Formulaic Theme and Wisdom in Eddic Poetry

Christopher Mawford

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2024

Abstract

This thesis explores how wisdom was delivered in Eddic poetry via the mechanism of formulaic theme. It demonstrates how the delivery of wisdom was a vital part of Eddic poetry, and that even poems not typically counted amongst the wisdom canon contain the same elements found in texts such as *Hávamál*. Additionally, this thesis explores how the formulaic delivery of wisdom developed from the earliest poems to the latest. This can further inform us on the fundamental creation of Eddic poetry.

After establishing the methodology of this study in the introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides an in-depth analysis of David Crowne's 1960 theory of the 'hero on the beach' and how such a study may not just be translated from the Old English tradition to the Old Norse, but also across genres from the Heroic to Wisdom, using episodes from *Hávamál* to illustrate this.

Following this study, the thesis progresses through the Codex Regius considering the following poems: *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál*, *Reginsmál, Fáfnismál*, and *Sigrdrífumál*. *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* are found in Chapter 3, along with an analysis of the various forms of staging wisdom and the types of wisdom delivered. Chapter 4 features the three Sigurðr poems, and shows how the wisdom formulaic theme crosses over from the wisdom mythological poem in the heroic poetry, and the impact that this crossing over has on the delivery of wisdom.

Chapters 5 and 6 are each dedicated to a single poem, *Grípisspá* and *Sólarljóð* respectively, as these poems serve to illustrate the different ways in which the theme developed and stagnated.

Chapter 7 is the final summation chapter and shapes all the previous analysis into a cohesive theory of what precisely was needed in the theme, and what could change as its users needed.

Finally, the conclusion offers some final commentary, before exploring how the theory could be studied further beyond the scope of this thesis.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance, guidance, and support of numerous people.

I could not hope for better supervisors than those I had, Judith Jesch and Paul Cavill, both of whom left their marks on the thesis as a whole and on me personally. My examiners, John Baker and Hannah Burrows, gave vital feedback, and provided me with the best of experiences in the viva that they ran, giving me the opportunity to talk and talk about a subject that I am passionate about.

The whole of the CSVA, and the English department more broadly, provided me with a supportive environment for the thesis, and I feel improved as a person for the incidental kindnesses and productive environment that all offered. Additionally, those who attended the reading groups that I organised all provided a relaxing space to engage with the languages that we all enjoyed, and particularly in the depths of Covid they provided a much-needed lifeline.

I am lucky to have been able to call so many of my PhD colleagues friends throughout my time at the university. Special mention should go to those who I shared office LG43 with: Cassidy, Ruby, Amy, Emma, Lizzie, Lexi, and Ghozayel. I count them as the finest people I could have hoped for to go on the journey of the PhD.

My two childhood friends, Sam and Alex, both gave me support from outside that academic environment, and helped keep me sane during the long lockdowns. My friend Jen, who also did the preceding MA with me, helped in a thousand little ways, from providing me with a spare room whenever I needed to travel to Nottingham, both before and after the lockdowns, to celebrating my viva.

Finally, I would not have been able to do any of this without the support of my family in all things, even as the world seemed to shut down and change around us. My mother, Elaine, provided support throughout a thesis that took longer than hoped, and never once waivered in her help. My sister, Katharine, who herself had completed a PhD and showed me the way, gave a never-ending ear to my troubles and tribulations, and helped me in ways that are hard to put into words. My aunt, Val, helped provide welcome distractions throughout what was a gruelling period, and gave a sense of constancy to my life. And finally, to my dog. Freyja, whose silent support and insistence to go out helped when I was feeling at my lowest.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

The mythological poems *Hávamál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, and *Grímnismál* form the traditional corpus of wisdom texts in Eddic poetry.[1] Each of these poems features either Óðinn, or an Odinic figure who is most probably Óðinn but not definitively identified as such, in a variety of settings in which he and/or an opposing character deliver wisdom either to another character within the narrative or to the audience directly. The content of the wisdom found in these three poems is varied, but all feature elements of wisdom literature that have parallels with wisdom traditions from other cultures. The other Eddic poems are not generally considered to be wisdom texts, although there has been previous study of wisdom in these remaining Eddic poems, as will be discussed later. Few would describe these remaining poems as wisdom poems in their own right, however.[2]

