hoard, and Beowulf, too, has to fight a poison- and fire-spitting dragon. See Chapter 3, pp. 137–38.

Although Brynhildr's transformation is a direct reflection of her treachery, alterity does not have to be experienced as negative. On the contrary, the identification of heroes as fierce animals or even as poison-spewing serpents highlights qualities that separate these heroes from the common man. Martial vigour is a positive attribute as long as it is not used against one's own people. The hero Cú Chulainn, for example, bravely defends Ulster against Queen Medb and her army; only when he falls into his warp-spasm, he becomes a monstrous, uncontrollable force of destruction threatening friends and foes.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, ferocious and courageous enemies are respected in the heroic poetry of all three cultures, and the metaphors and similes that describe them often do not differ from those used for the protagonists. For example, Jǫrmunrekkr, king of the Goths and mortal foe of Hamðir and Sǫrli, roars like a bear (*sem björn hryti*, st. 25) in the eddic *Hamðismál* 'The Lay of Hamðir' even though he has lost all his limbs, while Fer Diad's charioteer calls Cú Chulainn *seabac saer* 'noble hawk' just before the combat between his own master and the Ulster hero in *Táin Bó Cúailnge* 'The Cattle Raid of Cooley'.<sup>64</sup> If a warrior is weak and cowardly, however, any metaphor used to describe his (moderate) alterity is automatically negative, as can be noted in the early Irish satirical verse. Although in the majority of instances the absence of any narrative context makes it very difficult if not impossible to reconstruct the causes for the satirists' scorn, the charges, whether true or not, usually point to the low birth, imbecility, and cowardice of the target. For example, the satire against an unidentified Lorcán, whose name means 'little mite' and hence could be a nickname, begins with the exclamation 'Uch, a Lorcáin, isat lac! Ní mó is ráiti rit, a drúith!' (Alas, Lorcán, you are weak! No more should be said to you, you fool). It is followed by a number of derogatory image metaphors, such as *taman chrín fo choiss cháich* 'withered stump under everyone's feet', and *cáith lín i lladair fíacha* 'chaff of flax in a raven's claw'.<sup>65</sup> Clearly, poor Lorcán is seen as a lifeless and feeble person who is oppressed and scorned by everyone. Other metaphors are even more challenging. How should we understand metaphors like *tolltimpán* 'pierced *timpan* [= drum or stringed instrument]' or *fíacla con ar cloich ailig* 'hound's teeth on a

<sup>63</sup> For a discussion of Cú Chulainn's canine qualities that make him both a protector of and menace to his people, see Chapter 3, pp. 158–59.

<sup>64</sup> *Hamðismál*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 273. '*Táin Bó Cúailnge*': *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 87 (text), p. 204 (translation).

<sup>65</sup> *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 8 (p. 136 [text], p. 137 [translation]); *Bruchstücke*, ed. by Meyer, no. 67 (p. 30). McLaughlin's translations (but note that McLaughlin prefers 'little mite' to 'Lorcan').



dung-covered stone' for a man called Alcán's son?<sup>66</sup> Perhaps the poet wished to emphasize his target's weakness or cowardice, since a perforated instrument does not produce much sound. Furthermore, if the canine teeth are used as a metonym for 'hound', Alcán's son could be accused of engaging in unrewarding (rock) and dirty (dung) exploits, instead of displaying a hound's fierceness against his enemies. What can be said with certainty is that the metaphors in all instances highlight and exaggerate the targets' social alterity by transforming them into common animals and objects of little value.

A second mode of alterity relevant to this study is inter-cultural alterity in its more or less radical forms. The lesser or moderate form is represented by groups or cultures that adhere to different customs, live in an inhospitable habitat, and may, but do not have to, display deviant physical characteristics. Grendel's mother, for example, is a huge female of dubious appearance — King Hrothgar mentions to Beowulf that she has the *onlicnes* 'likeness' of a woman (l. 1351a; physical alterity) — who lives as an outcast in the fens with her son and takes the male role of the avenger (social alterity) upon herself. Grendel's mother is a stranger in a world in which noble and royal women were married off for the consolidation of political alliances or for the establishment of peace between two feuding tribes. Instead of functioning as a 'peace-weaver' (a common motif in Anglo-Saxon poetry), she continues the feud between her family and Hrothgar's Danes, so that it is no coincidence that Hrothgar calls her a *sinnig secg* 'sinful man' (l. 1379a).<sup>67</sup> She is sinful not only because she belongs to the Grendelkin but also because she has perverted her cultural role.<sup>68</sup> And yet, she is as much a mother as the other women in Hrothgar's community. She grieves when her son is killed and only avenges her son because nobody else can do it for her. Even more ambiguous is the role of the giants in the Old Norse mythological corpus. Sharing a common ancestry with the Æsir, they are not always so different from the latter. Individual giants and giantesses are allowed or even forced to enter Æsir space; once assimilated to Æsir culture, their alterity is mainly restricted to their former group affiliations. As a collective, however, the giants remain a hostile group culturally inferior to the Æsir. Living in their own primitive, infertile habitat, they are denied access to the gods' domain, which they sometimes gain by force.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 41 (p. 148 [text], p. 149 [translation], pp. 225–26 [note]); *Bruchstücke*, ed. by Meyer, no. 62 (p. 28).

<sup>67</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 48.

<sup>68</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 131–33.

<sup>69</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 29–31, 39–47.

The giants' dual role becomes particularly clear in the many skaldic kennings that identify them as gods or humans who dwell in the mountains, in caves, or in other rocky surroundings. Whereas the metaphorical kenning bases refer to the giants' affinities with the inhabitants of two culturally advanced spheres,<sup>70</sup> the metonymic determinants highlight their primitive nature, which excludes them from the gods' community. In addition, their sterile environment moves them closer to the forces of chaos. Particularly the multi-headed giantess in *Hymiskviða* 'Hymir's Poem' (st. 8) and the frost giant Hrímgrímnir, who lives *fyr nágrindr neðan* 'under corpse gate' in *For Skírnis* 'Skírnir's Journey' (st. 35), are creatures that display physical or spiritual monstrousness to such a degree that they challenge cosmic order.<sup>71</sup> Tendencies towards such a radical form of alterity (*interkulturelle Fremdheitserfahrung großer Transzendenzen*) can also be found in Grendel, whose ontological status vacillates between human and embodied spirit, in the Fomoiri, whose original nature as powers of darkness and chaos resurfaces in their attempt to prevent Partholón's and Nemed's races from cultivating Ireland's soil in the pseudo-historical *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* 'Book of the Taking of Ireland',<sup>72</sup> and even in the Túatha Dé Danann 'People of the Goddess Danu', as presented by the tenth-century poet Eochaid úa Flainn in the same work.<sup>73</sup> In his poem *Ériu co n-uail, co n-idnaib* 'Ireland with Pride, with Spears', Eochaid refers to the gods as *siabrai* and *arrachta* 'spectres' and speculates that they must be *díabuil* 'devils' if they are descendants of *demnai* 'demons', but then observes that they are mortals after all.<sup>74</sup> In other words, the poet creates the blends Túatha Dé Danann/demons and Túatha Dé Danann/spectres in order to stress the Túatha Dé's spiritual alterity, while at the same time denying them any supernatural status. Unlike the mysterious Grendel, they are humans with demonic qualities. Finally, the fire demons and the two monstrous beasts, i.e. the Fenriswolf and World Serpent, in the Old Norse

<sup>70</sup> It should be noted that since the gods descend from the giants in Nordic cosmogony, the metaphorical use of the names of gods in giant-kennings is based on subcategorization and thus on a metonymic relationship (PART FOR A PART metonymy).

<sup>71</sup> *Hymiskviða*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 89; *For Skírnis*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 76. The title *Skírnismál* occurs in Copenhagen, Arnarnagmagnæan Institute, MS AM 748 I a 4<sup>vo</sup>, p. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, II, § 202 (pp. 270 [text], 271 [translation]; Recension 1), III, §§ 237–43 (pp. 120, 122, 124 [text], pp. 121, 123, 125 [translation]; Recension 1).

<sup>73</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 81–84.

<sup>74</sup> *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, IV, 212, 214 (text of poem 53, Recension 1); translation by Carey in *The Celtic Heroic Age*, § 72 (pp. 254–55).



mythological world are ontologically so different from the gods that any negotiation with them is impossible. Even though they can still be categorized as supernatural and beastly entities and thus do not embody absolute alterity in Emmanuel Lévinas's sense, they pose an existential threat to the ordered world of gods and humans which cannot be removed.<sup>75</sup> Despite the fact that the gods are able to bind Fenrir with a magical fetter and throw the World Serpent into the sea encircling the world of mortal men, the monsters will return at Ragnarøk. In the meantime, the Serpent, which has wound itself around the land biting its tail, remains in a threatening position. This notion is particularly forcefully expressed in Úlfr Uggason's tenth-century *Húsdrápa* 'House Lay', where the poet applies the conventional snake-band metaphor to the Serpent. The concept of a belt-like monster surrounding the world is in itself a frightening one, but Úlfr further intensifies its menacing and, most likely, death-bringing function with the metaphorical kenning *stirðþinull stordar* 'rigid net-rope of the earth'.<sup>76</sup> The image of a rigid rope that closes a net when pulled and thus entraps everything within the net is fused with the image of the world-encircling Serpent in the blended space, from which an immobilized entity emerges that threatens to bring stasis and death to everything within its confines.

### Sources

A major challenge for any comparative analysis that encompasses several corpora is the selection of comparable source material. Ideally, the source texts would date back roughly to the same period, which therefore needs to be determined first. The Anglo-Saxon poetic corpus provides the least problems in this respect. Although the dates of most poems cannot be clearly identified, it is safe to place almost all compositions in the period from the seventh to the eleventh centuries.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the majority of the extant poems have survived in four major manuscripts, all of which date from the late tenth or early eleventh century. The *terminus ad quem* for the early Irish poems is unfortunately less clear.

<sup>75</sup> A short discussion of Lévinas's treatment of true alterity self is given by Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, pp. 195–97. According to Lévinas, true (or radical) alterity is something that only resides in the Other and cannot be conceptualized or categorized; rather, any encounter with such irreducible alterity overwhelms the subject. See also Waldenfels, *Grundmotive einer Phänomenologie des Fremden*, pp. 116–17.

<sup>76</sup> Úlfr Uggason, *Húsdrápa*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 129.

<sup>77</sup> Only the metrical description of the city of Durham dates from the first decade of the twelfth century.

The vast majority of early Irish literature has been transmitted in manuscripts of the Middle Irish period, the earliest of which date from the late eleventh [?] and twelfth centuries, such as *Lebor na hUidre* (see above) and the Book of Leinster (Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1339 [H 2.18], s. xii<sup>2</sup>). Still, most of the poetry discussed in the book has been assigned by scholars to either the Old Irish or the early Middle Irish period, thus predating the twelfth century, while a few younger sources (poetry and prose) have been included for comparative purposes. Finally, the cut-off date of *c.* 1100 has proven to be impractical for the Old Norse material. The exclusion of poems which may have been composed in the twelfth century (or even a bit later), but which contain diction comparable to that in the earlier verse would indeed have impoverished the analysis. In all cases possible late dates are indicated and, if necessary, discussed.

In addition to the time frame, the poetic corpus to be investigated has to be defined. Since my main, though not exclusive, concern lies with physical and verbal conflicts and culture-sensitive conceptualizations of an enemy in such conflicts, heroic verse is an obvious choice. Nevertheless, conflicts also play a dominant role in the (pseudo)-historical and eulogistic/satirical verse of all three cultures, which therefore has been included in the analysis as well. The third category contains poems that feature the native gods either in their struggle against their enemies or as inimical entities that need to be conquered. I have intentionally not identified all discussed poems as ‘mythological’ in Chapter 2, since only the Old Norse eddic and skaldic poems, with their focus on the gods’ fight against monsters and giants, can be defined as such. The Irish poems relevant for this study, on the other hand, occur in *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* and not in one of the prosimetric tales of the Mythological Cycle. Lastly, Anglo-Saxon mythological verse (or prose) has not been preserved at all and may never have existed in written form. The texts that will be discussed are the two charms entitled *Wið ferstice* ‘For a Sudden Stitch’ and *The Nine Herbs Charm*, in which whole metaphorical narratives are created to discredit the old gods as malevolent and destructive.

The uneven distribution of metaphors that express alterity within the three selected poetic categories poses a different challenge. Whereas Old Norse mythological, heroic, and occasional poetry provides a considerable number of such metaphors, the two other poetries are not equally equipped. In the Anglo-Saxon corpus, for example, the authors of the two eulogistic poems *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *The Battle of Maldon* make surprisingly little use of metaphor for the conceptualization of King Aþelstan’s and Ealdorman Byrhtnoð’s enemies. Similarly, conflict metaphors are relatively scarce in the verse sections of the prosimetric tales of the Heroic (i.e. Ulster) Cycle. It has to

be kept in mind that the conclusions drawn from the study of metaphor in the three poetries are based on the available data and therefore cannot be definite.

A final issue that needs to be addressed is the influence of a Christian world view on the different concepts of (negative) alterity in the three poetries. Although the examined texts are secular in nature, such influence is only to be expected in texts that were conceived or at least written down in the Christian era. The extent of this influence, however, varies. Least affected is Old Norse mythological and heroic poetry, even though Christian tendencies can be discerned in a number of eddic poems. Loki's treachery and vile accusations against the gods in *Lokasenna* 'Loki's Quarrel', for example, liken him to the devil,<sup>78</sup> and *Völuspá* 'The Seeress' Prophecy' (c. 1000), a visionary poem that recounts the fate of the world from its creation to its doom and rebirth, suggests an author who was acquainted with Christian theology.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, Christian demonization of the enemy occurs sporadically in eleventh- and twelfth-century skaldic verse. In a stanza attributed to Sigvǫtr Þórðarson (fl. eleventh century), the poet condemns those Norwegians who treacherously accepted money from the Danish king Knútr in return for supporting him against King Óláfr inn helgi Haraldsson of Norway: 'hverr veit sitt innan í svörtu helviti, ef selr hollan harra sinn við golli' (everyone knows his own [to be] inside black hell if he sells his gracious lord for gold).<sup>80</sup> For Sigvǫtr, betrayal of one's lord excludes the traitor from the heavenly kingdom just like the heathens whom he found sacrificing to the elves (*álfablót*) on his voyage to the Swedish earl Ragnvaldr.<sup>81</sup> Still, the number of passages that present a Christian view of alterity is limited. No such claim can be made for Old English or early Irish poetry, where the enemy is often associated with heathendom and the devil, although here, too, the distribution of such references is uneven. Whereas the demonization of the Túatha Dé Danann in parts of *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* is paralleled by an equally overt condemnation of the Germanic gods in the two Old English charms and the Old English wisdom poem *Maxims I*, Christian-influenced concepts of the enemy or satirized person in the transmitted occasional poetry of both cultures differ in function and scope. But what is most striking is that Christian notions of alterity like those found in *Beowulf* — Grendel's continuous association with

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Chapter 2, p. 52.

<sup>79</sup> For a discussion of possible Christian influences in the poem, see Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, II, 93–104.

<sup>80</sup> Sigvǫtr Þórðarson, *Lausavísur*, ed. and trans. by Fulk, no. 13 (p. 715). The word order of Sigvǫtr's lines has been modified for the quote.

<sup>81</sup> Sigvǫtr Þórðarson, *Austrfararvísur*, ed. and trans. by Fulk, no. 5 (p. 590).

the devil and hell constitutes only one example — are on the whole absent in the many tales of the Ulster Cycle. One notable exception is the Ulster tale *Síaburcharpat Con Culaind* ‘The Phantom Chariot of Cú Chulainn’, which records St Patrick’s conjuring up of Cú Chulainn from hell before the fifth-century pagan king Lóegaire mac Néill. Cú Chulainn urges Lóegaire to convert to Christianity, and when the king does so, spiritual alterity is overcome and Cú Chulainn can at last join the blessed in heaven.

### *Procedure*

Given the comparative nature of the study, Chapters 2 to 4 are arranged by subject matter rather than by poetic corpus. Each chapter consists of three sections that investigate both the application of different metaphors and metaphorical techniques in the presentation of conflicts (and their participants) and the possible socio-cultural implications of the employed metaphors in each poetry. As already mentioned, the extent of the source material that could be consulted varies, a problem that is particularly pronounced in the treatment of conflicts involving heathen gods in Chapter 2. Only the first section discusses the struggles of the gods against their sterile and primitive giant enemies in Old Norse skaldic and eddic mythological poetry, whereas the second section explores parts of the aforementioned charms as mega-metaphors that turn the old gods themselves into foes in Anglo-Saxon everyday life. A similar form of marginalization is examined in the last section of the chapter, which provides a short discussion of the relations between the divine Túatha Dé Danann and the demonic Fomoiri in *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* and the prosimetric tale *Cath Maige Tuired*, followed by an analysis of the metaphorical language that three poets used for their different assessments of the Túatha Dé Danann in *Lebor Gabála*.

Chapter 3 is the most homogenous chapter in its treatment of metaphors of conflict and alterity in the three heroic poetic corpora. The chapter opens with an examination of metaphors that identify and marginalize various types of enemies in specific intra-cultural contexts in the Old Norse heroic poems. Although enemy status is less defined in these poems than in their mythological counterparts because it is not necessarily linked to group affiliation but caused by socially unacceptable behaviour, it will be illustrated that the employed metaphors contribute just as much to the latter’s stigmatization as sterile, effeminate, and anti-social. The next section introduces the notion of interiority, which plays a major role in the Old English poems *Deor* and *Beowulf*. Both poets made use of a wide range of metaphors not only for the marginalization of human(oid) opponents but also for the conceptualization of emotional pro-

cesses intrinsically linked with these opponents.<sup>82</sup> No such extensive psychological approach to the conceptualization of alterity can be found in the early Irish heroic corpus, but, as the third section will reveal, inverted heroic metaphors can highlight the target's deficient emotional state, which becomes the object of scorn.

The employment of metaphor to express such scorn is also a major concern in the fourth chapter, which focuses on the occasional poetry of Northwest Europe. It will be demonstrated in the first section that although the evidence in the Old Norse skaldic praise and *níð* 'lampoon' poetry may not be copious, it is still sufficient to confirm the popularity of the marginalizing techniques adopted in the mythological and heroic verse. In a similar vein, the few metaphors which contribute to the conceptualization of the Englishmen's enemies in *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *The Battle of Maldon*, and which are discussed in the second section, indicate a concern with religious otherness also found in *Beowulf*. In this case, however, the metaphorical potential so clearly indicated in *Beowulf* is not exploited in the two occasional poems, a curiosity that will be addressed particularly in connection with *The Battle of Maldon*. Finally, there is no lack of metaphors in the early Irish satiric verse analysed in the final section, many of which are as unique as those ridiculing Lorcán and Alcán's son. Given their frequency, these idiosyncratic metaphors must have been part of the shared understanding of the poets' communities, although they pose a serious challenge to our visual imagination and ability of conceptualization today.

The Conclusion briefly reviews the wide spectrum of metaphorical techniques that aid the conceptualization of alterity in Old English, Old Norse, and early Irish poetry. It demonstrates that these metaphorical techniques, ranging from highly idiosyncratic metaphors to shared metaphorical constructions, reflect intersecting poetic conventions, which in turn shed light on both common and culture-specific ways of viewing otherness in the three cultures in question. In the end, the various historico-cultural factors that conceivably contributed to such cultural conformity and variation in the perception of alterity confirm once again Gibbs's observation that 'all cognition is embodied in cultural situations'.

<sup>82</sup> Mental processes are conceptualized by means of focalization as defined by Mize in his *Traditional Subjectivities*, p. 15: 'focalization is the practice of creating access to and knowledge of a particular subjective position within a narrative, through the godlike liberty afforded by heterodiegetic narration (the so-called third-person point of view), such that a reader's understanding of the account is selectively informed by that subjective perspective on it or private experience with respect to it.'



## HEATHEN GODS AND THEIR ENEMIES IN OLD ENGLISH, OLD NORSE, AND EARLY IRISH POETRY

### *Old Norse Mythological Poetry*

#### **Conflict and Alterity in the Old Norse Mythological World**

Any investigation of metaphors of conflict and alterity in Old Norse mythological poetry must begin with a close examination of the conflicts between the gods and their enemies as portrayed in the individual poems and Snorri Sturluson's (1179–1241) *Prose Edda*.<sup>1</sup> In these descriptions, the gods (i.e. Æsir and Vanir) are not only existentially threatened by the monstrous Fenriswolf, the World Serpent, and the forces of the fiery world Muspell, but they live in continuous conflict with a large number of giants who endanger their physical and cultural well-being. The gods try to check these groups as much as they can: Fenrir is bound, the Serpent is thrown into the sea, and the giants are condemned to a life in Giantland. As already indicated in the previous chapter, the natures of the monsters and the giants are not the same. The radical alterity of the monsters makes them forces that cannot be negotiated with. Regardless of whether they symbolize natural elements (fire) or appear in animal shape, they

<sup>1</sup> Snorri was a politician, historian, and poet. His *Edda* 'Poetics' consists of four works: a prologue, *Gylfaginning* 'The Tricking of Gylfi', *Skáldskaparmál* 'The Language of Poetry', and *Háttatal* 'List of Verse Forms'. For this study, references will repeatedly be made to *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*.

can only temporarily be controlled by the gods and break loose at Ragnarøk.<sup>2</sup> The giants are different. As ancestors of the gods who have been banned to the fringes of the world, they represent first of all a moderate form of cultural alterity. In fact, the geographical and socio-cultural markers that Reinhart Koselleck identifies for the Hellenes and the barbarians can also be discerned in the god-giant relationship.<sup>3</sup> The giants live in Giantland and are thus geographically separated from the gods; their primitive, stone-age culture is inferior to the gods' advanced civilization; and they have been oppressed by the gods not unlike the barbarians by the Hellenes in and outside the *polis*. Nor do the Æsir hesitate to conduct punitive raids into Giantland or to force useful giants and attractive giantesses to participate in their culture usually as second-class citizens. Giantesses in particular are victimized, who either become the gods' concubines (e.g. Óðinn's concubine Jörð, Þórr's concubine Járnsaxa) or are deceived or coerced into marriage. The beautiful Gerðr is threatened with madness and sterility if she does not accept Freyr's marriage proposal,<sup>4</sup> and Skaði is tricked into marrying Njörðr although she fancied Baldr.<sup>5</sup> Less clear is the relationship between the giant Ægir and the gods. In *Lokasenna* 'Loki's Quarrel', the gods' banquet is held in Ægir's hall of 'inviolable peace',<sup>6</sup> but his role as host may not

<sup>2</sup> Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, p. 53; Schulz, *Riesen*, pp. 53–54. The goddess Hel has not been included in the list, since it is very likely that she is, as Simek (*Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 138) has argued, a late personification of the realm of the underworld.

<sup>3</sup> Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*, pp. 218–28.

<sup>4</sup> For *Skírnir*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, sts 26–36 (pp. 74–76). The Codex Regius (Reykjavík, Árni Magnússon Institute, MS GKS 2365 4<sup>to</sup>, c. 1270) contains twenty-nine eddic poems. All references to the eddic poems (with normalized spelling) are to the Neckel-Kuhn edition.

<sup>5</sup> According to Snorri Sturluson's *Skáldskaparmál*, the gods offer the giantess her choice of Æsir husband as compensation for their killing of her father Þjazi. Their condition is that she must choose the Áss by his feet. Assuming that 'fatt mvn liott a Baldri' (there must be little that is ugly about Baldr), she selects the god with the most shining feet, but the lucky candidate turns out to be Njörðr. Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 80–81. Snorri's *Edda* has been transmitted in the following four manuscripts: Reykjavík, Stofnum Árna Magnússonar, MS GKS 2367 4<sup>to</sup>, fols 1<sup>r</sup>–53<sup>r</sup>, s. xiv<sup>3/4</sup> (R; Codex Regius); Utrecht, University Library, MS 1374, fols 1<sup>r</sup>–52<sup>v</sup>, c. 1595 (T; Codex Trajectinus); Uppsala, University Library Carolina Rediviva, MS DG 11, 4<sup>to</sup>, fols 1<sup>r</sup>–21<sup>v</sup>, 26<sup>r</sup>–44<sup>r</sup>, 47<sup>r</sup>–55<sup>r</sup>, s. xiv<sup>3/4</sup> (U; Codex Upsaliensis); Copenhagen, Arnamagnæan Institute, MS AM 242 fol., pp. 2–82, 139–50, 167–69, c. 1350 (W; Codex Wormianus). For the manuscript dates given here, see the website of the Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages project.

<sup>6</sup> Meulengracht Sørensen, 'Loki's *senna* in Ægir's Hall', pp. 245–46. Meulengracht Sørensen also postulates that Þórr may be absent on the occasion because his traditional role as giant slayer prevents him from attending a feast in a giant's hall.



have been voluntary either. The suspicion that Ægir is a servant rather than an equal in the world of the gods seems to be confirmed in *Hymiskviða* 'Hymir's Poem', where Þórr forces Ægir the *bergbúi* 'mountain dweller' (st. 2) to give a feast for the Æsir.<sup>7</sup> In all cases, however, the desirability of certain giant(esse)s implies that their alterity is less pronounced or even minimal; it may be added that at least some eddic giants can also boast of positive attributes like wisdom<sup>8</sup> and creativity if only in the sense of building.<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of their common ancestry and shared characteristics, the tension between gods and giants is continually noticeable inside and outside the gods' domain. The conflict between gods and giants has been the subject of a considerable amount of socio-anthropological scholarship which assumes that the relationships and conditions in the Norse mythological world in some way reflect the values and concepts of the people that transmitted the myths. For example, John Lindow discerns a relationship between the god-giant conflict and the blood feud,<sup>10</sup> whereas Margaret Clunies Ross and Katja Schulz interpret the gods' repressive actions against the giants as reflections of sanctioned aggressive behaviour either by the Viking raiders abroad (Schulz) or by the Scandinavian ruling elite at home (Clunies Ross).<sup>11</sup> Even the gods' peaceful dealings with the giants betray the former's superiority and can be interpreted in socio-anthropological terms. The Æsir adhere to a strictly hierarchical marriage model that allows Æsir and Vanir to have sexual liaisons with beautiful giantesses but prevents giants from acquiring goddesses. Clunies Ross points out:

It is suggestive, then, that we find the social world of Old Norse myth to be one of considerable inequality, in which a dominant group, the Æsir, maintains its superiority over the rest by depriving the lower-ranking groups of returns in marriage exchanges while at the same time stripping them of their assets, whether by

<sup>7</sup> In revenge, Ægir asks Þórr to provide a cauldron big enough for the task, a request that forces the god to go to Giantland and retrieve such a huge cauldron from the frost giant Hymir (st. 3).

<sup>8</sup> Schulz, *Riesen*, p. 61. A good example of a giant who engages with Óðinn in a wisdom contest is Vafþrúðnir in the eddic *Vafþrúðnismál* 'Vafþrúðnir's Sayings'.

<sup>9</sup> The example that immediately comes to mind is that of the giant who builds Ásgarðr's wall for the gods (Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, ed. by Faulkes, pp. 34–36; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, pp. 35–36). Motz, furthermore, uses the Old English and Old Saxon phrases *enta geweorc* and *wrisilic gewerc* as evidence of a common Germanic concept of giants as builders. Motz, 'Giants in Folklore and Mythology', pp. 78–79.

<sup>10</sup> Lindow, 'Bloodfeud and Scandinavian Mythology', pp. 51–68.

<sup>11</sup> Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, esp. p. 50; Schulz, *Riesen*, pp. 53–54.

force or trickery. There are some obvious parallels to be drawn with twelfth- and thirteenth-century Icelandic society here, with its growing social distance between the powerful few and the rest. Nevertheless, something of what we find expressed in Old Norse myth probably stands in a hyperbolic relationship to social reality. The inequalities, the deceptions and the blockage of marriage exchanges place the Æsir in a position of greater intransigence and control than even members of the chieftain class achieved in late commonwealth Iceland, with their networks of affines and other supporters who were so necessary to the maintenance of their political ascendancy. What the gods can get away with is often more difficult for mere mortals!<sup>12</sup>

Clunies Ross refers mainly to the socio-political system in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iceland, although she acknowledges that a number of texts — particularly the poems — were composed prior to the twelfth century and consequently contain information that reflects views from various time periods. Since hierarchical systems with their ruling elites headed by chieftains, kings, or jarls already existed in Viking Age Scandinavia, we can assume that the inequalities inherent in these systems must also have found their expression in the mythological literature of the pre-twelfth century period. Nevertheless, it is equally plausible that the abusive treatment of the giants reflects Viking attitudes towards the enslavement and exploitation of foreigners. The essential notion in both cases is that the victims always belong to the group of ‘them’, which could be a different social class or ethnic group. John McKinnell has defined this dualism which distinguishes between ‘us’ and ‘them’ as ‘one of the basic assumptions of Old Norse myth’.<sup>13</sup> Living beings are either ‘us’ represented by the gods and humans and ‘This World’ or ‘them’ represented by all other creatures that belong to ‘the Other World’, such as monsters, giants, and dwarves. Otherness and enmity do not always coincide, however. Although all enemies of the gods fall into the second category, not all representatives of the Other are hostile, as illustrated by the substantial number of giantesses that have become the gods’ consorts. Accordingly, the category ‘giant’ contains two groups of different size, a smaller one that cooperates with the gods and a larger one that remains hostile. It is the second group that is associated with infertility and chaos and therefore moves closer to the monstrous forces that overcome the gods at Ragnarök.

<sup>12</sup> Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, p. 102.

<sup>13</sup> McKinnell, *Meeting the Other*, p. 4.

Finally, Loki can be considered a special case. As the product of the socially tabued relationship of the giant Farbauti and the goddess Laufey,<sup>14</sup> he is allowed to participate in Æsir culture, but, given his allegiance to his father's kin, remains a quarrelsome and often treacherous figure responsible for much of the gods' discomfort.<sup>15</sup> In fact, his mating with the giantess Angrboða, as described by Snorri in his *Gylfaginning* 'The Tricking of Gylfi', produces even worse offspring than expected: instead of fathering more giant-like hybrids, he is the progenitor of Fenrir, the World Serpent, and Hel.<sup>16</sup> Although Snorri's reference to Angrboða has to be approached with some caution for the very reason that she is only mentioned in the (late) twelfth-century *Völuspá in skamma* 'The Shorter Völuspá', and then only in her role as Fenrir's mother (st. 40),<sup>17</sup> eddic and skaldic kennings confirm the father-child relationship between Loki and all three creatures.<sup>18</sup> In addition, *Völuspá* 'The Seeress's Prophecy' (c. AD 1000) refers to a giantess called the *aldna* 'old one', who *fæddi* 'gave birth' to *Fenris kindir* 'Fenrir's race [WOLVES]' in the very uninviting *Járnviðr* 'Iron Wood' (st. 40). Since one of these monstrous wolves in his *trolls hamr* 'troll-shape' (st. 40) will destroy the sun at Ragnarøk, this special pup must be Fenrir indeed.<sup>19</sup> No tradition concerning the procreation of Loki's other two monstrous children has survived, yet it can be assumed that their mothers' (or mother's) domicile is in the

<sup>14</sup> Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, p. 64. Simek (*Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 186) has tentatively suggested that Laufey 'Leaf Island' may be a tree goddess. She is also called Nál 'Needle' in Snorri's *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, as well as in the late *Sörla þáttr* (Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 227).

<sup>15</sup> For examples, see my discussion of Loki's roles in *Lokasenna* on pp. 52–54.

<sup>16</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Gylfaginning*, ed. by Faulkes, pp. 26–27; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, pp. 26–27.

<sup>17</sup> *Völuspá in skamma*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 294. Simek (*Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 16) regards the name *Angrboða* 'the one who brings grief' as a late word-formation derived from the giantess' function. For a discussion and categorized list of giantesses' names, see Motz, 'Giantesses and their Names', esp. pp. 503 and 504 (nos 6 and 8). *Völuspá in skamma* has been transmitted as part of the thirteenth-century *Hyndluljóð*. For the twelfth-century date of the poem, see Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 367; de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, II, 109.

<sup>18</sup> For example, Hel is *lifra algífs úlfs* 'the sister of the worst demon wolf' (st. 9) in Bragi Boddason's ninth-century *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Loka mæ* 'Loki's maiden' (st. 7) in Þjóðólfr ór Hvini's *Ynglingatal* 'Enumeration of the Ynglingar' (c. 900); Loki is *úlfs faðir* 'wolf's father' (st. 8) in *Haustlong* 'Autumn-long' by the same author as well as in *Lokasenna* (st. 10). The kenning *lögseimsfaðir* 'sea-string's father' (st. 1) for Loki occurs in Eilífr Goðrúnarson's *Þórsdrápa*. See below.

<sup>19</sup> *Völuspá*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 9.

Other World.<sup>20</sup> Loki is thus a truly ambivalent character who represents different degrees of intra-cultural and inter-cultural alterity. While interacting with the members of his maternal kin group, he also mates with a monstrous giantess and produces the very creatures that want to destroy it and with whom he will eventually side. Not only does he cause Baldr's death when he, in woman shape, first tricks Frigg into telling him that the mistletoe can hurt the otherwise invulnerable god and later, in the shape of the giantess Þökk 'Thanks', refuses to weep Baldr out of *hel*,<sup>21</sup> but his charges against the gods in *Lokasenna* finally succeed in causing the breakdown of cosmic order.<sup>22</sup> His imputations are in fact so provocative that they cause the final breach between him and the gods, which leads to his binding and the commencement of Ragnarøk.

Loki, the monstrous forces, and the (frost) giants represent various degrees of alterity to which the gods respond accordingly. As will be illustrated in the following sections, ontological, cultural, and social alterity play a prominent role in the poetic corpus. Not surprisingly, a cultural bias against the various enemies as 'them' can be detected in many poems, yet it is expressed differently

<sup>20</sup> Loki's sons Narfi and Vali are less conspicuous than their monstrous (half) brothers and sister. According to Snorri (*Gylfaginning*, ed. by Faulkes, p. 49; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, p. 52), Narfi is torn to pieces by Vali, whom the Æsir have turned into a wolf so that Loki can be bound with Narfi's entrails, yet it is unclear why the gods resort to such a cruel punishment. The two sons do not take part in any other story, nor does Snorri supply us with any description of their nature or their maternal lineage. Although it is not inconceivable that they are, as Lindow claims, ordinary Æsir engendered in Loki's marriage with the Asynja Sigyn, the identification of Narfi as *brimkaldr* 'rime-cold' in *Lokasenna* (sts 49, 50) points to his origins as a frost giant. In fact, Simek (*Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 228) identifies Narfi as a demon who is somehow related to the giant Nǫrr, father of Night, and places him with Hel among the dead. Simek uses the kenning *jódis Ulfs ok Narfa* 'sister of the wolf and Narfi' (in Þjóðólfr ór Hvini's *Ynglingatal*) as evidence for the association between Narfi and Hel, which, however, may be quite literal. Hel, Fenrir, and Narfi share one father. Lindow, *Murder and Vengeance among the Gods*, p. 55. Sigyn is listed among the Asynjur in Snorri Sturluson's *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 78, 197; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, pp. 59, 157. For a brief discussion of Narfi as *brimkaldr*, see pp. 52–53.

<sup>21</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Gylfaginning*, ed. by Faulkes, pp. 45–48; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, pp. 48–51. Frigg had made all things in the world promise not to hurt Baldr but did not have the heart to coerce the mistletoe. Loki finds out about the exception and attends a gathering where the Æsir throw all kinds of things at the invulnerable Baldr. He gives the blind Höðr the mistletoe, and when the blind Höðr shoots his missile, Baldr is mortally wounded and goes to *hel*. In response to her loss, Frigg requests Hermóðr to ride to *hel* and beg the goddess Hel to release Baldr. Hel complies with the condition that all created things in the world weep for Baldr; Þökk, however, does not weep, thus making Baldr's return from *Hel* impossible.

<sup>22</sup> Meulengracht Sørensen, 'Loki's *senna* in Ægir's Hall'; McKinnell, 'Motivation in *Lokasenna*'.

in the two types of poetry. Whereas the skalds worked with complex metaphorical (and metonymic) kennings in their depiction of the struggle between the gods and their foes, mythological eddic poetry presents this struggle less forcefully with relatively few kennings and in a narrative context. Still, some metaphors used for the gods' enemies in the skaldic poems recur in the eddic poetry and hence point to conceptualizations of cultural and social alterity that transcend a particular poetic genre, and that may indeed be deeply rooted in the socio-cultural history of early Scandinavia.

### Skaldic Poems

As already mentioned, the cultural perspective presented in the mythological poems is that of social groups that need to confirm their superiority, both inside and outside Viking Age Scandinavia. In the few extant mythological skaldic poems that have survived as part of Snorri's *Prose Edda*, it is accordingly a common practice to highlight the cultural non-conformity of the gods' enemies, the giants, by marginalizing them as existentially inferior, culturally deprived, and anti-social.<sup>23</sup> The (frost) giants live in a cold, barren landscape outside the gods' domain, to which most of them have no access. Their cultural and social alterity is frequently conceptualized by means of kennings that situate them in an infertile terrain, such as metonymic kennings of the 'inhabitant/ruler of the rock/mountain/cliff' type or the metaphorical variants '(name of) god/human being of the rock/mountain/cliff' and 'animal of the rock/mountain/cliff'.<sup>24</sup> In all three cases, we find a preoccupation with unfavourable natural conditions, which indeed must have posed a major challenge to the Scandinavians in Norway and Iceland. Yet not all giants are equal even in the skaldic poetry. Depending on their role in the individual poems, their intercultural alterity vacillates from moderate to more radical forms that are primarily defined through interacting culture-specific metaphors and metonyms.

<sup>23</sup> Schulz points out: 'Beide Aspekte [i.e. the giants' membership of another population and their association with the uncultured wilderness] fügen sich auffällig in zwei Oppositionspaare, die in der strukturalistischen Forschung "Karriere" gemacht haben als anthropologische Grundopposition: Ein Clan-orientiertes *Wir* vs *die Anderen* und der Gegensatz *das Soziale* vs *das Wilde*' (p. 134; Schulz's italics).

<sup>24</sup> Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden*, pp. 256–59.

## *Húsdrápa*

Radical alterity plays a significant role in Úlfr Uggason's description of Þórr's fishing expedition in *Húsdrápa* 'House Lay' (tenth century), which the poet apparently saw carved on the woodwork in the main hall of the Icelandic chieftain Óláfr pái 'Peacock' (fl. tenth century).<sup>25</sup> The story of the god rowing out to sea with a giant helper in order to confront the World Serpent also occurs in *Hymiskviða*, in Bragi Boddason's ninth-century *Ragnarsdrápa*,<sup>26</sup> and in three skaldic fragments,<sup>27</sup> but only Úlfr's version ends with the god dealing blows to the giant and decapitating the Serpent.<sup>28</sup> Úlfr does not give any reasons for the god's aggressive behaviour towards the giant. It is certainly possible that the giant tried to help the Serpent and is punished for it — in *Ragnarsdrápa*, the

<sup>25</sup> The presence of carvings depicting legends in the wainscoting and roof of Óláfr's hall at Hjarðarholt and Úlfr's description of these legends are mentioned in the thirteenth-century *Laxdæla saga*, chapter 29. According to the saga author, Úlfr recited his poem at the wedding feast of Óláfr's daughter Þurid and her suitor Geirmundur: 'Þar var at boði Úlfr Uggason ok hafði ort kvæði um Ólaf Høskuldsson ok um sögur þær, er skrifðar váru á eldhúsinu, ok færði hann þar at boðinu. Þetta kvæði er kallat Húsdrápa ok er vel ort' (One of the guests at the feast was Úlfr Uggason, who composed a poem about Olaf Hoskuldson and the carved legends depicted in the hall, and this poem he recited at the feast; it is called the 'House Lay', and is an excellent poem). The citation of the original text is from *Laxdæla saga*, ed. by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, p. 80. Translation by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, p. 112. The poem has only survived in the form of disjointed stanzas in Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál*, of which four stanzas refer to Þórr's fishing expedition, six stanzas to Baldr's funeral, and one stanza to a fight between Loki and Heimdallr possibly for the Brisingamen, a piece of jewellery belonging to Freyja.

<sup>26</sup> It is assumed that the episode was painted on a shield that Bragi received from the legendary ninth-century Viking leader Ragnarr loðbrók 'Shaggy Breeches'. In return, Bragi composed a six-stanza poem on the mythological event. Since only Snorri mentions Bragi as the composer of these stanzas, however, their allocation to *Ragnarsdrápa* cannot be proven. Furthermore, the fully developed kenning formation and the occurrence of loan verbs have made some scholars contest the genuineness of the poem. See, for example, Marold, 'Ragnarsdrápa und Ragnarssage'.

<sup>27</sup> Although parts of the episode have also survived in the fragments by Ólfr hnúfa '? Snub Nose' (ninth century), Gamli gnævaðarskáld '? the Outstanding Skald' (tenth century) and Eysteinn Valdason (c. 1000), these fragments do not contain any references to the giant in their present form. For a detailed discussion of the pictorial representations of the episode and their relation with the written accounts, see Meulengracht Sørensen, 'Thor's Fishing Expedition'.

<sup>28</sup> A lacuna in the text prevents any conclusions about the giant's actions in *Hymiskviða*. Þórr deals the Serpent a blow and eventually the latter sinks back into the sea. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether the giant, here identified as Hymir, is involved — he survives the conflict only to be killed by Þórr later — and whether the Serpent is dead or alive. For a short discussion of Hymir, see pp. 50–51.

giant cuts Þórr's fishing line with the Serpent dangling from it and hence allows the latter to escape — or he may merely have been the victim of Þórr's general dislike of the giant race. In either case, Úlfr differentiates between Serpent and giant. The former embodies a form of alterity that threatens the very existence of the gods and therefore needs to be annihilated:

Innmáni skein ennis  
 ǫndóttvínar banda;  
 ǫss skaut ægigeislum  
 orðsæll á men storðar.

En stirðþinull starði  
 storðar leggs fyr borði  
 fróns á folka reyni  
 fránleitr ok blés eitri. (sts 4 and 5)<sup>29</sup>

(The forehead-moon [EYE] of the friend of the gods/binding powers shone fierily; the well-reputed Áss shot terrible rays at the earth-necklace [WORLD SERPENT].

And the rigid net-rope of the earth [WORLD SERPENT] stared with a gleaming look at the tester of the people of the land-bone [GIANTS > ÞÓRR] over the ship's side and blew poison.)

Úlfr uses various metaphors for his transformation of the hostile encounter between the god and his stiff, poison-spewing foe into a conflict of cosmic dimensions. To begin with, the monster reacts to the fiery light shining from Þórr's *innmáni ennis* 'forehead-moon' with an equally fiery but motionless stare and a blast of poison. Clearly both antagonists are destructive, yet there is a difference. The god's aggressiveness is sanctioned with the conceptualization of the god's eye as a heavenly body that, according to *Völuspá*, is responsible with the sun for the beginning of time and that will be extinguished only at Ragnarök.<sup>30</sup> To put it differently, Þórr is associated with cosmic order, and when

<sup>29</sup> Úlfr Uggason, *Húsdrápa*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 128–29. The translations of the skaldic mythological poetry are my own unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>30</sup> In *Völuspá*, stanza 5, the sun is called *sinni mána* 'moon's companion'. The destruction of the moon at Ragnarök is not explicitly mentioned in the poem but can be deduced from the fact that the sun turns black and the stars fall from the firmament at this last stage of the world's existence (st. 57). *Völuspá*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, pp. 2, 13. Snorri Sturluson's *Gylfaginning* (ed. by Faulkes, p. 14; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, p. 15) mentions that the moon will be caught by a wolf called Hati Hróðvitnisson (? Fenrir).



he ‘shoots’ his rays (via WHOLE FOR A PART metonymy) at his opponent, he does so in order to defend this order. The World Serpent, on the other hand, is by metaphorical extension a force of destruction that needs to be combated, a function that is also suggested by its identification as *men storðar* ‘earth-necklace’. As I indicated in the previous chapter, the concept of the band, here in the form of a necklace, defines the Serpent’s form and rigidity, and, as encircler of the world, its role of an acute menace to its inhabitants and their well-being.<sup>31</sup>

Unlike the Serpent, the giant has an ambiguous role in the episode. According to Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, he stands in between the gods and the monsters, thus taking a mediating position in the myth. This is particularly evident in *Gylfaginning*, where Hymir aids Þórr by rowing out to sea with him, but acts against the god once the World Serpent appears.<sup>32</sup> In *Húsdrápa*, the unnamed giant helper also becomes the victim of the god’s rage, though with the important qualification that Úlfr relativizes the giant’s alterity:

Fullqflugr lét fellir  
fjall-Gauts hnefa skjalla  
(ramt mein vas þat) reyni  
reyrar leggs við eyra;  
Viðgymnir laust Vimrar  
vað[s] af frónum naðri  
hlusta grunn við hrønnum.  
Hlaut innan svá minnum. (st. 6)<sup>33</sup>

(And the very powerful killer of the rock-Gautr [GIANT > ÞÓRR] had his fist clash against the ear of the rowan tree of the reed-bone [ROCK; GIANT = Hymir]; a mighty hurt was that; the Viðgymnir of Vimur’s ford [ÞÓRR] struck the ears’ ground [HEAD] from the gleaming serpent against the waves. Thus it was allotted to me within [= in my memory].)

<sup>31</sup> Bragi (*Ragnarsdrápa*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 4) also refers to the rigidity of the World Serpent in his version of the episode: ‘Ok borðróins barða | brautar þvengr enn ljóti | á haus-sprengi Hrunnis | harðgeðr neðan starði’ (And the ugly and hard-minded thong of the path of the ship with oars on the sides [sea > serpent] stared from beneath at the breaker of Hrunnir’s skull [Þórr]). The motionless and hard-minded Serpent merely stares at the god, who is identified by one of his violent activities, namely the breaking of Hrunnir’s skull. For a list of ‘band’-kennings for the Serpent, see Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden*, pp. 114–16.

<sup>32</sup> Meulengracht Sørensen, ‘Thor’s Fishing Expedition’, pp. 267–68.

<sup>33</sup> Úlfr Uggason, *Húsdrápa*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 129.



The roles of god and giant seem clear. The Þórr-kenning *fall-Gauts fellir* ‘killer of the rock-Gautr’ presents the god as the traditional antagonist of all giants, and this particular giant forms no exception. The giant-kenning is certainly conventional enough in its delineation of the giant’s hybrid role. On the one hand, it identifies him as a god or as the member of an ethnic group (GIANTS ARE GODS or GIANTS ARE HUMANS), depending on whether Gautr is one of Óðinn’s many names or the name of the member of the Swedish Gautar. The metonymic determinant, on the other hand, expresses the giant’s otherness as inhabitant of an uncultivated and sterile habitat and his possible affinities with the forces of chaos, here represented by the World Serpent. The question is which of the two aspects dominate in the context of the poem. Úlfr uses only two other expressions for the giant, *reyrar leggs reynir* ‘rowan-tree of the reed-bone’ and, in stanza 2, *þjokkvaxinn þiklingr* ‘thick-set stout one’.<sup>34</sup> In fact, while the metonymic phrase merely describes the giant’s bulky form, *reyrar leggs reynir* moves him closer to Þórr. Tree names are very common metaphorical base words in man-kennings, but Úlfr may have selected the *reynir* ‘rowan-tree’ in particular, the very tree that saves Þórr from being washed away by the swelling river Vimur in *Þórsdrápa* (note the Þórr-kenning *Vimrar vaðs Viðgymnir* ‘the Viðgymnir of Vimur’s ford’).<sup>35</sup> Even the choice of the word *reynir* for god and giant — albeit with the different meanings ‘tester’ and ‘rowan tree’ — does not seem to be coincidental. In spite of Þórr’s antagonism, god and giant are not that different when they face the awful encircler together: they are both literally and metaphorically ‘in the same boat’.

### *Haustlǫng*

A different conceptualization of the gods’ giant enemies occurs in Þjóðólfr ór Hvini’s ‘from Hvinir’s’ late ninth-century *Haustlǫng* ‘Autumn-long’. The poem consists of the descriptions of two mythological scenes depicted on a magnificent shield that Þjóðólfr allegedly received from his patron Þorleifr inn spaki ‘the Wise’.<sup>36</sup> Both scenes feature giants that, though not belong-

<sup>34</sup> This stanza is attributed to Úlfr only in the Uppsala Edda (U). The other manuscripts assign the stanza to Bragi. See Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 96.

<sup>35</sup> *Þórsdrápa* is discussed on pp. 47–49.

<sup>36</sup> The suggestion that Þjóðólfr composed *Haustlǫng* for Þorleifr inn spaki is made by Richard North in the introduction to his edition of the poem (*The ‘Haustlǫng’*, p. xxxii). The title of the poem may be a reference to the time that Þjóðólfr took for his composition. The two episodes are only known from Snorri’s *Edda*.

ing to the class of monsters and demons, pose a categorical threat to the gods' vitality. In the so-called Hrungrnir episode, Þórr invades Giantland and kills the giant Hrungrnir apparently without the latter's provocation. Snorri explains Þórr's deed with the giant's previous immodest behaviour at the Æsir's court,<sup>37</sup> but whether Snorri had a source for his story or invented this explanation to supply such provocation cannot be established with any confidence. Given the god's innate hostility towards the giants, the poem itself certainly does not require Snorri's prelude. Þjóðólfr merely follows the tradition of Þórr as giant slayer *par excellence*: Þórr is the *jǫtna ótti* 'giants' dread' (st. 14), *Belja bolverðungar fjǫrspillir* 'life-spoiler of Beli's bale body guard', and *berg-Dana brjótr* 'breaker of the mountain-Danes' (st. 18).<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, as kinsman of Meili, Ullr, Baldr, and Óðinn (sts 14, 15, 16, 19), the god seems to kill the giant on behalf of the Æsir.<sup>39</sup> Hrungrnir, on the other hand, represents a moderate but nonetheless unacceptable form of cultural alterity, which may at first glance be not that different from the giant helper's in *Húsdrápa* in his function as *bjarga getir* 'mountain-guardian', *braundrengr* 'gallant man of the lava field' (st. 17), and *grundar gilja gramr* 'prince of the ravines of the earth' (st. 18).<sup>40</sup> He is conceptualized as a ruler in the human world, although he inevitably holds his prestigious position only in an infertile, culturally impoverished space. At the same time, however, Þjóðólfr introduces a cosmic dimension that moves Hrungrnir towards radical alterity. Not only do god and giant belong to two culturally incompatible groups — Hrungrnir fights with a primitive whetstone while Þórr throws his hammer which was produced by skilled

<sup>37</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 100–04; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, pp. 77–78.

<sup>38</sup> *The 'Haustlǫng'*, ed. and trans. by North, pp. 8, 10 (text), pp. 9, 11 (translation). My line division. The translation is mainly based on North's interpretation of the stanzas. In addition, the following translations of the poem have been consulted: *Snorri Sturluson: Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, pp. 80–81 (Hrungrnir episode) and pp. 86–88 (Þjazi episode), and *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 14–18. North uses Kock's emendation of MSS *berg-Dana* to *berg-Egða* in stanza 18 (p. 10 [text], p. 81 [commentary]). However, since *berg-Egða* is not attested in any of the manuscripts, I have followed the usual practice of retaining the manuscript reading.

<sup>39</sup> *The 'Haustlǫng'*, ed. and trans. by North, pp. 8, 10 (text), pp. 9, 11 (translation).

<sup>40</sup> The kennings *myrkbeins Haka reinar vogna vátrr* 'witness for the whales of the darkbone of Haki's land' [SEA > ROCK > GIANTS > HRUNGRNIR] in stanza 16 and *ólágra gjalfra fjalfis bolmr* 'bear of refuge of the high swelling waves' [CAVE > HRUNGRNIR] in stanza 18 deviate from this practice as they incorporate allusions to the sea. Since their ultimate meaning is 'rock' and 'cave' respectively, these allusions may be nothing more than a reflection of the skald's playfulness.

dwarves — but they also represent two opposite cosmic forces as suggested by the kenning choice in the first two stanzas of the episode (sts 14 and 15):

Eðr of sér es jǫtna  
ótti lét of sóttan  
hellis bǫr á hyrjar  
haugs<sup>41</sup> grjó[t]úna, baugi;  
ók at ísarnleiki  
Jarðar sunr, en dunði  
(móðr svall Meila blóða)  
Mána vegr und hǫnum.

Knóttu ǫll (en Ullar  
endilóg fyr mági  
grund vas grápi hrundin)  
ginnunga vé brinna,  
þás hofregin<sup>42</sup> hafrær  
hógreiðar fram drógu  
(seðr gekk Svǫlnis ekkja  
sundr) at Hrungnis fundi.<sup>43</sup>

(One can still see on the ring of fire [SHIELD] where giants' dread [ÞÓRR] paid the cavern-tree of the grave-mound of stone enclosures [GIANT] a visit; Earth's son [ÞÓRR] drove to the play of iron, and Moon's path [SKY] resounded beneath him. The passion of Meili's brother [ÞÓRR] swelled.

All the sanctuaries of hawks [SKIES] did burn, while the ground down below was kicked with hail on account of Ullr's kinsman [ÞÓRR], when the goats drew the temple-deity of the easy(-riding) chariot [ÞÓRR] forward to the encounter with Hrungnir. Then Svǫlnir's widow [EARTH] split asunder.)

Þórr is *Jarðar sunr* 'Earth's son' (st. 14), the sky, as *mána vegr* 'the moon's path', resounds beneath his passionate advance (st. 14) and burns (st. 15), the ground is beaten with hail, and *Svǫlnis ekkja* 'Svǫlnir's widow' splits apart (st. 15). Amidst all this cosmic turmoil caused by the god, Hrungnir, the *hellis bǫr haugs grjó[t]úna* 'cavern-tree of the grave-mound of the stone enclo-

<sup>41</sup> Reading taken from *W* (AM 242 fols, p. 56). *R* (GKS 2367 4<sup>to</sup>, fol. 23<sup>v</sup>) reads *haug* (used by Finnur Jónsson in *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, B 1, p. 17).

<sup>42</sup> Finnur Jónsson (*Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, B 1, p. 17) emends to *hafreginn*, but all manuscripts read *hofreginn*.

<sup>43</sup> *The 'Haustlong'*, ed. and trans. by North, p. 8 (text), p. 9 (translation).

sure', stands motionless on the hail-covered ground.<sup>44</sup> In fact, this last, metaphorical kenning incorporates the most important aspect of the conflict. Although *bǫrr* 'tree' — just like the kenning bases of *bjarga gætir*, *braundrengr*, and *grundar gilja gramr* — ties Hrungrnir to the human world,<sup>45</sup> the determinant both identifies the giant's sterile habitat and highlights its cosmic implications. The rigid Hrungrnir is conceptualized in proximity to a *haugr*, i.e. a mound or, more specifically, a grave mound. In the second case, the metonymic entailments 'stasis' and 'death' map onto the giant, regardless of whether his function is that of a frequenter, guardian, or inhabitant of this mound. Þórr's vitality is consequently pitched against a force which threatens the cycle of growth and reproduction for his group, and which has to be eliminated.

In the Hrungrnir episode, Þjóðólfr makes use of metonymy and metaphor to stress Hrungrnir's role as a threat to fertility and regeneration embodied by the gods. The other part of the poem focuses on the same threat which, however, now emanates from the giant Þjazi. In the episode, Þjazi assumes the shape of an eagle and, in this form, steals four parts of an ox that Óðinn, Hœnir, and Loki were just about to eat. Loki becomes angry and pokes with a pole at the giant, but the eagle flies away with the pole sticking to his body and Loki hanging from it. In order to get out of such a painful situation, Loki is forced by the giant to bring him the goddess Iðunn, whose *ellilyf* 'old-age medicine' (st. 9) ensures the gods' immortality.<sup>46</sup> To put it differently, Þjazi endangers the god's existence even from his residence in Giantland, although in this case he digs his own grave. Loki adopts Freyja's falcon shape,<sup>47</sup> retrieves Iðunn, and lures the giant in his eagle shape back into the gods' domain (Ásgarðr), where the latter await him and set fire to his feathers. In this second episode, too, Þjóðólfr uses traditional giant-kennings to emphasize the giant's alterity. Already in stanza 2, Þjazi is called *ár-Gefnar byrgi-Týr bjarga*, which can be rendered either as

<sup>44</sup> In *Kenningkunst*, pp. 168–69, Edith Marold prefers the collocation *hellis bǫr haugs Grjóttúna* 'baur of the cavern of the hill of Grjóttún' (*hyrjar baugi* 'ring of fire'), while North discerns the kenning *hellis bǫrhyrjar haugs grjót[t]úna* 'cavern-tree of the fire of the grave-mound of stone-enclosures' ('Commentary', in *The 'Haustlǫng'*, pp. 59–61). Although both interpretations suggest an association of Hrungrnir with rocks and infertility, Marold's rendering favours the more general sense of *haugr* 'hill'.

<sup>45</sup> For the identification of W *baur* and R *biaur* with acc. *bǫr* 'tree', see *The 'Haustlǫng'*, ed. and trans. by North, p. 59.

<sup>46</sup> *The 'Haustlǫng'*, ed. and trans. by North, p. 6 (text), p. 7 (translation).

<sup>47</sup> This detail is given by Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 80; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, p. 60.

‘Týr of rocks that would imprison the harvest-Gefn’ (Marold) or as ‘Týr that would imprison the harvest-Gefn in rocks’ (North).<sup>48</sup> In both cases, the base of this complex kenning connects the giant with a god, which is certainly not unusual, only that this god is called *byrgi-týr*. The base word could of course be a generic term meaning ‘god’ (*tívar* ‘gods’), yet an allusion to the brave god who loses his hand in the gods’ attempt to bind the Fenriswolf would provide the stanza with an ironic twist. According to Snorri, Týr put his hand as pledge into the mouth of the Fenriswolf so that the Æsir could put the magical unbreakable fetter Gleipnir on the monster.<sup>49</sup> A conceptual blend is hence created in which god and giant are not only linked by their common ancestry but also contrasted in terms of their behaviour. Unlike Týr’s act which protects the physical (and social) well-being of his community, Þjazi’s theft sets their aging process into motion, here conceptualized as the imprisonment of the *ár-Gefn* (ABSTRACT CONCEPTS ARE PEOPLE; EVENTS ARE ACTIONS). The identification of Iðunn with Gefn, most probably another name for Freyja if we believe Snorri,<sup>50</sup> stresses the general nature of the threat which incorporates all aspects of fertility and regeneration. Þjóðólfr once again plays with the association of a giant with a sterile habitat in order to stress the cosmic ramifications of the giant’s theft which, if successful, will lead to the gods’ physical deterioration and eventual death.<sup>51</sup>

The contrast between fertility and decay/death is reinforced in two other striking metaphorical kennings for goddess and giant in the second *helmingr* of stanza 9:

Sér það sagna hræri  
sorgæra[n] mey færa,  
þás ellilyf ása,  
átrunnr Hymis, kunni;  
brunnakrs of kom bekkjar  
Brísings goða dísi  
girðipjófr í garða  
grjót-Niðaðar síðan.

<sup>48</sup> Marold, *Kenningkunst*, p. 154; *The ‘Haustlög’*, ed. and trans. by North, p. 2 (text), p. 3 (translation), p. 19 (commentary).

<sup>49</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Gylfaginning*, ed. by Faulkes, p. 25; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, pp. 27–28.

<sup>50</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Gylfaginning*, ed. by Faulkes, p. 29; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, p. 30; Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 126; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, p. 86.

<sup>51</sup> Another kenning quite similar to *ár-Gefnar byrgi-Týr bjarga is herfangs djúphugaðr hirði-Týr* ‘deep-thinking Týr that was protecting the war-booty’ for Loki in stanza 6.

(The family-branch of Hymir [GIANT = ÞJAZI] ordered the rouser of tales, (who was) mad with pain [LOKI], to bring him the girl who knew the old-age medicine of the Æsir [IDUNN]; the thief of the Brising-girdle [LOKI] later brought the gods' *dís* of the brook of the (well-) spring's cornfield [EDDY-WAVE = *iðu + unnr*] to rock-Níðuðr's [GIANT = ÞJAZI's] dwelling.<sup>52</sup>)

Following North's interpretation of *bekkjar brunna* 'brook of the well-spring's cornfield' [EDDY-WAVE], Idunn is the gods' lady (*góða dís*) associated with water and fertile land (*akr*).<sup>53</sup> Thus, when she is brought to the *grjót-Níðuðr* 'rock-Níðuðr', disaster looms. But Þjazi also poses a cultural threat. Þjóðólfr not only reminds us of Þjazi's biological and cultural heritage with six metonymic kennings — *áttrunnr Hymis* 'family-branch of Hymir' (i.e. member of Hymir's family) is one of them — but he also depicts him as an anti-social force that needs to be kept outside the Æsir's cultural boundaries. Þjazi is identified as Níðuðr, the legendary king who, according to the eddic poem *Völundarkviða*, captured the elvish smith Völundr, hamstrung him, and forced him to make artefacts.<sup>54</sup> Hence the metaphor seems to provide some information about Þjazi's motivation for the theft of the goddess: Níðuðr's greed is mapped onto the giant even though the objects of their greed are different. It is even arguable that a more complex metaphorical blend with additional correspondences is formed, given that both king and giant display cowardly behaviour, overreach, and are punished for their actions. Níðuðr overpowers Völundr in his sleep and assumes that he can keep the smith in his service once hamstrung; Þjazi makes Loki angry, traps him without much risk to himself (he is already in the air at this point), and finally coerces his victim into delivering the goddess with the idea that he will be able to keep her. And just as Níðuðr is conned by the smith, who kills his sons, rapes his daughter, and finally escapes, Þjazi is finally tricked into pursuing Loki with the fatal consequences mentioned above.

Throughout the episode, Þjazi's aggressive and immoderate behaviour threatens the existence of the gods and their culture, and it is no coin-

<sup>52</sup> *The 'Haustlong'*, ed. and trans. by North, p. 6 (text), p. 7 (translation).

<sup>53</sup> In his commentary on the stanza (pp. 42–43), North regards 'eddy-wave' (*ið[u]-unnr*) as a pun on the name 'Idunn'. Other interpretations have been suggested, but the more plausible ones, like Finnur Jónsson's 'goddess of the bank of Brunnakkr' (*Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, B 1, p. 16; Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, p. 41) or Marold's 'Dís der Götter (= Göttin) der Bäche von Quellenacker' (*Kenningkunst*, pp. 163–65) also associate Idunn with water and fertility. For a discussion of more interpretations, see Marold, *Kenningkunst*, pp. 163–65.

<sup>54</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 99–100, 119–21.

cidence that the giant is called a wolf three times in the poem: *snótar úlfr* ‘wolf of the gentlewoman’ (st. 2), *fjallgylðir* ‘wolf of the fells’ (st. 4), and *bræva brynseva hundr ǫl-Gefnar* ‘hound of the roaring seas of corpses [BLOOD > WOLF] of the nourishing Gefn [IDUNN]’ (st. 11).<sup>55</sup> It was already briefly mentioned that the depiction of giants as animals is rather common in skaldic poetry.<sup>56</sup> If the giants are akin with the gods, their assumedly primitive nature would also associate them with the animal world. Yet some animals are chosen more carefully than others. In the Hrungnir part of *Haustlong*, for example, the kennings *myrkbeins Haka reinar vagnir* ‘whales of the darkbone of Haki’s land [SEA > ROCK > GIANTS]’ (st. 16) and *ólágra gjalfra fjalfs bolmr* ‘bear of the hide-out of high swells [CAVE > HRUNGNIIR]’ (st. 18) allude to the massive form of the giants.<sup>57</sup> In the Þjazi-part the two giant-kennings most likely highlight the giant’s role as a predator in the poem and, given the association of wolves with criminals and outlaws in early Scandinavia, social outcast.<sup>58</sup> Old Norse *vargr* means both ‘wolf’ and ‘criminal’, meanings that appear to derive from the conceptual metaphor CRIMINALS ARE WOLVES (< PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS). Criminals attain wolf attributes, such as the wolf’s predatory and destructive behaviour and, in the special case of the outlaw, its frequenting of remote regions outside human communities.<sup>59</sup> In the Icelandic *Grágás* ‘Grey

<sup>55</sup> *The ‘Haustlong’*, ed. and trans. by North, pp. 2, 4, 6 (text), pp. 3, 5, 7 (translation). The referent of *bræva brynseva hundr ǫl-Gefnar* could be Þjazi or Loki. North (‘Commentary’, in *The ‘Haustlong’*, p. 46) remarks that the combination of ‘wolf’ with ‘lady’ is so rare that two different referents for this kenning and *snótar úlfr* are not likely. Other scholars including Marold (*Kenningkunst*, p. 199) and Krömmelbein (*Skaldische Metaphorik*, pp. 99–100, 109–13) have preferred Loki. In the poem, Þjazi is the predator and the conceptualization of Loki as *bræva brynseva hundr ǫl-Gefnar* would be curious indeed if Loki’s recapture of the goddess were seen in similar terms.

<sup>56</sup> See p. 35.

<sup>57</sup> *The ‘Haustlong’*, ed. and trans. by North, pp. 8, 10 (text), pp. 9, 11 (translation). See p. 40 n. 40.

<sup>58</sup> Wolf imagery occurs in Old Norse, Old English, and early Irish poetry and will be discussed in detail accordingly throughout this study. As will be illustrated in Chapters 3 and 4, the MAN IS A WOLF metaphor does not necessarily have negative connotations, since it also expresses male ferocity. Such positive use, however, is suspiciously absent in Old Norse mythological verse.

<sup>59</sup> Extensive wolf imagery based on the metaphor OUTLAWS ARE WOLVES can be found in a *lausavísa* ‘separate verse’ assumedly uttered by Hildir Hrólfssdóttir nefju. In the stanza, Hildir refers to her son as *gandr* ‘wolf’, who has been outlawed by Haraldr hárfagri ‘Fair Hair’ and then adds: ‘Illts við ulf ar ylfask | Yggs valbríkar slíkan; | muna við hilmis hjarðir | hœgr, ef renn til skó-



Goose' (a collection of laws of the Icelandic Commonwealth), full outlawry is called *skóggangr* 'lit. forest going' which points to the convicted person's loss of all communal ties and a wolf-like existence.<sup>60</sup> A full outlaw was not to be aided in any matter, had a price on his head, and could be killed, like a wolf, with impunity, while his son, called a *vargdropi* 'wolf-dropping' in another section of *Grágás*,<sup>61</sup> had no claim to any inheritance. Þjazi is not in a better situation. Excluded from the gods' society, Þjazi has no access to Iðunn's anti-aging product and therefore tries to attain it by force.

As expected, Loki has an ambiguous role in this struggle between gods and giants. At first glance, he can only be accused of acting rashly, which brings the gods into a difficult situation. Loki is still on the gods' side, especially since he is called *Hænis vinr* 'Hœnir's friend' (st. 3, 7), *brafnásar vinr* 'raven god's [ÓÐINN'S] friend' (st. 4), and *Þórs ofrúni* 'Þórr's confidant' (st. 8). But Loki is also *Farbauta mōgr* 'Farbauti's boy' (st. 5) and the *úlfs faðir* 'wolf's father' (st. 8), descriptions that highlight Loki's alterity and remind us that he will eventually join the gods' enemies. The metaphorical Loki-kenning *herfangs djúphugaðr hirði-Týr* 'deep-counselled Týr who was watching over the war-booty' (st. 6) is equally ambiguous.<sup>62</sup> As mentioned above, the base word is also used for Þjazi, but the details are different. The very fact that this Týr is credited with deep thought and a protective role right before he pokes impulsively with the pole at the giant and, as a consequence, endangers the gods' vitality suggests a context-dependent, ironic use of this kenning. Such

gar' (It is dangerous to threaten such a wolfish enemy of the Yggr (= Óðinn) of the slain-plank [SHIELD > WARRIOR = Haraldr]; he will not be gentle with the ruler's herds if he runs to the forest). Hildr Hrólfsdóttir nefju, *Lausavísa*, ed. and trans. by Gade, p. 139. Gade's translation.

<sup>60</sup> In the corpus, a distinction is made between *skóggangr* and *fjörbaugsmaðr* 'lesser outlawry'. Lesser outlawry involved the payment of a fine, the forfeiture of property, and a three-year banishment from Iceland. In the West Norwegian Gulathing Law and Frostathing Law, outlawry is called *útleð*. For the Icelandic legal corpus, see *Grágás*, ed. by Vilhjalmur Finsen; translation by Dennis and others, *Laws of Early Iceland*. For definitions of *skóggangr* and *fjörbaugsmaðr*, see *Laws of Early Iceland*, ed. and trans. by Dennis, Foote, and Perkins, I, 246, 250. For the Gulathing Law and Frostathing Law, see the first volume of *Norges gamle love*, ed. by Keyser and others; translation by Larson, *The Earliest Norwegian Laws*.

<sup>61</sup> The term *vargdropi* occurs in *Konungsbók* in the inheritance section (*arfa þáttir*), § 118 (*Grágás*, ed. by Vilhjalmur Finsen, I, 224; *Laws of Early Iceland*, ed. and trans. by Dennis, Foote, and Perkins, II, 7). For a discussion of the second attestation of *vargdropi* in the eddic *Sigrdrífumál* 'The Lay of Sigrdrífa', see Chapter 3, pp. 104–05.

<sup>62</sup> *The 'Haustlǫng'*, ed. and trans. by North, pp. 2, 4 (text), pp. 3, 5 (translation). For a detailed discussion of the Loki-kennings, see Krömmelbein, *Skaldische Metaphorik*, pp. 109–12.



use, however, does not invalidate the possibility that the shared metaphor, like *Farbauta mǫgr*, was intended to reinforce the cultural affiliations between Loki and Þjazi, since both of them are outcasts who threaten the gods' physical and cultural well-being either in the present (Þjazi) or in the future (Loki).

### *Þórdrápa*

Úlfr and Þjóðólfr composed their poems for a wealthy patron in the late heathen period. Both skalds transformed pictorial representations of various myths into poetic form, and both most likely did so in order to confirm the interests of the powerful social elite to which they and their patrons belonged.<sup>63</sup> Depictions of the Æsir defeating the physically and culturally inferior giants must have been more than welcome. Even Þórr's preoccupation with the World Serpent in *Húsdrápa* does not pay off for the giant: Þórr kills him anyway. The patrons could certainly approve of a view that categorically rejected all forces posing a potential threat to the status, integrity, and preservation of their own privileged group, and it is only natural that the two skalds, who belonged to the same class, would have promoted such a view.

Roberta Frank and Edith Marold have discerned similar political motives behind Eilífr Goðrúnarson's *Þórdrápa*, which narrates Þórr and Þjalfi's expedition to the courts of the giant smith Geirrøðr and the god's subsequent killing of the host, his two daughters, and the giant population around them.<sup>64</sup> Eilífr's poem was to praise Hákon jarl Sigurðarson (r. c. 970–c. 995) and legitimize his activities against the sons of Eiríkr blóðøx 'Blood Axe' and their allies in the British Isles. As Frank points out:

The skald probably intended his audience to recognize in Thor's incessant hammering upon his giant opponents a figure for Hákon's own sexual and disciplinary instincts; and in the god's weapon a symbol of the benefits — fertility, order, treasure, growth, redemption — accruing to those supporting Hákon's standard. The poet's kennings transfer the pattern of conquest from a divine setting to a historical one, a humanization of myth and a confirmation of legitimacy at the same time. What happened once can happen again: Hákon's overcoming of Hordalanders (11), Swedes and Danes (12), and Rogalanders (20) is in consonance with the cosmos.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> See pp. 36, 39.

<sup>64</sup> Frank, 'Hand Tools and Power Tools', pp. 101–03; Marold, 'Skaldendichtung und Mythologie'.

<sup>65</sup> Frank, 'Hand Tools and Power Tools', p. 102.

If myth and socio-political reality are skilfully combined in Eilífr's difficult poem, this combination is created predominantly by metaphor. Marold illustrates in considerable detail how Eilífr creates a complex analogy between the two domains, which makes Hákon appear as the powerful god and his enemies as the giants.<sup>66</sup> On the one hand, the names of the jarl's foes inside and outside Norway constitute the base words of a considerable number of giant-kennings, namely *barða Hørðar* 'slope-Hordalanders' (st. 11), *val-látr Lista Rygir* 'Rogalanders of Falcon-lair Lister' (st. 20), *kolgu-Svíþjóðar dolgferð* 'hostile crowd of frost-Sweden' (st. 12), *flóðsrífs útvés Danir* 'Danes of the distant sanctuary flood-rib' (st. 12), as well as *Gandvikr Skotar* 'White-Sea Scots' (st. 2), *[skútar] skyld-Bretar* 'related rock-cave Britons' (st. 11), *hellis hringbalkar Kumrar* 'Cumbrians of the rock-cave's circular wall' (st. 13), and *öld steins Ellu* 'people of Stone Ella' (= England; st. 20).<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, the metaphorical and metonymic warrior-kennings *herþrumu Gautr* 'Gaut of the war-thunder' (Þórr; st. 1),<sup>68</sup> *sagna sviptir* 'leader of the company' (Þórr; st. 2), *ýta sinni* 'support of men' (Þórr; st. 9), and *gunnar hraðskyndir* 'swift speeder of battle' (Þórr; st. 17), as well as the complex *eiðsvara Gauta setrs víkingar snotrir gunnar* 'battle-wise Vikings of Gautr's oath-bound seat [ÁSGARÐR > ÞÓRR AND ÞJALFI]' (st. 8), are most likely references to Hákon and his followers.<sup>69</sup> Seen from a cognitive perspective, the audience witnesses two separate conflicts, namely the historical conflict (input 1) and the mythological encounter (input 2), which at the same

<sup>66</sup> Marold, 'Skaldendichtung und Mythologie', pp. 118–30.

<sup>67</sup> Eilífr Goðrúnarson, *Þórsdrápa*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson. The quoted stanzas occur on p. 139 (sts 1, 2), p. 141 (st. 9), p. 142 (sts 11, 12), p. 143 (st. 17), and p. 144 (st. 20). For the emended kenning *[skútar] skyld-Bretar* 'related rock-cave Britons' in stanza 11, see Reichardt, 'Die *Þórsdrápa*', p. 367. Marold ('Skaldendichtung und Mythologie', p. 110 and n. 8) retains *skytju* and translates the kenning as 'Britten verwandt [mit] der Schützin [= Skaði]'. The people of Ella are the English people in skaldic verse (Frank, 'Hand Tools and Power Tools', pp. 102–03). Marold ('Skaldendichtung und Mythologie', pp. 121–22), however, argues that the kenning may be a specific allusion to the killing of the Northumbrian king Ella (867) during the Danish conquest of York, which legend regarded as an act performed by Ragnarr's sons in revenge for their father's death.

<sup>68</sup> It is possible that the determinant of *herþrumu Gautr* identifies Þórr as the god of thunder, thus making Þórr the kenning referent. My preference of a warrior-kenning of the type *name of god + term related to battle* is based on the very large amount of such warrior-kennings as well as on contextual grounds.

<sup>69</sup> For an analysis of six additional, more ambiguous warrior-kennings, see Marold, 'Skaldendichtung und Mythologie', pp. 124–27.

time fuse in a double-scope conceptual blend.<sup>70</sup> Hákon is conceptualized as the god-like defender of Norway's prosperous soil that is threatened by aggressive culturally inferior forces and thereby requires the ruler's future incursions and conquests. As it turned out, Hákon was not as victorious as Þórr, and the desired conquests did not materialize.<sup>71</sup>

## Eddic Poems

Although metaphors that express the enemy's cultural alterity are less frequent and complex in eddic than in skaldic mythological poetry, they are similar in nature: the enemy is depicted as wolfish, cold, and infertile. An interesting example of a wolfish enemy occurs in *Hárbarðsljóð* 'Hárbarðr's Song', featuring a flyting match between Óðinn disguised as the ferryman Hárbarðr and Þórr, who in vain tries to be ferried across the fjord by him.<sup>72</sup> In stanza 37, Þórr proudly proclaims that he fought *brúðir berserkja* 'brides of berserks' on the island Hlesey. These special *brúðir* were most likely giantesses,<sup>73</sup> but when Hárbarðr condemns an attack on women as a disgraceful act, Þórr objects that his opponents were *vargynjur* 'she-wolves' and *varla konur* 'hardly women' (st. 39) and therefore could be treated as such.<sup>74</sup> A more frequent characteristic of the gods' enemies in the mythological eddic poems is coldness. One of these poems, the tenth-century *Vafþrúðnismál* 'Vafþrúðnir's Sayings', describes a wisdom contest between Óðinn (alias Gangráðr) and the wise giant Vafþrúðnir, in which both

<sup>70</sup> As noted in Chapter 1 (p. 17), conceptual integration (blending) and disintegration (conceptualization of the separate inputs) are interdependent processes; they are two sides of the same coin.

<sup>71</sup> Frank, 'Hand Tools and Power Tools', p. 103.

<sup>72</sup> *Hárbarðsljóð*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 84. The suggested composition date for the poem ranges from the tenth to the early thirteenth centuries. Whereas de Vries (*Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, I, 58) regards *Hárbarðsljóð* as an early poem that was popular enough to be orally transmitted in spite of its mix of various metres, von See and others explain the irregular form of the song as the result of a literary composition (*Kommentar*, II, 277).

<sup>73</sup> In the saga literature, *berserkir* 'bear-shirts' distinguished themselves by their bestial ferocity, a characteristic that may already allude to the brides' animal status. In *Haraldskvæði*, furthermore, the terms *berserkr* and *úlfræðinn* 'wolf-skin' are used for the same group of frenzied warriors. See Chapter 3, p. 99.

<sup>74</sup> McKinnell (*Meeting the Other*, pp. 110–11) has suggested that the referent of the *brúðir berserkja* on the island of the giant and sea-god Ægir alias Hlér could also be, just like *Hlés brúðir* 'Hlér's brides', the waves, in which case Þórr fights against two different manifestations of the 'destructive powers of nature' (p. 111).

contestants display their knowledge of mythological events from creation to Ragnarøk.<sup>75</sup> Immediately when Óðinn meets Vafþrúðnir, he calls his opponent *kaldriðfiðr* ‘cold-ribbed’ (st. 10), a description that, though clearly appropriate for a frost giant, also expresses the infertility of his race (metonymy) and their hostility towards the gods (metaphor).<sup>76</sup> The giant’s cold nature can be traced back to the *ur*-giant Augelmir/Ymir, who was formed by freezing poison (st. 31) and whom Vafþrúðnir calls quite literally *brimkaldur jotunn* ‘rime-cold giant’ (st. 21).<sup>77</sup> Since frost and poison hardly make favourable conditions for the growth of anything alive, they can be seen as indicators of the giants’ overall infertility, distinguishing them from the gods and, as has repeatedly been argued, making them a menace to the latter. But Vafþrúðnir’s cold ribs do not solely stand for the general condition of his race (double-layered use of PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy). They also link him to the Fenriswolf, whose *kaldir kjaptar* ‘cold jaws’ (st. 53) will swallow Óðinn at Ragnarøk.<sup>78</sup> Still, the wolf is not by nature cold, and if its jaws are frosty, this is so because its future swallowing of the main god will be the ultimate hostile and destructive act. I therefore suggest that *kaldir kjaptar* is a blend emerging from metaphorical and metonymic mappings: the expression is based on the metaphors ENMITY/DESTRUCTIVENESS IS COLDNESS, but since the metaphors rather define the wolf’s mindset than its jaws, additional metonymic substitution of the PART FOR A PART type takes place.<sup>79</sup> The wolf will devour Óðinn with full hostility, while the association between its cold jaws and the giant’s cold-ribs also prepares us for the final alliance between monsters and giants against the gods at Ragnarøk.

Frost giants also occur in the twelfth- or thirteenth-century *Hymiskviða*.<sup>80</sup> Returning from the hunt, Hymir enters his hall with a frozen beard (st. 10), which is not only the result of inhospitable weather conditions but also func-

<sup>75</sup> Most scholars assign *Vafþrúðnismál* to the (late) tenth century, although Simek does not exclude a late date. See Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 345; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, *Íslenzkar bókmenntir*, p. 228; de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, I, 42–45.

<sup>76</sup> *Vafþrúðnismál*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 46.

<sup>77</sup> *Vafþrúðnismál*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, pp. 48, 50.

<sup>78</sup> *Vafþrúðnismál*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 55.

<sup>79</sup> For other instances of the ENMITY IS COLDNESS metaphor in the three poetic corpora, see Chapter 3, pp. 106–10, 121, 134, 154.

<sup>80</sup> The composition of *Hymiskviða* has predominantly been placed in the period between 1100 and 1250 (e.g. de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, II, 113–17; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 168; van See and others, *Kommentar*, II, 277).

tions as a reminder that he is a hostile frost giant.<sup>81</sup> In fact, his hostility also comes to the fore on the narrative level. In their attempt to acquire Hymir's cauldron, Þórr and Týr have to hide from him, and when Þórr finally obtains it, Hymir and his fellow frost giants pursue them only to be slaughtered by Þórr's hammer. In *For Skírnis* 'Skírnir's Journey', on the other hand, Freyr desires the giantess Gerðr, whose shining arms have turned his head.<sup>82</sup> He sends his servant Skírnir to court her, but when Gerðr does not submit to the god's wishes, Skírnir threatens her with a curse of eternal grief and sterility. Crushed like a thistle at the end of the harvest (st. 31), she will live a life of sorrow among the frost giants (st. 30). More specifically, she will share her dwelling with the abominable three-headed Hrímgrímnir 'Frost-Grímnir [ÓÐINN, GIANT]' in the realm of the dead, drinking urine for sustenance (st. 35).<sup>83</sup> But Skírnir's threat is very powerful not merely because of his visualization of Gerðr's gloomy prospects. The identification of the giant as Óðinn in this double-scope blend also presents Gerðr's options in a nutshell: she can either join Óðinn's race or descend forever into the realm of the sterile frost giants with all its unpleasurable attributes. Faced with such a choice, Gerðr naturally accepts Freyr's marriage proposal.

The final eddic mythological poem of interest for this study is the twelfth-century [?] *Lokasenna*, which features Loki as the main enemy of the gods.<sup>84</sup> As

<sup>81</sup> *Hymiskviða*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 89.

<sup>82</sup> Dronke (*The Poetic Edda*, II, 396–400) argues in the introduction to her edition of the poem that the story is based on the myth of the mating of Sky (Freyr) and Earth (Gerðr when still in the sea). *For Skírnis* may be as early as the late heathen period or as late as the twelfth century. For a tenth-century date of composition, see Jónas Kristjánsson, 'The Composition of Eddic Poetry', pp. 209–10, and Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, II, 400–02; for a twelfth- or even thirteenth-century date, see von See and others, *Kommentar*, II, 64–65; de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, II, 106–07.

<sup>83</sup> *For Skírnis*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, pp. 83, 84. In *Hymiskviða* (ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 89), Týr's grandmother is also a multi-headed giantess (st. 8). Whereas her radiant appearance and proper social behaviour put his giantess mother *on par* with the gods — she assumes the role of the hostess by offering beer to her son — the grandmother remains physically and socially alien. With her monstrous nine hundred heads, she neither speaks nor participates in the ritual of beer-giving.

<sup>84</sup> A twelfth-century date for *Lokasenna* has been proposed by von See and others (*Kommentar*, II, 384), de Vries (*Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, II, 123), and Simek (*Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 193). Features that suggest a date as late as 1200 (de Vries) are the satirical nature of the *senna*, its flawless metrical form, its tidy categorization of the gods, and the similarities with classical symposia as found in Menippos, Seneca, and Lucian.

mentioned, Loki is an ambiguous character tied to the worlds of gods, giants, and monsters. His roles in the different eddic and skaldic poems vary accordingly from that of the trickster, who is untrustworthy but still on the side of the gods in *Haustlong*, to that of the accuser in *Lokasenna*.<sup>85</sup> In the poem, Loki crashes the party in Ægir's hall with his scornful accusations of lechery and marital infidelity, cowardice, incest, sorcery, effeminacy, and injustice against all attending gods and goddesses. Admittedly, not all accusations can be dismissed as the inventions of Loki's evil mind, such as the charge of promiscuity against the fertility goddess Freyja or the charge of favouring cowards on the battlefield against Óðinn (st. 22).<sup>86</sup> The latter needs strong and brave warriors after all to fight with the gods at Ragnarøk and therefore has them killed prematurely for the necessary preparations in Valhøll.<sup>87</sup> At the same time, however, Loki hardly flings his insinuations at his targets for corrective purposes but to provoke the final breach between them and himself.<sup>88</sup> Loki has always been a social and cultural misfit among the Æsir, as his role as the wolf's father (st. 10),<sup>89</sup> his paternal ancestry (inter-cultural alterity in both cases), and his treacherous behaviour towards his mother's kin (intra-cultural alterity) suggest. In fact, Loki's patrilinear allegiance, which has turned him against his mother's kin, is aptly expressed in two metaphors. When Skaði refers to Loki's

<sup>85</sup> McKinnell, *Both One and Many*, pp. 29–52. McKinnell identifies three roles: in addition to that of the trickster and of the accuser, Loki is also the evil traitor. According to McKinnell, the last two roles show Christian influence.

<sup>86</sup> *Lokasenna*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 101.

<sup>87</sup> Another example would be Loki's comparison of Óðinn with a *seiðr*-practising witch (st. 24), which seems to be confirmed in Snorri's *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 7). According to Snorri, Óðinn used *seiðr* — a form of magic that was introduced by Freyja (ch. 4) — so that 'mátti hann vita orlog manna ok óorðna hluti, svá ok at gera monnum bana eða óhamingju eða vanheilendi, svá ok at taka frá monnum vit eða afl ok gefa qðrum. En þessi fjolkynngi, er framið er, fylgir svá mikil ergi, at eigi þótti karlmonnum skammlaust við at fara, ok var gyðjunum kennd sú íþrótt.' (He could know beforehand the predestined fate of men, or their not yet completed lot; and also bring on the death, ill-luck, or bad health of people, and take the strength or wit from one person and give it to another. But after such witchcraft followed effeminacy, that it was not thought respectable for men to practise it; and therefore the priestesses were brought up in this art.) For the Old Norse text, see Snorri Sturluson, *Ynglinga saga*, ed. by Bjarni Adalbjarnarson, p. 19. The translation is from *The Online Medieval and Classical Library*. I have translated *ergi* with 'effeminacy' rather than with 'weakness and anxiety'. The concept of *ergi* will be further discussed in Chapter 3, pp. 96–97.

<sup>88</sup> For this interpretation, see McKinnell, 'Motivation in *Lokasenna*'; Meulengracht Sørensen, 'Loki's *senna* in Ægir's Hall'.

<sup>89</sup> *Lokasenna*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 98.



son Narfi as *brímkaldr* ‘rime-cold’ (st. 49, repeated by Loki in st. 50), she highlights Loki’s and his son’s spiritual affinities with Ymir and the frost giants.<sup>90</sup> Whereas she joined the Æsir, Loki moved to the other side. Loki’s group affiliation is further reinforced by Þórr’s threat to strike off his *herða klettr* ‘shoulder cliff’ (st. 57), a counterpart to Hymir’s stone head which can shatter even the hardest crystal cup (*Hymiskviða*, sts 30, 31).<sup>91</sup> In response, Loki addresses Þórr with *Jarðar [burr]* ‘Earth’s son’ in the next stanza, thereby confirming the opposition between the god’s generative powers and his own barren condition.

Loki fully intends to disturb the social peace among the gods in order to speed up events leading to Ragnarøk. He threateningly tells the servant Eldi that he intends to mix the mead with *mein* ‘harm’ (st. 3), a threat to which Eldi retorts that the gods will retaliate if Loki pours *bróp* ‘slander’ and *róg* ‘spite’ over the gods (st. 4).<sup>92</sup> Loki’s announcement and the servant’s reply are part of an extended metaphor used to highlight the ramifications of the god’s intended behaviour.<sup>93</sup> Loki’s manoeuvre is conceptualized in terms of the brewing and serving of mead in the hall, an essential ritual that symbolizes the gods’ social harmony and that finds its counterpart in Viking culture. Mead was one type of drink which was served at feasts both to strengthen the ties within the community and to forge alliances with other groups.<sup>94</sup> The quarrelsome Loki, however,

<sup>90</sup> *Lokasenna*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 106. For a discussion of Reginn as *brímkaldr jötunn* in *Fáfnismál* (st. 38), see Chapter 3, p. 94 n. 2.

<sup>91</sup> *Lokasenna*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, pp. 108, 102. In the same poem, the head of the World Serpent is called *skarar háfjall* ‘high mountain of the hair’ (st. 23 [p. 101]), which creates a comparable affinity between frost giant and monster. The identification of the head with a mountain or cliff also occurs in non-mythological contexts (see Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden*, p. 128); however, the association of the referent with infertility seems to be confined to the mythological verse.

<sup>92</sup> *Lokasenna*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 97. In *Völuspá* (ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 6), Loki also contaminates the peace. He pollutes the sacred (‘*hefði lopt alt lævi blandit*’ [had mixed all the air with ruin], st. 25) with his suggestion that Freyja should be married off to the giant builder if he finished Ásgarðr’s wall on time. Cf. *Völsunga saga*, chapter 10, where Sinfjǫli says that the drink given by Borghildr was blended with deceit. *Völsunga saga*, ed. by Ebel, p. 31; *The Saga of the Völsungs*, trans. by Byock, p. 51. For a short discussion of phrases that treat corruption as a ‘contagious substance’ in eddic poetry, see Hallberg, ‘Elements of Imagery’, pp. 53–54.

<sup>93</sup> The extended metaphor requires the reification of non-physical concepts. Harm, slander, and spite are perceived as substances via the ontological metaphors ACTIVITIES ARE SUBSTANCES and EMOTIONS ARE SUBSTANCES.

<sup>94</sup> The motif of the hall as the centre for communal activities can be found throughout the Old Norse and Old English literary corpus. For a multi-disciplinary study of possible ideo-

wishes to sabotage this ritual by contaminating the fluid with a special ingredient that will not promote peace but contention. The image of Loki pouring *bróþ* and *róg* directly over the gods rather than into cups further shows that Eldi perceives his attack as sudden, brutal, and impossible to escape from: the gods will be soaked with this vile liquid before they can take any precautions. Not surprisingly, Freyr calls Loki a *bplvasmiðr* ‘harm-smith’ (st. 41),<sup>95</sup> for Loki does not manufacture anything but trouble and strife. Unlike the dwarves who are skilled smiths specialized in the production of precious artefacts for the Æsir, Loki’s skill is confined to importune or malicious acts meant to throw the gods back into a state of disorder. That Loki will be ultimately successful becomes evident in the last stanza of the poem. He boastfully predicts the burning of Ægir’s hall at Ragnrøk and thus the destruction of this important symbol of Æsir civilization.<sup>96</sup>

In *Lokasenna*, Loki constitutes a special case among the enemies of the Æsir, since he is allowed to perform his subversive social role as ‘enemy within’, whereas the giants are for the most part excluded from the Æsir community. As has been illustrated throughout this section, the typical giant is characterized by his sterile habitat, which marks his cultural otherness and, in some poems, even a more radical form of alterity that associates him with cosmic stasis and decay. Yet occasionally a poet could also highlight a giant’s social alterity, as in the case of Hrímgrímnir, who has Gerðr drink urine rather than mead in *For Skírnis*, or Þjazi who is called a wolf (twice) and a ‘rock-Níðuðr’ in Þjóðólfr ór Hvini’s *Haustlǫng*. Although the disruption of social peace may be one of Loki’s specialities, the giants, too, could be conceptualized as anti-social forces that for this very reason needed to be kept at a safe distance from Æsir society.

logical implications of hall interiors in Viking Age Scandinavia, see Sundqvist, ‘Religious and Ideological Aspects of Hall Interiors’, pp. 109–44. Famous excavated Viking Age (feast) halls are those at Lejre in Denmark, at Borg and Huseby in Norway, and at Hofstaðir in north-eastern Iceland. For archaeological studies of these halls, see, for example, *Kongehallen fra Lejre*, ed. by Larsen; *Borg in Lofoten*, ed. by Munch, Johansen, and Roesdahl; Skre, ‘Excavations of the Hall at Huseby’, pp. 223–47; Lucas, *Hofstaðir*, pp. 400–07.

<sup>95</sup> *Lokasenna*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 47.

<sup>96</sup> For discussion of the function of the hall in Old Norse literature in general and in *Lokasenna* in particular, see Meulengracht Sørensen, ‘The Hall in Norse Literature’, p. 271.



## *The Old English Charms*

### Introduction

Unlike their Scandinavian counterparts, heathen gods play a very minor role in Old English texts. No mythological tales have survived, and short accounts or mere allusions to pagan major and minor divinities are sparse. A few divinities do make an appearance in documents, such as the elves in the medical recipes (see below) and Woden, who surfaces as ancestor in the royal genealogies, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>97</sup> In his *De temporum ratione*, furthermore, Bede mentions the worship of the goddesses Hreðra in March and Eostre in April, as well as a festival celebrated in the *modra nect* 'night of the mothers' on 25 December.<sup>98</sup> Less clear is the significance of the terms *welcyrige* 'lit. chooser of the slain',<sup>99</sup> *hægtesse* denoting a powerful human or supernatural malevolent female being,<sup>100</sup> and particularly the more mysterious *burgrune*, *helrune*, and *leodrune* in the medical recipes

<sup>97</sup> Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, I. 15: '[Hengist et Horsa] erant filii Uictgisli, cuius pater Uitta, cuius pater Uecta, cuius pater Uoden, de cuius stirpe multarum provinciarum regum genus originem duxit' ([Hengest and Horsa] were the sons of Wihtgisli, son of Witta, son of Wecta, son of Wodan, from whose stock the royal families of many kingdoms claimed their descent). *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 50–51. For a discussion of Woden's role in the Anglian, West Saxon, and Kentish genealogical material, see North, *Heathen Gods*, pp. 11–32.

<sup>98</sup> Bede, *Bedae opera de temporibus*, pp. 211–12. *Modra* most probably refers to a triad of fertility goddesses related to the *matres* that were worshipped in parts of Germania and eastern Gaul between the late first and fifth centuries, but also the other two festivals mentioned by Bede make the presence of (local) fertility cults before the Christianization of Anglo-Saxon England probable. Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, pp. 204–07. See also Owen, *Rites and Religion*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>99</sup> Meaney, 'Women, Witchcraft and Magic', p. 17. Related to the Norse valkyries, the *welcyrrian* are the Germanic counterparts either of the classical Furies or of the war goddess Bellona in the Old English glossaries. In Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, however, nothing of the supernatural nature of the *welcyrrian* has remained, as the term refers to human sorcerers (*wiccan* and *welcyrrian*). For the attestations of *welcyrige*, see *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, comp. by Healey, Wilkin, and Xin Xiang.

<sup>100</sup> For a discussion of the meaning and etymology of *hægtesse*, see *Anglo-Saxon Remedies*, ed. and trans. by Pettit, II, 247–49. In the Old English corpus, *hægtesse* glosses terms for supernatural beings from classical mythology (*Parce*, *Furiae*, *Eumenides*, *Erenis*) as well as terms for human females with supernatural powers (*phinotissa* 'pythoness', *striga* 'hag, witch' (*Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, comp. by Healey, Wilkin, and Xin Xiang)).

and glossaries, which may or may not reflect lesser divinities.<sup>101</sup> The Anglo-Saxon poems provide even fewer traces of a mythological past. All that is left are two references to Woden in *Maxims I* and *The Nine Herbs Charm*, one mysterious occurrence of Ing in *The Rune Poem*,<sup>102</sup> an equally obscure account of shooting *ese* (*Æsir*), elves, and *hægtessan* in the charm *Wið færstice*, and a reference to Cain's progeny consisting of giants, elves, and *orcneas* in *Beowulf*.<sup>103</sup> For the few references that have been left, furthermore, we are well advised

<sup>101</sup> *Burgrune* 'wise woman (*rune*) of a protected place/community (*burh*)' glosses *furiae* and *parcae*, a practice that makes Meaney ('Women, Witchcraft and Magic', p. 14) conclude that *burgruna* may have been tutelary goddesses like the Norse *dísir*, i.e. fate goddesses who could inflict harm on others (see below). Meaney further observes that the compound *hel(le)rune/-a* — though it glosses *philotissa* and otherwise refers to any (male or female) human being practicing divination — may be traced back to a 'female being skilled in the mysteries of the world of the dead' ('Women, Witchcraft and Magic', p. 15). For the use of *helrune* in *Beowulf*, see Chapter 3, p. 135.

<sup>102</sup> The passage in question could depict a fertility ritual featuring Ing as an anthropomorphized fertility deity: '(Ing) wæs ærest mid Eastdenum | gesewen secgun, oþ he siððan eft | ofer wæg gewat, wæn æfter ran; | ðus heardingas ðone hæle nemdun' (ll. 67–70). (Ing was first seen among the East Danes | by the men until he afterward departed again | over the wave, the wagon ran after him. | Thus the Heardings called the hero.) According to North, Ing 'appears to be an Anglo-Saxon form of Ingvi-freyr, who tours across the Øresund or the North Sea, and whose single tour represents a spring prelude with his wagon, here a summer procession, following him. North, *Heathen Gods*, pp. 48 (quote) and 49. See also *The Old English Rune Poem*, ed. by Halsall, pp. 146–47. For the cited text, see *The Rune Poem*, ed. by Dobbie, pp. 29–30. All translations from the Old English are mine unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>103</sup> The role of the kin of Cain in *Beowulf* is further discussed in Chapter 3. Giants also surface in the expressions (*eald*) *enta geweorc* 'old work of giants' and *enta* (*ær*) *geweorc* '(ancient) work of giants' in *Andreas* (ll. 1235a, 1495a), *The Wanderer* (l. 87a), *The Ruin* (l. 2b), *Maxims II* (l. 2a), and *Beowulf* (ll. 1679a, 2717b, 2774a). In most instances the phrase refers to old stone buildings or stone paths (*Andreas*, l. 1235a), for which the poets took their inspiration from the Roman remains in Anglo-Saxon England. Frankis has illustrated that the destruction of the *enta geweorc* in *The Wanderer* is closely associated with the fall of Babylon and Rome, but in the other poems such associations are less clear. The concept of the works of giants may also have its source in Germanic tradition, with a parallel in Snorri's account of the giant builder and his construction of the wall around Ásgarðr (see p. 31 n. 9 and p. 53 n. 92). In *Beowulf*, furthermore, *enta geweorc* denotes the dragon's ancient barrow (l. 2717b), the hoard hidden in it (*eald enta geweorc*, l. 2774a), and the sword that Beowulf finds in the abode of Grendel's mother (*enta ærgeweorc*, l. 1679a). In the second and third instances, the phrase may reflect a tradition that features giants rather than dwarves as metal-workers and that would be represented by Geirrod in *Þórsdrápa*. Frankis, 'The Thematic Significance of *enta geweorc*', pp. 253–69. The various occurrences of *enta geweorc* are listed in the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, comp. by Healey, Wilkin, and Xin Xiang.

to heed Audrey Meaney's warning not to read 'heathen memories into passages of poetic description which a more prosaic explanation would illuminate just as well, if not better'.<sup>104</sup> The warning is certainly appropriate for the two short myths presented in *The Nine Herbs Charm* and *Wið færstice* 'For a Sudden Stitch', which may have been (considerably) altered in the transmission process or even invented for specific healing rituals. However, the present investigation is less concerned with the authenticity of the myths than with their cognitive function. As will be illustrated below, the two micro-narratives constitute the inputs of complex (metaphorical) blends that must have facilitated the comprehension of the origins of various ailments and thus the production of a cure. Gods, elves, and *hægtessan* emerge as the ultimate scapegoats from this cognitive process. They are conceptualized as the instigators of the various medical conditions, while in the case of *Wið færstice* they also become malevolent antagonists that inflict harm on the patient and that are accordingly fought and neutralized by the healer.

### Deprecating Heathen Divinities in Anglo-Saxon Literature

In the previous section it was illustrated that the Old Norse mythological poems present events from the gods' perspective. Even though the Æsir are fallible,<sup>105</sup> they are the protagonists who defend their cultural interests and cosmic order against the giants and Loki's monstrous offspring. In the Anglo-Saxon literary corpus, heathen divinities and other supernatural beings do not have much of an appearance, and when they are mentioned in a text, they are viewed with suspicion and disapproval by its Christian author. In *Maxims I*, for example, Woden is contrasted with the true God, who alone is the creator of the universe:

Woden worhte weos, wuldor alwalda,  
rume roderas. (ll. 132–33a)<sup>106</sup>

(Woden made idols, the ruler of all [made] heaven,  
spacious skies.)

In other words, the pagan deity produced only worthless objects.<sup>107</sup> The idea that the worship of idols is devil worship is not explicitly expressed but may

<sup>104</sup> Meaney, 'Woden in England', p. 115.

<sup>105</sup> See p. 52.

<sup>106</sup> *Maxims I*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, p. 161.

<sup>107</sup> North (*Heathen Gods*, p. 110) has interpreted these lines as a possible allusion to a myth

very well have been on the poet's mind, just as it undoubtedly was on Ælfric's when he composed his long *vita* of St Martin:

Mid þusend searo-cræftum wolde se swicola deofol  
þone halgan wer on sume wisan beswican.  
and hine ge-sewen-licne on manegum scin-hiwum  
þam halgan æteowde. on þæra hæþenra goda hiwe.  
hwilon on ioues hiwe. þe is gehaten þór.  
hwilon on mercuries. þe men hatað oþon.  
hwilon on ueneris þære fulan gyden.  
þe men hatað fricg. and on manegum oþrum hiwum  
hine bræd se deofol on þæs bisceopes gesihþe.<sup>108</sup>

(With a thousand tricks the guileful devil wished  
to deceive the holy man [i.e. Martin] in some way  
and revealed himself in many illusive shapes  
to the holy one, [namely] in the shape of the heathen gods:  
at times in the shape of Jove, who is called Þórr,  
at times in the shape of Mercury, whom men call Óðinn,  
at times as Venus that foul goddess,  
whom men call Frig, and into many other shapes  
the devil transformed himself in the bishop's sight.)

According to Ælfric, Óðinn (or Woden) is merely the devil in disguise, a form of radical alterity that can be defeated but not destroyed. In *Maxims I*, on the other hand, Woden's status is less defined. He may be a demon with curtailed powers, or he may be just a dangerously fraudulent human who is venerated as a god similar to Óðinn in Snorri's *Prose Edda*.<sup>109</sup> In either case, however, the lines send a clear message concerning the futility of idol worship.

of Woden making 'demons out of dead kings on Anglian battlefields' in an indigenous Anglian Valhöll. However, this rendering is mainly based on Óðinn's ability to regenerate dead kings as illustrated in *Hákonarmál*, *Eiríksmál*, Einarr skálaglamm 'Tinkle Scales' Helgason's *Vellekla* (all tenth-century poems), and the eddic *Hyndluljóð* (twelfth century) and therefore must remain tentative. We simply do not know whether the Anglo-Saxon poet knew any Odinic myths. In fact, even the existence of a native Scandinavian tradition of Óðinn's animation of idols is far from certain. Such animation may take place in *Hávamál* (st. 49), but other texts preserved in the fourteenth-century *Flateyjarbók* and cited by North constitute very unreliable witnesses to the tradition. Shaw has convincingly argued that the tradition of the animation of artificial figures in the *Flateyjarbók* texts was based on hagiographic rather than native sources. Shaw, 'Miracle as Magic'. *Hávamál*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 24.

<sup>108</sup> *The Life of St Martin*, ed. and trans. by Skeat, p. 264.

<sup>109</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Prologue*, ed. by Faulkes, pp. 5–6; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, pp. 3–4.

As mentioned above, pagan deities are rare visitants in Anglo-Saxon literature. In contrast, a relatively prominent place in the Anglo-Saxon corpus is taken up by elves, who regularly appear as the causers of disease in the medical texts. The Anglo-Saxon elves, just like the heathen gods, can be regarded as notorious casualties of the Christianization process, although this happens rather by marginalization than by suppression. Scholars have argued that the supernatural entities had once been neutral beings who could aid or harm humans,<sup>110</sup> an assumption that finds support in the occurrence of word combinations with *ælfē(n)/ælfa* as base word and the name of a natural habitat (wood, sea, mountain, etc.) as determinant in various glossaries. And even though it is rather questionable whether all or even some of the different types of elves given in Latin-Old English glossaries (i.e. country-, field-, mountain-, mound-, sea-, water-, and wood-elves) ever existed — the compounds may have been created for the sole purpose of glossing the classical concepts of muses, nymphs, and furies<sup>111</sup> — the frequent use of such compounds points to a native tradition of neutral otherworldly elves that had become blurred in the post-conversion period.<sup>112</sup> The occurrence of *Ælf* in female and male personal names (e.g. *Ælfwine* ‘elf-friend’, *Ælfhere* ‘elf-army’, *Ælflæd* ‘elf-beauty’, etc.) seems to both confirm and complement this postulated tradition, in that it reflects the conceptualization of elves as beautiful and benevolent male or female creatures. Only the three attestations of the adjective *ælfsciene* ‘beautiful like an elf’ with its allusion to elfin beauty provide a more ambiguous image of elves. While the *ælfscinu* Judith (*Judith*, l. 14a) uses her good looks to seduce and kill Holofernes,<sup>113</sup> Sarah’s attribute as being *ælfscieno* in *Genesis A* attracts the attention of the Egyptians and their pharaoh as well as of Abimelech of Gerar.

<sup>110</sup> Jolly, *Popular Religion*, pp. 134, 136. For earlier studies, see Stuart, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Elf’, p. 316; Thun, ‘The Malignant Elves’, p. 392.

<sup>111</sup> Thun, ‘The Malignant Elves’, p. 379. Hall, *Elves*, p. 79. For the occurrences of the various elf-compounds (*dun.ælfā/dun.ælfā*, *-en/dunylfā/duunalfinni*; *feld.ælfen/feld.ælfinni*; *land.ælfē*; *munt.ælfen*; *sælfen/sælfenne/sae.ælfinne*; *weter.ælfenne* / <*uaeter.ælfinne*>; *wudu.ælfen/wudu.ælfenne* / *wudu.ælfinne*), see *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, comp. by Healey, Wilkin, and Xin Xiang. Except for *dunylfā* (rendering *Castalidas nymphas*) in *Byrthferth’s Manual*, all compounds are attested in glossaries.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Stuart’s assumption that two different ‘elvish traditions’ must have existed, one associated with Punor, the other with Woden (‘The Anglo-Saxon Elf’, pp. 319–20). Hall (*Elves*, pp. 75–88) has argued that the Anglo-Saxon *ælfē*, like their Norse counterparts, were originally male, which necessitated the use of the feminine derivative *ælfen* and the feminine plural form *ælfa* (*ō*-stem in place of masculine *i*-stem *ælf*, pl. *ælfē*) in the eighth-century glosses for *nympha*.

<sup>113</sup> *Judith*, ed. by Griffith, p. 97.

Before entering Egypt Abraham predicts that the *mæg ælfscieno* (l. 1827a) will stimulate the sexual desires of many men and therefore presents himself as her brother for his own safety, with the result that the pharaoh wants to take Sarah for his own.<sup>114</sup> The ruler repents once punished by God for his lechery and lets the couple go, but the danger is not over yet. Abimelech is also captured by Sarah's beauty, which makes him take her for his wife. Only when God discloses her identity in a dream does he give her back to Abraham, assuring Sarah that she, the *mæg ælfscieno* (l. 2731a), does not have to fear any reproach.<sup>115</sup> Thus the use of *ælfsciene* in both poems suggests a form of seductive, perhaps otherworldly beauty of the heroines which requires divine guidance (Judith) or intervention (Sarah).

In addition to the tradition of neutral or even beautiful elves, another equally strong tradition of the *ælf* as malignant and even monstrous creatures must have existed. In *Beowulf*, the *ylfe* belong to Cain's monstrous progeny (ll. 111–12; see below);<sup>116</sup> in the late eighth- or early ninth-century *Royal Prayer Book*, the word *ælf* denotes Satan;<sup>117</sup> and in the medical texts, elves are responsible for various maladies. The three *Leechbooks* and the *Lacnunga* list a variety of remedies against (*water*) *ælfadl* '(*water*-) elf-disease', *ælsiden* 'elf-influence/magic',<sup>118</sup> or simply the elfin race (*ælf*, *ælfcytt*),<sup>119</sup> and in almost all cases, the remedies are herbal drinks and salves prepared in a predominantly Christian ritual. If a per-

<sup>114</sup> *Genesis A*, ed. by Krapp, p. 55. For a detailed analysis of *ælfsciene*, see Hall, *Elves*, pp. 88–94.

<sup>115</sup> Hall, *Elves*, p. 81.

<sup>116</sup> Klaeber's *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 6.

<sup>117</sup> Hall, *Elves*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>118</sup> The meaning of *ælsiden* is discussed in Hall, *Elves*, pp. 119–56.

<sup>119</sup> For the *Lacnunga* texts, see *Anglo-Saxon Remedies*, ed. and trans. by Pettit, I, 16–17 (no. 29 *ælsiden*), 90–95 (no. 127, *Wid ferstice* [elf-shot]). The *Lacnunga* was first edited and translated by Grattan and Singer in *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine*. The *Leechbook* remedies can be found in volume II of *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England*, ed. and trans. by Cockayne, pp. 138–41 (I. 64 *ælsiden*); pp. 296–97 (II. 65.5 *ælf*); pp. 335–36 (III. 41 *ælsiden*); pp. 344–53 (III. 61 *ælfcytt*; III. 62 *ælfadl*; III. 63 *water ælfadl*). For a discussion of the remedies against elvish influence, see further Jolly, *Popular Religion*, pp. 146–67. Hall (*Elves*, pp. 98–104) argues that critics have too easily assumed shooting elves in *Leechbook* II, section 65, as a number of medical contexts suggest that the meaning of *sceotan* had faded to the general meaning 'to afflict, to cause pain'. Although it is true that the occurrence of *sceotan* should not automatically invoke the presence of elves, it still reflects the conceptualization of a certain kind of internal pain as one caused by a missile. For the concept of shooting elves in *Wid ferstice*, see p. 69.

son was afflicted by elves, their negative influence needed to be destroyed with powerful medicine and ritualistic exorcism.

A considerable part of the existent references to pagan (minor) divinities make the latter appear as spiritually and/or physically harmful to humans, and the references in *The Nine Herbs Charm* and *Wið færstice* in British Library, MS Harley 585, fols 160<sup>r</sup>–163<sup>v</sup>, 175<sup>v</sup>–176<sup>r</sup> (late tenth to early eleventh centuries) are no exception. In both charms, the old divinities are marginalized as mortal enemies responsible for the patient's suffering, and in both charms, metaphor plays a significant role in this marginalization process though in a less explicit manner than in the Old Norse poetic corpus. Not only is the futility of the gods revealed by means of short narratives rather than linguistic expressions, but the boundaries between literal and metaphorical language also become increasingly blurred. Interestingly, it is this blend of the 'real' and the imagined that is to ensure the effectiveness of the healing ritual.

### *The Nine Herbs Charm*

If Woden is the maker of idols in *Maxims I*, in *The Nine Herbs Charm* he combats a poisonous snake:<sup>120</sup>

Wyrm com snican, toslat he man;<sup>121</sup>  
 ða genam Woden VIII wuldortanas,  
 sloh ða þa næddran, þæt heo on VIII tofleaþ.  
 Þær geændade æppel and attor,  
 þæt heo næfre ne wolde on hus bugan.  
 Fille and finule, felamihtigu twa:  
 þa wyrte gesceop witig drihten,  
 halig on heofonum, þa he hongode. (ll. 31–38)

(A serpent/worm came crawling, tore a man to pieces;  
 then Woden took nine glory-twigs,  
 slew the serpent, so that it flew into nine pieces.

<sup>120</sup> *The Nine Herbs Charm*, ed. and trans. by Pettit, I, 62, 64. I have not followed Pettit's editorial practices here or for *Wið færstice*. Herb names are not capitalized, length marks have been omitted, and abbreviations silently expanded.

<sup>121</sup> MS *henan* (Pettit *he nan*). The emendation to *he man*, suggested by Dobbie (*The Nine Herbs Charm*, p. 119) is contextually defensible: it is difficult to conceive why Woden would kill the snake if it had not done any harm. Furthermore, the god's reaction and its results correspond to the offense in terms of violence: the serpent *toslat* a man, Woden *sloh* it, and it *tofleaþ* into nine pieces.



There apple and poison brought about  
 that it would never dwell in the house.  
 Chervil and fennel, two very powerful ones,  
 the wise Lord created these herbs,  
 holy in heaven when he hung.)

After the lengthy invocation of nine (or fewer?) herbs to fight poison, *onflyge* ‘flying venom’, and ‘þam lapan ðe geond lond færð’ (the hostile one that travels through the land), Woden is introduced as serpent-slayer in this composite charm.<sup>122</sup> A snake, identified both as a *wyrm* and a *næddra*,<sup>123</sup> has killed a man, and Woden reciprocates the attack with an equally violent act. He cuts it into nine pieces with nine *wuldortanas* ‘glory twigs’, which could be either (magical) rods or weapons.<sup>124</sup> Taken on its own, this micro-story is not only an instantiation of the Indo-European mythographic formula *HERO SLAYS SERPENT WITH WEAPON*,<sup>125</sup> but it could also allude to Woden’s traditional role as healer as depicted both on artefacts and in texts. Karl Hauck, for example, has illustrated this role on a number of C-bracteates featuring Woden healing a horse.<sup>126</sup> In a similar vein, Woden heals the dislocated leg of Baldr’s horse in

<sup>122</sup> The actual number of herbs mentioned in the first thirty lines of the charm depends on whether *una* and *stide* are interpreted as separate herbs or as variations of the preceding herbs *mucgwyrt* and *stune*. Meroney (‘The Nine Herbs’, pp. 158–59) favours the first option, postulating the presence of two kinds of *attorlaðe* in lines 21 and 22 to increase the number from eight to nine herbs: ‘Fleoh þu nu, attorlaðe, seo læsse ða maran, | seo mare þa læssan, oððæt him beigra bot sy’ (Put you to flight now, Attorlathe, the lesser the greater one [i.e. poison], the greater the lesser one, until there is a remedy against both for him).

<sup>123</sup> For a discussion of the referents of *wyrm* and *næddra*, see Olsen, ‘Earthworms’, p. 201.

<sup>124</sup> For the rendering of *wuldortanas* as rods or even swords, see Bremmer, ‘Hermes-Mercury and Woden-Odin’, pp. 412–15. See also Chardonnens, ‘An Arithmetical Crux’, esp. pp. 693–96. Both Bremmer and Chardonnens reject the notion that the *wuldortanas* are rune-inscribed twigs, as first suggested by Singer (‘Early English Magic and Medicine’, p. 355) and later adopted by Storms in his *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, p. 195. According to Storms, ‘Crowning the achievements of the herbs Woden himself comes to their assistance against the hostile attack of the evil one. He takes nine glory-twigs, by which is meant nine runes, that is, nine twigs with the initial letters in runes of the plants representing the power inherent in them, and using them as weapons he smites the serpent with them.’ The problem with this interpretation is that runes are not mentioned in the passage and that Óðinn’s acquisition of the runes by hanging from a tree for nine days, as presented in *Hávamál* ‘The Sayings of the High One’, stanzas 138–39 (ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 40), may be of no relevance in this passage.

<sup>125</sup> Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon*, pp. 414–28.

<sup>126</sup> Hauck, ‘Gott als Arzt’, esp. pp. 34–50.



the Old High German *Second Merseburg Charm*, and in the eddic *Hávamál* 'The Sayings of the High One' (st. 147) Óðinn is credited with a medicinal spell.<sup>127</sup> In the Anglo-Saxon charm, Woden's exploit may therefore provide a historiola with a mythological precedent for the healer's action. Still, caution is required. It is not at all clear that Woden's encounter with the snake has positive results. Although the snake seems to be prevented by its own poison from inhabiting the house, its fragmentation is disastrous. The nine rods make the adder break into nine pieces, which correspond to — and possibly release — the *nygon wuldorgeflogene* 'nine who have fled from glory' (l. 45b), namely the nine poisons and nine *onflogene* 'flying venoms' (l. 46b).<sup>128</sup> Instead of defeating evil, Woden spreads it.<sup>129</sup>

We will probably never know whether the micro-story of Woden the serpent-slayer is an otherwise unattested myth, which was inserted in the poem at some stage of the transmission process in order to highlight the futility of pagan (magical) exploits, or whether it was modified or even invented for this very purpose.<sup>130</sup> In fact, Woden's ontological status is equally obscure. Even though there is no indication that he is demonic, he may at least have been conceived as supernatural. From a cognitivist point of view, however, these uncertainties are of little significance; what is relevant here is the story's function as part of a complex conceptual blend. Woden's exploit causes the creation of nine serpentine pieces (input 1), which correspond to the nine poisons and infections addressed in the charm (input 2). The relation between the two inputs is most likely causal, giving rise to a blend in which Woden's dismemberment of the

<sup>127</sup> *Hávamál*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 42.

<sup>128</sup> See also Grattan and Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine*, Introduction, esp. p. 53. Drawing attention to the fact that nine cuts produced by a real weapon should produce ten pieces, Chardonnens argues that the serpent must belong to the tail-biting species like the World Serpent, which was known in Anglo-Saxon England ('An Arithmetical Crux', pp. 696–98). However, numerical correspondences (i.e. the recurrent use of the number nine) may be more relevant than logical niceties in this charm. For a short discussion of the form *onflognum* in the text, see Pettit, *Anglo-Saxon Remedies*, II, 154.

<sup>129</sup> For a similar interpretation, see Singer, 'Early English Magic and Medicine', p. 355. Watkins, on the other hand, renders line 34 as 'there the apple ended (it) and (its) venom' (*How to Kill a Dragon*, p. 425) and concludes that the apple completely removes the serpent's venom. According to Watkins, the serpent's tooth with its poison could be left in the apple once the serpent bit it. Watkins' translation of the crucial line is not convincing, as it requires *æppel and attor* to be subject and object linked by the conjunction 'and'.

<sup>130</sup> A less sceptical view of the authenticity of the myth is presented by Glosecki, 'Stranded Narratives', pp. 60–65.

snake releases the nine poisons and infections. The blend, furthermore, serves as another input. It feeds a second blend featuring the conflict between god and serpent as the source of the multifaceted phenomenon of infectious disease that the practitioner tries to combat. The causal connections between conflict and disease are only possible via SUBCATEGORY FOR CATEGORY metonymy, which makes the nine poisons and infections stand for many different types of poisons and infections. It is this second blend that enables the practitioner to proceed with his exorcism of the various 'real' poisons and flying venoms, summarized in a list of sixteen vague items.<sup>131</sup> At the same time, the micro-story of Woden the serpent-slayer and the subsequent release of venoms is an extensive metaphor that explains the origins of disease in terms of Germanic myth.<sup>132</sup> The target figure emerging from this cognitive process is clearly Woden, whose role changes from successful vanquisher of a poisonous snake and hence the producer of a salutary act to the spreader of poisons in the world. It is no coincidence that Christ's crucifixion is mentioned in the following lines, as it gives further prominence to the futility of Woden's exploit: whereas Christ's sacrifice created eternal life for man, Woden's only ensures illness and death.

The use of obscure mythological information featuring a serpent-slayer for the reinforcement of Christian values is not as unique in the Anglo-Saxon corpus as it may first seem, for a similar technique is employed in *Solomon and Saturn II*. The poem, as preserved in the tenth-century Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 422, pp. 13–26, has been viewed both as a wisdom contest and a didactic dialogue.<sup>133</sup> Solomon, advocating a Christian world view, and Saturn,

<sup>131</sup> The ten poisons on the list in lines 52 to 54 (*Anglo-Saxon Remedies*, ed. and trans. by Pettit, I, 66) are categorized by their colour (red, blue, etc.), while the remaining six items seem to refer to swellings perhaps caused by infection: *wyrmegebled* 'snake blister', *wateregebled*, 'water-blister', *þorngebled* 'thorn-blister', *þystelgebled* 'thistle-blister', *ysgebled* 'ice-blister', *attorgebled* 'poison-blister'.

<sup>132</sup> For a discussion of the complex interaction between metaphor and metonymy in conceptual blends, see Turner and Fauconnier, 'Metaphor, Metonymy and Binding'; for an earlier study of metonymy and conceptual integration, see Fauconnier and Turner, 'Metonymy and Conceptual Integration'; for a detailed outline of metonymy as a cognitive process, see Radden and Kövecses, 'Towards a Theory of Metonymy'.

<sup>133</sup> A detailed analysis of *Solomon and Saturn II* is provided by Menner in his edition of *The Poetic Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*, pp. 57–58, and, more recently, by Hansen, *The Solomon Complex*, pp. 147–52. For references to the didactic nature of the poem, see Menner, *The Poetic Dialogues*, pp. 53–58; O'Neill, 'On the Date, Provenance and Relationship of the "Solomon and Saturn" Dialogues', p. 165; Harbus, 'The Situation of Wisdom in *Solomon and Saturn II*', p. 101.

here a Chaldean noble, engage in a verbal ‘contest of knowledge and wisdom’ that turns out to be highly instructive for the Chaldean. Saturn asks most of the questions, which allow Solomon to slip into the role of teacher and convey both his knowledge of esoteric learning and his superior Christian insights. At the beginning of the poem, however, the roles are reversed. After referring to Saturn’s sinful ancestry, which received a *moning* ‘warning’ (l. 209b), Solomon demands:

‘Sæge me from ðam lande  
ðær nænig fyra ne mæg fotum gestæppan.’ (ll. 211b–12)<sup>134</sup>

(‘Tell me about the land  
on which no man can set his foot.’)

Saturn, on the other hand, meets the challenge with the reply:

‘Se mæra was haten *mereliðende*  
weallende [w]ulf,<sup>135</sup> w[e]rðeodum cuð  
Filistina, freond Nebrondes.  
He on ðam felda ofslog XXV  
dracena on dægred, and hine ða deað offcoll;  
forðan ða foldan ne mæg fira ænig,  
ðone mercstede, mon gesecan,  
fugol gefleogan, ne ðon ma foldan n[ea]t.  
Ðanon atercynn ærest gewurdon  
wide onwæcned, ða ðe nu weallende  
ðurh attres oroð ingang rymað.  
Git his sweord scined swiðe gescæned,  
and ofer ða byrgenna blicað ða hieltas.’ (ll. 213–24)

(‘The glorious one was called the seafaring,  
raging wolf, known to the people  
of the Philistines, Nimrod’s friend.  
He slew twenty-five dragons in the field at dawn, and then death killed him.  
Therefore no man is able to seek that borderland,  
no bird can fly [to it], no more than any beast of the earth.  
From there the race of poisonous beings<sup>136</sup> was

<sup>134</sup> *Solomon and Saturn II*, ed. by Dobbie, p. 39; for the indicated emendation, see Shippey’s edition of the text in *Poems of Wisdom and Learning*, p. 86 (text) and p. 136 (notes).

<sup>135</sup> Since it is by no means certain that *wulf* is a proper name, I have not adopted Dobbie’s use of a capital letter.

<sup>136</sup> For the interpretation of *atercynn* as ‘poisonous beings’, see Shippey’s note 6 in

first born far and wide, which now, swarming,  
 clear the entrance with their poisonous breath.  
 Yet his exceedingly brilliant sword shines  
 and the hilt gleams over the graves.’)

No myth underlying this micro-story has been identified so far, and it is very possible that it never existed in its present form.<sup>137</sup> In either case, more important than the authenticity of the story is its function as a comment on the limitations of martial exploits and worldly glory — symbolized by the sword shining over the graves — limitations to which Saturn is so blatantly oblivious.<sup>138</sup> It is also not accidental that the protagonist is called a *weallende wulf* and thus endowed with lupine qualities (MAN IS A WOLF), such as ferocity and strength. Unlike a wolf’s predatory nature (of which Þjazi and Loki are guilty), martial vigour is certainly a positive warrior-attribute especially when used against harm-inflicting creatures, and yet it does not produce the desired results. On the contrary, his undertaking has catastrophic consequences. Not only does it bring about his own death, but it also gives rise to equally *weallende atercynn* ‘seething poisonous creatures’ that make the region of the conflict inhabitable. Although celebrated by Saturn as an immortal dragon-slayer, the *wulf*’s presumption both leads to his own destruction and spreads more evil in the region.

The parallels between Woden’s and the *wulf*’s deeds should be obvious. Both figures kill poisonous serpents, but rather than eliminating the threat posed by the creatures, they increase and prolong it. In other words, the narratives contribute to the condemnation of the two pagan figures albeit in two vastly different contexts. Whereas Saturn’s story could be seen as a piece of esoteric knowledge in a purely fictional wisdom contest, the (pseudo-) myth of Woden the serpent-slayer, though also fictional, constitutes an integral part of a healing ritual for Anglo-Saxon patients suffering from a range of infections. As indicated above, both metaphor and metonymy play a crucial role in the identification of Woden’s exploit as the common origin of these infections and thus in the healing process.

*Poems of Wisdom and Learning*, p. 137. Shippey argues for a compound parallel to *feorhcynn* ‘kinds of living creatures’ and *eordcynn* ‘kinds of creatures on the earth’. I find Menner’s translation ‘kinds of poison’ less convincing in the context of the passage. Both options are given in the *Dictionary of Old English*, ed. by Cameron and others, *attor-cynn*, *ātor-cynn*.

<sup>137</sup> Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense*, pp. 149–50.

<sup>138</sup> Olsen, ‘Shining Swords and Heavenly Walls’.

*Wið færstice*

Woden's role in *Maxims I* and *The Nine Herbs Charm* is not as positive as has often been assumed but rather corresponds to that of the disease-inflicting elves in the medical literature. The charm *Wið færstice* 'For a Sudden Stitch' confirms the negative attitude towards these remnants of a lost pagan period.<sup>139</sup> Here Æsir, elves, and *hægtessan* are conceived as malevolent supernatural beings intent upon inflicting bodily pain by shooting projectiles at their victims:<sup>140</sup>

Wið færstice: feferfuige and seo reade netele ðe þurh ærn inwyxð and  
wegbrade; wyll in buteran.  
Hlude wæran hy, la hlude, ða hy ofer þone hlæw ridan,  
wæran anmode, ða hy ofer land ridan.  
Scyld ðu ðe nu, þu ðysne nið genesan mote.  
Ut, lytel spere, gif her inne sie!  
Stod under linde, under leohtum scylde,  
þær ða mihtigan wif hyra mægen beræddon  
and hy gyllende garas sændan  
Ic him oðerne eft wille sændan,  
fleogende flane forane togeanes.  
Ut, lyte[l] spere, gif hit her inne<sup>141</sup> sy!  
Sæt smið, sloh seax,  
lytel iserna, wund<sup>142</sup> swiðe.  
Ut, lytel spere, gif her inne sy!  
Syx smiðas sætan, wælspera worhtan.  
Ut spere, næs in, spere!  
Gif her inne sy isenes dæl,  
hægtessan geweorc, hit sceal gemyltan.  
Gif ðu wære on fell scoten, oððe wære on flæsc scoten  
oððe wære on blod scoten<sup>143</sup>  
oððe wære on lið scoten, næfre ne sy ðin lif atæsed;  
gif hit wære esa gescot oððe hit wære ylfa gescot  
oððe hit wære hægtessan gescot, nu ic will ðin helpen.  
Þis ðe to bote esa gescotes, ðis ðe to bote ylfa gescotes,

<sup>139</sup> For a brief discussion of the date of the poem, see Hall, *Elves*, pp. 109–10.

<sup>140</sup> *Wið Færstice*, ed. and trans. by Pettit, I, 90, 92, 94. My punctuation.

<sup>141</sup> *Herinne* in Pettit's edition.

<sup>142</sup> Dobbie (*Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, p. 122) emends to *wundrum*, but this emendation is not necessary. Pettit reads *wundswiðe*.

<sup>143</sup> Pettit adds 'oððe wære on ban scoten', an emendation that was suggested by earlier editors.

ðis ðe to bote hægtessan gescotes; ic ðin wille helpan.  
 Fleo<sup>144</sup> þær on fyrgenheafde.  
 Hal westu, helpe ðin drihten!  
 Nim þonne þæt seax, ado on wætan.

(Against a sudden stitch, feverfew and the red nettle, which grows into a house, and waybroad; boil in butter.

Loud they were, lo, loud, when they rode over the mound,  
 they were resolute when they rode over the land.

Shield yourself now that you may escape this enmity/strife.

Out, little spear, if you be in here.

I/he<sup>145</sup> stood under the linden tree, under a light shield,  
 where the mighty women deliberated about their power,  
 and sent[,] screaming[,] spears;<sup>146</sup>

I will send another [one] back to them,  
 a flying arrow from the opposite side, towards them.

Out, little spear, if it be in here!

A smith sat, forged a knife,  
 little iron, great wound.

Out, little spear, if it be in here!

Six smiths sat, made slaughter-spears.

Out, little spear, not in, spear!

If a piece of iron be in here,  
 the work of *hægtessan*, it must melt.

If you were shot in the skin, or were shot in the flesh,  
 or were shot in the blood,

or were shot in the limb, may your life never be injured;

if it were the shot of *Æsir*, or it were the shot of elves,

or it were the shot of *hægtessan*<sup>147</sup>, now I will help you.

This [be] your remedy for the shot of *Æsir*, this your remedy for the shot of elves,  
 this your remedy for the shot of *hægtessan*; I will help you.

Fly there on the mountain top.

Be whole, God help you!

Take then the knife, put into liquid.)

<sup>144</sup> Pettit retains MS *fled*.

<sup>145</sup> For the two different renderings of the verbal form *stod* and their implications, see below.

<sup>146</sup> In this apo koinou construction, *gyllende* 'screaming' refers to both women and spears, thus reinforcing the hostile intentions of the antagonists.

<sup>147</sup> For a justification of a genitive plural which is necessary for the maintenance of the parallel structure of the exorcism, see Hall, *Elves*, p. 3 n. 8.

Alaric Hall has shown that Old English *gescoten* and *gescot* are polysemic words, meaning 'shot' or 'projectile' (< OE *sceotan* 'shoot') and, in the later medical texts, 'pained' and 'sharp pain'.<sup>148</sup> According to Hall, the poet ingeniously conflated the metaphorical sense of the words (i.e. 'pain') with the literal sense of being shot with a missile and in this way effected a most potent remedy against the pain:

What *Wið færstice* shows is that these words were at times incorporated into dramatic mythological narratives in which a *gescot* is metaphorically conceived in another of the word's senses, as a magical projectile. This strategy gave the ailment an ultimate as well as a proximate source, and created a narrative in which the healer tackled the disease at its root — neither treating merely the symptoms nor merely defending the patient against supernatural assault, but mounting a dramatic counter-offensive. Moreover, *Wið færstice* re-narrates the situation of the patient as part of a heroic struggle in which he or she represents the in-group in opposition to external forces. A potentially debilitating ailment, potentially restricting the economic contribution of the sufferer to the community, is recast in martial, heroic terms as a wound.<sup>149</sup>

In cognitive terms, a conceptual blend is created in which the elements of two input domains — here the physical stabbing pain experienced by the patient and the shooting of projectiles by hostile supernatural beings — have metonymic and metaphorical connections. The invisible *cause* of such pain (input 1) is imagined as a missile shot (input 2) and thus in terms of a concrete concept belonging to a different conceptual domain (i.e. warfare). In fact, the resultant blend of stabbing pain, invisible physical projectiles, and supernatural beings blurs the boundaries between a literal and metaphorical understanding of the world presented in the charm. Although we know today that the cognitive process involves metaphor, the notion of penetrating invisible projectiles shot by hostile entities may have been very real to practitioner and patient.<sup>150</sup>

The belief in elf-shot, however, does not require that the micro-narrative in the first part of the charm reflects a genuine myth. The details of the story are certainly so vague that they have evoked different interpretations. Stanley

<sup>148</sup> Hall, *Elves*, p. 100.

<sup>149</sup> Hall, *Elves*, p. 115.

<sup>150</sup> The possibility of an extant belief in aggressive supernatural beings that torment their victims with projectiles is enhanced by a reference to elf-arrow heads shot by the presumed witch Issobel Gowdie in the texts of some early Scottish witchcraft trials (Hall, *Elves*, p. 114). The Modern German term *Hexenschuss* for the ailment of lumbago is first illustrated in a woodcut inserted in the treatise *Won den unholden oder hexen* (*Tractatus von den bösen weibern, die man nennet die hexen*) by Ulrich Molitor, printed by Johann Zainer in 1489 [?].



Hauer, for example, argues that the riders in line 1 are counterparts to, if not identical with, the members of Woden's Furious Host, who reappear as *ese* in lines 23a and 25a, while the mighty women and six smiths can be identified as the witches and elves in lines 21 to 24a.<sup>151</sup> Yet such neat correlation between the groups in each section of the poem has its problems. To begin with, the identification of smiths and elves is mainly based on the interpretations of specific references in Icelandic texts, such as the sporadic references to *Vølundr* in *Vølundarkviða* as *vísi álfa* 'leader of the elves' (st. 13, 32) and *álfa ljóði* 'member of the elves' (st. 10), as well as on Snorri's obvious equation of the metal-working dwarves with *svartálfar* 'black elves'.<sup>152</sup> Although we find Snorri's fusion of a certain type of elves with dwarves in dwarf names like *Gandálfr*, *Vindálfr*, and *Álfr* in *Vølusþá* (sts 12, 16),<sup>153</sup> any use of evidence from Old Norse sources for the interpretation of Old English texts should be approached with caution, especially when the evidence is as scanty as here. No metal-working elves are mentioned in the Scandinavian texts of the Viking Age, and even the references to *Vølundr* as *álfa ljóði* and *vísi álfa* are open to interpretation, since the phrases could very well be metaphorical. In this case, *Vølundr* is credited with some unspecified elvish qualities, which could indeed be as general as their otherworldly nature and not include any smithing skills.<sup>154</sup>

The identity of the riders and the *mihtigan wif* remains equally elusive. Although they may be Hauer's *Æsir* and shooting *hægtessan* respectively, it seems safest not to define the group too closely and focus on the causal link between the actions of the protagonists in the charm and the ailment. The most straightforward explanation would be that the riders are also the *mightigan wif*, who advance on horseback and then attack the person standing under the linden tree, and that the *wælsperu* 'slaughter-spears' produced by the six smiths are

<sup>151</sup> Hauer, 'Structure and Unity', pp. 252–53. For a more recent analysis of the smiths and their elfin nature, see Hall, *Elves*, p. 114.

<sup>152</sup> In Snorri's *Gylfaginning* (ed. by Faulkes, p. 28), for example, Óðinn sends Freyr's messenger Skírnir down to *svartálfaheimr*, the 'world of the black elves', to have dwarves make the fetter Gleipnir, with which the Fenriswolf is finally bound. Similarly, in *Skáldskaparmál*, Snorri relates how Loki, after having cut off Sif's hair, has to go to the *svartálfar*: 'eptir þat for Loki til þæra dverga, er heita Ivallda synir, ok gerþv þeir haddin ok Skiðblaðni ok geirinn, er Óþinn [Óþinn] atti, er Gvngnir heitir' (after that Loki went to the dwarves called Ivaldi's sons, and they made the head of hair and Skiðblaðnir and Óðinn's spear called Gungnir). Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 122.

<sup>153</sup> *Vølusþá*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, pp. 3, 4.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Chapter 3, p. 102 n. 45.

identical with the *gyllende garas* thrown by the noisy women. This explanation, however, does not shed any further light on the nature of the aggressive, loud horsewomen, who might be shooting elves, witches, or female divinities akin to Scandinavian valkyries or *dísir*.<sup>155</sup> The notion of them riding over a *hlew*, most likely a burial mound, unfortunately does not decide the issue. As Howard Williams has demonstrated, burial mounds were probably perceived in early Anglo-Saxon England as liminal spaces frequented by supernatural beings, which could be any of the four groups described here.<sup>156</sup>

Given the unclear nature of the story, it is quite possible that the *historiola* — like the micro-narrative featuring Woden the serpent-slayer in *The Nine Herbs Charm* — was invented or at least re-invented as part of the healing ritual.<sup>157</sup> From a cognitive perspective, it constitutes yet another rich blend which arises from a considerable number of inputs including the weapon-producing smiths, the furious riders, and the mighty women. As already mentioned, the relationships between these inputs can be construed differently; nevertheless, relationships of identity between the riders and the *mihrtigan wif* and between the *walsperu* and the *gyllende garas* do increase the cohesion and therefore also the efficacy of the charm. The smiths manufacture the spears that are used by the hostile female beings in their assaults (blend 1) and that correspond to the projectiles that wound the patient (blend 2). The two blends are moreover analogously related: just as the riding women once threw spears at the person standing under the linden tree, female supernatural beings in the form of elves, *Æsir*, or *hægtessan* have now done the same to the patient. The results, however, are different. Whereas the protagonist of the micro-narrative was able to cast the spears back, the patient has been wounded and now suffers from severe stabbing pain. The effectiveness of the charm and its ritual consequently depends on the successful repetition of the act done in the (imagined) mythic past in a third blend. The patient's pain is conceptualized as the result of cast projectiles, which could be averted in the past and need to be exorcized in the present situation by sympathetic magic: the successful defence in the *historiola* is hence transposed as desired outcome for the present situation in

<sup>155</sup> See also p. 44 for the use of *dís* as kenning element. A well-known narrative in which inimical *dísir* figure prominently is the story of Þiðrandi in *Þiðrandi þáttur ok Þórþalls* in *Ólaf's saga Tryggvasonar* (Flateyjarbók) (Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North*, pp. 221–24 and n. 15). Nine supernatural women called *dísir* and *fylgjur* in the story attack and kill Þiðrandi for his and his companions' openness towards the Christian faith.

<sup>156</sup> Williams, 'Monuments and the Past'. See also Semple, 'A Fear of the Past'.

<sup>157</sup> See also Chickering, 'The Literary Magic of "Wið Færstice"', pp. 97–99.

this additional blend. But who is the person fighting his supernatural enemies, particularly since the verbal form *stod* allows a first- or third-person subject? If *stod* is rendered as ‘he stood’, the referent is a hero or god who successfully withstood the hostile attack in the historiola, and whose success is now to be repeated; if the verb is a first-person form, the practitioner uttering the charm imagines himself as the antagonist of the supernatural women in the story, a possibility that would create an additional link between the present and the past.

The fact that *Æsir*, elves, and *hægtessan* are on the practitioner’s blacklist in the second part of the charm illustrates that there is little differentiation among the various groups of supernatural beings; it is sufficient that they belong to a pagan past and are inimical to the Christian patient. Yet the alterity of the belligerent *mihtigan wif* also has a socio-cultural dimension. Although it was possible for a woman to engage in military campaigns, as the example of *Æðelflæd*, Lady of the Mercians and sister of Edward the Elder (r. 899–924) suggests, warrior women must have been very rare indeed.<sup>158</sup> Excavations of female graves in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries have shown that women’s responsibilities revolved around the household rather than the battlefield.<sup>159</sup> In the secular literature of Anglo-Saxon England, women do not fight either. Only Grendel’s monstrous mother takes physical action when she kills King Hroðgar’s dearest counsellor *Æschere*, and she can hardly be seen as a role model.<sup>160</sup>

Finally, there are the smiths whose role in the charm has been subject to much controversy. It is not inconceivable that the seven smiths assist the speaker by supplying him with the *walsperu* in his struggle against the hostile women and with the knife for his treatment at the end of the charm.<sup>161</sup> The *walsperu* are

<sup>158</sup> *Æðelflæd*’s achievements are mentioned in the Mercian Register, a series of annals that focus on Mercia during the reign of Edward the Elder in MSS B, C, and D of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. *Æðelflæd*’s career has received considerable attention. See Wainwright, ‘Aethelflæd’. Another example is Queen *Æðelburg*, wife of Ine of Wessex who in 722, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ‘towearp Tantum 7 Ine ær timbrede’ (demolished Taunton, which Ine had built). Text taken from *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS A*, ed. by Bately, p. 34.

<sup>159</sup> Typical grave goods found in female graves are jewellery, dress accessories, household utensils, and items related to cloth making; weapons are usually not among the items. For a discussion of burial practices and the information they yield on the relationship between biological sex and cultural gender, see Lucy, ‘Gender and Gender Roles’. For specific analyses of weapon finds in female graves, see Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear*, p. 76; Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, pp. 89–90. See also Walton Rogers, *Cloth and Clothing*, p. 199.

<sup>160</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 131–33.

<sup>161</sup> The possibility that all smiths are benevolent has been suggested by Storms (*Anglo-Saxon Magic*, pp. 146–47) and Chickering (‘The Literary Magic of “Wið Færstice”’;

consequently identical with the *fleogende flane* 'flying arrow' rather than with the *gyllende garas*. The problem with this alternative approach is that it introduces allies whose benevolent nature is not easily explained in the Christian context of the charm, for the final benediction reveals that the healing ritual can only be successful with God's help.<sup>162</sup> In other words, the imagined conflict is most likely one fought between the Christian patient and healer, on the one hand, and various groups of hostile supernatural beings from a pagan past, on the other. The clear division between good and evil also makes it highly improbable that six smiths are malevolent and one benevolent, as argued by Hauer.<sup>163</sup> This leaves us with *þæt seax* mentioned at the end of the poem. Since the demonstrative *þæt* suggests an earlier reference to the *seax*, it may be identical with the smith's *seax lytel*. According to Hall, the supernatural *seax* is drawn from the patient's body and put into a liquid afterwards in a shamanic ritual, which would further blur the line between the real and the imagined and thus strengthen the cohesion of the charm: the source of the stabbing pain conceptualized as an invisible knife turns literally into a physical object.<sup>164</sup> Although the presence of such a ritual is certainly possible, details remain obscure.<sup>165</sup> Perhaps the wound was covered with some cloth with a knife hidden underneath it so that it could be produced after the incantation, or the knife might have been part of a secondary ritual not specified in the text. Less speculative would be the assumption that the referent of *þæt* is the knife in the practitioner's hand instead of the smith's *seax lytel*. The healer dips the knife into the concoction for some medicinal procedure like, for instance, an incision for blood-letting. The knife would then be pitched against the evil power of the knife of the smith, just as the healer (or hero/god) fought the *gyllende garas* of the *mihtigan wif* with another *gar*.

pp. 100–01). Storms identifies the single smith as Weland/Völundr, but this identification cannot be proven.

<sup>162</sup> Doskow, 'Poetic Structure and the Problem of the Smiths', pp. 324, 326.

<sup>163</sup> Hauer, 'Structure and Unity', pp. 255–56. Hauer, however, allows the possibility that all smiths are evil.

<sup>164</sup> Hall, *Elves*, p. 111.

<sup>165</sup> In his *Shamanism and Old English Poetry*, pp. 18–19, Glosecki describes a ritual involving the sucking out of infections among the North American Shoshone Indians. The 'medicine man' draws the infection from the patient's body into his own body and into a large feather. He rids himself of the disease by repeated vomiting, while the feather is shaken several times at a lump of raw meat which is subsequently burned. No connection between any possible magical shots causing the infection and the feather is made. See further Lévi-Strauss, 'The Sorcerer and his Magic', pp. 167–85.

The association between malignant forces and smiths is certainly not surprising, given the Christian context of the charm's transmission. The portrayal of hell as a hot smithy can be found in various Anglo-Saxon homilies, of which the twelfth-century 'Old English Honorius' provides a good example:<sup>166</sup>

On swylcen wisen (þegneð) se deofol ure Drihtene. Hwu þegneð he him? For he nolde beon mid uren Drihtene on wuldre mid wele 7 mid blisse buten geswyncne, þa geaf God him ane wica þæt he næfre ne byð (ge)swyncleas, for he is smið, 7 his heorð is seo gedrefodnysse, 7 seo tyntrega. Ða hameres 7 þa beliges synden þa costninga, þa tangen synden ehteres, þa fielen 7 þa sagen synd þara manna tungen, þe wyrceð hatunge betweenan heora encristene, 7 bliðelice specað yfel. Ðurh swylcene smið 7 þurh swylce tol, geclænsað ure Drihten þære halgena sawlen, ac of þan yfela mannen God sylf nymð þa wræce.<sup>167</sup>

(The devil serves our Lord in such ways. How does he serve him? Because he did not wish to be with our Lord in glory with prosperity and grace without toil, God gave him then one dwelling that he is never without labour, for he is a smith, and his hearth is trouble and torment. The hammers and the bellows are the temptations, the thongs are the persecutors, the files and the saws are the men's tongues which create hatred among their fellow Christians and happily speak evil. Through such a smith and through such instruments does our Lord cleanse the souls of the holy, but on the evil ones God takes vengeance himself.)

The infernal connotations of the smith make him a perfect associate of the evil pagan divinities and an equally perfect target in the healing ritual: the micro-story of belligerent demonic women and their helpers hence aided the healer to localize, marginalize, and finally remove the source of the patient's pain.

In the end, we are left with two charms that present a number of non-Christian (minor) divinities in a not very flattering way. Unlike their Scandinavian

<sup>166</sup> A second occurrence of the image can be found in an eleventh-century Gospel of Nicodemus homily. The homily appears in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 303, pp. 72–75 (p. 73), s. xii, as well as in the margins of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 41, pp. 295–301 (p. 297), s. xi<sup>1</sup>. The marginalia date from the mid-eleventh century. See Grant, *The B Text of the Old English Bede*, pp. 7–8. Hell is also associated with a hot and noisy smithy in the very popular 'The Devil's Account of the Next World' to be found in Vercelli Homily IX (Vercelli, Bibliotheca Capitolare, MS CXVII, fols 61<sup>r</sup>–65<sup>v</sup>, s. x<sup>2</sup>) and several related texts. In the tale, the devil gives an anchorite a detailed account of a hypothetical infernal smithy only to show that no imaginable place of suffering can match the torments of hell. The smithy is surrounded by an iron wall and is filled with a roaring fire stoked by the smiths' bellows and the noise of their hammers. *The Vercelli Homilies*, ed. by Scragg, pp. 151–90 (p. 176). See also Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, pp. 175–214.

<sup>167</sup> *Early English Homilies*, ed. by Warner, p. 141.

counterparts, Woden the serpent-slayer, the aggressive *mihtigan wif*, *hægtessan*, Æsir, and elves are not the protagonists of mythological poems but appear in micro-stories of questionable authenticity that form an integral part of specific healing rituals. Regardless of whether the divinities are made directly or indirectly responsible for the patient's ailment, their antagonistic role undoubtedly constitutes an essential element in the Christian healer's cure.

## Lebor Gabála Érenn and the Cycle of the Gods

### Introduction

Whereas references to native deities are scarce in the Anglo-Saxon corpus, the medieval Irish *literati* seem to have been more willing to write about their mythical past. Tales, place-name lore, and the pseudo-historical *Lebor Gabála Érenn* 'The Book of the Taking of Ireland' feature the often violent stories of many different divinities which are inextricably linked with the topography and alleged history of ancient Ireland.<sup>168</sup> The divinities to be examined in this section are the Túatha Dé Danann 'Tribes of the Goddess Danu', whose struggles with their enemies are depicted in the prosimetric tale *Cath Maige Tuired* 'The Battle of Mag Tuired' as well as in some of the prose sections and poems of *Lebor Gabála*. In *Cath Maige Tuired*, the Túatha Dé Danann defeat and expel the demonic Fomoiri in a battle that has repeatedly been seen as a reflex of the Indo-European myth of the War of the Gods;<sup>169</sup> in *Lebor Gabála*, particularly their struggle with the Fir Bolg is made part of Ireland's imagined past which, modelled on Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, begins with the arrival of Cesair, granddaughter of Noah, in Ireland and ends with the conquest of the island by the Milesians or Gaels.<sup>170</sup> Here the gods constitute the fifth group

<sup>168</sup> For an introduction to the mythological cycle, see, for example, Bhrolcháin, *An Introduction to Early Irish Literature*, pp. 26–40; Dillon, *Early Irish Literature*, pp. 51–72.

<sup>169</sup> *Cath Maige Tuired* has been identified as an eleventh- or twelfth-century redaction of an originally ninth-century tale. It is preserved in sixteenth-century London, British Library, MS Harley 5280, fols 63<sup>v</sup>–70<sup>r</sup>. See Gray, 'Cath Maige Tuired: Myth and Structure (1–24)', p. 184 and n. 3. Gray's study continues in 'Cath Maige Tuired: Myth and Structure (24–120)' and 'Cath Maige Tuired: Myth and Structure (84–93, 120–67)'. Edition and translation of the text by Gray in *Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*. For diachronic treatments of the tale, see Ó Cathasaigh, 'Cath Maige Tuired as Exemplary Myth'; Gray, 'Cath Maige Tuired: Myth and Structure'.

<sup>170</sup> Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála, Part II', pp. 12–13.



of settlers, who displace the Fir Bolg before being themselves displaced by the Gaels. Their dealings with the Fomoiri, on the other hand, receive relatively short shrift. In fact, Mark Scowcroft has argued that the invasion of the Túatha Dé Danann was added last to the list and that the battle between the Fir Bolg and the Túatha Dé Danann was an invention of *Lebor Gabála*, which, once it had been incorporated into Ireland's history, was noted by the redactor of *Cath Maige Tuired* (§§ 9 and 10) and became the inspiration for the late prose tale *Cath Maige Tuired Cunga* 'The Battle of Mag Tuired at Cong.' According to Scowcroft, the battle constituted a euhemerized version of the battle between the Túatha Dé Danann and the Fomoiri, which, 'proving tenacious in tradition and sufficiently different from *LG*'s version to be interpreted as a separate event, was added to the canon.'<sup>171</sup> Theomachy had certainly no place in a work preoccupied with the linking of Ireland's past with biblical history, and even though the Túatha Dé Danann could not be ignored by the *literati*, they could be marginalized. Throughout the work, they are presented partly as a demonic race and partly as fierce warriors skilled in witchcraft and other pagan arts who, together with the Fomoiri, defeat the Fir Bolg and later yield to the superior Milesians.

### Fomoiri and Túatha Dé Danann in *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*

Both *Cath Maige Tuired* and *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* provide us with insights into different conceptualizations of the gods and their foes. Nevertheless, since only *Lebor Gabála* contains intelligible poetry of interest, the investigation has been restricted to this work.<sup>172</sup> First attested in the twelfth-century Book of Leinster (Recension I) but with a core narrative that may date from the late ninth century, it contains numerous poems by tenth- and eleventh-century poets, including Eochaid úa Flainn (936–1004), Flann Mainistrech mac Echthigirn (d. 1056), Tanaide (d. c. 1075), and Gilla Cóemáin (fl. 1072).<sup>173</sup> The Fomoiri are mentioned in the prose texts and poems long before the Túatha Dé Danann

<sup>171</sup> Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála, Part II', p. 36. Murphy ('Notes on *Cath Maige Tuired*', pp. 191–98, 204) first illustrated that the tradition of a first battle fought between Fir Bolg and Túatha Dé Danann post-dates the tradition of the battle between the Túatha and the Fomoiri. Murphy assigns *Cath Maige Tuired* in its extant form to the eleventh or twelfth century. For the text of the first battle, see *The First Battle of Moytura*, ed. and trans. by Fraser.

<sup>172</sup> No attempt has been made to translate the obscure poetry in paragraphs 129, 133, 136, 137, 141, and 162 of *Cath Maige Tuired* (Gray's edition). The last poem (Gray's § 167) consisting of two prophecies uttered by the Morrigan (i.e. one of the war goddesses) has been edited and translated by Carey, 'Myth and Mythography', pp. 66–69.

<sup>173</sup> Carey, *A New Introduction to 'Lebor Gabála Éirenn'*, p. 5.



'People of the Goddess Danu' enter the narrative, and may once have been forces of darkness and chaos embodying a radical form of inter-cultural alterity. Scholars have interpreted *fomoiri* either as a compound consisting of *fo* 'under' and *mor* < *muir* 'sea' and thus as an allusion to their maritime nature, or as a compound consisting of *fo* and *\*mor* 'mare' (cf. Germ. *Mahr*; OE, ON *mara* as in nightmare) meaning 'underwater demons' or 'inferior/latent demons' (cf. Morrígan 'queen of demons').<sup>174</sup> John Carey prefers the second etymology:

Who are the Fomoiri? They appear repeatedly in *Lebor Gabála*, always as adversaries, but we are told nothing of their origin or nature. Even their name is puzzling; but it may provide the clue we need. It consists of two elements, *fo*- and *-mor*: *fo* means 'under', and *mor*- is a cognate of the second element in such words as English 'nightmare', German *Nachtmahr*. The Fomoiri may perhaps be taken, then, to embody the terrors or dangers which lurk beneath the surface of our waking lives, even as the Morrígan, the war goddess whose name preserves the only other trace of this root in Irish, is associated with the panic of the battlefield.<sup>175</sup>

According to Carey, the Fomoiri represent lower powers in *Lebor Gabála* that rise against the efforts of the second and third groups of settlers to cultivate the land and thereby to impose order on the inchoate.<sup>176</sup> Lake bursts occur and plains are cleared by Partholón's and Nemed's peoples, yet neither group is able to enjoy the topological changes. While a week-long plague kills Partholón's entire race (except for Partholón's kinsman Tuán, who lived until the time of Colum Cille [St Columba]), the Nemedians perish in a sea battle against the Fomoiri. Unlike the Partholónians, the Nemedians try to turn their opponents into servants but subsequently have to succumb to them and give an annual tribute of two thirds of their grain, milk, and children every Samain night. Drained of their natural resources, they rebel against their oppressors, kill the leader of the Fomoiri, and are themselves killed (except for thirty warriors) in the mutual slaughter that follows in the ensuing sea battle. The Fomoiri, however, can only temporarily be controlled, as they re-emerge as both allies and enemies of the Túatha Dé Danann at a later stage.

<sup>174</sup> The combination of *fo* and *mor* < *muir* was suggested by Meyer. Meyer rendered the name as a people's name with the meaning 'ein nach der See gelegendes Land' (*Über die älteste irische Dichtung*, II, 60).

<sup>175</sup> Carey, 'Native Elements in Irish Pseudohistory', p. 50. The rendering of *\*mor* 'mare' was first suggested by Thurneysen, in *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 64; see also Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, *Gods and Heroes of the Celts*, p. 5.

<sup>176</sup> Carey, 'Native Elements in Irish Pseudohistory', pp. 49–51.

The alliance between Fomoiri and Túatha Dé Danann was not invented by the compilers of *Lebor Gabála*. In *Cath Maige Tuired*, the binary opposition has also given way to an intricate system of inter-cultural affinities characterized by intermarriage, shared cultural practices, and political transactions not unlike the affinities between gods and giants in the Old Norse mythological world. Lug Lámfada ‘of the Long Arm’ himself has a Fomorian grandfather, the one-eyed Balor,<sup>177</sup> whom he kills in the battle at Mag Tuired, while the beautiful Fomorian Elatha mac Delbaith has sexual liaisons with the goddesses Eithne and Ériu, which produce the champion Ogma and the less reputable Bres. After Nuadu Airgetlám ‘Silver Arm’ has lost his arm in the battle with the Fir Bolg, Bres is made ruler of the Túatha Dé Danann but turns out to be a niggardly sovereign.<sup>178</sup> His rule is marked by the heavy tributes inflicted by three Fomorian kings (i.e. Indech mac Dé Domnann, Elatha mac Delbaith, and Tethra) on the Túatha Dé Danann, which curtail the latter’s prosperity and cause the chief gods Ogma and the Dagda literally to waste away, and it is only with the help of Lug that the Túatha Dé Danann can gain the upper hand again.<sup>179</sup> In spite of such complications, the sides are nevertheless clearly defined in *Cath Maige Tuired*. Although the Túatha Dé Danann are guilty of bad judgement, they never cease constituting the in-group. As *fir n-Éirenn* ‘men of Ireland’ (an identification that occurs eighteen times in the text), they successfully combat all forces that pose a threat to their well-being. Not only do they dispose of Bres, but with the aid of Lug they also overcome the Fomoiri,

<sup>177</sup> Balor’s eye is special. While he was watching his father’s druids brewing magic, the poisonous fumes of the brew settled in his eye; since then his enemies are seized with terror when looking at it.

<sup>178</sup> Bres’ depravity has been explained in various ways. Carey (‘Myth and Mythography’, p. 58) sees the bad ruler as mythological re-enactment of ninth-century cultural developments during the Viking invasions. As the product of a native mother and a foreign father he represents the ‘erosion of native values’ brought about by alliances between Irishmen and Vikings. Alternatively, Gray (‘*Cath Maige Tuired*: Myth and Structure (84–93, 120–67)’, pp. 236–37) argues that Bres symbolizes the detrimental consequences for the woman’s tribe if she takes a man from another tribe. In fact, the comparison Bres-Loki comes to mind, since Loki is the product of a similarly disadvantageous union (here between goddess and giant). Like Loki, Bres does not conform to the rules of the tribe, a failure that disturbs the social peace and, once he is satirized by Caibre of the Túatha Dé Danann, deprives him of his right to rule.

<sup>179</sup> The notion of a just king occurs both in legal texts, which treat violations of *fir flathmon* ‘a king’s justice’, and in wisdom literature. A well-known wisdom text that connects a ruler’s prosperous reign directly to his justice is the late seventh-century *Audacht Morainn* ‘The Testament of Morann’, ed. and trans. by Kelly, esp. pp. 6–7.

who are identified as *trénfir ant sídho* ‘champions of the *síd*’.<sup>180</sup> In the end, the inter-cultural tensions between the Túatha Dé Danann and Fomoiri and the internal conflicts within each tribe are resolved in favour of the gods, whose superiority is subsequently confirmed.

In *Lebor Gabála*, such tensions between the two mythological races are ignored: the Túatha Dé Danann and the Fomoiri first fight together against the Fir Bolg, then against each other, and finally unite again in their struggle against the Sons of Míl.<sup>181</sup>

I cind trí lá 7 tí n-aidchi iar sein ro brisset Meic Míled cath Slébi Mis for demno 7 Fomoraig, .i. for Túaith Dé Danand.

(At the end of three days and three nights thereafter the sons of Míl broke the battle of Sliab Mis against the demons and Fomoraig, that is, against the Túatha Dé Danann.<sup>182</sup>)

The text is not clear on whether *Túatha Dé Danann* is just another name for the Fomoiri, or whether it is a collective term encompassing both Fomoiri and demons (Lug’s tribe?). In the Book of Leinster, furthermore, *Fomoraig* is omitted, which makes the Túatha Dé Danann demons, and in Recension II (which is by no means secondary and in fact has been assessed as slightly older than

<sup>180</sup> *Cath Maige Tuired*, ed. and trans. by Gray, § 41 (p. 34 [text]).

<sup>181</sup> McCone argues for a connection between the role of the Túatha Dé Danann and the Israelites. Since the invaders are called Túatha Dé without the name of the goddess Danu, and since the expression *túath Dé* refers to the Israelites in early Irish texts, he sees this wordplay as a ‘deliberate ploy to associate these conquerors of Ireland with those of the promised land’ (*Pagan Past and Christian Present*, p. 70). The Fir Bolg and the Fomoiri would then be counterparts to the Canaanites and the Philistines. Nevertheless, McCone concedes that the Túatha Dé Danann do not keep this role throughout the history of invasions but adopt the role of the Canaanites during the Milesian invasion, with the Gaels now representing the Israelites. McCone also fails to mention the previous alliance between Fomoiri and Túatha Dé Danann.

<sup>182</sup> *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, v, § 387 (p. 32 [text], p. 33 [translation]). Recension I of *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* can be found in The Book of Leinster (Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1339 [H 2.18], pp. 1–26, s. xii<sup>2</sup>), The Book of Fermoy (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MSS 23 E 29, pp. 1–16, and D.iii.1, fols 1’–14’, s. xiv), and a manuscript that was formerly MS 1 in Longford-Westmeath Co. Library, Mullingar (two fragments written by Seaghan Ó Maoil-Chonaire in 1560). For a study of the manuscript tradition of *Lebor Gabála*, see Scowcroft, ‘Mediaeval Recensions’; Scowcroft, ‘*Leabhar Gabhála*, Part I’. The manuscripts are listed in ‘*Leabhar Gabhála*, Part I’, pp. 85–86. See also the description of Recension I in *Codecs* published online by the A. G. van Hamel Foundation. All citations are from Recension I of *Lebor Gabála*.

Recension I),<sup>183</sup> they are in league with demons and *siabrai* 'spectres'.<sup>184</sup> Despite these uncertainties, however, it is safe to assume that the two groups are united by a common demonic nature in their struggle against the human invaders, who become the new and legitimate men of Ireland. In other words, new boundaries are created between the Gaels, who constitute the in-group, and the other two races, who are excluded from the in-group and embody the Other. But how should 'demonic nature', a form of radical alterity after all, be defined here? Are the Túatha Dé Danann demons or do they only have demonic qualities, moving them somewhat closer to the Gaels? Since they are descendants of Japhet, their identification as demons should be metaphorical, yet at least in the cited passage they may be conceptualized as entities whose ontological status vacillates between human and demon.<sup>185</sup>

In the remaining prose texts of *Lebor Gabála*, the Túatha Dé Danann are presented as humans, in the form of both fierce warriors and false divinities skilled in sorcery and pagan arts. Their magical skills are particularly emphasized in the description of their arrival (Recension I):

Batar iarum clanda Bethaig meic Iarboneóil Fada meic Nemid in insib túascerta-chaib in domain, oc foglaím druidechta ⁊ fessa ⁊ fástini ⁊ amainsechta, combtar fortaile for cerdaib súithe gentliuchta.

(Thereafter the progeny of Bethach s[on] Iarbonel the Soothsayer s[on] of Nemed were in the northern islands of the world, learning druidry and knowledge and prophecy and magic till they were expert in the art[s] of pagan cunning.<sup>186</sup>)

<sup>183</sup> Scowcroft, 'Mediaeval Recensions', esp. pp. 15–18. Recension II has been transmitted in the three sub-recensions *r* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B 512, new fols 75B–90, s. xv–xvi<sup>in</sup>; Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1433 [E 3.5], part 2, s. xv), *l* (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MSS D.v.1, D.iv.1, s. xiv–xv, D.i.3, various dates; Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 2 [Great Book of Lecan], fols 1–16, s. xv<sup>in</sup>), and *D* (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS D. iv.3, s. xvi). Scowcroft, 'Mediaeval Recensions', p. 4; Scowcroft, '*Leabhar Gabhála*, Part I', p. 86; A. G. van Hamel Foundation, '*Lebor Gabála Éirenn*: Second Redaction'.

<sup>184</sup> 'In tres láithe iar tiachtain dóib an Éirinn ro fichset cath Sléibe Miss fri demnu ⁊ siabra ⁊ Túatha De Danann' (The third day after their coming into Ireland, they [i.e. the Sons of Míl] fought the battle of Sliab Mis against demons, and spectres, and Túatha Dé Danann). *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, v, § 420 (p. 60 [text], 61 [translation]).

<sup>185</sup> For Grendel's similarly uncertain ontology, see pp. 134–37.

<sup>186</sup> *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, v, § 304 (p. 106 [text], p. 107 [translation]). A variant of the cited paragraph occurs in *Cath Maige Tuired*. It is the first of seven paragraphs that were copied from an interpolated version of Recension I of *Lebor Gabála*. *Cath Maige Tuired*, ed. and trans. by Gray, p. 24 (text), p. 25 (translation). See also Carey, 'Myth and Mythography', pp. 53–54.

Elizabeth Gray has argued that sorcery and magic were acceptable skills in early Ireland as long as they were not used for pagan worship,<sup>187</sup> but the observation that these crafts made the Túatha Dé Danann ‘fortaile for cerdaib súithe gent-liuchta’ (expert in the arts of *pagan cunning*) could suggest disapproval by the Christian *literati*. In Recension II, furthermore, the Túatha Dé Danann follow more specifically the teachings of the devil: they studied *druidechta diabuil* ‘devil’s druidry’ until they were experts in ‘cach diabul-dán na druidhechta’ (every diabolic art of druidry), skills that they first used against the Philistines by conjuring demons in the shapes of dead Athenians in order to secure victory for the people of Athens.<sup>188</sup> According to this version, the Túatha Dé Danann belong to the human community, yet their questionable rites also affiliate them with the demonic. Interestingly, such a critical stance towards the old gods is not necessarily shared by the authors of the poetic sections. Only in the poem *Ériu co n-uaill, co n-idnaib* ‘Ireland with Pride, with Spears’ by Eochaid úa Flainn (presumably Eochaid úa Flannucáin)<sup>189</sup> are the Túatha Dé Danann presented as a race offensive to God, while Tanaide, Flann Mainistrech, and the author of the poem *Dene mo [f]resnis, a mic* ‘Answer my Questions, Lad’ seem to be less judgemental. Even in the more sympathetic poems, however, the old gods are tolerated or even praised only after having been stripped of their significance as former objects of worship. In other words, any potential threat that could still have emanated from their original status as rival divinities is neutralized with their incorporation into the human community.

### Marginalized Gods in Eochaid úa Flainn’s *Ériu co n-uaill, co n-idnaib*

The most condemning view of the Túatha Dé Danann occurs in Eochaid úa Flainn’s *Ériu co n-uaill, co n-idnaib*. In stanzas 2 to 6 of the poem, Eochaid synthesizes the conceptualization of the Túatha Dé Danann as human sorcerers with another, presumably earlier tradition that saw them as demons or fallen angels.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>187</sup> Gray, ‘*Cath Maige Tuired*: Myth and Structure (1–24)’, p. 189; see also Gray, ‘*Cath Maige Tuired*: Myth and Structure (24–120)’, p. 30.

<sup>188</sup> *Lebor Gabála*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, iv, § 320 (p. 138 [text], p. 139 [translation]).

<sup>189</sup> For the identification of Eochaid úa Flainn as Eochaid úa Flannucáin, see Carey, ‘*Lebor Gabála* and the Legendary History of Ireland’, pp. 41–42; Carey, ‘Eochaid ua Flannucáin (c. 936–1004)’.

<sup>190</sup> Carey, ‘Native Elements in Irish Pseudohistory’, p. 54. The view that the Túatha De Danann came from heaven is mentioned in *Scél Tuáin meic Chairill do Finnén Maige Bile* ‘Tuán mac Cairill’s story to Finnén of Mag Bile’, which Carey has assigned to the second half of the

Tricha bliadna iar nGenand  
 gabsat slúraig siabra sonann;  
 for Túaith mBolg búuibthe barann  
 tadall Túaithe Dé Danann.

Dia do dáim, cid dosrimart —  
 gabsat co ngráin, co nglonn-alt,  
 na néill oll-choicthe arracht,  
 for sléib Conmaicne Connacht.

Cen dechla d'Érind, ergnaid,  
 cen ethra, érim n-angbaid,  
 ní fess a fír fo rind-nim,  
 in do nim nó in do thalmain.

Mása do demnaib díabuil,  
 don loinges lengduib láidig,  
 slán co srethaib, co slogaib:  
 clann Bethaig más do dáinib.

Do dáinib an dir dligid  
 in sáergein dían síl serig;  
 Bethach fian-ailén fobaid  
 mac d' Iarbonél meic Nemid.<sup>191</sup>

(Thirty years after Genann  
 troops of spectres took the prosperous land,  
 boasts of anger to the Tuath Bolg,  
 [was] the visitation of the Tuath Dé Danann.<sup>192</sup>

[Their] numbers were sufficient, whatever impelled them;  
 they alit, with horror, in warlike manner,  
 in their cloud, evil wars of spectres,  
 upon the mountains of Conmaicne in Connacht.

Without [...] to skilful Ireland,  
 without ships, a savage journey;

ninth century. *Scél Tuáin meic Chairill*, ed. and trans. by Carey, pp. 94–97 (discussion of date), p. 102 (reference to the Túatha Dé Danann as exiles), p. 106 (translation).

<sup>191</sup> *Lebor Gabála*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, iv, 212, 214 (poem 53). *The Book of Invasions*, trans. by Carey, § 72 (pp. 254–55).

<sup>192</sup> Carey: 'troops of splendid [?] phantoms overcame | the Tuath Bolg, boasts of fury — | the visitation of the Tuath Dé Donann'.

the truth concerning them was not known beneath the starry heaven —  
whether they were of heaven or earth.

If from the demons, it is devils  
that composed the troop of famous dark-cloaked exiles,<sup>193</sup>  
a blaze [?] [drawn up] in ranks and hosts;  
if from men they were Bethach's offspring.

They belong properly among mortals;  
the noble enduring origin of the vigorous race  
was swift Bethach, an island of war-bands [?],  
son of Iarbonél son of Nemed.)

Eochaid's final verdict on the Túatha Dé Danann's ontological status in stanza 6 is clear: the fifth group of invaders must be classified as humans and not as demons. Unlike Grendel, whose uncertain nature, as I will illustrate in Chapter 3, derives from the blend of the literal concepts 'man', 'spirit', and 'demon', the Túatha Dé Danann 'properly belong among mortals' (st. 5). Still, the details in the preceding stanzas are suspiciously vague, particularly if compared to those given in an interpolated version of Recension I of *Lebor Gabála*. According to this version, the Túatha Dé Danann belonged to Bethach's (and Nemed's) offspring contrary to the mistaken belief that they were demons.<sup>194</sup> After their arrival by boat they burned their vessels, thereby creating the illusion of their supernatural landing in clouds of mist.<sup>195</sup> Eochaid, however, mentions exactly such a landing. Not only does he state that they came in clouds (a detail that can also be found in the prose text of Recensions I and II), but he also explicitly denies their use of ships. In other words, Eochaid presents the Túatha Dé Danann as evil supernatural beings, a notion that is further reinforced by his identification of them as *siabrai* and *arrachta* 'spectres'. Nothing in the emerging conceptual blend suggests that the relation between the two input spaces is metaphorical (PEOPLE ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS). Only when

<sup>193</sup> Carey does not provide a meaning for *lengduib*. Macalister (*Lebor Gabála*, IV, 215) translates: 'if it were of diabolic demons | the black-cloaked agitating expedition'.

<sup>194</sup> Further uncertainty concerning the ontological status of the Túatha Dé Danann can be found in Recension III; see *Lebor Gabála*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, IV, § 358 (pp. 168, 170 [text], pp. 169, 171 [translation]).

<sup>195</sup> The detail that the Túatha Dé Danann arrived in a fleet of ships which they burned afterwards can also be found in *The Four Jewels*, ed. and trans. by Hull, p. 84 (text), p. 87 (translation). According to this text, the invaders are humans with 'suigecht slan | A n-druigeacht, a n-diabaldan' (perfect wisdom | in druidism [and] in deviltry). They burn their ships in the interpolated text of *Cath Maige Tuired* (§ 9, ed. and trans. by Gray, p. 24 [text], p. 25 [translation]).



Eochaid investigates the question of their origin does he raise the possibility of such a relation. The *loinges lengduib láidig* ‘troop of famous, dark-cloaked exiles’ could be either *diabuil* ‘devils’ descending from *demnai* ‘demons’ and thus a troop of fallen angels, or, alternatively, they could be descendants of Bethach who practised magic and the pagan arts on the northern islands of the world and therefore forfeited their access to heaven. Eochaid solves the issue with his confirmation of the Túatha Dé Danann’s mortal status; however, he does not do so without having them temporarily merge with Lucifer’s retinue of fallen angels before they re-emerge as a permanently blemished race. In fact, Eochaid’s harsh judgement of the Túatha Dé Danann recurs in four stanzas appended to Flann Mainistrech’s poem on the deaths of the various gods in the *Míniugud* redaction and in the Great Book of Lecan version of Recension III.<sup>196</sup> In the appended poem, the Túatha Dé are seen as mortals, whom *sáebh-eólaig* ‘misleading teachers’ have wrongly declared *síd*-folk with their dwelling in the everlasting *Tír Tairngire* ‘Land of Promise’, but who in truth are *lucht na trist* ‘people of the curses’ inhabiting *ifearnn íchtarach* ‘the lowest Hell’.<sup>197</sup>

Eochaid’s ontological speculations in his poem reinforce the Túatha Dé Danann’s inter-cultural otherness, which distinguishes them from the other groups of settlers. He also mentions their collaboration with the equally fierce Fomoiri in their campaign against the Fir Bolg (sts 7–9):

Ní theilgset dáil na dliged  
im ined Fáil co fuined;  
ro bo daig ocus debech  
fo deired i m-Maig Tuired.

Túatha Dé, ba tolg tréine,  
im Thúaithe mBolg báigsit ríge[;]  
ina cath co méit úalle,  
atbath cúaine cét míle.

<sup>196</sup> Main witnesses to Recension III of *Lebor Gabála* are Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 2 (the Great Book of Lecan), fols 264<sup>r</sup>–311<sup>v</sup> and Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 12 (Book of Ballymote), fols 8<sup>r</sup>–34<sup>r</sup>, s. xiv/xv. The *Míniugud* recension is appended to Recension II in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 512, fols 90<sup>v</sup>–97<sup>r</sup>; Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS Stowe D.i.3, s. xiv–xv, and Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 2, fols 16<sup>v</sup>–21<sup>v</sup>. Scowcroft, ‘*Leabhar Gabhála*, Part I’, p. 87.

<sup>197</sup> *Lebor Gabála*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, IV, poem 56 (p. 240 [text], p. 241 [translation]).

Meice Eladáin, áeb idna,  
 fri fer-fogail fáel fodla;  
 Bres don Brug bélgáeth Banba,  
 Dagda, Delbaeth, is Ogma.<sup>198</sup>

(They admitted neither judgement nor law<sup>199</sup>  
 throughout the expanse of Ireland westward;  
 there were flame and conflict  
 at last in Mag Tuired.

The Tuatha Dé, an assault of strength,  
 contended [?] for kingship with the Tuath Bolg;  
 in their host, with great pride,  
 a company of a hundred thousand perished.

The sons of Elatha, splendour of weapons,  
 divisions of wolves for the plundering of men:<sup>200</sup>  
 Bres from the wise-rimmed [?] Bruig of Ireland,  
 the Dagda, Delbaeth, and Ogma.)

According to Eochaid, the four sons of the Fomorian Elatha, i.e. the Dagda, Delbaeth, Ogma, and Bres, are marauders who did not honour judgement or law. They are wolves (MAN IS A WOLF < PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS) that plunder men (as warriors do) in this conceptual blend. Although wolf imagery can be very positive in early Irish literature with its emphasis on a person's (i.e. warrior's) ferocity and strength (see below), the reference to the lawlessness of the Túatha Dé Danann and Fomoiri in combination with the identification of the Fir Bolg as *men* suggests different associations. It is certainly possible that Eochaid was not only interested in displaying the Túatha Dé Danann and Fomoiri's dominance on the battlefield, but that he wished to present their savage nature (wolves) triumphing over the regulated world of the Fir Bolg (men).<sup>201</sup> This interpretation would correspond to the assessment of the Fir Bolg in the prose text of *Lebor Gabála*, where it is claimed that after the defeat of his people, King Eochu's prosperous reign was brought to a close: 'Ní bóí

<sup>198</sup> *Lebor Gabála*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, IV, poem 53 (p. 214); *The Book of Invasions*, trans. by Carey, § 72 (p. 255).

<sup>199</sup> Translation of the line provided in Toner and others, *eDIL*, *doléci*.

<sup>200</sup> Carey: 'against a troop of men [?]'.  
<sup>201</sup> As is only to be expected, wolves were feared for their attacks on livestock in early Ireland, but they were also declared pets in the Brehon Laws. See Hickey, *Wolves in Ireland*, pp. 42–43, 60–61. The dual function of the wolf will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

fleochod na ré acht drucht: ní baí bliadain cen mess. Ro curthea gai a Hérind re lind. Is leis dorónad in recht cóir in Hérind ar tús' (no rain fell during his reign, but only the dew; there was no year without mast. Spears were banished from Ireland in his time. It is by him that law was first enacted in Ireland).<sup>202</sup> It is thus tempting to assume that the Túatha Dé Danann are conceptualized in Eochaid's poem as external enemies who, with their brutality, disrupt the social order and peaceful way of life created by the Fir Bolg. In fact, their cultural alterity gains once more a cosmic dimension at the end of the poem:

Glé dosróibaid dia n-irind,  
Mac Dé, don rig-maig redim:  
fri gail na ngním na ngléirind,  
ní fil a sil for Hérind.<sup>203</sup>

(It is clear that the one who wiped them  
[i.e. Mac Cecht, Mac Cuill, Mac Gréne] from the land,  
from the royal plain, was the Son of God; I proclaim [it].  
Despite the valour of their deeds in their bright division  
their race does not remain in Ireland.)

When Eochaid declares that God rather than the Milesians expelled the three grandsons of the Dagda, last rulers of the Túatha Dé Danann, from the island, he reminds us of the original conflict at the beginning of salvation history: just as God had once exiled the fallen angels from heaven, he drove the Túatha Dé Danann from *tír n-oibeng Herend* 'the beautiful land of Ireland', which he had shaped.<sup>204</sup>

### **Wolf Imagery in *Dene mo [f]resnis, a mic* and Tanaide's *Túatha Dé Danann fo diamair***

Eochaid's negative depiction of the Túatha Dé Danann as demons and arguably lawless predators is not shared by the authors of the other poems featuring in *Lebor Gabála*. On the contrary, the author of *Dene mo [f]resnis, a mic* 'Answer my Questions, Lad', identified in the text as St Columba, praises the Túatha Dé Danann as a *garb aicme gluais* 'splendid, savage troop' who landed

<sup>202</sup> *Lebor Gabála*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, IV, § 280 (p. 10); *The Book of Invasions*, trans. by Carey, § 59 (p. 248).

<sup>203</sup> *Lebor Gabála*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, IV, poem 53 (p. 218); *The Book of Invasions*, trans. by Carey, § 72 (p. 256).

<sup>204</sup> The reference to the beautiful land of Ireland and its creator occurs in the last stanza of the poem.

on Sliab Conmaicne Réin and who fought the Fir Bolg. Their leader Lug is not only called a *fer feith-grind fial* ‘honourable, handsome man’, but he is also a *fuilech fáel* ‘bloody wolf’, i.e., a beast (MAN IS A WOLF) that spills the blood (*fuil*) of his opponents (metonymy: RESULT FOR ACTION).<sup>205</sup> He is a human hero who represents a positive form of moderate alterity, which we will also encounter in the heroic verse of all three cultures. Although the poet refers to the extraordinary arrival of the Túatha Dé Danann on Sliab Conmaicne Réin, he focuses on the exemplary bravery of Lug’s race, which is not even compromised by the introduction of the Milesians in the subsequent stanzas. In fact, the Gaels’ defeat of the Túatha Dé Danann is not mentioned, so that the latter disappear from the narrative with a spotless heroic reputation.

Unlike Pseudo-Columba, Flann Mainistrech and Tanaide stress in their poems the Túatha Dé Danann’s restricted role in Ireland’s pseudo-history. Whereas their failure to persevere against the Milesians is most vividly expressed in Flann Mainistrech’s thirty-five stanza description of their deaths,<sup>206</sup> Tanaide incorporates this failure in a Christian framework. In the first three stanzas of his *Túatha Dé Danann fo diamair* (The Túatha Dé Danann, under Concealment), he uses the wolf-metaphor to highlight the limitations of this fierce race that lived and died in spiritual darkness:

Túatha Dé Danann fo diamair,  
lucht cen chomall crabuid;  
cuileoin in chaille na crínaig,  
doine d’fuil feóil Adaim.

Úaisle thall na túaithe thréine,  
lucht na crúache críne,  
aisnéidem, ind réim-se itamne,  
a réimse sa ríge.

Ré secht mblíadan Nuadat narseng  
osin chuanairt chéibfind,  
flaithius ind fir chichmair chuifind,  
ria tiachtain in Hérind.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>205</sup> *Lebor Gabála*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, IV, poem 48 (p. 56); *The Book of Invasions*, trans. by Carey, § 60 (p. 249).

<sup>206</sup> ‘Éstid a colchu can ón’ (Listen, scholars without flaw); *Lebor Gabála*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, IV, poem 56 (pp. 224–39); *The Book of Invasions*, trans. by Carey, § 98 (pp. 259–63).

<sup>207</sup> *Lebor Gabála*, ed. and trans. by Macalister, IV, poem 54 (p. 220); *The Book of Invasions*, trans. by Carey, § 74 (pp. 256–57).

(The Tuatha Dé Donann, under concealment,  
men who did not observe the faith,  
young hounds of the wood<sup>208</sup> which does not decay,  
men of the flesh and blood of Adam.

The nobles of the mighty tribe yonder,  
the troop of the withered hill [?]:  
let us, in the season in which we live,  
relate their times and their kingship.

Noble slender Nuadu ruled for seven years  
over the fair-haired wolf-pack;  
[that was] the eager fair-headed man's reign  
before the coming into Ireland.)

Tanaide is quite explicit in his description of the Túatha Dé Danann: they are secretive warriors notable for their strength, but most of all they are mortal and pagan. Their heroic vigour, here expressed by their identification as *cuiléoín* 'young hounds' and *cúanairt* 'wolf pack', is an honourable but temporary quality in an eternal setting, namely *in chaill na crínaig* 'the wood which does not decay'. Regardless of whether the reference to the undecaying wood denotes the cyclically regenerating forests of Ireland (literal), the whole of Ireland (metonymic), or God's eternal kingdom (metaphorical) — most likely it is a blend of all three concepts — the mention of the hounds' young age marks their transient nature: these hounds will inevitably grow old and die. With the entailments 'mortality' and 'transience' being carried over from the input 'dogs' to the blend 'Túatha Dé Danann', it is not surprising that in the subsequent stanza Tanaide specifies the length of each reign from Nuadu to the three grandsons of the Dagda, who finally perish in battle with the Milesians. In other words, the Túatha Dé Danann's martial vigour could not even protect them in armed conflict, let alone give them access to a limitless reign, and when Tanaide concludes his poem with the final statement that '*ni do braise, ni do báithe, | bec tasse na Túathe*' (it is not from boldness, not from foolishness that the Túatha's remains are few), we are urged to believe that no deeds, whether bold or foolish, could save them from sinking into oblivion.<sup>209</sup> Tanaide does

<sup>208</sup> Carey: 'territory'. However, the traditional connection of wolves with woods is to be preferred. In fact, Tailtiu, wife of Eochu mac Eirc, cut down a large wood called *Caill Cúan* 'Wood of the Wolf Pack'. She died from the strain, and the new plain (in Co. Meath) was named after her. For the story of Tailtiu, see *Taltiu*, in *The Metrical Dindsenchas*, ed. and trans. by Gwynn, IV, 146–63.

<sup>209</sup> The notion that heroic vigour is worthless unless its owner is Christian also occurs in

not demonize the old gods like Eochaid, nor does he glorify them for their martial strength; in his poem, they are fierce pagan warriors who ruled Ireland for a while and who finally perished without leaving much of a trace.

### *Conclusion*

The depiction of the heathen gods and their enemies varies considerably in Old Norse, Old English, and early Irish poetry. In the skaldic and eddic verse transmitted in the Codex Regius of the Elder Edda and in the four manuscripts of Snorri's *Prose Edda*, the Æsir and Vanir take centre stage in their fight against giants and monsters. The conflict is presented from the gods' perspective, which leads to the marginalization of their enemies. Most members of the giant race are excluded from Æsir space and forced to live in a sterile habitat, while the few giants and giantesses that live among the gods find themselves in subordinate positions. Only the half-giant Loki could be seen as an equal to the gods, and his emancipation has disastrous consequences for the cosmic order. In contrast with their Scandinavian counterparts, the old gods play a considerably less prominent role in the Anglo-Saxon corpus. It is always dangerous to speculate on the reasons for an absence of a particular phenomenon, yet in this case we may assume with some degree of probability that clerical intolerance of pagan stories and the destruction of an already depleted corpus during the Viking invasions were decisive factors. Such conjectured clerical intolerance of any form of heathen practice can certainly be detected in the charms, in homiletic literature,<sup>210</sup> as well as in legal texts and penitential literature.<sup>211</sup> Furthermore, in the two metrical Anglo-Saxon charms that fea-

*Siaburcharpat Con Culaind inso*. See Chapter 3, pp. 160–61.

<sup>210</sup> See, for example, Ælfric's *De falsis diis*, ed. by Pope, and Wulfstan's abbreviated version *De falsis deis*, ed. by Bethurum.

<sup>211</sup> Legislation against the use of sorcery and witchcraft and/or heathen worship occurs in the legal codes issued by King Alfred (871–99), Ælstan (924–27), and Cnut (1016–35). In the introduction to his law code, Alfred cites various laws concerning witchcraft and idol worship from the Book of Exodus (Introduction, nos 30, 32, 48, 49.5). The other prohibitions can be found in II Ælstan 6, 6.1 and II Cnut 4a, 5, 5.1. For an edition of the law codes (with a German translation), see *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. and trans. by Liebermann, pp. 38–39, 42–43, 44–45, 152–55, 310–11, 312–13. For practices of heathenism and the corresponding penances in the penitential literature, see, for example, *Medieval Handbooks*, ed. and trans. by McNeill and Gardner, p. 198 (*Theodore's Penitential*), pp. 246–47 (*Confessional of Pseudo Egbert*). For a thorough discussion of Anglo-Saxon penitential literature in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, see Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance*.

ture divinities, they are moved to the margins as antagonists of patient and healer. Regardless of whether they are identified as the source of infectious disease (*Nine Herbs Charm*) or as aggressive malignant supernatural entities (*Wið fæstice*), they endanger the patient's health and therefore have to be fought by the healer. In early Ireland the situation was somewhat different. The Irish *literati* transmitted and adjusted mythological tales in prosimetric form, which suggests an interest in their mythological heritage not unlike Snorri's, but the Túatha Dé Danann were also conveniently incorporated, euhemerized, and even condemned in the pseudo-historical *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*. In the prose text of the work, these fierce warriors and experts in the pagan arts terminate the prosperous reign of King Eochu of the Fir Bolg and are eventually defeated by the Gaels. Though descendants of Japhet, they are excluded from these two communities of settlers because of both their objectionable cultural practices and their affinities with the Fomoiri. When the Túatha Dé Danann join forces with the latter against the Milesians, they assume a more radical form of inter-cultural alterity, as expressed by such terms as *demnai* and *stabrai*. The poems preserved in *Lebor Gabála*, however, present a mixed response to the old gods. In Eochaid úa Flainn's *Ériu co n-uaiill, co n-idnaib*, they are described as spectres whose ancestry may have been the fallen angels, but who turn out to be bestial mortals. More favourable are the responses in the other two poems discussed in this chapter, although the assessment of the divinities still varies. Whereas Pseudo-Columba celebrates Lug as a valiant commander leading his men into battle, Tanaide acknowledges the Túatha Dé Danann's worldly exploits but also emphasizes their insignificance in the course of time.

If the transmission of the mythological material and perceptions of the key players in it are products of the three cultures under investigation, the question arises to what extent the metaphors used for the conceptualization of the antagonists (either the gods' enemies or the gods themselves) are equally culture-specific. As has been illustrated throughout the first section of the chapter, such specificity can be observed in the Old Norse poetic corpus with its many giant-kennings that clearly highlight the giants' inferiority to the gods. The former are usually placed in a sterile habitat, which qualifies metaphorical base words denoting the concepts 'god', 'man', or 'animal'. The gods, on the other hand, are never conceptualized as giants or animals. Thus the giants are distinguished from the gods by their primitive nature and their cultural impoverishment, which sanction the gods' and particularly Þórr's punitive actions against them. Scholars have assumed that the repressive relationship between gods and giants in some manner reflects aggressive Viking behaviour at home or abroad, an assumption that seems to be particularly valid for Eilífr Goðrúnarson's



*Þórsdrápa*. Here the giants are identified as Hákon jarl's foes inside and outside Norway, while the jarl is conceptualized as the victorious giant-basher Þórr, who fights any forces that threaten the prosperity of his culture. A similar binary opposition can be detected in some early Irish sources featuring the struggle between the Fomoiri and the Túatha Dé Danann. As original powers of darkness and chaos, the Fomoiri pose a threat to the Túatha Dé Danann's well-being and even triumph over their opponents when the latter elect Bres to become their niggardly sovereign. In fact, this interconnectivity between a just ruler and a prosperous reign is not a theme restricted to the mythological literature, but also appears in other prose texts, in early Irish wisdom literature, as well as in the legal texts. According to these texts, a king's justice (*fírflathemon*) is needed to make both his country and people thrive; if he does not perform his task, natural calamities will be the response.<sup>212</sup> Still, the alterity of the Fomoiri and Bres is not presented by means of any systematic imagery in *Cath Maige Tuired*, and the textual evidence in *Lebor Gabála* is equally inconclusive. In the prose text of *Lebor Gabála*, the Túatha Dé Danann join the Fomoiri in their demonic nature, either literally or metaphorically. What is interesting here is the identification of the Túatha Dé Danann as *demnai* and *slabrai* — and thus as Christian demons and traditional spectres — both in the prose narrative and in Eochaid's poem. This fusion of native and Christian spirits expresses an intolerance towards pre-Christian beliefs that reminds us not only of Ælfric's demonization of the Germanic pagan gods, but also of the assumedly hellish image of the smiths in *Wið Færstice* and the juxtaposition of Woden's futile serpent-slaying and Christ's salvation-bringing sacrifice in *The Nine Herbs Charm*. In the two Anglo-Saxon charms, the marginalization of the minor divinities is accordingly not so much accomplished by specific, easily identifiable linguistic expressions than by mega-metaphors that only gain their full significance in the Christian contexts in which they were produced.

In addition to the culture-specific metaphorical language that expresses inter-cultural alterity, other metaphors discussed in the first section of this chapter reflect a lesser degree of culture-specific concepts. Coldness is a giant's attribute in the Norse corpus, but it also betrays more general conditions such as enmity and emotionlessness in all three poetries. Wolf imagery is equally pervasive, although the function of the implicit MAN IS A WOLF metaphor varies in the individual texts. For instance, the bestial ferocity of the target is emphasized in *Solomon and Saturn II*, *Dene mo [f]resnis, a mic*, Tanaide's

<sup>212</sup> Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp. 18–21.

*Túatha Dé Danann fo diamair*, and Eochaid's *Ériu co n-uaille, co n-idnaib*, but only in *Dene mo [f]resnis, a mic* is this quality assessed positively. In *Solomon and Saturn II* and Tanaide's poem, the metaphor seems to illustrate the limits of worldly power, while Eochaid's uses it to highlight the Túatha Dé Danann's brutality in order to distinguish them from the peaceful Fir Bolg. Finally, in Þjóðólfr ór Hvini's *Haustlong*, the rapacious nature of the wolf and its exclusion from the community associate Þjazi with a criminal and an outlaw. Given the fact that warriors, criminals, and outlaws firmly belong to the human domain, it is not surprising that wolf imagery is particularly prominent in the heroic verse of early Northwest Europe, to which I will now turn.

## MARGINALIZING THE ENEMY IN THE HEROIC POETRY OF EARLY NORTHWEST EUROPE

### *Enemy Metaphors in the Old Norse Heroic Poems*

#### **Introduction**

The definition of the enemy is more fluid in the heroic poetry of early Scandinavia than in its mythological counterpart. Although gods and goddesses may be flawed,<sup>1</sup> they are always on the right side in their struggle to ward off the forces of sterility and chaos. They never turn against their own kind with the exception of Loki, whose aberrant behaviour is closely tied to his hybrid nature. In the heroic world, on the other hand, cultural and even ontological alterity are not the only characteristics of an enemy. Giants are indeed marginalized but so are other human characters that move freely in their own world (intra-cultural alterity). The latter pose a danger to an individual or a group either because they belong to another group with different political interests (as in armed conflict), or because they display deceptive or cowardly behaviour. Metaphors are accordingly not only used to highlight the alterity of humans that do not belong to a specific community but also to identify enemies within that community. In fact, whereas members of a hostile group are often respected for their personal integrity and heroic behaviour, traitors and cowards always

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 2, p. 52.

meet with stern disapproval regardless of their group affiliations. It is predominately these individuals that become subject to metaphorical techniques that confirm and reinforce their otherness.

### Eddic Poems

In the heroic eddic poems, the appearance of giants and giantesses is restricted to *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* ‘The Poem of Helgi Hjörvarðsson’.<sup>2</sup> The poem features the confrontation between Helgi and his men and Hrímgæðr ‘Frost-Gæðr’, undoubtedly a fitting representative of all the monstrous giantesses that Þórr so enthusiastically combats in the mythological poems.<sup>3</sup> Helgi has just slain her father Hati and is now confronted by her while mooring his ships at Hatafjörðr. In the ensuing flyting match, Helgi’s companion Atli proudly announces that he stabbed the bulky Hrímgæðr in her *þverst*, that is, in the lean part of a whale’s flesh, when she was waiting in the water for them and trying to sink their ships (st. 18).<sup>4</sup> The problem with Atli’s remark is that it may either be metaphorical or literal. Is she a *Mischwesen* like the *margýgr* ‘sea-ogress’ in *Óláfs saga ins helga* ‘The Saga of St Óláfr’ (Flateyjarbók), as Klaus von See and others have suggested, thus embodying a more radical form of alterity, or is she a giantess of enormous size, who frequents the water and likes to capsize ships?<sup>5</sup> The conventional association of giants with whales in giant-kennings would support a metaphorical rendering,<sup>6</sup> yet her mention of her *krymmur* ‘claws’

<sup>2</sup> In *Fáfnismál* ‘The Lay of Fáfnir’, stanza 38, Reginn is called *inn brímkalda jötun[n]* (ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 187). This collocation seems odd considering that Reginn appears to be a dwarf elsewhere but certainly illustrates how easily an attribute signifying coldness attached itself to a giant. The composition of *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* has been placed in the pre-Christian period (Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, *Íslenzkar bókmenntir*, p. 229) as well as in the twelfth century (de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, I, 313; von See and others, *Kommentar*, IV, 404).

<sup>3</sup> Helgi’s *fylgja* (guardian spirit) appears to his brother Heðinn also in the form of a giantess, who, in this case, is riding a wolf. When Heðinn rejects her companionship, she discloses Helgi’s imminent death (st. 35). *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 148.

<sup>4</sup> *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 144. For a discussion of the two possible interpretations of *þverst* as the adverbial superlative of *þverr* ‘athwart, across’ or a noun denoting the flesh underneath the blubber of a whale, see von See and others, *Kommentar*, IV, 495–97.

<sup>5</sup> Von See and others, *Kommentar*, IV, 491–94.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the identification of giants as whales in *Haustlång* discussed in Chapter 2, p. 45.

(st. 22), with which she wishes to crush her opponent, is puzzling.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps Hríngerðr is indeed an ontological hybrid with animal claws like hooks and a bulky, whale-like body, and Atli's boastful remark is merely to indicate that his (spear?-) thrust penetrated so deep that it reached her flesh underneath thick fat layers. In either case, Hríngerðr does not help her own cause when she refers to her *krymmur*. Although she may have wished to demonstrate her fierceness, her strategy backfires, as she simultaneously excludes herself from Helgi's community. She fails to realize that hands are necessary to participate in human life: humans need hands to fight, eat, and work. Worse, her very name betrays her cultural alterity which threatens the welfare of the human group. Unlike the beautiful giantess Gerðr, she is an ugly member of the hostile race of frost giants (*Hrim-* 'Frost') whose attempts on Helgi's life are successfully parried by his love interest, the *margullin* 'sea-golden' Sváva (st. 26) in this struggle between fertility (water; brightness) and barrenness (coldness).<sup>8</sup> Helgi, of course, finds Hríngerðr's request for sexual intercourse as compensation for the death of her father (st. 24) totally unacceptable and instead envisions a mate for her who is *hundvís* 'very wise' but also the *braunbúa verstr* 'worst lava-dweller' (st. 25),<sup>9</sup> hence a giant like Hrímgrímnir, Gerðr's worst nightmare in *For Skírnis*. In the end, Helgi's scheming does not materialize: Hríngerðr turns into stone once the first sunbeam hits her.

Sterility and sexual perversity are also very prominent themes in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* 'The First Poem of Helgi Hundingsbani' and *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* 'The Second Poem of Helgi Hundingsbani', where they function as accusations against enemies within the human community.<sup>10</sup> The opponent is charged with effeminacy and bestiality, charges that are in most cases clearly metaphorical and very effective. In a flyting match that precedes the battle between Helgi's and Höðbroddr's forces, Helgi's half-brother

<sup>7</sup> *Helgakviða Hjórvardssonar*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 145.

<sup>8</sup> *Helgakviða Hjórvardssonar*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 146.

<sup>9</sup> *Helgakviða Hjórvardssonar*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 146. Cf. Chapter 2, p. 30 and esp. n. 5.

<sup>10</sup> For *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, de Vries (*Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, I, 304) and Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (*Íslenzkar bókmenntir*, p. 229) agree on a (late) eleventh-century date of composition, whereas von See and others (*Kommentar*, IV, 163–64) extend the period of composition to the first half of the thirteenth century. The composition of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* has been placed both in the pre-1000 period (Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, *Íslenzkar bókmenntir*, p. 229) and the late twelfth (de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, I, 313) or even early thirteenth century (von See and others, *Kommentar*, IV, 636–37).

Sintfjötli and Hǫðbroddr's brother Guðmundr fling insults or *tungunið* 'insults of the tongue' at each other which blatantly negate the opponent's manliness.<sup>11</sup> In *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, Sintfjötli claims that Guðmundr milked the goats of the giant Gullnir (st. 43) and identifies him as a sorceress (st. 37), a valkyrie (st. 38), a giantess (st. 43), and as an unspecified female who has borne nine wolves to him (i.e. to Sintfjötli in wolf-shape, st. 39).<sup>12</sup> Sintfjötli's stigmatization of Guðmundr as goatherd occurs in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, stanza 22, where the latter is also charged with practising *seiðr*, a form of witchcraft that was forbidden to be practised by males.<sup>13</sup> Guðmundr's main accusations against Sintfjötli in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* are in a similar vein when he declares that Sintfjötli was not only castrated by giant girls (st. 40), but that he was also a mare ridden by Guðmundr himself (st. 42).<sup>14</sup> Much has been written on the subject of effeminacy in Old Norse-Icelandic literature and its utter rejection in early Scandinavian society.<sup>15</sup> At this point, it suffices to mention that metaphorical insults that turn a man into a woman (MEN ARE WOMEN) or, worse, into a female animal (MEN ARE FEMALE ANIMALS) and thus into the passive recipient in the sexual act were punished with full outlawry in the

<sup>11</sup> Verbal insults are listed both in the West Norwegian law codes and the Icelandic *Grágás*. Depending on the nature of the insult, punishments consisted of the payment of personal compensation and/or of outlawry. See *Grágás*, ed. by Vilhjálmur Finsen, 1 (*Konungsbók*), §§ 237–38 (pp. 181–85), 11 (*Staðarhólsbók*), §§ 375–78 (pp. 390–95); *Laws of Early Iceland*, ed. and trans. by Dennis, Foote, and Perkins, 1, 195–99 (*Konungsbók*), 354 (for additions from *Staðarhólsbók*). For the treatment of verbal insults in the Gulathing and Frostathing law codes, see, for instance, *Norges gamle love*, ed. by Keyser and others, 1, §§ 133, 138, 196 (Gulathing Law, pp. 56, 57, 70), § 35 (Frostathing Law, p. 225); *The Earliest Norwegian Laws*, trans. by Larson, §§ 133, 138, 196 (Gulathing Law, pp. 121, 123, 143), § 35 (Frostathing Law, p. 356). Charges of effeminacy and bestiality are dealt with in Gulathing Law, §§ 138, 196, Frostathing Law, § 35, and in *Grágás* (*Staðarhólsbók*), § 376. The various meanings of *níð* given in the laws are discussed by Ström, 'Níð', pp. 3–4. Finlay ('Monstrous Allegations', pp. 25–26) distinguishes between *níð* and *yki*, the latter referring to an insult that could not be literally true. In *Grágás*, insults that could have a literal foundation incurred heavier penalties than *yki*.

<sup>12</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, pp. 134, 136, 137.

<sup>13</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana qnnur*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 156. In the same stanza, Guðmundr allegedly handles a *heslíkylfó* 'hazel-club' rather than a sword. For Óðinn's practice of *seiðr*, see Chapter 2, p. 52 n. 87.

<sup>14</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 136.

<sup>15</sup> For detailed discussions of effeminacy in Old Norse literature and early Scandinavian society, see, for example, Ström, 'Níð'; Clunies Ross, 'Hildir's Ring'; Meulengracht Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man*. For a discussion of *ergi* in *níð* poetry, see Chapter 4, pp. 181–83.

Scandinavian law codes.<sup>16</sup> As Folke Ström has pointed out, femaleness was associated with passivity and weakness, qualities that seriously compromised a man's manhood. The charge of *ergi* 'unmanliness' (adj. *argr*, *ragr*), for example, included passive homosexuality as well as physical weakness and cowardice (for the use of animal metaphors for the cowardly Huns in *Atlakviða*, see below).<sup>17</sup> In other words, not Sintfjötli's and Guðmundr's outrageous accusations (which are not true), but the activation of the entailments 'weakness' and 'passivity' in the metaphor MEN ARE WOMEN or its variation MEN ARE FEMALE ANIMALS — here with an additional slur of the opponent's direct subordination to the speaker in the sexual act — made their charges appear so offensive in a culture preoccupied with male power and virility.

Equally significant to Guðmundr's and Sintfjötli's accusations of each other's unmanliness are their persistent references to giants, cliffs, and coldness. According to Guðmundr in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, Sintfjötli was not only a werewolf when living with his father Sigmundr in the forest, which is according to the thirteenth-century *Völsunga saga* literally true,<sup>18</sup> but, with his *svalr muðr* 'cold mouth' and his habit of creeping into a 'rock pile' (st. 36),<sup>19</sup> he also showed characteristics (e.g. hostility and infertility) that could just as well belong to a (frost) giant. It is therefore likely that potential entailments from the input 'giant' are activated in the conceptualization of the lupine Sintfjötli, and it may not come as a surprise that his castration is supposed to have been brought about by giantesses. In *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, Sintfjötli similarly mentions Guðmundr's frequenting of rocky clefts (st. 22),<sup>20</sup> a claim that complements his identification of his opponent as the daughter of the giantess Imðr in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* (st. 43, see above). And this is not all. Since the reference in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* is preceded by Sintfjötli's charge of Guðmundr having milked the goats of a giant, the combination creates a parallel with Óðinn's identification of Loki as a woman milking cows in *Lokasenna*. Evidently Sintfjötli and Guðmundr display a vital interest in reinforcing their opponent's cultural alterity by relocating him into the realm of the infertile race of giants and in this way making him an unwanted member in the human community.

<sup>16</sup> Ström, 'Níð', esp. pp. 7, 15.

<sup>17</sup> Ström, 'Níð', p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> *Völsunga saga*, ed. by Ebel, pp. 21–22; *The Saga of the Volsungs*, trans. by Byock, pp. 44–45.

<sup>19</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 135.

<sup>20</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana qnnur*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 156.



If likening a warrior to a female animal was the worst libel possible, comparing him to a fierce male one could be complimentary. This positive form of alterity is found in the in-group as well as among its enemies, since the latter could still be valued for their strength and ferocity and, if defeated, would elicit even more lavish praise of the victors. A common animal used for such purposes is the bear with its deep-rooted significance in Scandinavian culture. *Berserkir* ‘bear-shirts’ were warriors whose origins scholars have sought in Indo-European warrior cults (*Männerbünde*) and, more specifically, in Odinic cults, and whose trademarks were their bestial battle frenzy and their apparent invulnerability to fire and iron.<sup>21</sup> Snorri observes in his *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 6):

en hans (Óðins) menn fóru brynjlausir ok váru galnir sem hundar eða vargar, bitu í skjöldu sína, váru sterkir sem birnir eða griðungar. Þeir drápu mannfólkit, en hvártki eldr né járn orti á þá. Þat er kallaðr berserksgangr.<sup>22</sup>

(and his men went without armour (into battle) and were as mad as dogs or wolves, bit their shields, were as strong as bears or bulls; they killed men and neither fire nor iron affected them; that is called berserk-fury.)

In Old Norse saga literature, the *berserkir* are described as elite troops employed by kings for their enormous fighting power.<sup>23</sup> The first reference to *berserkir* occurs in *Haraldskvæði* ‘Poem about Haraldr’ (in *Heimskringla*), a poem composed by the ninth-century skald Þórbjörn hornklofi ‘Horn-cleaver’ in praise of the Norwegian king Haraldr hárfagri ‘Fair Hair’ after his victory over a joined force of petty rulers at Hafrsfjord (c. 872). The poem features a dialogue between a valkyrie and a raven, in which the carrion bird provides ample information about the king, his court, his marriage to Ragnhildr, daughter of the Jutish king Eiríkr, and his battle at Hafrsfjord.<sup>24</sup> In its description of

<sup>21</sup> Lindow, ‘Berserks’, p. 75; Simek, ‘Berserks’, in *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 35; Blaney, ‘Berserkr’; Höfler, ‘Berserker’. For a detailed discussion of *Männerbünde* both in their Germanic and Indo-European contexts, see Kershaw, *The One-Eyed God*.

<sup>22</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Ynglinga saga*, ed. by Bjarni Adalbjarnarson, p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> *Berserkir* fighting for famous kings can be found, for example, in *Egils saga*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, pp. 22–23 (*Egils Saga*, trans. by Fell, p. 11). *Berserkir* also feature in *Hrólfs saga kraka*, where they form elite warrior bands employed by King Adils and King Hrólf. See, for example, *Hrólfs saga kraka*, ed. by Slay, pp. 33–50, 82–86; *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki*, trans. by Byock, pp. 23–33, 53–55.

<sup>24</sup> Þórbjörn hornklofi, *Haraldskvæði*, ed. and trans. by Fulk. For an overview of the scholarship written on the date of the poem, its author, compositional unity, and classification as skaldic vs eddic, see Fulk’s introduction to the poem, pp. 91–93. For a brief discussion of the historical context of the poem, see Clunies Ross and others, ‘General Introduction’, pp. cxcvi–cxcviii.

the battle and its outcome, the raven mentions roaring *berserkir* and howling, spear-brandishing *úlfheðnar* ‘wolf-skins’ (st. 8), who seem to have fought on the king’s side.<sup>25</sup> Regardless of the loyalties of this formidable fighting force, it is quite clear that the raven refers to one rather than two groups of warriors. When asked by the valkyrie about the outfit of the *berserkir* (st. 20), the raven declares that the *berserkir* are ‘úlfheðnar þeir es í orrostu blóðgar randir bera’ (wolf-skins who bear bloody shields into battle, st. 21).<sup>26</sup> The association between *berserkir* and *úlfheðnar* could point back to a common origin in the warrior cults mentioned above; it may even be argued that the shared animal nature expressed by their unrestrained ferocity and their primitive clothing made the two groups interchangeable for the poet. In both cases, the participants embody quite an extreme form of intra-cultural alterity when let loose against their prey. A fighting force that consisted of combatants who attacked their enemy impulsively and that were resistant to pain must have been very attractive for rulers, and yet their presence was not without its dangers. If their frenzy was not channelled properly, it could become a considerable threat to the in-group. A blatant example of the dangers of such undirected frenzy or *berserksgangr* ‘berserk-frenzy’ is provided by Skalla-Grímr in *Egils saga*. Having become excited during a ball game, he kills one person and then turns against Egill, his own son. Egill’s childhood nurse challenges the attacker and redirects his fury, which saves Egill’s life but not her own.<sup>27</sup> *Berserksgangr* is also mentioned in the Christian section of *Grágás*, where both the offender and those who are present and fail to restrain him are punished with lesser outlawry.<sup>28</sup>

In terms of conceptual metaphor theory, the input ‘bear’ thus contains a considerable number of potential entailments of which only a selection are mapped onto the bear-warrior blend. In the eddic lays, the resultant metaphorical entailments are usually positive. In *Völundarkviða* ‘The Poem of Völundr’,<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The text does not identify the commander of the *berserkir* in stanza 8 (Þórbjörn hornklofi, *Haraldskvæði*, ed. and trans. by Fulk, p. 102), but references to Haraldr’s elite *berserkr* troops in other texts makes such an identification likely. For an argument that places the *berserkir*/*úlfheðnar* on the enemy side, see von See, ‘Berserker’, p. 134.

<sup>26</sup> Þórbjörn hornklofi, *Haraldskvæði*, ed. and trans. by Fulk, pp. 113, 114.

<sup>27</sup> *Egils saga*, ed. by Sigurðr Nordal, ch. 40 (pp. 101–02); *Egils Saga*, trans. by Fell, ch. 40 (p. 57).

<sup>28</sup> For the Christian laws section (‘Kristinna laga þáttur’), see *Grágás*, ed. by Vilhjalmur Finsen, I, § 7 (p. 23); II, § 18 (p. 28); *Laws of Early Iceland*, ed. and trans. by Dennis, Foote, and Perkins, I, 39.

<sup>29</sup> I have grouped *Völundarkviða* with the heroic poems, as the conflict between the supernatural smith and King Niðuðr takes place in the human world. In the Codex Regius, the poem

for instance, the elvish smith Völundr kills King Níðuðr's two *húnar* 'boys/young cubs' (st. 24) in retaliation for his crippling and enslavement by the king, an expression that resurfaces when the king asks about their whereabouts:<sup>30</sup>

‘Seg þú mér þat, Völundr, vísi álfa:  
af heilum hvat varð *húnum* mínum?’ (st. 32)

(‘Tell me, Völundr, leader of elves:  
what has become of my healthy boys/young cubs?’)

Völundr answers savagely:

‘Gakk þú til smiðju, þeirar er þú gørðir,  
þar fiðr þú belgi blóði stokna;  
sneið ek af hofuð húna þinna,  
ok undir fen fjoturs fœtr um lagðak.’ (st. 34)<sup>31</sup>

(‘Go to the smithy, the one which you built,  
where you find bellows bespattered with blood;  
I cut off the heads of your boys/young cubs,  
and I put the feet in the mud of the straps of the forge.’)

All three stanzas painfully remind the audience of the fact that Níðuðr's boys are dead and that the fighting potential of these young cubs has gone to waste. Similarly, in *Atlakviða* ‘The Poem of Atli’, one of the early eddic poems (ninth or tenth century), the poet calls Gunnarr and Högni *berharða* ‘bear-fierce’ (st. 38);<sup>32</sup> earlier in the poem, it is Gunnarr who imagines himself and his brother as bears:

‘Úlfr mun ráða arfi Niflunga  
gamlir granverðir, ef Gunnars missir,  
birnir blakfjallir bíta þreftönnum,  
gamna greystóði, ef Gunnarr né kœmrað.’ (st. 11)<sup>33</sup>

is the penultimate one of the mythological poems. The date of the poem has been contested. Von See and others (*Kommentar*, III, 116–17) postulate a twelfth-century date, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (*Íslenzkar bókmenntir*, p. 229) and de Vries (*Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, I, 81–87) have argued for a date before AD 1000.

<sup>30</sup> *Völundarkviða*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 117. All translations of the eddic poems are my own.

<sup>31</sup> *Völundarkviða*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 122.

<sup>32</sup> *Atlakviða in grænlenská*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 246. Hallberg, ‘Elements of Imagery’, p. 52. For the dating of the poem, see Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, I, 42–45.

<sup>33</sup> *Atlakviða in grænlenská*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 242.

(‘The wolf will rule the Niflungs’ inheritance,  
the old grey companions, if Gunnarr is lost,  
black-pelted bears will bite with wrangling teeth,<sup>34</sup>  
make the pack [lit. ‘stud’] of bitches rejoice, if Gunnarr does not come back.’)

Gunnarr and Hogni are *birnir blakfjallir* ‘dark-coated bears’,<sup>35</sup> who will defend themselves with their *þreftenn* ‘wrangling teeth’ against the Huns, and who will gladden the *greystóð* ‘pack of bitches’ if they do not return from Atli’s hall.<sup>36</sup> *Grey* ‘bitch’ and *stóð* ‘stud’ identify the Huns as female animals and thus implicitly as *argr* (i.e. effeminate and cowardly),<sup>37</sup> whereas the ferocious Niflungs depart from the *garðr húna* ‘young bear cubs’ court’ to meet their fate in the next stanza (st. 12).<sup>38</sup> Similarly, when in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* the blood-bespattered Helgi tells Sigrún after the killing of King Hunding that he has been hunting *birnir* ‘bears’ and given food to the eagles (st. 8), he emphasizes his enemies’ battle vigour,<sup>39</sup> and Jormunrekkr’s ursine roar commanding his men to stone Hamðir and Sqrli in *Hamðismál* ‘The Lay of Hamðir’ (st. 25) reflects his enormous strength still left in him after having lost all his limbs.<sup>40</sup>

More ambiguous than the identification of a warrior as a bear is his identification as a wolf. Like the bear, the wolf is a fierce animal, whose strength and ferocity could be used to highlight a warrior’s martial vigour, as in the case of the *úlfsheðinn*. The common personal name Úlfr confirms such a usage, as

<sup>34</sup> For the translation of *þreftennum*, see Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, I, 54.

<sup>35</sup> Dronke (*The Poetic Edda*, I, 25–26) suggests that the reference to the black colour of the bears may be a pun on the name *Niflungar* ‘Men of Darkness’. Bragi uses the epithet *brafnúblár* ‘raven-black’ for Hamðir and Sqrli in his *Ragnarsdrápa*. Bragi Boddason, *Ragnarsdrápa*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, B I, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Kroesen (‘More than Just Human’, p. 412) has argued that the stanza also alludes to the chaos that will reign in Gunnarr’s kingdom after his and his brother’s deaths. A literal interpretation of the bears and wolves in the second half of the stanza is also given by von See and others, *Kommentar*, IV, 230–44. Such rendering cannot be excluded, although references to animals are odd in a poem that focuses on the destruction of the Huns and that otherwise does not contain any superfluous information (see also Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, I, 25).

<sup>37</sup> Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, I, 26.

<sup>38</sup> *Atlakviða in grænlenszka*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 242. The manuscript reading *Huna* ‘Huns’ must be an error, as Gunnarr and Hogni are leaving their own court at this point.

<sup>39</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana önnur*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 152.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Þá hraut við inn reginkunngi, | baldr í brynjo, sem bjorn hryti’ (‘Then the god-descended one roared, the lord in his mail coat, just as a bear roars’). *Hamðismál*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 273.

do a few passages in the eddic corpus. In *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, Helgi refers to himself as *úlfr grár* 'grey wolf' (st. 1),<sup>41</sup> while Sigrún later compares him (albeit in a simile) to a wolf chasing his enemies like goats (st. 37).<sup>42</sup> In the same vein, Reginn calls Sigurðr a *freccr úlfr* 'greedy wolf' in *Reginsmál* (st. 13), which is clearly meant as a complimentary observation on the hero's fierceness.<sup>43</sup> Still, less positive entailments of the input 'wolf' are equally prominent in the texts. Not only is Völundr identified as an *álfa ljóði* 'member of the elves' (st. 10) and *vísi álfa* 'leader of the elves' (sts 13, 32),<sup>44</sup> who takes brutal revenge for his injuries and who ultimately escapes from his captivity by rising into the air and flying away,<sup>45</sup> but he also lives outside society in Úlfadalir 'Wolfdales' and has typical wolfish qualities. He *ór holti ferr* 'comes from the wood' (st. 16) and bares his teeth (st. 17), descriptions that prepare us for his immense cruelty towards Niðuðr's boys.<sup>46</sup>

Unfavourable are also the references to Sigmundr and Sinfjötli's life in the woods and their transformation into wolves in *Völsunga saga*.<sup>47</sup> Although Sigmundr's lupine existence outside the human community was not caused by any criminal behaviour on his part but by the treachery of his brother-in-law King Siggeir, he at least temporarily succumbs to this existence in the most radical manner. His plans to avenge the death of his father King Völsung and his nine brothers are suspended when he and Sinfjötli, who was sent by his sister

<sup>41</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana qnnur*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 150.

<sup>42</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana qnnur*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 158: 'Svá hafði Helgi hrædda gorrva | fjándr sína alla ok frændr þeira, | sem fyr úlfi óðar rynnir | geitr af fjalli, geiska fullar' (So Helgi terrified all his enemies and their friends, just as frantic goats run before the wolf down from the mountain, full of terror).

<sup>43</sup> *Reginsmál*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 176.

<sup>44</sup> *Völundarkviða*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, pp. 118, 119, 122. For a discussion of the meaning of the hapax *ljóði*, see von See and others, *Kommentar*, III, 171–72; Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, II, 310–11; Hall, *Elves*, pp. 41–42.

<sup>45</sup> For interpretations of Völundr as an elf, see Grimstad, 'The Revenge of Völundr'; Hall, *Elves*, pp. 39–47; von See and others, *Kommentar*, III, 170–71, 180–81. According to McKinnell ('The Context of *Völundarkviða*', pp. 24–25), however, Völundr is a human character who has retained some of the characteristics of the vengeful divinity that he once must have been. Whether or not he is able to fly away after his terrible revenge has also been disputed. Völundr's status as shaman-like flying elf has been suggested by Grimstad, 'The Revenge of Völundr', and Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, II, 265–67. For the view that the smith made his own wings, see Ármann Jakobsson, 'The Extreme Emotional Life', pp. 238–39.

<sup>46</sup> *Völundarkviða*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 119.

<sup>47</sup> *Völsunga saga*, ed. by Ebel, pp. 22–23; *The Saga of the Volsungs*, trans. by Byock, pp. 44–45.

Signý to assist him in his endeavour, find wolf skins and, once they have put them on, undergo an ontological change from humans with lupine features (i.e. ‘metaphorical wolves’) to real predators. As werewolves they temporarily lose sight of their goal, releasing, not unlike Skalla-Grímr, their fury indiscriminately against anyone that crosses their path and ultimately even turning against each other. Only when they free themselves from their skins can they once more focus on the revenge for their killed kinsmen. It is therefore not surprising that in *Hundingsbana I*, Guðmundr taunts Sintfjötli with this shameful condition, which, though temporary, certainly casts a shadow over the hero’s career. It is this lonely and loathsome existence of a prowling outcast that Sigrún wishes for her brother Dagr for having killed Helgi in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*:

‘Pá væri þer hefnt Helga dauða  
ef þú værir vargr á viðum úti,  
auðs andvani oc alls gamans,  
hefðir eigi mat, nema á hræum spryngir.’ (st. 33)<sup>48</sup>

(‘Then Helgi’s death would be avenged on you  
if you were an outlaw/wolf in the forest outside,  
deprived of wealth and all joy,  
you had no food except when you overgorge upon corpses.’)

Sigrún’s curse is so powerful because it utilizes the conceptual metaphor OUTLAWS ARE WOLVES (< CRIMINALS ARE WOLVES < PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS),<sup>49</sup> in a very creative manner. Sigrún visualizes her brother as a *vargr* ‘wolf, criminal’ that is deprived of wealth and that must live on dead flesh; while still a person, Dagr’s dietary habits will literally be those of a wolf, thus moving him farther from the human community. In other words, the conceptual metaphor has given rise to the double-scope blend ‘Dagr’ with entailments from inputs ‘man’ and ‘wolf’.<sup>50</sup> Finally, in *Sigrdrífumál*, Sigdrífa advises Sigurðr:

<sup>48</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana ǫnnur*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 157.

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 45–46.

<sup>50</sup> A similarly strong association between wolves and criminals can be found in *Hamðismál* (ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 271). On their way to Jǫrmunrekkr’s hall, Hamðir and Sǫrli see Jǫrmunrekkr’s son Randvér hanging from a *vindkǫld vargré* ‘wind-cold *varg*-gibbet’ (st. 17). The reference is corroborated by Saxo’s testimony of the Germanic custom of hanging criminals with a wolf or dog, which suggests that the executed men were indeed conceptualized as wolves. According to Saxo, furthermore, one of Frothi’s laws prescribes that ‘a hanged thief should have a sword thrust through his sinews and a wolf fastened up at his side, so that the vicious man’s likeness to the fierce animal might be demonstrated through similar treatment’ (v, 137). Saxo

‘Þat ræð ek þér it tíunda, at þú trúir aldri  
 várum vargdropa,  
 hvárstu ert bróður bani,  
 eða hafir þú feldan fœður:  
 úlfr er í ungum syni,  
 þótt sé hann gulli gladdr.’ (st. 35)<sup>51</sup>

(‘That I counsel you the tenth, that you never trust  
 the oaths of a wolf dropping,  
 whether you are his brother’s slayer  
 or have killed his father:  
 the wolf is in the young son,  
 although he be glad of the gold.’)

According to the speaker, an outlaw’s son or *vargdropi* ‘wolf-dropping’ should not be trusted even if he receives compensation for the killing of his kinsman.<sup>52</sup> The implication is that he will not observe legal arrangements and therefore become a substantial threat to the in-group. Indeed, the notion that a wolf is dangerous also occurs in *Atlakviða*. In order to prevent a catastrophe, Guðrún sends her brothers a ring with *váðir heiðingja* ‘heath-dweller’s hair’ wrapped around it (st. 8).<sup>53</sup> She knows that Atli’s invitation is to lure her brothers to his court so that he can have them killed. Högni understands his sister’s warning and fittingly remarks that their path will be *ylfscr* ‘wolfish’ (st. 8). Their journey will be dangerous, here most likely in the twofold sense that the brothers have to traverse paths through dark, perilous forests (i.e. the wolf’s habitat), and that treachery is awaiting them at the end of the path. Duplicity and cunning are of course human characteristics — wolves kill by instinct and not premeditatedly — so that wolfishness as conceptualized in *Atlakviða* constitutes a double-scope blend with entailments from the inputs ‘wolf’ (literal) and ‘man’ (meta-

Grammaticus, *The History of the Danes*, ed. by Davidson, trans. by Fisher, p. 152. Even earlier, in his eleventh-century *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, Adam of Bremen mentions the execution of a criminal who was hanged upside-down between two dogs (III, 8). Adam of Bremen, *History*, trans. by Tschann, p. 120. For Jarmerik’s (*Jǫrmunrekkr*’s) similar treatment of kinslayers and Slavs (VIII, 232), see Saxo, *The History of the Danes*, ed. by Davidson, trans. by Fisher, p. 255. See also Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, I, 232. For a critical view of the rendering of *vargtré* as ‘wolf-gibbets’, see Stanley, ‘Wolf, my Wolf!’, esp. pp. 48–50.

<sup>51</sup> *Sigrdrifumál*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 196.

<sup>52</sup> Whether the ‘wolf dropping’ is Giúki’s illegitimate son Guttormr, who ends up killing Sigurðr, as Pulsiano and Wolf have argued (‘The “Hwelp”’, pp. 2–5), remains uncertain.

<sup>53</sup> *Atlakviða in grænlenskja*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 241.



phorical). The *vargdropi*, too, is untrustworthy, but here it is not clear whether this flaw is seen as a human or lupine trait. All we know is that he has inherited his father's nature, for 'he has the wolf in him'. Wolfishness could be associated with treachery, but it is equally possible that the *vargdropi* is simply ferocious, as wolves naturally are, and that his ferocious nature makes him utterly unreliable in human oath-taking.

As illustrated above, fighting for the other side made a person an enemy but did not necessarily condemn him. King Hunding is praised for his battle vigour, and even Jǫrmunrekkr is admired for his last fierce attempt to take revenge on Hamðir and Sǫrli. Treachery and cowardice, on the other hand, are scorned regardless of a person's group affiliations. A good example is Brynhildr's behaviour in the Sigurðr cycle. We are told in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 'A Short Poem about Sigurðr', *Vǫlsunga saga*, and Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* ('The Language of Poetry') that Brynhildr was tricked into marrying Gunnarr, king of the Burgundians.<sup>54</sup> Although the details vary in the different accounts, the general storyline is relatively clear. Brynhildr was in love with Sigurðr and only accepted Gunnarr's marriage proposal when he assumedly managed to leap through the wall of fire surrounding her hall. But the successful suitor was Sigurðr in Gunnarr's shape, and once Brynhildr finds this out in a quarrel with Gunnarr's sister Guðrún, who is now happily married to the hero, she takes terrible revenge. However, it is not only because of the deception that she goads her husband to kill his brother-in-law. In *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, she cannot bear anybody else to be with the one she loves and rather sees her beloved dead than be second in his life.<sup>55</sup> Her envious and relentless, treacherous nature also surfaces in *Guðrúnarkviða I*.<sup>56</sup> Wishing Guðrún nothing but ill, she curses Guðrún's sister Gullrond for helping the young widow grieve for her dead hus-

<sup>54</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 130–31; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, pp. 102–03. *Vǫlsunga saga*, ed. by Ebel, pp. 56–82; *The Saga of the Volsungs*, trans. by Byock, pp. 71–93. The date of *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* cannot be determined, although scholars agree that it belongs to the younger poems dating from the mid-eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. See Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, *Íslenskar bókmenntir*, p. 229; de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, I, 147–50; von See and others, *Kommentar*, VI, 317.

<sup>55</sup> *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn.

<sup>56</sup> *Guðrúnarkviða I* has been considered a younger eddic poem. According to von See and others, *Guðrúnarkviða I* is probably a 'sehr junge[r] Text' (p. 222) as its chronological position after *Brot af Sigurðarkviða* 'Fragment of a Poem about Sigurðr' and *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, the fact that it did not influence any other eddic poems, and its theme (what is true sorrow?) suggest (*Kommentar*, VI, 221–22). De Vries suggests a late twelfth-century date (*Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, II, 137–38).

band (st. 23) and then stubbornly shifts the blame to Atli, who forced her to marry Gunnarr against her will ('veldr einn Atli öllum böðvi' [Atli alone causes all the evil], st. 26).<sup>57</sup> Worse, once Sigurðr's wound becomes visible and she is confronted with her terrible deed, she transforms into a poison-spewing serpent:

Stóð hon und stoð, strengði hon *efli*;<sup>58</sup>  
brann Brynhildi, Buðla dóttur  
eldr ór augum, eitri fnæsti,  
er hon sár um leit á Sigurði. (st. 27)<sup>59</sup>

(She stood by the pillar, she gathered her strength;  
from Brynhildr, Budli's daughter,  
fire burned from the eyes, she snorted poison,  
when she gazed at the wound on Sigurðr.)

I have already mentioned in Chapter 1 that Brynhildr's human nature is temporarily suspended and that the Brynhildr-serpent blend creates very strong affinities with the demonic and thus radical alterity.<sup>60</sup> Like Loki, Brynhildr has become an enemy within, although her monstrosity is defined exclusively by her hostile, treacherous, and unrelenting behaviour rather than by her ontological status.

We would expect that a poisonous serpent provides a particularly suitable input for the conceptualization of a hostile, treacherous person, but this does not seem to be the case. Only Völundr has eyes that remind Níðuðr's queen of a shining serpent ('ámun ero augu ormi þeim inum frána' [the eyes are similar to the shining serpent], st. 17), a simile that Ursula Dronke has related to the 'snake-like spirit of the man: his venomous hate, treacherous subtlety, pitiless hostility'.<sup>61</sup> More common in the heroic corpus is the conceptual metaphor ENMITY IS COLDNESS that we also encountered in the mythological poems and in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, but with the difference that the metaphor can shade into TREACHERY IS COLDNESS. The most well-known example for such ambiguity may be Knéfrøðr's *köld rødd* 'cold voice', with which he announces

<sup>57</sup> *Guðrúnarkviða (in fyrsta)*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, pp. 205, 206. Gullrond pulls the covering from Sigurðr's corpse; once Guðrún sees the dead hero, she is able to cry and thus release her penned-up emotions.

<sup>58</sup> For the emendation *efli* for MS *elvi*, see von See and others, *Kommentar*, VI, 274–75.

<sup>59</sup> *Guðrúnarkviða (in fyrsta)*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 206.

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 1, p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> *Völundarkviða*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 105. Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, II, 314. For a positive assessment of 'snake-bright' eyes, see Chapter 4, p. 172.

Atli's invitation to Gunnarr and Högni in *Atlakviða* (st. 2).<sup>62</sup> Although assigned to a seat of honour by the Burgundians, Atli's minion does not come with peaceful intentions. His cold voice, rather than merely referring to his hostility — which is also suggested by the preceding statement in the same stanza that '[v]reiði sásk þeir Húna' (they [the Burgundians] feared the Huns' anger) — may very well betray the real purpose of Atli's invitation, namely to capture and kill the two brothers. Similarly, the gallows with the strung-up Randvér in *Hamðismál* is not any *vargtré*, but one that is *vindkøld* 'wind-cold' (st. 17).<sup>63</sup> It is at least possible that *vindkøld* not only reflects poor weather conditions or even Jǫrmunrekkr's hostile attitude towards his son which leads to the latter's punishment, but that it is also an allusion to the treachery that caused Jǫrmunrekkr's transgression. In *Skáldskaparmál*, Jǫrmunrekkr's plotting counsellor Bikki sets the fateful events into motion when he goads Randvér and Jǫrmunrekkr's young wife Svanhildr to have an affair and then betrays the young couple to the king.<sup>64</sup> Bikki does not appear in the poem, but his involvement may have been common knowledge and therefore may not have required any further references except for the one to the cold gallows.<sup>65</sup>

The conceptualization of a hostile and treacherous disposition as being cold appears in other eddic poems. The expression *køld ráð* 'cold counsels', which occurs in poetry and prose and forms part of the proverb *eru køld kvenna ráð* 'cold are women's counsels',<sup>66</sup> is used by King Níðuðr when commenting on his queen's advice to hamstring Vølundr:

'Vaki ek ávalt vilja lauss,  
sofna ek minnst sízt mína sono dauða;  
kell mik í haufuð, køld eru mér ráð þín,  
Vilnumk ek þess nú, at ek við Vølund dæma.' (st. 31)<sup>67</sup>

<sup>62</sup> *Atlakviða in gænlenska*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 240. Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, I, 47; Hallberg, 'Elements of Imagery', p. 51; Stevens, 'The Poet and *Atlakviða*', p. 57.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. p. 103 n. 50.

<sup>64</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 132–33; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, p. 104.

<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of the Ermanaric legend, see Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, I, 192–96.

<sup>66</sup> For the proverb *eru køld kvenna ráð*, see Anderson's introduction in *Cold Counsel*, pp. xi–xiii. The phrase *køld ráð* is another example of a contextually relevant conventional metaphor. Skaði also promises *køld ráð* to Loki in *Lokasenna* (st. 51, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 106), thus expressing her full hostility towards the troublemaker.

<sup>67</sup> *Vølundarkviða*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 122.

(‘I continuously lie awake without joy.  
I sleep very little (i.e. not at all) since the death of my sons.  
Frozen is my head, cold are your counsels to me.  
I wish now that I could converse with Vǫlundr.’)

Although the queen, who is even described as *kunnig* ‘wise’ in the preceding stanza, may have wanted the growling and serpent-eyed smith to be maimed in order to reduce the danger emanating from him, Níðuðr blames her advice for their unfolding domestic tragedy. Ignoring the fact that he and not his wife issued the order for the crippling, he now wishes that he could speak with Vǫlundr in the knowledge that this has become impossible. He perceives her counsels as cold because they have turned out to be false as well as hateful to him. But the queen’s cold words are not only hostile and treacherous. As an instantiation of the conceptual metaphor LACK OF EMOTION IS COLDNESS, they also form a contagious substance that has transformed Níðuðr’s head or rather mind (WHOLE FOR A PART metonymy) into a frozen entity incapable of thinking or feeling.<sup>68</sup>

In *Brot af Sigurðarkviða* ‘Fragment of a Poem about Sigurðr’, Brynhildr has a symbolic dream in which she sees herself occupying a cold bed in a very cold hall.<sup>69</sup>

‘Hugða ek mér, Gunnarr, grimt í svefni,  
svalt alt í sal, ættak sæing kalda;  
enn þú, gramr, riðir, glaums andvani,  
fjotri fatlaðr í fjánda lið.  
Svá mun ǫll yður ætt Niflunga  
aflí gengin: eruð eiðrofa.’ (st. 16)<sup>70</sup>

(‘I thought, Gunnarr, to have a cruel dream,  
it was very cold in the hall, I had a cold bed;  
and you, prince, were riding, without noisy merriment,  
fettered among a host of enemies.

<sup>68</sup> A similar cold-metaphor is used in *Guðrúnarhvöt* (st. 20; *Edda*, ed. by Neckel Kuhn, pp. 267–68). Here Guðrún wishes the fire of her own funeral pyre to melt her sorrow that has oppressed her heart.

<sup>69</sup> Although *Brot af Sigurðarkviða* seems to be the oldest poem of the Sigurðr cycle, it was probably not composed much earlier than the twelfth century. See von See and others, *Kommentar*, vi, 151–52; De Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, i, 301–03 (esp. p. 303). Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (*Íslenzkar bókmenntir*, p. 229) places the poem among the older eddic lays.

<sup>70</sup> *Brot af Sigurðarkviða*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 200.

So all of your race of the Niflungs will  
be forsaken by strength; you are oath-breakers.')

The coldness that surrounds Brynhildr in her dream most likely anticipates the hostile conditions to which Gunnarr will be subjected (ENMITY IS COLDNESS). Yet her subsequent remark that Gunnarr's and Högni's strength will be decreasing because they broke their oath to Sigurðr may also allude to their committed treachery. The Niflungs' line will come to an end because of their involvement in the killing of Sigurðr, with whom they had sworn blood-brotherhood. It is hence quite possible that the cold environment also reflects the Niflungs' treachery (TREACHERY IS COLDNESS) and, indirectly, her own plotting. More straightforward is the connection between Brynhildr's hostility and treachery and her chilly surroundings in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*:

Opt gengr hon innan, ills um fyld,  
ísa ok jökla, aptan hvern,  
er þau Guðrún ganga á beð  
ok hana Sigurðr sveipr í rípti,  
konungr inn húnski, kván friá sína.

'Vön geng ek vilja, vers ok beggja,  
verð ek mik gæla af grimmum hug.'

Nam af þeim heiptum hvetjask at vígi:  
[...] (sts 8–10)<sup>71</sup>

(She goes often outside, filled with evil,  
onto the ice patches and glaciers, each evening,  
when he [lit. 'they'] and Guðrún go to bed  
and Sigurðr wraps her in the bedcloth,  
the southern king, he caresses his wife.

'I went deprived both of happiness and man,  
I must take pleasure in my cruel mind.'

Because of her hatred she started to goad to slaughter:  
[...])

The *ísar ok jöklar* 'ice patches and glaciers' to which Brynhildr is exposed in her solitude form a stark contrast with the warm bed that Sigurðr and Guðrún can enjoy together in their intimate friendship. She is *ills um fyld* 'filled with evil'

<sup>71</sup> *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 208.

and can satisfy herself only with her *grimmr hugr* ‘fierce mind’, which, along with her *heipt* ‘hatred’ makes her instigate Gunnarr to the murder. Finally, the metaphor TREACHERY IS COLDNESS resurfaces in *Guðrúnarkviða II* ‘The Second Poem of Guðrún’, where Grímhildr mixes a *svalt* ‘cold’ and *sárlicr* ‘bitter’ drink of forgetfulness for Guðrún, of which one of the many (evil) ingredients is the *svalkaldr sær* ‘ice-cold sea’ (st. 21).<sup>72</sup> The queen wants to make her daughter forget about her grief so that she may marry Atli and consequently not only betrays Guðrún but, with her deceitfulness, also contributes to the fateful events that unfold with this marriage. In other words, the cold-metaphors help to specify Brynhildr and Grímhildr’s enemy status: although not belonging to a hostile group like Knéfrøðr, both women pose a considerable threat to their own community.

### Skaldic Poems: Bragi Boddason’s *Ragnarsdrápa*

Bragi’s *Ragnarsdrápa* is the only skaldic poem with heroic sections that has survived. Presumably composed for a certain Ragnarr, perhaps the legendary Viking Ragnarr loðbrók ‘Shaggy Breeches’, the poem presents the two stories of the *Hjaðningavíg* ‘Battle of the Hjaðnings’ and Hamðir and Sqrli’s journey of revenge to Jǫrmunrekkr’s court.<sup>73</sup> Treachery and lawlessness are key features in these two sections, and, as we have seen in the eddic heroic poems, they are not restricted to one particular group. In the Hamðir and Sqrli episode, all three main characters transgress against their kin and are judged accordingly. Bragi calls Jǫrmunrekkr *Randvés hofuðniðr* ‘Randvér’s chief relative (i.e. father)’ (st. 3) and *Foglhildar munr* ‘Birdhildr’s joy (i.e. husband)’ (st. 6), thus alluding

<sup>72</sup> *Guðrúnarkviða (gnur)*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 227. In Þjóðólfr ór Hvini’s *Ynglingatal* ‘Enumeration of the Ynglingar’ (st. 3), the compound *Grímhildr* constitutes the base word of the woman-kenning *Grímhildr liðs* ‘Grímhildr of the strong drink’, which in collocation with *trollkund* ‘troll-descended’ seems to refer to a *mara*, a malevolent mythical being that causes nightmares. In the prose context (*Heimskringla*), the *mara* tramples King Vanlandi of Sweden to death as punishment for his failure to return to his wife Drífa in Finnland. When Drífa realizes that her husband will not come back, she asks a witch either to cast a spell on the king that would change his mind or to kill him if the spell proves to be ineffective. Although it is not clear whether the *mara* is the (shape-shifting) witch or a separate creature, Þjóðólfr’s choice of *Grímhildr* in the kenning could be intentional, since Guðrún’s mother is also a questionable woman who practises harm-inflicting magic. For the stanza, see Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, *Ynglingatal*, ed. and trans. by Marold, p. 12. For the prose context, see Snorri Sturluson, *Ynglinga saga*, ed. by Bjarni Adalbjarnarson, pp. 28–29.

<sup>73</sup> Unlike the fishing episode, whose attribution to *Ragnarsdrápa* has been questioned, the two heroic sections are identified as parts of the *drápa* in Snorri’s *Skáldskaparmál*.

to his obligations towards his son and wife. He should have supported his heir and cherished his wife, but instead he had them executed. Likewise, Hamðir and Sqrli are identified as *Erps barmar* 'Erpr's brothers' (st. 3), and yet they kill Erpr (who is actually their half-brother) on their way to the Gothic king. Such perfidious behaviour proves fatal to all three protagonists: Jǫrmunrekkr loses his arms and legs, and the two young men are stoned to death. Of particular interest for an investigation of marginalizing metaphorical techniques, however, is the episode from the legend of the *Hjaðningavíg*, which features the ruthless princess Hildr and her terrible behaviour towards those men she should have cherished most. According to Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál*, Hildr is abducted by Heðinn during the absence of her father King Hǫgni. When Hǫgni finally catches up with the now married couple on an island, she pretends to diffuse the precarious situation. She offers her father a neck ring in appeasement but also states that her husband is prepared to fight. Hǫgni is understandably short-spoken, and Hildr returns to her husband with the message that her father is not interested in a settlement. Although her duplicitous negotiations are inevitably followed by the battle she desired so much, her destructive role does not end here; rather, she resurrects all the fallen warriors each day, thereby condemning them to fight until Ragnarǫk.<sup>74</sup>

Snorri's account certainly leaves no doubt about Hildr's role as enemy within, but it is only in Bragi's version and particularly in his kenning choice that the full extent of her monstrous behaviour and hence her intra-cultural alterity becomes apparent:

Ok ofþerris æða  
 ósk-Rǫn at þat sínum  
 til fárhuga færa  
 feðr veðr boga hugði,  
 þás hristi-Sif hringa  
 hals, en bǫls of fylða,  
 bar til byrjar drǫsla  
 baug ǫrlygis draugi.

Bauða sú til bleyði  
 bæti-Þrúðr at móti  
 malma mætum hilmi  
 men dreyrugra benja;

<sup>74</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 153–55; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, pp. 122–23.



svá lét ey, þótt etti  
sem orrostu letti,  
jöfrum úlfs at sinna  
með algífris lifru. (sts 8–9)<sup>75</sup>

(And chosen Rán of the drying up of the veins [DEATH > VALKYRIE = Hildir] thought with wrath to bring the bow-weather [BATTLE] to her father, when the ring-/sword-shaking Sif [VALKYRIE = Hildir], filled with bale, bore the neck-ring to the spectre of battle [WARRIOR = Hǫgni] onto the horse of the fair wind [SHIP].

The healing-Þrúðr of bloody wounds [VALKYRIE > WOMAN = Hildir] did not offer the necklace to the worthy chief so that he might show cowardice at the meeting of ore [BATTLE]; thus she continually behaved as if she was preventing battle, although she incited the kings to travel with the sister of the worst demon-wolf [HEL].)

Bragi devotes two of the four stanzas to the ring offering, which is so crucial for the development of the negotiations between the two hostile parties. Margaret Clunies Ross has suggested that Hildir's offering not only insinuates her father's cowardice — she expects him to accept material compensation rather than fight — but also challenges his manliness: the ring could signify the anus, pushing the addressed person into the role of the sexually passive partner who ends up with the charge of being *ragr*.<sup>76</sup> With her gesture Hildir therefore ensures that any reconciliation between the two opponents becomes impossible and therewith seals her father's and husband's fate. Hildir's social alterity, furthermore, is taken to a new, supernatural level with the metaphorical kennings *ósk-Rón æða ofþerris* 'chosen Rán of the drying up of veins' (st. 8) and *bæti-Þrúðr benja dreyrugra* 'healing-Þrúðr of bloody wounds' (st. 9). The input 'Rán' of the first kenning maps onto Hildir qualities of the relentless sea goddess, who preys on possible victims to be hauled into her realm of death, while the kenning determinant transforms the princess from death goddess into a valkyrie.<sup>77</sup> In the blend that is created from both kenning base and determinant, Hildir consequently emerges as a supernatural death figure (PEOPLE ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS), a notion that is confirmed by the second, more complex kenning.<sup>78</sup> Hildir is a *Þrúðr benja dreyrugra* [VALKYRIE] who heals

<sup>75</sup> Bragi Boddason, *Ragnarsdrápa*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, B 1, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> Clunies Ross, 'Hildir's Ring', esp. p. 80.

<sup>77</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 121; *Edda*, trans. by Faulkes, p. 95.

<sup>78</sup> Olsen, 'Bragi Boddason's *Ragnarsdrápa*', p. 133. Guðrún, too, turns into a supernatural

[WOMAN], yet it is not clear whether the name Þrúðr refers to a valkyrie or to Þórr's daughter. The ambiguity may have been intentional, since particularly the comparison of Hildr with the goddess would have made the audience painfully aware of the fact that Hildr is not a loyal daughter. In favour of such an interpretation would be Bragi's introduction of the kenning *hristi-Sif hringa* 'Sif of shaking rings/swords' (st. 8), with Sif 'kin' referring to Þórr's wife.<sup>79</sup> Unlike Þórr's wife or daughter, Hildr is not loyal to her husband or father<sup>80</sup> but betrays them in the most treacherous manner: by offering a ring she causes the shaking of swords, i.e. battle. Nor are her healing skills (*bæti*) that are supposed to define her humanity in the kenning of any advantage to her victims. On the contrary, she employs them only for the resurrection of all killed warriors so that they can die a terrible death again, thus distinguishing herself both from mortal women and supernatural death goddesses.<sup>81</sup> As Edith Marold remarks, Hildr is only interested in the most brutal aspects of dying which she wishes the warriors to experience *ad perpetuum*:

Die Umschreibung von Hel durch ihren Verwandten, den Ungeheuer-Wolf, bietet die Möglichkeit, die grauenhafte Atmosphäre des Todes noch mehr zu vertiefen, als es die Nennung der Todesgöttin allein konnte. Was Hild will, ist nicht das offenbar vergnügliche Kräfteressen der Einherjar, von dem Snorri in der Gylfaginning spricht, das er als *skemtun* und *leikr* bezeichnet. Es ist vielmehr der sich ewig wiederholende grauenhafte Tod, das immer erneute Anheimfallen an die Dämonen und Ungeheuer der Unterwelt. Dieser grauenhafte Zug des Sterbens ist es, der Hilds Tat als gräßliches Verbrechen offenbar werden läßt.<sup>82</sup>

figure in *Atlakviða* (ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 246) when she serves Atli their own sons at the funeral feast. She is called an *afkár dís* 'strange/wild dís' (st. 35) and thus associated with a mortal woman (*dís* 'lady') and a supernatural death-bringing *dís*. Her brightness (*skirleitr* 'of a bright countenance', *gaglbjartr* 'bright as a goose', *Akv*, sts 35, 39) reinforces this transformation into a supernatural avenger which allows her to act as he does. Still, Guðrún's state is only temporary. For a discussion of Guðrún's status as valkyrie rather than *dís*, see Kroesen, 'More than Just Human', pp. 419–21. Note that Helgi's valkyrie consorts are also characterized by their bright colour: in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, Sváva is sea-golden (st. 26), and in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, Sigrún is white (st. 48). As Simek (*Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, pp. 61–62) has pointed out, *dísir* and valkyries have overlapping functions in the eddic poems.

<sup>79</sup> Marold, *Kenningkunst*, p. 76.

<sup>80</sup> Marold, *Kenningkunst*, p. 104.

<sup>81</sup> In the version by Saxo Grammaticus, Hildr conjures up the dead spirits out of yearning for Hithin (v, 133–34). See Saxo Grammaticus, *The History of the Danes*, ed. by Davidson, trans. by Fisher, p. 149.

<sup>82</sup> Marold, *Kenningkunst*, p. 105.

(The description of Hel as kin to the demon-wolf makes it possible to intensify the gruesome atmosphere of death even further than the mention of the goddess of death alone. Hild does not want the *einherjar*'s apparently pleasurable contest of strength about which Snorri speaks in *Gylfaginning*, labelling it *skemtun* [entertainment] and *leikr* [play]. Rather, it is the eternally repetitive gruesome death, the constantly renewed victimization by the demons and monsters of the underworld. It is this gruesome feature of death that reveals Hild's deed as a ghastly crime.)

Unlike the valkyries and Rán, who take fallen warriors or drowned seamen to the realm of the dead, Hildr ensures that dying is a permanent rather than a transitional phase for her father and husband. As a perverted version of daughter and wife and, metaphorically, of (death-) goddess and valkyrie, Hildr has left her group and moved closer to the monstrous forces in a horrid twilight world of endless torture and death.

### *Old English Heroic Poems*

While no Anglo-Saxon mythological poetic corpus has come down to us, a few poems that focus on heroic legend have survived the hazards of transmission: *Beowulf*, *Deor*, *Widsið*, and the two fragmentary poems *Waldere* and *The Fight at Finnsburg*. Of these five poems, however, only the first two are relevant for this analysis. Whereas *Widsið*, as a catalogue poem, lists some characters from heroic legend (e.g. Ermanaric, Hroðgar, Hroðulf, etc.) but does not elaborate on the characters' qualities or deeds in such a way that the additional details would be of use here, *Waldere* and *The Fight at Finnsburg*, though depicting conflicts, do not contain any conceptual metaphors that might contribute to the stigmatization or marginalization of one of the contesting parties. The extant lines of *Waldere* present the encounter between Waldere of Aquitaine and the Frankish king Guðhere with special emphasis on the former's prowess with which his opponent is faced, and in the Finnsburg fragment, Hnæf's Danes and Finn's Frisians appear as equally valiant fighters. When the poet comments on the bravery and loyalty of Hnæf's retainers, his sympathies may indeed lie with them:

Ne gefrægn ic næfre wurþlicor   æt wera hilde  
 sixtig sigebeorna   sel gebæran,  
 ne nefre swanas hwitne medo   sel forgyldan,  
 ðonne Hnæfe guldan   his hægstealda. (ll. 37–40)<sup>83</sup>

<sup>83</sup> *The Fight at Finnsburg*, in Klaeber's *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 284–85.

(I have never heard of sixty victorious warriors behaving  
better and more nobly in a battle between men  
and never of young men repay the shining mead better  
than his young warriors paid Hnæf.)

Still, the heroism of the Danes does not prevent the poet's comment that 'godra fæla, | hwearflicra hræw' (the corpses of many good, active ones, ll. 33b–34a) were lying around a slain Frisian warrior called Garulf.<sup>84</sup> Fierce enemies do not have to be portrayed negatively for the very reasons given in the previous chapter. Matters lie differently in *Deor*, where the antagonists are primarily not people, but the oppressive emotions of the protagonists. As will be shown below, such inner conflicts are expressed by a range of metaphors that are conspicuously absent in any of the examined Norse poems. Finally, metaphorical descriptions of the enemy in *Beowulf* are twofold. While the heroic world of *Beowulf* knows mental turmoil, it also abounds in physical encounters with enemies, whether they are human, beastly, or of uncertain ontological status. Fierce human opponents, like the Swedes, can be valued and in fact highlight the hero's own bravery, but such credit is not given to the three monstrous foes, who are excluded from the human in-group for various reasons. The dragon is foremost a beast (*draca*, *wyrm*) with some human and possibly supernatural qualities. The Grendel kin, on the other hand, are categorically condemned as members of another cultural group not unlike the giants in the Old Norse mythological poems. Belonging to the group of *untýdras*, which consists of *eotenas* (a cognate of *jötunn*), *ylfe*, *orcneas*, and *gigantas*, they are endowed with spiritual and physical attributes that deny them access to the domain of Hroðgar's Danes. Both Grendel and his mother are cultural exiles characterized by their perverted social habits, monstrous shape, and destructiveness, attributes that are firmly placed in a Christian context in the poem. Metaphorical expressions particularly for Grendel deviate frequently from those found in the Norse texts, as they centre around the Christian notions of the devil and hell. And yet, Grendel's function is not so different from that of the northern forces of chaos that face the gods at Ragnarøk since he, too, is conceptualized as an enemy who plunges the ordered world of the Danes into turmoil and darkness.

### *Deor*

In each of the six stanzas of *Deor* the suffering of a protagonist is briefly depicted, and in three stanzas this suffering is caused by a human agent. Weland (ON Völundr) was hamstrung by Niðhad (ON Níðuðr, ll. 1–7), Beaduhild

<sup>84</sup> *The Fight at Finnsburg*, in Klaeber's *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 284.

(ON Bøðvildr) was raped by Weland in revenge for his injuries (ll. 8–13), and Ermanaric's (ON Jǫrmunrekkr's) people were oppressed by their tyrannical ruler (ll. 21–27).<sup>85</sup> Less certain are the circumstances of the protagonists in the remaining four stanzas. Mæðhild's suffering may or may not be ascribed to an opponent (ll. 14–17), nor do we know whether the possession of *Mæringa burg* by the Ostrogoth Theoderic refers to his exile or to his reign (ll. 18–20).<sup>86</sup> The trouble of the generalized grieving man cannot be traced to an identifiable source either, and even Deor's (past?) grief can only indirectly be blamed on Heorrenda, who replaced him as court poet.<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, it is noteworthy that in five of the six stanzas the victims are afflicted by their own emotions which they cannot control. Mæðhild, for example, is afflicted by *seo sorglufu* in stanza three:

We þæt Mæðhilde    monge<sup>88</sup> gefrignon  
 wurdon grundlease    Geates frige,  
 þæt hi seo sorglufu    slæp ealle binom.  
 Pæs ofereode,    þisses swa mæg! (ll. 14–17)<sup>89</sup>

(Many of us have heard about that concerning Mæðhild,  
 that Geat's passion became bottomless,  
 so that the sorrow-love deprived her of all sleep.  
 That passed away, so may this!)

<sup>85</sup> *Deor*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, pp. 178–79.

<sup>86</sup> *Þeodric* has usually been identified as Theodoric the Ostrogoth, but see Malone's argument that the hero must have been the Frankish king Theodric, son of Clovis and protagonist of the MHG *Wolfdietrich* story. *Wolfdietrich* was brought up in exile in Meran. Malone, *Studies in Heroic Legend*, pp. 116–23. 'Introduction', in *Deor*, ed. by Malone, pp. 9–13.

<sup>87</sup> The refrain 'Pæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg' (that passed away, so may this) is ambiguous in the last stanza. It may indicate that Deor's fortune at court came to an end and that he hopes his misfortune equally to end. However, since in the previous stanzas, *pæs* refers to different kinds of misfortunes that have passed, it is also possible that Deor's problem was solved, but that he now finds himself in a new, unidentified precarious situation.

<sup>88</sup> Malone ('Introduction', in *Deor*, pp. 8–9) emends to *mane* 'moan' and interprets the original reading as a scribal error by anticipation. He also renders *frige* as a form of *freo* 'lady, wife', translating the stanzas as 'We learned that, [namely] Mæðhild's moans, [they] became numberless, [the moans] of Geat's lady, so that that distressing love robbed her of all sleep' (p. 9). The problem with this interpretation is that it requires the emendation of *monge* to *mone* as well as the rare meaning of *frige* < *freo* 'lady, wife', which is attested in only one other text, namely in *Genesis B*, line 457a. I have adopted Klinck's rendering of the two lines ('Notes', in *The Old English Elegies*, pp. 162–63).

<sup>89</sup> *Deor*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, p. 178.

The story underlying this stanza is obscure, although enough attempts at reconstructing it have been made.<sup>90</sup> Kemp Malone postulated the story of Gauti/Gaute and Magnhild as preserved in Scandinavian ballads, which features Magnhild as the victim of a water demon and her husband Gauti/Gaute as her desperate rescuer. In the Icelandic version, Magnhild dreams that she will drown in the Vending River, and Gauti has an iron bridge made to prevent this from happening. In spite of his efforts, the bridge breaks, Magnhild falls into the water and drowns, and Gauti is only able to retrieve her dead body with his harp. In the Norwegian version, the spouse is more successful (no mention is made of dreams), as his music not only makes her rise from the river but also resurrects her.<sup>91</sup> Malone's identification of Geat and Mæðhild with the two characters from the Scandinavian ballads is plausible, but as Anne Klinck has pointed out, the story alluded to in *Deor* and the story in the ballads do not have to be identical.<sup>92</sup> Nor do we know whether the *sorglufu* is the love of the conjectured water demon, as Malone suggested, Geat's love, or her own. Regardless of these uncertainties, however, it is evidently the *sorglufu* that is conceptualized as her *immediate* enemy (personification as a form of ontological metaphor) depriving her of her sleep.

Metaphor, though not in the form of personification, also conveys the condition of the general sufferer:

Siteð sorgcearig, sælum biðæled,  
on sefan sweorced, sylfum þinceð  
þæt sy endeleas earfoða dæl.  
Mæg þonne geþencan, þæt geond þas woruld  
witið dryhten wendeþ geneahhe,  
eorle monegum are gesceawað,  
wislicne blæd, sumum weana dæl. (ll. 30–35)<sup>93</sup>

(He sits troubled with sorrows, deprived of joys,  
it becomes dark in [his] heart; he thinks  
that [his] share of troubles is endless.  
He can then consider that throughout this world  
the wise Lord often goes,

<sup>90</sup> For an overview of the many other interpretations, see 'Notes,' in *The Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 162–64.

<sup>91</sup> 'Introduction,' in *Deor*, ed. by Malone, pp. 8–9.

<sup>92</sup> 'Notes,' in *The Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 146, 162–63.

<sup>93</sup> *Deor*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, p. 179.

shows favour to many a nobleman,  
true prosperity, to some a portion of woes.)

The poet relates that it ‘on sefan sweorceð’ (becomes dark in [his] heart); in other words, the afflicted person experiences his heart as an enclosed space (THE MIND IS A CONTAINER) which is made to grow dark by his own sorrows and troubles (SAD IS DARK),<sup>94</sup> but how or by whom these sorrows were caused is unknown. In the end, the answer to the question does not matter; much emphasis is put on the sufferer’s darkened heart and his contemplation of God’s divine power as the ultimate source of all fortune and misfortune in this world.

Even when the antagonist is identified, his role in his victim’s suffering is both direct and indirect. The wretched citizen of Ermanaric’s Gothic kingdom is primarily afflicted by his own personified emotions, which thus shift the focus from the actual source of the suffering (i.e. Ermanaric) to the turmoil in the victim’s mind:

We geascodan Eormanrices  
wylfenne geboht; ahte wide folc  
Gotena rices. Þæt wæs grim cyning.  
Sæt secg monig sorgum gebunden,  
wean on wenan, wyscte geneahhe  
þæt þæs cynerices ofercumen wære.  
Þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg! (ll. 21–27)

(We heard of Ermanaric’s  
wolfish thought; he ruled far and wide the people  
of the kingdom of the Goths. That was a fierce king.  
Many a man sat bound by sorrows,  
in expectation of woe, often wished  
that that kingdom were conquered.  
That passed away, so may this!)

In the first three lines, the *grim* Ermanaric is characterized by his *wolfish thought*, which, as mentioned in Chapter 1, is a composite metaphor.<sup>95</sup> While the human quality of thinking is given to the wolf (WOLVES ARE PEOPLE < ANIMALS ARE

<sup>94</sup> For analyses of the mind-as-a-container metaphor, see Mize, ‘The Representations of the Mind’; Mize, ‘Manipulations of the Mind-as-Container Motif’; Harbus, ‘Travelling Metaphors and Mental Wandering’; Harbus, *Cognitive Approaches*, pp. 36–38. For a discussion of common metaphors of sadness in modern psychotherapeutic discourse, see Kövecses, *Metaphor and Culture*, pp. 101–03.

<sup>95</sup> See Chapter 1, p. 11.



PEOPLE), Ermanaric is endowed with a wolf's ferocity (MAN IS A WOLF < PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS). The collocation of wolves and ideas makes us pause: this king does not display fierceness in battle but rather nurses savage thoughts most likely towards his own people, as the poet's comment 'þæt wæs grim cyning' (that was a fierce king) suggests.<sup>96</sup> Ermanaric's brutality, so well-known from Norse legend, where he is made responsible for the death of his own son,<sup>97</sup> is confirmed in the metaphor, yet equally significant is the loose connection between cause and effect. By remarking that 'sæt secg monig sorgum gebunden' (many a man sat bound by sorrows), the poet envisages the people's emotional paralysis by means of a binding metaphor. Although it is ambiguous whether the people's sorrows are conceptualized as fetters with which Ermanaric's subjects are bound (reification) or as agents (personification), they evidently constitute independent entities that have (been) turned against their owners in either case.

An even more complex relationship between oppressor and oppressed can be discerned in the first two stanzas of the poem, which depict the fates of Weland and Beaduhild:

Welund him be wurman wræces cunnade,  
 anhydig eorl earfoða dreag,  
 hæfde him to gesippe sorge ond longað,  
 wintercealde wræce; wean oft onfond,  
 sibþan hine Niðhad on nede legde,  
 swoncre seonobende on syllan monn.  
 Þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg!

Beadohilde ne wæs hyre broþra deaþ  
 on sefan swa sar swa hyre sylfre þing,  
 þæt heo gearolice ongieten hæfde  
 þæt heo eacen wæs; æfre ne meahte  
 þriste geþencan, hu ymb þæt sceolde.  
 Þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg! (ll. 1–13)

(Weland experienced persecution among serpents,  
 the resolute nobleman suffered hardships,  
 had sorrow and longing for his company,

<sup>96</sup> Cf. the phrase 'þæt wæs god cyning' (that was a good king) referring to Scyld Scefing, the Danish king Hroðgar, and Beowulf in *Beowulf*, ll. 11b, 863b, 2390b (*Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 3, 31, 82).

<sup>97</sup> See p. 107.

winter-cold *wreçe*; he often discovered misery,  
 after Niðhad put fetters on him,  
 supple sinew-bonds on the better man.  
 That passed away, so may this!

For Beaduhild the death of her brothers was not  
 as painful in her heart as her own affair,  
 [namely] that she had clearly realized  
 that she was pregnant; she could never  
 consider boldly, what should come from that.  
 That passed away, so may this!)

The second stanza alludes to, but does not identify, Weland as the tormentor who first murders Beaduhild's brothers and subsequently rapes the girl; rather, the poet's emphasis lies on the girl's resulting grief. The death of her brothers *is* in her heart, here seen as a substance enclosed in a container that causes pain, and yet it does not do so with the same devastating effect as her own *þing*, i.e. her pregnancy, also locked in her heart.

The first stanza conveys a different picture of the smith, who, tortured by Niðhad, experiences immense suffering caused by the king's external aggression and by his own personified turbulent emotions.<sup>98</sup> His sorrow and longing and his *winterceald wracu* are his constant companions, and all he can discover is his own woe. But, unlike Beaduhild, Mæðhild, the general sufferer, and

<sup>98</sup> Cf. the discussion of Völundr's role in *Völundarkviða*, p. 102 and n. 45. In the version of the legend known to the *Deor* poet, Weland does not seem to be hamstrung. Jost was the first to argue that although *ned* and *seonobend* could refer to the result of Weland's crippling, i.e. his bondage, the adjective *swoncor* poses a problem (Jost, 'Weland und Samson', pp. 86–87). *Swoncor* could be a 'transferred epithet', as Klinck has pointed out ('Notes', in *The Old English Elegies*, p. 159), but does Weland really experience 'supple bondage'? The stanza explicitly states that he experienced a cruel fate. It is certainly conceivable that various versions of the legend circulated, and that, according to one version, Weland was fettered with strings and then placed in a snake pit (*be wurman*). Such placement would correspond to Gunnarr's fate in *Atlakviða* and agree with the traditionally evil nature of worms in Old English texts. Or has the poet perhaps created his own version based on Judges 16. 7, where Samson is bound with 'nervicis funibus necdum siccis et adhuc humentibus' (sinews that are not dry and thus moist) ('Notes', in *The Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 159)? Both Weland and Samson are victims of a treacherous act and both of them take terrible revenge. This interpretation, however, does not take into account that Samson's revenge is divinely sanctioned, whereas Weland's is merely an act of immense cruelty. Lastly, *be wurman* can also be interpreted as a metaphorical reference to his own manufactured artefacts, here swords. In this case, the term has either metonymic or metaphorical force depending on which feature of the sword is highlighted: its serpent-pattern (metonym) or its serpent-like movement during battle (metaphor).

Ermanaric's subjects, Weland is not condemned to passivity, as the mention of *winterceald wracu* already prepares for his cruelty against the two princes and Beaduhild. *Wracu* is attested with the meanings 'misery', 'vengeance', and 'enmity' in the Old English corpus and indeed could refer to Weland's suffering or even to Niðhad's animosity.<sup>99</sup> Still, Weland's misery is already expressed by the terms *sorb* 'sorrow' and *longaþ* 'longing', so that *wracu* could also denote his and Niðhad's mutual hostility, as well as his cruel revenge for the wrong done to him. The use of *winterceald* does not solve the ambiguity. Coldness is metonymically related to physical and mental discomfort in Old English texts, a relation that underlies Leslie Whitebread's interpretation of *winterceald wracu* as an expression of the smith's intense suffering.<sup>100</sup> Alternatively, *-ceald* could be an instantiation of the conceptual metaphors ENMITY IS COLDNESS. For example, the merciless Mermedonians in *Andreas* shriek *caldheorte* 'cold-hearted' (l. 138a) when fetching their victims for the next meal and later seize Andreas with *cealde clommas* 'cold clutches' (l. 1212a) in order to kill him.<sup>101</sup> Here ENMITY IS COLDNESS identifies the disposition of the Mermedonians, and, by metonymic extension, a physical body part, i.e. the heart as the seat of emotions (CONTAINER FOR CONTAINED), and the actions that result from the emotion (EFFECT FOR CAUSE).<sup>102</sup> Whether we understand *winterceald* metonymically or metaphorically will ultimately depend on the interpretation of *wracu*, although the two options are not exclusive if the poet exploited the polysemy of the noun. *Winterceald wracu* is in this case a conceptual blend that receives elements from a number of interrelated inputs. Not only are suffering, hostility, and vengeance (denoted by *wracu*) understood as physically cold in this blend, but they are also causally connected: Weland's distress and Niðhad's enmity give rise to Weland's own hostility and revenge. In fact, a similar blend with slightly different causal connections occurs in a passage in *Beowulf*, which describes how the Swedish prince Eadgils goes on *cealde cearsiðas* to avenge his brother's death:

<sup>99</sup> Bosworth, 'wracu', *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, pp. 1268–69

<sup>100</sup> Whitebread, 'A Medieval English Metaphor'.

<sup>101</sup> *Andreas*, ed. by Krapp, pp. 6, 36. Note that the original meaning of *clamm* is 'fetter', and that the meaning 'grip' is the result of the conceptual metaphor HUMAN PROPERTIES ARE THE PROPERTIES OF INANIMATE THINGS.

<sup>102</sup> The metonymic equation of the mind and the hand (PART FOR A PART) may be an additional element in the cognitive process underlying the conceptualization of the Mermedonians' clutches as cold, for it is the hand that carries out the action (ACTION FOR INSTRUMENT).

Se ðæs leodhryres lean gemunde  
 uferan dogrum, Eadgilse wearð,  
 feascaftum freond; folce gesteppe  
 ofer sæ side sunu Ohteres,  
 wigum ond wæpnum; he gewræc syððan  
 cealdum cearsiðum, cýninge ealdre bineat. (ll. 2391–96)<sup>103</sup>

(He [i.e. Beowulf] remembered the recompense for the fall of the prince  
 in later days, became to Eadgils  
 a friend, to the destitute one; with an army he supported  
 Ohtere's son across the wide sea,  
 with warriors and weapons; afterwards he took vengeance  
 on his cold expeditions of sorrow, deprived the king of his life.)

The coldness of Eadgils' expeditions both expresses the prince's hostile and vengeful state of mind and alludes to their fatal outcome for his uncle, the Swedish king Onela, who was ultimately responsible for his and his brother's misfortune. Still, the poet never leaves any doubt about the identities of the perpetrator and his victim in the cited lines, whereas the picture provided by the Weland episode in *Deor* is more complex. As mentioned, the *winterceald wracu* that Weland has for his companion is a personification of his and Niðhad's mutual hostility, his own suffering, and his vengefulness which, in turn, make him transgress and cause Beaduhild's grief.

### *Beowulf*

In *Deor*, the conflicts are either intra-cultural, involving an antagonist who embodies a moderate form of social alterity (Ermanaric), or they take the form of the protagonists' inner-personal struggle with (their own) reified or personified emotions. In *Beowulf*, both Danes and Geats face a wider spectrum of enemies, ranging from foreign tribes and hostile insiders, who have succumbed to the attacks of their passions, to humanoid monsters and a monstrous beast. Here, too, otherness and enemy status are not necessarily linked. The Geatish messenger, for instance, describes the hostile Swedes as brave and ferocious warriors who responded to Geatish aggression in the past. For the messenger, it is the Geats who had sought the Swedes *for onmedlan* 'in their pride' (l. 2926b) and who encounter firm resistance.<sup>104</sup> Ongenþeow in particular is called *se goða*

<sup>103</sup> Klaeber's *'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 82.

<sup>104</sup> Klaeber's *'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 99.

‘the good one’ (l. 2949) and *frod felageomor* ‘wise and very sad’ (l. 2950a);<sup>105</sup> he also displays great bravery, yielding his life only after an extremely fierce battle. Socially unacceptable behaviour, on the other hand, is assessed differently regardless of whether it occurs inside or outside the in-group. An example *par excellence* is the Danish king Heremod.<sup>106</sup> His arrogant rulership, avarice, and homicide turn him into an enemy of his own people and finally lead to his exile and betrayal to the *eotenas* ‘Jutes’ (or ‘giants’, l. 902b).<sup>107</sup> Like Weland, Heremod is tormented by his own emotions, which causes him to become a ruthless oppressor; unlike Weland, however, the king does not oppress members of the enemy side but the very people for whose safety and welfare he is responsible. In the Sigemund digression, it is mentioned that *sorhwylmas* ‘surges of sorrow’ (l. 904b) *lemede* ‘afflicted’ (l. 905a) Heremod to such an extent that he turned out *to aldorceare* ‘as life-long sorrow’ for both noblemen and commoners (ll. 905b–06).<sup>108</sup> Hence Heremod’s sorrow is conceptualized as a surging substance (i.e. fluid or heat/fire) that torments the leader with its violent movements, probably within his mind.<sup>109</sup> In fact, when Hroðgar warns Beowulf against the dangers of pride eight hundred lines further into the poem, he locates Heremod’s violent emotions in his mind. He relates that Heremod *breat* ‘killed’ his table-companions *bolgenmod* ‘with a swollen mind’

<sup>105</sup> Klaeber’s *‘Beowulf’*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 100.

<sup>106</sup> Another character with controversial habits is King Hroðgar’s spokesman Unferð, who takes up a prominent position at the Danish court even though he killed his own brothers. Given the gravity of his offense, Unferð’s high reputation is puzzling unless his fratricide was committed in the interest of the Danish community and therefore condoned by its members (see Nagy, ‘A Reassessment of Unferð’s Fratricide’, pp. 15–30). Since metaphor plays no significant role in the conceptualization of Unferð’s deviant behaviour, the character is not further discussed here.

<sup>107</sup> Klaeber’s *‘Beowulf’*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 32.

<sup>108</sup> Klaeber’s *‘Beowulf’*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 32. The other occurrence of *lemian* occurs in the Old English translation of Gregory the Great’s *Cura pastoralis*: ‘Swa swa wildu hors, ðonne we hie æresð gefangnu habbað, we hie ðacciað & straciad mid bradre handa & lemiað, to ðon ðæt we eft on fierste hie moten mid gierdum fullice gelæran & ða temian’ (Likewise, wild horses, when we have caught them first, we pat them and stroke them with a broad hand and subdue them, to such an extent that we, again, may at first teach them fully with a yard and then tame them’ (*Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, comp. by Healey, Wilkin, and Xin Xiang). The concept *aldorcearu* entails a cause-and-effect relationship, namely STATE FOR THE PERSON WHO CAUSED IT. See Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, p. 154.

<sup>109</sup> An interesting parallel to the *sorhwylmas* ‘surges of sorrow’ occurs in *Maxims I* (ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, p. 158), where an agitated mind is conceptualized as a sea storm (ll. 50–53).

(ll. 1713a),<sup>110</sup> only that the substance that now causes the swelling is his anger (ANGER IS A SURGING SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER).<sup>111</sup> Hroðgar continues that ‘on ferhþe grew | breosthord blodreow’ (‘a bloodthirsty breast-hoard grew in his mind’, ll. 1718b–19a), with *breosthord blodreow* being most likely a metaphor for Heremod’s cruel thoughts;<sup>112</sup> located in the breast, these thoughts are organic substances that keep growing and finally produce a swollen and turbulent mind (also located in the breast).

Heremod was a member of Danish society whose social alterity caused his expulsion from the group. His social otherness, which corresponds to Münkler and Röcke’s *innerkulturelle Fremdheit mit Fremdheitserfahrung mittlerer Transzendenz*, is perceived by Hroðgar as so grave a danger to the community that he adds the slightly different example of the promising ruler who becomes a menace to his people. Hrothgar explains to Beowulf that once the ruler does not experience any oppression at all, an arrogant disposition starts to grow and flourish in him:

‘Wunað he on wiste; no hine wiht dweleð  
adl ne ylðo, ne him inwitsorh  
on sefan sweorceð, ne gesacu ohwær  
ecghete eoweð, ac him eal worold  
wendeð on willan; he þæt wyrse ne con —,  
oð þæt him on innan oferhygda dæl  
weaxeð ond wridað.’ (ll. 1735–41a)<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup> *Klaeber’s ‘Beowulf’*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 58. The adjectives *gebolgen* ‘swollen’ and *bolgenmod* denoting an angry mind are epithets not only for the various adversaries (Heremod, Grendel, and the dragon) but also for Beowulf during his encounters with his three monstrous foes. Nevertheless, in Beowulf’s case, his anger could be regarded as a positive asset because it is directed against those who pose a threat to the Danish and Geatish communities.

<sup>111</sup> The conceptual metaphor ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER has drawn much attention from cognitive linguists over the past thirty years. See especially the work by Turner and Fauconnier (*The Way We Think*) and by Kövecses (*Metaphor: A Practical Introduction and Metaphor and Culture*) repeatedly cited in this volume. For a more recent study of literal expressions, metonyms, and metaphors denoting anger in Old English, see Geeraerts and Gevaert, ‘Hearts and (Angry) Minds’. Geeraerts and Gevaert conclude that the conceptualization of anger as a hot substance is secondary in the Old English corpus without, however, acknowledging the possible causal relationship between heat and the more common conceptualization ANGER IS SWELLING in the Old English corpus. As Geeraerts and Gevaert point out, the latter is attested thirty-three times in eleven texts, thus ‘[taking] up a very considerable part of the conceptual field of anger’ (p. 337).

<sup>112</sup> *Klaeber’s ‘Beowulf’*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 58.

<sup>113</sup> *Klaeber’s ‘Beowulf’*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 58–59.

(‘He lives in feasting; disease and old age  
do not lead him at all astray, nor does hostile sorrow  
darken in his heart, strife does not show  
sword-hate anywhere, but the whole world  
turns to his will; he does not know any worse  
until a portion of arrogance  
grows and thrives in him.’)

Untouched by either *adl* ‘disease’, *yldo* ‘old age’, or *inwitsorb* ‘hostile sorrow’, here seen as deceiving entities and a darkening substance in the heart respectively, the ruler becomes vulnerable to an *oferhygda dæl* ‘portion of arrogance’. Interestingly, it is the ruler’s surrender to his pride on which the poet has Hroðgar elaborate with an extended metaphor:

þonne se weard swefeð,  
sawele hyrde; bið se slæp to fæst,  
bisgum gebunden, bona swiðe neah,  
se þe of flanbogan fyrenum sceoteð.  
Ðonne bið on hrepre under helm drepen  
biteran stræle — him bebeorgan ne con —,  
wom wundorbebodum wergan gastes;  
þinceð him to lytel, þæt he lange heold,  
gytsað gromhydig, nallas on gylp seleð  
fætte beagas, ond he þa forðgesceaft  
forgyteð ond forgymed, þæs þe him ær God sealde,  
wuldres Waldend, weorðmynda dæl.’ (ll. 1741b–52)<sup>114</sup>

(‘then the guardian,  
the soul’s ward sleeps; the sleep is too deep,  
bound by troubles, the slayer very near,  
who shoots wickedly from his bow/who shoots from his fiery bow.  
Then he is struck under the helmet into the breast  
with a bitter arrow — he cannot protect himself —  
with crooked strange commands of the cursed spirit;  
it seems too little to him what he has possessed for a long time,  
angry-minded he covets, not at all does he in his pride give  
ornamented rings, and he forgets and neglects  
his future destiny, his portion of glories  
which God, the ruler of glory, had given him before.’)

<sup>114</sup> Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 59.



Having succumbed to his proliferating arrogance, the unnamed ruler can no longer defend his soul/mind against the subsequent onset of spiritual attacks. Sinning is conceptualized in terms of the sinner's inability to protect his soul — he is asleep — with the result that it is penetrated by the arrows shot by the devil, here called *bana* 'slayer' and *wearg gast* 'cursed spirit'. Andy Orchard has illustrated that the concept of the devil shooting his arrows from a fiery bow ultimately derives from the phrase *tela nequissimi ignea* 'fiery arrows of the evil one' in Ephesians 6. 13–17 to be found in the Psalter, in homiletic literature, and in Old English poetry.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, according to Orchard, the *Beowulf* poet may have employed *fyren* with its double meaning 'fire' and 'sin' as an allusion to the concept of the *tela ignea*. From a cognitive perspective, the connection between bows, flaming arrows and sin would be both metonymic and metaphorical. Both bow and arrow belong to the conceptual domain of archery and are hence metonymically linked, yet the conceptualization of the fiery arrows is based on the conceptual metaphor SIN IS FIRE. In fact, the metaphor of the devil's attack on the mind functions as an explanation of Heremod's spiritual decline. Hit by the devil's fiery arrows, the king submitted to his overwhelming emotions, which in his case were his (? heat-induced) *sorhwylmas* 'surges of sorrow' (l. 904b) rather than pride and covetousness (see above). His mental instability allowed a *breosthord blodreow* 'bloodthirsty breast-hoard' (l. 1719a) to grow in his mind, which in turn initiated his subsequent crimes and finally caused his downfall.

Heremod and his prototype's alterity is mainly expressed in terms of their aberrant behaviour unacceptable to the Danish community. Grendel and his mother have never been part of that community. They are misshapen exiles whose exclusion from Hroðgar's group is presented as an unalterable fact of life. The poet establishes early in the poem that the *eoten* Grendel — unlike the northern *jotnar*, who trace their origins back to the frost giant Ymir — belongs to *Caines cyn* 'the kin of Cain' (l. 107a) and, more specifically, to Cain's evil progeny (*untýdras*, l. 111a), consisting of antediluvian *gigantas*, postdiluvian

<sup>115</sup> Orchard, *A Critical Companion*, p. 161. For an analysis of the concept of the devil as archer in the Psalter, see Atherton, 'The Figure of the Archer', pp. 653–57. The devil archer is also found in the Cynewulfian poems *Christ II* and *Juliana*. In *Juliana*, lines 397b–409a (ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, p. 124), the victim's mind is conceptualized as a castle, whose gate the devil first has to open before he can fire his missiles, namely *bitre geþencas* 'bitter thoughts' (SIN IS BITTER). The castle-of-the-mind metaphor in *Juliana* has also been discussed by Stanley in his seminal 'Old English Diction', pp. 418–22. For an extensive study of the concept of spiritual warfare in Old English literature, see Hermann, *Allegories of War*.

*eotenas*, *ylfe*, and *orcneas* (ll. 112–13a).<sup>116</sup> Grendel's enormous size, furthermore, is a characteristic of the biblical *gigantas* that, according to Augustine and Bede, arose from the union of the sons of Seth and the daughters of Cain. Although, as a post-diluvian giant, he cannot belong to the race of *gigantas* that perished in the Flood, scholars have argued for the survival of Cain's descendants via Cham.<sup>117</sup> That Grendel follows in the line of God's antagonists is also quite clear because he antagonizes two leaders (i.e. Hroðgar and Beowulf), who, though pagans, intuitively know their Creator and, in return, receive divine aid.<sup>118</sup>

Grendel's status as *eoten* or humanoid giant seems to be confirmed by the poet's straightforward identification as such (l. 761a), as well as by expressions like *wonseli wer* 'unhappy man' (l. 105a), *feasceafst guma* 'miserable man' (l. 973a), *gromheort guma* 'fierce-hearted man' (l. 1682a), *healðegn* 'hall-thane' (l. 142a), *rinc* 'warrior' (l. 720b), and *hæðen hilderinc* 'heathen battle-warrior' (l. 986).<sup>119</sup> It can also be assumed that his equally huge mother comes from the same evil stock even though this identification is never explicitly made in the poem. But are *eotenas* indeed human even though they descend from a human being? The poet's statement that not only giants but also elves and the so-called *orcneas* belong to Cain's lineage must make us pause. In fact, very little is said about Grendel and his mother's human form. The only vague description of their outer appearance is given by Hroðgar after Grendel's mother's attack; he tells Beowulf that two large figures had been sighted in the past, one *idese onlicnes* 'the likeness of a woman' (l. 1351a), the other *earmsceapan | on weres wastmum* 'miser-

<sup>116</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 6–7. For a detailed analysis of the correction of *comes* to *caines* in the manuscript, see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 67–79.

<sup>117</sup> Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 77–79; for discussions of the poet's use of Jewish pseudo-epigraphical, biblical, and patristic traditions regarding Cain's offspring and the race of giants and their post-diluvian survival, see Mellinkorf, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part I'; Mellinkorf, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part II'; Bandy, 'Cain, Grendel, and the Giants of *Beowulf*'; Peltola, 'Grendel's Descent from Cain Reconsidered'; Crawford, 'Grendel's Descent from Cain'; Emerson, 'Legends of Cain'.

<sup>118</sup> Both protagonists refer to God but never to Christ or any other overtly Christian concepts in their discourse, which makes their virtues resemble those of the Old Testament patriarchs. As the editors of *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'* point out, such an approach may seem anachronistic to us today but indeed reflects the poet's 'strong interest in depicting a version of the pagan past that, with its high deeds and its sententious speeches, has its own narrative consistency and could have had ethical value for the members of his Christian community' (p. lxix).

<sup>119</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 6, 34, 57, 2, 26, 35 (in sequence of citation).

able [lit. 'created miserable'] in a man's form' (ll. 1351–52a).<sup>120</sup> To put it differently, Hroðgar only confirms that Grendel has the *form* of a man and that his mother, though *micel*, has the *appearance* of a woman.<sup>121</sup> They may or may not be humans; all that Hroðgar can say is that they are human-like.

Hroðgar's uncertainty is well-founded: Grendel and his mother do not fit easily into any ontological category. To begin with, their human roots and humanoid shapes are complemented with beastly traits. Neither seems to be able to master language and thus lacks one key feature that defines a human being. Grendel, furthermore, randomly snatches up his human victims, swallows their blood, and finally devours them feet and all; his unsavoury dietary habits not only violate the biblical injunction against the drinking of blood but are also comparable to the behaviour of animal predators.<sup>122</sup> Food preparation and eating rituals are clearly unknown to him. Grendel's giant mother is different in this respect, as she does not randomly slaughter and devour Danes. It is not mentioned how she kills Hroðgar's counsellor Æschere and disposes of his body. The only detail that the poet discloses is that Hroðgar and his men eventually find Æschere's severed head on a cliff by the mere, and this detail remains inconclusive in view of the fact that decapitation was a common form of punishment in medieval societies including Anglo-Saxon England. It is also remarkable that Grendel's mother dispatches only one person in order to avenge her dead son. Beasts do not enact vendetta, nor do they attack people with knives as she does in her fight with Beowulf. And yet, the poet repeatedly associates the anthropomorphic giantess with a wolf (MAN IS A WOLF), thereby fusing the conceptual domains of humanoid female and ferocious beast. The blend occurs for the first time when Hroðgar tells Beowulf and his Geatish companions that Grendel and his mother guard the *wulfhleodu* 'wolf-slopes' (l. 1358a).<sup>123</sup> At this point the referent of *wulf* is not clear: the term can refer either to real wolves roaming the barren landscape, or it can refer metaphorically back to the Grendelkin. Most likely both groups are targeted, for Grendel and his mother do not only share their ferocity and habitat with wolves. As illustrated in the previous chapter, criminals and outlaws were associated

<sup>120</sup> Klaeber's 'Beowulf', ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 47. The adjective *earmsceapen* occurs in the Old English corpus twelve times (*Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, comp. by Healey, Wilkin, and Xin Xiang); in all cases it is an attribute either for persons in a wretched state or for devils and the damned souls.

<sup>121</sup> For a discussion of the term *ides*, see below.

<sup>122</sup> Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 63–66.

<sup>123</sup> Klaeber's 'Beowulf', ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 47.

with wolves in the Germanic tradition. In the Old Icelandic corpus the noun *vargr* means both 'wolf' and 'criminal', and a *vargdropi* 'wolf-dropping' was, according to one law in the Icelandic *Grágás*, the son of an outlaw.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, the Old English cognate to Old Icelandic *vargr*, *wearg* is used for both *eotenas*: Grendel is called a *heorowearh* 'sword-wearh' in line 1267a, Grendel's mother *grundwyrgen* in line 1518b.<sup>125</sup> Although in the extant Old English corpus the noun *wearh/wearg/werg* usually does not denote a wolf but a criminal or a person, creature, or object that is cursed,<sup>126</sup> one possible exception can be found in the tenth-century Blickling Homily XVI. The homily is based on a version of the apocryphal *Visio S. Pauli* and offers a description of the infernal regions so close to the description of Grendel's mere that a relation between the two texts can hardly be doubted. It mentions a dwelling under a grey rock frequented by *niccras* 'water-monsters' and *weargas* tormenting the damned spirits that hang from the boughs of icy groves.<sup>127</sup> The *weargas* in this context could be either accursed creatures or 'wolves', and both meanings have been suggested.<sup>128</sup> The use of *heorowearh* (cf. *heorowulfas* below) for Grendel is less ambiguous. The meaning 'sword-criminal' contradicts Grendel's trademark as weaponless

<sup>124</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 45–46 and n. 61.

<sup>125</sup> Klaeber's *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 44, 52.

<sup>126</sup> For the various meanings of *wearg*, see Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 1177. *Wearh* 'criminal' can be found in Ælfric's *Life of St Edmund* (l. 211), where the noun is used for the three thieves who try to steal the valuables that people deposited at the shrine of the saint; in *Maxims II*, where it refers to the hanging of a criminal (l. 55b); and in *Elene*, where it is part of the compound *wearhtræf* 'criminal-tent' (dat. pl. *wearhtreafum*, l. 926a), a reference to hell. See *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, comp. by Healey, Wilkin, and Xin Xiang, *wearg*, *wearh*. According to Stanley ('Wolf, My Wolf', pp. 50, 52), this meaning of *wearh* is the primary one, while the meaning 'wolf' is secondary and mainly restricted to the Old Norse corpus. However, Stanley does not refute a possible connection between *wyrgen* and wolf.

<sup>127</sup> 'The Feast of St Michael', ed. and trans. by Kelly, pp. 144. The relation between the two texts has been subject to considerable debate. Scholars have made a case for the direct influence of the homily on the poem (see Collins, 'Blickling Homily XVI'), as well as for the direct influence of the poem on the homily (see, for example, Brown, '*Beowulf* and the *Blickling Homilies*'; Niles, *Beowulf*, pp. 17–19, 264 [n. 29]). Others have argued for the indebtedness of the homily and the poem to a common source (see, for example, Malone, 'Grendel and his Abode', pp. 297–308; Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, pp. 113–36), as well as for the independent use of common eschatological motifs (Tristram, 'Stock Descriptions', esp. pp. 110–11).

<sup>128</sup> *Weargas* 'wolves' has been suggested by Orchard (*A Critical Companion*, p. 158) and Wright (*The Irish Tradition*, p. 117 n. 53), *weargas* 'accursed creatures' by Niles (*Beowulf: The Poem*, p. 18). Kelly ('The Feast of St Michael', p. 145) translates the term with 'abominable creatures'.

offender, but if *wearh* is used metaphorically, the function of *heoro* changes. Since swords belong to the human domain, *heoro* indicates Grendel's non-beastly nature: wolves do not carry swords but monstrous giants might. At the same time, it is very possible that the more common meaning 'criminal' also plays a role on a connotative level due to the close associations between exiles and criminals. Grendel can certainly be regarded as a criminal whose beastly behaviour defines his social alterity and consequently causes his exclusion from Hroðgar's community.<sup>129</sup>

Similarly ambiguous is the meaning of *grundwyrge* (l. 1518b) for Grendel's mother, which has traditionally been rendered as 'accursed (female) monster/creature of the deep' and, more recently, as '(female) outcast of the deep'.<sup>130</sup> Yet here, too, *-wyrge* 'she-wolf' seems to refer to her outlaw status and her wolfish qualities, a dual reference that is reinforced by her identification as *merewif mihtig* 'mighty sea-woman' (l. 1519a) and *brimwylf* 'surf she-wolf' (ll. 1506a, 1599a). The *brimwylf* drags Beowulf to the bottom of the mere (l. 1506a), the *grundwyrge* and *merewif mihtig* engages in combat with him, and again the *brimwylf* is decapitated by the hero (1599a).<sup>131</sup> In other words, Grendel's mother is conceptualized as a giantess who lives in the surf, and who, given her wolfish nature, is an outlaw and a ferocious fighter capable of driving Beowulf into the defence.<sup>132</sup> It is the merger of the conceptual inputs 'giantess', 'wolf', and 'outlaw/criminal' that determines and confirms Grendel's mother's physical and social alterity. At this point, we need to re-examine the cultural implications of the metaphor MAN IS A WOLF in Anglo-Saxon literature and culture. Despite its association with criminal behaviour and outlawry, it should not be forgotten that the use of violence, as Jennifer Neville has pointed out,

<sup>129</sup> For a discussion of the correlation between social alterity and the monstrous in Old English poetry and especially in *Beowulf*, see Neville, 'Monsters and Criminals'.

<sup>130</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 52. *Dictionary of Old English*, ed. by Cameron and others, *grundwyrge*; 'Glossary', in *Beowulf*, ed. by Klaeber, p. 347. For the meaning 'female outcast of the deep', see 'Glossary', in *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, p. 388.

<sup>131</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 52, 54.

<sup>132</sup> Orchard has emphasized the beastly nature of Grendel's mother: 'Moreover, the monsters that Beowulf fights are also strangely stylized: Grendel is an outcast giant man-shaped monster; his vengeful mother seems more bestial than human; finally, there is a mighty dragon. The same tripartite division of monsters into man-shaped, bestial and serpentine creatures is also found in an eighth-century Anglo-Saxon spotter's guide to around 120 different types of monster called the *Liber monstrorum* ("Book of Monsters")'; Orchard, 'Beowulf and Other Battlers', p. 67. See further Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 134. Damico, *Wealththeow and the Valkyrie Tradition*, p. 9.

was necessary for Anglo-Saxon society to survive.<sup>133</sup> Personal names containing the element *wulf* have accordingly positive connotations, such as 'Beowulf' ('bee-wolf' [BEAR]? 'wolf of [the god] Beow?') or 'Cynewulf' (royal wolf).<sup>134</sup> Still, the metaphor remains ambiguous since the entailment 'beast' (vs 'civilized man') in the input 'wolf' can always be activated. The identification of the cannibalistic Mermedonians and the ferocious Vikings as *welwulfas* in *Andreas* (l. 149a) and *The Battle of Maldon* (l. 96a), and of the Egyptians as *hare heorowulfas* 'hoary sword-wolves' shortly after the introduction of the literal beasts in *Exodus* (l. 181a; MS *heora wulfas*) are clear instances of such activation.<sup>135</sup> Even positive characters who channel their aggression against their enemies are affected. Beowulf crushes Hygelac's slayer Dæghrefn with his bare hands, and the Geatish warrior Wulf displays brute force in his fight with Ongenþeow. As Gale Owen-Crocker observes, 'Wulf and Eofor "boar" embody the savagery that is associated with their names, and there is little else to them.'<sup>136</sup>

Since male warriors are usually endowed with wolfish qualities in the poetic corpus, the *wulf*-metaphors used for Grendel's mother make her more beastly and, paradoxically, place her back in the human male domain. Grendel's mother's gender is indeed ambiguous. Although her sex is clearly defined as female in her biological function as *modor*, she displays the behaviour of an aggressive male against the in-group. She occupies a *niðsele* 'enmity-hall' (l. 1513a) and a [*guð*]*sele* 'war-hall' (l. 2139a),<sup>137</sup> while Hroðgar goes a step further and even conceptualizes her as a man (WOMEN ARE MEN), namely a *mihtig manscaða*

<sup>133</sup> Neville, *Representations of the Natural World*, pp. 55–56.

<sup>134</sup> For a brief discussion of some early interpretations of the compound, see 'Introduction', in *Beowulf*, ed. by Klaeber, pp. xxv–xxviii (see also 'Introduction', in *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. xlviii–li). The meaning 'wolf of (the god) Beow' has been suggested by Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 121 n. 117.

<sup>135</sup> *Andreas*, ed. by Krapp, p. 7; *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 60; *Exodus*, ed. by Krapp, p. 96. For a discussion of the systematic association between the Egyptians and wolves in *Exodus*, see Griffith, 'Convention and Originality', pp. 191–92. See further Terasawa, 'Old English *Exodus* 11a', pp. 259–61. Less certain is the use of the compounds *herewulf* 'army-wolf' (l. 2015b) and *hildewulf* 'battle-wolf' (l. 2051a) for the hostile Elamites in *Genesis A* (ed. by Krapp, pp. 61, 62), but since all other *wulf*-compounds emphasize the animalistic nature of the referent, it is quite likely that Lot's abductors are conceptualized in a similar way. The identification of the Vikings as *welwulfas* in *The Battle of Maldon* is further discussed in Chapter 4, pp. 194–95.

<sup>136</sup> Owen-Crocker, 'Beast Men', p. 277.

<sup>137</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 52, 72.



‘mighty crime-warrior’ (l. 1339a) and a *sinnig secg* ‘sinful man’ (l. 1379a).<sup>138</sup> Certainly, Grendel’s mother does not act like the women in Hroðgar’s community. Instead of functioning as a peace-weaver like Queen Wealhþeow and her daughter Freawaru, she assumes a warrior role in her vengeance against the Danes and her fight with Beowulf. But the poet also calls her an *ides aglæcwif* (l. 1259a), that is, both a woman (*wif*) who inspires awe (*aglæca*)<sup>139</sup> and a ‘woman, lady’ (*ides*). This is the second time that *ides* is used in connection with Grendel’s mother, only that Beowulf’s formidable opponent does not merely have the *appearance* of an *ides* in this instance but is identified as one. Such identification is particularly peculiar since it predominantly denotes noble women in Old English poetry,<sup>140</sup> including Wealhþeow (ll. 620b, 1168b, 1649b), Hildeburh (ll. 1075, 1117b), and Modþryðo (l. 1941a) in *Beowulf*.<sup>141</sup> However, instead of indicating Grendel’s mother’s nobility, as Keith Taylor and Wendy Hennequin have claimed,<sup>142</sup> I would argue that the use of *ides* in combination with *aglæcwif* simply reminds us of the very function that she, unlike Wealhþeow and Hildeburh, does not perform, namely the function of a peace-weaving noblewoman.<sup>143</sup> True, Modþryðo also failed to meet the requirement

<sup>138</sup> Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 47, 48.

<sup>139</sup> Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 44. For this rendering of *aglæca*, see Kuhn, ‘Old English *aglæca*’. Kuhn translates *aglæcwif* with ‘female warrior woman’ (p. 218). Cf. *Dictionary of Old English*, *aglæcwif*. See also Nicholls, ‘Bede “Awe-Inspiring” not “Monstrous”’; Menzer, ‘*Agelcwif* (*Beowulf* 1259a)’. For a general study of the term and its connotative meanings in Old English religious and secular poetry, see Gillam, ‘The Use of the Term “Æglæca”’.

<sup>140</sup> In addition to the occurrence in *Beowulf* listed here, *ides* is also used for, among others, St Helena (*Elene*, 3x), Judith (*Judith*, 8x), Eve (*Genesis B*, 7x; *Guthlac B*), Mary (*Creed*), Cain’s and Lamech’s wives and daughters, Sarah (10x), Hagar (3x), and the women of Sodom and Gomorrah (*Genesis A*). In all these cases, Meaney’s observation that the application of the term is ‘complimentary’ is valid (Meaney, ‘The *Ides*’, p. 24). However, a less specific use of *ides* occurs in the phrase *weas ond idesa* ‘men and women’ in *Guthlac B* (l. 1232b), and in *Precepts*, a father instructs his son to protect himself against *idese lufu* ‘the love of a woman’ (l. 36b) ‘forðon sceal æwiscmod oft sibian, | se þe gewiteð in wifes lufan, | fremdre meowlan’ (because he must often wander ashamed, who knows the love of a woman, of a foreign maiden, ll. 37a–39a). *Precepts*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, p. 141. For a list of all occurrences of *ides*, see *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, comp. by Healey, Wilkin, and Xin Xiang.

<sup>141</sup> Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 23, 41, 56, 38, 39, 66.

<sup>142</sup> Taylor, ‘*Beowulf* 1259a’; Hennequin, ‘We’ve Created a Monster’, pp. 515–16. See also Alfano, ‘The Issue of Feminine Monstrosity’.

<sup>143</sup> See also Chance (Nitzsche), ‘The Structural Unity of *Beowulf*’, pp. 287–303. In a similar vein, Grendel is called a *healþegn* ‘hall-thane’ (l. 142a), a *rinc* ‘warrior’ (l. 720b), and a *hilderinc* ‘battle-warrior’ (l. 986b), who displays his *gudcraeft* (l. 127a) and is *heapodeor* (l. 772a).



of peace-weaver, as the poet explicitly states,<sup>144</sup> but the situation is different in this instance. Although Modþryðo had passed the death sentence on many men before her marriage to King Offa, her integration into the king's group made it possible for him to correct her culturally unacceptable behaviour and turn her into an *ides* who became *gode mære* 'famous for her goodness' (l. 1952b).<sup>145</sup> Grendel's mother, on the other hand, has never had any access to such a group. Her size, her ferocity, speechlessness, and her kinship ties affiliate her with her son's group, affiliations that prevent her from entering the Danish community and force her to remain an exile until her death.<sup>146</sup>

Grendel and his mother are hostile outcasts, whose cultural alterity is highlighted throughout the first part of *Beowulf*. Incapable of accessing Hroðgar's group, they inhabit the moors, a landscape feature that, as Alaric Hall points out, is associated with monsters in place names.<sup>147</sup> But their habitat is also dark, cold, and desolate not unlike that of the northern *jǫtunnar*. A good example is Hroðgar's description of Grendel's mere mentioned above:

'Hie dygel lond  
warigeað wulfhleopu, windige næssas,  
frecne fengelad, ðær fyrgenstream  
under næssa genipu niþer gewiteð,  
flod under foldan. Nis þæt feor heonon  
milgemearces, þæt se mere standeð;  
ofer þæm hongiað hrinde bearwas,  
wudu wyrtum fæst wæter oferhelmað.' (ll. 1357b–64)<sup>148</sup>

The last two terms are inappropriate for the very reason that Grendel's cannibalistic excursions into Heorot can hardly be seen as 'battle-craft', while Grendel's attempt to escape does not qualify him as 'battle-brave'.

<sup>144</sup> 'Ne bið swylc cwenlic þeaw | idese to efnanne, þeah ðe hio ænlicu sy, | þætte freoðuwebbe feores onsæce | æfter ligetorne leofne mannan' (Such is not a queenly custom for a lady to perform although she be peerless, that the peace-weaver deprive a dear man of his life after a pretended injury, ll. 1940b–43). *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 66.

<sup>145</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 66.

<sup>146</sup> A different interpretation of Grendel's mother's nature as *ides* is provided by Damico in *Wealththeow and the Valkyrie Tradition*, pp. 69–70 and 'The Valkyrie Reflex', esp. pp. 178–79. Damico links it to that of the etymologically related *dísir* (cf. Chapter 2, pp. 70–71). For a discussion of the etymology of the term, see also Meaney, 'The *Ides*', pp. 23–24.

<sup>147</sup> Hall, *Elves*, p. 66. Neville's study (*Representations of the Natural World*, esp. pp. 70–74) has illustrated that the natural world is generally perceived as hostile and menacing in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Grendel and his mother are thus embodiments of this world.

<sup>148</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 47.

('They guard the secret land,  
the wolf-slopes, windy headlands,  
the dangerous fen path, where the mountain stream  
goes down under the darkness of the headlands,  
the flood under the earth. It is not far hence  
in miles, where the mere is located;  
groves covered with frost hang over it,  
trees, firmly rooted, hang over the water.')

Like the *jotnar*, the Grendelkin have close affinities with their stagnant surroundings, which are both metonymic (PLACE FOR THE PEOPLE IN THAT PLACE) and, since their hostility corresponds to a frozen and thus equally hostile landscape, metaphorical (ENMITY IS COLDNESS). But Grendel and his mother's alterity is not only cultural. Just before mentioning their humanoid shapes, Hroðgar calls mother and son *ellorgæstas* 'spirits from elsewhere' (l. 1349a), an identification that seems to be confirmed by two references to them as *wælgæst* 'slaughter'-*gæst* (ll. 1331a and 1995a).<sup>149</sup> Two complications arise from these references. The first one concerns the base word of *wælgæst*, which could denote a spirit (*gāst*, *gæst*) but could also be a variant spelling of *giest/gyst* 'visitant, specifically denoting an alien, outlandish creature'.<sup>150</sup> Hroðgar observes that a *wælgæst wæfre* 'restless slaughter-gæst' had killed his chief counsellor Æschere, and it is quite possible that he sees her as a very unpleasant visitor at this point. Furthermore, when Hygelac later mentions that he did not want Beowulf to attack the *wælgæst* Grendel, we are again left with the two meanings. It may therefore be the most satisfactory solution to allow wordplay: Grendel is perceived as a visitant and a spirit, and Grendel's mother is seen at least by Hroðgar in the same way.

The second complication concerns the metaphoricity of the compounds. Hrothgar's association of Grendel's mother with the demonic is further reinforced by the statement that, after *bryre deofla* 'the fall of the devils' (l. 1680a),<sup>151</sup> the hilt of the giant sword passed into Hroðgar's hands. And yet, the terminology stressing her demonic nature is not systematic enough to turn her into a demon. In other words, Grendel's mother appears to be a humanoid female with male, lupine, and demonic characteristics supplied by the corresponding input spaces 'man', 'wolf', and 'spirit, demon' in this complex metaphorical blend. Grendel, on the other hand, is treated differently even though he and

<sup>149</sup> Klaeber's *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 47, 46, 67.

<sup>150</sup> *Dictionary of Old English*, ed. by Cameron and others, *gāst*, *gæst*, and *gyst*.

<sup>151</sup> Klaeber's *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 57.

his mother belong to the same race.<sup>152</sup> He is called *gast* 'spirit' five times: he is a *grim gast* 'fierce spirit' (l. 102a), a *wearg gast* 'cursed spirit' (l. 133a; also used for the devil in l. 1747b; see below), and a *helle gast* 'spirit of hell' (l. 1274a);<sup>153</sup> furthermore, he belongs to the *geosceafgastas* 'spirits fated of old' (l. 1266a), while his unknown father's ancestry consists of *dyrne gastas* 'secret spirits' (l. 1357a; this last reference is Hrothgar's).<sup>154</sup> Grendel's strength is expressed by the compound *ellengast* 'powerful spirit' (l. 86a) and his mysterious origin by *ellorgast* 'spirit from elsewhere' on three occasions (ll. 807b, 1617b, 1621b) in addition to the one mentioned above.<sup>155</sup> In fact, the conceptual blend of the inputs 'human' and 'spirit' is so even that Grendel's ontological status has become uncertain.<sup>156</sup> Whereas the many man-words indicate that he is anthropomorphic albeit with beastly habits, the *gast* words and phrases, which often occur in close proximity to the man-words, suggest a demonic nature. This uncertainty is further reinforced by narrative details and expressions that associate Grendel with the Christian concept of hell in another conceptual blend. He is one of the *helrunan* 'counsellors skilled in the mysteries in hell' who *scriþað* 'wander' (l. 163b) in the wastelands, just as the devils in the Old English poem *Christ and Satan scriþað* in hell (l. 629b),<sup>157</sup> and when he breaks into Heorot, an unnatural, fiery light pours forth from his eyes.<sup>158</sup> Grendel who knows the secrets of hell carries hell-fire into Heorot. The poet is even

<sup>152</sup> Grendel's mother's affinities with the race of Cain become quite clear in lines 1258b–65a, where her exile and Cain's fratricide are temporally — and perhaps causally — linked.

<sup>153</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 6, 7, 59, 44, 47.

<sup>154</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 44, 47.

<sup>155</sup> *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 29, 55.

<sup>156</sup> See also Baird's 'Grendel the Exile' for an earlier analysis of Grendel's dual nature of Christian demon and human exile.

<sup>157</sup> *Christ and Satan*, ed. by Krapp, p. 155.

<sup>158</sup> 'Ligge gelicost leoht unfæger' ('horrible light a flame most alike', l. 727). *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 26. Flaming eyes are also a characteristic of some of the monstrous races listed in the insular *Liber monstrorum diversis generibus* (650–750), such as a humanoid race with eyes that emit light like lanterns, two-headed serpents and serpents of enormous size with equally shining eyes, and a snake species that 'iubas habebant sanguineas et oculi eorum igni horrebant et cruore' (had bloody crests and their eyes were grim with fire and gore). Edition and translation by Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, I. 36 (p. 278 [text], p. 279 [translation]), III. 2 (p. 306 [text], p. 307 [translation]), and III. 5 (p. 308 [text], p. 309 [translation]). The quotation (III. 10) occurs on p. 310 (text), p. 311 (translation). Two-headed serpents with eyes shining like lanterns are also mentioned in *The Wonders of the East*, ¶ 5 (ed. and trans. by Orchard, p. 176 [Latin text], p. 186 [Old English text], p. 187 [translation]).

more direct in line 101b, where he calls Grendel a *feond in helle* ‘enemy in hell’. Although various interpretations of this phrase are possible and indeed have been offered, it may very well be a reference to a devil whose natural habitat would be hell,<sup>159</sup> an assumption that is supported by the poet’s identification of Grendel as *wearg gast* ‘cursed spirit’ (l. 133a), *feond mancynnes* ‘enemy of mankind’ (ll. 164b, 1276a), *Godes andsaca* ‘God’s enemy’ (ll. 786b, 1682b), *helle gast* ‘spirit of hell’ (l. 1274a), *ealdgewinna* ‘old adversary’ (l. 1776a), and *deofol* (l. 1680a).<sup>160</sup> In all instances the employed terminology fuses Grendel with creatures from the infernal regions.<sup>161</sup>

As a figure of evil, Grendel also represents chaos and darkness in a more universal sense. He hears the joy in Hrothgar’s hall from his dark abode, here called *þystru* ‘darkness’ (l. 87b), rules the moors in *sinnihte* ‘in perpetual night’ (l. 161b), invades in *deorce nihte* ‘the dark nights’ (l. 275b), and inhabits Heorot in *swearte nihte* ‘the black nights’ (l. 167b).<sup>162</sup> But Grendel is not only associated with darkness metonymically; he also becomes a shadow himself. The poet calls him a *deorc deapscua* ‘dark shadow of death’ (l. 160a), a dark, death-bringing ghostly apparition.<sup>163</sup> With this reference appearing after the illustrations of Grendel’s questionable lineage and amidst the terms indicating his spirit-like nature, Grendel’s status becomes entirely elusive. A fourth input is created which merges with the wolfish giant and the hellish spirit in the conceptual blend ‘Grendel’. Indeed, the identification of Grendel as death shadow is reinforced by other references. Grendel’s approach to Heorot after Beowulf’s arrival is preceded by the ‘nipende niht [...] scaduhelma gesceapu [...] wan under wolcnum’ (darkening night [...] the shapes of the covers of the night [...] black under the clouds, ll. 649–51a).<sup>164</sup> The dark night comes gliding in over the

<sup>159</sup> See also Malmberg, ‘Grendel and the Devil’. A different interpretation is given by Andrew (‘Grendel in Hell’), who argues that the sinful Grendel carries hell(-fire) with him and therefore is in hell wherever he goes. A third option would be a more general rendering of *in helle* as ‘hellish’. For an overview of the various interpretations of *feond in helle*, see the commentary on the phrase in *Klaeber’s ‘Beowulf’*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 122.

<sup>160</sup> *Klaeber’s ‘Beowulf’*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 7, 8, 44, 28, 57, 44, 60, 57 (in sequence of citation).

<sup>161</sup> For a similar discussion of Milton’s Satan as a blend of anthropomorphic being with a theological ontology and non-human qualities, see Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, pp. 160–62.

<sup>162</sup> *Klaeber’s ‘Beowulf’*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 6, 8.

<sup>163</sup> *Klaeber’s ‘Beowulf’*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 6.

<sup>164</sup> *Klaeber’s ‘Beowulf’*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 24.

Danes, covering them with its shadows. The same vocabulary is used roughly fifty lines later. Grendel is called a *sceadugenga* ‘shadow walker’ (l. 703a), who glides to Heorot (*scriðan*) in order to spread darkness over the Danes and fling them under the shadows (*under sceadu bregdan*, l. 707b).<sup>165</sup> Yet Grendel is not a spirit either. Whereas such spirits vanish into thin air once hard pressed or killed, Grendel’s body does not disintegrate after his death; on the contrary, Beowulf is even able to turn Grendel’s arm and head into trophies. In the end, we are left with a conceptual multi-scope blend with clashing inputs that casts doubt on Grendel’s ontological status. As a wolfish giant, a demon, and a cosmic force, Grendel can boast of an ontological ambiguity that distinguishes him from his mother and that brings him closer to the forces of chaos in the Old Norse mythological world.

Unlike Grendel and his mother, the third monstrous enemy in the poem, the dragon, is not a potential member of any human community. Since it is in the dragon’s nature to keep away from society, it resents any intrusion into its own domain, its barrow. Even its function as a treasure guardian is innate. *Maxims II* states:

Draca sceal on hlæwe,  
frod, frætsum wlc. (ll. 26b–27a)<sup>166</sup>

(The dragon sits on the mound,  
wise, proud of its treasures.)

Although, as Neville once pointed out, the dragon ‘appears to be another element of nature’s variety whose division from life was not sorrowful to any of the people,’<sup>167</sup> it does not qualify for cultural alterity; it simply moves within a different ontological domain. The dragon’s beastly nature is expressed by the many metonymic simplexes and compounds that identify it as *wyrm* (18x) or *-draca* (11x) and/or highlight one of its natural characteristics as nocturnal, flying, poisonous, fire-vomiting, earth-dwelling, and treasure-guarding serpent.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Klaeber’s ‘Beowulf’, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 26.

<sup>166</sup> *Maxims II*, ed. by Dobbie, p. 56.

<sup>167</sup> Neville, ‘Monsters and Criminals’, p. 109.

<sup>168</sup> The association with fire is made in the compounds *lig-* and *fyrdraca* (ll. 2333a, 2689a, 3040b), with the earth in *eorðdraca* (l. 2712a). The dragon’s airborne activity is expressed in the compounds *lyftfloga* ‘air-flier’ (l. 2315a), *guðfloga* ‘war-flier’ (l. 2528a), and *widfloga* ‘far-flier’ (ll. 2346a, 2830a); its role as (treasure) guardian surfaces in *weard* ‘guardian’ (l. 2413b), *goldweard* ‘gold-guardian’ (l. 3081b), *hordweard* ‘treasure-guardian’ (ll. 2293b, 2554b, 2593a),

The poet accordingly calls this marvellous and formidable dragon *aglæca* ‘one inspiring awe’ (ll. 2520a, 2534a, 2557a, 2592a [dragon and Beowulf], 2905a) five times.<sup>169</sup> In fact, the dragon’s reaction to the theft of one single cup reveals, once aroused, its violent and destructive nature: it not only destroys the heart of Beowulf’s society, i.e. his hall, but also poses an existential threat to the Geats: besides being a *ðeodsceaða* ‘people harmer’ (ll. 2278a, 2688a), the serpentine creature is identified by Wiglaf and the Geatish messenger as *ferhðgeniðla* (l. 2881a), *feorhgeniðla* (l. 2933b), and *ealdorgewinna* (l. 2903b), and thus an enemy (*-geniðla*, *-gewinna*) that endangers all human life (*feorh-*, *ealdor-*, *ferhð* ‘life’ < ‘spirit’).<sup>170</sup>

The metonymic expressions *ferhðgeniðla*, *feorhgeniðla*, and *ealdorgewinna* suggest qualities that place the dragon with the Grendelkin as well as with the monsters of the northern cosmos.<sup>171</sup> Much has been written on the dragon as a force of evil and chaos, both in a Christian and an Indo-European context,<sup>172</sup> and it is certainly possible that its identification as *atol inwitgæst* ‘horrid hostility *gæst*’ (l. 2670a) and *niðgæst* ‘enmity-*gæst*’ (l. 2699a) in the final encounter between the serpent and Beowulf and Wiglaf points to its demonic qualities (*gæst*) rather than its status as a visitor or stranger (*gyst*).<sup>173</sup> However, such

*frætwa hyrde* ‘guardian of precious things’ (3133b), *maðma mundbora* ‘protector of treasures’ (l. 2779b), *beorges hyrde* and *beorges weard* ‘guardian of the barrow’ (ll. 2304b, 2580b); its old age and nocturnal and poisonous nature are expressed in *attorsceaða* ‘poison-harmer’ (l. 2839a) and *eald uhtsceaða* ‘old dawn-harmer’ (l. 2271a). Rauer (*Beowulf and the Dragon*, p. 34) has pointed out that the nocturnal habits of the dragon in *Beowulf* are atypical: ‘The *Beowulf*-poet seems to imply not only that the dragon is habitually active during the night and at dusk and dawn, but also (and more remarkably) that it is normally *asleep during the day*. Sleeping dragons occur in some late medieval Old Norse material, but seem to be extremely unusual in other traditions, where dragons are sometimes even characterized as notoriously sleepless and vigilant’ (Rauer’s italics).

<sup>169</sup> Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 86, 87, 89, 99.

<sup>170</sup> Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 78, 92, 98, 99.

<sup>171</sup> *Feorhgeniðla* is used for Grendel in line 969a, for Grendel’s mother in line 1540a. Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 34, 53. Note that all three compounds only occur in *Beowulf*.

<sup>172</sup> For discussions of the dragon as a Christian symbol of evil, see, for example, Sand, ‘Drache, C. Bibel’, pp. 238–49; Steffen, *Drachenkampf*, pp. 73–162. Interpretations of the *Beowulf* dragon as a force of evil are provided by Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning*, pp. 129–44; Kaske, ‘*Sapientia et Fortitudo*’, pp. 450–55. See also Brown, ‘The Firedrake’. For studies of the dragon in European myth, see especially Fontenrose, *Python*; Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon*. Additional references can be found in Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon*, p. 52 nn. 1 and 2.

<sup>173</sup> Klaeber’s *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 91, 92.

associations do not seem to affect its ontological status as *wyrm* and *draca*. An additional complicating factor for the determination of the blend 'dragon' is its identification as a *mansceaða* 'crime-harmer' (l. 2514b),<sup>174</sup> an expression which elsewhere in the Old English corpus denotes wicked people (i.e. the antediluvian giants in *Genesis A*, l. 1269a, the Egyptians in *Exodus*, l. 37a, the sinner at the Last Judgement in *Christ C*, l. 1559a) and, somewhat more ambiguously, the Grendelkin.<sup>175</sup> Two options arise: either the term could also be applied to beasts even though the extant corpus does not indicate this, or the poet wished to endow the beastly dragon with human features. Although the first option cannot be excluded — we simply do not know how many texts have perished over the centuries — the second one corresponds well to the dragon's other human qualities, such as its impatience (it can hardly wait until dusk in order to avenge its injuries) and vengefulness. Once a human component is added to the blend, the dragon's instinctive hoarding of treasure may also be viewed as a negative human attribute. It violates the social code established in the first part of the poem, where it is implied that, in a well-functioning heroic society, a ruler ensures the loyalty of his followers by circulating treasure among them instead of keeping it to himself. Both the Danish king Heremod and the unnamed ruler were poor rulers because they succumbed to their emotions and, as a consequence, became cruel and failed to distribute rings (ll. 1719b, 1750a).<sup>176</sup> The dragon does, of course, not have a retinue to whom it can distribute its wealth, but by preventing such wealth from being used by human communities it attains an anti-social role nevertheless. Hence the dragon is primarily conceived as a beast with human and possibly supernatural characteristics that is placed far from Beowulf's society, and that with its eventual destruction confirms the cultural values expressed throughout the poem.

<sup>174</sup> Klaeber's *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 86.

<sup>175</sup> For the listed occurrences of *mansceaða*, see *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, comp. by Healey, Wilkin, and Xin Xiang.

<sup>176</sup> Klaeber's *Beowulf*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 58, 59.



## *The Early Irish Heroic Tales: The Ulster Cycle*

### Introduction

Mythology does not only feature in the early Irish works discussed in Chapter 2; it is also an essential element in the heroic tales. In the Ulster Cycle, mortal men interact freely with divinities and other supernatural beings — whether humanoid, animalistic, or phantom — in a world that is to represent the Celtic Iron Age. The tales evolve around warriors of extraordinary strength and skill, who, similar to their counterparts in the other two heroic corpora, fight strong and fierce enemies so that their victory becomes even more pronounced. In fact, much emphasis is laid on gory scenes, with blood flowing inch-deep and headless trunks scattered all over the battlefield. Belonging to the other side does not per se contribute to the construction of an enemy's alterity, but unheroic qualities like weakness, cowardice, and treachery do. Perhaps the most blatant example expressing such a view can be found in the death tale of the semi-divine Cú Chulainn 'Hound of Culann'.<sup>177</sup> This special hero, who displayed his superhuman qualities already in his boyhood, and who became the sole defender of Ulster against Connacht at the age of seventeen,<sup>178</sup> finds his pre-

<sup>177</sup> For an account of the treachery committed against Cú Roí, another hero of the Ulster Cycle, see below.

<sup>178</sup> At the age of five, the hero still called Setanta single-handedly defeats one hundred and fifty boys at Emain Macha; at the age of seven, he kills the ferocious hound of the smith Culann and then compensates the smith for his loss by becoming himself his hound for a while, thereby acquiring the name 'Hound of Culann'. In the same year he takes up arms. Cú Chulainn's initiation is indeed extraordinary. After having received King Conchobar's weapons and chariot, he is taken by Conchobar's charioteer to Sliab Fuait, where he relieves the hero Conall Cornach from his task of guarding the province's boundary. He kills the three monstrous sons of Nechta Scéne and finally catches a wild stag and a flock of swans. At this point, however, his war frenzy has overpowered him, making him incapable of distinguishing between friend and foe. On his return to Emain Macha, he challenges the Ulstermen and only when the women of Emain Macha bare their breasts and in this way shame him, are his fellow warriors able to throw him successively into three vats of cold water (*'Táin Bó Cúailnge': Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, pp. 12–26 [text], pp. 135–48 [translation]). The epic has been transmitted in three recensions. Versions of Recension I can be found in the late eleventh- or early twelfth-century *Lebor na hUidre* (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 E 25, pp. 55<sup>a</sup>–82<sup>b</sup>), the late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century Yellow Book of Lecan (Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1318 [H 2.16], pp. 17<sup>a</sup>–53<sup>a</sup> [facs.]), as well as in London, British Library, MS Egerton 1782, fols 88<sup>r</sup>–105<sup>v</sup>, s. xvi<sup>m</sup> and in O'Curry 1 (Maynooth, Russell Library, MS 3a1, pp. 1–76, s. xvi<sup>cs</sup>). The reworked and modernized version of the epic constituting Recension II is preserved in the twelfth-century Book of Leinster (Dublin, Trinity College, MS1339 [H 2.18], pp. 53<sup>b</sup>–104<sup>b</sup>),

mature death not in fair battle but by the trickery of inferior opponents.<sup>179</sup> In revenge of their father's death, the three sons of Cailitin use magic to make the plain of Macha seem ablaze, and when Cú Chulainn rushes off to the rescue, he is tricked by their three one-eyed sisters.<sup>180</sup> The hags invite him to a meal of dog-meat with the knowledge that two of the hero's taboos, or *gessi*, dictate that he must neither refuse hospitality nor eat the flesh of his name-sake. Since heroes rather sacrifice a personal *geis* than violate the social code, Cú Chulainn is forced to accept the meat, which makes him lose his strength and puts him at a disadvantage in the battle afterwards.<sup>181</sup> He is eventually killed by Lugaid in revenge for his killing of Lugaid's father Cú Roí, but this happens only after another instance of foul play by his opponents, as Erc mac Cairpre's satirists force the hero to hand over his spear three times (he retrieves it twice).

Interestingly, the warriors themselves seem to be less concerned with being accused of treachery than of cowardice and physical weakness. Cú Chulainn is very upset when he is falsely accused of retreating before Nad Crantail in *Táin Bó Cúailnge* 'The Cattle Raid of Cooley', and Fer Diad is compelled to fight Cú Chulainn once Medb tells him that the young hero is already certain of his victory. Before the arranged encounter, he silences his objecting charioteer with 'ferr tendi ná timi' (stoutness of heart is better than cowardice),<sup>182</sup> while Cú Chulainn boasts before his friend Fergus mac Roich that he will not retreat a single step before any opponent.<sup>183</sup> Similarly, heroes could denounce their opponents for 'shameful' behaviour, as is done by Cet mac Mágach of Connacht in the ninth-century *Scéla mucce Meic Dathó* 'The Story of Mac Dathó's Pig'.<sup>184</sup> In the tale, both King Conchobar of Ulster and Ailill and Medb, king and queen

while Recension III has survived only in fragmentary form in the London, British Library, MS Egerton 93, fols 26<sup>r</sup>–35<sup>v</sup>, s. xv?, and Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1319 [H 2.17], pp. 336–47, 334–35, 111–14, 348–49, 115–18, 350–51, various ages. For a detailed discussion of the content of the three recensions, see Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 96–244.

<sup>179</sup> For a recent edition of the eighth-century *Aided Con Chulainn*, see *The Death of Cú Chulainn*, ed. by Kimpton.

<sup>180</sup> For other instances of the blemish of one-eyedness and blindness, see Chapter 4, pp. 198, 201–02.

<sup>181</sup> A detailed discussion of the nature and function of personal taboos in Irish heroic literature is provided by O'Leary, 'Honour-Bound'; see also Greene, 'Tabu in Early Irish Narrative'.

<sup>182</sup> '*Táin Bó Cúailnge*': Recension I, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 87 (text), p. 202 (translation).

<sup>183</sup> '*Táin Bó Cúailnge*': Recension I, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 84 (text), p. 200 (translation).

<sup>184</sup> *Scéla mucce Meic Dathó*, ed. by Thurneysen; *The Story of Mac Dá Thó's Pig*, trans. by Meyer.

of the Connachta, ask the hospitaller Mac Dathó for his famous hound Ailbe. Since Mac Dathó does not want to turn either party against him, he follows his wife's advice and promises the hound to both. A feast given by the hospitaller for the men of both provinces follows, the highlight of which is a slaughtered pig of enormous size to be carved by the most deserving warrior. The two sides start bragging about their exploits until Cet seizes the knife while flinging insults at his competitors. Not unlike Loki in *Lokasenna*, he exposes their flaws, only that in this case they all relate to a lack of strength and/or courage in previous combats with him. For instance, he boasts of having defeated the champion Lóegaire Búadach 'Victorious' right after the latter took up weapons in his youth and was not at all so *búadach* then. Cet further avows that he deprived four of his challengers either of a hand, an eye, eloquent speech, or virility, and that he left two others with a maimed father and a killed son. The dishonour experienced by Lóegaire and the blemish and disgrace of the other warriors make them all sit down; in the last two instances, furthermore, the contestants are humiliated because they were clearly not brave enough to avenge their kinsmen.<sup>185</sup>

The question arises whether specific metaphors denote the socio-cultural alterity of treacherous, weak, or cowardly characters in the Ulster Cycle poetry, and if there are such metaphors, how they function. Most of the poems relevant for this investigation are found in the prose tales of the Ulster Cycle, where they appear as first-person narratives like dialogues, greetings, and prophecies, thus providing fertile ground for inflammatory attacks on an enemy. Nevertheless, given the tendency to stress the battle vigour of the opponents rather than their flaws, discriminating metaphors are not as numerous as in the Old Norse heroic material. The opponents are often associated with a positive manifestation of moderate alterity like violent natural phenomena (e.g. thunderbolts, fire, and crashing waves) or fierce animals (e.g. boars, bears, lions, hounds and wolves, hawks, and serpents).<sup>186</sup> At the same time, however, the preoccupation with heroic conduct makes the instances in which such conduct is lacking or questioned more conspicuous and the choice of metaphors particularly interest-

<sup>185</sup> McCone has argued that the traditional motifs of head hunting and of the fierce warrior who has lost an eye, arm/hand, and/or leg/foot are parodied by the monastic author in order to expose the martial customs of the Irish ancestors as ridiculous and futile. In other words, the blemishes of Cet's opponents were not the result of victorious combat but of humiliating defeat. McCone, 'Die Spottwettkämpfe', esp. pp. 154–58.

<sup>186</sup> In her description of Cú Chulainn in *Fled Bricrenn* (ed. and trans. by Henderson, § 52, p. 64 [text], p. 65 [translation]), Medb even identifies the hero as a *bara bledmail* 'sea-monster of fury'. Cf. *Verba Scáthaige*, where Cú Chulainn is called a *belenn* 'whale' (ed. and trans. by Henry, ll. 25, 26; Henry, *Verba Scáthaige*, p. 206 n. 25).

ing. As will be illustrated below, exposing the targets' flawed social conduct by means of a parodic or ironic use of heroic metaphors was one frequently used technique; demonizing the opponents and thus pushing them towards radical alterity was another.

### Cowardice and Treachery in the Poems of the Ulster Cycle

The relevant metaphors occur in the eulogy *Amrae Chon Roí* and in a few poetic sections of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, *Fled Bricrenn* 'Bricriu's Feast', and *Scéla mucce Meic Dathó*. In the interpolated Fer Diad episode of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (Recensions I and II),<sup>187</sup> Cú Chulainn and Fer Diad fling humiliating insults at each other before entering combat. Fer Diad begins:

'Can tici-seo, a Chúa,  
do throit re nert núa?  
Bid croderg do chúa  
úas análaib t' ech.  
Bid atód fri h-airis  
mairg tánic do thurus  
ricfa a leas do leigis  
mad dá rís do t'ech.'<sup>188</sup>

('Whence do you come, O Cú,  
to fight with fresh strength?  
Your flesh will be blood-red  
above the steam of your horses.  
Woe to him who comes as you do,  
for it will be the kindling of a fire with one stick of firewood.  
You will be in need of healing  
if you reach your home again.')

<sup>187</sup> The Recension I version occurs in the Yellow Book of Lecan. Although its language is older than that of the corresponding episode in Recension II, the latter has been identified as earlier. Significant alternative readings from Recension II are provided in the footnotes. See Rutten, 'Displacement and Replacement', p. 314.

<sup>188</sup> '*Táin Bó Cúailnge*: Recension I, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 91 (text), p. 206 (translation). Note the alternative reading of the quote in Recension II, lines 1 and 2: 'Cid ra[t] tuc, a Chúa, do throit ra níaid núa?' ('What has led you, little Hound, to fight with a strong champion?'). '*Táin Bó Cúailnge*' from the *Book of Leinster*, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 81 (text), p. 219 (translation). This reading corresponds to Fer Diad's overall promotion of himself as the better warrior in the episode.

Not only does Fer Diad predict that Cú Chulainn will lose the fight, but he also supplies the reason for it: his endeavour will be *atód fri h-airis* 'lit. lightening (of a fire) with one firebrand'.<sup>189</sup> Cú Chulainn is a single burning piece of wood that cannot set anything ablaze; in other words, he is too weak a warrior to engage in fierce combat with Fer Diad, which makes his whole expedition doomed from the beginning. The charge is especially insulting as champions are usually singled out as fire or a blazing flame in the Ulster tales.<sup>190</sup> When Lóegaire Búadach, Conall Cernach, and Cú Chulainn approach Cruachan in *Fled Bricrenn*, Queen Medb refers to them as *bruth brátha* 'fire of judgement', *breó digla* 'flame of vengeance' (Lóegaire), *londbruth loga* 'fierce blaze of a hero' (Conall; this phrase is also used for the same warrior in *Scéla muicce Meic Dathó*, see below),<sup>191</sup> and, somewhat less forcefully, *blog dergthened* 'fragment of red fire' (Cú Chulainn).<sup>192</sup> In the given instances, the champion is metonymically identified with his battle fury (SALIENT QUALITY FOR THE PERSON), which, in turn, is conceptualized as a source of heat consuming everything around him (ANGER IS FIRE). In Lóegaire's case, furthermore, the hero receives the addi-

<sup>189</sup> O'Rahilly adds the explanatory phrase 'be as vain as' in square brackets: Cú Chulainn's lack of heroic vigour will make his enterprise as vain as the kindling of a fire with one stick of firewood.

<sup>190</sup> A similar metaphor is used by Cú Chulainn himself in his fight with Lóch Mac Mo Femis. He is exhausted from fighting so many warriors, and after mutilating the Morrígan, who has attacked him in three different shapes, he chants: 'Ro bíi cosnom im óenchend | acht nád lassa nach óenc[h]rand | día mbetis a dó nó a trí | lasfaitis a n-athinni' ('One man alone may be defended but a single log will not catch fire. If there were two or three, then their firebrands would blaze up'; *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 62 [text], p. 181 [translation]). However, Cú Chulainn utters the proverbial 'a single log does not catch fire' in quite a different context. He has come to realize that he cannot fight against his enemies forever. Relief is brought by his father Lug, who makes him sleep for three days and nights, but not before Cú Chulainn has killed Lóch and another five warriors.

<sup>191</sup> *Fled Bricrend*, ed. and trans. by Henderson, § 46 (p. 56 [text], p. 57 [translation]); § 48 (p. 60 [text], p. 61 [translation]). Henderson renders *londbruth loga* as 'a flame of Lug', whereas Meyer translates the phrase in *Scéla* with 'fierce glow of fire' (*Hibernica minora*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, p. 62). Meyer sees *loga* as an attributive genitive of *lug* 'warrior, hero, fighter', hence 'fiery' in the sense of 'magnificent, heroic, warlike'. See also *eDIL Language, lug*. In the prose section entitled 'Toichim na mBuiden annso' (The March of the Companies) of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, Fergus identifies the Ulster warrior Furbaid Fer Benn as *londbruth loga*, who leads one of Conchobar's many companies to the battlefield. *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 115 (text).

<sup>192</sup> *Fled Bricrend*, ed. and trans. by Henderson, § 52 (p. 64 [text], p. 65 [translation]). Henderson translates *dergthened* as 'a fragment of flame and fire'.

tional credit of being vengeful and judgemental towards his enemies, providing at least two causes of his 'fiery' disposition in battle. A similar, albeit explicit comparison by means of a simile occurs in *Cath Ruis na Ríg for Bóinn*, where the hero Iriel reports to Conchobar in a poem that his enemies (i.e. Medb and Ailill's forces) 'lassait mar lassair dar leirg' (blaze like fire across the plain).<sup>193</sup> More examples could be given from early Irish praise poetry and various prose texts, including the conceptualization of a warrior as *láth gaile*, denoting either a 'warrior of warlike ardour' or a 'warrior of seething heat' (ANGER IS HEAT).<sup>194</sup> Fer Diad's reduction of his opponent's marital vigour to *atód fir h-airis* consequently creates a blend in which Cú Chulainn's condition is contrasted with that of a 'real' warrior. Not surprisingly, Cú Chulainn takes offense and feels the need to assert his battle vigour by calling himself a *torc toraig trétaig* 'wild boar of troops and herds', who will prove victorious in the encounter.<sup>195</sup> He must confirm his alterity, albeit in its positive form, and therefore credits himself with bestial ferocity that makes him stand out both in the human and in the animal world.

Fer Diad is not impressed. At the end of the flyting match, he launches another devastating attack with an inverted version of Cú Chulainn's animal metaphor:

'Bí 'tast díim do robud.  
Is tú is braisi ar domun.  
Nítfia lúag ná logad  
dáig ní dos úas dus.  
As misi roftir  
it gilla co ngicil,  
a chridi inn eóin eitig,  
cen gaisced cen gus.<sup>196</sup>

('Leave off your warning.  
You are the most boastful man on earth.  
You shall have neither reward nor remission  
for you are no outstanding bushy tree/hero.  
Well I know  
that you are but a nervous lad,

<sup>193</sup> *Cath Ruis na Ríg*, ed. and trans. by Hogan, § 29 (p. 38 [text], p. 39 [translation]).

<sup>194</sup> See *eDIL*, *láth, gaile*.

<sup>195</sup> '*Táin Bó Cúailnge*': *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by Rahilly, p. 92 (text), p. 206 (translation).

<sup>196</sup> '*Táin Bó Cúailnge*': *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by Rahilly, p. 93 (text; my punctuation), p. 207 (translation).

O heart of a fluttering [lit. 'winged'] bird,<sup>197</sup>  
without valour, without vigour.)

In this stanza, Fer Diad accuses Cú Chulainn of being a *gilla co ngicil* 'nervous lad' with the heart of a winged bird *cen gaisced cen gus* 'without valour, without vigour'. Given its position in the last line of the stanza, *cen gaisced cen gus* not only describes the apprehensive boy and his avian heart, but it also specifies the meaning of *eitig* 'winged' as 'fluttering':<sup>198</sup> a bird with a heart that lacks courage and resolution is timid. Thus the heart is implicitly conceived as a vessel containing mental qualities which in turn define the disposition of its host, as we have seen in the instance of Heremod's surging sorrows. But Cú Chulainn is not merely accused of having the qualities of a frightened bird. Worse, Fer Diad's metaphor combines the heart-container metaphor with a second set of correspondences, namely between the fluttering of a scared bird and Cú Chulainn's alleged nervousness. Entailments in the input 'fluttering bird', such as instinctive fear and rapid uncontrolled movements, are activated and carried over as metaphorical entailments to the blend 'Cú Chulainn'.

Obviously, if Cú Chulainn had the heart of a fierce animal like a hawk or a boar, quite different entailments would be activated, as is the case in Medb's aforementioned praise of Lóegaire in *Fled Bricrenn*. In addition to her comparison of the warrior with a ravaging fire, she assigns to him the heart of a dragon:

'Greit rí,  
senrechtaid buáda,  
barc bodbae,  
bruth brátha,  
breó digla,  
drech curad,  
cúinsiu chórad,  
cride n-dracon.'<sup>199</sup>

('Compeer of kings,  
an old disposer of conquest,

<sup>197</sup> O'Rahilly: 'you with the heart of a fluttering bird'.

<sup>198</sup> In Recension II, the lines expressing Cú Chulainn's nervousness and his timid heart are inverted with the result that the lack of valour and vigour relate more directly to the nervous lad: 'a chride ind eóin ittig, | at gilla co ngicgil, | gan gasced, gan gus' (*Táin Bó Cúailnge* from the *Book of Leinster*, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 83). For the meaning *ettech* 'flying, fluttering', see *eDIL*.

<sup>199</sup> *Fled Bricrend*, ed. and trans. by Henderson, § 46 (p. 56 [text], p. 57 [translation]). The text is based on the version in *Lebor na hUidre*. Capitalization, punctuation, and layout are mine.



a fury of war,  
 a fire of judgment,  
 a flame of vengeance,  
 in mien a hero,  
 in face a champion,  
 in heart a dragon.')

Medb admires and fears this dangerous warrior. Although his face is that of a human champion, his dragon heart endows him with the features of a ferocious beast threatening to devastate her fortress. In a similar vein though without any reference to the animal's heart, Medb calls Conall a '*léo oxad* 'lion that groans', a *londbruth loga* 'fierce blaze of a hero', and a *cern eter cethraib* 'triumph among cattle', which could very well be a reference to a wolf killing livestock (cf. *fáel iter ceithrib* 'wolf among cattle').<sup>200</sup> Cú Chulainn, on the other hand, qualifies as a *mathrúamda* 'famous [?] bear' with the *mórbruth borrbíaste* 'great blazing heat of a swollen beast/monster' and the *bruth matho* 'boiling heat of a bear'.<sup>201</sup> All three warriors are consequently credited with a fierce nature, which in Cú Chulainn's case also manifests itself in the heat emitted by the warrior (ANGER IS HEAT). At the moment of their approach the three warriors have fallen into a bestial frenzy, which they cannot control any longer and therefore pose an immediate threat to Medb and her people. Their heightened alterity, fortunately, does not last long, for Medb is able to reintegrate them into her community with three vats of cold water and a choice of naked women to spend the next night with them.<sup>202</sup>

In fact, it is also possible that the identification of Cú Chulainn as an *én ettech* calls up another traditional, but more specific instantiation of WARRIORS ARE FIERCE ANIMALS (< PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS). The metaphors in question are WARRIORS ARE BIRDS OF PREY and WARRIORS ARE CARRION BIRDS, which occur both in the early Irish heroic corpus and in the praise poetry. Good warriors are described as ravens, hawks, or griffins, and Cú Chulainn is no exception. For example, Samera calls him *bran carna comramaig* 'raven of contentious flesh' in *Fled Bricreann* (see below), Fer Diad's charioteer — in contrast to his master — refers to him as a *seabac saer* 'noble hawk' (in a poem) just before the combat

<sup>200</sup> *eDIL*, *cethrae*.

<sup>201</sup> *Fled Bricreann*, ed. and trans. by Henderson, § 48 (p. 60 [text]), § 52 (p. 64 [text]), p. 65 [translation].

<sup>202</sup> For the motif of cooling down warriors in three vats of cold water in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, see p. 140 n. 178 and p. 159.

between the two heroes in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*,<sup>203</sup> and Cú Chulainn's description under the heading 'Túarascbáil delba Con Culaind so' (The Description of Cú Chulainn's Appearance) in the same tale includes 'secht meóir cechtar a dá lám co n-gabáil ingni sebaic' (seven fingers on each of his hands with the grasp of a hawk's claws).<sup>204</sup> In this last instance, the bird's strength, ferocity, and aggression, as well as its ability to catch its prey in a defenceless position are mapped onto the hero, with the consequence that his enemies attain the characteristics of timid, weak, and helpless animals including *eóin etecha* 'fluttering birds'. It may indeed be no coincidence that Fer Diad denies the champion the status of a *dos/dus* 'bushy tree'. Whereas a hero has the role of protector and defender, just as a tree shelters birds from dangers,<sup>205</sup> Cú Chulainn seems to be the very bird that seeks such shelter.

Fer Diad accordingly inverts standard metaphors that map the qualities of a fierce bird onto a hero: timid birds lack these qualities, so that warriors identified as such have no place in combat. Moreover, his reference to Cú Chulainn's heart as that of a frightened bird parodies another set of conventional metaphorical expressions that have not been mentioned yet, namely expressions that identify the heart of a fierce warrior as one made of a hard substance. Here the imagined features of the organ (i.e. physical rigidity, resilience) represent the warrior's mental qualities (i.e. steadfastness and resolution). The metaphor occurs in *Scéla mucce Meic Dathó* near the end of the tale. After Cet mac Mágach has humiliated all his opponents at the feast and Conall Cernach has finally appeared on the scene, Cet changes his strategy and praises the latter for his *cride licce* 'heart of stone':<sup>206</sup>

'Fochen Conall,  
cride licce,  
londbruth loga,  
luchair ega,  
guss flann ferge

<sup>203</sup> *Táin Bó Cúailnge*: *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 87 (text), p. 204 (translation). For the laudatory uses of hawk terminology, see *eDIL*, *sebac*, *seig*.

<sup>204</sup> *Táin Bó Cúailnge*: *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 71 (text); p. 190 (translation).

<sup>205</sup> *eDIL*, *dos*.

<sup>206</sup> This poem and the previous one are marked by the marginal abbreviation *.r.* for *rosc(ad)* in *Lebor na hUidre*. Mac Cana ('On the Use of the Term *Retoiric*') has argued for three types of *roscada*, namely 'speeches in short-lined rhymeless verse, speeches in long-lined rhymeless verse, and speeches in artificially obscure diction' (p. 89). The two poems represent the first type. For a critical assessment of Mac Cana's study, see Aitchinson, 'The Ulster Cycle', pp. 96–98.

fo chích curad  
 créchtaig cathbúadaig.  
 Atcomsa mac Findchoíme frim.<sup>207</sup>

(‘Welcome Conall,  
 heart of stone,  
 fierce blaze of a hero,  
 glitter of ice,  
 red strength of anger  
 under a hero’s breast,  
 wound-inflicter, triumphant in battle.  
 I see the son of Findchoem.’<sup>208</sup>)

Conall’s heart has the characteristics of a rock. Just as a rock is solid and does not bend, Conall’s heart does not flinch (the association between stone and infertility so common in skaldic poetry evidently does not apply), but his anger is so fierce that the unavoidable outcome will be his enemies’ death, here symbolically represented by the colour red (i.e. their red blood). In response, Conall assigns to Cet a *críde n-ega* ‘heart of ice’, which is paired with such compliments as *err trén tressa* ‘strong chariot-chief of battle’, *trethan ágach* ‘battling sea’, and a *cáin tarb tnúthach* ‘fair fierce bull’.<sup>209</sup> William Sayers has called these words of praise ‘ironically menacing’: rather than flinging insults at each other, both warriors credit their opponent with qualities that he apparently lacks and in this way make him painfully aware of why he does not belong to the warrior community.<sup>210</sup> In terms of conceptual blending theory, two incompatible situations are combined: Conall and Cet should have a heart of stone and a heart of ice respectively, but they do not.

In spite of Fer Diad’s inflammatory remarks, it is nevertheless evident that he does not seriously consider Cú Chulainn to be a coward or a weakling but

<sup>207</sup> *Scéla mucce Meic Dathó*, ed. by Thurneysen, § 15 (p. 14). *At comsa* has been changed to *Atcomsa*.

<sup>208</sup> *The Story of Mac Dá Thó’s Pig*, trans. by Meyer, § 15 (p. 73). For the rendering of *londbruth loga*, see p. 144 n. 191. The line division of the Irish poem is based on Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, p. 4.

<sup>209</sup> *Scéla mucce Meic Dathó*, ed. by Thurneysen, § 15 (p. 15); *The Story of Mac Dá Thó’s Pig*, trans. by Meyer, § 15 (pp. 73–74). Meyer translates *tnúthach* as ‘shapely’.

<sup>210</sup> Sayers, ‘Serial Defamation in Two Medieval Tales’, p. 44. In the Irish law text *Gúbretha Caratniad* ‘The False Judgements of Caratnia’, a poet is not entitled to payment for false praise, which is considered equivalent to satire. See Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, p. 139; McLaughlin, *Early Irish Satire*, p. 7.

merely tries to provoke his opponent. He is very much aware of Cú Chulainn's qualities and has trouble sleeping the night before the encounter because 'dá nataiselbad óenfecht for áth do Choin Culaind, demain lais ná biad, commus a chind nach a anma aici bodéin asa hait[h]li' (he was sure that if he once appeared before Cú Chulainn on the ford, he would no longer have power over his own body or soul).<sup>211</sup> Samera's attitude towards Lóegaire Búadach and Conall Cernach in *Fled Bricrenn* is less respectful. In the tale, Lóegaire, Conall, and Cú Chulainn contend for the champion's portion, which is reserved for the most accomplished warrior, and, as may be expected, Cú Chulainn prevails in every challenge. When the three warriors have to fight demonic Amazons (*geniti*), for example, Lóegaire and Conall are put to flight, leaving their clothing and weapons behind, whereas Cú Chulainn is able to confront and kill them. Samera, who has been given the task of referee for this specific contest, predictably proclaims Cú Chulainn winner. According to him, Cú Chulainn

'is cú ferna fodluigthe,  
is bran carna comramaig,  
is torc tren hi fothugud,  
traithaid nerta lochnamat  
amal æd tria fithicén.  
Is cú othair ér Emna,  
is men<sup>ch</sup>omarc ban búaignigi.  
Is fland tedma tromchatha.<sup>212</sup>

('is a hound of cloven alders [shields],  
he is a raven of contentious [or: victorious] flesh,  
he is a strong boar in supporting,  
who subdues the power of all enemies  
like a fire through the tinder.  
He is a noble working hound of labour of Emain,  
he is the desire of beautiful [?] women.  
He is blood of pestilence of grievous battle.')

<sup>211</sup> 'Táin Bó Cúailnge': *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 86 (text), p. 201 (translation). In Recension I, Fer Diad does not sleep at all, whereas Recension II credits him with a troubled, short sleep. For a detailed analysis of Cú Chulainn's encounter with his three foster-brothers (including Fer Diad), see Wong, 'Combat between Fosterbrothers', esp. pp. 129–39.

<sup>212</sup> *Fled Bricrend*, ed. and trans. by Henderson, § 68 (p. 86; text with my capitalization and punctuation). The translation is my own, but Henderson's notes on p. 175 and Ernst Windisch's glossary to his edition of the text in *Irische Texte* have been consulted.

Samera uses conventional and not so conventional concepts for his praise of Cú Chulainn. The hero is a *cú ferna fodluigthe* ‘dog of cloven shields’, a *bran carna comramaig* ‘raven of contentious/victorious flesh’, and a *torc tren hi fothugud* ‘strong boar in supporting’. While the first metaphor provides Cú Chulainn with the ferocity of his totem animal, which enables him to split shields in battle (for further discussion of hounds and wolves, see below), his identification as a *bran carna comramaig* endows him in this ‘warrior-raven’ blend with the features of a carrion bird that picks the slain on the battlefield, here in the form of taking their weapons and heads rather than of consuming their bodies.<sup>213</sup> In fact, since two war goddesses, namely Badb ‘crow’ and the Morrígan, habitually transform into ravens or crows in the Ulster tales, Samera’s metaphor could be an additional comment on Cú Chulainn’s destructive role on the battlefield.<sup>214</sup> That Cú Chulainn does not qualify as a complacent contestant is further confirmed by Samera’s identification of him as a boar — an animal feared for its ferocity and supernatural qualities that make it hard to kill in the Irish tales<sup>215</sup> — as well as by his powerful comparison of Cú Chulainn’s battle frenzy with fire (ANGER IS FIRE). Cú Chulainn is certainly not an ineffective lonely stick of firewood that cannot inflict any harm, as insinuated by Fer Diad, but he ravages his enemies with his battle heat in the way a flame consumes dry wood (‘traithaid nerta lochnamat | amal æd tria fithicén’). Finally, Samera elaborates on the ‘hound’-metaphor by acknowledging that Cú Chulainn’s name has not lost any of its meaning from the time he had taken over the role of Culann’s hound. According to Samera, Cú Chulainn has been protecting Ulster in his role of *cú othair ér Emna* ‘noble hound of labour of Emain’ against their enemies just as he defended Culann’s premises at the age of seven.<sup>216</sup> And Cú Chulainn does so in the most savage manner, which Samera depicts by means of a blend consisting of two metonymously related concepts in the last line: Cú Chulainn merges with the blood that he spills on the battlefield in this

<sup>213</sup> Although *comramaig* grammatically refers to *carna*, it is doubtful that the flesh of the fallen warriors is described as contentious or even victorious. Instead, the epithet reflects back onto the victor of the battle, in this case Cú Chulainn. London, British Library, MS Egerton 93, fol. 23, reads *bran cernai comramoch* ‘contentious raven of victory’.

<sup>214</sup> For a translation of the term ‘Morrígan’, see Chapter 2, p. 77. The war goddesses are briefly discussed by Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, pp. 119–20. See also MacKillop, *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, p. 27 (Badb), p. 100 (crow), p. 297 (Morrígan).

<sup>215</sup> Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, pp. 179–81; MacKillop, *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, pp. 40–41.

<sup>216</sup> See p. 149 n. 177, and p. 158.

blend — he is *fland tedma tromchatha* ‘blood of pestilence of grievous battle’ — which becomes an ultimate expression of his destructive power.

In contrast to his extensive approval of the hero, Samera acknowledges Lóegaire and Conall with only three lines:

‘Cid dó arbad chutrummus  
fri Lóegairi leo airbi,  
*no* fri Conall clothriatha?’<sup>217</sup>

(‘Why should there be equality  
to Lóegaire, lion of fences,  
or to Conall of the famous journey?’)

Samera asks his rhetorical question only to confirm Cú Chulainn’s superiority over the other two heroes. Clearly, neither Lóegaire nor Conall have Cú Chulainn’s courage or battle frenzy, for both have failed miserably on their recent quest. Samera’s ironic use of heroic epithets for the two heroes further illustrates his scorn. He calls Conall *clothriatha* ‘of the famous journey’, though his last exploit was anything else but glorious and certainly should not become well-known. As it turns out, Conall cannot live up to Medb’s flattering description of him as an *oxad léo* ‘lion that groans’, a *londbruth loga* ‘fierce blaze of a hero’, and a *cern eter cethraib* ‘triumph/wolf [?] among cattle’ in this (or any other) contest with Cú Chulainn.<sup>218</sup> Similarly, Lóegaire proves not to be the champion that Medb first saw, even though Samera calls him a lion. The metaphorical epithet is, as has already been pointed out, usually reserved for champions and in fact occurs both in early Irish poetry and prose.<sup>219</sup> In the

<sup>217</sup> *Fled Bricrend*, ed. and trans. by Henderson, § 68 (p. 88; text with my punctuation and translation).

<sup>218</sup> *Fled Bricrend*, ed. and trans. by Henderson, § 48 (p. 60 [text], p. 61 [translation]).

<sup>219</sup> The metaphor also occurs in the Fenian material. In the late tale *The Chase of Sídna mBan Finn and the Death of Finn*, Oscar is praised in a style reminiscent of the Ulster tales. Finn, Oisín, and Cáilte spend some time with a huge, ugly churl on a hill. When they spot Oscar and his host from their vantage point, the churl asks Finn to identify the warriors and particularly the leader, whom he describes as ‘feramail finnrúadh fornertmur firchalma [...] co léidmire leómain 7 co lainne ladraínn’ (‘manly, fair and ruddy, masterful, truly bold, with the strength of a lion and with the fierceness of a robber’). Finn answers: ‘Ní *hansa* is muir [...] *acht* 7 is leoman ar luinni 7 is bethir ar burba 7 is t[onn] rabarta ar rúathur 7 is math[g]amain ar miri 7 is cur [...] [nach] claiter 7 is fer nach fuilngther intan dogeib tenta catha nó chomraic. Táisech na budnesin .i. Osgur échtach anglonnach mac Oisín sin’ (‘Not hard to tell. He is a sea [...] and a lion for fierceness and a bear for ferocity, and a springtide wave for the rush of his onset, and a bear cub for wildness, and a champion who cannot be beaten, and a man who cannot be resisted when

Ulster tales, Cú Chulainn and Conall but also other warriors are identified as lions. In the prose section ‘Toichim na mBuiden annso’ (The March of the Companies) in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, Fergus calls the Ulster warrior Eirрге Echbél a *leó lámderg londandsclech dadánic* ‘lion fiercely combative with bloodstained hands’,<sup>220</sup> and Ailill praises Fergus — perhaps with a touch of irony considering that Fergus had his sword stolen — as a warrior ‘co n-ilcruth ríge co m-bruth dracon co anáil n-athrach co mbéim léoman’ (with the beauty of a king, the fierceness of a dragon, the [venomous] breath of a viper, the powerful blow of a lion).<sup>221</sup> Lions are ferocious animals, but what is a ‘lion of fences’? If the metaphor is extended, the cattle enclosed in a pen are warriors, and he becomes the feline counterpart to the wolf among cattle mentioned above. Yet Lóegaire has not lived up to his reputation as a fierce champion excelling all other warriors. The metaphor could of course be laudatory for the traditionally fierce warrior regardless of its immediate context, but such an interpretation strikes me as unlikely. Rather, Samera’s misplaced lavish praise appears to be quite similar to Conall’s and Cet’s ironic jibes in *Scéla mucce Meic Dathó* with the one difference that Lóegaire’s behaviour entirely justifies Samera’s ridicule.

If some heroic metaphors could be parodied or used ironically in order to expose a warrior’s lack of courage and strength, others were used to expose and condemn his treachery. This vice features in many tales, and, as has been mentioned above, causes the downfall of an eminent hero like Cú Chulainn. Significantly, in two poetic treatments of treacherous behaviour, the metaphors used for the perpetrators appear to exclude them not only from a particular group but from the whole human community. The first treatment occurs in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. Disturbed by the large number of warriors that have been slain by Cú Chulainn, Medb asks the hero to come unarmed to a meeting with her but then confronts him with fourteen fierce warriors. Cú Chulainn has been warned by his charioteer Láeg against Medb’s guile and therefore has kept his sword, which enables him to kill all fourteen men. After his feat, he utters a boast that reveals both his pride and dismay:

he engages in battle or contest. The leader of that band is the valiant and mighty Oscar, son of Oisín’. *Fianaigecht*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, § 8 (p. 60 [text], p. 61 [translation]).

<sup>220</sup> ‘*Táin Bó Cúailnge*’: *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O’Rahilly, p. 113 (text). The translation of the passage occurs on p. 226, but note my rendering of *lam* as ‘hand’ rather than ‘paw’, which highlights the metaphorical blend with entailments from the inputs ‘lion’ and ‘warrior’.

<sup>221</sup> ‘*Táin Bó Cúailnge*’: *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O’Rahilly, p. 34 (text), p. 155 (translation).



‘Fó mo cherd láechdachta.  
 Benaim béimend ágmara  
 for slóg síabra sorchaidi.  
 Certaim ág fri ilsúagaib  
 im díth erred anglondach  
 sceó Medbi 7 Ailella.  
 Altai drochrún derchoblid  
 gossa dubrúin banmassa  
 Cengait celga úargossa  
 fri ág erred anglonnach  
 congeib dagrún degmessa  
 oc fir dia ndich dagarliud  
 im anglonna fó.’

fó.m.<sup>222</sup>

(‘Splendid is my heroic deed.  
 I strike fearsome blows  
 against a brilliant spectral army.  
 I wage battle against many hosts  
 to destroy valiant warriors  
 together with Ailill and Medb  
 [...]’<sup>223</sup>  
 There comes treachery, coldly impetuous,  
 to strike against valiant warriors  
 who take wise well-judged counsel  
 from one who can well advise them  
 to perform heroic deeds.’)

Cú Chulainn boasts of his martial strength that will defeat any of Ailill and Medb’s warriors even if they attack him in large numbers, and at the same time utterly condemns Medb’s guile. Medb is not the one who gives *dagrún degmessa* ‘well-judged counsel’; instead, she is responsible for the *celga úargossa* ‘coldly impetuous treachery’ (lit. ‘treachery of cold impetuosity’), here manifested in the attack by her *slóg síabra sorchaidi* ‘brilliant spectral army’. While the association of Medb’s hostility and ruthlessness with coldness (ENMITY IS COLDNESS) can also be found in the Old Norse and Old English poems, the personification of Medb’s despicable behaviour creates a further dimension to her enemy

<sup>222</sup> ‘*Táin Bó Cúailnge*’: *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O’Rahilly, p. 60 (text; my punctuation), p. 179 (translation).

<sup>223</sup> The lines of the *rosc* have not been translated by O’Rahilly. Although individual words are comprehensible, their context is obscure.

status. Medb's treachery strikes against *errid anglonnaig* 'valiant warriors' most likely including Medb's fourteen *errid anglondaig* whom Cú Chulainn intends to destroy five lines earlier. If this is true, Medb has turned into an enemy of her own troops by making them the instruments of her conspiracy and, with her treacherous deed, causing Cú Chulainn's perception of these *errid anglondaig* as a *slóg síabra sorchaidi* 'brilliant spectral army'. Although in this instance *siabair* 'phantom' lacks the Christian overtones that stigmatize the Túatha Dé Danann in Eochaid úa Flainn's poem in *Lebor Gabála*, its usually pejorative sense fits the context well.<sup>224</sup> Medb's co-conspirators are conceived as a group of enemies that have compromised their humanity by complying with their queen's wishes.

The same strong condemnation of betrayal occurs in the early to mid-eighth century *Amrae Chon Roí* 'The Eulogy of Cú Roí'. Presumably composed by Cú Roí's poet Ferchertne after the hero's death, the poem is part of a narrative complex that, considering Cú Chulainn's dishonourable conduct in it, most likely preceded the composition of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.<sup>225</sup> In the prose tale *Aided Chon Roí I*, Cú Roí helps the Ulstermen both to retrieve Conchobar's daughter Bláthnat, who was abducted by Echde Echbél, and to steal the latter's three speckled cows and a copper cauldron called their 'calf'.<sup>226</sup> He also kills the pursuing Echde in return for the girl, cows, and cauldron and even lets the Ulstermen have the booty for a year. However, when they refuse to keep their side of the bargain, Cú Roí takes everything. On his way back to his fort, he defeats Cú Chulainn by throwing him into the earth up to his shoulders. Shamed this way, Cú Chulainn plots with Bláthnat against Cú Roí: he learns from Bláthnat, who is now Cú Roí's wife, that her husband's soul lies in an apple inside a salmon that appears only every seventh year.<sup>227</sup> Seven years later, Cú Chulainn catches the salmon and kills it, while the Ulstermen are approaching Cú Roí's fort. Cú Roí loses his strength and is slain by Cú Chulainn. Here it is Bláthnat and Cú Chulainn who commit shameful treachery, as Ferchertne reproachfully declares:

<sup>224</sup> *eDIL*, *siabair*.

<sup>225</sup> *Amra Con Roí*, ed. and trans. by Henry, p. 179. A summary of the poem is given by Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 435.

<sup>226</sup> *Aided ConRoí I*, ed. and trans. by Thurneysen. Thurneysen assigns the tale to the eighth or ninth century (*Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 432).

<sup>227</sup> In *Aided ConRoí II* (ed. and trans. by Best, p. 24 [text], p. 25 [translation]), Bláthnat washes Cú Roí's hair and then ties it to the bedposts, steals his sword, and opens the gates of the fortress.

Cú Roi robo mórmac Dé ó Dáire Dúr,  
 dian-acmacht huac cach dú Dedad,  
 dech reraig Brega; boi ina sert[h]ib sert.  
 Sech mo iath arro-siasair séig a marbtha,  
 mál mos-tadbat a clé Conchobuir;  
 Cú Chulainn con-síne fris firu Ochaine.  
 Úargus génair ara-marbtha[e] mnaí  
 cen choin cen arm, airm i sluagaib sínset  
 fo iar[r]aid ic nascad ara dún ron-génsat collud.  
 Cot-m(b)rath mál re siabra siasair, soe fri ríga.  
 Rogialla(i)t ro-bíth nie námait. (ll. 57–67)<sup>228</sup>

(Cú Roi was the great son of Dea from Dáire the Resolute,  
 from whom issued a descendant in every land of Ded,  
 the best that has ruled Brega; 'twas at their heels he arrayed (them).  
 Beyond (outside) my country has remained the hawk who killed him,  
 a chief who soon appears at Conchobar's left hand.  
 Cú Chulainn contends with him for the birds of Ochaine.  
 Cold impetuosity<sup>229</sup> was devised that he might be killed by a woman  
 without hound or weapon, in a place where they advanced in companies  
 in an attack threatening his stronghold, which they have destroyed.  
 The prince was betrayed, who contended against phantoms,  
 who warred with kings.  
 The champion to whom enemies have submitted has been slain.)

Cú Roí is first betrayed by his wife and then by Cú Chulainn, who cowardly slays him unarmed ('cen choin cen arm'). *Úargus* 'cold impetuosity' is used to kill the hero, with *úar* denoting the hostile but possibly also the treacherous nature of the force (*gus*) used against Cú Roí (TREACHERY IS COLDNESS). It is striking that the compound occurs in two contexts where treachery is committed against the hero, which may suggest a loose association between treachery and coldness in Medb's *celga úargossa* in *Táin Bó Cúailnge* as well. In fact, Cú Roí's enemies, just like Cú Chulainn's, are identified as *siabrai* 'spectres'. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the reference may be literal and denote hostile supernatural beings (since Cú Roí contended with such beings in his lifetime), it may identify one group of Cú Roí's adversaries as demonic, or it may do both, producing a conceptual blend of two ontological categories, i.e. demons and demonic humans.<sup>230</sup> Since there is no indication that Cú Roí's enemies in the

<sup>228</sup> 'Amra Con Roí', ed. by Henry, pp. 188–89 (text), pp. 193–94 (translation).

<sup>229</sup> Henry ('Amra Con Roí', p. 194) translates *úargus* as 'hostile power'.

<sup>230</sup> See Chapter 1, p. 17.

story are not the Ulstermen, it is safest to assume that these human enemies, like Medb's fourteen warriors, have participated in the treachery against the hero and have hence undergone the same demotion to *siabrai*.

### Hounds, Wolves, and Dragons in the Ulster Cycle

Parodies and ironic uses of warrior metaphors in early Irish heroic verse, as can be found in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, *Fled Bricrenn*, and *Scéla muicce Meic Dathó*, constitute two techniques that poets employed for the exposure and marginalization of characters inside and outside the in-group. Conventional metaphors that denote courage and strength are modified to express cowardice and weakness. The question arises whether these conventional metaphors were always as positive as they first appear to be. When Fer Diad's charioteer calls Cú Chulainn a *seabac saer* 'noble hawk', his metaphor is no doubt laudatory, and so is Cú Chulainn's grasp of a hawk. In *Amrae Chon Roi*, however, Cú Chulainn is conceptualized as a *seig* 'hawk' even though he assumes the unusual role of a cowardly and treacherous enemy. The use of *seig* could be context-independent: Cú Chulainn is usually a fierce warrior and therefore deserves such a metaphor of praise despite his less-than-honourable behaviour towards Cú Roí. Or the epithet could be ironic, since Cú Chulainn does not use his ability to attack swiftly in order to overcome his enemy. Yet a third explanation is also possible, which both allows a context-dependent metaphor and avoids a clash in tone produced by the use of cutting irony in the otherwise straightforward eulogy. This explanation is based on a different assessment of the mappings between hero and hawk, which arises from the victim's perspective. The hawk waits for an opportune moment to swoop down and seize its prey, which does not have much of a chance to get away in time. It is at least conceivable that, in the given context, the reference highlights Cú Chulainn's denial of fair play to Cú Roí, for he, like a hawk, waits for the right moment to catch his enemy in a vulnerable position.

In the end, we cannot determine whether such context-dependent negative use of *seig* was intended by the poet, particularly since the conceptualization of a hero as a hawk is usually positive. In other words, the mappings between the two inputs remain elusive in this particular instance. Less controversial seem to be the mappings between the inputs 'hound/wolf' and 'warrior' in early Irish heroic literature. Hounds were first of all viewed as fierce protectors, which gave rise to many names such as *Cú* and (derivatives of) *Conn*. Furthermore, the poets ensured that the metaphor did not lose its positive connotations in the names of some warriors. Two examples will suffice here. In the longer version of

*Compert Conchobuir* ‘The Conception and Birth of Conchobar (Wolf Lover),’ Cathbad calls the future king of Ulster *cú Ulaid* ‘hound of the Ulstermen’ in his verse prophecy of the latter’s birth; after the birth, he utters another prophecy, once again in verse, which he concludes with an endearing reference to his son as *mu cuilén* ‘my whelp/cub’.<sup>231</sup> But the most prominent hound is Cú Chulainn. First called Setantae, he acquires his name only after he, in his boyhood, killed and replaced the hound of the smith Culann. As the protector of Culann and his premises, he becomes literally the ‘Hound of Culann’. As Kim McCone has argued, the dog’s martial qualities pass on to Setantae, who transforms into Cú Chulainn, only that his function expands to that of protector of a whole province.<sup>232</sup> Accordingly, Cú Chulainn is often identified as ‘hound’. Among the many examples are Samera’s reference to him as *cú ferna fodluigthe* ‘hound of cloven shields’ (see above) and a string of laudatory phrases uttered by Fer Diad’s charioteer. For the charioteer, Cú Chulainn is a *cú airctech* ‘plundering hound’, a *cú chubaid* ‘comely hound’, a *cú na hEmna Macha* ‘hound of Emain Macha’, a *cú co ndelb, cach datha* ‘hound with beauty and every colour’, *cú chreichi* ‘hound of beauty’, and a *cú [ch]atha* ‘hound of battle’.<sup>233</sup> Fer Diad himself identifies the champion as *cú dían comainm Culand* ‘swift hound called the hound of Culann’, and Medb calls him *cú na cerda* ‘hound of the smith’ in response, an epithet that is also used by the prophetess Fedelm at the outset of the cattle raid.<sup>234</sup>

Still, hounds were not without their problems. A hound could also turn against its own people and in this way become a menace to them. Dun Mouse and Celtchar’s Dáel-chu in *Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair* are such hounds. Both create havoc in the province of Ulster, while Dun Mouse even kills the very persons (i.e. a widow and her son) who adopted and raised it.<sup>235</sup> The input

<sup>231</sup> *Compert Conchobair*, ed. and trans. by Meyer (longer version).

<sup>232</sup> McCone, ‘*Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair*’, pp. 9–11. See also Ó Cathasaigh, *The Heroic Biography of Cormac mac Airt*, p. 16.

<sup>233</sup> ‘*Táin Bó Cúailnge*’: *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O’Rahilly, pp. 87–88 (text). My translation and use of lower case letters for *cú/hound*.

<sup>234</sup> ‘*Táin Bó Cúailnge*’: *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O’Rahilly, pp. 80, 82 (text), pp. 197, 198 (translation; O’Rahilly does not translate *dían*). Fedelm’s prophecy occurs on pages 3–4 (text; translation on pp. 127–28). It concludes with a climax: ‘beit cuirp cerbtha cáinfit mná | la coin na certa atchíu-sa’ (Men’s bodies will be hacked and women will weep because of the hound of the smith whom I now see; p. 4 [text], p. 128 [translation]). O’Rahilly uses capitals for *cú* and *cerda*.

<sup>235</sup> *Aided Cheltchair*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, pp. 28, 30 (text), pp. 29, 31 (translation).

'hound' has thus the potential entailments 'uncontrolled and uncontrollable savagery', which can transform into metaphorical ones defining a warrior in certain contexts. Naturally, the entailments are not restricted to this one input, as Medb's comparison of Cú Chulainn, Lóegaire Búadach, and Conall Cernach to several different ferocious animals and unconstrained natural forces in *Fled Bricrenn* has already illustrated, yet the dubious quality of turning against the hand that has been feeding it distinguishes the hound from other animals like the boar, the bear, or the exotic lion. Again, the semi-divine Cú Chulainn is particularly dangerous in this respect. Once his ire is invoked, he loses his humanity and simultaneously adopts a more radical form of alterity. He becomes the distorted one (*riastartha*), a disfigured killing machine that does not distinguish between friends and foes. Perhaps the most memorable incident where Cú Chulainn is overcome by a war spasm occurs right at the end of his *macnímrada* 'boyhood deeds'. After having killed the three sons of Nechta Scéne followed by his capture of a wild stag and a flock of swans, he challenges his own people who can only save themselves by shaming him with the display of women's naked breasts and then by throwing him into three vats of cold water.<sup>236</sup>

Hounds and wolves were not always easy to distinguish. Although Cú Chulainn is called 'Hound', *cú* can mean either 'hound' or 'wolf'. As in the other two cultural traditions, the wolf was associated with exile: a *cú glas* 'grey wolf' was an exile from overseas,<sup>237</sup> and the sons of Dond Désa, who follow in their father's footsteps and take to brigandry (*diberg*) in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* 'The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel', are banished by King Conaire from Ireland as a consequence of their *fáelad* 'wolfing'.<sup>238</sup> Interestingly, the negative entailments in the input 'wolf' do not seem to be activated in the Ulster poems. Terms like *cú* and *fáelad* are not associated with exile or outlawry, whereas ferocity in battle is a positive quality in this poetry regardless of whether it is used by the members of the in-group or their opponents. Brute force elicits

<sup>236</sup> See. p. 140 n. 178.

<sup>237</sup> Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, p. 6. Charles-Edwards, 'The Social Background to Irish *Peregrinatio*', esp. pp. 97–98.

<sup>238</sup> Although in the second instance exile is the result of wolfing, the lawlessness of Dond Désa's sons has already made them social outcasts, so that their banishment from Ireland redefines rather than creates their status as exiles. *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, ed. by Knott; *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel*, ed. and trans. by Stokes. A revised version of Stokes' translation is given in *The Celtic Heroic Age*, ed. and trans. by Koch and Carey. For a discussion of *diberg* and *fianna* in early Ireland, see McCone, 'Werewolves, Cyclopes, *Diberga*, and *Fianna*'.

respect, not dismay or scepticism as in Eochaid úa Flainn's and Tanaide's poems in *Lebor Gabála*.<sup>239</sup> Only when the hero threatens to inflict injury on his friends rather than his foes do the potential entailments of uncontrollable brutality transform into metaphorical ones. In other words, either the context of the passage, such as when Medb calls the rabid Lóegaire a *cern eter cethraib* (provided that *cern* 'triumph' is a metonym for 'wolf'), or general knowledge about a specific warrior like Cú Chulainn must facilitate this transformation. Once the warrior has become a menace, he is feared just as much as weak, cowardly, and unfair warriors are scorned.<sup>240</sup>

One Ulster tale in which the comparison of a warrior with a hound/wolf questions a warrior's heroism is the early monastic tale *Siaburcharpat Conculaind* 'The Phantom Chariot of Cú Chulainn'. In the tale, Lóegaire, high king of Ireland, asks St Patrick to conjure up Cú Chulainn as a precondition for his own conversion to Christianity. The ancient champion then appears twice in his chariot driven by his charioteer Láeg, but only at his second appearance does he relate to king and saint his heroic deeds and yet terrible fate. He tells Lóegaire (in verse form) that he had been a *cú* that captured deer, that was strong in combat, aided troops, and protected King Conchobar's stronghold Emain Macha.<sup>241</sup> In short, he had performed *gníma erred* 'the deeds of a hero', and yet,

<sup>239</sup> Heroes are also favourably conceptualized as hounds in two early Fenian poems. In the eighth-century poem *Reicne Fothaid Canainne*, the head of the decapitated Fothad tells his lover about the two otherwise unknown young champions Mugarn and Mugna, whom he calls *dá cuilén colma* 'two brave whelps' (*Fianaigecht*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, p. 12 [text], p. 13 [translation]). Even when Finn's enemy Flann is called *conchend na ergaile* 'wolf-head of conflict' in the ninth-century 'Áth Liac Find I' ascribed to Máel Muru Othna (d. 887), he merely acknowledges Flann's savage nature. See *The Metrical Dindsenchas*, ed. and trans. by Gwynn, IV, 36–39 (Recension I from the Book of Leinster). In the later, second recension of the poem (pp. 40–43), the sentence 'roríast a chruth' (he wried his shape) is added. It is not clear whether the addition was only to highlight the warrior's battle frenzy or whether it was to suggest that Flann was a werewolf. The second option makes the reference to Flann as *conchend* 'wolf-head' literal.

<sup>240</sup> The notion that a hound can also turn against its own master is most clearly illustrated in the eleventh-century *Fled Dúin na nGéd* (*The Banquet of Dun na n-Gedh*, ed. and trans. by Donovan, pp. 8–13 [text and translation]) from the Cycles of the Kings. Domnall mac Áedo (d. 642), king of Ireland and descendant of Niall Noígíallach 'of the Nine Hostages', dreams of a *cuilén con* 'greyhound whelp' (p. 8 [text], p. 9 [translation]) that, although raised by him, revolts, recruits dogs in Ireland and Britain (i.e. Scots, Britons, and Saxons), and finally is slain in the last of seven battles. When Domnall asks his brother Mael Chaba to interpret the dream, the latter identifies the whelp as a king's son who will rise against him. As it turns out, Domnall's foster-son Congal Claen, king of Ulster, later challenges the king.

<sup>241</sup> *Siaburcharpat Con Culaind inso*, ed. by Best and Bergin, pp. 280–81; *The Phantom*



his valour, which he further describes in a forty-eight stanza poem, has been of no avail to him in his new home, hell. Cú Chulainn declares that after his defeat by Lugaid he ended up in the infernal abode, where he and all other Ulstermen have been oppressed by the devil ever since. The hero's main fault was his religious alterity as a heathen, which earned him a permanent place in the infernal regions. With his painfully gained insight that his worldly achievements as *cú* are of no significance in the afterlife, Cú Chulainn asks Patrick to grant him access to heaven — which the saint does — and Lóegaire, too, finally converts.

Its explicitly Christian context distinguishes *Siaburcharpat Con Culaind* from other Ulster Cycle tales. Context also determines the nature of the mappings between dragons (*dracoin*) and serpents, on the one hand, and warriors, on the other, in early Irish poetry and prose. Two examples from the Cycle have already been cited: Lóegaire Búadach is credited with the heart of a dragon (i.e. he behaves like a dragon) in *Fled Bricrenn*, and Fergus is said, perhaps somewhat mockingly, to possess the fierceness of a dragon and the [venomous] breath of a viper in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.<sup>242</sup> We may add another example from 'Toichim na mBuiden annso', where Conchobar's sons Fiachna and Fiacha are called *dá drec* 'two dragons', and a praise poem in which the celebrated person is a *drecon bruthmar brúithe elta* 'fierce dragon who crushes herds'.<sup>243</sup> Particularly in the last instance, the conceptualization of the warrior as a dragon that totally destroys its surroundings with its brute strength creates mappings between the beast's ferocity and the warrior's battle fury (WARRIORS ARE FIERCE ANIMALS). Furthermore, a warrior's rage could be expressed by the metaphor ANGER IS POISON, as Ailill's reference to Fergus's snake breath indicates.<sup>244</sup> Fergus emits his venom, with which he kills his foes on the spot. A similar description occurs in another praise poem, this time in honour of a certain Rúadri, who is identified as *béimm dobeir nathair di neoch* 'an adder sting for all' (ACTION FOR

*Chariot of Cuchullin*, trans. by Crowe, pp. 273–87, 295–98.

<sup>242</sup> See p. 153.

<sup>243</sup> 'Táin Bó Cúailnge': *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 114 (text); *Bruchstücke*, ed. by Meyer, no. 13 (p. 10).

<sup>244</sup> In the prose text of *The Chase of Sid na mBan Finn* (ed. by Meyer, § 15 [pp. 68, text, p. 69, translation]), it is stated that Ferlí resembled his grandfather Goll 'ar mét 7 ar maiú 7 ar míletacht, ar neim 7 ar nert 7 ar nidhachus' (in size and stateliness, in *neim* and strength and championship). Meyer translates *neim* with 'virulence', a meaning that is also provided in the *eDIL*. To what extent the literal meaning 'poison' was still recognized cannot be determined in the given context.

AGENT, ANGER IS POISON, WARRIORS ARE FIERCE ANIMALS).<sup>245</sup> Both the praise poet's sincere and Ailill's tongue-in-cheek eulogies make poison an asset rather than a curse, which it becomes if different entailments are activated in a different context. The nickname *nemthenga* 'poisonous tongue' so fittingly given to the troublemaker Bricriu is a good example for the common association of poison with evil and, more specifically, with treachery and foul play. Cú Chulainn accordingly boasts in *Siaburcharpat Conculaind* that he was not a 'poisonous tongue' of his territories even though his personal integrity did not save him.<sup>246</sup>

### Excursus: Dreco

It may not be surprising that the very positive identification of a hero with a poisonous serpent or dragon is restricted to the Ulster tales and some early Irish praise poems,<sup>247</sup> once the additional negative connotations that the concepts 'serpent' and 'dragon' attained in the Christian era are considered. A very clear example of how a poet *could* utilize potential entailments of the two conceptual domains under investigation in order to convey his Christian message is provided in a poem on an otherwise unknown druidess, Dreco. The poem is part of the early Irish *Dindshenchas*, twelfth-century legends in poetry and prose that intended to explain a large number of topographical features in Ireland. The short prose text in the *Rennes Dindshenchas* relates how Dreco's treachery brought about the name Nemthend in Co. Mayo:

Neimthend, cid dia ta? Ni *ansa*. Dreco ingen Chalcmáil *meic Connaith* bandrúi & banliccerd, is le *conairnecht* laith neime do ceithrib macoib *fichet Fergusa* Leithdeirg, *co n-eblatar* uile dí sodhoin, *conid* don airm a n-eipletar is ainm Nemtenn.

(Dreco daughter of Calcmael son of Cartan, son of Connath was a druidess and a female rhymmer, and by her was prepared a poisonous liquor for Fergus Redside's four and twenty sons, so that they all died of it; and the place at which they perished bears the name *Nem-thenn* [strong poison].<sup>248</sup>)

<sup>245</sup> *Bruchstücke*, ed. by Meyer, no. 48 (p. 22).

<sup>246</sup> *Siaburcharpat Con Culaind inso*, ed. by Best and Bergin, p. 281.

<sup>247</sup> See Chapter 4, p. 205.

<sup>248</sup> *The Prose Tales*, ed. and trans. by Stokes, no. 83 (p. 34). The prose text in the Bodleian *Dindshenchas* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 506, fol. 14<sup>r</sup>, s. xiv + s. xvii) does not mention Dreco's occupation but only refers to her poisoning of Fergus Lethderg's twenty-four sons. *The Bodleian dinnsenchas*, ed. and trans. by Stokes, no. 35 (p. 499).

The author of this text recounts the episode in a rather factual manner: Dreco poisoned the twenty-four sons of Fergus Lethderg, son of Nemed, and the place where this happened has been called Nemthend ever since. The author of the corresponding poem, on the other hand, turns Dreco into a demonic figure not unlike Grendel:<sup>249</sup>

Dreco ingen Chalcmaíl chrúaid,  
maic Cartain chaíl, maic Conúaithe,  
ander ‘cambuí cach bine,  
sech ba druí, ba deg-fhile.

Is lé conairnecht, scél ngúr,  
tria ainrecht is tria imthnúth,  
diambaí nith Bregrossa beirg,  
díth mac Fergossa leth-deirg.

[...]

Tuc dóib nomain ocus neim  
in draic dremain, der demin,  
corusmarb i n-óen-fhecht de  
tria sáeb-recht súain serb-díge.

Áit i m-bátar mairb co mend,  
is dó-sin is ainm Nemthend:  
dosfuc i n-imned ria n-ail  
fled rohindled oc Drecain. D.

Mo chorp, a Rí cháem na cros,  
rop sáer ar olc, ar elgnos,  
is m'anam, cen mímes maill,  
nírop díles do Drecainn. D.

(Dreco, daughter of grim Calcmael  
son of slender Cartan, son of Conuath,  
a maiden versed in all crimes,<sup>250</sup>  
was a wizard and eke a poetess.

<sup>249</sup> *Nemthend*, in *The Metrical Dindsenchas*, ed. and trans. by Gwynn, iv, 14, 16 (text), 15, 17 (translation). Gwynn's translation of the first four cited stanzas occurs on p. 15.

<sup>250</sup> Gwynn: 'black arts'.

By her was wrought (a tale of woe)  
 — by her fury and her great envy<sup>251</sup> —  
 the slaughter of the sons of Fergus Lethderg,  
 when the fight of Bregross, the robber's hold, was fought.

[...]

The fierce dragon,<sup>252</sup> devil-begotten,  
 brought against them battle fury<sup>253</sup> and poison,  
 and slew them all together  
 by the perverse law [?] of a bitter drink of sleep.<sup>254</sup>

The place where they lay dumb in death,  
 its name is called Nemthend:  
 the feast that was spread by Dreco  
 brought them to sorrow and shame.

May my body, gentle King of Crosses,  
 be saved from harm and peril!  
 and my soul, unblamed for sloth,  
 let it not be delivered up to the Dragon!

Dreco is a *draic dremain*, *der demin* 'fierce dragon, devil begotten' and thus very different from war heroes like Fergus or Lóegaire. Although it is said that she slew her victims with *nemain ocus neim* 'battle fury and poison' (st. 3 in quote), the references do not define her martial vigour (ANGER IS POISON). Compelled by her *nemain* 'battle fury', *ainrecht* 'injustice/fury' and *imthnuth* 'great envy' (st. 2), she literally poisoned her victims. Worse, she murdered them treacherously *tria sáeb-recht súain serb-díge* 'through the perverted law [the law of the devil?] of the bitter drink of sleep [i.e. death, poison]'. Her *imthnúth* 'great envy' is of course one of the devil's main attributes, so that we can assume that Dreco is conceptualized as his spiritual daughter (PEOPLE ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS). Her identification as a *draic* (st. 3 in quote) makes her temporarily merge with an infernal dragon, a blend that is reinforced by the wordplay on *Drecaín* 'Dreco' and *Drecainn* 'Dragon' in the last two stanzas. When the poet

<sup>251</sup> Gwynn: 'jealousy'.

<sup>252</sup> Although *draic* means 'dragon', Gwynn renders the term as 'woman-fiend'.

<sup>253</sup> Gwynn translates *nemain* as 'murder', but the usual meaning of the noun is battle fury (cf. the war goddess *Nemain*). See *eDIL*, *nemain*.

<sup>254</sup> Gwynn: 'sleep-bringing spell of a bitter drink'.

prays to God not to let the Dragon seize his body, he also includes demonic human beings like Dreco.

### *Conclusion*

Conflicts lie at the heart of the heroic poetry of Anglo-Saxon England, Viking Scandinavia, and early Ireland. In all three corpora, the protagonists prove their courage and personal integrity by fighting valiantly against the odds and in this way defying their fate. Gunnarr and Högni bravely face Atli's Huns, Beowulf defeats the Grendelkin and the dragon, and Cú Chulainn single-handedly defends Ulster against Medb and Ailill's troops. Their utter unwillingness to compromise their heroic ideals becomes the standard against which the conduct not only of their enemies but also of their associates is measured. Socially unacceptable behaviour both inside and outside the in-group takes many forms, ranging from cowardice and treacherous plotting against the transgressor's own kin or social group to gender-deviant practices, uncontrolled aggression, and, given Grendel's nature as *wer*, even cannibalism. Not all offenses occur in all three poetic corpora, but when they do, the methods of depicting them often varies. A good example is provided by the use of animal imagery that can indicate either a positive or negative moderate form of intra-cultural alterity. As has been illustrated throughout this chapter, warriors are often conceptualized as fierce animals. Wolves/hounds surface in all traditions, and we may add the boar, which is not only mentioned in the Irish sources but also makes its appearance in the name of Wulf's companion Eofor and the poetic term *jǫfurr* 'boar' for 'prince' in the eddic poems.<sup>255</sup> The boar symbolized strength, virility, and protection in all three cultures and hence was a particularly suitable animal for the description of a warrior. Still, battle frenzy could also become a menace to the warrior's own group if it was not properly channelled, as is the case in *Fled Bricrenn* when Medb identifies the approaching Ulster warriors as uncontrollable wild animals (lion, wolf, and bear) that threaten to destroy her

<sup>255</sup> Two seventh-century boar-crested helmets have been excavated at Wollaston and Benty Grange, while the Sutton Hoo helmet (early seventh century) depicts the head of a boar on each end of the copper eyebrows. In *Beowulf*, repeated reference is made to such helmets. Beowulf's men wear boar helmets to Hrothgar's hall (ll. 301–06a), boar-figures burn on Hnæf's and his nephew's funeral pyre at Finnsburg (ll. 1110–13), and Hroðgar reminisces about clashing *eoferas* (l. 1328a) in previous battles that he fought together with his faithful counsellor Æschere (ll. 1323b–28a). *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 12, 39, 46.

and her people. Among the predators, particularly the wolf had attained additional negative qualities that could be projected on a target to indicate his/her intra-cultural alterity. Unbridled hostility, as manifested in the rampages of the Ulster heroes, Ermanaric's wolfish thought, and Völundr's brutal slaughter of Níðuðr's two sons is one such quality, the wolf's assumedly solitary life outside society is another. The wolfish Grendelkin live in desolate marshes, Sigmundr, Sintfjötli, and Völundr hide in the woods, and Sigrún wishes the fate of a lonely wolf roaming the same habitat on Dagr. I have not noticed a similar connection between outlawry and wolfishness in the poetic sections of the Ulster tales, but the concept of an exile as a *cú glas* and the description of the exiled wolfing sons of Dond Désa in the mythological tale *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* suggest its presence in early Irish thought nevertheless. One possible variation of the MAN IS A WOLF metaphor occurs in the eddic *Atlakviða*, with Atli's treachery being expressed both by the ring wrapped in wolf hair that Guðrún sends to her brothers and Högni's acknowledgment of an *ylfscr* journey. As mentioned, wolves are not duplicitous, so that we have to assume a double-scope blend with entailments from the inputs 'wolf' and 'man'.

Unlike wolves, serpents and dragons are treated differently in the three poetic corpora. As poisonous and fire-spewing creatures, they are ferocious beasts that could, like the above-mentioned predators, be used for laudatory depictions of heroes fighting fierce battles against their foes on the battlefield. Such use can only be found in the early Irish sources, where the imagined ferocity of the serpents is a positive metaphorical entailment that emphasizes a moderate (or even radical) form of the warrior's intra-cultural alterity and that sets him apart from other fighters. Still, this admiration of a warrior's spewing poison on the battlefield could not be transferred to other social contexts. Because of its quality to kill a person unawares poison was inevitably associated with deceit and treachery, as is best demonstrated by Bricriu's epithet *nemthenga* 'of the Poisonous Tongue'. In the Old Norse heroic poems, only the negative connotations of serpent imagery prevail and then only sparingly. The serpent-eyed Völundr acts treacherously when he kills his opponent's promising *húnar* 'boys/young cubs', whereas the fiery-eyed, poison-snorting Brynhildr transgresses against her own group with her instigation of Sigurðr's murder. Brynhildr's intimidating appearance in *Guðrúnarkviða I* suggests that her unmitigated hostility towards the Niflungs and her own brother has deprived her of her humanity. Since the poem has generally been placed among the younger poems, it is of course possible that Brynhildr's transformation was influenced by Christian notions of serpents as hellish creatures, just as similar notions may have had an impact on the conceptualization of the dragon as an inimical and vengeful antagonist in

*Beowulf*. Yet Brynhildr's nature is notably different from that of the druidess Dreco, the 'devil-begotten fierce dragon', who treacherously poisons her victims and indeed merges with her spiritual father in the last line of the poem. In the end, Brynhildr's alterity is not defined by any Christian concepts of the devil and hell, but by her transformation into a poison-emitting fire-drake.

Wolves and, to some extent, serpents provided attractive conceptual domains that could be exploited for metaphorical entailments to signal a character's non-conformist behaviour. Hostile climate conditions in the form of coldness constitute a second concept to be found in all three poetic corpora. Cold-metaphors have a wide scope in the heroic poetry of Northwest Europe, as they aid the comprehension not only of a character's hostile and vengeful disposition, but also of his or her infertility, emotionlessness, intense suffering, and/or treachery. The metaphor ENMITY IS COLDNESS is certainly the most prevalent one in all three heroic corpora, with the distribution of the other metaphors being less uniform. Unfortunately, the incompleteness of the source material allows only a few tentative conclusions to be drawn from this uneven distribution. It is not surprising, for example, that coldness occurs as an indicator of sterility in some Eddic heroic poetry (i.e. the Helgi poems), thus complementing similar uses in the mythological corpus. The fact that coldness does not seem to play a role in the conceptualization of intense suffering or absent emotions in the Irish poems discussed in the chapter, on the other hand, can be explained by the focus of the poems on heroic boasts and armed conflicts rather than emotional turmoil, while the absence of the TREACHERY IS COLDNESS metaphor in the two Old English heroic poems constitutes negative evidence which is hardly representative and therefore does not allow any further conjectures.

In addition to divergent uses of common conceptual metaphors, each poetry contains metaphors that are not present in the other two corpora. A distinguishing feature that only occurs in the Old English heroic poems is the special attention paid to the workings of the human mind. In *Deor*, suffering is explained by means of personified tormenting emotions, binding sorrows, and a mind that grows dark inside, whereas in *Beowulf*, Heremod's suffering and anger are conceived both as a surging (hot) fluid and a growing substance in his container-mind. The *Beowulf* poet utilizes several of these conceptual metaphors to explain the unnamed ruler's moral disintegration in a Christian framework: since the ruler is not afflicted by a darkened mind or any attacks by disease or old age, his pride grows in his heart and makes him vulnerable to the devil's arrows shot from his fiery bow. The employment of the Christian concept of the devil shooting arrows at his victim is furthermore complemented with the attacks by the Grendelkin. Being descendants of Cain, they both seem



to be humanoid, and yet they are also associated with the demonic literally and metaphorically. While Grendel's mother is called both a spirit and a devil, these definitions are used sparingly and most likely do not question her nature as humanoid, monstrous outcast. Grendel's ontological status is less defined, vacillating between human descendant of Cain and devil or spirit. As a man and an embodied spirit he has a dual nature, so that the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS may not apply here.

Hell also plays a prominent role in *Siaburcharpát Conculaind*. Conjured up from the infernal regions by St Patrick, Cú Chulainn reminisces about his heroic accomplishments, which in the end did not save him. Just like the *cuileoin* 'young hounds' and the *cúanairt* 'wolf-pack' (i.e. Túatha Dé Danann) in Tanaide's *Túatha Dé Danann fo diamair*, the hero had to succumb to mortality, but in his case it is also made explicit that Cú Chulainn suffers everlasting punishment in hell, and that he needs the saint to intercede for him in order to escape from his torments. In fact, the idea that the heroes of old are condemned to the infernal regions also occurs in *Aided Chonchobuir*, where Conchobar, though baptized, is first sent to hell only to be rescued and taken to heaven by Christ.<sup>256</sup> Such notions of hell, damnation, and the vanity of worldly accomplishments do not seem to be projected onto human characters in the natural world, however. Although treacherous opponents can be conceptualized as entities embodying a more radical form of alterity, these entities are *stabrai* and not devils.

Besides the use of culture-specific (interpretations of) concepts, early Irish heroic poetry also displays a tendency to satire. Attributes such as strength, courage, and loyalty are praised to such an extent in the heroic literature that enemies are stigmatized by means of a parodic and/or ironic use of heroic metaphors. Cú Chulainn is a lonely burning wooden stick and has the heart of a fluttering bird, while other heroes are credited with qualities they do not have, such as hearts of stone or ice, or the nature of a lion. In other words, the targets are not directly accused of weakness or cowardice but rather painfully reminded of the warrior ideal, which they apparently cannot live up to.

Finally, in the Old Norse heroic poems, concepts and rhetorical techniques involved in the realization of conceptual metaphors can also be quite culture-

<sup>256</sup> *Aided Chonchobuir*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, pp. 14, 16 (text), pp. 15, 17 (translation). The detail occurs in the C-version of the tale (Liber Flavus Fergusiorum [Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 O 48b, fol. 52<sup>r</sup>, s. xv<sup>1</sup>]). See also Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 534–39. The text states that according to the Gaels, Conchobar was the first pagan to go to heaven. Conchobar had been shot in the head by Cet with a ball made of a calcified brain, which could not be removed. Once he heard that Christ was crucified, he rushed into battle. The ball shot out of his head, and he was baptized with his own gushing blood.

specific. In Bragi's *Ragnarsdrápa*, the treacherous Hildr is contrasted with the rapacious sea goddess Rán and the valkyrie Þrúðr when trapping her father and husband in a horrid twilight world of torture and dying. At the same time, however, the identification of Hildr as Þórr's wife Sif and perhaps also as his daughter Þrúðr — if the name represents a conceptual blend of the inputs 'Þrúðr (goddess)' and 'Þrúðr (valkyrie)' — suggests a rhetorical technique very similar to the Irish use of irony mentioned above. Hildr does not act like Þórr's loyal wife Sif, just as Jǫrmunrekkr is not *Foglhildar munr* 'Birdhildr's [i.e. Svanhildr's] joy' when he has his beautiful wife killed. In both cases, the antagonists violate obligations implied in the kenning (base). Similarly, the vigour with which an opponent could be denounced in a flying match is shared in both poetries, although the employed metaphors differ. Whereas the Irish heroes liked to fling insinuations of cowardly conduct at their opponents, their Norse counterparts made extensive use of charges of socially unacceptable gender-related behaviour. This, however, does not mean that such charges could not occur in the early Irish or Old English poetic corpus. After all, Grendel's mother perverts the traditional role of peace-weaver when she avenges the death of her son, and Medb's role as military leader is discredited throughout the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, culminating in Fergus's comment on her men's utter defeat by the Ulstermen that 'is bésad [...] do cach graig remitét láir, rotgata, rotbrata, rotfeither a moín h-i tóin mná misrairleastair' (that is what usually happens [...] to a herd of horses led by a mare. Their substance is taken and carried off and guarded as they follow a woman who has misled them).<sup>257</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that in both cases, the target figures are female, whereas insults implying deviant gender roles for males seem to be a culture-specific feature in the Old Norse heroic poems. Sexual defamation occurs in *Atlakviða*, *Ragnarsdrápa*, and particularly in the Helgi poems with their abundance of accusations that expose the opponent as effeminate (*ragr*; MEN ARE WOMEN) or even as a female beast (MEN ARE FEMALE ANIMALS) and thus parallel the charges of sexual perversity which Óðinn and Loki fling at each other in *Lokasenna*. As fanciful as such insults may appear, furthermore, they do not constitute a purely literary phenomenon. Sexual slander was regarded as a serious offense in early Scandinavian society, as suggested by the punishment of the slanderer with full outlawry in the law codes. As the last chapter will show, the obsession with male virility resurfaces in the Scandinavian praise poetry, where it receives fierce competition from the early Irish satirists and their impressive store of sexual metaphors.

<sup>257</sup> 'Táin Bó Cúailnge': *Recension I*, ed. and trans. by O'Rahilly, p. 124 (text), p. 237 (translation).



## DEFAMING THE ENEMY IN THE OCCASIONAL POETRY OF EARLY NORTHWEST EUROPE

### *Old Norse Occasional Verse*

#### **Praise Poetry**

If skaldic poetry was used as a medium to transmit myths and legends, this was mainly done in praise of a patron. Even though it is not certain for which Ragnarr Bragi composed his *drápa*,<sup>1</sup> he did so in gratitude for the shield that he had received from this Ragnarr. Before describing the scenes painted on the shield, he addresses a certain Hrafnketill, who has assumedly presented him with the gift:

Vilið Hrafnketill heyra,  
hvé hreingróit steini  
Þrúðar skalk ok þengil  
þjófs ilja blað leyfa. (st. 1)<sup>2</sup>

(Do you want to hear, Hrafnketill, how I shall praise the leaf of the foot soles of the thief of Þrúðr [HRUNGNIR > SHIELD], brightly grown upon with light colour, and the prince.)

Þjóðólfr ór Hvini similarly composed his *Haustlönq* in return for a shield that was given to him by a certain Þorleifr, probably Þorleifr inn spaki ‘the Wise’

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 2, p. 36 n. 26 and Chapter 3, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Bragi Boddason, *Ragnarsdrápa*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, B 1, p. 1. My translation.

Hjorðu-Kárason,<sup>3</sup> and Úlfr Uggason described the scenes painted on the panels in the hall of his patron Óláfr pái in his *Húsdrápa*. But the skalds usually praised their patrons in a more direct manner by focusing on the latter's martial exploits against their human foes. Transmitted in the kings' sagas, such as Snorri's *Heimskringla* and the roughly contemporary *Fagrskinna*, these poems have been seen as authentic in respect to authorship and time period.<sup>4</sup>

Only a few metaphors employed for the marginalization of the enemy occur in this type of poetry, which may not be too surprising after all. The skalds took pains to emphasize the fierceness of the battle(s) and their patrons' heroism displayed in them. The rulers are described as stirrers of weapons, feeders of the beasts of battle, dispensers of treasure, ship captains, and heathen gods,<sup>5</sup> and are even credited with eyes flashing like snakes (*ormfrón augu*) with which they terrified their enemies.<sup>6</sup> Descriptions of the enemies, on the other hand, often do not go beyond the indication of their tribal/national affinities, but when enemy activity is mentioned, it can be fierce and heroic. One strategy to advance the patron's reputation was to present the enemy as a worthy opponent who was not easily overcome. For instance, in a *lausavísa* 'separate verse' which Eyvindr skáldaspillir 'Despoiler of Skalds' Finsson presumably recited to Hákon inn góði 'the Good' Haraldsson (c. 920–61) at a feast, the poet warns his patron against the approaching Eiríkssynur. He calls them *hvassa Blóðøxar téa* 'bold avengers of (their father Eiríkr) Blood Axe' and hence highlights the serious nature of the

<sup>3</sup> 'Introduction,' *The 'Haustlǫng'*, ed. and trans. by North, p. xxxii.

<sup>4</sup> For a short discussion of 'authenticating' versus 'situational verse', see Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, pp. 69–80.

<sup>5</sup> See Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden*, pp. 244, 351–52. Meissner points out that kennings with base words that identify kings, jarls, and other (Christian) leaders as heathen gods are rare in the poetry composed in the post-conversion period, although such word-formations remain common in general man-kennings.

<sup>6</sup> In his *Arinbjarnarkviða* 'Poem about Arinbjörn', stanza 5 (ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 38), Egill Skallagrímsson refers to Eiríkr blóðøx's *ormfránn ennimáni* 'snake-flashing forehead-moon', and Óláfr inn helgi Haraldsson can boast of *ormfrón augu* in Sigvatr Þórðarson's eleventh-century *Erfdrápa Óláfs helga* 'Memorial *drápa* for Óláfr the Saint', stanza 13 (ed. and trans. by Jesch, p. 679). For a discussion of the motif of the ruler's flashing eyes and its relation to Vendel-era snake helmets, see Marold, 'Die Augen des Herrschers', pp. 7–29. In *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, stanza 32 (ed. and trans. by Lethbridge, p. 986), Bjarni byskup Kolbeinsson uses the term for all warriors of the Norwegian force under the command Hákon jarl and his son Eiríkr, as well as of the Wendish-Danish force that fought in the sea battle of Hjörungavágr in c. 985. Since Bjarni composed his *drápa* in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, it is quite possible that the specific association of a snake's fierce glance with which it paralyzes its victim with that of a ruler had been lost.

threat.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the eleventh-century Arnórr jarlaskáld 'Jarls' Poet' Þórðarson tended to focus on the battle prowess of his patron's opponents. Judith Jesch has pointed out that in his *Magnússdrápa* composed in praise of Magnús inn góði 'the Good' Ólafsson (c. 1025–47), Arnórr 'seems anxious not to belittle Sveinn [i.e. Sveinn tjúguskegg 'Fork-Beard', the Danish king and opponent of King Magnús of Norway], perhaps in order to emphasize Magnús's achievement'.<sup>8</sup> Sveinn is called the *fylkir framr* 'bold leader' and *armsvellis hati* 'hater of the arm-ice' [SILVER > GENEROUS MAN] (st. 4).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Arnórr uses the same technique in his *Haraldsdrápa* for King Haraldr harðráði 'Hard-Ruler' Sigurðarson (c. 1015–66). He makes sure that the battle valour of the king's enemies in the Battle of Niså and the Battle of Stamford Bridge is sufficiently noticed by calling the Danish king Sveinn Estridsson *forbrausti* 'very valiant' (st. 4) and the English king Harold Godwinson *dýran fylkir* 'leader of high worth' (st. 10).<sup>10</sup> A strong opponent softened the ruler's defeat or even his death; it would certainly have been shameful if Haraldr had fought against weak foes.

Despite this self-serving respect for some enemies, others were exposed as cowardly and treacherous. According to Jesch, typical themes to be found in Viking poetry are — besides the themes of the flight-shunning leader and the ferocious warrior who feeds the beasts of battle — fleeing enemy forces (from the mid-eleventh century onwards) and deceptive political opponents.<sup>11</sup> The few metaphors that are used to highlight cowardice and deception link

<sup>7</sup> Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, *Lausavísur*, ed. and trans. by Poole, p. 215.

<sup>8</sup> Jesch, *Ships and Men*, p. 245.

<sup>9</sup> Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson, *Magnússdrápa*, ed. and trans. by Whaley, p. 212.

<sup>10</sup> Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson, *Haraldsdrápa*, ed. and trans. by Whaley, pp. 264, 271.

<sup>11</sup> Jesch, *Ships and Men*, pp. 243–65. Jesch regards Sigvaldi Strút-Haraldsson as such a treacherous opponent. Enjoying the trust of King Óláfr Tryggvason, he persuaded the latter to sail from Vinðland back to Norway in the full knowledge that Óláfr's enemies (King Óláfr of Sweden, King Sveinn of Denmark, and the Norwegian Eiríkr jarl Hákonsson) were awaiting him at Svplðr. Sigvaldi is remembered by the poet Stefnir as a *níðingr*, a term that is used for a person who has acted in a detestable manner (see Almqvist, *Norrön niddiktning*, pp. 74–76). In fact, such accusations were not restricted to a patron's enemies. Jesch also illustrates that a skald's patron could be, even if indirectly, accused of treachery as well (*Ships and Men*, pp. 262–65). King Óláfr inn helgi 'the Saint' Haraldsson's court poet Sigvatr Þórðarson composed a *flokkr* in commemoration of his friend Erlingr Skjálgsson, who had engaged in battle against the king. Erlingr was granted his life if he surrendered, but once he did so, he was immediately killed by one of the king's men. Although Óláfr did not do the killing himself, Sigvatr's praise of Erlingr as a brave, guileless victim of trickery reflects his disappointment with the king. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *'Flokkr' about Erlingr Skjálgsson*, ed. and trans. by Jesch.

the enemy with effeminacy and infertility, thus complementing similar associations in the mythological and heroic poems. They occur in the poetry of Þórbjörn hornklofi's *Haraldskvæði* 'Poem about Haraldr', Einarr skálaglamm 'Tinkle Scales' Helgason's *Vellekla* 'Lack of Gold', and in the anonymous eleventh-century *Liðsmannaflokkur* 'Flokkur of the Household troops'.

### *Haraldskvæði*

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, one part of Þórbjörn hornklofi's *Haraldskvæði* describes the Battle of Hafrsfjord, in which Haraldr hárfagri overcame an enemy force under the command of petty rulers. Two kings of the opposition are named, Kjotva and Haklangr (Þórir haklangr 'Having a Long Chin?'), Kjotva's son and, according to Snorri, a great *berserkr*. Whereas Haklangr is killed in battle, as we would expect from a *berserkr*, Kjotva flees with his troops to an island.<sup>12</sup> Þórbjörn highlights the cowardly behaviour of the survivors by declaring them *ragr*:

Leiddisk þá fyr Lúfu  
landi at halda  
hilmi inum halsdigra;  
holm lét ser at skjaldi.  
Slógusk und sesspiljur,  
es sárir vóru;  
létu upp stjölu stúpa;  
stungu í kjöl hofðum.

Á baki létu blíkja  
— barðir óru grjóti —  
Sváfnis salnæfrar  
seggir hyggjandi.  
CEstusk austkylfur  
ok of Jaðar hljópu  
heim ór Hafrsfirði  
ok hugðu á mjöðdrykkju. (sts 10–11)<sup>13</sup>

(Then the fat-necked ruler [i.e. Kjotva] grew tired of defending the land against Lúfa [thick and matted hair = Haraldr]; he allowed an island to be a shield to

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the context of the *Haraldskvæði*, see the comments by Fulk, pp. 101–06.

<sup>13</sup> Þórbjörn hornklofi, *Haraldskvæði*, ed. and trans. by Fulk, pp. 104–05, 106. The translations of the praise and *níð* poetry in this section are based on the editors' translations of the various poems.



himself. Those who were wounded thrust themselves under the rowing benches; they let their rumps stick up; they stuck their heads in the keel.

The prudent men let the tiles of Sváfnir's hall [ÓÐINN > VALHÖLL > SHIELDS] shine on their backs — they were pelted with stones — the eastern 'clubs' were stirred up and ran across Jæren, homewards from Hafsfjörðr, and were thinking of mead-drinking.)

The corpulent Kjotva seeks shelter for his ships either on or behind an island (the context is not clear), with his wounded warriors hiding under the row-benches. But Þjórbjörn's defamation does not end with this description of the leader's shameful flight. The skald also refers to the bottoms of the wounded warriors raised into the air, which would be a gesture of sexual submission. In fact, the metaphorical identification of the fleeing warriors as *austkylfur* 'eastern clubs' in the next stanzas summarizes the poet's insinuations in a particularly nasty manner. These men, whose wisdom seems to consist of covering their backs against the stones flung by Haraldr's forces, try to reach their safe home as fast as possible. By calling them *kylfur*, Þórbjörn creates a complex of cognitive processes that make his audience aware of their shortcomings. As a weapon, the club would metonymically highlight its owner's belligerent though primitive nature, while its metaphorical function as a phallic symbol should confirm his manliness both physically (metonymy) and socially (metaphor). Þórbjörn thus ridicules the cowards by assigning to them male aggressive behaviour that they clearly lack. Ironical uses of metaphor — and metonymy in this case — were obviously an effective means of discrediting the opponent both in early Irish and Old Norse poetry.

### *Vellekla*

*Vellekla* 'gold dearth' was composed by Einarr skálaglamm 'Tinkle Scales' Helgason (b. mid-tenth century) in praise of Hákon jarl Sigurðarson's (r. c. 970–c. 995) achievements. We learn from Einarr's poem that Hákon entered a bloody conflict with the sons of Eiríkr blóðøx (sts 6–11), killed Haraldr gráfeldr 'Grey Cloak' Eiríksson (r. c. 961–c. 970) in revenge for the death of his father Sigurðr jarl Hákonarson (st. 12),<sup>14</sup> fought and routed Ragnfrøðr Eiríksson's troops (sts 18–24), and helped the Danish king Haraldr blátönn 'Blue-Tooth'

<sup>14</sup> Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla*, ed. and trans. by Marold, p. 298. The poem is preceded by a short biography of the poet, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1*, Part 1, ed. by Marold, pp. 278–79.

Gormsson (r. c. 958–85/88) defend the Danevirke against the armed forces of the Holy Roman emperor Otto II (sts 25–28).<sup>15</sup> Yet Hákon's enemies are not treated equally in the various episodes. Einarr's use of comparable metaphors for both Hákon and Otto II, for example, make the emperor a worthy foe even though he has to succumb to the jarl.<sup>16</sup> Both rulers are credited with one of Óðinn's many names in the episode: Hákon is the *geirrásar garð-Rognir* 'Rognir [ÓÐINN] of the fence of the spear-rush [BATTLE > SHIELD > WARRIOR]';<sup>17</sup> who attacks the *gunn-Viðurr* 'battle-Óðinn [WARRIOR = Otto II]' (st. 27).<sup>18</sup> The latter has arrived with his *Hagbarða hurðar hlým-Nirðir* 'noise-Nirðir of Hagbarð's door [SHIELD > BATTLE > WARRIORS]' (st. 26),<sup>19</sup> and only in the next stanza does the *sundfaxa sæki-Þróttr* 'attacking Óðinn of the sea-horse [SHIP > SEA-WARRIOR = HÁKON]' put the *Saxar* 'Saxons' to flight (st. 28).<sup>20</sup> Given Hákon's firm belief in the old gods, Einarr's consistent employment of god-kennings for the jarl in the episode and throughout the poem may be anticipated,<sup>21</sup> but the same claim cannot be made for the Christian emperor. Kennings could be employed without any regard to context, but in this case it may very well be that Einarr's portrayal of Otto II as an almost equal match for Hákon required him to pay more attention to Hákon's religious affinities than to factual niceties.

Einarr's treatment of the Christian Eiríkssynur is very different. In the parts of the poem that focus on Hákon's conflict with the Eiríkssynur after his father's death, the latter are hardly mentioned.<sup>22</sup> All attention is directed at Hákon,

<sup>15</sup> Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla*, ed. and trans. by Marold, pp. 305–18.

<sup>16</sup> Einarr's description does not seem to correspond to the accounts given in the historical sources. Otto II not only defeated and expelled Haraldr blátǫnn but also annexed Denmark in 974. It is of course possible that Hákon jarl was successful in defending the part of the wall of which he was in charge (see also Marold, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1*, Part 1, ed. by Marold, pp. 318–19). Haraldr reclaimed power nine years later.

<sup>17</sup> Literally, 'fence-Rognir [= Óðinn] of the spear-rush'.

<sup>18</sup> Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla*, ed. and trans. by Marold, p. 317.

<sup>19</sup> Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla*, ed. and trans. by Marold, p. 315. Since there is only one god called Njörðr, the pluralized form suggests a metonymic relationship (MEMBER OF A CATEGORY FOR THE CATEGORY).

<sup>20</sup> Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla*, ed. and trans. by Marold, p. 318.

<sup>21</sup> In the thirty-seven stanzas of the poem, Einarr uses ten kennings in which Hákon is identified as a Norse god: Óðinn (4x), Njörðr (1x in *Hkr*), Freyr (1x), Ullr (2x), Þórr (1x), Týr (1x; *Fagr* 2x). *Fagrskinna* reads *fell-Týr flóttu* 'felling-Týr of the fleeing ones' in st. 29. *Heimskringla* has *felli-Njörðr flóttu*. Hákon is also called a kinsman of Óðinn twice.

<sup>22</sup> Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla*, ed. and trans. by Marold, p. 311. Marold argues

who embodies both martial vigour and fertility. Einarr's references to the jarl as *hjörs brak-Rognir* 'noise-Óðinn of the sword [BATTLE > WARRIOR]' (st. 7) and *haffaxa hald-Viðurr* 'steering-Óðinn of the sea-horse [SHIP > SEA-WARRIOR]' (st. 10) are followed by his identification as the fertility god Freyr (*folkskiðs Freyr* 'Freyr of the war-ski [SHIP > SEA-WARRIOR]'), whose power will never be surpassed (st. 12).<sup>23</sup> The Eiríkssynur, in contrast, receive little praise. Einarr sneeringly describes Haraldr gráfeldr 'Grey Cloak' as *konungr Hq̄rða* 'king of Hq̄rðar [i.e. Norway]' at the very moment he is killed by Hákon in the Battle of Hals in Limfjorden (st. 12).<sup>24</sup> A second, more oblique reference to the Eiríkssynur occurs in stanza 14, which illustrates Hákon's reinstatement of pagan worship after Haraldr gráfeldr's fall:

Qll lét senn enn svinni  
 sonn Einriða mǫnnum  
 herjum kunnr of herjuð  
 hofs lönd ok vé banda,  
 áðr vé jǫtna vitni  
 valfalls of sæ allan  
 — þeim stýra goð — geira  
 garðs Hlórriði farði. (st. 14)<sup>25</sup>

(The wise one, famous among the peoples, soon made all the despoiled temple grounds of Einriði [ÞÓRR] and the sanctuaries of the gods lawful for men, before the Hlórriði [ÞÓRR] of the fence of spears [SHIELD > WARRIOR = Hákon] carried evidence of the slaughter of the sanctuary giants [= Eiríkssynur] across the entire sea — the gods guide him.)

Þórr's name occurs twice in the stanza, that is, as the name of the deity who used to be venerated by the Norwegians and will be venerated again, and in a metaphorical warrior-kenning for Hákon. Einarr's employment of the kenning is hardly accidental. The strong emphasis on Hákon as vanquisher of his enemies

that the kenning *hlifar flagðs blym-Narfi* 'noise-Narfi of the troll-woman of the shield [AXE > BATTLE > WARRIOR]' in stanza 23 most likely refers to Ragnfróðr, since the identification of a ruler with Loki's son is hardly appreciative (p. 312). For a discussion of Narfi's role in the mythological corpus, see Chapter 2, p. 34 n. 20.

<sup>23</sup> Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla*, ed. and trans. by Marold, pp. 291, 295, 298.

<sup>24</sup> 'Herforðuðr réð fjörvi Hq̄rða konungs' (the host's protector ruled the life of the king of the Hq̄rðar).

<sup>25</sup> Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla*, ed. and trans. by Marold, p. 301. The translation of the stanza is mainly Marold's, but see below.

and restorer of prosperity in the following stanzas recalls Þórr's defence of cosmic order and fertility against the giants in Eilífr's *Þórsdrápa*.<sup>26</sup> More controversial is the proposed link between the Eiríkssynur and the giants, which in the end depends on the interpretation of the phrase *vé(g)jotna* (l. 5). Edith Marold, following Finnur Jónsson, renders the expression as 'path of the giants', which would be a kenning for the mountains possibly representing Norway [PART FOR THE WHOLE]. According to this reading, Hákon 'ferried evidence of slaughter to the path of the giants [MOUNTAINS = Norway?]', with *vitnir valfalls* 'evidence of slaughter' referring to the death of Haraldr gráfeldr.<sup>27</sup> Margaret Clunies Ross, on the other hand, proposes the same meaning for *végjotna* but interprets *vitnir valfalls* as 'wolf of slaughter [SWORD]', so that 'the Hlórriði [= Þórr] of the fence of spears [SHIELDS]' carries the sword over the *végjotna* 'path of giants' [(Norwegian) MOUNTAINS] and the sea. Clunies Ross concludes:

Here, by his choice of kennings both for Hákon and the land of Norway, Einarr draws the jarl into Þórr's sphere of activity as protector of the world of gods and men from the incursions of giants, and suggests an equation between the ruler's and the god's roles.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, Einarr refers to Hákon's struggle against all of his enemies and not only against the Eiríkssynur. Hans Kuhn, however, adopts the form *vé* 'sanctuary' that occurs in some manuscripts and makes *jotunn* a metonym for 'a being that inflicts harm/damage' (MEMBER OF THE CATEGORY FOR THE CATEGORY): 'eh der *geira garðs Hlórride* (der Jarl), den die Götter lenken, die Nachricht vom Tode der Tempelschänder über die ganze See verbreitete'.<sup>29</sup> Kuhn's rendering accordingly highlights the Eiríkssynur's activities as 'desecrators of the temple' after Sigurðr jarl's death, which made Hákon's restoration programme necessary in the first place. The only problem with this interpretation seems to be the rare use of the metonym in the skaldic corpus, but since the identification of a warrior with Þórr is equally rare, this type of evidence is hardly conclusive.<sup>30</sup> In fact, it is very likely that the connections between the *jotnar* and the Eiríkssynur are not only metonymic but also metaphorical. *Végjotna* would then be a conceptual blend that highlights both the Eiríkssynur's

<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 47–49. Krömmelbein, *Skaldische Metaphorik*, pp. 201–02; Frank, 'Hand Tools and Power Tools', p. 102 n. 24; Clunies Ross, 'Style and Authorial Presence', pp. 285–86.

<sup>27</sup> Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla*, ed. and trans. by Marold, p. 302.

<sup>28</sup> Clunies Ross, 'Style and Authorial Presence', p. 286.

<sup>29</sup> Kuhn, 'Rund um die *Völuspá*', pp. 5–6.

<sup>30</sup> Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla*, ed. and trans. by Marold, pp. 302–03.

past activities as desecrators of the temples and their association with the giants as sterile forces threatening physical and cultural growth. As Einarr points out in the next three stanzas, Hákon's defeat of his enemies and reinstatement of pagan sacrifice (st. 15) make the earth flourish again, enabling the jarl to begin a reign of peace and prosperity only second to that of the legendary Danish king Fróði (st. 17).<sup>31</sup>

### *Liðsmannaflokkur*

Einarr's practice of expressing a conflict between a ruler and his opponents in mythological terms resurfaces in the eleventh-century *Liðsmannaflokkur* (*flokkur* of the Household Troops). The *flokkur* (a poem consisting of loosely connected stanzas) commemorates the campaign of Knútr inn ríki 'the Great' Sveinsson (Cnut the Great, 990–1035) and Þorkell in hávi 'the Tall' Strút-Haraldsson in England in c. 1015–16, as presented from the viewpoint of one of Knútr's *liðmen*, who reports the events to an otherwise unidentified *mær* 'maiden' (sts 5, 7, 10).<sup>32</sup> A possible association of Knútr's enemies, here the Englishmen under the leadership of the East Anglian Ulfcetel, with the giants occurs in the description of Knútr's siege of London in stanza 6 (where a comrade rather than the maiden is addressed) and stanza 8:<sup>33</sup>

Einráðit lét áðan  
Ul/kell, þars spjör gullu,  
— hǫrð óx hildar garða  
hríð — víkinga at bíða.  
Ok, slíðrhugaðr, síðan  
sátt á oss, hvé mátti

<sup>31</sup> Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, *Vellekla*, ed. and trans. by Marold, pp. 303, 305.

<sup>32</sup> *Liðsmannaflokkur*, ed. and trans. by Poole, pp. 1022, 1024, 1028. Poole argues that the poem was not composed by King Óláfr inn helgi Haraldsson (r. c. 1015–30), as the two Óláfr sagas would have it, but by (one of) Knútr's *liðsmenn* mentioned in the thirteenth-century *Knýtlinga saga*. According to Poole, the author of the 'Oldest Saga of St Óláfr', from which the other two Óláfr sagas are derived, had confused Óláfr's participation in an attack on London in 1009 with the later siege of London in 1016 (*Viking Poems of War and Peace*, pp. 91–99; *Liðsmannaflokkur*, ed. and trans. by Poole, pp. 1014–15). In his note on stanza 4 (*Liðsmannaflokkur*, p. 1021), Poole concedes that the campaign could have been one of the many conducted in 1015–1016.

<sup>33</sup> *Liðsmannaflokkur*, ed. and trans. by Poole, pp. 1023, 1025. My translation is based on Poole's rendering of the stanzas.

byggs við bitran skeggja  
brunns tveir hugir runnu. (st. 4)

Út mun ekkja líta,  
— opt glóa vópn á lopti  
of hjalmtómum hilmí —  
hreinn, súsbýr í steini,  
hvé sigrfíkin sækir  
snarla borgar karla  
— dynr á brezkum brynjum  
blóðíss — Dana vísi. (st. 8)

(Ullkell [Ulfcetel] had made up his mind earlier to await the Vikings, where spears yelled — the hard storm of the battle-fences [SHIELDS > BATTLE] became severe; and you, fierce-minded one, saw on us afterwards how one [we] could prevail against the keen keeper of the spring-barley [STONE > Englishman = Ulfcetel]; two minds were competing [we were doubtful].

The pure widow who lives in stone [= the stone habitation] will look out — weapons often gleam in the air above the ruler wearing a helmet — [to see] how the leader of the Danes [Knútr], eager for victory, quickly assails the men of the city; the blood-ice [SWORD] rings against British mailcoats.)

The poet undoubtedly associated London with its remaining sections of the Roman wall with a stone habitation, and yet the traditional connection between stone/rock and the giants may also have been on his mind. The English Ulfcetel is identified as a *brunns byggs bitri skeggi* ‘bitter keeper of the spring barley [STONE]’, and the widow views the fighting from her stony residence. In fact, although in poetic contexts *ekkja* can denote any woman and not specifically a widow, it seems likely that the poet had King Æðelræd’s widow Queen Emma in mind, whose fate as Knútr’s future spouse could be seen as quite similar to that of the gods’ giantess wives. The stanzas hence invite a metaphorical interpretation which reinforces the ideological message of the poem. The attribution of giant qualities to both Ulfcetel and Queen Emma would stigmatize them as members of an inferior, stagnating culture that needs to be conquered and reorganized by Knútr’s group. If the Danish king is not identified with Þórr or perhaps a fertility god, this may be due to, as Russell Poole has argued, ‘ideological repression.’<sup>34</sup> The identification of the Christian Knútr, or Þorkell, with a pagan deity would indeed have been ideologically improper and is therefore omitted in the equation.

<sup>34</sup> Poole, ‘Skaldic Praise Poetry’, p. 176.

*Níð* poetry

As much as the skalds could compose poetry to praise a patron or friend, they could also fling shameless insults called *níð* at their opponents. These insults are closely connected with the accusation of *ergi* and thus unmanliness both in a sexual and a moral sense.<sup>35</sup> Þórbjörn hornklofi's ridicule of Kjǫtva's troops as cowering *austkylfur* has already been discussed; in this section, attention will be given to similar insults that are not embedded in a praise poem like *Haraldskvæði* but address the opponent head-on.

The texts in question are *níð*-verses that ridicule two kings, the Danish Haraldr blátǫnn Gormsson and the Norwegian Haraldr harðráði. The first verse occurs in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in Snorri's *Heimskringla* and was presumably uttered by Icelanders in response to Haraldr Gormsson's plundering of a stranded Icelandic vessel on the Danish coast:

Þás sparn á mó Maurnis  
 morðkunnr Haraldr sunnan,  
 vas þá Vinða myrðir  
 vax eitt, í ham fæxa;  
 en bergsalar Birgir  
 þöndum rækr í landi  
 — þat sá ǫld — í jöldu  
 óríkr fyrir líki.<sup>36</sup>

(When Haraldr from the south, known for slaughter, kicked in a stallion's shape on the *mór* of Maurnir [?], then the destroyer of the Wends was only wax; and weak Birgir (Haraldr's bailiff), expelled by the gods of the rock-hall of the land [GIANTS > *LANDVÆTTIR*], was in front in the shape of a mare. Men saw that.)

Admittedly, any translation of the first *helmingr* must remain tentative, as the meaning of *mó maurnis* is difficult to determine. *Mór* could be a horse name, as Finnur Jónsson conjectured, which together with the river-name Mørn (gen. sg. Marnar; *mørnar* in *Jómsvíkinga saga*)<sup>37</sup> produces the meaning 'ship' and thus the rendering 'Haraldr went from the south on the ship in the shape of a stallion'.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> For discussions of *níð* and its close association with *ergi*, see Folke Ström, '*Níð*'; Meulengracht Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man*, pp. 14–32; Almqvist, *Norrön niddiktning*, ch. 1. Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 96–97.

<sup>36</sup> *Lausavísa from 'Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar'*, ed. and trans. by Whaley, p. 1073. My translation.

<sup>37</sup> Copenhagen, Arnarnagæan Institute, MS AM 291 4<sup>to</sup>, s. xiii<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, B 1, p. 166. Whaley



Alternatively, *mór* could mean ‘heath’, and *Mörn* could be a sword name: the heath/land of the sword is the shield, in which case the king kicks his shield which he has dropped in flight. His cowardice is indeed metaphorically indicated by his waxen nature (COWARDICE/WEAKNESS IS SOFT): Haraldr suffers from a soft and pliable disposition (WHOLE FOR A PART), which prevents him from showing courage and steadfastness. Finally, an even more defamatory translation has been offered by Magnus Olsen who interprets *mörn* as (horse) penis and *mó mörn* as ‘land of the (horse) penis [MARE’S BEHIND]’.<sup>39</sup> Alison Finlay translates:

When Haraldr, famous for murder, braced himself in a stallion’s shape on the land of the horse’s penis [= a mare’s rump] in the south.<sup>40</sup>

Regardless of which rendering of the first four lines we choose — intentional ambiguity could also have been intended — the slander is clear enough.<sup>41</sup> Haraldr appears in the shape of a stallion and engages in sexual intercourse with his bailiff Birgir, who takes the female part. Although the male part in the homosexual act was not considered shameful, Haraldr’s association with wax modifies this notion.<sup>42</sup> Haraldr does not only lack courage, but he is also unable to perform adequately in the sexual act (WHOLE FOR A PART), a failure that seriously compromises his manliness. Birgir’s effeminacy, on the other hand,

(*Lausavísa from Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, p. 1073) is not convinced by this interpretation, as it requires the emendation of *maurn-* to *marn-* and the postulation of the uncommon meaning ‘travelled’ for *sparn*.

<sup>39</sup> For Magnus Olsen’s rendering, see Bjarni Adalbjarnarson, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, pp. 270–71 (note on st. 133).

<sup>40</sup> Finlay, ‘Monstrous Allegations’, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> An equally serious charge of effeminacy, though in a different context, is directed against Þórvaldr and the Saxon bishop Fredrik (Friðrekr) in the thirteenth-century *Kristni saga*. While Þórvaldr was preaching to heathens at a legal assembly during their mission (981–85), a certain Heðinn from Eyjaflóð retorted: ‘Hefr börn borit | byskup níu, þeira’s allra | Þórvaldr faðir’ (‘The bishop has given birth to/carried nine children, Þórvaldr is the father of them all’). Although *bera* ‘carry’ could refer to the bishop carrying nine children to the baptismal font in his function as their godfather, Þórvaldr clearly does not take the remark in this way, but sees it as a charge of effeminacy. Grønlie suggests that the ambiguity may have been intentional in order to protect the accuser, as he could be killed for such an accusation. If this is indeed the case, the cautionary measure did not work. Þórvaldr killed two men at the assembly anyway. *Íslendingabók*, trans. by Grønlie, p. 61 n. 27.

<sup>42</sup> Ström, ‘*Níð*’; see also Meulengracht Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man*, pp. 26–28; Finlay, ‘Monstrous Allegations’, p. 27.

is expressed by the metaphor MEN ARE FEMALE ANIMALS, which we already encountered in the Helgi poems and in *Atlakviða*, and which incurred severe penalties in Norway and Iceland if used against another person.

*Níð* verses are also uttered by the Icelander Hjórttr in *Hemings þáttr Áslákssonar*.<sup>43</sup> After his return from Russia (1065–66), Hjórttr and his companions appear before King Haraldr harðráði with a bag of gold, which the latter had left with his wife Queen Ellisif (Elizabeth) of Kiev. However, when they do not receive the attention of the king, who is engaged in a conversation with Tostig Godwinson, the annoyed Hjórttr recites the following stanza:

Þröngvir gulli  
gramr fast saman;  
veitir Sýrar  
sonr faskonar.  
Land skyldi lítit  
laf-Hamðir hafa;  
þá myndi hauldum  
Haraldr svara.<sup>44</sup>

(The ruler gathers gold forcefully; Sýr's son [= Haraldr]<sup>45</sup> gives away little. Laf-Hamðir [Slouch-Hamðir] should get little land; then Haraldr might answer the men.)

As Kari Ellen Gade has pointed out, the referent of *laf-Hamðir* depends on whether *hafa* means 'get, obtain' or 'possess'. In the prose text, Tostig has travelled to Haraldr's court in order to persuade the king to participate in a joint expedition to England; if they turn out to be victorious, Tostig and his brothers would recognize him as their lord in return. The *laf-Hamðir* who should 'possess' little land would thus be Tostig, whom Hjórttr wishes to have an insufficient amount of land so that he would lose the king's attention. However, if *hafa* means 'obtain', then the *laf-Hamðir* is Haraldr. In this case, Hjórttr wants the king to receive only a fraction of England. This second interpretation is in fact supported by the prose text of the Hrokkinskinna parchment and Hauksbók versions of the story,<sup>46</sup> where the king asks Hjórttr how little he should obtain. The

<sup>43</sup> *Hemings þáttr Áslákssonar*, ed. by Jensen, pp. 37–39.

<sup>44</sup> Hjórttr, *Lausavísur*, ed. and trans. by Gade, p. 344. *Hemings þáttr*, ed. by Jensen, p. 38. Gade's translation.

<sup>45</sup> Haraldr was the son of Sigurðr sýr 'Sow'.

<sup>46</sup> Hjórttr, *Lausavísur*, ed. and trans. by Gade, p. 345. *Hemings þáttr*, ed. by Jensen, p. 38.

poet replies that it should not be more than the plot of land he can lie on, i.e. his grave, a wish that is eventually fulfilled with Haraldr's death at Stamford Bridge.

Hjortr's outspokenness is rather curious. A skald's complaint about his patron's lack of generosity is certainly not unheard of,<sup>47</sup> but calling the latter *laf*-Hamðir is a very serious insult indeed. Hjortr compares Haraldr to Hamðir only to discredit and ridicule the king in the same manner as Þórbjörn hornklofi ridicules Kjotva's troops. Unlike the ferocious hero, Haraldr is *laf* (from *lafa* 'dangle, hang'), an attribute that first of all seems to allude to his slouching posture characterized by his dangling arms, but that also may have sexual overtones. Perhaps the *níð* was originally aimed at Tostig (who could be labelled with more importunity than the king) but was reattributed to Haraldr at some later stage of the transmission. Still, the word *laf* recurs in Ellisif's rather brutal message which is unambiguously addressed to Haraldr, and which Hjortr dutifully delivers:

Munat í vári  
vestr langskipum  
hugragr of haf  
Haraldr fara.  
Því mun lengi  
lafhræddr konungr  
alls andvani  
Englands ok vegs.<sup>48</sup>

(Mind-*ragr* Haraldr will not travel on longships west across the sea in spring.  
Therefore the *lafhræddr* king will long be without all England and honour.)

In her traditional role of goader, Ellisif denounces Haraldr as a coward who will not dare to invade England.<sup>49</sup> According to her, the king is *hugragr* and *lafhræddr*: his womanish disposition (*hugragr*, MEN ARE WOMEN) makes him

<sup>47</sup> For example, Þórarinn stuttfeldr 'Short Cloak', one of Sigurðr jórsalafari's 'Jerusalem Farer' (d. 1130) poets, acquired his nickname in a *lausavísa* in *Magnússonar saga*, in which the poet responded to the king's comment on his short cloak: 'Hykk, at hér meg þekkja | heldr í stuttum feldi | oss, en ek læt þessa | óprýði mér hlýða. | Værir mildr, ef mæra | mik vildir þú skikkju, | — hvat hafim heldr an tǫtra — | hildingr, muni vildri.' ('I think that one may see us [me] here in quite a short cloak, but I say this lack of style suits me. You would be generous, if you would deck me out in a coat somewhat more desirable, ruler; I'd rather wear anything but rags'). Þórarinn's request for a new attire is inoffensive and yet clear: if the king is generous he will exchange the poet's rags ('stuttum') for a more suitable cloak ('skikkju muni vildri'). Þórarinn stuttfeldr, *Lausavísur*, ed. and trans. by Gade, p. 479. Gade's translation.

<sup>48</sup> Hjortr, *Lausavísur*, ed. and trans. by Gade, p. 347. My translation mainly follows Gade's.

<sup>49</sup> For a discussion of the female goader in Old Norse literature, see Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women*, chs 7 and 8.

so frightened (*hræddr*) that he cannot stand erect and his arms (and most likely another body part) must dangle (*laf*) helplessly. In other words, Ellisif brands Haraldr as a literally and metaphorically effeminate ruler who is in no position to undertake a manly task, and who therefore is no ruler at all. If Haraldr wanted to save his honour, he had to support Tostig and invade England with him. Not surprisingly, he did so soon afterwards.

### *Anglo-Saxon Panegyrics*

Few panegyrics have survived in the Anglo-Saxon poetic corpus. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* contains six poems that commemorate certain tenth- and eleventh-century events in Anglo-Saxon history, while the seventh extant poem, *The Battle of Maldon*, records the battle fought between the Englishmen under the command of Ealdorman Byrhtnoð and the Vikings at Maldon in 991. Of the six *Chronicle* poems, furthermore, the five shorter ones are not of particular interest for a study of metaphor,<sup>50</sup> which leaves us with the longer poem entitled *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *The Battle of Maldon*. As might be expected, courage and fierceness in battle are praised in both poems just as much as in the skaldic praise poetry, whereas any form of cowardice or weakness earns the poets' utter contempt. Still, the few metaphors that can be found in the two poems are very different from those employed in the *níð* poetry. Rather than focusing on the opponents' lack of manliness, they present the opponents of the English as collectives that either do not enjoy God's favour and thus display a form of religious alterity (*Brunanburh*) or that exhibit sub-human features denying them any access to the cultural world of Anglo-Saxon England (*Maldon*).

### *The Battle of Brunanburh*

In contrast with the Vikings in *The Battle of Maldon* fought half a century later, the invading armies of Óláfr (Anlaf) Guðfriðarson of Dublin (r. 934–41),

<sup>50</sup> The events are King Edmund's liberation of the Five Boroughs from the Norsemen (942), the coronation (973) and death of King Edgar (975), the capture, imprisonment, and murder of Prince Alfred, son of Æðelræd (1036), and the death of King Edward the Confessor (1065). The poem on the capture of the Five Boroughs presents the Northmen as formidable enemies who keep the Danes *on hæpenra hæfteclommun* 'in the heathens' fetters' (l. 10b). Since *clamm* also has the metaphorical meaning 'clutch, grip' (see Chapter 3, p. 121 n. 101), the Norsemen's oppressive rule is conceptualized as fetters and human clutches that restrict the movement (i.e. freedom) of the Danes. The poems have been edited by v. K. Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, pp. 20–26.

Constantín mac Áeda (Constantine II, r. 900–43) of Scotland, and Eógan I (Owen I) of Strathclyde could not boast of victory when they faced the West Saxon and Mercian forces of King Æpelstan (r. 924–39) and his brother Edmund (r. 939–46) at Brunanburh.<sup>51</sup> The battle, which was fought in 937, ended with the defeat and subsequent rout of the invaders and consolidated Æpelstan's power in Mercia and Northumbria.<sup>52</sup> In fact, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* poem *The Battle of Brunanburh* commemorates and celebrates this English triumph in a manner that reminds us of panegyric skaldic poetry rather than of Old English verse: not only is the Englishmen's heroism praised to the utmost, but the enemies' defeat and flight are most cruelly scorned. John Niles has drawn attention to the similarities between the Anglo-Saxon poet's contemptuous description of the grief and shame suffered by the foreigners and Þórbjörn hornklofi's derisive account of the utterly disgraceful flight by Haraldr hárfagri's enemies in the battle fought at Hafrsfjörð.<sup>53</sup> Yet unlike Þórbjörn, who uses metaphor to declare the cowards *ragr*, the *Brunanburh* poet expresses his full scorn by means of emphasis and litotes. As Niles points out:

Athelstan's triumph is celebrated not by a sober account of his actions, but by exultant allusion to the enemy blood spilled on the field and the number of enemy kings and noblemen cut down. The poet's bloody-mindedness is matched by his emphasis on the losers' shame. The survivors take to their ships *ewiscmode* 'humiliated' (56b), whereas the victors proceed home *wiges bremge* 'gloating in battle' (59b). The satirical element that runs through the poem is most prominent in the three-

<sup>51</sup> *The Battle of Brunanburh* has been transmitted in several manuscripts: MS A. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 173, s. ix–xi (entry: s. x); MS B. London, MS Cotton Tiberius A.vi, s. x<sup>2</sup>; MS C. London, MS Cotton Tiberius B.i, s. xi; MS D. London, MS Cotton Tiberius B.iv, s. xi (up to 1016). 'Introduction', in *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. by Campbell, p. 1; see also the editions of the various manuscripts published as part of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Dumville and Keynes.

<sup>52</sup> 'Introduction', in *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. by Campbell, pp. 43–57. For more recent discussions of the historical context of the poem, see Dodgson, 'The Background of Brunanburh'; Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, chs 3 and 4; Wood, 'Brunanburh Revisited'; Higham, 'The Context of Brunanburh'. Particularly the location of the battle has been subject to controversy and has included Bromborough in Merseyside (Dodgson, Higham; see also Coates, 'A Further Snippet of Evidence'), Brinsworth in South Yorkshire (Wood, 'Brunanburh Revisited', pp. 206–13), Burnswark (Halloran, 'The Brunanburh Campaign'), and Bromswold, a stretch of forest bordering on Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire (Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, pp. 50–55). For a negative assessment of the last three options, see Cavill, 'The Site of the Battle of Brunanburh'.

<sup>53</sup> Niles, 'Skaldic Technique', p. 359.

fold repetition 'hreman ne þorfte ... Gelpa ne þorfte ... hlehhan ne þorftun,' 39b, 44b, 47b ('he had no need to gloat ... He had no need to boast ... they had no need to laugh'). The poet here makes sardonic reference to the grief of the aged Scottish king Constantine, who not only lost his son on the battlefield but was unable to recover the young man's body.<sup>54</sup>

Niles' observations form part of a convincing analysis of possible Norse influences in *The Battle of Brunanburh*, which makes him conclude that 'there is reason to think that the *Brunanburh* poet had at least passing acquaintance with the Norse language and skaldic poetic models'.<sup>55</sup> Despite such possible familiarity, the use of defamatory metaphors that stigmatize the invaders as effeminate is not among the poet's 'skaldic' techniques. Norsemen and Scots are portrayed as hostile and miserable and, as is suggested early in the poem, do not enjoy divine support:

Hettend crungun,  
Sceotta leoda and scipflotan  
fæge feollan, feld dænnede  
secga *swate* siðþan sunne up  
on morgentid, mære tungol,  
glad ofer grundas, godes condel beorht,  
eces drihtnes, oð sio æpele gesceaft  
sah to setle. þær læg secg mænig  
garum ageted, guma norþerna  
ofer scild scoten, swilce Scittisc eac,  
werig, wiges sæd.<sup>56</sup> (ll. 10b–20a)

(The haters yielded,  
the people of the Scots and the ship-sailors

<sup>54</sup> Niles, 'Skaldic Technique', p. 358. For further studies of the poet's style, see Johnson, 'The Rhetoric of Brunanburh'; Lawler, '*Brunanburh*: Craft and Art', pp. 52–67. Interpretations that regard the invaders' misery as an expression of human suffering evoking a sympathetic response from the reader are offered by Lipp, 'Contrast and Point of View' and Frese, 'Poetic Prowess in *Brunanburh* and *Maldon*', pp. 83–91. Frese in particular states that 'it is the subtly cognate fates of men, not the experience of hostility, that constitutes the poem's final deposit of meaning. The sense of all life as a puissant flick preoccupies poet and reader, while the dismemberment of consciousness inherent in such reflection translates into an italicized sympathy for the mutilated dead of the poem' (p. 87). Such a reading, however, ignores the strong sense of pleasure that the poet conveys in his description of the bereavement and death of the enemy forces.

<sup>55</sup> Niles, 'Skaldic Technique', p. 359.

<sup>56</sup> *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. by Dobbie, p. 17. My translation.

fell doomed to die, the field resounded<sup>57</sup>  
 with the blood of men when the sun,  
 the glorious star, in the morning  
 glided above over the grounds, the bright candle of God,  
 of the eternal Lord, until the noble creation  
 sunk to its seat. There many a man lay,  
 destroyed [lit. 'poured forth'] by spears, [many a] northern man  
 shot above the shield, just as a Scotsman as well, weary,  
 sated with fighting.)

The Scots and Norsemen, here identified as *hettend* 'haters', fall in great numbers after 'godes condel beorht, | eces Dryhtnes' (the bright candle of God | of the eternal Creator) rises above the battlefield and before it sets again. Scholars have linked the image of the sun both with nobility — it is God's *æpele gesceaft* 'noble creation'<sup>58</sup> — and with the Englishmen, whose victory is as inevitable as the sun's course through the sky.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the sun-metaphor implies that both the English victory and the slaughter of the enemies are divinely sanctioned. The poet makes use of the metaphor G(O)OD IS LIGHT, and even though he does not resort to EVIL IS DARK to denote the routed opponents, this idea may be implicit nevertheless. In fact, not all references to the sorrowful Scottish king Constantine are as straightforward as they first seem. Constantine is no doubt portrayed as an aged warrior(-king), a *har hilderinc* 'hoary battle-warrior' (l. 39a) and *beorn blandenfeax* 'grey-haired warrior' (l. 45a), who in his advanced age has to suffer the loss of his young son on the battlefield.<sup>60</sup> The third phrase, *eald inwidda* (l. 46a), however, does not have to denote only an

<sup>57</sup> *Dænnede* < *dynian* 'resound'. Harris ('*Brunanburh* 12b-13a') has linked the phrase 'feld dænnede | secga swate' to similar phrases used by various skalds, such as Egill Skallagrímsson (tenth century), Kormákr (tenth century), and Gestr Þórhallsson (tenth/eleventh centuries). It could be interpreted with Niles as 'a boldly elliptical phrase' that omits the clashing weapons as the cause of the resounding field and the streaming blood (p. 362), particularly since reference is made to such weapons in subsequent lines. Alternatively, the concept of noisy blood (i.e. that gushes forth like roaring waves) is quite common in skaldic battle poetry, and may have been used by the *Brunanburh* poet as well. For an overview of the scholarship written on the possible meaning of *dænnede*, see Niles, 'Skaldic Technique', 361–62.

<sup>58</sup> Lawler, '*Brunanburh*: Craft and Art', pp. 57–58. Isaacs (*Structural Principles*, p. 121) even interpreted the sun as God's noble retainer, yet as Anderson has pointed out ('The Sun'), such personification of the sun is not supported by the textual details in the passage.

<sup>59</sup> Lipp, 'Contrast and Point of View', pp. 171–72.

<sup>60</sup> *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. by Dobbie, p. 18.



aged enemy.<sup>61</sup> The substantivized adjective *inwidda* occurs in one other text, the Old English *Judith*, where it is used for the evil Holofernes. In the poem, the Assyrian ruler is presented as God's antagonist who goes straight to hell after his demise:<sup>62</sup> he is *se deofolcunda* 'diabolical one' (l. 61b), *nergende lað* 'hostile to the Saviour' (l. 46b), a *moðres brytta* 'distributor of crime' (l. 90a),<sup>63</sup> and, in more general terms, *bealuful* 'wicked' (ll. 48b, 63a, 100b, 248a) and *hæðen* 'heathen' (ll. 98b, 110a, 179a).<sup>64</sup> This leaves us with *se inwidda*, which most likely refers to Holofernes' moral and spiritual perversion. Julius Pokorny renders the root of the adjective as a *t*-formation of Indo-European \**uei-*, *ueiā-*: *uī-* 'to turn, bend', so that *inwidd-/inwit-* would mean '(that which is) bent severely' if *in-* functions as an intensifier, or '(that which is) bent inside'.<sup>65</sup> In either case, moral and spiritual depravity are conceptualized as crooked (BAD IS CROOKED), while this crookedness can manifest itself in many different ways. One such form is dishonesty — *inwit* glosses Latin *dolus* 'trick, deceit, cunning' or, as an adjective, Latin *dolosus* in the Old English corpus — yet in many instances, the meaning of *inwit* is less specific and could equally refer to malice or even hostility. More significantly, the *Dictionary of Old English* lists eighty-two occurrences of the word (as noun, adjective, simplex or compound element) in the

<sup>61</sup> *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. by Dobbie, p. 18.

<sup>62</sup> Once Judith had decapitated Holofernes, his 'gæst ellor hwearf | under neowelne næs ond ðær genyðerad wæs, | susle gesæle syððan æfre, | wýrmum bewunden, witum gebunden, | hearde gehæfted in helle bryne | æfter hinside' ('spirit turned elsewhere under the steep cliff and was brought low there, bound by torment ever after, surrounded by worms, bound by torments, painfully imprisoned in hell-fire after the journey hence', ll. 112b–17a). *Judith*, ed. by Griffith, p. 100.

<sup>63</sup> *Judith*, ed. by Griffith, pp. 98, 99. *Moðres brytta* refers to the devil in *Andreas*, line 1170b (*Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, comp. by Healey, Wilkin, and Xin Xiang).

<sup>64</sup> *Judith*, ed. by Griffith, pp. 98, 100, 104, 99, 100, 102 (in sequence of citation). For (allegorical) interpretations of Holofernes as God's antagonist, see Arthus, 'Postural Representations of Holofernes', pp. 876–77; Herbison, 'Heroism and Comic Subversion', pp. 8–9; Lucas, 'Judith and the Woman Hero', pp. 23–24; Astell, 'Holofernes's Head'; Hermann, *Allegories of War*, pp. 173–98; Hermann, 'The Theme of Spiritual Warfare'; Chance, *Woman as Hero*, pp. 39–41.

<sup>65</sup> Pokorny, \**uei-*, *ueiā-*: *uī-*, in *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, pp. 1120. Bammesberger (*Beiträge*, pp. 87–88) interprets *inwidda* as a loan from Latin *invidia*. He further distinguishes *-wid* from *-wit*, a nominal formation of IE \**uedi-*, *ueiā* 'to see' (cf. Pokorny, \**u(e)di-*, in *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, pp. 1126–27). The existence of two words would explain the *-t/-d-* variation, but it is difficult to extract the meaning 'deceit, malice' from the formation of *in-* and *wit* 'to see, to know'. Interestingly, MS B of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reads *inwitta*. See *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, vol. IV: MS B, ed. by Taylor, p. 52. Cf. Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 597: *inwid*, *inwit* (n.): 'fraud, guile, deceit, evil, wickedness'; *inwidda*, *inwit* (adj.): 'guileful, deceitful, evil, wicked, malicious'.

Old English corpus, sixty-eight of which can be found in religious contexts where it is simply an attribute of devils and evil men.<sup>66</sup> If a person is called *se inwidda*, he is accordingly characterized not only by his 'twisted' mind (BAD IS CROOKED; PART FOR THE WHOLE) but also by a number of negative mental and possibly spiritual attributes. In other words, the use of the term *inwidda* in *The Battle of Brunanburh* creates a conceptual blend that integrates besides its referent 'Constantine' the notions 'malice', 'hostility', and perhaps even 'devil'. It is no doubt conceivable that the term *inwidda* was intended to associate the aged Constantine in *Brunanburh* with God's human and supernatural enemies and in this way justify the Englishmen's victory and their slaughter.

### *The Battle of Maldon*

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that the Battle of Maldon was fought in 991 between the English commander Byrhtnoð and his troops and a Viking contingent in the vicinity of Maldon; it also records that it ended with the defeat of the Englishmen and the commencement of the payment of tribute to the Vikings.<sup>67</sup> Such an outcome could hardly have been stimulating for extensive praise poetry, and yet, the anonymous author of *The Battle of Maldon* did exactly that: he turned the physical defeat of the Englishmen into a moral victory.<sup>68</sup> In the poem, Byrhtnoð and his men defend their homeland against the

<sup>66</sup> The *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* (comp. by Healey, Wilkin, and Xin Xiang) identifies forty-seven poetic occurrences of *inwit/inwid(d)* in its simplex form or as compound element, twenty-seven prose occurrences (twenty-two of which in homilies), seven occurrences in glosses, and one in a glossary. In the non-poetic texts, the compounds are mainly restricted to *inwitful*, although *inwitweorc* is once used in Blickling Homily X. The adjective *inwid(d)* occurs five times in a psalter gloss (Eadwine's Canterbury Psalter), where it glosses Lat. *dolosus*, in *Christ and Satan*, line 727a, and in the form of the substantivized *inwidda* in *Judith* and *The Battle of Brunanburh*.

<sup>67</sup> The battle and Byrhtnoð's death are reported in five copies of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The text of MS A, which according to Bately ('The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*', pp. 42–49) dates from the first decade of the eleventh century, also mentions the later Norwegian king Óláfr Tryggvasonar as one of the leaders of the Viking army, but this detail, like the date of 993, is most likely incorrect.

<sup>68</sup> The poem was part of London, British Library, MS Cotton Otho A.xii, which was badly damaged in the fire at Ashburnham House in 1731. The pages containing the poem were destroyed, but a transcript of the poem (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 203, fols 7<sup>r</sup>–12<sup>v</sup>, s. xviii) had been made before 1731. The transcribed version misses the beginning and end of the poem, which had already been lost before the transcript was made. 'Introduction', in *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, pp. 1–8.

heathen Vikings, who, stationed on an island off the Essex shore (probably Northey Island)<sup>69</sup> and separated from the native forces by the River Blackwater, would rather have the Englishmen buy their way out than fight. Byrhtnoð shatters such hopes of easy gain when he, in true heroic fashion, offers them spears instead of money (ll. 46–48) and even grants his enemies safe passage across the causeway that connects the island with the mainland at low tide.<sup>70</sup> Only the poet's comment that he allowed them *landes to fela* 'too much land' (l. 90a) for his *ofermode* (l. 89b) contains open criticism. Byrhtnoð's mindset has provoked endless discussions, mainly because *ofermod* (noun and adjective) and its derivatives refer to '(sinful) pride' elsewhere in the Old English corpus,<sup>71</sup> yet such a meaning does not seem to be appropriate for the resolute and pious leader. Before being cut down by his enemies, Byrhtnoð thanks God for the favours he could enjoy in his life and prays that his spirit will be shielded against the *helsceaðan* 'hellish foes' (l. 170a).<sup>72</sup> Perhaps the most satisfying solution to the problem is given by Paul Cavill, who argues for the same polysemy in *ofermod* as can be found in *mod* 'mind', 'courage', 'pride', and *modig* 'courageous', 'proud'. According to Cavill, the occurrence of *ofermod* in *The Battle of Maldon* should be interpreted as an excess (*ofer-*) of courage (*mod*) rather than of pride, particularly since *mod* and *modig* unambiguously denote this positive trait elsewhere in the poem.<sup>73</sup> Byrhtnoð may be guilty of too much boldness or, as Cavill suggests, too much belligerence, which makes him give the Vikings too much space to manoeuvre once they have crossed the causeway,<sup>74</sup> but when he engages in battle he fights heroically and dies a true Christian. His loyal retainers, too, display utmost bravery when they keep on fighting for their lord, who sup-

<sup>69</sup> Northey Island, which an ancient causeway connects with the west bank of the Blackwater, was first identified by Laborde as the site of the Vikings' encampment in 'The Site of the Battle of Maldon'. For a detailed argument that supports this identification, see Dodgson, 'The Site of the Battle of Maldon'. See also Scragg, *The Return of the Vikings*, pp. 130–32.

<sup>70</sup> *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 58. All translations of the poem are my own.

<sup>71</sup> *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 60. For a detailed semantic study of *ofermod*, see Gneuss, 'The Battle of Maldon 89'. See also Schabram, *Superbia*. Schabram's analysis of the Old English *superbia*-words *ofermod*, *ofermettu*, *ofermedu*, and *oferhygd* can be found on pp. 123–29.

<sup>72</sup> *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 62.

<sup>73</sup> Cavill, 'Interpretation of *The Battle of Maldon*', pp. 156–58. In his article, Cavill provides a comprehensive review of the scholarly discussions about the meaning and use of *ofermod*, *landes to fela*, as well as *ongunnon lytegian* (l. 86a; see below).

<sup>74</sup> Cavill, 'Interpretation of *The Battle of Maldon*', pp. 152, 157–58.

ported them in his lifetime. Byrhtnoð and his men may thus be seen as the ideal group united by their allegiance to the same heroic values.

The cowardly Englishmen and the Vikings, in contrast, have no access to this group. Godric, his brothers, and all those men who desert the battlefield once their commander has fallen fail to meet its moral demands and are sharply rebuked for it. For instance, the poet highlights Godric's treachery by juxtaposing Byrhtnoð's former generous gifts of horses to him with his theft of his commander's horse, 'þe hit riht ne wæs' ('which was not proper', l. 190b).<sup>75</sup> In fact, far more warriors followed suit 'þonne hit ænig mæð wære' ('than it was in any way fitting', l. 195b) if they had remembered all of their lord's favours that they enjoyed in the past.<sup>76</sup> The poet's treatment of the Vikings is equally scathing though adjusted in such a way that their (inner-) cultural alterity becomes particularly prominent. The Vikings were naturally affiliated with the sea by their enemies, but the number of expressions that highlight this affiliation is striking: as *brimlipende* 'seafarers' (l. 27b), *brimmen* 'seamen' (ll. 49a, 296b), *flotan* 'seamen' (ll. 72b, 227a), *lidmen* 'sailors' (ll. 99a, 164b), and *særinca* 'sea-warriors' (l. 134a),<sup>77</sup> they are presented as alien to the Englishmen, who defend their native soil and are therefore implicitly associated with the land. Furthermore, the seamen remain anonymous. Whereas the poet supplies the names of many English fighters including the names of some of the deserters, not a single Viking is identified. We are not given the name(s) of their leader(s), nor can we draw any conclusions about their ethnicity from the single occurrence of *Dene* (l. 129a),<sup>78</sup> which was a generic term for any Viking regardless of his origin.

Anonymity is only one characteristic that distinguishes the Vikings from the Englishmen. Others are their cunning and heathendom, which stand in stark contrast to Byrhtnoð's straightforwardness and piety. As already mentioned, Byrhtnoð makes the strategic mistake of granting the Vikings *landes to fela*, but he does so only after 'ongunnon lytegian lape gystas' ('the hostile visitors began to use guile', l. 86).<sup>79</sup> They ask for *upganga* (l. 87a) over the causeway, with *upganga* referring to their safe crossing and perhaps sufficient space to manoeuvre on the mainland.<sup>80</sup> The poet clearly perceived the Vikings as smooth talkers

<sup>75</sup> *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 63.

<sup>76</sup> *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 63.

<sup>77</sup> *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, pp. 57, 58, 66, 59, 64, 60, 62, 61 (in sequence of citation).

<sup>78</sup> *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 61.

<sup>79</sup> *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 59.

<sup>80</sup> *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 59. For an analysis of *upganga* as a term that also

who try to get the better of their strategic disadvantage.<sup>81</sup> The invaders do not honour the heroic code Byrhtnoð and his men live by, nor do they have access to the Englishmen's Christian faith. It can hardly be coincidental that Byrhtnoð is killed by *hæpene scealcas* 'heathen warriors' (l. 181b) after asking God for the protection of his soul against the *helsceaðan* 'hellish foes' (l. 180a).<sup>82</sup> The shared *h-* and *sc-*alliteration and assonance in the two phrases, as well as the notion that the worship of the Scandinavian heathen gods is devil worship — an idea that Ælfric so forcefully expresses in his *Life of St Martin*, but that is also reflected in the many saints' lives in which any form of heathenism is associated with the devil — encourages the connection:<sup>83</sup> Byrhtnoð can hope for God's protection from the *helsceaðan* whose torment will undoubtedly be his heathen foes' lot.<sup>84</sup>

Although both the cultural alterity of the Vikings expressed by their unheroic behaviour and their traditional marginalization as heathens elsewhere in Old English literature should have provided very fertile soil for many condemning metaphors, such metaphorical potential was evidently not exploited by the poet. The Vikings' heathendom and cunning are presented in a straightforward manner only to confirm Byrhtnoð's piety and his loyal retainers' heroism, and even the description of the Vikings' ferocity in the battle mainly functions to

denotes 'the freedom to move at will (up) out of a confined space', see Cavill, 'Interpretation of *The Battle of Maldon*', p. 15. Cavill further points out that Byrhtnoð's subsequent exclamation 'nu eow is gerymed' ('now it is opened for you', l. 93a) can refer both to the causeway as well as to the *welstow* 'battlefield' in line 95a.

<sup>81</sup> For a detailed analysis of the tradition of Danes as masters of verbal deception, see Pulsiano, 'Danish Men's Words Are Worse than Murder'.

<sup>82</sup> *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 62.

<sup>83</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 57–58. The Vikings are also linked to the devil in the *Passio S. Eadmundi* by Abbo of Fleury (c. 945–1004), which describes the pillaging of East Anglia by the Great Army after their invasion in 865 and the subsequent death of the local king Edmund (869 or 870). In the Latin *Life*, Abbo portrays the two leaders of the Viking army, Hinguar and Hubba, as the devil's minions who are to test the king's patience and make him curse God. Accordingly, Abbo has Edmund call Hinguar, one of the leaders of the Viking force, *filius diaboli* (son of the devil) (section 9) and later refers to the Danes (i.e. Vikings) with their leader as *ministri diaboli* (instruments of the devil) (section 11). Ælfric mentions that Hinguar and Hubba were *geanlehte þurh deofol* 'united through the devil' (l. 28). Abbo of Fleury, *Life of St. Edmund*, ed. by Winterbottom, pp. 76, 79; Ælfric, *Life of St Edmund*, trans. by Needham, p. 45.

<sup>84</sup> It is even possible that alliteration and assonance not only contribute to the compression of the Vikings' present and future into one blended space, but that these stylistic devices also create connections of identity. Viewed in this way, the Vikings temporarily merge with the devils in hell. Compression and decompression in blends are discussed by Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, esp. ch. 7.

offset the Englishmen's valour. This technique may indeed remind us of Einarr skálaglamm's depiction of Otto II's fierce troops in *Vellekla*, but there is also a major difference. Einarr equates Otto and Hákon by means of comparable god-kennings, whereas the *Maldon* poet makes a clear distinction between defenders and intruders in his panegyric. When the Vikings cross the Blackwater, the poet calls them *wælwulfas* 'slaughter-wolves' (l. 96a) to indicate their beast-like ferocity:

Wodon þa wælwulfas (for wætere ne murnon),  
wicinga werod, west ofer Pantan,  
ofer scir wæter scyldas wegon,  
lidmen to lande linde bæron. (ll. 96–99)<sup>85</sup>

(Then the slaughter-wolves advanced (they were not fearful about the water),  
the troop of Vikings, west across the Pant [i.e. Blackwater],  
carried shields over the clear water,  
the seamen bore shields to the land.)

At this crucial moment the ramifications of Byrhtnoð's tactical error become evident. The Englishmen will have to face a sub-human opponent whose animalistic battle frenzy, as expressed by the MAN IS A WOLF metaphor, is hard to match.<sup>86</sup> I already illustrated in Chapter 3 that the *wulf*-compounds in the Old English poetic corpus signal unbridled ferocity,<sup>87</sup> but here it is particularly noteworthy that both the Vikings and the cannibalistic Mermedonians in *Andreas* (l. 149a) are identified as *wælwulfas*.<sup>88</sup> The determinants of the ken-

<sup>85</sup> *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 60.

<sup>86</sup> Cross's argument ('Oswald and Byrhtnoth') that *wælwulf* simply denotes 'warrior' (p. 108) does not take the variety of entailments in the source domain 'wolf' into account. Bestial ferocity constitutes one such entailment, but there are others. In fact, the entailment 'stealth' is activated in Abbo's *Passio S. Edmundi* and Ælfric's translation. According to Abbo, the Danes do not fight open battles but attack and return as quickly as possible to their ships, just as a wolf enters the plain in the evening for the hunt and soon after returns to his wood. Stanton (*The Culture of Translation*, pp. 163–64) has pointed out that Ælfric presents a 'domesticated' version of the Danes. Whereas Abbo explains their cruelty with their function of Satan's minions, Ælfric turns them into 'familiar, malignly human enemies' who act so frightfully because it is their nature to do so.

<sup>87</sup> Chapter 3, p. 131.

<sup>88</sup> *Andreas*, ed. by Krapp, p. 7. Griffith ('Convention and Originality', p. 196) has identified the *wulf*-kenning in *The Battle of Maldon* as metonymic because of the physical contiguity of the Vikings and the beast of battle and 'the fact that the actions of the one cause the actions of the other' (causal relationship). Such an additional metonymic relationship is certainly possible in any battle context even if the beasts of battle do not appear (as in *Andreas*) on the scene and



nings *heorowulfas* 'sword-wolves', *herewulfas* 'army-wolves', and most likely also *hildewulfas* 'battle-wolves' indicate that the referents are humans who carry swords, who are members in an army, or who participate in warfare. *Wæl*, on the other hand, only denotes the carnage caused by the *wulfas*, so that the Vikings' and Mermedonians' bestiality is further emphasized instead of being mitigated by a qualifier (*heoro-*, etc.) that would place them in the human domain. But whereas the Mermedonians on their island are far removed from human civilization, Byrhtnoð's foes live in close physical proximity to Anglo-Saxon culture and are yet presented as total strangers to it. In fact, it should not come as a surprise that the seamen are completely silenced in the second part of the poem. Deprived of human speech, their only function is to fight ferociously, thus making the courage and loyalty of the remaining Englishmen even more admirable. Before the poem breaks off, we are reminded of why the Viking's alterity is so important in the poem: their lack of individuality, their cunning, their heathendom, and their beastly nature throw the Englishmen's idealism into stark relief, and we are left with the famous heroic boast uttered by Byrhtnoð's loyal retainer Byrhtwold that he intends to die with his lord rather than yield to his ferocious enemies.

### *Early Irish Occasional Verse*

Rulers and other men of high status are subject to praise in a substantial number of genealogical and occasional poems to be found in Irish genealogies, annals, glosses, and grammatical and metrical tracts. Edited first by Kuno Meyer in his *Über die älteste irische Dichtung* and *Bruchstücke der älteren Lyrik Irlands* almost a century ago, the genealogical and the panegyric verse abounds in metaphorical terms that express the poet's admiration for a particular ruler or other prominent figure.<sup>89</sup> But poets could equally satirize a person and in this way damage his reputation. As Fergus Kelly points out, satire that exposed violations of the law was legitimate, whereas other forms that mocked or ridiculed a person, exposed blemishes, spread lies about this person, etc. were not.<sup>90</sup> In either case, satire was seen as so harmful that a king or lord had to respond to it;

may explain why the poets often selected the wolf [MAN IS A WOLF] rather than any other fierce animal [e.g. MAN IS A BEAR] in their portrayal of the enemy forces.

<sup>89</sup> Additional poems were edited by Murphy in *Early Irish Metrics* and, most recently, by McLaughlin in *Early Irish Satire*.

<sup>90</sup> Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp. 137–38.



if he ignored the insult, he lost his right to rule.<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately, little is known about the targets' social status in most of the satirical verse, which has been transmitted in the form of single stanzas and out of context in a Middle Irish metrical tract,<sup>92</sup> but there is some evidence that the victim could be as lowly as a swine-herd or as privileged as a king.<sup>93</sup> Regardless of the target's social status, however, many of the stanzas are extremely insulting and could not have qualified as justified satire in any context. Roisin McLaughlin has argued that these stanzas should rather be called 'invectives', as they consist of a string of disparaging epithets in the nominative and vocative case.<sup>94</sup> In fact, a substantial number of the inflammatory epithets flung at the satirist's victims are metaphors so specific and diverse that they must have been created with the sole purpose of seriously compromising the latter's reputation.

The metaphors used in the satirical verse are the result of various techniques, of which four will be examined in more detail: 1) the use of conventional heroic metaphors for the target which are modified by metaphorical and/or non-metaphorical expressions that reveal his true, despicable nature; 2) the creation of new metaphors with inputs (source domains) that share some entailments with the inputs of conventional heroic metaphors and in this way highlight the target's shortcomings (cf. Fer Diad's association of Cú Chulainn with a fluttering bird); 3) feminization of the target; 4) the use of metaphors with the input 'demon'. Three of the four techniques have already been treated in the discussion of various early Irish heroic poems in Chapter 3, while the technique listed under point 3 recalls the effeminization of the enemy in the Old Norse corpus. Lastly, many highly creative metaphors that draw attention to a person's social alterity do not fit into any of the four categories but do not qualify as image metaphors either. Although the metaphors in question highlight the victim's flawed nature in the most extraordinary ways, they usually do not accomplish this by superimposing one image onto another. For example, when the defamed person is called *traigle i nach úathad uidre* 'a very dun-coloured shoelace', he seems to be accused of cowardice and weakness (i.e. he can be twisted like a

<sup>91</sup> Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp. 138–39.

<sup>92</sup> The tract has been edited by Thurneysen as the third *Verslehre* in his *Mittelirische Verslehren*, pp. 67–105.

<sup>93</sup> 'Introduction' and 'Dating and Linguistic Analysis', in *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, pp. 23–25, pp. 118–19. McLaughlin mentions three kings that may have been the butt of satire: Flannacán úa Cellaig, king of Brega (d. 1060), Gilla Cellaig, king of the Uí Fhiachrach Aidni (d. 1003), and Domnall mac Murchada, king Leinster (r. 1072–75).

<sup>94</sup> 'Introduction', in *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, p. 9.

shoelace), with the colour of the shoelace alluding to the dun-coloured clothing of commoners and hence to his presumed low status.<sup>95</sup> More offensive but also more conventional is the comparison of the satirized person with excrement. A certain Gilla Mo Laise is denounced as *cacc ar <másaib>* ‘shit on buttocks’, an insult that must have been quite an effective means to express the worthlessness and disgusting nature of the target, as similar denouncements occur in at least two other poems (for the use of *mún*, see below).<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, metaphors of this kind require separate treatment and therefore fall outside the investigation unless they are part of the satirical poems discussed here.

No other type of poetry investigated so far contains as many metaphors for heroic rulers as the early Irish occasional verse. In order to highlight their destructive power over their enemies and their roles as successful defenders and protectors of their people, the rulers are predominantly identified as fierce animals (lion, bear, boar, wolf, lynx, dragon), birds of prey (griffin, hawk), fish (salmon), fire, the raging sea, the sun, trees, as well as a hard substance (crystal, rock).<sup>97</sup> In contrast, the satirical verse aims at marginalizing the target by means of an abundance of metaphors that emphasize such undesirable characteristics as stinginess, cowardice, weakness, deceit, treachery, filthiness, and low birth. The satire, or rather invective, against a certain Goll Mena provides a very rich example of the strategies that a poet could employ in order to ridicule his victim:

Goll Mena do muintir Grácáin,  
Gall ac cnúasach cnó,  
ballán i mbí bainne lomma,  
dallán Dromma Bó.

Goll Mena mún cromgabair, cerc i cill, crann eidnénach,  
bert fleda for lomgabail, linn deidblénach drolmánach,

<sup>95</sup> ‘Introduction’, in *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, pp. 23–24. All references to the satirical verse are to McLaughlin’s edition (here no. 82 on p. 168 [text], p. 169 [translation], p. 257 [note]) with cross-references to Meyer’s *Bruchstücke* where applicable (here, cf. Meyer, no. 88, p. 37). Translations are by McLaughlin unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>96</sup> *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 36 (p. 148 [text], p. 149 [translation], p. 221 [note]).

<sup>97</sup> For the texts, see *Über die älteste irische Dichtung*, ed. and trans. by Meyer. There has been much debate on the class of poets that composed the panegyric verse. While some scholars argue that a single class of poets consisting of the trained poets or *filid* and the monastic *literati* came into being at an early date, Mac Cana (‘Praise Poetry’) contends that the *filid* continued to be responsible for the composition of praise poetry.

brissiud stúaigne ic stocairecht, stiúir d'fid lim long mallrámach,  
cáinte búaille ic brocairecht, ben chamlámach chomdálach.<sup>98</sup>

(Goll of Men of the family of Gracán,  
a Viking collecting nuts,  
a goblet in which there is a drop of milk,  
the little blind one of Druim Bó.

Goll of Men, piss of a crooked goat,<sup>99</sup> a hen in a church, an ivy-covered tree,  
a load for a feast [carried] on a bare fork, weak ale drawn from a vat [?],<sup>100</sup>  
breaking a handle [of a trumpet] while trumpeting, a softwood rudder of  
slow-rowing ships,  
a satirist of the cowshed acting like a badger, a crooked-handed gregarious  
woman.)

Goll Mena certainly has very little to smile about. Perhaps most insulting to the modern reader would be the poet's use of the expression *mún cromgabair* 'piss of a crooked goat', which emphasizes Goll's filthiness and low birth.<sup>101</sup> What could be worse than being called the excrement of a farm animal? More pertinent to the discussion, however, is the fact that three of the four aforementioned techniques are employed to present the victim as weak, effeminate, and cowardly. To begin with, the poet ridicules Goll with his creation of heroic images which he immediately destroys again (technique 1 above). The phrase *stiúir d'fid lim long mallrámach* 'rudder of soft wood belonging to a slow-rowing ship' is a case in point. Whereas a fierce sea-captain would be a strong rudder for his ship, Goll can only be a rudder made of soft wood incapable of steering anything but a slow ship. The relationship between agent and tool is metonymic, but in the case of our poem a second, metaphorical dimension is added. Metaphors with the input 'rudder' usually point to the leadership and control of the referent, as, for example, in a praise poem on Labraid Loingsech, legendary high king and ancestor of the Laigin, where the hero is called *luam na lergge* 'pilot of the battlefield'.<sup>102</sup> But Goll is a rudder made of soft wood. The map-

<sup>98</sup> *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, nos 66 and 67 (p. 160 [text], p. 161 [translation], pp. 244–46 [notes]); *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, nos 79, 80 (p. 24).

<sup>99</sup> Meyer reads *mun cromgabair* 'auf dem krummen Klepper'.

<sup>100</sup> McLaughlin: 'weak ale on the handles of a vat'.

<sup>101</sup> For a discussion of *mún* and *cáinte búaille ic brocairecht* 'satirist of the cowshed acting like a badger', which highlights Goll's mean, filthy, and cowardly person, see McLaughlin's note in *Early Irish Satire*, p. 246. *Mún cromgabair* involves metaphor and metonymy (PART FOR THE WHOLE).

<sup>102</sup> *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 2 (p. 5). In a eulogy on Bran Berba (d. 795),

pings between the inputs 'hardness', on the one hand, and 'strength' and 'firmness', on the other, are contrasted with 'softness' and 'weakness' and 'cowardice' respectively in a more comprehensive blend, which accordingly highlights Goll's deficiencies and makes him subject to much derision and scorn.<sup>103</sup>

Another concept used for a hero in the panegyric verse is that of the tree. Since a leader had to surpass his warriors in all achievements, calling him a tree which towers over a forest was one way of highlighting his outstanding qualities. The seventh-century saint Mo Ling, in his role of spiritual leader, is a *barr uas géraib* 'treetop over branches',<sup>104</sup> and Murchad of Maisten, possibly a son of a king of Ireland, is celebrated as a *barr gécach glúaises in fidbaid* 'treetop covered with boughs that sets the forest into motion'.<sup>105</sup> The same metaphor but with different metaphorical entailments can be found in Rechtgaís úa Síadail's (eighth-century) reference to a certain Óengus mac Domnaill, king of Ulster, as a *bras bile* 'defiant tree' and in the designation of the king of Rathlinn

the hero is even referred to as a *bárc thacid thríúin* 'strong ship of good fortune', an epithet that is followed by the complex metaphorical phrase *torc indlaig allmaire* 'boar who breaks the valuables of foreigners'. Bran is a ship carrying his crew to other countries, where his fierceness (< *torc*) enables him to win spoils and distribute them (*indlaig*) among his followers back in Ireland (*Bruchstücke*, no. 9 [p. 8]). In the king's tale *Orcuin Néill Nóigiallaig*, Niall (d. c. 452) is *amail draic de thuind cen táir* 'like a blameless dragon-(ship) from the wave' (*Stories and Songs from Irish Manuscripts*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, p. 88 [text]). Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*.

<sup>103</sup> See also McLaughlin's note on the phrase in *Early Irish Satire*, p. 246.

<sup>104</sup> The reference to Mo Ling occurs in a tale called *Bóroma* 'Cattle Tribute', which gives an account of the many conflicts between the kings of Ireland (i.e. the Uí Neill) and the kings of Leinster. Leinster has given tribute to the kings of Ireland ever since Tuathal Techtmar, ancestor of Conn Cétchathach 'Conn of the Hundred Battles', demanded such for the deaths of his two daughters. When the King of Leinster Bran Mut mac Conaill asks Turchan who should repel *in plaig* 'the plague' from them, the latter responds that it should be Mo Ling (who indeed proves successful on this mission). According to Turchan, St Mo Ling is a *lassar daiged* 'flame of fire', a *tond linta na n-airer* 'wave that fills the harbour', a *torc dar trétaib* 'boar over herds', and a *barr uas géraib* 'treetop over branches', metaphors that we would expect in heroic poetry, but that are in the present context used to identify a man of spiritual rather than physical power and leadership. In fact, the first two metaphors are especially interesting, as they express the constructive rather than destructive power of the referent. Mo Ling does not kill people but sets them afire for God (EMOTION IS FIRE), filling them (THE BODY IS A CONTAINER) with spiritual ideas. *The Bóroma*, ed. and trans. by Stokes, pp. 102–03.

<sup>105</sup> *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 24 (p. 14). For a discussion of Murchad's uncertain identity, see Meyer's entry following no. 23 (p. 13) and Mac Cana, 'Praise Poetry', pp. 26–27.

as *dos duillech* ‘bushy tree abounding in foliage’.<sup>106</sup> Whereas *bras* ‘defiant’ in the first instance evokes the element ‘firmness’ in the input ‘tree’ (source domain), *dos duillech* activates the element ‘protection’: unlike Cú Chulainn who, according to Fer Diad, is no *dos*, the king of Rathlinn protects his people in the way a bushy and foliage-covered tree shelters birds and other animals. None of these positive connotations are left when Goll is called a *crann eidnénach* ‘ivy-clad tree’, for this tree disappears behind the clinging ivy, and we are left with the image of a leader whose movements are severely encumbered by others.

Finally, the phrase *Gall ac cnúasach cnó* needs to be investigated further. Although *Gall* could merely mean ‘foreigner’, it often denotes more specifically a Viking. This rendering has been given by Kuno Meyer and would indeed be another instance of the poet’s juxtaposition of two opposite concepts. It is certainly conceivable that a blend is created consisting of the concept of the fierce Viking marauder (input 1) with that of a harmless collector of food (input 2): instead of gathering spoils, this Viking, i.e. Goll, gathers the produce that has fallen from harmless trees and therefore does not have the qualities of a Viking at all. In fact, the blend may even be more complex, as the phrase also parodies the Celtic custom of head hunting, which was practised by Irish warriors but which seems to be alien to poor Goll.

If a poet could modify or even invert heroic metaphors in order to ridicule a person, he achieved the same effect with his exploitation of his audience’s knowledge of traditional heroic ones (technique 2). As has already been pointed out, the sources of heroic and mocking metaphors share enough elements to make such usage possible. Fer Diad denounces Cú Chulainn as a nervously fluttering bird, thereby activating the usual identification of a hero with a bird of prey. In the case of our poem, the poet uses the same technique by referring to Goll as *cerc i cill* ‘hen in the church’, a harmless female bird that cowers in a protected space instead of attacking its prey on the battlefield. A less obvious parody of a conventional metaphor is the poet’s defamation of Goll as a *ballán i mbí bainne lomma* ‘a goblet in which there is a drop of milk’. Associating the hero with the raging sea or some aspect of it — whether by means of metaphor or simile — is a regular feature of the panegyric verse. For example, an otherwise unidentified Bran is a *lán fairgge* ‘ocean at full tide’, an equally obscure king of Femen is called by his panegyrist *rith mara buirb tar brúachaib* ‘rapid course of the fierce sea over the shores’, and the aforementioned Murchad becomes an *érge coire* | *Breccáin barrdeirg dar brug mBanba* ‘red-topped whirl-

<sup>106</sup> *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 7 (pp. 7–8) and no. 45 (p. 21).

pool of Breacan rising over the land of Banba'.<sup>107</sup> In all three instances, the champions are conceptualized in terms of their ferocity in battle (metonymy), which, in turn, is identified as the destructive power of the sea.<sup>108</sup> In the invective against Goll, the poet consequently evokes a conventional metaphor only to invert it: Goll's courage is reduced to one drop of milk that seems to be left in his weak body, here presented as a *ballán* 'goblet' (THE BODY IS A CONTAINER).

Goll's identification as a *cerc*, furthermore, not only highlights his cowardice but also points to his effeminate nature, which is confirmed by the poet's reference to him as a *ben chamlámach chomdálach* 'crooked-handed gregarious woman' (technique 3).<sup>109</sup> The insulting nature of feminine imagery is firmly anchored in the laws and traditions of early Irish society. While the legal tracts endow women with only very limited legal capacity,<sup>110</sup> wisdom texts and early Irish literature present women as promiscuous, greedy, false, slanderous, and foolish. Lustful and treacherous females like Medb figure prominently in the literary corpus,<sup>111</sup> but perhaps most telling is the 122-line diatribe against women in the ninth-century *Tecosca Cormaic* 'The Instructions of Cormac', which reveals a large number of weaknesses, offenses, and vices to which women were presumably susceptible.<sup>112</sup> Goll is accordingly depicted as a harlot, with his crooked hands being a metaphorical allusion to his lechery (i.e. the hands are in places that they should not be; MORAL INADEQUACY IS PHYSICAL DEFORMITY).

A persistent theme in the satirical poems is also the target's effeminacy combined with another blemish or flaw, which the satirists added in order to made the ridicule even more biting. Invectives include the identification of the satirized person as a *ben drúth i ndabaig* 'wanton woman in a vat', possibly alluding to the victim's drunkenness, as a *ben co n-aillsin duib eógainn* 'woman with a tumour, black and scurfy-topped' and the *bél caillige cáithe* 'mouth of a

<sup>107</sup> *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 11 (p. 9), no. 29 (p. 16), no. 23 (p. 13)

<sup>108</sup> In the case of Murchad, furthermore, the poet activates metaphorical entailments in the target domain 'battle' in such a way that a double-scope blend is created: the water is *barrderg* 'red-topped' with the blood that Murchad spills on the battlefield.

<sup>109</sup> Female animals constitute productive source domains for the derision of the target in the early Irish satirical verse and include (water-) hens, geese, mares, does, and heifers.

<sup>110</sup> Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp. 75–79.

<sup>111</sup> For Fergus's comment on Medb's leadership in the campaign against Ulster and its outcome, see Chapter 3, p. 169.

<sup>112</sup> *The Instructions*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, § 16 (pp. 29–35). For the criticism of lustful women in the ninth-century *Triads of Ireland*, see *The Triads of Ireland*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, § 83 (pp. 10–11), § 185 (pp. 24–25).

one-eyed hag'<sup>113</sup> with references to visible physical blemishes, and finally as an *athchaillech ic imthecht idraid otraig* 'ex-nun going around cow-pats', suggesting the target's low birth, cowardice, and perhaps filthiness.<sup>114</sup> In a similar vein, the satirized person could be addressed as a dysfunctional female animal:<sup>115</sup>

A uí Flannáin,  
a láir mall,  
a lethchoss geóid,<sup>116</sup>  
a glass cam  
fo gáir Gall.

(O grandson of Flannán,  
you sluggish mare,  
you one leg of a goose,  
you crooked bolt  
at the battle cry of the Vikings.<sup>117</sup>)

The target is not only called a mare and the leg of a goose (MEN ARE FEMALE ANIMALS; PART FOR THE WHOLE), but these farm animals have additional flaws that are projected onto the victim. Here the flaws are sluggishness and probably one-leggedness, as the use of *leth* 'one of a pair' suggests.<sup>118</sup> Effeminacy is hence paired with intellectual incompetence and physical ineptness, a combination that leads to the inevitable conclusion that the addressed grandson of Flannán can only be a *glass cam* 'crooked bolt' against the northerners. Flannán's descendant is either physically not able to defend his people just as a

<sup>113</sup> With additional PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy.

<sup>114</sup> *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 56 (p. 156 [text], p. 157 [translation]), no. 54 (p. 154 [text], p. 155 [translation], p. 236 [note]), no. 49 (p. 152 [text], p. 153 [translation]), no. 76 (p. 164 [text], p. 165 [translation], p. 253 [note]); for nos 49 and 76, see also *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 59 (p. 27), no. 71 (pp. 31–32).

<sup>115</sup> *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 44 (p. 150 [text], p. 151 [translation]); *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 61 (p. 28).

<sup>116</sup> Other metaphors with the source domain 'goose' are *geóid iarna gabáil* 'captured goose' (*Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 46 [pp. 150–51]; *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 63 [p. 28]) and, with additional PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy, *dronn geóid iarna gabáil* 'hump of a captured goose'. *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 49 (p. 152 [text], p. 153 [translation]); *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 59 (p. 27).

<sup>117</sup> For the rendering of *Gall* 'Viking', see above. McLaughlin: 'foreigners'.

<sup>118</sup> Meyer (*Bruchstücke*, no. 61) translates *lethchoss geóid* as 'einbeinige Gans'. The *eDIL* also provides the meaning 'one-legged goose' for the expression.



crooked lock cannot keep invaders out of a dwelling or, if ‘crooked’ is an instantiation of the conceptual metaphor BAD/MORALLY DEFICIENT IS CROOKED, he is unwilling to do so. Most likely, both options apply, and *glass cam* parodies metaphors that identify the mighty, resolute hero with a *strong* lock or bolt, as in the aforementioned praise poem on Labraid Loingsech: ‘Labraid lúam na lergge [...] glass glúairgrinn fri gente’ (Labraid [i.e. Labraid Loingsech], pilot of the battlefield [...] shining firm lock against the heathens [i.e. Vikings]).<sup>119</sup>

Female animal imagery must have been very effective in invectives, as it combines the charges of effeminacy and unheroic behaviour. Still, the second charge was severe enough for male or gender-neutral animal imagery to be a regular element in the satirical verse. The butt of the satire is not described as a fierce mammal or a bird of prey, but as (a body part/excrement of) a common farm animal, harmless bird, and/or even an insect (technique 2). The many examples listed and discussed by McLaughlin include, among others, horses, oxen, sheep, (buck-) goats, pig(let)s, cocks, badgers, snails, midges, and fleas.<sup>120</sup> Of particular interest is once more the man/wolf/hound-metaphor. Whereas in the panegyric verse its use highlights the patron’s valour,<sup>121</sup> it is regularly appropriated for the creation of an opposite effect in its satirical counterpart. For example, in a stanza illustrating the metre *nath sebrechta*, Indrechtach, an otherwise unknown king of the Uí Briúin, is a *cáinfáel ilchonda* ‘very wolfish good wolf’, and the aforementioned Bran and Murchad are a *fáel crú, cú chúan nad chorbbaí* ‘bloody wolf, wolf of the wolfish brood who does not defile [his honour]’ (Bran),

<sup>119</sup> *Bruchstücke*, ed. by Meyer, no. 2 (p. 5). Another instance can be found in *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 31 (p. 16), where the patron is called *glass ar oscaraib Érenn* ‘lock against Ireland’s enemies’.

<sup>120</sup> McLaughlin, ‘Indexes’, in *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, pp. 269–71. The extensive animal imagery in the early Irish satirical verse is discussed on pp. 33–39.

<sup>121</sup> Eminent warriors are also conceptualized as wolves or hounds in the king tales. Different metaphorical entailments of the inputs ‘hound’ and ‘wolf’ are activated to highlight a person’s battle fury and the dangers of it. In one of the poems forming part of *Aided Chrimthainn*, Niall Noígíallach ‘Niall of the Nine Hostages’, is approvingly called *cana Cairne* ‘Cairenn’s wolf whelp’ (*The Death of Crimthann*, ed. and trans. by Stokes, p. 184), and the Leinster king Rónán (seventh century) states in the Book of Leinster version of *Fingal Rónán* ‘The Kinslaying of Rónán’ that his son Mael Forthartaig was *cunnid na cúane* ‘support/warrior of the host/litter’. Deceived by his treacherous wife, Fingal slew his own son, whose loss he now deeply mourns. In fact, in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1337 [H 3.18], pp. 749–54, s. xv–xvi, Mael is called a *cú imaniadh cuaine* ‘hound/wolf around whom the litter gathered’, a variant that foregrounds the literal meaning of *cuaine* by means of additional canine imagery. Mael Forthartaig was a ferocious *cú* that took care of his young. *Fingal Rónáin*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, p. 395 (text).

and a *cuilén miadach* ‘honourable whelp’ (Murchad).<sup>122</sup> As has been argued in the previous chapter, the identification of a warrior with a ‘wolf’ or ‘hound’ is usually laudatory in early Irish literature because of the automatic activation of the entailment ‘fierceness’ in the input ‘wolf, hound’ even though this positive quality can become a menace if misapplied. In the satirical verse, however, other, less flattering, entailments are activated (technique 1). For instance, an unidentified person is called a *cú clechtas ar cnámaib* ‘hound who is accustomed to bones’,<sup>123</sup> and Domnall and Dall Bóruime are accused of *canat gréchánach* ‘screaming like a whelp’ and of having a *guth senchon ar slabraid* ‘the voice of an old hound on a chain’ respectively.<sup>124</sup> Even though hounds grow old, are chained, and chew bones, and even though their whelps howl when in distress, these entailments do not usually carry over to the blend ‘warrior’. When they do, conventional entailments like ‘fierceness’ and ‘protector’ are suppressed. In other words, our three ‘heroes’ are conceptualized as hounds that are, contrary to expectations, not very dangerous.

A particularly grave insult is flung at a certain Muiredach with his identification as a *cú dar céssib* ‘hound mounting piglets’ and thus as a person who displays deviant sexual behaviour.<sup>125</sup> But *cú dar céssib* also parodies a phrase like *fiáil/ cern eter cethraib* ‘wolf among cattle’ that was discussed in Chapter 3. Whereas the latter raises the hero’s (i.e. Lóegaire’s) ferocity above that of all other warriors (*cethraib*), *cú dar céssib* demotes Muiredach to a cowardly, unmanly, lustful wretch. Instead of displaying his valour on the battlefield, Muiredach is preoccupied with sensual pleasures, a notion that is reinforced by derogatory identifications of him with the mouth (PART FOR THE WHOLE) of a (farm) animal, namely the *mant capaill chróin* ‘jaw of a reddish-brown horse’, the *carpat bó bricce for benn* ‘gum of a speckled cow on a prong’, and the *bél daim dona Déssaib* ‘ox-mouth from the Dési’. Finally, the curious expression *cenn crúaid con ar cáirig* ‘cruel head of a wolf on a sheep’ endows the grandson of Cú Chúan with attributes from two input spaces.<sup>126</sup> If the exact nature of the insult is not entirely clear, this is mainly due to

<sup>122</sup> *Über die älteste irische Dichtung*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, II, 25. *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 11 (p. 9), no. 23 (p. 13).

<sup>123</sup> *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 35 (p. 146 [text], p. 147 [translation]); *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 83 (pp. 35–36).

<sup>124</sup> *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 40 (p. 148 [text], p. 149 [translation], p. 225 [note]), no. 69 (p. 162 [text], p. 163 [translation]). For the phrase *fiacra con ar cloich áilig* ‘hound’s teeth on a dung-covered stone’, see also Chapter 1, pp. 20–21.

<sup>125</sup> *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 58 (p. 158 [text], p. 159 [translation], p. 239 [note]); *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 65 (p. 29).

<sup>126</sup> *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 60 (p. 158 [text], p. 159 [transla-

the uncertain mappings between the two spaces and the blend. We may assume that the target is conceptualized as the head (PART FOR THE WHOLE) of a hybrid creature but remain uncertain about what the entailments of the inputs 'wolf' and 'sheep' actually tell us about the person. Is he cruel though pretending to be timid and gentle as expressed in the traditional 'wolf in a sheep's clothing', or, alternatively, is he timid and weak but fakes fierceness? In either case, Cú Chúan's descendant seems to be accused of dissimulation.

All metaphors discussed so far have illustrated the significance of heroic values in a honour-driven society. Satire was used to make the target look cowardly, incompetent, weak, treacherous, feminine, and poor. One question that still needs to be addressed is whether the poets also had Christian metaphors in their repertoire, such as the conceptualization of the target as a serpent or dragon, as we have seen in the case of the evil druidess Dreco. Defamations of this kind, however, do not seem to play a role in the occasional poetry. Fierce dragons and poisonous serpents are associated with heroic valour in the eulogistic verse just as much as in poems from the Ulster Cycle. In a genealogical poem celebrating the exploits of the kings of Leinster and attributed to the mythical Leinster king Find Fili, a certain Foglas is identified as a *cathrí* 'king of battle' who devastates territories with *neim nathrach* 'snake poison',<sup>127</sup> and in the verse on the prehistorical kings of Leinster presumably composed by Lugair lanfili, Fiachu ba haiccid, youngest son of the legendary High King Catháir Már (second century), King Enna Cennselach of Leinster (fifth century), and his namesake Enna Nia are called *dracoin*.<sup>128</sup> Among the historical kings, the fair Bran is *fi drong* 'venom for troops', Anmachaid of Ossory is a *drecon bruthmar* 'fiery dragon', and a nameless ruler is *lán di nemib co nem* 'full with poison up to heaven'.<sup>129</sup> Evidently, the concept 'serpent' lacks any of the Christian connotations so forcefully expressed in the poem on Dreco. But Christian metaphors do occur, namely in the form of a more or less creative association of the satirized person with devils or hell. A grandson of Conn is accused of being a *diabail omda ibes in linn* 'rude devil who drinks the ale', a certain Domangart is called a *gemm dubgorm demain* 'dark-blue jewel of the devil', and Britán's

tion]); *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 64 (p. 29).

<sup>127</sup> *Über die älteste irische Dichtung*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, I, no. 12 (p. 40 [text], p. 43 [translation]).

<sup>128</sup> *Über die älteste irische Dichtung*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, II, 16, 19 (texts and translations). In an unassigned poem (pp. 17–18), *draic* is also used for Eochu Domplén, son of the prehistorical Lifechair Cairbre of the Dál Cuinn.

<sup>129</sup> *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, nos 10 (pp. 8–9), 13 (p. 10), 49 (p. 22).

grandson has to live with the charge of being a *mac dúr dall iffirnn* 'dour, blind son of hell'.<sup>130</sup> All phrases highlight the target's demonic nature to which some interesting features are added. Thus in the first instance, we witness the blend 'Conn's grandson', which contains both diabolical features as well as two forms of social misbehaviour, i.e. rudeness and drunkenness. The identification of Domangart as a jewel (GOOD PEOPLE ARE PRECIOUS OBJECTS), on the other hand, loses its positive connotations as soon as the referent of the metaphor is disclosed. Domangart is only valuable to the forces of evil, a notion that is further reinforced by the dark colour of the jewel and its association with the darkness of hell. Finally, by calling Britán's grandson a 'dour, blind son of hell', the poet explains the accused's spiritual shortcomings with his infernal origins. Anybody who is brought forth by hell is spiritually hard and blind, and the 'jewel' Domangart seems to be particularly well-equipped with these qualities.<sup>131</sup>

### Conclusion

In the occasional verse of early Northwest Europe, we witness an uneven distribution of metaphors for the stigmatization of opponents or, alternatively, persons that have fallen out of favour with the poets. The Anglo-Saxon corpus yields particularly little evidence for such stigmatization, but here special caution is required given the incompleteness of the source material. Since only two battle poems offer themselves for analysis, no firm conclusions should be drawn concerning the poets' use of metaphor. What can be said, however, is that both poets introduce a spiritual dimension for the marginalization of the enemy forces that the Englishmen had to face at Brunanburh and Maldon. Although the *Brunanburh* poet, not unlike the skalds, gloats extensively over the defeat of the enemy troops and particularly over Constantine II's loss of his son, his depiction of the Anglo-Saxon victory as divinely sanctioned by means of the conceptual metaphor GOOD IS LIGHT and his identification of the Scottish king as *inwidda* explain and perhaps even justify his emotional coldness and sar-

<sup>130</sup> *Early Irish Satire*, ed. and trans. by McLaughlin, no. 47 (p. 150 [text], p. 151 [translation]), no. 49 (p. 152 [text], p. 153 [translation]), no. 46 (p. 150 [text], p. 151 [translation]); for nos 46 and 49, see *Bruchstücke*, ed. and trans. by Meyer, no. 63 (p. 28) and no. 59 (p. 27). Further identifications of the target with an aspect or body part of the devil are *delb in demain* 'form of the devil' and the curious *dér do déraib diabail* 'one of the tears of a devil'. The second phrase is aimed at a king of Connaught, who may possibly be accused of hardness and treachery. McLaughlin, no. 51 (p. 154 [text], p. 155 [translation]) and no. 68 (p. 162 [text], p. 163 [translation]).

<sup>131</sup> McLaughlin translates the phrase with 'dour, ignorant son of hell'.

casm. The *Maldon* poet, on the other hand, faced a different dilemma because not the Viking invaders but some of the defending Englishmen displayed a lack of courage. He therefore demarcated the Northmen from the native warriors by highlighting other manifestations of the former's religious and cultural alterity, such as their heathendom and use of guile. However, the Vikings also become sub-human *welwulfas* at their crossing of the causeway, which marks the beginning of the battle with all its disastrous consequences for the Englishmen, and it may be their bestial ferocity that forces the latter to succumb to them.

If the Anglo-Saxon poets emphasized particularly the religious alterity of the opponents in the two panegyrics, the skalds tended to marginalize their enemies by associating them with barrenness or sexually deviant behaviour. Since the Scandinavian population depended on fertile soil and good harvests for their survival, the fear of anything that might impede physical growth could be effectively exploited for political propaganda. Such a strategy is indeed discernible in Einarr skálaglamm Helgason's *Vellekla* and the anonymous *Liðsmannaflokkr*. While Einarr legitimates Hákon jarl's aggression against his opponents by calling him the *geira garðs Hlórriði* 'Hlórriði of the fence of spears' who defeats the Eiríkssynur and re-establishes the pagan faith in Norway, Knútr's attack of the stone-walled London invites a direct comparison between its inhabitants and the giants, and in this way sanctions his campaign as an effort to bring physical and cultural prosperity to England. In addition, the skalds seem to have been particularly fond of metaphors that would stigmatize their targets as effeminate in both praise and *níð* poetry. The charge of being *ragr*, whether literal or metaphorical, was a serious insult and, as has been illustrated in the preceding two chapters, was also acknowledged as such in the laws. The charges could be flung at the opponents head-on, as in the case of Haraldr blátǫnn's waxen nature and Birgir's identification as a mare, or they could be veiled with irony. In the second case, the target would be presented as something he is not: Haraldr harðráði receives the honourable name of the heroic Hamðir, but he is a *laf*-Hamðir, and Kjǫtva's troops are called 'clubs' at the very moment they turn to flight across Jæren, seeking safety in their own meadhalls. In other words, the poets praised their targets only to expose this praise as completely unfounded, a technique that reminds us of the early Irish poets, who applied it very liberally and in many different contexts.

In fact, the Irish satirists were even more inventive than the skalds in their ridicule, resorting to an enormous range of metaphorical expressions in order to mock, feminize, and demonize their targets in a society that, like the Scandinavians, valued high rank, physical prowess, masculinity, and personal integrity. The butt of the satire is often exposed as anti-heroic by means of

parodic uses of metaphors (harmless dogs and farm animals, ivy-clad trees, soft rudders, milk pails, etc. are telling examples), he can be identified as (a body part of) a physically and/or morally blemished woman or weak and disfunc female animal, or he can be denounced by a combination of both strategies. Low birth and/or filthiness were further attributes that caught the satirists' attention and that made the latter invent such insulting metaphors as 'piss of a crooked goat' or 'shit on buttocks' for their target, while associations with devils and hell served to move him towards a more radical form of alterity. As has been illustrated throughout this study, making an opponent appear ridiculous, effeminate, disgusting, or demonic were commonly used techniques in Northwest European poetry, yet they were nowhere as prominent and creatively executed as in the early Irish occasional verse.

## CONCLUSION

Although an inevitable element in human relationships, conflicts always arise in specific cultural contexts that in turn affect the ways they are perceived, handled, and possibly solved. This study focused specifically on the perception of conflicts and alterity as expressed by the metaphorical language in three different poetic corpora that were produced in Northwest Europe. As an essential element of human cognition, the investigated metaphors and metaphorical techniques illuminated common and culture-specific ways of viewing otherness in the (pseudo-) mythological, heroic, and occasional verse of Viking Scandinavia, Anglo-Saxon England, and early Ireland. Since (intersecting) native traditions and Christian perceptions shaped in different ways the poets' conceptualization of alterity and their metaphorical techniques to express it, cultural variation was inevitable. Christian notions of alterity are, as we have seen, particularly prominent in the Anglo-Saxon poetic corpus, pervading charms as well as heroic and eulogistic poems. The subtlety of the employed marginalizing metaphors varies, but in all cases the antagonists are clearly excluded from the Christian or at least God-fearing in-group (e.g. Danes and Geats in *Beowulf*), whether they are the gods of old, monsters like Grendel, or the Englishmen's enemies. Less pervasive is this approach in the Irish corpus. The Ulster tales seem to be for the larger part unaffected by it, and even Cú Chulainn and Conchobar, though first sent to hell as heathens, are eventually rescued by St Patrick and Christ in *Siaburcharpat Con Culaind* and *Aided Chonchobuir* respectively. At the same time, Eochaid's *Ériu co n-uaill, co n-idnaib* illustrates that the old gods could be discredited as malignant beings in early Irish verse as effectively as in the Old English charms, while the association of a person with the devil and hell occurs in the satirical poetry frequently enough to allow for the assumption that it was a commonly employed metaphorical strategy. If the heroic tales remained relatively free of overt Christian sentiments — the Ulster heroes do not share



Hrothgar's natural piety nor do their opponents display any characteristics of God's enemies — this may very well be because the authors were more concerned with the re-invention of a pre-Christian aristocracy as they thought it must have existed in the period around the birth of Christ than with presenting their pagan past through a Christian lens. Finally, the Scandinavian poets of the Viking Age rarely betrayed a Christian bias in their conceptualization of alterity. Not only is such bias absent in the mythological and heroic poems, but even the skalds who composed their poetry in honour of Christian kings like Óláfr Tryggvason, Óláfr inn helgi Haraldsson, and Knútr inn ríki Sveinsson exploited traditional poetic techniques for the depiction of their patron's enemies. In his *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga*, for instance, Sigvatr Þórðarson praises various facets of Óláfr inn helgi's Christianity, such as his conversion efforts (st. 2), his holiness, his post-mortem miracles (sts 22–25), and his baptism (st. 28), yet when referring to the king's last battle at Stiklastaðir, he makes use of the imagery and diction of traditional battle poetry.<sup>1</sup> Óláfr reddens swords in his fight against his fierce enemies (st. 14), who, in turn, are identified as trees (sts 1, 20), by their nationality (st. 8), or simply as *gr öld* 'bold men' (st. 19).<sup>2</sup> Only in stanza 16 does Sigvatr highlight the heathendom of one of Óláfr's main enemies, Þórir hundr 'Dog', by means of a context-dependent metaphorical kenning. An adamant adherent of the pagan religion, Þórir had vehemently opposed Óláfr's efforts to Christianize Norway and eventually came to play a crucial role in the killing of the king at Stiklastaðir. Although Sigvatr shows a strong reluctance to use the names of heathen gods as base words for his man-kennings elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> he appropriately calls Þórir 'Þrótt' (= Óðinn) in this combat between the saintly king and his pagan opponent. In fact, we may go even one step further. According to the prose context of *Óláfs saga helga*, Þórir wore a reindeer skin with magical powers that he had received from the Saami and that blunted Óláfr's sword. Since magic and foul play are also two of Óðinn's specialities, Sigvatr may not have selected this particular god at random but with the goal of highlighting Þórir's dubious qualities.

<sup>1</sup> Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga*, ed. and trans. by Jesch, pp. 666, 691–95, 697.

<sup>2</sup> Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga*, ed. and trans. by Jesch, pp. 680, 665, 674, 687.

<sup>3</sup> In stanza 15, the warriors fighting on both sides are called *skorðu skæ-Njörðungar* 'the Njörðungs (= gods) of the steed of the prop [SHIP > MEN]'. The expression is a conventional man-kenning that reflects older kenning formation practices rather than Sigvatr's religious beliefs. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga*, ed. and trans. by Jesch, p. 682.

Christian concepts of otherness were not employed with the same fervour or consistency in the three poetic corpora, nor were culture-specific uses of metaphors and metaphorical techniques restricted to this one aspect. Only the Anglo-Saxon poets employed a wide range of metaphors for the conceptualization of emotional processes as hostile entities, whereas the Irish satirists and the Scandinavian skalds distinguished themselves with their use of highly idiosyncratic metaphors and complex metaphorical kennings for their targets. But we also witness a considerable number of intersecting poetic conventions, such as the composition of defamatory poetry in Viking Scandinavia and early Ireland. In both cultural traditions, the poets could highlight their target's social alterity by means of satire or invective, and in both cultural traditions, kings, noblemen, and commoners could be victims of the poets' scorn. Interestingly, a particularly common insult that occurs throughout the Old Norse poetic corpus and in the Irish satirical verse, but that does not occur in the extant Anglo-Saxon corpus, is the identification of the subject as a woman or, worse, a female animal. Charges of effeminacy so prominent in the verbal duel between Sinfjötli and Guðmundr do not have any presence in the flyting match between Beowulf and Unferð; instead, Beowulf accuses Unferð of drunkenness, empty boasting, cowardice, and fratricide, qualities that highlight both Unferð's lack of personal integrity and his failure to perform a champion's task.<sup>4</sup> This, however, does not necessarily imply that masculinity did not have special significance in Anglo-Saxon heroic culture. When Grendel's mother avenges the death of her son, she trespasses with her behaviour into male territory and, in response, is marginalized by Hroðgar as a *mihtig manscaða* 'mighty crime-warrior' (l. 1339a) and a *sinnig secg* 'sinful man' (l. 1379a), whose crime consists not only of killing Æschere but also of doing a man's job.<sup>5</sup>

By contrast, other metaphors examined in the study were shown to be productive in all three corpora. We encountered, for example, many different instantiations of the conceptual metaphor ENMITY IS COLDNESS, with ENMITY shading into INFERTILITY in the Old Norse corpus and possibly TREACHERY in some Norse and early Irish poems. Equally common but considerably more varied is the presentation of a marginalized character as an animal. Thus the conceptualization of a target figure as a farm animal, mollusc, or even insect is a feature of only the early Irish invectives, while the wolf and the serpent figure prominently in all three cultural traditions though not always

<sup>4</sup> Klaeber's 'Beowulf', ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, ll. 530–32a, 583b–601a (pp. 20, 22).

<sup>5</sup> Klaeber's 'Beowulf', ed. by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, pp. 47, 48.

with the same implications. Although the ferocity of wolves and hounds was very much appreciated in martial contexts, as suggested by such names as Úlfr, Wulf, and Cú, wolves also provided an input space (source domain) for the perception of criminals and outlaws particularly in the Germanic tradition and were even appropriated for the Christian notion of the limits of worldly power in some Irish texts. Still, the most fascinating animal used to highlight either positive or negative forms of alterity is the serpent. Savage, poison-spewing serpent-warriors frequent the battlefields in early Irish literature, and fierce Scandinavian kings intimidate their opponents with their flashing serpent eyes. That the ferocity of serpents and dragons was appreciated in Viking Scandinavia can also be concluded from the fact that Viking ships could have dragon head prows and attracted such names as *ormr* 'snake, serpent', *naðr* 'snake', and *dreki* 'dragon'.<sup>6</sup> However, poison is not among the metaphorical entailments that are activated in the inputs for such positive identifications; on the contrary, in the eddic corpus, we encounter the poison-snorting Brynhildr, who reacts so violently to her own act of treachery, and who may remind us of Beowulf's angry serpentine foe. Perhaps the poison-vomiting warrior in the Irish heroic and eulogistic poetry must remain a special case, as poison is anything but praiseworthy off the battlefield even in the Irish texts. We may only think of the treacherous Bricriu of the Poisonous Tongue or the druidess Dreco, 'the fierce dragon, devil-begotten, that brought against them [the twenty-four sons of Fergus Lethderg] battle fury and poison and slew them all together'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Jesch, *Ships and Men*, pp. 127–28.

<sup>7</sup> *Nemthend*, in *The Metrical Dindsenchas*, ed. and trans. by Gwynn, iv, 15.

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