

THE WORDS OF ODIN

COUNSEL AND ADVICE FOR GUESTS, WANDERERS
AND SEEKERS OF WISDOM



A NEW RENDERING OF HAVAMAL FOR THE PRESENT AGE

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ILLUSTRATED BY
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A New Rendering of Hávamál

By

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This book is dedicated to Gangraðr-Oðinn
In fulfillment of a promise made to him
And in thanks for his guidance through danger.

It is dedicated also to my wise Foremothers and Forefathers
Who knew things about living in this world
That we today are poorer for lacking.

And it is dedicated to Wren Marie-Evelyn Carlson
May the Father of Wisdom protect her and guide her
Every day of her life.

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INTRODUCTION

History has bequeathed to us many books of wisdom. But humanity has been around for a very long time, and for the majority of our true history, there were no books. The recent arrangement of things that goes under the name "civilization" is responsible for the birth of books, and though I don't consider civilization's triumphs in terms of a great number, I do consider books to be among them.

By the power of the written word, the wisdom of Lao-Tzu came to dwell among later generations: his wisdom put down in the *Tao Te Ching*, even across the perilous lines of translation and the leap to many other cultures, is a powerful depiction of the all-creating feminine spirit of nature and a way of living in simplicity and peace that appears faultless. The words of the Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius- despite his devotion to the unfortunate pleasure-hating and quasi-world denying background of his Stoicism- still passed down a treasury of wisdom and compassion in his own personal journal, his *Meditations*, which although he never intended for publication, has helped to ennoble many people since his time.

Both the *Tao* and the *Meditations* come to us from times long distant and from places that had living wisdom traditions that had not yet been destroyed by the spread of absolutist Abrahamic monotheistic culture. To have the privilege of reading the words of men or women who had not yet been subjected to that woeful change of the human social world gives us a chance to hear perspectives on living that are meaningfully different from the outworn creeds of the modern day.

The ancient Chinese and the ancient Greeks and Romans have no hard time qualifying for the modern day's "Civilizations Worth Admiring" list. In them, we see everything we wish we could be or hope that we are: builders of vast cities, artists, philosophers, scientists, sages, and the list goes on. But the people of the ancient Heathen world- the Germanic-language speaking peoples who dwelled in Eastern and Northern Europe originally, and who came to dominate Western and Southern Europe later, creating an entirely new cultural landscape after the fall of Rome- have a slightly harder time getting onto the list. It's true that the modern faddish explosion of interest in the Viking explorers and traders of the 8th-11th centuries has produced a certain modern horde of people who hold the ancient Scandinavians in very high regard, but the caricatures presented (culturally speaking) of the ancient Scandinavians, who engaged in the activity of Viking raiding and exploring, are awful and produce only fantasy.

Outside of a certain kind of fantasy fame born in distorted depictions of Old Norse-speaking raiders being wily and lethal outlaws defying authority, adventuring around, being boastful, and essentially being the most macho men of all time, the actual Heathen Germanic peoples of historical Europe have been disregarded for the vast majority of our academic and cultural history as just another largely ignorable group of savages until after their eventual conversions to Christianity, and with that conversion, their entry into the mainstream of European civilization. The main reason for the distortions and condescension lies in the fact that Christian civilization could not look upon non-Christian cultures as anything but savages. Such attitudes, though washed out now by ages of time, are still far from dead.

The entry of the Germanic-speaking peoples into the fold of Christianity, and thus into the new kind of civilization that Christianity built after the fall of Rome, was not an easy one. It is a history of much violence and infamy, a history of cultural conquest and cultural destruction that reached its terminus in the problem of Iceland.

The small and independent nation of Iceland which distinguishes itself now as a bastion of peace and progressiveness out in the Atlantic Ocean was settled by Heathen Scandinavians in the 9th century when the Norwegian chieftain Ingólfr Arnarson settled there with his family and others. The people who followed him quickly created the kind of land they wanted to live in: a country free of the ceaseless troubles and political machinations of the "kings" on the mainland who were fighting for dominance. They succeeded quite well; Iceland wasn't ruled by a king but by an assembly of the landowners there for a nearly three centuries. However, within a century of settling, Iceland found itself isolated culturally from its parent nations, all of whom had been forcibly converted to Christian culture under the hegemony of villainous kings like Olaf Tryggvason. Olaf, the king of Norway, was particularly bent on seeing the Icelanders convert away from their Heathen culture and sent missionaries to the island, though the first missionaries had little success.

It wasn't some great and holy insight of faith that led to Iceland's capitulation to these sorrowful forces that were surrounding it; it was brutal force levied against them. Olaf cut off trade with the island, and his nation was its only trading partner. He had taken hostages of several sons of several prominent Icelandic landowners whom he threatened to kill if they didn't convert. Missionary efforts over time did convert others to the new creed, and soon the Island was divided.

Under immense pressure, the Icelanders managed to peacefully solve the issue by voting on it, and in the year 1000 CE, they voted to adopt Christianity as their official religion. Though Heathen customs were no longer allowed to be practiced openly, they were tolerated behind the scenes for a short time before they finally disappeared completely from the view of official history. Icelandic independence from political manipulations was over, too, as the church quickly levied tithes and taxes onto the population and wielded an enormous influence over the cultural life of the people, long before Iceland had to cede to the Kingship of Norway in 1262.

From the tangles of this tawdry and true tale of deceit and corruption arises a very fine silver lining- or at least, we sons and daughters of a later age who didn't have to live through the pains of those former times can be happy for this lining: The Heathen Icelanders had (in common with

all Heathen peoples) a thriving oral culture with a shared cultural memory of countless folk-tales, sacred stories, myths, and proverbial wisdom that had been passed down and remembered for countless generations. Under the new culture of Christianity, literate men (largely clerics) undertook to write certain things about the Heathen past down. This is how the central historical sources on Norse Heathen culture and religion- documents whose contents would be published later, dubbed by modern people the Eddas- were born. Perhaps the newly converted Icelanders weren't so ashamed of their Heathen past; whatever the case was, a wealth of information was preserved about the Heathen worldview, religion, and culture.

"Codex Regius" is the name given to the collection of writings in Old Norse that are the sources of the books and stories of what is now called the "Poetic Edda", the primary source for anyone studying Norse Heathen religion today. One of the documents in the Codex Regius, which is always to be found in any translation calling itself a Poetic Edda, is a unique work called *Hávamál*, "The Sayings of Hár " or "The Sayings of the High One."

"The High One" whose sayings are collected in *Hávamál* is the God of Wisdom, Odin. Odin was and is a very complex figure, whose history among the Germanic speaking peoples of Europe goes back a very long way. Though he is called "God of wisdom", his complexity as a figure is such that no single title or label could ever suffice to encapsulate who and what he is. One of his primary understood functions in the last Heathen era was as a God of wisdom, no doubt, but his character conceals much more.

Hávamál is poetically understood to be Odin's words of advice to human beings on all manner of topics: how guests and hosts should interact, how friends should approach relationships with one another, how travelers should secure their safety, how people should secure prosperity, and how wisdom, sagacity, and renown can be won. And *Hávamál* succeeds in a very clear, pithy, and astonishing way in transmitting a rare wisdom in its words on all these topics.

Formerly Heathen Icelanders collecting wisdom-stories and sayings would have little aesthetic choice but to put those things in the mouth of the God who represented (and still represents) the collective wisdom of their Ancestors, and that is precisely what Odin does. There is an aspect of Odin's character, his existing person, which empowered the Ancestors towards expressions of wisdom and discoveries of wise and skillful ways to live and interact in this world. It might be said that if something is wise, it is also Odinic.

Hávamál, when we get down to the grit, is a patchwork quilt. It is not the work of one human author, but countless human authors. I don't mean human writers in a literate culture, of course; I mean "authorship" in a more broad, spiritual sense. Countless human lives- men and women who lived, fought, struggled, and loved over endless ages- are the sources of *Hávamál*. It is a collection of many distinct stories, sayings, and proverbs that got collected into one document. These many stories and sayings and the like were handed down by word of mouth for a very long time. They represent what remains of the essence of wisdom from historical Heathen cultures.

The reality of the "patchwork quilt" is obvious to any reader or translator or student of the text. *Hávamál* has sections that vary in meter and style. It has sudden changes of subject matter, and even discrepancies that reveal its nature as a collection of many formerly separate fragments and distinctive parts. Though some of its ideas may belong to different periods, scholars have agreed

that the work's central contents and messages are highly archaic.

And far from the overly-simplified God of war and kingship that Odin was often worshipped as on the continent in the last Heathen age, the Odin of Hávamál is the culture-teacher, the God of wisdom and truth-finding who reveals how wisdom was won, and how humans can best live together. In Hávamál, we do not encounter Herjaföðr-Oðinn, the father of armies; we encounter Gangraðr-Oðinn, the Godly wanderer who "knows the way" everywhere, for he has traveled all over and learned great wisdom and world-cunning. It is not Herjan-Oðinn, the warrior and harrier we meet; it is Sangetall-Oðinn, the finder and obtainer of truth. And then, later in Hávamál, we also meet the Truth Obtainer's ultimate form: Runatýr-Oðinn, the God of the Runes or mysteries of life and death. Oðinn has many shapes and names as suits the God of sorcery and magic of all kinds. Whatever he needs to be, he can become. Such is the demand of the pathway to wisdom in a world such as this one.

Hávamál deserves to be counted among the great manuals of wisdom that have come down to us from former times. Its brand of wisdom is refreshingly direct and yet subtle at the same time, when it needs to be. It doesn't ever get lost in useless or unrealistic ideals; it remains focused on the human realities of life, even the ones that are shot-through with seeming unresolvable difficulties or paradoxes that we in the modern world cannot find a satisfying way to answer. Odin's words never waver a moment in the face of reality.

And for a collection of wisdom and experience born in the soul of a "barbarian" or "savage" Heathen people, Hávamál ceaselessly praises the virtues of generosity, moderation, caution, friendship, and compassion. This is at odds with the historical propaganda created by Christian monks and clerics that does little more than depict towering, Viking serial killers obsessed with death and glory as the signifiers of Heathen culture. It is clear that Heathen culture and civilization was in possession of all the art and subtlety that any other commanded, and depending on your perspective, you might say it had an even larger share of those things with regards to dealing realistically with the very real and nuanced human world.

The work you are holding is my rendering of Hávamál into a new form for modern people to read. It includes many notes by me that help to explain some of the many cultural, mythical, and historical realities hidden behind many of the verses- things that can help a reader to have a richer, fuller experience of the text. Though I have studied the Old Norse language for years, my command of it was only made good enough for this large undertaking with the help of the old masters who created my small library of Old Norse grammars and dictionaries, and the inspiring translations of Hávamál that have been done by Carolyne Larrington, Lee Hollander, Olive Bray, and Henry Bellows. My study of their words, and how they chose to express what the Old Norse original lines said helped me immensely.

Translating a work like Hávamál into English is an enormous challenge because while the bare reality of words and their modern meanings might translate easily enough, ancient shades of meaning, old cultural connections that certain words might have brought up in ancient people who heard them, and the subtle reality of another culture's poetic sensibility doesn't translate so easily. Every renderer or translator of Hávamál has to make some difficult decisions about how to express things in modern English or into whatever language they may be utilizing. Men and

women who were culturally invested and culturally encapsulated poets- either in practice, or at least living with a true understanding of their culture's intuitive poetic realities- wrote Havamal. The only people who can do it justice today when rendering it into another language are people who have at least some understanding of the essence of the poetry involved, some understanding of the older culture, and who can preserve the most crucial aspects of that. I know that my four companions listed above have that poetic insight and capability; I hope that my work here will prove that I have at least a sufficient share myself.

Hávamál is traditionally divided into three main parts, though a fourth is sometimes considered apart from the rest. The first is *Gestaþátr*, or Hávamál proper, ordinarily considered to be the first 80 verses, but in my rendering here, *Gestaþátr* ("The Guest's Section") runs to verse 110, to include the stories of Odin's Love-Adventures. *Gestaþátr* is the portion of Hávamál concerned with the proper or wise conduct of guests and hosts, assorted proverbs and wisdom-statements, and many other things, and the Love Adventures contain a high degree of key Odinic mythology, particularly regarding the winning of the Mead of Wisdom and Inspiration, an important treasure to the Gods and to human beings alike.

The second portion is called *Loddfáfnismál*, The Lay of Loddfáfnir, is another collection of wisdom-verses, this time addressed by Odin to a person named Loddfáfnir. Loddfáfnir's name is notoriously difficult to translate; but after many months of fighting with what all the scholars have said, I have chosen to understand his name to mean "ragged dragon"- but the implication is that he is a person poor in wisdom or wits, a vagabond (or "stray singer" as one popular translation has him) who is hungry to learn and obtain eminence and wisdom. The "ragged" or poor Loddfáfnir overhears the words of wisdom being recited in Odin's Hall, and Odin addresses him with excellent advice on many topics.

Rúnatal, or Odin's Rune Song, is the next section; for many people it is the most popular and recognizable portion of Hávamál. It is Odin's account of how he penetrated into the depths of reality to gain direct understanding and possession of the *Runes* or the esoteric Mysteries that underlie all things. Modern mystical explorations of Old Norse myth and religion such as those undertaken by neopagan Heathens and others have led to this portion of the work having a very potent significance in their own spiritual lives or understandings.

Though many people mistake the "Runes" that Odin describes winning as the letters of historical Runic alphabets, this is not what the text or the myth is referring to. "Rune" means something like "mystery" or "mysterious" and carries with it connotations of something secret or powerful being whispered, like magic. The Runic alphabets were so named because writing among Germanic peoples, when it was first introduced, was seen as a highly mysterious and esoteric thing and only done by special persons learned in that lore. This reflects a common attitude we find towards primordial writing systems among many ancient peoples. Much layering of quasi-mystical or theoretical mystical meaning upon the letters of the Runic alphabets has taken place in the last thirty years, much of it not very skillful or in touch with the authentic mysteries that Odin makes reference to in this work. Historical Runic characters were, however, used to write magical words and phrases and to create magical symbols on charms and objects, and those activities *were* a part of the mysterious cultural practices of magic and sorcery. Thus, an unavoidable relationship is established between writing and magic, particularly in the Heathen

mind.

I think it fair to say that the alphabetic Runic letters are symbols that can aesthetically or poetically point (indirectly) to the deeper mysteries of the world, or aesthetically point towards magical mysteries in general, due to their historical usage in magical charms, but the situation is still very nuanced.

Ljóðatal, or the Enumeration of Songs (Songs here referring to chants or spells), is the final section and contains Odin's description of eighteen powerful workings of magic or supernatural power that he has acquired in his lengthy time as a seeker of wisdom, of the Mysteries, and through other means.

Hávamál is a great gift to the world- born over many ages- from the spirit of Wisdom, which is to say from the extraordinary person of Odin, and from the many men and women who have discovered through wise action a skillful way of living in this world. I tell people truthfully and often that I have never gone wrong acting in my own life under the advice that Odin gives in Hávamál. For that is what the Wise God is giving: rede, or advice, not commands. I think he's wise enough to understand that ultimately, human beings- who are by their deepest nature beings of dignity- don't take well to being commanded to do anything.

Odin gives wise advice that men and women can then follow or not follow: to their gain if they do, and to their detriment if they do not. The old Heathen religious institutions were organic cultural institutions; they did not have sacred books or revealed sacred literature. The wisdom of Odin, and the other spirits and powers, organically crept into and then through human society via sharing, storytelling, and simple life-experience. Now, as then, people could trust wisdom, try it out, or go their own way and suffer whatever lies at the end of that road. The world didn't spin or turn on what humans in one place or another decided to do; humans were not and are not the pinnacle of the massive community of life of this world or the cornerstone of the sacredness and power of the extraordinary world. But humans have a friend in the spirit of wisdom, and his wisdom was shared to make human lives easier for he (mythically speaking) does have a special kinship with humans which creates in him a certain disposition towards sharing with them.

It is with a very deep sense of gratitude to him, and to my foremothers and forefathers, that I give to you now The Words of Odin.

Robin Artisson

In the Yule-Time of 2016 CE



Gestaþátr

Wise Counsel for Guests, Friends, and Travelers
And the Tales of Odin's Love-Adventures

1. At every doorway, before you walk inside,
You should look around, and look well.
Because you never know if unfriendly people
Are already sitting within.(1)

2. Hail to the givers, good health! A guest has come in;
Where will he sit down?
Those who come to your hall are in haste to find a warm place.
Those who use swords to prove their strength are hasty too.(2)

3. Those who have wandered long in the cold, frozen to their knees,
Warmth is the foremost thing they need.
Meat and dry clothes the traveler has to have,
Who has come from over the mountain.(3)

4. Water, a dry towel, and a welcome greeting
Should every guest find who comes for a meal.
And guests, if they would win to be welcomed again,
Should know when to use good words and when to use silence.(4)

5. You need to be very clever when you wander this world;
Home is a place of ease, however.
If you don't have wisdom, don't sit among the wise;
They'll just wink at you and make jokes at your expense.

6. If you have a keen mind, it's best not to boast about it;
Keep that close to your chest.
Two people seldom come to grief: the wise and the silent,
As they go among people at home or about.
You can't find a more faithful friend than good sense.

7. If you're a cautious guest, sitting at the table,
Just speak less and open your ears more.
With your eyes, just see. With your ears, just hear;
This is how wise people find out things.

8. The man is happy and lucky if he has won praises
And good, easy words.
No one has it easy if they must rely
On what is inside the breast of another person.(5)

9. That man is happy and lucky if he owns wisdom in this life,
And a good, well-earned reputation.

For bad advice or ill ways of living
Too often a man gets from the heart of another.

10. If you're going to be on the roads of this world,
The best burden you can carry is wisdom.
A shrewd mind is better than wealth
When you're lost in unknown places.
It is a refuge from woe.

11. If you're going to be wandering the roads of this world,
The best burden you can carry is wisdom.
The worst food you can have for your journey
Is to be drunk all the time on ale. (6)

12. There's less good in drinking ale than people say
For the sons and daughters of men;
For I know that the more people drink,
The less they have of their own minds and spirits.

13. There is a bird of forgetfulness that flies over
Any place where people are drinking much.
It steals the wits of men and women.
This bird's feathers had me well chained and bound up
When I lay in the house of Gunnlod deep below. (7)

14. I was drunk, so drunk that my wits were dead,
In the hall of that wise and cunning giant Fjalar;
You drink best when you go easy,
And can get your wits back quickly.

15. The child of a noble family should be thoughtful and quiet,
And daring in every conflict they encounter.
Glad and happy should every person go,
Until the day of their death arrives.

16. Non-daring people think they will live forever
If they manage to avoid strife;
But old age will give no one peace,
Even if the spears do. (8)

17. Fools gape when they come to their friends,
And they mumble to themselves or mope;
But if they get a drink in their hands, and swallow it down,
Their minds are suddenly known to everyone. (9)

18. Only a person who has wandered wide
And fared far into the world
Really has the power to know the minds
Owned by other people;
Who is wise of head and heart.

19. Don't cling to the mead cup;
Only drink your measure.
Say needful things, or say nothing at all.
No one will call you rude if you seek your rest early.

20. The immoderate man, unless he watches himself closely
Will over-consume to his deadly sorrow.
His belly makes a mockery of him, gives him away,
When he tries to sit in the company of the wise. [\(10\)](#)

21. Cows know when they should be near their home
And leave the fields of the pasture.
But a foolish, immoderate man, he never will know
The limits of his stomach or his speech. [\(11\)](#)

22. An empty person
Who has badly shaped his life-
He is constantly mocking everything.
He doesn't know the most important thing a man can know:
That he himself is not free of faults. [\(12\)](#)

23. The unwise man lies awake the whole night,
His mind bent with thoughts of countless things.
All he gains for it is being moody and tired when morning comes,
And his problems are just as they were before. [\(13\)](#)

24. The unwise man thinks that everyone who laughs with him
Is his friend. And he never can recognize
That they are speaking poorly of him
When he sits among the wise. [\(14\)](#)

25. The unwise man thinks that everyone who flatters him
Is his friend. But when he arrives at the council,
He finds that there are few to speak in his favor. [\(15\)](#)

26. A foolish man can think himself very wise
So long as he keeps to his own little shelter, free of challenges.

But he doesn't know what to say to others
When people test him with important questions.

27. When unwise people have to be around others,
It's best for them to be sparing with their words.
No one can really tell you're not so sharp
Unless you speak too much.
But fools are seldom aware of the fact
That they are talking too much.(16)

28. A man seems wise when he knows how to ask good questions
And how to make good answers, too.
The words people say, the things people talk about-
No secret can be kept of those things.(17)

29. A man who talks too much speaks many useless words;
If you don't watch your tongue,
The ceaseless babbling will sing up mighty troubles.

30. Don't be so quick to ridicule another
Even if they are only coming for a visit.
Men can believe themselves wise if nothing is asked of them
And they are allowed to keep their skin dry.(18)

31. It is a wise man that gets away from the table
When one guest is insulting another there;
The one who mocks and laughs at a feast table
May not realize he is sitting among foes.(19)

32. Many men have hearts of friendship for one another
And yet they will quarrel or goad each other over a meal.
This bane for mankind will always be:
Guests and friends will chide one another.

33. Always get for yourself an early meal, if you can.
Don't go visiting friends or kinsmen too hungry;
Else you'll sit and stuff your face
And be little able to ask many things.(20)

34. Crooked and hard is the road to a false friend's house
Even if their house is easy to get to.
But pleasurable is the way to a good friend
Even if they live far from you.

35. Visit, then go away- do not remain a guest for too long.
The loved one will be loathed if too long they sit
In the rooms of another's house. (21)

36. A farm of your own is good, even if it's tiny;
Each man is a king in his own house.
Even if you only have two goats and a roof made of ropes,
That's better than having to beg for things.(22)

37. A farm of your own is good, even if it's tiny;
Everyone is someone important in their own place.
A man's heart bleeds when it has to beg
For a morsel at every meal-time.

38. When out in the fields,
Don't go further than a footstep from your weapons;
You never know for sure, out in the wild,
How close a need might be for aspear.(23)

39. I never found a generous, wealthy person-
Those who always show off their goodness-
Who was unhappy about receiving gifts.
And I never met a person free with their wealth
Who didn't love beingrewarded.(24)

40. If a man has worked to amass much wealth,
Let him never be so guarded of that wealth that he suffers.
Often what you put aside for friends is got by foes;
What you put aside for good times is taken by bad times-
For many things go worse than we wish them to.(25)

41. Friends should make one another happy by giving gifts;
Weapons, clothing, and the like; it's obvious to all:
Those who give back in turn, and give again,
Remain friends for the longest time
If their Fates be kindly.(26)

42.If you have a good friend, be a good friend back.
Answer every gift you get with a gift in return.
Repay laughter with more laughter,
But repay lies with deceit of your own.

43. If you have a good friend, be a good friend back,
And be friendly with your friend's friends.
But you should never extend friendship

To the friends of one who is your enemy.

44. Do you have a friend that you trust,
And from whom you desire good things?
Bond your soul with his often- give good gifts to him,
And travel to see him often.

45. You may have someone you hardly trust,
Yet you need to get good things from him.
Speak very fair with him, but be sly-
Always repay any falsehood with deceit of your own.

46. Again, for those you hardly trust,
And whose minds you hold in suspicion,
Laugh with them, be friendly, but guard your words.
Give gifts to them of the same kind they give you. (27)

47. I was young once, and I wandered alone;
The wide road was bewildering; I didn't know much.
Then I met a friend and I felt very rich,
For man is ever the joy of man. (28)

48. Generous and fearless is the best way to live;
People like that seldom harbor many troubles.
But the non-daring are afraid of everything
And misers are always upset over having to give.

49. Once, along the way, I gave my clothes
To two carved wooden men at the roadside.
They looked so proud in that dress!
A naked man truly is shamed and reduced to nothing. (29)

50. I've seen a withered pine-tree standing in a hamlet,
Wasting away with no bark or needles to shelter it.
So it is for a man who has no friends or kin;
Why should he even want to live long? (30)

51. Between false friends, the fire of affection burns hot
For five days. But then the sixth day dawns,
And all that friendship cools and sours away.

52. You don't have to give great things;
Often, just small things will earn you much praise.
With just half a loaf shared, and a tilted cup,

I have won myself many good friends.

53. When there's little sand, there's little sea.
Just so, small are the minds of most men.
Men and women do not become equally wise or foreseeing;
Only a half of them will be able to acquire wisdom.(31)

54. Wise in good measure let each person be,
But don't try to be overly wise.
You won't be the happiest of people
If you know too much about many things.(32)

55. Never overly wise should each person be,
And never over-striving for wisdom;
Hearts overly burdened by wisdom and knowledge
Seldom sing joyfully.

56. A good measure of wisdom should each person have,
But be careful about too much;
If you come to know your Fate before it is revealed,
Your spirit may lose the power to be carefree.(33)

57. One fire takes its power from another, till it is consumed;
One spark only springs from another spark.
A man becomes wise and witty by talking with others,
But fools remain foolish by remaining isolated.

58. He will rise early,
He who wants to take from another person
Their wealth or their life.
Seldom does a slumbering wolf get a ham,
Nor a sleeping man a victory.(34)

59. Even if you have to work alone, get up early
And go about your work with a thoughtful mind.
People who sleep too long neglect many things;
For the swift man, good destiny is already halfway won.

60. Of the dried logs you've saved,
And the dried bark you've stored,
You can always know the measure.
How much firewood you have, for a quarter-year, or a half-year,
That you can also know. (35)

61. Wash yourself and eat before you go to the council,

But don't worry over-much about your clothes.
Don't be ashamed of your shoes or breeches
And be less ashamed of your horse, even if it is poor. (36)

62. An eagle flies over the ancient ocean, looking,
Turning his head, snatching after prey;
That's what man is like when he comes among a group
And finds no friends there to support him. (37)

63. To ask well, and answer well, be ready to do that
If you would be known as a wise person.
Share your heart and mind with one person, but not two;
Everyone will know what three people know. (38)

64. A wise person best be mild with people,
And never overbearing with their wisdom or power.
Because they find, when they mingle with others,
They are not the cleverest or the fiercest. (39)

65. Be ever watchful and mindful of your speech!
And be slow to put too much trust in people;
Often, for words given away thoughtlessly,
An ill reward comes back. Even good men have fallen thereby. (40)

66. I've come to many feasts too late,
And others I've arrived at too soon.
The ale was all drunk at the first, not yet brewed at the other.
An unlikeable person is never on time, no matter when they arrive.

67. Sometimes, people would invite me to their feasts
When they knew I wasn't hungry,
Or after I had hung two hams in a good friend's house,
Having eaten my fill on one of his first. (41)

68. A warm fire is best for men and women,
And the sight of the sun is sweet.
Health is a blessing too, if you can manage to keep it,
And to live life without shameful deeds.

69. No person is deprived of all goodness,
Even if their luck or health be poor:
Some people are happy by their children,
Others with kinsmen, others with enough money,
And others have done worthy deeds in their life. (42)

70. It's better to endure living than to not live at all.
Only living people can catch cows.
I saw a hearth fire inside a house, with happy heirs around it,
But a rich man lying dead outside the door. (43)

71. A lame person can still ride a horse.
A man without hands can still herd beasts.
A deaf man can be daring in battle.
To be blind is better than being burned on a pyre.
A corpse is useful to no one.(44)

72. To have a son is good, even if he's born late,
And even if his father is dead before he is born:
Seldom do stones get raised by the roadside
Unless kinsmen raise them for beloved family.(45)

73. Two are as dangerous as an army against a lone man.
The tongue is the greatest danger to the head.
Under each fur-cloak, I expect to see a fist.(46)

74. He doesn't mind night-fall, if he has enough food
And a good place to sleep.
Autumn nights are the most fickle: good and bad weather
All in five days, and more than that in a month.

75. A man knows nothing if he doesn't know
How wealth warps the minds of men.
One man is wealthy, and another man not wealthy,
Yet the last one should not be blamed for that woe.

76. Cattle die, and kinsmen die,
And we will die ourselves;
But fair fame never dies
For the one who can achieve it.

77. Cattle die, and kinsmen die,
In the same way, we will die ourselves;
But I know one thing that never dies:
The judgment on each one dead.(47)

78. Full folds of cattle had Fitjung's sons,
Who now all carry a beggar's staff.
Wealth goes fast, like the wink of an eye.
No friend is more false.

79. If a fool manages to gain the love of a woman,
Or win himself much wealth, only his arrogance increases,
Never his wits or wisdom.
Straight on he goes in his folly.

80. Whatever you ask of the runes will be proven true
Those runes that came from the Gods,
Which the Holy Powers made,
Which the Mighty Sage painted red.
After that, silence is best. (48)

81. Praise the day at evening, a woman on her pyre,
A weapon after it's tried, a maiden at her wedding,
Ice after it's crossed, ale after it's drunk. (49)

82. Cut wood in windy weather, in good weather row out to sea,
Flirt with maidens in the dark, for day's eyes are many;
Seek speed from a ship, protection from a shield,
Sharp cuts from a sword, and kisses from maidens. (50)

83. Drink ale by the fire, skate on the slippery ice,
Buy a horse when it's lean and a blade when tarnished,
Fatten your horse at home and your hound in the yard. (51)

84. A maiden's words- no man should be keen to trust those,
Nor the troth of women;
For on a turning wheel their hearts were shaped,
And changeable is the spirit in their breast. (52)

85. A bending bow, a burning flame,
A hungry wolf, a croaking raven,
A snarling boar, a rootless tree,
A stormy sea, a boiling kettle,

86. A flying arrow, a crashing wave,
New-formed ice, a snake's coils,
A woman's bed-talk, a broken sword,
A bear's playing, a king's son,

87. A sick calf, a stubborn slave,
A smooth-tongued witch, a newly dead foe,

88. A kinsman's murderer, if you meet him on the road,
A half-burned house, a horse too swift,
(He becomes useless if he breaks a leg)

Don't ever become so thoughtless that you put trust in these.

89. A field sown early is not to be trusted,
Nor should you trust a son too soon;
The field needs fair weather, the son needs wisdom,
And both are uncertain.

90. The love of women, whose thoughts are fickle,
Is like taking a horse without shoes over slippery ice,
Or like a wild and unruly two year old,
Or trying to sail a rudderless ship in a storm;
It's like chasing a lame reindeer on icy rocks.

91. Now I will speak plainly, for I have known both:
False are men to women-
Fairest we speak to them when falsest we think:
With deceit, we work against wisdom.

92. Speak gently to a women and offer rich gifts
If you long for her love;
Praise her body, praise her beauty.
If you flatter her best, you will win her favor.

93. Never chide another man for being in love.
A wise man can be seized, while a fool is not,
By a bewitching beauty.

94. Not a bit should one person blame another
Over the folly that seizes so many.
Powerful love makes the sons of men into fools,
Even when they used to be wise.(53)

95. You know what is near to your heart;
You alone know your soul.
For a wise person, no sickness is worse
Than to be divided within oneself.

96. That's what I found, when once I sat outside
In the reeds, waiting for my heart's desire;
A girl dearer to me than my own body or soul.
But I never did win her.(54)

97. Billing's daughter I found in her bed
Sleeping, as radiant as the sun.
All the pleasures of lordship suddenly seemed like nothing,

If I couldn't live with her lovely form.

98. "Odin, away! Come again at evening,
If you would win me as your love;
All will be lost if more than we two
Should come to know of our secret deed."

99. So away I went, against my better judgment,
Certain that I'd return to joy,
And win all the pleasure of her love-play.

100. The next night, I went again,
Only to find the warriors of the house awake,
Bearing torches and burning brands.
There was no luck for me that way!

101. When morning came I went again,
And the company of that hall were all asleep.
But in my fair girl's bed I found
Only a bitch tied there.

102. Many a fair maid, when her mind you know,
Is found to be fickle towards men.
I learned that when I tried my wiles on a sharp girl.
The shrewd maid scorned me and humiliated me,
And I didn't even get to have her.

103. At home, be glad and cheerful with your guests;
But be shrewd and discreet in your own bearing.
The sage who would seek wisdom wide,
Should often use fair speech.
They call you fool if you have nothing to say,
For that is the way of those without wit.

104. I sought out that old Giant, and now I've returned safely;
Silence gained me nothing in his house.
Many good words won me what I desired,
There in Suttung's Hall.[\(55\)](#)

105. From her golden throne, Gunnlod gave to me
A drink of the glorious mead;
But a poor reward I gave her in return
For her true heart and troubled spirit.

106. With Rati's tusk, I bored a passageway

I made a tunnel through the rock;
With the paths of Giants above me and below me.
I risked my life for a sip of this mead.[\(56\)](#)

107. In an easy disguise, I gained my advantage;
A wise man wants for little.
And now, the Soul-Stirring mead has come up from below.
It is brought to the world of men.

108. I doubt that I would have come home
From the realms of the Giants,
Had I not been helped by Gunnlod,
Whose arms had been around me.



109. The next day, the Frost Giants came
Into the High One's hall, to seek his counsel:
They asked about the Baleworker- was he among the Gods?
Or had Suttung slaughtered him?(57)

110. Odin swore an oath on a ring;
Who can trust his troth now?
He took drink at Suttung's table, and betrayed him:
He left Gunnlod in grief.(58)



Loddfáfnismál

The Counsel Given to Loddfáfnir

111. It is time to speak from the chair of the Sage,
Here, close by the Well of Wyrð.
I looked and saw, I was silent, I pondered;
I heard the speech of men.
They spoke of Runes, and the counsel of Runes,
At the High One's hall, in the High One's hall,
This is what I heard:

112. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Do not rise at night, unless you mean to check for dangers,
Or you need to relieve yourself.

113. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Don't sleep in the arms of a sorceress,
For she will bind your limbs-

114. Her magic will make you have no mind
For the counsels of men, nor the words of kings;
You won't seek out meat, nor the company of others-
And with sorrow go to sleep.[\(59\)](#)

115. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Don't ever try to use love-whispers
On the wife of another.

116. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
If over mountains or waters you would travel far,
Stock up on food, and stay well fed.

117. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Never tell an evil man about your misfortunes:
From such people, you will never receive a return
For any trust you give.

118. I saw a man mortally wounded
By an evil woman's words:
Her lies had sent him his death-injury,
But there was no word of truth spoken.

119. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
If you have a friend you trust completely,
Go and visit him often;
For the brushwood grows, and grasses high,
On the path that no foot touches.

120. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Use good words to win for yourself good friends-
And learn healing songs all your life. [\(60\)](#)

121. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Never be the first, with your friends,
To break the ties of fellowship.
Your heart will be heavy, if you have no one close
To speak your mind to.

122. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Do not waste a single word on fools.

123. From fools and wicked men,
You will never get a reward for your good will.
But good people with good praise
Will bestow on you many favors.

124. It is true kinship
When you can share all your thoughts with another.
Nothing is as vile as a false and fickle tongue;
And no friend is he who only tells you good things.

125. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,

It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Don't speak even three words in dispute
With a worse man than yourself.
Often the lesser man gets the upper hand in fights.

126. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Make shoes and arrows only for yourself.
If the shoe is poorly made, or the arrow,
They will put the curse on your head.(61)

127. I counsel you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
If you see an evil, then call it an evil,
And make no truces with your foes.(62)

128. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Do not rejoice when you hear of evil things,
But let your soul be joyful at the hearing of good.(63)

129. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Do not look up in battle, when men are mad with terror-
Lest your wits become bewitched. (64)

130. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
If you want the joy of a good woman,
To lure her with love-whispering,
Make fair promises to her and keep them.
No one tires of the good they get.

131. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
I counsel you be cautious, but never fearful;
Be most cautious about ale, and other men's wives,
And of thieves who may outwit you.

132. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Don't hold in scorn or mockery, in your hall,
Any guest or wanderer.

133. Often those who sit in the hall have no idea
Whose kin the newcomers may be.
No man is so good that he has no faults,
And none is so wicked that he lacks all worth.

134. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Don't ever sneer at a grey-haired sage!
There is often a lot of wisdom in old men's words;
From shriveled skin often comes clear counsel,
From those who hang the hides,
Tan the dangling skins,
And wrap the entrails. [\(65\)](#)

135. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
Don't be gruff with strangers or guests, or drive them from your gate-
Treat people in need very well!

136. Strong is the beam that must be raised
To allow everyone to enter:
You must have many rings to give,
Or people will wish you much evil. [\(66\)](#)

137. I urge you, Loddfáfnir, to heed this counsel;
It will be your gain to hear it,
It will be your great gain if you follow it:
When you drink ale, invoke the strength of the Earth!
For Earth cures drunkenness- as fire cures sickness,
The oak cures distress of bowels, and the ear of corn witchcraft-
The elder cures home-strife, the moon is invoked in a hateful fight.
Alum stops bite-sickness, and bad luck is stopped by Runes:
The grassy field drinks in all floods. [\(67\)](#)



Rúnatal

The Winning of the Runes

138. I know that I hung on that windswept tree
For nine nights.
Wounded with a spear, given to Odin,
Myself given to myself.
High on that tree, of which no man knows
From where its roots rise.(68)

139. With bread I was not gladdened, nor given a drinking horn,
And I peered there below, into the deep:
I seized the Runes; crying aloud I took them up,
Thereafter I fell back.(69)

140. Nine mighty spells I learned from the great
Son of Bolthorn, Bestla's sire;
I drank a draught of the soul-stirring mead,
Poured out from Odrerir. (70)

141. Then I began to thrive, and gain in wisdom,
And I grew and I prospered;
Each word led me to another word,
Each deed led me to another deed.

142. The Runes you must find,
And the carved staves of counsel.
The very great staves,
The very strong staves,
Which the Mighty Sage painted,
And the Holy Powers made
And Odin carved among the Gods.

143. Odin carved for the Gods,
Dáinn for the Elves,
Dvalinn for the Dwarves,
Ásviðr for the Giants,
And for mankind, I carved some myself.(71)

144. Do you know how to scrape and carve?
Do you know how to read and interpret?
Do you know how to draw and paint?
Do you know how to test?
Do you know how to ask, or obtain?
Do you know how to sacrifice to the Gods?
Do you know how to send or dispatch?

Do you know how to slaughter? [\(72\)](#)

145. Better to avoid asking,
Than to sacrifice too much to the Gods;
Always a gift seeks a gift in return.
Better to avoid slaughtering,
Than to slaughter too much.
This, Thund carved before humankind's origin.
He who came back, when he rose from the deep. [\(73\)](#)



Ljóðatal

The Spells and Magical Songs of Odin

146. I know spells which king's wives do not know,
Nor any man's son.
"Help" the first is called,
And this one will help you against all accusations,
Or worries or sorrows. [\(74\)](#)

147. I know a second spell:
The sons of men who want to live as healers will need it.

148. I know a third spell: if I have great need
To bind the hands of my enemies-
I can blunt the edges of their blades;
Their swords and staffs can bite no more.

149. I know a fourth spell:
If warriors bind my arms or legs,
Then I sing so that the fetters are destroyed-
They spring off my feet, and off my hands.

150. I know a fifth spell:
If I see an arrow shot in malice,
A shaft rushing towards the folk,
It cannot fly so fast that I cannot stop it,
If I catch sight of it. [\(75\)](#)

151. I know a sixth spell:
If a man tries to send me harm
With the roots of a sapling,
This man who sends the hateful curse
Is eaten by an ulcer, not me. [\(76\)](#)

152. I know a seventh spell:
If I see flames burning high
In the hall around my friends,
It cannot burn so wide that I cannot save them.
I know the song to sing for this.

153. I know an eighth spell;
It is, among all, most useful to know:
When hatred grows among the sons of warriors,
I can set it right at once. [\(77\)](#)

154. I know a ninth spell:

If a need comes to save my ship at sea,
I can quiet down the wind and waves-
I can put the sea to sleep.

155. I know a tenth spell:
If I see hedge-riders doing their sorcery in the air,
I can work so that they go astray,
From their own shapes,
From their own souls. (78)

156. I know an eleventh spell:
If I lead my friends to battle,
Under a shield I sing my song,
And they move with power,
Safe into battle, and safe out of it.
They always come back safely.

157. I know a twelfth spell:
If I see, high in a tree,
A hanged corpse dangling,
Then I carve, and the Runes I paint,
So that the man comes to me
And speaks with me.

158. I know a thirteenth spell:
If I throw water on a young warrior,
He shall not fall, though he moves
Through a host of warriors,
Nor will he sink beneath swords.

159. I know a fourteenth spell:
If to all the people, I must speak of the Gods,
I know well of the Gods and Elves,
Their natures and the differences between them:
Few can know this but the very wise.

160. I know a fifteenth spell:
That the dwarf Thiodrerir sang before Delling's doors:
Strength he sang for the Gods, and renown for Elves,
And wisdom for Odin the sage. (79)

161. I know a sixteenth spell:
If I will to have of a wise girl
Her whole spirit and the pleasure of her,
I can turn the mind of the white-armed woman,

And change her whole mood.

162. I know a seventeenth spell:

This song makes it so
That youthful maidens will not shun me.
You will long for these songs, Loddfáfnir,
And it would be good if you could get them.
Useful to you, if you could catch them.
They would help you if you had them.

163. I know an eighteenth spell:

I never teach this one to a maiden or the wife of a man,
Except to that one alone who holds me in her arms,
Or who is also my sister.
A secret is best kept if it is known only to one.
This is the end of my songs. [\(80\)](#)

164. Now the words of the High One

Are sung in the High One's hall.
They are needful to the sons of men,
And useless to the sons of Giants.
Hail to him, who spoke these words!
Hail to him who knows them!
Hail to all who heard and learned from them-
Hail, all who listened.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. This first piece of sage advice- on the alertness and wariness needed when entering into a new place or (more abstractly considered) starting a new venture- is a very appropriate one to start a collection of wise sayings with. This verse greatly highlights the importance of being cautious to danger when entering unfamiliar places or any place wherein danger may be concealed- which can truly be anywhere. Modern readers may consider this to borderline on the paranoia of a previous, perhaps more dangerous age, but our present age is certainly not lacking in danger, nor are we any poorer for being reminded of it. Odin's advice for danger-avoidance is always very practical: he urges people to always to use their senses (see verse 7, among others) to look, to examine, and to always maintain a wise level of wariness. As with so many of Havamal's sayings, examples of the dangers this first verse is addressing abound in history. This very wisdom might have spared the historical Jarl Einarr Þambarskelfir and his son Eindride, both of whom were slain by the treachery of Einarr's rival, the tyrannical King Olaf Haraldsson. Though Haraldsson had called for a truce-meeting to sit down and broker some kind of peace with Einarr, he had no intention of truce-making, and hid assassins in the farmhouse wherein the meeting was to take place. The whole story can be found in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*.

2. This verse begins by blessing the "givers" or the hosts who receive guests. Guest-friendliness or hospitality was one of the chief virtues of the Heathen world, and the sacred responsibilities of hospitality were as important for ordinary men and women as they were for Jarls and Kings. If anything, people of authority had more onus on them to be hospitable and generous, for in their world, their reputations were the chief factor that came into play with regard to maintaining their positions, and nothing could undermine a lord's reputation more than being thought stingy or inhospitable especially when they had the wealth at their disposal to be very generous. The verse reminds people in a position to be a host that they shouldn't make guests wait too long nor expect guests to ask for basic hospitality- all guests should be assumed to want shelter and comfort quickly. It is the duty, again a sacred duty, of hosts to provide it. Of all the translations of Havamal I have seen, only the Bellows translation mentions (in the last two lines of the verse) the haste of people who live by the sword when they want to prove their might. Hollander simply says, in his own translation, that "the last two lines are difficult." I have included my rendering of the sword-line alongside the usual line involving the haste of the guest to find comfort in the hall because I find both lines to be important in what they say.

3. As is the usual case with Havamal, the wisdom verses are very pithy and ground-level. This verse spells out in the simplest possible terms what people in various conditions of discomfort need. It may be surprising that such simple things need to be said, but the simplest or most obvious things seem to be easily forgotten if people lose their focus on, and appreciation for, the simple organic realities of life. But in this verse, I see something else; in our day (though I hope not so much in earlier times) people often attempt to address the problems of others in ways that don't help very much. A hungry man doesn't really need someone's sympathy for the situation that made them hungry; they need food first. The heart of this verse is truly the line that reads " Those who have wandered long in the cold, frozen to their knees- warmth is the foremost thing they need." Those who wish to render aid to others must start with what is really needed first and

work their way up from there. While most societies in the West don't teach their people that they have any wider responsibility to help strangers in need, this verse is specifically directed at hosts who do have a responsibility to guests, even strangers who come to their doors and gain invitation inside.

4.In much the same manner that hosts had many important responsibilities to their guests, their guests, too, have reciprocal responsibilities in return. Most people today have the basic sense to know that you don't go into another's house and cause your host discomfort or misery; but Havamal goes further and spells out the need for guests to have good manners. It isn't so exacting as it sounds. Most people have a basic capacity to intuitively know how to read their host, or those people around them, and to avoid putting their foot in their mouths. Everyone has been in a situation where a host or a family member has made a comment that they were offended by but knew to hold their tongue lest the "peace of the hall" be unduly disturbed. Being a host is already challenging enough; guests should avoid making the host's job harder by making themselves seem obnoxious or rude. It is, in fact, another way of repaying the host's generosity. In the verse that follows this one, Odin suggests that people who don't know as much as the wise avoid sitting with them and presumably humiliating themselves by trying to talk "above their level." This isn't to protect the "wise" from being annoyed; this is a simple and wise statement about knowing one's limits.

5.This verse, and the verse that follows it, seem to focus on the dangers in being forced to rely on certain qualities in others too much- such as the wisdom of others or the counsel of others. But it also speaks to the idea that we can never know what others are really thinking inside so relying on the opinions of others can be a real downfall, too. It may seem strange or paradoxical that a sage like Odin would say such a thing while himself giving the famous wisdom and counsel that humans probably relied upon for centuries; and it may seem stranger that a society of people who relied heavily upon one another to a degree that people of the present age can hardly comprehend should produce such statements.

And yet, these two verses teach a timeless truth: that obtaining wisdom and happiness for oneself and one's kin or family is the ultimate point of seeking the wisdom and counsel of others. It does not do to receive wisdom or counsel and simply stop there; one must put it to use and become wise oneself. The verse that follows this one makes a rather cynical-seeming observation that people who do gain wisdom are really lucky owing to the amount of falsehood and deception in the world. Again, what may be taken by modern people as cynical is only the terse, mature, and highly realistic perspective of the wisest of beings- a perspective still relevant and quite verifiable by anyone who has seen the enormous amount of nonsense that still characterizes human interactions in the modern day. To be alert to the proliferation of falsehoods is the first step towards neutralizing them.

6.This verse, and the one that follows it, may strike some as humorous: a Heathen God, Himself central to a large group of cultures known (or possibly caricatured) for their love of heavy drinking, advancing what sounds like a pretty potent temperance statement. But Odin talks about the dangers of drinking in terms of how it dulls the wits. In Odin's view, sharpening the wits and being more alert and cunning is all-important; anything that distracts from that or makes mindfulness harder will necessarily invoke a warning from Him. It's just as true that in earlier

times as now, high levels of alcohol consumption were a major factor behind a lot of brawls, troubles, and feuds. While most people understandably love to focus on the positive aspects of intoxication, few are willing to be too up-front about the negative aspects. But the wise have to give honest service to all sides of every issue. Verses 19 and 20 point to the need for moderation in consuming alcohol, in eating and by extension, in any kind of consumption. Moderation is a continually-praised virtue in Havamal, and a case could be made that it is one of the supreme keys to wisdom if not the chief key.

7.In this verse, and the one that follows it, Odin alludes to one of his adventures, wherein he visited Hnitbjorg, the mountain-hall of the giant Fjalar (also known as Suttung) and there seduced Fjalar's daughter Gunnlod to steal away a magical mead-potion that she guarded. That potion granted poetic inspiration and magical insight or powers to him and to others who have gained it from him and his family of Gods in times since. Odin accounts the story in more detail in verses 104-110. Snorri Sturluson tells the story in a lengthy form in *Skáldskaparmál*.

Giants are, mythologically considered, ancient beings of a powerful race older than the Gods and often presented as very wise and cunning. Though some are actively presented in the myths as malevolent and dangerous and must be fought by the Gods to keep their world and the world of human beings (and perhaps other worlds) safe, certain classes of giants are wise and potent, sought out for their wisdom or other abilities. Some are allies to the Gods, and females of the giant race can even become spouses to the Gods. The Giants are close to the very oldest and most powerful forces of nature, repositories of primordial power and wisdom. They do not give up their gifts or secrets very easily.

Thus, seducing the daughter of a giant in the underground caverns of a mountain, she being the guardian of the mead of inspiration, and winning the magic mead is an easy myth to decipher: wisdom and inspiration, like magical power, must often be retrieved or obtained through bravery and trickery from such places and such entities; literally stolen from their ancient guardians in the skies, the deep wilderness, or the underworld. Human life, like nature itself, doesn't give up its secrets quickly or easily either; one must grow and mature over time and face hard or transformative situations, often involving powers well outside of our understanding or control (giant forces), to win wisdom and perspective. Verse 18 goes further and praises the act of traveling away from what is familiar, experiencing the unfamiliar parts of the world, and the insight it wins for people who do it. We have to leave the familiar if we really want to learn.

8.This spirit of this verse is echoed well in a modern quote (of unknown origin) which goes something like "I refuse to tiptoe carefully through life, only to arrive safely at death's door." There is a needed balance between being over-obsessed with self preservation on one hand, and being very reckless on the other. Death is a certainty for everyone, and trying to avoid strife or danger in exaggerated or obsessive ways practically causes strife and dangers of other sorts. This verse surely reflects an older "warrior" mentality that suggests early death isn't such a bad Fate (or at least it comes with the silver lining that one never has to suffer the difficulties of being old.) Overall, this verse is a reminder that there's more to life than just surviving at all costs and that no one lives forever. Wasting one's time in being too fearful or too avoidant of risks and dangers profits people nothing.

9. This verse suggests another danger of excessive alcohol consumption: that it will render a person's mind too transparent or obvious to all. This kind of exposure, the all-too-common "drunk honesty" and the egregious over-sharing that comes with it, is one of the hallmarks of a "fool" or a mediocre person. There is an aspect of wisdom that requires a certain opaqueness or mystery to the mind and motivations of the wise, and to lose one's capacity to keep their innermost thoughts and feelings to themselves is shameful or at least a dangerous display of vulnerability. (See verses 11-13 as well.)

10. This verse may seem, on the surface, to be a criticism of those who are gluttonous and whose physical appearance suffers from their overindulgence in food. But the verse can be taken in other ways, and owing to the subtlety of Odin's wisdom, perhaps should be. The "immoderate" man, or the man who cannot be mindful of his greed and immoderation, is said to gain life-long harm from his consumption- but this could just as well refer to greed or immoderate desire for gold or wealth as much as food. The over-eating could, in a sense, refer to obsessive hoarding or over-taking, which can (and in some famous Germanic myths and sagas often did) lead to the life-long (and sometimes fatal) harm of the taker. The "belly" of the immoderate man which becomes a cause for mockery from others can likewise refer to something more than physical appearance. Over-taking can bloat a person's affairs, finances, and reputation in many negative ways. People that over-consume or over-take in any manner have a difficult time being counted among the truly wise. Havamal has a strong underlying current of moderation in most things.

11. Continuing the theme of gluttony or over-taking begun in verse 10, this verse points to a natural wisdom that animals- and presumably healthy people- have when it comes to how much they consume, whether in terms of food, or in terms of the toll they extract from their environment or their interpersonal relations. The gluttonous over-taker lacks this natural intuition of limits; worse, his foolish condition is defined by the fact that he lacks the power to ever see or sense why taking too much is a grave peril. There is a forward-seeing criticism of modern day greed and non-sustainable economic and cultural systems to be divined from this pithy verse, every bit as much as a warning to people who can't heed the healthy limits of things in their own lives.

12. The famous Socratic maxim about the wise man being wisest because "he knows that he knows nothing" seems to have a kinship with Odin's statement about people recognizing their own faults or recognizing that no person, including themselves, is lacking in flaws (also see verse 133.) There is an equalizing force, a wisdom-granting power in honest self-appraisals, one that makes people less likely to be so harsh on others. Those who are ceaselessly harsh to others are in the grip of a vicious folly- either a youthful folly that can hopefully cease with maturity, or a folly that will curse them their entire lives.

13. The importance of sleep to human health cannot be understated. This is just as true for physical health as it is for mental health. Adequate rest is a prerequisite to the healthy functioning of every other capacity that humans possess. But this verse is more than just a tough and wise statement about the self-defeating outcomes of over-worrying and losing sleep; it is a strategic statement of how to overcome opposition. One must have the resources required to face problems or foes, and rest is one of the chief resources that undergirds all human endeavor. To lay awake worrying or over-thinking, instead of sleeping and gaining the needed strength to face

one's problems, is a form of surrender or self-sabotage.

14. Baltasar Gracian writes "A fool is someone who cannot recognize another fool." This inability springs from the fact that fools cannot see the foolishness in themselves. Not being able (or unwilling) to see it in themselves, they have become quite good at ignoring what is in the world around them or revising it to suit what they want to believe. The fool can't see that the laughter of people at his expense is an indictment of his foolishness; he rests in the delusion that all is well, and that he is quite the clever, well-liked person.

15. This timeless wisdom verse, more than most, displays just how world-wise Odin really is: it is a truth as old as the hills that there is more to true friendship than just enjoying the company of others, or even speaking niceties (flattery) to others. Fools think that positive attention or shared positive times equal into friendship; but when they go to the community assembly or court to plead a case, they find no one to be an ally or a speaker for their causes. Taken to a modern audience's sensibilities, real friends are the people who are around to lend support even when your chips are down; they will defend you or speak on your behalf to anyone. Your real friends are there even for non-enjoyable things: they will help you when you face the enormous labor of moving your furniture and belongings. Allies are more than people who laugh at our jokes or flatter us. They are people who are there for us in our times of need- and just so, we are not friends to others until we are there for them in times of trouble or need. Shared hard times are almost a necessity to cement and authenticate real bonds and friendships.

16. The last two lines of this verse seem to have been added later as extra explanatory material or just a clarification someone thought was needed. The added lines continue a theme commonly found in Havamal, that foolish people must almost necessarily lack certain levels of self-awareness to persist in their foolishness. The first four lines of this verse is another wisdom statement that has a modern-day parallel in the humorous, and by now widespread quote (which originated in a book of nonsense verse written by Maurice Switzer in 1907): "It is better to remain silent at the risk of being thought a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt of it." Surprisingly, a quote from the book of Proverbs (17:28) also echoes this wisdom: "Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent and discerning if he holds his tongue." They say that Odin has wandered to many lands in his ages-long existence; perhaps ancient Palestine benefited from one of his wanderings.

17. The first idea introduced in this verse is an important, if subtle one. While most people consider others wise or intelligent if they are good at making insightful answers to questions, there is just as much importance in being able to form insightful questions about the world around you and to ask the right questions to others. Wisdom or canny intelligence isn't just about what emerges from you when prompted for an answer; it's also related to what emerges from you when you reach out to explore the world and other beings and attempt to know them. "To ask well and to answer well" as a positive combination of capacities comes up more than once in Havamal. The second part of this verse also brings up an idea that gets repeated again later: the idea that in the communicating system that is the natural life-world, and which includes the human social life-world, nothing is really easy to keep a secret, if secrets can truly be kept at all. By the time a few people (or more) are talking about something, it can and will be known by all, eventually. We accept this as a taken-for-granted reality in our internet age, but clearly, it has

always been this way.

18. This verse includes not just a well-worded bit of advice about not being rude to people but gives a compelling reason (of many that could be given) not to be: engaging in aggressive mockery of others will naturally call into question how tough or well-tested you are as a person or if you are the sort of person that has the "cred" to be looking down on others. And many, as the verse points out, only appear to be wise or strong due to having been "spared the rain showers" or "kept dry" or "kept sheltered"- they've not been exposed to many difficulties.

19. Even being around certain bad or conflicted situations has a way of involving or implicating a person in the possible outcomes; a wise person, noticing things becoming hostile or dangerous between other parties, can justifiably "take to his heels." Truly insulting others without a really good reason or justification is generally a poor idea as demonstrated in several verses throughout Havamal; to allow insults to fly cheaply or indiscriminately is the worst of all such outcomes owing to the swift way it summons enmity.

20. This verse includes another mention of the importance of "asking well" mentioned first in verse 28. It also presents a short warning about the undesirability of even appearing gluttonous in this case out of sheer hunger. A person's appearance, poise, and ability to speak well is important in any situation.

21. It is by far one of the most universally recognized truths of human social life: guests, like dead fish, really stink after three days. True to the reciprocal bond that existed between hosts and guests in Heathen times- a bond that had many unspoken yet very known and sacred nuances- guests were expected not to unduly burden a host nor remain in their host's house for too long of a time. It truly matters not how beloved a guest might be; all hosts eventually want things at their houses to return to normal and resentment can be born for anyone if they overbear another with their presence. To hang about so long that the host might have to ask them to leave was unthinkable; no guest could be so rude nor could any host beyond the most desperate (or poor) ones ever really take that step. These same understandings about a polite length of time to stay and then leave a friend's house are in force today just as they were long ago.

22. This verse, and the related verse that follows it, communicates the same idea that we share when we talk about every man being the "king of his own castle." No matter how humble one's place may be, it is one's home and the one place he or she can reasonably expect things to fall in line often with their own expectations and desires. The verse says that even poor living conditions are better than begging, and the next verse further adds the detail that the hearts of those who must beg "bleed." This can be taken as a metaphysical description of the killing stress and soul-level injury that poverty inflicts on those who must endure it. It is a known fact today (as it has been known for centuries, truly) that poverty literally kills people; for a multitude of reasons, it shortens the life spans of persons that must live in it or under its influence.

Far from being just an issue of wounded pride, Odin says the heart itself "bleeds"- the seat of life leaks the precious fluid of life, presumably at a subtle level which can still quite negatively affect a person, if that person must continually display such vulnerability or neediness to others. Though modern people ordinarily have little power to see it, this *metaphysically bleeding* beggar doesn't just "bleed" because of having to beg; they bleed because on a deeper level of proper

human justice, no person should have to beg in the first place. The wretched person fallen through the gaping cracks of unwisdom and greed within the human society becomes emotionally "bled out" and unable to healthily connect to others after being in this condition for too long. Something about human emotional health (and perhaps all other kinds of health) is tied to our ability to healthily engage the world and sustain ourselves and others close to us through that engagement.

Before modern readers- particularly Americans- take some of these verses to mean that the Heathen world maintained something of the "rugged self sufficiency" notions of modern societies in which the poor or those who rely on financial help are actively presented as lazy or flawed, Odin says in later verses that poverty is not something that the poor are to be blamed for, and that the poor should not be scorned. In Heathen societies- societies based on large extended families that always helped and supported one another, and with a strong focus on generosity- reliance was not primarily "self" focused. It was clan, kin, and community focused. A beggar in a Heathen society would almost always be a kin-less, or isolated person, without a family. This would be a rare, dark, and dangerous condition for a person to be in and more than enough reason for the heart to bleed. Verse 50 directly mentions the peril of a person without family or friends to love and support them.

23. This verse is sound advice for travelers in previous times, long before formal, nationwide and super-organized law enforcement paired with high technology had made traveling long distances reasonably safe. Outside of one's homestead or community, there truly were no guarantees of safety- or very few- unless you provided them for yourself. To be prepared and never far from what you need to survive (the Old Norse text suggests never being more than one foot or "one step" from your weapons) is tantamount. Of course, modern people can understand this to mean that you should always have what you need close at hand, for any situation of possible danger, and to always prepare adequately for any emergency that could arise during any trip you are going to take, or any situation you are going to enter. It seems obvious to say, but countless people today don't prepare overly much for dangers, and some come to regret it. It's always better to have preparations and useful thing in place and not need them than to need them and not have them.

24. Part of the personality or character/social behavior expected of the wealthy in the Ancestral world was not just generosity, but the need to make a show of it. Odin here speaks of this in a subtle mocking way, seeing it as somewhat farcical even if it is better for the wealthy to act this way. Odin says he never met a rich man that "didn't make a show of his goodness" at one time or another, desiring to be thought good- nor a rich man that didn't like obtaining more or receiving gifts. The rich, in other words, always watch out for their wealth, or worry over it, and never mind a little more. There is, in my view, a subtle warning here about the darker influence that possessions or wealth can have on people's minds.

25. Don't hold back from enjoying the fruits of your blessings, be they financial or otherwise. We do not get to keep blessings or wealth forever, and often bad situations pop up to take more from us than we had expected or anticipated. Better to get fair enjoyment while one can than to delay for some distant gratification that may never come. Odin's advice to cease being stingy and enjoy life a bit, to not let yourself suffer, is based on his intimate knowledge of the workings of Fate itself,

and the ubiquitous presence of bad Fates or Nornic powers that could easily weave woeful events into people's lives. "Enjoy it while you got it- everything can be taken away suddenly." These ideas may sound cynical, morbid, or even wasteful, but they re-affirm the importance of the present moment of joy and plenty, if you are fortunate enough to have won or gained them. Life's best moments may come down to sharing great comfort, joy, warmth, and food with close friends and family, and to have missed a lot of enjoyable occasions of that sort would be quite a loss, especially if occasions such as those were traded away for some abstract notions that went belly-up anyway.

26. At this point in the text, verses 41-47, Odin begins giving his advice to friends, for how to make and maintain friendships, and how to deal with the complexities of these kinds of social relationships. His advice is, as usual, direct and honest. Unsurprisingly, the essence of friendship is in mutual benefits and exchanges, especially embodied in gifts that friends give between them. But everything that is exchanged in real friendships must be mutual- and that doesn't just include gifts and gift-giving. More than a few times Odin advises that one should be reciprocal with the quality of treatment they receive from others particularly regarding lies and deceit. He never suggests that people endure the lies of others while giving truth to those people in return. Return deceit for deceit is his constant advice. It may strike some modern readers as odd that the God of Wisdom (or any God) would suggest lying outright, but such is the nature of Odin's worldly wisdom, that he understands more about moral subtlety than most human beings, particularly humans trapped in idealistic societies or worldviews. Odin does not give advice to make people into victims; he urges people to seek true fairness and equality with others through perfectly fair and congruent exchanges with them.

He will not have people becoming "unevenly yoked", to use the old phrase, nor will he allow for liars to have peace of mind and take advantage of idealism in others (which they will, and in our world, often do.) In some sense, if it is true (as Odin says later) "A gift ever asks for a gift", then the doorway to being deceitful to another without guilt or shame over it is opened when that person chooses to be deceitful to you. The quality of their "word gifts" to you- the rotten quality of deceit- calls for a return gift of an equal kind. Not you, the "deceiver-in-return", but *the gift they gave to you first* summons the deceit, and makes the receiver quite deserving of nothing more. If the Old Testament calls for "an eye for an eye", Odin calls for "a lie for a lie."

Beyond this point, which so many still struggle with (but the wise accept) Odin talks in glowing terms about gift-giving and how it creates the longest lasting friendships- so long as the Fates of the friends are good. This is more than some extra gloss; he is talking about the actual Fate-powers, the Nornic powers, that surround people and relationships. If they are truly bad, no friendship regardless of the quality of gift-giving or the good feelings involved can last. Odin has to add this in; life is not so simple as to allow us to strategically plan out everything and gain every outcome perfectly. Other powers exist, beyond our ken or control, and they have a say in what shall become as well. We can really only submit to this fact and do the best we can otherwise. This is a rare wisdom for our day, indeed.

27. Again, the insistence on true reciprocity comes out here. It is a point that Odin will not compromise on. Something else emerges here, however, that stands out: trust between people can be understood as the condition that allows one to share his true mind or heart with another.

Without trust, one should never do this.

28. This verse, thought by me to be one of the most beautiful in all of Havamal, begins (some would say continues) an idea that runs throughout this wisdom tradition- the idea that it is relationships alone that endow life with its best joy, its best strength, and perhaps its very reason to be. "Man is forever the joy of man"- how true it rings, when we examine our own lives, and see that our best times of joy are often, or always, defined by those who shared those times with us. Odin was lost on the road in the wide world, but no longer felt lost or poor when he found true friendship with another. This is a God talking of his joy in a kindred of like kind- and it reflects a truth in the human world, or perhaps any world- "birds of a feather flock together", and gain deep natural joy in so doing. In the joy of a being of your own kind, or any being with whom mutual relationship is possible, we gain so much support and friendship and strength for living. In Verse 50, Odin gives the "other side" of this joyful wisdom- the peril and wretchedness of those who have no opportunity to take joy in others.

29. In this curious verse, Odin recounts a time he gave an offering of his clothing to two carved wooden idols on the roadside. These kinds of carved wooden "men", these sacred images, were common in the Heathen world. They are called "Tremaðr", or "Tree Men"- and images of Gods and heroes, or local spirits were carved into them. To be set up near the roadside implies, as Hollander says, that they were intended to protect travelers from dangers and evil forces on the road. To dress the Tremaðr up in some or all his clothes suggests either an offering to them, or a lighthearted bit of tomfoolery on his part, both of which are conceivable with the Wandering God. He makes an observation, however, that the Tremaðr look "heroic" or quite fetching in the clothes- but naked men, they are reduced to shame or simply nothing. This observation is far from an indictment of people who are so buried in misfortune that they can't afford clothing. It is a wise observation about how appearance-oriented the human world is. Even the wooden men, without flesh, blood, hue, or animation, seemed noble when dressed right. How much more so living people? And when living people must be of poor appearance, or ashamed of their appearance, they are greatly disadvantaged, maybe even "reduced to naught." Also, there is a deeper implication that people who can't get clothes lack family or kin support which was the foremost way of being "reduced to nothing" in historical Heathen societies. Let us not forget that to be "naked" means to be completely vulnerable and that sort of vulnerability came with having no kinsmen or friends.

30. In this, one of Havamal's darkest verses, Odin sees a tree that has withered away and has no shelter even within a community. The tree lacks the needed elements to protect itself, to remain alive. He likens this easily to a man who has no friends or family to help them survive, and then asks why such a person would even *want* to live. So powerful is the idea of community, kinship, and group-life in the Heathen world, and in Odin's mind, that lacking those things creates a situation in which life itself becomes intolerable or simply untenable. There is no realistic or lasting room for the romantic ideal of the "loner" or "lone wolf" in either the Heathen world, or if we are honest, in our world. Everyone comes to rely on someone, and often many other persons from the day they are born and for every other day of their lives.

31. Odin never stops reminding human beings that everyone has their flaws, and in this case, that all humans, no matter what, lack a little wisdom in some respect. Some lack more than others, of

course. To know one's limitations is by far one of the most crucial gateways to becoming actually wise and capable in our world. And it doesn't take a long time living and moving around in this world before one understands why Odin would refer to most of mankind as "small minded." Not long at all. Some things, it seems, never change- and Havamal may be one of the most important historical collections of insights that prove that old saying.

32. This verse, and verses 55 and 56, are a famous trinity of verses warning about the detriments of becoming too wise. There is a deeply subtle message and deeply grim humor to be found in the figure of the God of Wisdom warning people about becoming too wise. Odin says earlier in Havamal that wisdom was the "best of burdens" a person could have when in nearly any situation- and yet, here, he talks about the necessary "other side" or dark side to Wisdom. "To know too much" the figure of Merlin tells Arthur in John Boorman's classic movie *Excalibur*, "is to know the tears of the world." In some ways, ignorance can lead to a kind bliss because with knowing much comes much emotional baggage and (at times) much responsibility. Few verses in Havamal are quite so mature, with regard to the subtleties involved in Wisdom then these. In fact, I can think of no other place in which the subtleties of wisdom are better dealt with than right here. Odin suggests, over and over, that we seek to be wise in goodly measure- not too little, not too much. Sound advice from the perspective of living a happy life.

33. The chief reason why Odin warns about gaining too much wisdom or insight is made clear in this verse: enough wisdom or insight can carry a person even to the depths of Fateful or Nornic reality, to the underlying forces and causes behind the world itself and every human life. To gain such a knowledge of Fate itself, to really comprehend how much exists that is outside of our control as people, is by itself possibly ruinous to the socially-sheltered mind of human beings. But to gain knowledge of one's own Fate, certainty about things like when one will die, can easily rob a person of their ability to enjoy life. If we don't know when we will die, all of life seems so lengthy and even infinite to us- a soul-level optical illusion brought about by a kindly ignorance of the greater workings of things. Odin himself gained knowledge of his own son Baldr's impending death, which he could not change, so he speaks from hard experience here. Few people would truly want to know what their Fate had in store for them if it meant knowing everything or most things. And they are right to not want to know.

34. Chronically "sleeping in" implies a laziness or dullness of wits to wise onlookers. It implies that one spends too much time lacking in alertness while others- even their enemies- are up and moving about. But in this verse, with the appearance of a wolf (often associated in Norse and Celtic cultural traditions with warriors and reavers) and the reference to victory, something of the warlike strategy of Odin as the God of War emerges. Getting up "early" relates, possibly, to attacking an enemy first perhaps while they are still sleeping or unprepared. Those who get their forces and strengths together first are advantaged against others who have not yet begun, or who are dragging about.

35. This odd verse, about taking stock of one's firewood and kindling isn't so odd as it appears. There is always a deeply practical element to real wisdom. There is something surprising and immediate about Odin telling people that they have the power to know what they need, and what they have already stored away. This is true not just for people whose lives depended on having enough firewood for cooking and evading the cold but for anyone. Reading this, one might

rightly stop and ask themselves "What things do I really need for the next quarter or half year, and how much of it do I have assured or stored away?"

36. The same sagely God who talked in a minor riddle about the importance of appearance in the human world now seems to step back from that advising people to go to the "council" even if they don't have expensive or nice clothes to wear there- and further advising them to not be ashamed on account of this. It isn't as contradictory as it seems; as with all wise beings, Odin knows how to prioritize what is important for humans. The "council" referred to in this verse is the historical Althing, or the Thing, the assembly of local people, mostly land-owners, but any person of means or importance who lived in a community plus everyone else who wished to participate at some level or at least stay informed about the interior politics of the community.

This community-level organization eventually achieved a nationwide importance in ancient Iceland, but was carried there as a custom from the mainland where it was largely a matter of local assemblies. Odin is telling people not to shun involvement in community. Whatever clothes are good enough to keep you warm and even moderately presentable, and whatever horse is good enough to get you to the gathering, is good enough. Thinking of excuses to exempt yourself from the all-important business of communal life is not wise for many reasons, not the least of which is that you and your allies need to show up and speak your words if you are to have any hope of influencing things in your direction at all. This verse seems to display (and relieve) a tension between the needs of an individual and the needs of a community, but also suggests that there's more to life than appearances, however important appearances may be at times.

37. Larrington suggests that the image of the eagle is an image of a sea eagle, a bird of prey, swooping and looking for anything it can find to eat- like a desperate man looking for any ally. She also suggests that it could be a land eagle that has flown out to sea and is now lost or disoriented.

38. There is a funny saying attributed to Benjamin Franklin that seems to parallel this verse quite humorously well- "Three may keep a secret if two of them are dead."

39. The first two lines of this verse are a wise warning against abusing power. By themselves, they would be valuable for many reasons. But the second two lines ring loud and clear to wise human ears throughout history. In Boorman's classic movie *Excalibur*, Merlin warns Arthur that "there's always someone cleverer than yourself." The parallels between that movie and the treasures of more than a few old wisdom traditions are surprising beyond it simply being a good movie all on its own. Knowing one's limits is again communicated in this verse, as it appears in many places around Havamal. Odin didn't become wise through arrogance, but through realistic appraisals of himself and the worlds he found himself in. As is displayed in the story of Odin's winning of the runes, and all the wisdom and sorcerous power they brought him, he didn't attain that through exalting himself, but through lowering himself, through pain and hanging, to the Underworld. The truly wise can turn any limitation into a gateway to wisdom.

40. In the Old Norse text, only the last two lines of this verse are present. The first two missing lines have been supplied by previous editors from the paper manuscripts. The two lines I included as lines one and two are renderings of what those lines usually say, crafted to fit in with the spirit of my whole work. They are lines about being watchful, wary and careful about whom

you trust.

41. When people know that you won't be much of a burden, they're very happy to take you on or engage you. And if they hear that you're generous, that you give back more than you take, or that you're helpful somehow, they'll always be eager to have you around. This may be one of the realistic observations Odin discovered on his wanderings: even within a system and worldview of hospitality and generosity, people still seek advantages for themselves in these sly ways. It's easy to be hospitable when your guest is not hungry or very low-maintenance.

42. This verse, among others, repeats a strain of wisdom prominent in Havamal that there's truly no such thing as valueless people. Odin's insights into the complex forces that make up every being always allow him to see nuances. Even the worst of people (as it says in verse 133) is not lacking in some sort of virtue or positive feature. This verse relates a primordial form of a wisdom that modern-day psychotherapists often try to help depressed or despondent clients with: when we spend most of our time thinking about what we don't have, we become depressed. If we try to think about what we *do* have in our lives, our assets as much as our deficits, we usually feel better. And every life has assets. Even with the weaving of bad or harmful Norns (Fates) in our lives, the Norns are not all bad. Good fortune is woven into each life, too, in some form or another.

43. This verse describes an image of a dead man outside his house, awaiting his pyre, and his children or heirs inside, warming themselves by the hearth-fire. The living get their life-force and joy from fire and one another; the dead can only get that from their heirs. His wealth didn't protect the dead man from death, but it does help his heirs. The activity of "catching cows" or gaining cows- which were the chief measure of wealth in many places around the Heathen world- is a business of the living. The dead (as it also says in the verse that follows this one) can do nothing of the kind. Odin is suggesting that the power to engage the world, instead of being "outside" the house of the living, and thereby waiting on the living to engage you, is what characterizes the existence of living men and women and is better than being dead.

44. Some rather dismissive modern people love to believe that earlier "barbarian" societies were brutal, uncaring, dismissive, or unkind to members that bore physical deformities, or had other kinds of handicaps. If Odin's talk about the value to be found in every human- even those with severe handicaps- is to be taken as reflective of some aspect of the old Heathen worldview, we are faced with a potent vision of the value of life that defies those cynical notions. Of course, modernists are always in a hurry to convince everyone that we who live now have it far better than any who ever have for one reason or another. Odin states clearly that you have to be dead before you truly have zero ability to contribute positively to the human community. This kind of compassion, wed to very practical wisdom, is as far as you can get from the Nazi regime's "racial hygiene" mania which led to the murder of hundreds of thousands of mentally and physically handicapped German citizens (and others) in the middle of the 20th century.

45. There are some things that only family and kin can do for you or will do for you. Blood is thicker than water; it takes the special bond of blood to bring a higher assurance to some things, especially things that may be considered sentimental or burdensome and not practical- like the heavy work of erecting memorial stones along a roadside. Carved with runic inscriptions, almost

all of them memorial in nature, these stones are found all over Scandinavia and Britain. Family will (or at least should) go distances for kin than even the strongest friendships might falter before.

46. This verse and the verse that follow it are sometimes combined by some translators of Havamal. These verses are just collections of very short little proverbs or wisdom tidbits and mostly seem out of place. Some early copyist of the original manuscript apparently just put there here perhaps lacking any better place to put them. Some are marvelously witty for their short length- "the tongue is the greatest danger to the head" really stands out. As with today, I'm sure more than a few people in earlier times got themselves killed by talking too much or saying the wrong things to the wrong people. Odin's wariness, expecting every cloak to have a fist or an aggressive hand ready to strike underneath, is something we've come to expect from him. I've removed one tiny line saying "A ship's yard is short"- a line intending to simply communicate that ships have cramped quarters. I'm sure that ships have cramped quarters, especially back then, but overall, it doesn't seem to add much of value to the tone of the whole work. This is the only time I removed something from the source material during this project, and I did include it in this note for completion's sake.

47. Verses 76 and 77 are probably the most well-known verses from Havamal. On the surface, they appear to state that property, possessions, friends and family, and even one's own self are mortal and temporary, all bound by Fate to die. Two things, however, outlast one's mortal life: "fair fame" and "the judgment on each one dead." Most readers of Havamal take this to mean that the posthumous reputation of a dead person lives on forever, and thus, it is important to win good fame and a good reputation in life. The term "judgment", when understood in this context, means the judgment of a person's society on what sort of person they were in life. However, Viktor Rydberg has something extra to say about this, and I find it compelling enough to include here. Though he is respected by some, and reviled by others, when Rydberg hits on an important topic, he usually uncovers something quite insightful. He points out in his essential work "Teutonic Mythology" that these lines quite possibly communicate more than appears at first.

The crux of his argument is that the fame and reputations of dead people are anything but immortal and lasting- the vast majority of humankind dies, and after another generation or two has passed, they are not known or remembered at all. If the original author of these verses had intended them to refer to only the very great or celebrated dead- people whose reputations would have the power to last through countless generations- he would have said that; but the final line of verse 77 reads "domr um dauðan hvern"- "the doom (or judgment) on each one dead." For whatever reason, many translators have ignored that hvern means "every" or refers to all and have rendered this line "the judgment on the dead man." In verse 76, the term commonly translated (even by me) as "fair fame" (orðs tirr) is riddled with issues which Rydberg spends a good deal of time puzzling out. The long and short of his argument about the term is that it could not have originally referred to simple good reputation. The term orð means an utterance, a command, a result, or a judgment. It is a parallel or companion word to the term domr (doom, judgment) found in the last line of verse 77. In the Heathen cosmological text *Voluspa*, orð refers to an established law or judgment among the divine powers (Rydberg's words.) He points out that when orð appears in mythical sources, it is connected with judgments pronounced in the Underworld and sent from Urð's fountain out to the many worlds (Urð being the first or chief

Norn or Fate herself.) The term "Urðar Orð" means "Urd's Judgment"- that which must come to pass- whether it concerns life or death. Taken as a whole, Rydberg fills in the blanks and makes the case that "orðs tirr" in Havamal means more than simple "fair fame", but "reputation (a good reputation is implied) based on a decision, on an utterance of authority", that is, divine authorities in the Underworld, the Fateful authorities. Rydberg goes on to say:

"...the judgment which, according to Havamal strophe 77, is passed on everyone dead, and which itself never dies, must have been prepared by a court whose decision could not be questioned or set aside, and the judgment must have been one whose influence is eternal, for the infinity of the judgment itself can only depend on the infinity of its operation. That the more or less vague opinions sooner or later committed to oblivion in regard to a deceased person should be supposed to contain such a judgment, and to have been meant by the immortal doom over the dead, I venture to include among the most extraordinary interpretations ever produced." (Teutonic Mythology p. 341)

For people interested in studying Rydberg's theories about the Heathen notion of the afterlife, his Teutonic Mythology is a great place to start. He uses an enormous amount of mythical, textual, and linguistic evidence to support the believable idea that all of the world's dead were taken to a ring of "domr", a doom-ring or judgment-court, in the Underworld, at the edge of Urð's Well, where the sacred powers and deeper forces passed their domr, their doom on them in the form of a pronounced judgment, a statement of who they were, what their lives were, and of what quality. This was a dispositional declaration which was followed by the deceased person moving onward to whatever place they would enter into a new existence.

I am obviously leaving out many important details for brevity's sake, but those who were some or all of honorable, brave, wise, generous, loyal- all of the qualities Odin intends to create in people with his advice in Havamal, actually- obtained restful, happy, or otherwise positive journeys and homes beyond. Those who were not so well-favored perhaps didn't have as easy a time in their journeys beyond or in the depths. Odin's generously offered advice on how to live well is therefore possibly critical for a person's journey beyond this world; Odin himself sits as one of the exalted dignitaries at the Doom-Ring of the Sacred Powers, after all. I must conclude this note by saying that I believe these two verses are both appealing to human beings to work for a good reputation in this life, to seek "fair fame", but also telling them that a more lasting judgment, of ancestral and deep powers, will be given to them in line with their deeds and Fate.

48. The "runes" mentioned in this verse will be mentioned again later in Havamal when Odin talks about how he won them from the depths of the Underworld via powerful mystical means. The word "rune" means something like "mystery", or something whispered, as in a secret. Though most people associate runes these days with the letters of the Germanic "Futhark" runic alphabets, they probably referred to more than just letters used for short inscriptions on stones and wood and bone. They refer to mystical knowledge, secret knowledge, of the kind that the God of sorcerers and magic- Odin- would win and then use in his character as the Sorcerer-God. Special symbols- whether or not they were the alphabetic rune letters is not known to us- were historically carved onto lots of wood and cast in certain ways to gain messages from the Gods about needful matters. This was referred to as consulting or "asking of the runes"- and this verse refers to some of the etiquette of that process. It says the runes do not lie; that the "Ginnregin" or

the Holy Powers (the Gods and like beings) made them; it says that the "Master Sage"- Odin- "painted them red." This "painting red" refers to the process of painting the carved symbols with either some red paint or blood, which connects the rune-lots to the "blood twigs" mentioned in *Voluspa*.

Odin being the winner of the runes is also the God of their creation and usage, and presumably the primary divinity whose blessings were sought throughout the process of divination with them. To "ask of the runes" really means to consult with mysterious powers, the deeper, the unseen powers, and the final line of this verse states "after this, silence is best"- perhaps the magical or mystical impact of the whole process of divination would be ruined or invalidated if someone spoke of what they learned too much.

49. We begin to head into the section of Havamal where trust and trustworthiness becomes an issue in Odin's wisdom-advice. This first short group of statements are a lesson in not being too quick to praise things (or to use the more common saw, "not counting chickens before they hatch."). One of the statements here merits a quick bit of attention- "praise a woman on her pyre." This could have been rendered "praise a wife on her pyre" too. This relates to note 52 and stanza 84 that discusses the trustworthiness of women generally. To say that a wife or a woman shouldn't be praised until she is on her pyre would seem to indicate that while a wife is still alive, she may still yet prove to be a bad wife. Once she is dead, of course, it's safe to praise her. That sounds pretty cynical or grim especially with regard to women, but there may be more to it- in a society where great men were famous for having huge funeral pyres and funeral feasts and receiving much praise, this line could be a reminder that women- even the simple housewives of simple country folk- deserved praises for their lives at their funerals, too.

50. Hollander points out that Odin (in the first part of this verse) is probably suggesting that people cut wood in the "windy months" of spring and winter before the sap of the trees has risen. The rest is clear: start journeys in good weather (for beginnings ever have omens), be a little low-key with most of your flirting, and be very practical with how you approach things. Of course, Odin's words always have a layer of subtlety to them; as he discusses later, some of his magic, and more than a few of his adventures, deals with the presence of a female partner. To seek the maiden for kisses certainly carries a possible deeper meaning here.

51. Paraphrase: relax by the fire when it's cold out; the ice is slippery and hard to navigate. Use what you need to get over the ice if you must go out. Get a lean horse- one that people are willing to sell for less and make it fat and strong yourself (if you want something done right, chances are, you'll have to do it.) Get a sword when it's tarnished- stained, bloodstained, or rusted; that means it's been used, tested, has had some life behind it and is more trustworthy. Get the horse fattened up in your farm, but let the dog have the run of the yard- dogs can often fend for themselves.

52. No verse is as likely to bring rebukes and charges of misogyny down onto Odin, or onto the historical cultures that produced the spirit of these verses than this one. Of course, what is rendered here must be analyzed in detail before the deeper message of this verse can be understood. I consider this verse (and the controversies that surround it) to be so important, that I am going to analyze it line by line, and bring in evidence from other scholars to support my

claim that no misogyny lurks here. In Old Norse, the verse is rendered:

Meyjar orðum
skyli manngi trúa
né þvís kveðr kona,
þvít á hverfanda hvéli
váru þeim hjörtu sköpuð,
ok brigð í brjóst of lagið.

Translated, word for word, and quite literally, it seems to say "Of a maid (a young woman) her words should no man put trust in. Nor what a woman (or wife) should say (or sing, recite, pledge.) Because on a turning wheel their hearts were shaped (or created.) A fickleness (or a breach, a tendency to break things) lays in their breasts."

The first part of this verse needs little defense; "maiden" refers to very young women, who like very young men, lack the lived experience and wisdom to understand the true gravity of words and oaths. But the untrustworthiness of mature women (kona), who can also be wives, is another matter. Their hearts are said to have been shaped on a turning wheel (often understood by translators to be a potter's wheel but that may not be fully accurate) and in their breasts lies a fickleness or a "tendency to breach" things, like oaths and agreements.

Before we can really understand what this means, we need to understand that women in Old Norse society had the privilege of being able to divorce their husbands at will. Few people today, even those most concerned with women's equality issues, really grasp how much power and independence this gave women in the past. To say that someone's heart was shaped on a turning (or whirling or spinning) wheel is to say that the heart is changeable; and yet, it is true that men and women's hearts are both quite changeable. Odin's statement about women here sounds, on the surface, needlessly pejorative, but when you consider that there is a special association of women or the female form with turning and spinning powers, it makes a touch more sense. The Fates themselves are depicted in Old Norse societies as female. They *spin* the threads of every life; there is an association of the word "wyrd", or Fate, with "turning"- these Nornic powers stand behind even the destinies of the Gods. To depict them as women means that an aesthetic connection existed in the minds of Heathen people between the female form itself and the power of Fate- Fate, which could be kindly one day, and cruel the next. Odin is not lacking in criticism against men; within a few verses of this one, he calls men liars and manipulators, presenting them as untrustworthy, too.

Now, back to the literal Old Norse lines: the term brigð is the term that has caused this passage to seem so problematic. Brigð literally means "breach." Yves Kodratoff, on his incredible website devoted to Old Norse literature (nordiclife.org/nmh) has a beautiful and revealing discussion about the word brigð and its meaning in this verse. By itself, brigð cannot simply mean "fickle," though nearly every translator before now has rendered it that way. Brigð needs to be connected to another word before it fully makes sense in this kind of usage. The example Kodratoff gives is of the term "vináttu-brigð" which literally means "friendship breach"- but which refers to a person who is simply inconstant to their friends, a person who can't be trusted in friendship.

In this verse from Havamal, *brigð* is the subject of the verb *lagið*, which (following Kodratoff) makes it a legal term, which indicates “a right to claim something which belongs to you.” To simply use the term “fickle” here is not a very good translation; it seems to present women as unstable and capricious in a very negative manner- which certainly would be a misogynistic thing. The truth is that this verse is saying that women can break their contracts or pledges to you if they want to- it is, in short, a warning to men that they shouldn't assume that because they've gotten into a marriage pledge or contract with a woman that the deal is done and the woman is now going to just become obedient or exist in some granted way. She has a natural capacity, even a right- planted in her breast- to breach or break contracts she no longer wishes to be a part of. Recall again that Heathen women could divorce at will, and this begins to make more sense particularly in regard to the fact that Odin is speaking this passage specifically to men.

Those still unconvinced persons who still wish to take issue with this passage need to perhaps wonder- what would you rather Odin say about women here? That they are tame, domesticated creatures that men can always trust as soon as they've extracted oaths from them? Or that women are willful, able to breach contracts, and even unpredictable? Women are not presented as flawed here, but powerful, something men have to be concerned about- and dare I say it? They are presented as equal beings that men have to maintain fair and reciprocal bonds with, else they may find that the woman flies away to better allies and husbands or friends. In a social atmosphere of real equality, the two sexes are going to be frustrated with the other- this is a good thing, not a bad one. Odin doesn't advise men to beat their wives into compliance; he simply says be careful in how you trust them for they have (like men) a changeable nature and the power to break contracts- like marriage contracts- if they want. This is something implanted at a fundamental level in women, and men cannot change it; they can only be wary of it. Odin revisits this in Verse 90; only there, he immediately points out how deceitful men are to women, thus bringing to this issue the needed balance. Human nature is changeable- and it might be argued that his characterization of men as manipulative is more pejorative than anything he says about women.

For me, the association of women or the female form with the most fundamental or foundational powers of the entire Heathen worldview- the Fates- long ago answered any concerns I had about the positioning of women in Heathen society. Few today can understand how dark, deep, and potent the Fateful powers were to these people, nor the dark prestige that women all carried- consciously or unconsciously in the eyes of men- by being “more kin” to those powers than men were by virtue of their womanly form.

In Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's excellent book “Women in Old Norse Literature: Body, Words, and Power,” a pretty incontrovertible case is made that (despite the way this verse from Havamal may be rendered) women's status in society, particularly with regards to their ability at contributing words or counsel, was held as anything but “untrustworthy.” She rightly points out that in many sagas and other works, the consequences of ignoring women's words or counsel is disastrous. In the Saga of the Volsungs, Hamðir and Sorli ignore their mother Guðrun's advice not to harm the stones of the earth by polluting them with their brother's blood and end up getting stoned to death. Ragnar Loðbrok's wife, Aslaug, often gives him counsel on military matters that he ignores, and she even warns him that they should not consummate their marriage for three nights- but in not taking her advice (among other misfortunes), his son Ivarr the Boneless is born

with physical defects.

53. This verse, and the one before it, portray a mature perspective on the power of love and desire- it makes fools out of even the wisest people. Odin stands aside and let's love or desire be the awesome force it truly is; he advises that no one criticize other people for what games love plays with their hearts because it can happen to anyone and everyone. Few words in this collection of wisdom sayings are wiser.

54. This verse begins the story of Odin's unsuccessful attempt to win "Billing's Girl", or the daughter of Billing, as a lover. The story is told in very minimal form beginning with verse 96 and ending with verse 101. On the surface, it appears that Odin is smitten by the daughter of Billing, himself a being that the *Hauksbok* version of *Voluspa* identifies as a dwarf. John Lindow further points out that "Cup of the son of Billing" is a kenning for poetry. Since both Giants and Dwarves possessed the magical mead of poetry before the Gods obtained it (thanks to Odin) this makes perfect sense. Also, as he points out, sexual relations between Gods and Dwarves would not be impossible, as Freya is known well for having sexual relations with the Dwarf-craftsmen who created her magical necklace. Odin feels smitten- quite a bit- for Billing's daughter, and she makes him promise not to tell anyone about their expected affair. She bids him to return later for the consummation, but he is thwarted in his attempts to return. When he finally does get back to her bed, he discovers a female dog chained in the bed and realizes he has been duped. The fact that he says he "tried his wiles" on her would indicate that his efforts to get her were far from innocent- he no doubt used love-sorcery on her, a kind of magic he specializes in (as we see in *Havamal* verses 162 and 163.) That makes this "wooing" a sorcerous duel in which Billing's daughter triumphs by deviously deflecting Odin's amorous magic onto a female dog. Dwarven and Giantish powers are very potent, very old, and very wise- powerful enough to challenge even Odin.

55. This verse- verse 104- and all the way down to verse 110, is the second of "Odin's love adventures" included in *Havamal*. This one, which tells the story of the seduction of Gunnlod, and the winning of the *Soul Stirring* mead, or the Mead of Inspiration, is a central story to the entire body of Odin's mythical lore and exploits. Odin's role as a culture-hero and culture-teacher/establisher can be explored in many sacred stories or myths devoted to him, but *Havamal* treats us to two: the winning of the Mead of Inspiration, the winning of the Runes, and the return or rebirth from the deep (detailed later in *Havamal*.)

In this story of Odin and Gunnlod, we have what appears on the surface to be a blistering, cold-hearted defeat for the Giants at the hands of the wily God- as one-sided a victory for Odin as his defeat at the hands of Billing's daughter was one-sided. Odin, in his pursuit of the Odrerir, the "Soul-Stirrer" or the "Soul stirring mead"- the Mead of Inspiration- uses and then abandons Gunnlod, the daughter of the giant Suttung, at whose hall Odin has sought and accepted hospitality. He lies with her for three days and steals the mead that is entrusted to her keeping, stealing away in the form of a snake, then an eagle, to fly his treasure back to the world of the Gods. Odin speaks well of Gunnlod- he has nothing but praise for her- and speaks regretfully at how badly he betrayed her, almost as though he understands that this affair (though it ended up being quite the benefit to Gods and men) was handled darkly and ambiguously.

Some would say it was not ambiguous at all; some would call it plainly dishonorable- a violation of hospitality and trust. Odin isn't trying to hide the fact that, upon this occasion, he is dealing with these Giant-folk not as a shining exemplar of spotless honesty and trust but as a shadowy sorcerer, deceitful and clever- he goes to Suttung's hall with the full intention of stealing this precious mead-treasure under the name "Bölverk"- which means "Bale-worker" or "Evil-doer."

If it ends up being anyone's determination, after reading the story itself and this commentary, that Odin was plainly dishonorable and thus unworthy of the great respect he was paid in the Heathen past or the respect his modern worshipers give him today, it is important to point out that Heathen Gods were not historically presented as, nor believed to be, perfect and flawless exemplars of morality. Even the Gods have their less-than-proud moments of interaction with other beings, and those occasions upon which the Gods violate laws of propriety always set into motion terrible consequences. It is important to note that, in the genuine Heathen way of seeing things, even Gods (and through them, the world as a whole) must pay a cost or suffer unavoidable consequences for violating the Wyrð-scored "rules" of the world system.

While monotheists who are used to their notion of "God" being perfect may scoff condescendingly at the idea of Gods with flaws, one must consider that Heathen Gods were still viewed by historical people as true friends and powerful counselors and protectors to those who worshiped them, and that it is much easier to relate to divine beings who must (as humans must) sometimes suffer negative consequences due to hard, fateful situations in life. This might be thought a more approachable and relatable conception of divinity as opposed to attempting to create a relationship with an austere perfect divine ideal, even if that ideal was believed to briefly take a human form and suffer a painful death before re-obtaining omnipotence.

This story of Gunnlod and the mead, however, has many nuances, many shades and details that must be understood before we can grasp at the complexity of the situation. Every myth can be understood in purely mythological terms, but behind the mythical language and its icons, I believe there always stands a non-mythical basis in many complex worldly and social realities of the distant past. I think that understanding both of these levels is important if we wish to gain the entire picture of wisdom and insight that a myth offers.

In all of the ancient bodies of myth that deal with the theme of Gods stealing treasures from other beings- particularly demonic or Giantish beings- and particularly in the Indo-European myths of the Gods taking a sacred or magical drink from those same types of entities, we are at once dealing with a sacred message about the importance of the "inspiration drink" or the mythical source of poetic and divine inspiration needing to be in the possession of Gods (and therefore human beings who can more easily obtain it from the Gods) as opposed to that same treasure only being in the possession of Giants where it would be (in theory) harder to obtain, if not impossible. The Giants here represent larger, older, more implacable natural powers that never give up their treasures- the deep treasures of the natural world- easily. Godly cunning and wisdom therefore is necessary to see certain treasures wrested from their grasp, and the essence of those things carried to other parts of the world-system where their benefits can be more accessible. In this sense, Odin's theft of the Soul-Stirring Mead is placed in a somewhat broader context of justification.

In the purely Norse mythical sense, Odin and the Gods had a claim on the Mead from long before. When Odin's godly family or group, the Aesir, had made a truce with the Vanir family after their war with one another, they cemented their peace in many ways. One of the most important things they did was to mingle their spittle together into a vat. Their combined spittle became a divine person- Kvasir, a being of great wisdom who traveled far and wide, teaching many great things to all the peoples he came across. However, two dwarves- Fjalar and Galar- murdered him and mixed his blood with honey, creating the Soul-Stirring Mead which they then kept for themselves.

These two dwarves later murdered a Giant named Gilling and his wife. The son of those two Giants was none other than Suttung, who found the two dwarves and treated them (understandably) roughly, demanding compensation for his dead parents. In lieu of being killed by the vengeful Suttung, they gave him the Mead. And that is how it ended up in Suttung's under-mountain home guarded by his daughter Gunnlod. In the standard interpretation of this myth, Odin is after the precious mead-treasure because it is a long-lost heirloom or legacy of the Aesir family. Odin, as the God of Wisdom, has a fateful duty to obtain such powers, such wisdom and inspiration-related treasures, not just for himself, but for his kin which include the other Gods and human beings, too.

Beneath the myth, I believe that actual lost chapters of ancient history- and perhaps even pre-history- can be surmised. I am personally in agreement with John Grigsby, and other scholars and writers, that the mythical "Mead of Inspiration" refers not just to a mythical/metaphysical reality but to a historical one, too. I believe that the Mead of Inspiration or Poetry is a reference to an ancient entheogenic substance, a sacred intoxicant (or a grouping of such substances) that was a prominent feature of many prehistoric European and Asian cultures. I believe that the peoples of the Neolithic had sacred cultic and religious practices associated with the use of this substance, and by it, they obtained very great wisdom and knowledge of sacred things. I further believe that the Indo-European stories of Gods taking the Mead or magical drink from the Giants or demons is a mythologized memory of a time when proto-Indo European and early Indo-European peoples met with these other cultures and engaged in various exchanges with them, sometimes violent ones. In the same manner, I believe that the Aesir-Vanir war represents not just a mythical reality, but a mythologized memory of cultural conflict between early Indo European culture and other cultures of Neolithic Europe.

In the non-mythological language of the myths, "Aesir" and "Gods" refer to the divine persons and concepts and cultic practices of the Yamnaya or Indo-Europeans who appeared ultimately from an eastern homeland around the Black Sea. "Vanir" refer to the divine persons and sacred culture of the Neolithic peoples native to Europe, particularly Western and Northern Europe. "Giants" and even many of the other supernatural "lower" beings, like the Dwarves, refer to other groupings of human cultures, who were somehow distinct from the cultural groupings that we might identify as "Vanic." It may be that the cultures that went under the term "Giantish" were not as culturally developed as the Vanic ones, or not as willing to make "truces" with the Aesiric/Indo-European cultures, and blend with them to become one people, as happened historically in Europe with the many Indo-European peoples and the native Europeans. Whatever the case, Giants and Dwarves remain, in the myths, ambiguous and very much on their own "side" of things, able to be helpful or adversarial to the Vanir-Gods or the Aesir-Gods alike.

It must be remembered that when we analyze myths in this theoretical historical way, seeking to see how the myths might have been partially shaped by historical events, we are *not* attempting to banish the myths or their Gods or preternatural beings. They are perfectly powerful and real, existing as living, powerful forces even as I write this. All cultures mythologize powerful events from their histories. All cultures seek to give names to and make relationships with the strange and sacred powers of this world, and all cultures only have their own languages, assumptions, and histories to do that with. That the "powers" exist is without a doubt. That they have been mythically shaped in the understanding of men and women by many events in the past is also without a doubt.

When we look at the story of Kvasir from the "second angle" of mythologized history, I propose that we are seeing pages of a lost history of the very real cultural treasure of the sacred intoxicant that was such an important part of Neolithic culture-history. I strongly suggest John Grigsby's books "Warriors of the Wasteland" and "Beowulf and Grendel" for those who wish to see a detailed and thoughtful case made for this conclusion. Kvasir, whose name is connected to terms like "squeeze" and "crush" and "fermented drink" has for his own creation myth (the mingling of spittle in a vat) a reference to an ancient peace-making ritual of mingling spittle. But the entire process of fermenting certain beverages through chewing things like berries before spitting them into a container is referenced.

The idea of the two warlike tribes or cultures of divine beings spitting together into a vat to make peace is only a perfect mythical tribute to what historically occurred, as Indo-European and non-Indo European peoples struggled and then flowed together to become one people over time. That their two cultures also mingled their various cultural treasures together to create a being of great wisdom- a teacher who traveled, sharing many things- refers possibly to the new cultures that formed, and then spread their new insights and ways of living.

I believe that the original ancestors of the Indo-Europeans did not have the "sacred drink" of Neolithic Europe. The "native" Indo-European sacred drink, referred to in the Vedas as *Soma*, is not believed by many scholars to have been a substance that brought about hallucinatory or visionary states. It was, instead, likely a powerful stimulant which made men more fierce in battle, or put people in a highly alert state of attention, among other things. I believe that the Mead of Inspiration's true ancestor was from outside of the original Indo European culture, a thing sourced from Neolithic Europe, but that it passed into the hands of the Indo-European peoples, and thence into the hybrid people formed by them and the others they interlaced themselves with, much later.

It is that culture- or groupings of cultures- those blendings of Aesiric and Vanic roots- that moved about, sharing their ways, teaching their knowledge, as represented by Kvasir. To say that Kvasir was murdered, however, by Dwarves, is to say that over a long period of time, certain other cultures and cultural conflicts put a halt to this, and may have destroyed a few of the "Kvasir cultures", but kept- through theft, defeat, or otherwise- the secrets of the magical or entheogenic drink that they had. That these "Dwarves" would then have conflicts with other cultures or tribes- "Giants"- and pay those others off in defeat by in turn giving the secret of the magical drink or substances to them, is also perfectly coherent from this level of analysis.

And much later, that another group of people, descendants of the Aesiric/Vanic union in Old Europe who might have known of legends of the magical drink, might engage those "Giantish" people, and obtain by trickery from them the long-lost secret, giving us the story of Odin winning the mead from the Giants, is also coherent. It is exciting to imagine that behind the story of Odin seducing Gunnlod- herself a witch guarding a magical substance in an underground cavern- may lie the memory of a real culture-hero, a sorcerously powerful man who might be one of the many faceless and forgotten persons who contributed a tangible "human" element to some of the ancient cultural stories that became the later myths of the God Odin.

If one puts together all of these ideas, the mythical and the possible historical, I believe a deeper, more nuanced understanding of what we are seeing in Havamal- and in myths generally- can emerge.

56. The whole story of the winning of the Mead of Inspiration is only known from combining the accounts in Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* and the more minimalistic version of the tale we have (told in Odin's words) in Havamal. Snorri reports that Odin- in his disguise as Bölverk- came to Suttung's lands intending to gain the Mead of Inspiration. Odin sought to gain his "in" by working for Baugi, Suttung's brother, in exchange for a sip of the Mead. Of course, Odin's strategy was a bit more cunning; he met nine of Baugi's slaves who were mowing grain with scythes and offered them a means of working easier- a whetstone that could sharpen their scythes and make the able to cut easier. This worked out for the slaves quite well, and Odin offered to give them the whetstone in exchange for compensation. What ended up happening, however, is that the slaves killed each other in the struggle for the whetstone. Baugi, now lacking his agricultural workforce, accepted Odin (still disguised as "Baleworker") as temporary replacement labor, and Odin did the work of nine men so long as Baugi would promise to try and convince Suttung to let Odin have a sip of the mead in exchange for the work.

In my previous note, I talked about analyzing stories like this from both the mythical level and the possible historical level that might exist behind it. The details of this story seem to suggest a cultural contact- or representatives of one culture coming to another- with superior farming technology and an attempt on their part to trade these technologies for an experience of the secret, well guarded and special magical substance, that the leaders of the other culture might have had access to.

At any rate, Suttung hears of the deal his brother made with Odin; and though Odin worked for an entire season doing the labor of nine men, Suttung refuses to grant even a sip of the Mead to Odin. The mythical motif of the Giantish powers being greedy or unwilling to share their treasures is continued here. Odin gets Baugi to use *Rati*- a device that can bore holes through stone- to tunnel into the mountain below which Gunnlod's chambers are found; and in the form of a snake, he slithers into Gunnlod's home, the place where the mead is kept in her guardianship and lies with her for three nights to gain three gulps or three draughts of the Mead. He drinks it all in and turns into an eagle to fly it back to his home and the other Gods.

Suttung, realizing what has occurred, also has the power to assume an eagle's shape, and he does so to pursue Odin. Odin makes it home to the enclosure of his own beings, his own people, and spits out the mead into vats they have waiting for him. But the chase is very close- the only way

Odin could escape Suttung was to unburden himself of some of the Mead so he urinated some of it out while flying. That mead fell onto the earth outside of the God's homes where it became available to anyone who could find it. This sub-standard portion of the Mead was called the *skáldfífla hlutr*- the "rhymester's share" and was believed responsible for poetry and stories that were not very good. The actual Mead, bestowed upon true poets and inspired people, was in the keeping of the Gods.

57. The Giants- probably looking for the reprobate thief Baleworker- come seeking in the God's halls, asking about him. They don't know if he's there, or if Suttung managed to kill him, but they are seeking news. They clearly do not yet realize that Baleworker was a disguise of Odin.

58. Verse 110 contains elements that suggest a deeper story. The Giants bitterly denounce Odin- now apparently aware of his identity as Baleworker- and mention that he "swore an oath on a ring." The Oath-ring was the standard instrument used in Heathen culture for the swearing of oaths, often a silver or bronze ring anointed with the blood of sacrifices and kept in holy places. Upon them were sworn every kind of oath, and oaths so sworn were naturally inviolate- but in this instance, it's worth noting that marriage oaths were sworn on them, too. The fact that the Giants also claim that Odin "took a drink at Suttung's table" (thus receiving the sacred hospitality of the Giant's hall and home) and that he "left Gunnlod in grief" may hint at a lost layer of this whole story. Some scholars have suggested that these clues might indicate that Odin had engaged in a deceitful arrangement to marry Gunnlod and betrayed her- and his future father-in-law- by fleeing on their wedding night.

59. This verse, like the one before it, speaks of the dangers of getting too amorously involved with witches and sorceresses- at least on the surface. It is an indictment of a particular form of sorcery- *Seiðr*- the sorcery of the Vanir Gods, and thus a reference to indigenous or native sorcerous practices of Neolithic Europe that come from outside of the original purely Indo-European cultural sphere. *Seiðr* maintained a negative reputation among the upper echelons of historical Heathen cultures while remaining an entrenched practice of the sorcerers and other such mystical functionaries of the ordinary people. Even though *Seiðr* is largely associated with women (and always with "wicked" women) it was also utilized by men as well though the patriarchal rulership institutions and cultural prestige institutions in many Heathen cultural regions looked down on *Seiðr* as "unmanly" perhaps hinting that it was believed to have been originally an all-female art or simply associated too much with women for men to engage in without questions being raised about their masculinity.

Seiðr-magic or sorcery emerges from many sources as a kind of magic that was used to attack the minds of its victims. It was utilized for many reasons, but the idea that it could control people's minds, or exert a baleful influence on their minds, is common. In this passage, it is warned that "limbs" might be bound- meaning that a person might be unable to exert themselves or act with confidence or strength- but also that a person might question everything about their ordinary life- they will lose their mind for the counsels of men or kings, won't want to be social and feast (seek out meat) nor look for the company of others. "With sorrow you will go to sleep" indicates a fragmented, troubled mind. Behind this passage, I see more than a little aristocratic cultural propaganda against powerful, sorcerously active men and women who might present perspectives that are at odds with the mainstream cultural norms of a time or place, indicating

that a struggle may always have been taking place, below the surface, between different metaphysical cultural worldviews within Heathen communities. Seiðr would be an institution that ultimately came from a much earlier time, and with it likely carried aspects of a worldview that was at odds, in some places, with the mainstream values embraced by people in various Heathen societies.

Odin isn't warning Loddfáfnir about Seiðkonas, or Seiðr-using women (witches), by simply saying they are evil; he's warning him not to sleep in their arms, which is to say, not to fall in love with them or grow too intimate with them lest that bond lure him away from what is familiar and comfortable to him and into the strangeness that the sorcerous persons always mediate. "Sleeping in the arms" of a witch means to open oneself to their sorcery, to become vulnerable.

60. Though it is not often brought out in modern translations, the Old Norse verse for this passage actually suggests that a person should draw to themselves good persons by the use of "pleasure runes"- actual magical attraction-powers. This is beyond just using good words; this is Odin as a sorcerous instructor saying to Loddfáfnir that using the magic of the Runes to obtain good allies is important. He finishes by suggesting that Loddfáfnir obtain healing songs, too-spells for healing not just sickness but for maintaining the harmony and health of the mind and of bonds between people.

61. The shoes and arrows here may represent more than they appear: shoes are needed for making distance between oneself and danger but also for safely navigating treacherous places; arrows represent not just a means to hunt for food but to defend oneself, too. These extreme situations all speak to occasions of survival and trusting that one has all they need to survive based on the provisions or promises of other people- especially people who aren't directly related to you and thus not very caring about your well being- might be very unsafe. Odin suggests that each person should make certain themselves- check for themselves- that they truly and reliably have what they need for the eventuality of emergency situations. His advice is that it is best to obtain or create what you need for those kinds of situations yourself; the curse of poorly made shoes or arrows is their failure, and the grief and disappointment one will suffer when they fail. I liken this advice to the idea of packing your own parachute or trusting another to do it. It's safe to say that I won't be taking any shortcuts when I pack my own parachute, and nor would I if I were packing a parachute for someone I loved. I can't really have the same certainty for a stranger.

62. This is one of the most hard-hitting verses in the entire collection, and more than most, our modern day has a difficult time comprehending the importance of these simple words. The making of truces and compromises was important among the Ancestors, who had only their words in dealings with each other. They had dense and dangerous political and social situations that they had to navigate just as we do. But it is true now just as it was true then- if you ignore evil or compromise with evil, you will always be on unequal footing, even if the compromise would appear to be mutually satisfying or beneficial, and even if ignoring it or apologizing for it seems to make life easier.

Evil- the destructive force of unbalanced taking, of lack of concern for the well-being of others, of malicious disregard for life or fairness- cannot be a safe partner in anything. Its presence can

never be regarded as safe. Evil thrives because men and women very often compromise with it, learn to accept its presence for countless reasons, and refuse to call it by its true name. But naming evil for what it is becomes a means of damaging its power, of injuring it. If a truce is made with it, then just like truces with enemies, it will never end well. If more people comprehended this fact, and had the bravery Odin wishes for men and women in the face of evil and in the face of enemies, we would live in a different world indeed. "Enemies" in this context refers to deeply entrenched foes of one's family or people, not just personal enemies that may have emerged due to personal differences. Though to be fair, depending on the nature of those differences, personal enemies can surely qualify as "enemies" as Odin means.

63. Misfortunes brought on by evil are never worth celebrating. The kind of satisfaction we might get when our enemies suffer can be rather satisfying, but ultimately, Odin thinks that emotion to be ultimately detrimental. That kind of satisfaction teaches the heart to normalize evil, to accept that it might have a positive role, when it does not. The heart should be glad of things worthy of gladness. This teaches the heart to celebrate things worthy of celebration and keeps it sensitive to what is worthwhile.

64. This verse suggests the presence of sorcerous powers that can be (and usually were) involved in battles or struggles of many kinds. The free souls- or projected souls- of sorcerers and witches, just like the supernatural presence of other fateful entities, were believed to circle above battlefields or places of death and conflict, not unlike the ravens that very often appear as symbols of the same kinds of powers. To "look up" is to become too aware of the forces at play which can be a fatal distraction. When a person is engaged in extreme and dangerous conflict, immediate concerns have to be paramount. One can become bewitched- and thus unable to act properly- if one tries to think or see too deeply at times of high danger. The exploration and discovery of the deeper powers that are behind situations is a task better suited for the time before conflict heats up into battle.

65. This is not the first time that Odin speaks against ageism and on behalf of those who are not as physically or mentally capable as others. Here, Odin refers to the older people who are involved in the sorts of jobs and tasks suited to their inability to fight or hunt or do more celebrated things- they preserve food and hides and do these tasks that are still crucial to a society's well-being. But no less crucial to a society is the wisdom they sometimes have, distilled from long lives and many experiences. Odin is not a mere God of war and warriors, as some people may take him; he is a God of the people, young and old, capable and incapable, seeing with his great power how wisdom can be captured from many different people and places- even the places where food preparation and other drudge or dirty work is going on.

66. Many of the advice-verses offered to Loddfáfnir re-state and reinforce the wisdom tropes given in the first section of Havamal. In this verse and the one before it, the crucial importance of generosity to historical Heathen cultures- and to all positive human relations and interactions besides- is restated and emphasized. To "give rings" (referring to arm-ring treasures given by chieftains and kings to their warriors and to their guests) is a poetic way of referring to the act of giving gifts and being generous. Odin's insistence in the previous verse that "people in need" be treated well (Hollander translates: "do good to the wretched") rings loudly down through the ages and into our greedy world of extreme wealth disparity.

However, Odin does pay homage the necessary practical "other side" to this generosity: "Strong is the beam that must be raised to allow everyone to enter." This means that a door's bolt has to be strong if a person's generosity is open to all, or if it's going to be open for many. Odin is saying that if you are going to be generous, you need to have the strength to be so, the power to carry through with whatever degree of generosity you manifest, because the more generous you are, the more people will expect, and the harder it will be to set limits when limits have to be set.

Don't set yourself up to be more generous or hospitable than you can be. It would be misleading to do so, and wealthy persons in Heathen times relied on reputations of generosity and hospitality to maintain their social standing. They would have had a reason to want to appear more generous and capable than they really were. But if you have a weak door-beam, meaning not that much actual strength in your hall, declaring yourself "open to all" will spell disaster. Blind generosity, like blind hospitality, carries dangers.

67. This verse presents us with a medley of old magical charms and magical and medicinal lore. The idea of the earth curing drunkenness may have originally referred not just to drunkenness, but sickness due to bad ale, and the idea of ingesting earth to help the bowels or to purge may be indicated. Ingesting clay to neutralize poisons is a well known "old wives cure" from many places. Fire, heat, and warmth's power to fight off illness, purify things, or accelerate healing from sickness, is mentioned in this verse; the bark of oak was likewise once used as a cure for colic. The "ear of corn" being a cure for witchcraft or malevolent magic- particularly the magic that steals or diminishes well-being and prosperity- clearly speaks to an old belief that grains of wheat represent plenty and abundance and can act as counter-measures to life diminishing magic, perhaps in a talismanic way. The Elder Tree curing home-strife may descend from the Lithuanian belief (which I first encountered in the writings of Yves Kodratoff) in the *Kaukai*, the spirits who live at the roots of Elder Trees, and for whom gifts can be made- particularly gifts of clothing- who then were believed to protect the tranquility and domestic harmony of a house.

The moon being invoked for help in another kind of strife- a violent encounter- is placed alongside the Elder Tree magic for keeping strife away from a home. The Elder stops family fights; the moon protects people during the fights of warriors through some means or association that was probably known to the Ancients but not remembered by us. Alum being used to treat bites that are festering refers again to an old treatment for wounds; Runes (mysterious magical powers not the letters of the Runic alphabet) are accorded with the power to stop bad luck, and lastly, "The grassy field drinks in all floods"- a final line that suggests that the Earth itself finally absorbs all troubles or problems without fail and always. This can be understood as a metaphysical or magical statement, and perhaps poetically as a more expansive statement about the passing of the ages of time, and the way the floods of human troubles and dramas all end up gone and vanished beneath the ground and below the memory of human beings.

68. This verse begins the legendary "Rune winning ordeal" for which Odin is best known. He describes an act of self-sacrifice while hanging on the World-Tree, Yggdrasil, whose name means "Steed of Ygg" or "Steed of the Terrible One", which is a reference to Odin himself with the tree being his mount for this operation of wisdom-gaining. Yggdrasil is described as a "needle-ash" which is a poetic reference to a Yew tree whose toxins can cause altered states or death. For nine nights- a strongly magical period connected to the concept of Nine as the time of

gestation and coming to birth (or rebirth)- Odin hangs wounded from this "windswept" tree indicating that it stands apart, possibly, from other trees in a lonely place. All of this begs not just for a mythological interpretation, but a possible historical one as well- it may be describing a "shamanic" type ordeal in which a human sorcerer (like the God himself) undergoes a terrible death/vision quest to obtain power and insight from another world.

Odin describes the ordeal as "Myself given to myself"- a mysterious line that can mean many things. It would appear that Odin is simply describing himself as a sacrifice to himself as the God of wisdom. But it seems strangely unsatisfying if one leaves it at that.

It may be that Odin is revealing that he- perhaps in common with all beings- has a personal as well as a transpersonal reality. He (the personal) can be given to Himself (the other side of his personal identity, the transpersonal, which actually involves far more than just his personal self; it embraces all things, and in being given to it, Odin obtains a kind of omniscience.) This "all-embracing" nature of the transpersonal reality is supported by the fact that Odin is rewarded for this sacrifice by gaining direct knowledge of the Runes, the mysterious forces underlying reality itself, which are only found at the roots of the world. The transpersonal reality of Odin clearly extends even to the roots of things as it extends everywhere else.

Odin describes the Tree he is hanging from- the World Tree- as having its roots, and therefore its origin in a mysterious place that no one knows. The World Tree is an Ancestral way of expressing the very structure of this whole world or of reality itself. That this world is based upon, or in its deepest structure supported by, something that extends from an unknowable place is an elegant statement of the limits of mystical experience being translated into language. Whatever we think we know about this world, it extends from a place that is far beyond our knowledge or belief. Ultimately, the transpersonal realities of all ordinary things and persons partake of the very same fact.

What is carried forth by this passage is something that is implicit in this work but seldom made explicit: Rune-magic or mysticism is tied to the World Tree, the worship of the Tree, and relationship with it. Odin dies on it, but is a partner to it, too, as a rider is partner to a horse. In some deeper esoteric way, Odin *becomes* the Tree when he passes in his awareness into the Transpersonal aspect of himself, because like the transpersonal which seems to be unlimited or expansive in space and time, the Tree, too, through roots and branches unites all places and is the image of the universe-structure itself, containing all that is.

69. Odin's ordeal including not just being marked or wounded by a spear but by the added torment of fasting, abstaining from food and drink. At the culmination of his visionary quest, he plunges downward in his vision and peers into the deep, at the roots of the World Tree, and comprehends the mysterious powers- the Runes- before "seizing" them and crying aloud. "Thereafter I fell back" indicates his return from that state of ecstasy. It is very important to note that the "Runes" won by Odin in this quest were not the letters of the historical Runic alphabets. The Runes referred to here are mysterious powers, things that give rise to spells and magical operations, and which undergird many metaphysical realities that the world is based upon. The Runic letters of historical Runic alphabets were used by Heathen Rune-workers and magicians to *magically express* the more mysterious powers which are the true "Runes." But before a person

can use the ordinary letters to make magical or mysterious words or phrases or designs in this way, a person must- through initiation or instruction- gain the more secret Rune or Runes that underlie this world. Fortunately, Odin has made this information available and rendered these experiences possible to humans as we shall see.

70. Odin speaks in this verse to two of his three great "wisdom gaining" acts: the fact that he gained a drink from the Well of Mimir (Mimir being the Giant who is the "Son of Bolthorn" and Odin's maternal uncle and clearly an instructor or initiator of Odin into the primal mysteries) after sacrificing one of his eyes in exchange for that drink and winning the power of deeper Memory from this cosmos, along with other supernatural powers ("nine mighty spells.") He also recounts his winning of the Mead of Wisdom or Inspiration from Suttung, too. His third wisdom or power-gaining act is, of course, his self-sacrifice on the World Tree. What "order" these things occurred in, mythologically, is not a thing that can be known; and indeed, since they are mythological events, belonging to a timeless world of strange power, they need not be subjected to such ordered thinking.

71. Verses 142 and 143 contain interesting cosmological information regarding the existence of the magical forces that underlie the universe- the Runes, which Odin "won" or learned through his ordeal. He tells human would-be magicians or Rune-workers that they must find the Runes; they must find the "carved staves of counsel", the "strong staves which the Mighty Sage (Odin) painted." But note that while Odin may have painted or carved or drawn Runic secrets on staves, he *didn't create* the Runes themselves; the "Holy Powers" did that. Odin merely "carved them among the Gods." He took what he obtained from deeper powers and revealed them, carving them on staves to make them a tangible part of the Godly reality, preserving them thus.

Thus, Odin's role as a teacher of sacred things, a teacher of magical arts, is laid bare. But Odin acts as a teacher of the Runes, the mysteries, to Gods and to human beings specifically. Other powerful sagely beings, who doubtless won the Runes in their own manners, in sagas and stories that we have either lost or which were never in the possession of humans to begin with, act as Rune or Mystery teachers to other classes of beings: Dáinn mediates this special esoteric knowledge or the Runic arts to the Elves, the beings who are (among other things) the post-mortem souls of deceased humans; Dvalinn mediates this to the Dwarves, who can be understood as the strange persons who fulfill the role of the underlying creative and formative powers of the world; Ásviðr mediates this to the Giantish beings. All beings have their own claims on and access to the magic that is based on the underlying mysterious powers of the cosmos (the Runes) thanks to these sages that have obtained those arts and shared them.

72. This verse is a very nuanced (and fittingly mysterious) collection of questions that ask a person if they understand how to engage the mystical Rune-art, owing to their mastery of the various skills and processes that are required for many different acts involved in Rune magic. I will give the Old Norse verse here for ease of explanation below.

Veistu hvé rísta skal?

Veistu hvé ráða skal?

Veistu hvé fá skal?

Veistu hvé freista skal?

Veistu hvé biðja skal?
Veistu hvé blóta skal?
Veistu hvé senda skal?
Veistu hvé sóa skal?

"Rísta" means to carve, etch, or scrape. It can also mean gash, hack, or chop. This first question is basically asking if a person has the carving skills necessary to render the Runic words, signs, or phrases necessary to bring a Runic act of magic into being in this world. "Ráða" means to advise, to decide, to rule, or explain. It seems to be asking if a person has the power to determine what sorts of Runic operations or magical operations would be best for a given situation- and whether or not a person can read and interpret the mysterious things themselves, for instance in an act of divination or omen-finding. "Fá" means to draw or paint, but it also means to fetch, to win, to get something. It asks if a person can obtain the necessary formulas or signs or phrases, and render them in painting or drawing.

"Freista" means to try, to test, or to tempt. It is asking if a person can tempt the powers of the Runes or test them to see if they are potent. There is a minor idea here, possibly, of putting the strange powers behind the magic on a kind of trial- perhaps assigning to the power a period of working. "Biðja" means to beg or to ask. It is asking if a person knows how to properly approach or interact with the mysterious powers, asking for what one needs, or perhaps even begging for what one needs, if it is required. "Blóta" means to sacrifice (to the Gods.) While the institution of sacrifice itself wasn't a formal part of Runic magic, it is clear that there was a relationship between the magic of the mysterious powers, of the mystic's interaction with the mysterious things, and the cultural institutions of sacrifice to the Gods by which all of the persons of a Heathen community maintained their bonds of gratitude and generosity with the Gods. Asking a person if they know how to sacrifice to the Gods here would seem to suggest that a relationship with the Gods was necessary at times to Runic mysticism, and truly, it could not be otherwise as the Runes themselves were made available to men and women thanks to the benevolence of a God.

"Senda" means to send, dispatch, or to dedicate, the latter two words being a potential reference to death, in the fatal sense of dispatching a person or animal, or of dedicating a sacrifice to a God. A sorcerer could also send a malevolent spirit to harm an enemy. This line seems to ask the person if they know how to send forth the mysterious power channeled by the Runic charms or magic they are performing. It could also be asking if they can "kill" another, or stop their own charms or magic if needs be.

"Sóa" means to exhaust, to slaughter, or wipe out- it is a harsh word. It might be better thought to mean something like "destroy utterly." This line might be asking if a person knows how to exhaust a power that they have worked with or conjured, stopping it utterly if the case is required. It may suggest something much darker than this even, something that ages of translators and readers of Havamal have been hesitant to even try to give words to. Slaughtering in the sense of human sacrifice, or making blood sacrifices of many kinds to Gods and strange beings, has long been a part of human magic and religion.

73. One of the cornerstone ideas of the historical Heathen world- which had not only crucial

social implications, but deep metaphysical ones, as well- is encapsulated by the line (which is stated in many different ways) "A gift always seeks for a gift." Some say "A gift demands a gift" or "a gift always calls for another." In my rendering, I have "Always a gift seeks a gift in return."

The idea is quite simple, and incontrovertible: if someone is generous with you, or gives you a gift, you are under an unspoken and very sacred obligation to return the favor at some point. You must *never* fail in this obligation, but the obligation must *never* be made overt; to be asked by a person who gave you a gift why you haven't given a gift in return would be unthinkable and bring great dishonor on the person who asked. For you to say "I owe that person because they did this for me" in too public a way would also be a rude sort of violation- it is an underlying, organic, intuitive realization that we can and should do for each other in a very reliable and mutual way, and it must never be made too overt or overt at all.

A gift comes with certain obligations to make sure the gift-giver sees benefit of some sort (if a person can manage it) for what they did for another. There is a deeper kind of debt at work here though not the kind of warped financial slavery we recognize as "debt" today. I'm speaking of deeper social bond-debt, or benefit-debt, the debt you have to those in your community who always do many things to help you and others, and the debts humans have to the Sacred Powers and the mysterious powers for all they give to mankind. We must react to this by simply being generous to each other and keeping the chain of generosity going. Gift-giving can be (and was) a fundamental part of that. This includes us showing gratitude to the Gods by making gifts to them, too.

Everyone is in metaphysical debt to others and to the underlying sacred powers from the moment they are born, but this is no shame; it's the basis for all social bonds, and it's just reality. There's no way humans could ever truly repay the Gods or Holy Powers for all they have given. Sacrifices given by humans to the Gods don't begin to repay it; but the debt isn't supposed to be repaid in some ultimate way. It is maintained as part of an ongoing sequence of bond, of gratitude, of relationship. The same is true in human communities. Just giving what one can in a spirit of real gratitude is enough. That maintains good tidings and bonds. Shaming another by pointing out what they owe or do not owe is lethal to the entire sacred notion of mutual gifting and sharing.

In this background of unavoidable but positive relational metaphysical debt, Odin says that it is always better to ask less rather than more of the Gods and mystical powers. The reason being that we already have much given to us; to attempt to bribe the Gods with huge sacrifices would almost be the same thing as making a statement that the Gods haven't been generous enough. But the sacred forces that underlie our world have provided enormous quantities of power, life, kinship, and creativity to mankind. Odin's mediating of the Runes to mankind is just one example of an inestimable gift that we could never repay.

So it's better to ask less, than to sacrifice too much; we should be moderate in how we ask the Gods for things as opposed to immoderate, which might be perceived as a great rudeness or ingratitude. It's better not to slaughter at all (which can refer to sacrifices but also to lethal magic, to war, or anything else) than to slaughter or "use up" things too much- there is a great danger in unbalancing the strange powers in this way. This might be a warning especially about accessing

any sort of magic or "wyrd" thing too much. These kinds of foundational realizations of wisdom were realized and manifested by *Thund* (another by-name for Odin, which means "Thunderer") before humans even emerged into the world and were given as gifts to man later, to help them to live gratefully and non-wastefully. Odin is called "He who came back, when he rose from the deep," referring to his mystical-sacrificial death and return from the deep places in which he obtained the mysteries, the Runes, and with them, the great and timeless wisdom to describe this reality and how beings best interact within it. The wise rules that govern a working society, as well as the laws of magic, came from another world- and specifically from the depths of this world. Odin is here revealed as the great culture-teacher and placer of the primal layers of human cultural interaction and wisdom.

74. Havamal's final verses are Odin describing magical spells or powers that he knows, that he can use, and which he obtained throughout his many power-gaining adventures. This first spell- the one he calls "Help"- appears to be a general, all-purpose spell for escaping stressful, depressive, or anxiety-ridden situations.

75. This spell, which would appear to be against arrows fired in war or in battle, may also refer to the magical arrows that were symbols of malevolent magical sendings or dangerous powers seeking to strike people down or harm them in a spiritual sense. This is the idea that underlies "Elf Shot" in folklore- that predatory spiritual powers hurl arrows to kill living people, and that sorcerers and magicians could sometimes do the same. More than a few of Odin's charms deal with resisting the powers or countering the powers of other sorcerers or magicians or supernatural beings.

76. This spell's description seems to make reference to the idea that a curse can be sent against someone by burying some physical aspect of the spell-work, like a carving of some sort, at the roots of a sapling. As the tree grows, the dangerous spell grows in power and harms the person it is aimed at slowly, but more strongly over time. That Odin has a counter-spell for this might imply that this was once a common kind of curse. In Odin's counter-spell, an "ulcer", a painful and perhaps ultimately fatal condition, grows in the person who did the sending not the target of the sending.

77. It might seem odd to modern people to imagine a spell being needed to calm down hatred or bad blood between warriors, but in the world of the Ancestors, strife between kin or the fighting-men of a leader could be a very real disaster. The "sons of warriors" could also be a reference to the sons of nobles or a reference to powerful people who can engage in society-wrecking feuds or disagreements. That Odin has mediation magic, a magic that "set right" feuds or arguments, would have been a power beyond value to the Ancients.

78. With this spell, Odin shows his command over the projected spirit-bodies of sorcerers and witches (called "hedge riders" or "house riders", referring to the fact that this kind of spirit or soul-projection sorcery, like much of *Seiðr* otherwise, was done on elevated platforms and on the roofs of houses and the like) and his ability to misguide them or misdirect them in a rather fatal way or at least a way that might destroy their minds and leave them mad: he can stop them from easily returning to their own bodies and to the body-soul that remains behind when they project their separable souls from their bodies to work (usually malevolent) magic.

Odin has this kind of power and insight into the workings of witches and sorcerers specifically because he is not only a practitioner of the magic related to the mysteries of the Runes; his myths present him as having learned Seiðr sorcery from other beings too, making him a master of that art as well. He is very able to deal with soul-projecting sorcery and spiritual warfare and threats of this nature. This kind of "soul-separating" sorcery would not be the unique domain of human Seiðr-workers, but also of other kinds of beings that had the power to do so, and their own kinds of harmful magic to utilize.

79. The Dwarf Thiodrerir is not found in any other historical Heathen source, but it seems worth mentioning that his name looks very similar to Odrerir, the Soul-Stirring Mead of Inspiration or poetry that Odin won from the Giants. This spell of Odin's would appear to have been memorized by him when he heard a mystically inspired or magically powerful Dwarf sing a song "before Delling's Door"- a poetic reference to the dawn. The song gave strength to the Gods, renown (or victory) to the Elves, and wisdom to Odin.

80. This final spell presents a final mystery that no amount of scholarship will likely ever answer. Odin will not reveal this spell to any woman unless he lies in her arms, or she is his sister. Odin is not recorded as having sisters in known myths, but the "sister" here is obviously an esoteric circumlocution for another kind of entity or person that might have an intimate relationship with him. That he may teach this spell to a woman whose arms surround him- a lover, a woman that he lies in embrace with- gives further clues. There is an element of eroticism or deep relationship required for the transmission of this spell. This transmission can only go to female entities; it is clear that men (even though he doesn't spell this out) are excluded from receiving this power or spell, whatever it is. He gloats a bit about keeping this one a very guarded secret.

I can only speculate that the woman whose arms might be around him, or perhaps also his sister, is a reference to the concept of the Fetch-mate, or the Fetch-bride, the "soul mate" who represents a mystical power attached to the lives of living persons, a protective power who can also enter into a sexual kind of union with the person they follow and protect. This "soul mate" is an aspect of Hamingja, of inherited and ancestral luck-power that each person manifests through birth and life in this world. If Odin is making reference to the idea that he has a Hamingja-Maiden, a Fateful power that is attached to him and mediates to him his own luck-power, as a human man might have, he may be referring to her. That kind of entity could be like a "sister" of types, esoterically. But he also may be simply referring to a spell that he saves for female entities that he engages in romantic acts with, and whom he wishes to gift with this knowledge, or female entities that he comes to identify so closely with that they might be thought "sisters" to him, esoterically.

There is also the obvious thought that the "One who holds him in her arms" is a reference to his wife Frigg, and if this be the case, what he might have taught her is known only to them.

* * *

Appendix:Hávamál in Old Norse

1

Gáttir allar
áðr gangi fram
um skoðask skyli
um skygnask skyli
því at óvíst
er at vita
hvar óvinir
sitja á fleti fyrir

2

Gefendr heilir
gestr er inn kominn
hvar skal sitja sjá?
Mjök er bráðr
sá er bröndum skal
síns um freista frama

3

Elds er þörf
þeims inn er kominn
ok á kné kalinn
matar ok váða
es manni þörf
þeims hefir um fjall farit

4

Vats er þörf
þeims til verðar kœmr
þerru ok þjóðlaðar
góðs um æðis
ef sér geta mætti
orðs ok endrþögu

5

Vitz er þ q rf
þeim er víða ratar
dælt er heima hvat
at augabragði verðr
sá er ecci kann

oc með snotrom sitr

6

At hyggjandi sinni
skylit maðr hræsinn vera
heldr gætinn at geði
þá er horskr ok þögull
kømr heimisgarða til
sjaldan verðr viti vörum
því at óbrigðra vin
fær maðr aldregi
en manvit mikit

7

Hinn vari gestr
er til verðar kømr
þunnu hljóði þegir
eyrum hlýðir
en augum skoðar
svá nýsisk fróðra hverr fyrir

8

Hinn er sæll
er sér of getr
lof ok líknstafi
ódælla er við þat
er maðr eiga skal
annars brjóstum í

9

Sá er sæll
er sjalfr of á
lof ok vit meðan lifir
því at ill röð
hefr maðr opt þegit
annars brjóstum ór

10

Byrði betri
berrat maðr brautu at
en sé manvit mikit
auði betra

þykkir þat í ókunnum stað
slíkt er válaðs vera

11

Byrði betri
berrat maðr brautu at
en sé manvit mikit
vegnest verra
vegra hann velli at
an sé ofdrykkja öls

12

Era svá gótt
sem gótt kveða
öl alda sonum
því at færa veit
er fleira drekkur
síns til geðs gumi

13

Ómínnishegri heitir
sá er yfir öldrum þrumir
hann stelr geði guma
þess fugls fjöðrum
ek fjötraðr vask
í garði Gunnlaðar

14

Ölr ek varð
varð ofrölví
at hins fróða Fjalars
því er öldr bazt
at aprtr of heimtítr
hverr sitt geð gumi

15

Þagalt ok hugalt
skyli þjóðans barn
ok vígdjarft vera
glaðr ok reifr
skyli gumna hverr
unz sínn bíðr bana

16

Ósnjallr maðr
hyggsk munu ey lifa
ef hann við víg varask
en elli gefr
honum engi frið
þótt honum geirar gefi

17

Kópir afglapi
er til kynnis kømr
þylsk hann umbeða þrumir
alt er senn
ef hann sylv um getr
uppi er þá geð guma

18

Sá einn veit
er víða ratar
ok hefr fjölð um farit
hverju geði
stýrir gumna hvern
sá er vitandi er vits

19

Haldit maðr á keru
drekki þó at hófi mjöð
mæli þarft eða þegi
ókynnis þess
var þik engi maðr
at þú gangir snemma at sofa

20

Gröðugr halr
nema geðs viti
etr sér aldrtega
opt fær hlægis
er með horskum kømr

manni heimskum magi

21

Hjarðir þat vitu
nær þær heim skulu
ok ganga þá af grasi
en ósviðr maðr
kann ævagi
síns um mál maga

22

Vesall maðr
ok illa skapi
hlær at hvívetna
hitki hann veit
er hann vita þyrpti
at hann era vamma vanr

23

Ósviðr maðr
vakir um allar nætr
ok hyggr at hvívetna
þá er móðr
er at morni kømr
alt er vil sem var

24

Ósnotr maðr
hyggr sér alla vera
viðhlæjendr vini
hitki hann fiðr
þótt þeir um hann fár lesi
ef hann með snotrum sitr

25

Ósnotr maðr
hyggr sér alla vera
viðhlæjendr vini
þá þat fiðr
er at þingi kømr
at hann á formælendr fá

26

Ósnotr maðr
þykkisk alt vita
ef hann á sér í vá veru
hitki hann veit
hvat hann skal við kveða
ef hans freista firar

27

Ósnotr maðr
er með aldir kœmr
þat er bazt at hann þegi
engi þat veit
at hann ekki kann
name hann mæli til mart
veita maðr
hinn er vætki veit
þótt hann mæli til mart

28

Fróðr sá þykkisk
er fregna kann
ok segja hit sama
eyvitu leyna
megu ýta synir
því er gengr of guma

29

Ærna mæli
sá er eva þegir
staðlausu stafi
hraðmælt tunga
nema haldendr eigi
opt sér ógótt um gelr

30

At augabragði
skala maðr anna hafa
þótt til kynnis komi
margr þá fróðr þykkisk
ef hann freginn erat
ok nái hann þurrfjallr þruma

31

Fróðr þykkisk
sá er flótta tekr
gestr at gest hæðinn
veita görla
sá er of verði glissir
þótt hann með grömum glami

32

Gunnar margir
erusk gagnhollir
en at virði vrekask
aldar róg
þat mun æ vera
órir gestr við gest

33

Árliga verðar
skyli maðr opt fá
nema til kynnis komi
sitr ok snópir
lætr sem solginn sé
ok kann fregna at fá

34

Afhvart mikit
er til ills vinar
þótt á brautu búi
en til góðs vinar
liggja gagnvegir
þótt hann sé firr farinn

35

Ganga skal
skala gestr vera
ey í einum stað
ljúfr verðr leiðr
ef lengi sitr
annars fletjum á

36

Bú er betra
þótt lítit sé

halr er heima hverr
þótt tvær geitr
eigi ok taugreptan sal
þat er þó betra an bœn

37

Bú er betra
þótt lítit sé
halr er heima hverr
blóðugt er hjarta
þeim er biðja skal
sér í mál hvert matar

38

Vápnnum sínum
skala maðr velli á
feti ganga framar
því at óvist er at vita
nær verðr á vegum úti
geirs um þörf guma

39

Fanka ek mildan mann
eða svá matar góðan
at værit þiggja þegit
eða síns féar
svá gjöflan
at leið sé laun ef þiggr

40

Vápnnum ok váðum
skulu vinir gleðjask
þat er á sjalfum sýnst
viðr gefendr ok endrgefendr
erusk vinir lengst,
ef þat bíðr at verða vel

41

Vápnnum ok váðum
skulu vinir gleðjask
þat er á sjalfum sýnst
viðr gefendr ok endrgefendr
erusk vinir lengst,

ef þat bíðr at verða vel

42

Vin sínum
skal maðr vinr vera
ok gjalda gjöf við gjöf
hlátr við hlátri
skyli hölðar taka
en lausung við lygi

43

Vin sínum
skal maðr vinr vera
þeim ok þess vinr
en óvinar síns
skyli engi maðr
vinar vinr vera

44

Veiztu, ef þú vin átt
þann er þú vel trúir
ok vill þú af hánum gótt geta
geði skaltu við þann blanda
ok gjöfum skipta
fara at finna oft

45

Ef þú át annan
þanns þú illa trúir
vildu af honum þó gótt geta
fagrt skalt við þann mæla
en flátt hyggja
ok gjalda lausung við lygi

46

Þat er enn of þann
er þú illa trúir
ok þér er grunr at hans geði
hlæja skaltu við þeim
ok um hug mæla
glík skulu gjöld gjöfum

47

Ungr var ec forðom
fór ec einn saman
þá varð ec villr vega
auðigr þóttomz
er ec annan fann
maðr er mannz gaman

48

Mildir, fræknir
menn bazt lifa
sjaldan sút ala
en ósnjallr maðr
uggir hotvetna
sýtir æ glöggr við gjöfum

49

Váðir mínar
gaf ek velli at
tveim trémönnum
rekkar þat þóttusk
er þeir rift höfðu
neiss er nökkviðr halr

50

Hrörnar þöll
sú er stendr þorpi á
hlýr-at henni börkr né barr
svá er maðr
sá er manngi ann
Hvat skal hann lengi lifa?

51

Eldi heitari
brinn með illum vinum
friðr fimm daga,
en þá sloknar
es hinn sétti kómr
ok versnar allr vinskapr

52

Mikit eitt

skala manni gefa
opt kaupir sér í lítlu lof
með hálfum hleifi
ok með höllu keru
fekk ek mér félagu

53

Lítilla sanda
lítilla sæva
lítill eru geð guma
því at allir menn
urðut jafnspakir
hálf er öld hvar

54

Meðalsnotr
skyli manna hverr
æva til snotr sé
þeim er fyrða
fegrst at lifa
er vel mart vitut

55

Meðalsnotr
skyli manna hverr
æva til snotr sé
því at snotrs manns hjarta
verðr sjaldan glatt,
ef sá er alsnotr er á

56

Meðalsnotr
skyli manna hverr
æva til snotr sé
ørlög sín
viti engi fyrir
þeim er sorgalausastr sefi

57

Brandr af brandi
brinn unz brunninn er
funi kveykisk af funa
maðr af manni

verðr at máli kuðr
en til dælskr af dul

58

Ár skal rísa
sá er annars vill
fé eða fjör hafa
sjaldan liggjandi úlfr
lær um getr
né sofandi maðr sigr

59

Ár skal rísa
sá er á yrkendr fá
ok ganga síns verka á vit
mart um dvelr
þann er um morgin sefr
hálftr er auðr und hvötum

60

Þurra skíða
ok þakinna næfra
þess kann maðr mjöt
ok þess viðar
er vinnask megi
mál ok misseri

61

Þveginn ok mettr
ríði maðr þingi at
þótt hann sét væddr til vel
skúa ok bróka
skammisk engi maðr
né hests in heldr
þótt hann hafit góðan

62

Snapir ok gnapir
er til sævar kørnr
örn á aldinn mar
svá er maðr
er með mörgum kørnr
ok á formælendr fá

63

Fregna ok segja
skal fróðra hverr
sá er vill heitinn horskr
einn vita
né annarr skal
þjóð veit ef þrír ro

64

Ríki sitt
skyli ráðsnotra
hverr í hófi hafa
þá hann þat finnr
er með fræknum kørnr
at engi er einna hvatastr

65

Orða þeira
er maðr öðrum segir
opt hann gjöld um getr

66

Mikilsti snemma
kom ek í marga staði
en til síð í suma
öl var drukkit
sumt var ólagat
sjaldan hittir leiðr í lið

67

Hér ok hvar
myndi mér heim of boðit
ef þyrftak at málungi mat
eða tvau lær hengi
at ins tryggva vinar
þars ek hafða eitt etit

68

Eldr er beztr
með ýta sonum
ok sólar sýn

heilyndi sitt
ef maðr hafa náir
án við löst at lifa

69

Erat maðr alls vesall
þótt hann sé illa heill
sumr er af sonum sæll
sumr af frændum
sumr af fé ærnu
sumr af verkum vel

70

Betra er lifðum
en sé ólifðum
ey getr kvíkr kú
eld sá ek upp brenna
auðgum manni fyrir
en úti var dauðr fyr durum

71

Haltr ríðr hrossi
hjörð rekr handarvanr
dauftr veigr ok dugir
blindr er betri
en brenndr sé
nýtr manngi nás

72

Sonr er betri
þótt sé síð of alinn
eptir genginn guma
sjaldan bautarsteinar
standa brautu nær
nema reisi niðr at nið

73

Tveir ro eins herjar
tunga er höfuðs bani
er mér í heðin hvern
handar væni

74

Nótt verður feginn
sá er nesti trúir
skammar ro skips rár
hverf er haustgríma
fjölð um viðrir
á fimm dögum
en meira á mánuði

75

Veita hinn
er vættki veit
margr verður af aurum api
maðr er auðigr
annarr óauðigr
skylit þann vítká vár

76

Deyr fé
deyja frændr
deyr sjálfr it sama
en orðstírr
deyr aldregi
hveim er sér góðan getr

77

Deyr fé
deyja frændr
deyr sjálfr it sama
ek veit einn
at aldri deyr
dómr um dauðan hvern

78

Fullar grindr
sá ek fyr Fitjungs sonum
nú bera þeir vánarvöl
svá er auðr
sem augabragð
hann er valtastr vina

79

Fljóðs metnaðr honum þróask

en mannvit aldregi
fram gengr hann drjúgt í dul

80

Þat er þá reynt
er þú at rúnum spyrr
inum reginkunnum
þeim er gerðu ginnregin
ok fáði fimbulþulr
þá hefir hann bazt ef hann þegir

81

At kveldi skal dag leyfa
konu er brennd er
mæki er reyndr er
mey er gefin er
ís er yfir kœmr
öl er drukkit er

82

Í vindi skal við höggva
veðri á sjó róa
myrkri við man spjalla
mörg eru dags augu
á skip skal skriðar orka
en á skjöld til hlífar
mæki höggs
en mey til kossa

83

Við eld skal öl drekka
en á ísi skríða
magran mar kaupa
en mæki saurgan
heima hest feita
en hund á búi

84

Meyjar orðum
skyli manngi trúa

né því er kveðr kona
því at á hverfanda hvéli
váru þeim hjörtu sköpuð
brigð í brjóst um lagið

85

Brestanda boga
brennanda loga
gínanda úlfi
galandi kráku
rýtanda svíni
rótlausum viði
vaxanda vági
vellanda katli

86

Fljúganda fleini
fallandi báru
ísi einnættum
ormi hringlegnum
brúðar beðmálum
eða brotnu sverði
bjarnar leiki
eða barni konungs

87

Sjúkum kálfi
sjálfráða þræli
völu vilmæli
val nýfeldum

88

Akri ársánum
trúi engi maðr
né til snemma syni
veðr ræðr akri
en vit syni
hætt er þeira hvárt

89

Bróðurbana sínum
þótt á brautu mæti
húsi hálfbrunnu

hesti alskjótum
þá er jór ónýtr
ef einn fótr brotnar
verðit maðr svá trygggr
at þessu trúi öllu

90

Svá er friðr kvenna
þeira er flátt hyggja
sem aki jó óbryddum
á ísi hálum
teitum tvévetrum
ok sé tamr illa
eða í byr óðum
beiti stjórnlausu
eða skyli haltr henda
hrein í þáfjalli

91

Bert ek nú mæli
því at ek bæði veit
brigðr er karla hugr konum
þá vér fegrst mælum
er vér flást hyggjum
þat tælir horska hugi

92

Fagrt skal mæla
ok fé bjóða
sá er vill fljóðs ást fá
líki leyfa
ins ljósa mans
sá fær er fríar

93

Ástar firna
skyli engi maðr
annan aldregi
opt fá á horskan
er á heimskan ne fá
lostfagrir litir

94

Eyvitar firna
er maðr annan skal
þess er um margan gengr guma
heimska ór horskum
gørir hölða sonu
sá inn mátki munr

95

Hugr einn þat veit
er býr hjarta nær
einn er hann sér um sefa
øng er sótt verri
hveim snotrum manni
en sér øngu at una

96

Þat ek þá reynda
er ek í reyri sat
ok vættak míns munar
hold ok hjarta
var mér in horska mærr
þeygi ek hana at heldr hefik

97

Billings mey
ek fann beðjum á
sólhvíta sofa
jarls ynði
þótti mér ekki vera
nema við þat lík at lifa

98

Auk nær apni
skaltu Óðinn koma
ef þú vilt þér mæla man
alt eru ósköp
nema einir viti
slíkan löst saman

99

Aptr ek hvarf

ok unna þóttumk
vísun vilja frá
hitt ek hugða
at ek hafa mynda
geð hennar alt ok gaman

100

Svá kom ek næst
at in nýta var
vígdrótt öll um vakin
með brennandum ljósum
ok bornum viði
svá var mér vílstígr of vitaðr

101

Ok nær morni
er ek var enn um kominn
þá var saldrótt um sofin
grey eitt ek þá fann
innar góðu konu
bundit beðjum á

102

Mörg er góð mærl
ef görva kannar
hugbrigð við hali
þá ek þat reynda
er it ráðspaka
teygða ek á flærðir fljóð
háðungar hverrar
leitaði mér it horska man
ok hafða ek þess vættki vífs

103

Heima glaðr gumi
ok við gesti reifr
sviðr skal um sik vera
minnigr ok málugr
ef hann vill margfróðr vera
opt skal góðs geta
fimbulfambi heitir
sá er fátt kann segja
þat er ósnotrs aðal

104

Inn aldna jötum ek sótta
nú em ek aptr um kominn
fátt gat ek þegjandi þar
mörgum orðum
mæltu ek í minn frama
í Suttungs sölum

105

Gunnlöð mér um gaf
gullnum stóli á
drykk ins dýra mjaðar
ill iðgjöld
lét ek hana eptir hafa
síns ins heila hugar
síns ins svára sefa

106

Rata munn
létumk rúms um fá
ok um grjót gnaga
yfir ok undir
stóðumk jötna vegir
svá hætta ek höfði til

107

Vel keypts litar
hefi ek vel notit
fás er fróðum vant
því at Óðrerir
er nú upp kominn
á alda vés jarðar

108

Ifi er mér á
at ek væra enn kominn
jötna görðum ór
ef ek Gunnlaðar ne nytak
innar góðu konu

þeirar er lögðumk arm yfir.

109

Ins hindra dags
gengu hrímþursar
Háva ráðs at fregna
Háva höllu í
at Bölverki þeir spurðu
ef hann væri með böndum kominn
eða hefði honum Suttungr of sóit

110

Baugeið Óðinn
hygg ek at unnit hafi
hvat skal hans tryggðum trúa?
Suttung svikinn
hann lét sumbli frá
ok grætta Gunnlöðu

111

Hlýdda ek á manna mál
of rúnar heyrða ek dæma
né um ráðum þögðu
Háva höllu at
Háva höllu í
heyrða ek segja svá

112

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
nótt þú rísat
nema á njósn sér
eða þú leitir þér innan út staðar

113

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
fjölknigri konu
skalattu í faðmi sofa

svá at hon lyki þik liðum

114

Hon svá gørir
at þú gáir eigi
þings né þjóðans máls
mat þú villat
né mannskis gaman
ferr þú sorgafullr at sofa

115

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
annars konu
teygðu þér aldregi
eyrarúnu at

116

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
á fjalli eða firði
ef þik fara tíðir
fásktu at virði vel

117

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
illan mann
láttu aldregi
óhöpp at þér vita
því at af illum manni
fær þú aldregi
gjöld ins góða hugar

118

Ofarla bíta
ek sá einum hal
orð illrar konu;
flárað tunga
varð honum at fjörlagi
ok þeygi um sanna sök

119

Ráðumk þér, Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
veistu ef þú vin átt
þann er þú vel trúir
far þú at finna oft
því at hrísi vex
ok hávu grasi
vegr, er vættki treðr

120

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
góðan mann
teygðu þér at gamanrúnum
ok nem líknargaldr meðan þú lifir

121

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
vin þínum
ver þú aldregi
fyrrí at flaumslitum
sorg etr hjarta
ef þú segja ne náir
einhverjum allan hug

122

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir

en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
orðum skipta
þú skalt aldregi
við ósvinna apa

123

því at af illum manni
mundu aldregi
góðs laun um geta
en góðr maðr
mun þik gørva mega
líknfastan at lofi

124

Sifjum er þá blandat
hverr er segja ræðr
einum allan hug
alt er betra
en sé brigðum at vera
era sá vinr öðrum
er vilt eitt segir

125

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
þrimr orðum senna
skalattu þér við verra mann
opt inn betri bilar
þá er inn verri vegr

126

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
skósmiðr þú verir
né skeptismiðr
nema þú sjálfum þér sér

skór er skapaðr illa
eða skapt sé rangt
þá er þér böls beðit

127

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
hvars þú böll kannt
kveðu þat böllvi at
ok gefat þínum fjándum frið

128

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
illu feginn
verðu aldregi
en lát þér at góðu getit

129

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
upp líta
skalattu í orrostu
gjalti glíkir
verða gumna synir
síðr þitt um heilli halir

130

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
ef þú vilt þér góða konu
kveðja at gamanrúnum
ok fá fögnuð af
fögru skaltu heita
ok láta fast vera
leiðisk manngi gott ef getr

131

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
varan bið ek þik vera
en eigi ofvaran
ver þú við öl varastr
ok við annars konu
ok við þat it þriðja
at þjófar ne leiki

132

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
at háði né hlátri
hafðu aldregi
gest né ganganda

133

Opt vitu ógörla
þeir er sitja inni fyrir
hvers þeir ro kyns er koma
erat maðr svá góðr
at galli ne fylgi
né svá illr at einugi dugi

134

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
at hárum þul
hlæðu aldregi
opt er gott þat er gamlir kveða
opt ór skörpum belg
skilin orð koma
þeim er hangir með hám
ok skollir með skrám
ok váfir með vílmögum

135

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
gest þú né geyja
né á grind hrekir;
get þú váluðum vel

136

Rammt er þat tré
er ríða skal
öllum at upploki
baug þú gef
eða þat biðja mun
þér læs hvers á liðu

137

Ráðumk þér Loddfáfnir
en þú ráð nemir
njóta mundu ef þú nemr
þér munu góð ef þú getr
hvars þú öl drekkur
kjós þú þér jarðar megin
því at jörð tekr við öldri
en eldr við sóttum
eik við abbindi
ax við fjölkynngi
höll við hýrógi
heiptum skal mána kveðja
beiti við bitsóttum
en við bölvu rúnar
fold skal við flóð taka

138

Veit ek at ek hekk
vindga meiði á
nætr allar níu
geiri undaðr
ok gefinn Óðni
sjálfr sjálfum mér
á þeim meiði
er manngi veit
hvers hann af rótum renn

139

Við hleifi mik sældu
né við hornigi
nýsta ek niðr
nam ek upp rúnar
æpandi nam
fell ek aptr þaðan

140

Fimbulljóð níu
nam ek af inum frægja syni
Bölpórs Bestlu föður
ok ek drykk of gat
ins dýra mjaðar
ausinn Óðreri

141

Þá nam ek frævask
ok fróðr vera
ok vaxa ok vel hafask
orð mér af orði
orðs leitaði
verk mér af verki
verks leitaði

142

Rúnar munt þú finna
ok ráðna stafi
mjök stóra stafi
mjök stinna stafi
er fáði fimbulpulr
ok gørðu ginnregin
ok reist Hroptr rögna

143

Óðinn með ásum
en fyr álfum Dáinn
ok Dvalinn dvergum fyrir
Ásviðr jötnum fyrir
ek reist sjálfr sumar

144

Veiztu hvé rísta skal?

Veiztu hvé ráða skal?
Veiztu hvé fá skal?
Veiztu hvé freista skal?
Veiztu hvé biðja skal?
Veiztu hvé blóta skal?
Veiztu hvé senda skal?
Veiztu hvé sóa skal?

145

Betra er óbeðit
en sé ofblótit
ey sér til gildis gjöf
betra er ósent
en sé ofsóit
svá Þundr um reist
fyr þjóða rök
þar hann upp um reis
er hann aptr of kom

146

Ljóð ek þau kann
er kannat þjóðans kona
ok mannskis mögr
hjálp heitir eitt
en þat þér hjálpa mun
við sökum ok sorgum
ok sútum görvöllum

147

Þat kann ek annat
er þurfu ýta synir
þeir er vilja lækna lifa

148

Þat kann ek it þriðja
ef mér verðr þörf mikil
haptis við mína heiptmögu
eggjar ek deyfi
minna andskota
bítat þeim vápn né velir

149

Þat kann ek it fjórða

ef mér fyrðar bera
bönd at bóglimum
svá ek gel
at ek ganga má
sprettr mér af fótum fjöturr
en af höndum hapt

150

Þat kann ek it fimmta
ef ek sé af fári skotinn
flein í fólki vaða
flýgra hann svá stinnt
at ek stöðvigak
ef ek hann sjónum of sék

151

Þat kann ek it sétta
ef mik særir þegn
á rótum rams viðar
ok þann hal
er mik heipta kveðr
þann eta mein heldr en mik

152

Þat kann ek it sjaunda
ef ek sé hávan loga
sal um sessmögum
brennrat svá breitt
at ek honum bjargigak
þann kann ek galdr at gala

153

Þat kann ek it átta
er öllum er
nytsamligt at nema
hvars hatr vex
með hildings sonum
þat má ek bæta brátt

154

Þat kann ek it níunda
ef mik nauðr um stendr
at bjarga fari mínu á floti
vind ek kyrr
vági á
ok svæfik allan sæ

155

Þat kann ek it túnda
ef ek sé túnriðir
leika lopti á
ek svá vinnk
at þeir villir fara
sinna heimhama
sinna heimhuga

156

Þat kann ek it ellipta
ef ek skal til orrostu
leiða langvini
undir randir ek gel
en þeir með ríki fara
heilir hildar til
heilir hildi frá
koma þeir heilir hvaðan

157

Þat kann ek it tólpta
ef ek sé á tré uppi
váfa virgílná
svá ek ríst
ok í rúnum fák
at sá gengr gumi
ok mælir við mik

158

Þat kann ek it þrettánda
ef ek skal þegn ungan
verpa vatni á
munat hann falla
þótt hann í fólk komi
hnígra sá halr fyr hjörum

159

Þat kann ek it fjórtánda
ef ek skal fyrða liði
telja tíva fyrir
ása ok álfa
ek kann allra skil
fár kann ósnotr svá

160

Þat kann ek it fimmtánda
er gól Þjóðreyrir
dvergr fyr Dellings durum
afl gól hann ásum
en álfum frama
hyggju Hroptatýr

161

Þat kann ek it sextánda
ef ek vil ins svinna mans
hafa geð alt ok gaman
hugi ek hverfi
hvítarmri konu
ok sný ek hennar öllum sefa

162

Þat kann ek it átjándá
er ek æva kennik
mey né manns konu
alt er betra
er einn um kann
þat fylgir ljóða lokum
nema þeiri einni
er mik armi verr
eða mín systir sé

163

Þat kann ek it átjándá
er ek æva kennik
mey né manns konu
alt er betra
er einn um kann
þat fylgir ljóða lokum
nema þeiri einni
er mik armi verr
eða mín systir sé

Nú era Háva mál
kveðin Háva höllu í
allþörf ýta sonum
óþörf jötna sonum
heill sá er kvað
heill sá er kann
njóti sá er nam
heilir þeirs hlýddu

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Robin Artisson wears out his human time in northern Midgard, in the old region of Vinland—sometimes near its stony and forested shores, sometimes jaunting through the wooded interior, but always enjoying that region's four perfect seasons, its old and strange spirits, and its kindly and quiet people. He writes, conducts seminars devoted to spiritual ecology and sorcery, and seeks to live wisely.