In this thesis, however, I argue that wisdom was a fundamental part of the Eddic tradition, and that it was so ingrained in the creation of Eddic poetry that elements of it can be found throughout the corpus, even in those texts that are not considered to be wisdom texts. For example, even as Sigurðr and Fáfnir are verbally duelling, they cannot help but frame their contest in the style of a wisdom dialogue as they discuss Sigurðr's victory and inevitable doom. Stanzas 12-15 of *Fáfnismál* were the primary inspiration behind this observation, as within the verbal sparring and insults of the two characters lie a pair of question-and-

[1] Larrington identifies these poems as wisdom texts, along with some that will be mentioned shortly such as the Old English *Precepts*, while also highlighting that poems such as *Reginsmál* and *Fáfnismál* cannot be called as such (1993, 1-2). Throughout this thesis, I will be endeavouring to prove, at least to an extent, that these two poems could and probably should be included in the definition of wisdom texts, and not merely have wisdom elements.

[2] Several examples will be discussed throughout the thesis, but Schorn (2017) has discussed the role of authority in Eddic poetry, and Larrington (1993) has done an analysis of the wisdom in the Sigurðr poems. As will be discussed below, this does raise questions regarding the fundamental questions on genre and Eddic material, and to what degree such a separation is genuine or arbitrary.

answer stanzas that suddenly transform an otherwise heroic text into something more akin to the mythological poems.

What makes this thesis unique is the means by which it analyses the presence of wisdom, thereby connecting the wisdom material of the Odinic poems to the wisdom found in the heroic poems of Sigurðr and beyond. The mechanism by which I will show this connection of wisdom is through an analysis of formulaic theme, which will be described in the following chapter, using *Hávamál* as an example of how wisdom can be introduced, stressed, and then finally refreshed when the time comes for a new wisdom 'episode'.[3] This could then lead to other poems being analysed in a new light.

This thesis is organised by the analysis of Eddic poems as they appear in the Codex Regius, with two exceptions, followed by an overall analysis chapter and conclusion.[4] The two exceptions are *Grípisspá* and *Sólarljóð*, the former being thematically different from any of the other Sigurðr poems in the Codex Regius, and the latter as it is not drawn from that manuscript (the various manuscripts are discussed below). These poems were chosen for several reasons. The first three poems are included due to their universally recognised position of being wisdom texts already: by exploring the formulaic theme in poems that are already known to be wisdom texts, it will be easier to show how it is present there when moving onto poems that are not recognised as wisdom texts. I chose the next three poems, collectively known as the 'young Sigurðr' poems, because they represented a parallel with the first three, with *Reginsmál* featuring a mythological dialogue, to Fáfnir's debate with Sigurðr, to Sigrdrífa's monologue to Sigurðr. The final two poems were similarly chosen for

[3] Throughout this thesis several terms, such as 'wisdom episode', will appear repeatedly. These terms are detailed in the methodology chapter.

[4] *Hávamál* serves as the methodology chapter, then *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* being grouped together in Chapter 3, then *Reginsmál*, *Fáfnismál*, and *Sigrdrífumál* in Chapter 4, then *Grípisspá*¸ in Chapter 5, followed by *Sólarljóð* in Chapter 6.

specific reasons; *Grípisspá* because it relates much of the same information as the other Sigurðr poems, but does it in a manner different to the others. *Sólarljóð* as well represents an Eddic seeming text that contains parallels with *Hávamál*, but comes from an overtly Christian perspective.[5]

The primary goal of this thesis is to show, through the medium of analysing a formulaic theme observed by myself, that wisdom was a recurring element in Eddic material to a much greater extent than it has previously been considered to be. This will allow a new perspective on Eddic poetry, a new means by which to analyse it, and the ability to comment on the role of genre and wisdom in it. Formulaic theme has already been used as a mechanism to explore heroic themes in poetry in the Old English tradition, perhaps most extensively in Crowne's 1960 piece 'Hero on the Beach' which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. It is my intention to show that the same kind of theme exists in Eddic poetry, although in this instance it is a wisdom theme instead of a heroic theme.[6] From this, an understanding of the development of Eddic poetry from a wisdom perspective and how it changed from the earliest Eddic texts to the comparatively later works such as *Grípisspá* can be formulated.

Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own. At times I have chosen to render translations in a more literal sense at the expense of having a flowing translation. I have

[5] While it will be referred to again later in the thesis, Brett Roscoe's unpublished 2014 thesis contains an idea that I think is pertinent to my own, 'Because it straddles borderlines, wisdom naturally lends itself to a comparative approach.' (9) His thesis relies on a comparison between the Old Norse and the Old English wisdom traditions, that I will refer to briefly in this Introduction, but I think the core of the idea also works when looking at only a single tradition. One of the key themes of this thesis is the comparison between the mythological and the heroic, and how that comparison can reveal wisdom, even where it might seem unintuitive for it to be present.

[6] The role of theme will be explored in Chapter 2, whereas this chapter will focus on overviews of the other subjects of this thesis.

done this because in these instances such a translation makes it is easier to show how the formulaic theme is present in Old Norse.

An Overview of Eddic Material

When discussing Eddic material, it is important to define what precisely is being talked about. Indeed, a specific definition of what exactly is Eddic can be a surprisingly tricky subject. The collected Poetic or Elder Edda found in the Codex Regius (Reykjavík: GKS 2365 4to) would be one of the main sources of the Eddic collection. Beyond the poetry found in the Codex Regius we have the manuscript København: AM 748 I 4to, which features several poems found in the Codex Regius, such as *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál,* all of which are undeniably Eddic due to their inclusion in the original manuscript. This manuscript, however, also features *Baldrs Draumar*, which is not found elsewhere. Additionally, there is *Snorra Edda*, which contains mythological information not found elsewhere, paraphrases of poetic material from the Codex Regius, and even direct quotes from poetry found in the Codex Regius. The three parts *Gylfaginning*, *Skáldskaparmál*, and *Háttatal* (plus the contextualising prologue) can be found in various manuscripts, but they are combined in a manuscript that is also known, rather unhelpfully, as the Codex Regius (GKS 2367 4to). Any further discussion of *Snorra Edda* will be referred to as such, while all uses of the title 'Codex Regius' will exclusively refer to the manuscript in which the poems such as *Vǫluspá*, *Hávamál*, and *Fáfnismál* can be found.

Various other pieces of Eddic material can be found in several sagas, for example *Vǫlsunga saga* (NKS 1824 b 4to) and *Hervarar saga* in *Hauksbók* (AM 544 4to).[7] Both feature mythological and heroic material to varying degrees, and both have poetry that is classed as

[7] *Vǫlsunga saga* only survives in one 14th century vellum manuscript, which is degraded (Finch, 1965, xxxviii), but *Hervarar saga* survives in numerous editions, for example from the aforementioned *Hauksbók* but also in other manuscripts such as Gl.kgl.sml.2845 4to (Tolkien, 1960, xxix).

Eddic.[8] The narrative of *Vǫlsunga saga* clearly comes from the same material as that found in the poetry of the Codex Regius, and in several places quotes the poetry verbatim. *Hervarar saga* contains the poem known as *Hervararkviða*, which is generally considered to be Eddic in character.[9] *Hervarar saga*, also known as *Heiðreks saga*, represents a subject of interest to this thesis, insomuch as it is a blurring of the lines between a mundane world and a supernatural one, although, as will be seen in Chapters 4 and 5, it would still rest firmly with what I would describe as 'legendary', rather than mythological.[10] However, due to a desire to keep this thesis focused solely on poetic texts, *Hervarar saga* will not be discussed in the main body of the thesis.

Having discussed the sources for Eddic material, and the context that I will be using the term, I will now define what it means for a text to be Eddic. That it involves some manner of mythological setting or character is one part of it, but then again, there are sagas that feature mythological characters that are not considered Eddic, such as *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Hervarar*/*Heiðreks saga* (although in both instances they do contain some manner of Eddic poetry in them, the mythological figures also appear apart from these poetic inclusions). The same is true of legendary figures, such as Sigurðr. While there are Eddic poems that feature such legendary figures, there are many amongst the *Fornaldarsögur* that also feature such characters that are not Eddic works. Therefore, we must look beyond the characters involved to define Eddic. One way would be to only include the two sources, the

[8] For a more comprehensive collection of 'Eddic' material found outside the Codex Regius, see the *Eddica minora* edited by Heusler and Ranisch (1903). This contains many of the more prominent examples of Eddic material, such as *Hervararkviða*.

[9] Tolkien explicitly likens it to *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II (1960, xii).

[10] One area that would be interesting in which to follow up in future work would be a further exploration of *Hervarar saga*, as it too features Óðinn appearing in a wisdom setting in a game of riddles with Heiðrekr in Chapter 9 of Tolkien's 1960 translation. As noted by Tolkien, this occurrence of riddling is unique in the Old Norse canon, and are of course of interest to any broad study of wisdom (1960, xviii-xxi). Tolkien even notes the similarity to some of the questions posited in *Vafþrúðnismál*, of which I will discuss more in Chapter 3.

Poetic Edda found in the Codex Regius and *Snorra Edda*. As mentioned, this is too restrictive, as poems such as *Baldrs draumar* would be excluded from such a list, despite clearly belonging to the same genre of poetry. One way in which something may be described as Eddic is in the metre that the poetry is composed in. The three main forms are *fornyrðislag, ljóðaháttr* and *málaháttr*, which use alliteration and stresses to create their form.[11] This works to an extent, but as will be mentioned in Chapter 6, poems such as *Hugsvinnsmál* are also in the metre, despite it not seemingly being an Eddic text, as it is a translation of a Latin original. It also disqualifies *Snorra Edda*, being primarily a prose text. For something to be 'Eddic' then, requires some manner of combination of the above qualities.

All of these sources contain poetry which is considered to be Eddic, but for the sake of clarity, in this thesis when something is referred to as 'Eddic' it means either coming specifically from the Codex Regius (GKS 2365 4to) rather than AM 748 I 4to, or in the penultimate chapter, when referring to *Sólarljóð*. This thesis will occasionally engage with *Snorra Edda* and some of the other previously mentioned material, but when it does so it will always be explicitly described as coming from outside the Codex Regius. The main versions of the texts used are those found in Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason's 2014 edition for material found in the Codex Regius, and for *Sólarljóð*, Carolyne Larrington and Peter Robinson's 2007 edition of the poem.

Much scholarly work has been carried out on Eddic material; the various volumes of *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda* (von See *et al*) present perhaps the most

[11] Beyond being a tool to identify poetry which is in the Eddic genre, the role of metre is not as important to the study of formulaic theme, so I will not go further here, and the only other main mention of metre will be in Chapter 6 when referring to *Sólarljóð* and some other poetry. These base definitions are from Fulk (2016, 252), and the chapter in which they are discussed go into the technicalities of metre that are not of further relevance to this thesis.

comprehensive study of the Codex Regius and the relevant volumes will be individually referenced at the start of each chapter. Additionally in this thesis, Larrington (1993) and Schorn (2017) played a large formative role in particular.

Beyond this, the single most important piece of scholarship that inspired this thesis and its methodology is David Crowne's 1960 article 'Hero on the Beach', referring to the Old English *Andreas*, which will be properly explained in the next chapter.

The Manuscripts

The Codex Regius (GKS 2365 4to) of the Poetic Edda is a comparatively unadorned and small manuscript from the latter half of the thirteenth century. It is mostly whole save for a lacuna occurring in *Sigrdrífumál*, the text then resuming in a later Sigurðr poem. AM 748 I 4to is dated to the first half of the fourteenth century. *Sólarljóð* survives only in a seventeenth-century paper manuscript (AM 166b 8°ˣ), but is suspected to come from an earlier period, probably the thirteenth century (*Sólarljóð's* dating will be discussed more fully in its own chapter).[12]

The composition of the Codex Regius manuscript is interesting in its own right and also guided the organisation of this thesis. The manuscript can quite easily be divided into two sections, the first containing eleven mythological poems concerning the Æsir (and Vǫlundr) and the second featuring eighteen heroic poems concerning Helgi and then Sigurðr and Guðrún (along with many other characters connected to them).[13] The poems are mostly grouped by the characters that appear in them, with the opening poems of the mythological part featuring Óðinn, followed by a Freyr poem, followed by the Þórr poems. The heroic

[12] Other than *Sólarljóð*, all dates for the manuscripts are taken from the relevant pages in https://handrit.is/ (Accessed 15/03/22).

[13] The scribe himself obviously saw it as two separate parts, as Kristjánsson and Ólason point out (2014, 31), as the start of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* features a capital letter that is only rivalled in size by the opening of the manuscript with *Vǫluspá*.

poems are compiled with the Helgi poems opening the text, followed by the poems of Sigurðr's youth, then the Guðrún poems. Additionally, many of the poems that will be analysed in this thesis contain prose sections and framings, with some such as *Grímnismál* having a prose introduction and conclusion but no prose providing mid-poem contextualisation, while others such as *Reginsmál* are almost unintelligible without a prose section guiding the narrative. The relationship of prose and poetry is relevant in the broader thesis, and will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

While the heroic poems seem mostly to follow a chronological narrative, the mythological poems seem to rely more on characters and themes as a grouping method rather than any sort of chronological narrative. For example, the events of *Lokasenna* would make no narrative or contextual sense if they then led into the relatively light-hearted *Þrymskviða*, as Loki is still a member in relatively good standing amongst the Æsir in the latter poem. Even this ordering though, by theme and by character, is liable to change, as can be seen in AM 748 I 4to which seems to have an almost entirely different ordering system (or perhaps even no system of ordering at all), with the exception of *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, which are in the same order as in the Codex Regius. This raises the question to what extent the Codex Regius should be considered a whole work in its own right, and how important the ordering is. In their introduction to the text, Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason briefly discuss its ordering. It is their discussion of *Vǫluspá* (2014, 30) which is most relevant to the discussion of the Codex Regius as a whole work. By opening with *Vǫluspá* and the Óðinn poems, the compiler gives a good framework for the rest of the manuscript while also grounding it in human terms. When it comes to the dating of the poetry itself, beyond *Grípisspá*, this is not a terribly important aspect, as in many ways this thesis is primarily concerned with the poems as they appear in the Codex Regius. However, there are two

prime examples that make the subject worth mentioning, especially as two of the chapters of this thesis, 5 and 6, rely on considering the two poems to be in some manner separated in time from the other poems discussed in this thesis. In terms of dating Eddic poetry, Bjarne Fidjestøl's posthumous 1999 work 'The Dating of Eddic Poetry' is one of the most foundational modern studies on the subject, in both its examination of previous modes of thought (to the point of its origin and developments in 18th century Germany (9-10)) and in Fidjestøl's own methodology. The exceptions to this are the relative ages of both *Grípisspá* and *Sólarljóð*, as these poems represent comparatively later material that was originally compiled in the thirteenth century. Haukur Þorgeirsson (2017) provides a useful overview of how alliteration can be used to judge the age of certain poems, and concludes that poems such as *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Fáfnismál* are comparatively older than a poem such as *Grípisspá* (59). Most appropriate for this thesis however is a comment from the same page that remarks on the 'fluidity' of the poetry, along with a note on how the oral nature of the texts can render dating such poetry difficult at the minimum. While this thesis will not be able to offer new information in that regard, it will be able to serve as an additional form of verification for the development of Eddic poetry, especially when it comes to *Grípisspá* and *Sólarljóð*.

While I have discussed the dating of Eddic poetry, and how there is a looseness on the various datings of the material, a quote from Fidjestøl's work on the intentionality of Eddic poetry (such as whether a work like *Lokasenna* is a Christian text mocking paganism or whether it is a genuine relic of a non-Christian author) stands out as perhaps the most relevant to how I am going to approach the bulk of the thesis in its analysis:

> As is well known, poems like *Lokasenna*, *Þrymskviða* and *Rígsþula* are read by some scholars as Christian and archaizing persiflages of old lore, while others read them as

> genuine heathen mythological poem. If we know nothing of their ultimate pre-literary age, neither interpretation can be discarded, even if neither can be their *original* meaning. Even if we choose to limit our perspective to what is known without any doubt, namely the written poems as they were "fixed" in the 13th century, and to give them an interpretation in terms of their Medieval reception, it is still very important whether the poem, in a given historical context, is perceived as being brand new or age old. (1999, 194)

Following this, Fidjestøl also discusses the role of analysing Old Norse literature for meaning and how there will forever be a barrier between any modern observer of it and the original intent of the composer. Knowing the age of a poem, however, even in cases where the specifics of that age are controversial, is necessary in its analysis (1998, 194). I completely agree with Fidjestøl, and it is only by knowing that the two poems, *Grípisspá* and *Sólarljóð*, are of different period that their analysis can have any true relevance.

Wisdom

Having established my corpus, I will now briefly give an overview of what wisdom is and how this thesis defines it. It is to be expected that across cultural boundaries there will be some shifting of elements but through such an analysis it will be possible to explore whether wisdom literature is recognisable as an overall genre across traditions, and what, if anything, wisdom texts of various traditions can inform. In general, wisdom texts seek to inform and guide an audience in moral, practical, or spiritual matters.[14]

As discussed earlier, the majority of wisdom literature in the Old Norse tradition is found in Eddic poetry. There are some works outside the Eddic corpus that could potentially be included, such as the skaldic poem *Bersöglisvísur*, and the *Konungs skuggsjá*. *Konungs skuggsjá* itself is part of the genre of *specula principa*, another form of advisory text similar

[14] Wisdom poetry as a genre is more complex than this definition, and has been explored in more depth in the introduction. However, many scholars have looked at wisdom literature in both Old English and Old Norse contexts. For those who focus on Old English see: Cavill (1999); Hansen (1988); and Shippey (1976). For those who focus on Old Norse see Larrington (1993); Schorn (2017). Larrington's definition shown above will serve as the basis for this thesis however, at least as a starting point.

to wisdom literature. However, while these works may serve as a future path to follow, the current scope will stay within the Eddic corpus. As for defining wisdom as a whole, it is a surprisingly challenging endeavour. One of the problems this thesis aims to address is the presence of wisdom in non-wisdom texts, so defining wisdom is vital. There are some useful examples of how wisdom texts can be defined in recent scholarship. Larrington (1993, 1) looks at wisdom poetry holistically, and defines it as follows:

> A wisdom poem may be defined as a poem that exists primarily to impart a body of information about the condition of the world… Its intention may be to give advice, guiding on the basis of experience.'

Other scholars have looked at the Old Norse corpus from the perspective of a feature. For example, Schorn (2017, 6) approaches the concept of wisdom not from what advice is presented, but by whom, and the authority which the instructor possesses. She gives a brief view of the style of wisdom that can be found in the Old Norse tradition:

> Wisdom in Old Norse could mean many things. Proverbs and precepts, learned and common, feature in all modes of Old Norse discourse and literature.

This articulates the simple fact that there is in the Old Norse corpus a great variety of styles, but by focusing on a specific feature, Schorn creates a new perspective by which to analyse the corpus. I believe that there needs to be a bridge between these two approaches. I agree with Larrington's as a starting point for describing a wisdom poem, and Schorn's focus is similar to my own focus on the formulaic theme, but I hope to show by the end of the thesis how it is the wisdom 'episodes' that are the most important feature to focus on.

Beyond these definitions, there have of course been numerous others set forth by scholars. For example, in his definitions of wisdom literature (specifically those from the Old and Middle English, Welsh, and Irish traditions), Cavill (2017) describes it as such:

> Wisdom literature is here defined as those texts which have as a fundamental feature the character of a catalogue or list, with no developed narrative. The catalogue or list records knowledge, teaching, or instruction, and asserts the truth of propositions or proverbs.

Cavill's definition of wisdom literature here is clearly based upon an idea that at first seems opposed to the Old Norse idea of wisdom literature. While there are definitely examples of lists, especially in *Hávamál* and *Grímnismál,* both could hardly be said to have no developed narrative.[15] In other traditions, for example, we see definitions that are almost entirely removed from either Cavill's description, or from the definitions of Larrington and Schorn. Weeks (2010), for example, in his work on biblical wisdom connects it more to the modern English term of 'skill', and then defines wisdom as such:

> The linking of wisdom with righteousness in many places hints as a religious dimension: if one believes that long life and prosperity are a reward from God, then wisdom becomes associated with pleasing God – that is, the skill lies not so much in understanding life itself as in discerning the divine will. (2)

This overt connection of wisdom to divinity is something that we do not see in the Old Norse tradition. Larrington's and Schorn's definition, focusing on Old Norse already, are therefore a much better starting point for understanding a definition of wisdom.

However, to aid understanding of wisdom literature in the Old Norse tradition, it is necessary to explore earlier traditions that could potentially have influenced the Old Norse wisdom tradition through the transmission of knowledge, beliefs, and styles (beyond the above definitions by modern scholars). It is undeniable that texts are adapted across cultures for the purpose of education, for example the translation of *De consolatione philosophiae* into Old English. Even if there is no direct evidence of influence (and as will be in shown in the Chapter 6, such examples do exist), a deeper understanding of wisdom

[15] As will be seen, the compiler of the Codex Regius specifically restores the narrative through prose reconstructions.

literature will help reveal both what is unique to the Old Norse tradition, and what it shares with others.

A key element of wisdom literature is the construction of the instructor's authority, and the receptiveness of the student.[16] This will be discussed more fully in the analysis chapters, but the 'wisdom credentials' of a character are vital for them to be able to engage in a proper wisdom episode. To put it briefly, if characters are put in a wisdom exchange but do not have the right credentials, the work appears farcical.[17] Sometimes the audience takes on the role of the student, as seen in the Old English *Vainglory*, