

GRÍMNISMÁL ON THE EDDIC STAGE

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Magnus Olsen was the first who succeeded in reading Grímnismál as a comprehensible whole, where the situation sketched out in the prose-frame gave the drift to Grímnir's monologue /Olsen 1933/. Its descriptive stanzas were interpreted by Olsen as Grímnir's 'hallucinations' (closely associated with what was happening on the stage); the more obscure ones - as galdrar. In recent years several scholars - chiefly specialists in ethnography and comparative mythology - have brought some new ideas into discussion. We are persuaded by their powerful argumentation that Grímnismál comprises, indeed, a complicated net of motifs, each of its characters having his own 'view' on the situation.

Geirrǫðr, who, ostensibly, has plotted it all, has the goal to exterminate by fire the sorcerer's magic power /Schjódt 1988/. But Grímnir is not an ordinary sorcerer. The torment he is subjected to turns into the ordeal, or the ritual recurrence of the initiation of the god. Grímnir-Óðinn is performing the rite which is instrumental for his 're-viving' on a higher level of being /van Hamel 1932; Schröder 1958; Meletinskij 1973/. But as distinct from the 'original' Óðinn's initiation (see Hávamál 138-141) the abundant mythological knowledge which is produced in the course of the rite is conveyed by the god to the third character 'on the stage' - to young Agnarr who has handed him a horn with a drink. Thus, for Agnarr the situation is mostly aimed at his being consecrated a king by Óðinn /Fleck 1971/.

It is obvious, though, that these motifs are not of equal importance to a philologist. For 'den højere tekstkritikk' Óðinn's view is the only relevant one, for Óðinn is the speaker. However, some of the critics are inclined to think that the situational drift of Grímnir's speeches is not relevant at all for their interpretation. Bo Ralph has argued that

the solutions, suggested by Olsen, Schröder and others, exciting in themselves, lean too heavily on the information imposed by the prose-frame. The latter being removed (as the section of 'obviously' late origin) we are left with what we had from the start - a vast collection of mythological knowledge presented for its own sake and some obscure stanzas that, probably, conceal some more knowledge/Ralph, 1972/.

Being myself an admirer of Olsen and Schröder I would agree with Bo Ralph on one point. The interpretation of the text might have been still more convincing if philologists had found some inner mechanisms of actualizing the speeches. I will try to detect these mechanisms in their verse form.

By putting the question this way I mean that the major eddic metres, ljóðaháttir and fornyrðialag, are functionally different from the metres of modern poetry. They are linked with the corresponding genres not by literary convention ('νομῶν') but by nature ('φύσει'). Unlike modern metres, whose semantic value is secondary to their capability to arouse literary associations /Gasparov 1979/, the eddic metres are communicative by virtue of their own structural properties.

Let us turn to the structure of ljóðaháttir or, more precisely, of its full-line. I am not going to indulge in counting its stresses. This labour-consuming task seems to be of minor importance and, probably, insoluble. When we say that the full-line is accentually lax - and this is incontestably true - we can not mean anything other than that its metrical stresses are not abstracted from its natural sentence stresses. And, if so, our argumentation becomes inevitably circular when we try, nevertheless to find the predominant stresses (the lifts) in the line. But the laxity of the full-line has an important limitation: it does not affect its closing element. The word occupying this position, which is also the closing word of the sentence, is, on the contrary, remarkably rigid. This word is marked out by both linguistic and metrical means.

(1) In some 75 percent of instances /Heusler 1889 - 1969/ we find a short-stemmed disyllabic word ('stumpf') in this position. It is essential that such structures function in Old Ger-

manic as phonologically indissoluble (bimoric) units, i.e. they can not be divided into syllables /Kuryłowicz 1949; Liberman 1982, 57, IBI ff.,237/. This phonological property of short disyllabic words is reflected in the well-known rule of metrical resolution: words like Muninn are normally equated to monosyllabic words like miðr, i.e. they function as the marked substitutes of the latter. Thus, the remarkable property of ljóðaháttir close is that it gives preference to the marked structure making use of miðr type only of its occasional substitute.

(2) The closing short-syllable word functions as a metrical-ly autonomous unit (close, or cadence, proper) cut off from the rest of the line. It follows from the fact that its treatment in metre does not depend on the rhythmical context, i.e. on the accentual 'weight' of the preceding word; cf. Grm 20.6 þó síðk meirr um / Muninn and 20.3 ierunggrund / yfir. We remember that elsewhere in the regular forms of the alliterative verse the rule of resolution does not operate in the position immediately after the stress: in this position Muninn behaves like unnir, i.e. occupies two metrical positions (a lift and a drop). Thus, the full-line of ljóðaháttir functions as a binary structure with its two components - the lax sequence of words and the quantitative close - sharply contrasting each other.

(3) And last but not least. In the vast majority of instances the closing word of the full-line is marked off by alliteration; cf. Grm 20.6 þó síðk meirr um Muninn; I2.3 sér um gerva gali; I4.6 en hálfan Óðinn á. This fact, though partly predetermined by the lack of choice for alliteration, is especially conspicuous, for it most clearly opposes the full-line to the long epic line in fornyrðislag. In the latter, as we know, the closing word is excluded from alliteration, or, what is the same, is accentually subordinated to the penultimate word of the line.

Now, I would venture the opinion that the 'end-oriented' structure of ljóðaháttir and its full-line, suggestive in itself, might shed some new light on the anthologized facts of the Germanic alliterative verse and call for reconsideration

of a few major points of its prehistory. We should take into account, first, that the accentual pattern of the Common Germanic long line, as it is marked off by alliteration, should not be taken for granted. On the contrary, it is a universally accepted fact of comparative prosody that most of the existing verse forms irrespective of their prosodic features tend to give special prominence to the closing element of the line which functions as its boundary signal. In the accentual verse, whose line is governed by laws of sentence stress, this universal tendency is still strengthened: the end of the line in this case corresponds to the position of the final sentence stress. It is often believed that the accentual pattern of the long line is determined either by some specific features of the Early Germanic sentence stress or by the very fact of initial alliteration (which causes redistribution of principal stresses in the line). The case of *ljóðahátttr* makes such explanations unlikely or, at least, insufficient. Nothing prevents alliterating words from cramming towards the end of its full-line; cf. Grm I.4.6 *en hálfan Óðinn á*; 34.3 *en þats of hyggi hverr ósviðra apa*.

Taking these facts into account, I would like to suggest that the accentual pattern of the long line is determined neither by structural features of the Early Germanic nor by the demands of alliteration as such but rather by specific conditions of epic narration as distinguished from other varieties of archaic bundit mál. The original picture of various metrical (or 'proto-metrical') forms is completely obscured in the West-Germanic area. Preliterary non-epic forms could not survive here and new ones, i.e. 'minor genres' of the Old English poetry (elegies, maxims, riddles, Caedmon's Hymn) have developed, in the most literal sense of the word, along the lines of the epics, i.e. have acquired both its metre and its formulaic style. But the specific structure of the epic long line remains beyond the scope of the present paper.

It seems significant in this respect that *ljóðahátttr* displays both structural and functional affinity with all the non-epic forms of bundit mál extant in the Old Icelandic literature.

The binary structure of its full line bears resemblance to the structure of the dróttkvætt line (with the necessary reservation that in the latter all the structural devices are formalized and divorced from their original communicative functions). It is to be expected that the dróttkvætt close requires still more effective metrical and linguistic markers. It is marked by a hending, i.e. the sound device especially valued by skalds as the resource of the 'beauty' (*fagrö*) of the verse. For the same reason, the dróttkvætt close requires a prosodic structure which would allow no syllabic substitutions. The structure \acute{x} (unnir) exactly answers this requirement: though on the surface, just a most ordinary word structure in the Old Norse, it fixes the close (trysyllables like O.E. hamores being not tolerated in the Old Norse).

The sayings (maxims, proverbs), as we know them from sagas, are not poetry, and they use alliteration but sparingly. It can not be a mere chance, therefore, that in the witticisms of young Grettir (chapters XIV-XVIII of the saga) the closing word is more often than not marked off by alliteration. In the absence of the regular stress pattern the closing word tends to be the 'heaviest' in the sentence. Cf.:

XIV. Litit verk ok lögmannligt; Vinr er sá annars, er ills varnar; Heitt mun þat um hönd; Illt er at eggja óbilgjarnan; Þetta er kalt verk ok karlmannligt; Verðr þat er varir, ok svá hitt, er eigi varir; XV. Þræll einn þegar hefnisk, en agr aldri; XVIII. Mart er gmátt, þat er bert á gfökveidum.

Such sayings are placed, so to speak, midway between ljóðaháttir maxims (as in Hávamál) and skaldic lausavísur. Their semantic and structural affinity to the first can be seen from the following examples:

<u>Grettis saga</u>	<u>Hávamál</u>
Verðr þat, er varir, ok svá hit, er eigi varir.	40.6 Margr gengr verr en varir.
Vinr er sá annars, er ills varnar.	124.6. era sá vinr görom, er vilt eitt segir.

The functional affinity of Grettir's sayings to his own lausavísur is demonstrable from the saga itself as it goes:

as a boy Grettir begins with reviling witticisms and kyðlingar, but soon learns to use more effective devices of regular skaldic íþrótt in similar circumstances.

The immediate pragmatic function of this 'thriving towards the end' is displayed in the best way by the galdralag stanzas, i.e. the eddic version of 'authentic' Old Norse galdrar. Structurally, galdralag differs from ljóðaháttir in one respect: it redoubles all its closing elements. In fact, the full-line is reinforced here by a parallel (variative) full-line, and its close, most characteristically, is repeated in both lines (the device of 'epiforiskt fullrim', as Ivar Lindquist has called it /1923, 47/. Cf. in the closing and in the opening stanzas of Hávamal: I64.3-4 allþerf ýta sonom, /þerf ígna sonom; and I.I-4 Gattir allar, / aðr gangi fram,

um skoðaz skyli,

um skygnaz skyli.

The latter stanza is known also from Gylfaginning, where Snorri makes Gylfi recite it (not necessarily as a 'quotation' from Hávamal) at a most critical moment when he enters the hall of the 'Aðrir'. True, Snorri adduces the stanza in its abridged and weakened ljóðaháttir form. But what makes this place in Gylfaginning so instructive for our discussion is the way Snorri restores the original function of the galdralag / ljóðaháttir maxim by placing it within a particular situational context which gives birth to it /cf. Shippey 1977,29/. The 'general truth' of the Spruchdichtung appears to be a text of vital importance for the speaker - a charm against the evil eye (M. Olsen's reconstruction).

To sum up. I believe that the characteristic 'end-orientation' of all the non-epic texts (with a special reservation for the skaldic poetry, see above) has a most obvious communicative function. All the texts under discussion have a clear-cut communicative perspective - towards hic et nunc of the actual situation. All of them have developed as realizations of direct speech, endowed with special poetic and pragmatic ('magic') function. As one of the Old English charms has it,

... and h̄y gyllende ḡaras s̄endan.
 Ic him ȝberne aft wille sendan
 fl̄ogende fl̄an forane tȝḡeanes.

" And /the mighty women/sent whizzing spears; / I will send them back another / Flying arrow in their faces" ("Charm against a Sudden Stitch in the Side", II.7-9).

Ljóðaháttir of the eddic poems (with the notable exception of Hávamál; cf./von See 1972/) works as a powerful instrument of dramatizing the action. There is a world of difference between the speeches in Atlafmál or Hambismál incorporated in the narrative context and reaching the ear as if from a-far (Hm 2-4 *Vara þat nú, /ná í gmr- / þat hefir langt / líbit s̄þan*) and the dramatic dialogues of Þor Skírnis ('einseitige Ereignislied') whose each word has the powerful impact on the scenic situation and requires the adequate response of the audience. But the same is true of the 'Wissendichtungen'. What seems on the surface but a collection of mythological knowledge neatly wrapped into stanzas and distributed in the poem is in fact presented by the virtue of verse as an intricate game whose outcome depends on the 'moves' of the participants. To appreciate the game the audience should know its rules and understand how to decode its language. The scholar attempts to do the same by means of his textual criticism. A superb example of such critical analysis can be found in H. Klingenberg's article on Alvíssmál /Klingenberg 1967/. We are persuaded by the author that Þórr has won the game because he was a better player and knew how to outwit the omniscient dwarf.

In double-speech scene of Alvíssmál the dramatic tension is achieved by changing the speakers; in Grímnismál - by changing the speech planes of Grímnir's monologue. The performative speeches of the god between two fires (Grímnir promising, threatening, uttering spells) give place to descriptive speeches (the pictures of the mythic worlds) or are inserted within them. At first, there is a gap between these two planes. The pictures of the land that lies ásom ok álfom nær (4.3) arises abruptly after the opening words of Grímnir 'on the stage' (conjuring the fire not to touch him and promising

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The dissonant element in this stanza (closing the thula of mythic rivers) is the conjugation þvíat "because". What might be the causal link between the flame of Bifröst and the boiling waters of the rivers, on the one hand, and the trial (council) of the Æsir under the ash of Yggdrasill, on the other? This point remains unclarified in the critical literature. I believe, that this link once again is motivated by the actual situation 'on the stage'. The vision of the flame and the boiling rivers is provoked by the 'real' fires and boiling kettles - the instruments of Grímnir's torture /cf. Olsen, 271-72/. Grímnir foresees in these words the wrath and the trial of the Æsir, that lie in store for the tormentor (cf. Grm. 51. and 53.4). This reading is in agreement with the modal and temporal value of skal raða, the prophetic future being amalgamated in it with the gnomic (iterative) present (hverian dag).

The objects implied in stanza 29 are materialized in stanza 42, where Grímnir promises the favour of Ull and all the Æsir to those who will quench the fire, and goes on: 42.4-6 þvíat opnir heimar / verða of ása sonum, / þá er hefia af hvera ("... when the kettles are taken away"). The line 4-5 might be translated either as "the worlds will lie open for (or "about"?) the Æsir's sons" or, with Schröder, as "offen werden die Welten über dem Asem" (where of ása sonum is a 'poetic plural'). In both cases the purport of the stanza is the same: it says that the barriers are removed between Grímnir and the rest of the Æsir.

Now the long-awaited support (45.3 vilþiorg) is near, and the time approaches when the gods reunite Ægis bekkj á, / Ægis drekko at (45.6-7). In stanza 45 we see Grímnir moving vigorously: 1-2 Svipom hefi ek nú yft / fyr sigtíva sonum "I have raised my face towards the sons of the victorious gods" or "I have raised /myself/ with a swift movement...". The second reading/Schröder, 355/ which derives svipom from svipr "swift movement" (as in skaldic sverða svipr) is, certainly, preferable. The god has straightened himself ready to perform the final act of self-embodiment. Óðinn begins reciting his names.

The function of the thula as a performative text sui generis is implied by the nature of the names which comprise it. Óðinn's names are at the same time 'true' ('genuine') and 'deceptive' ('fictitious'). They refer or allude to Óðinn's true qualities but nevertheless are used by him for concealing his identity - as his masks /Lieberman 1989/. He invents them for particular occasions of his travelling in different worlds, and their temporary, situational value is determined by the grammatical form hétomk in the very first line of the thula (46.I-2 Hétomk Grímr, /hétomk Gangleri). As the thula goes on, Óðinn displays his intentions more explicitly, i.e. mentions some situations and names the victims of his onomastic tricks: 50.I-3 Sviðurr ek Sviðrir / er ek hét at Sökkmíra, /ek dulða ek þann inn alna iðunn. His final gesture appears still more impressive in this context: Grímr 'on the stage' throws off his mask and reveals his true identity before Geirrþór: 53.3 nú knáttu Óðinn síð!

And the linguistic aspect of this duality of the names (being at the same time 'genuine' and 'fictitious') should not remain unnoticed. In spite of the fact that some of the names of the thula are known from other eddic poems, from skalds and Snorra Edda (Grímr, Heriann, Belverkr, Flgnir, and so forth) and some of them allude to certain myths (unknown to us as in the case with Óðinn's adventure at Sökkmíra), it seems very likely that a number of names have been created by the god on the spur of the moment and, thus, exist only within the alliterative lines of the thula. Óðinn performs his magical action with the aid of poetry.

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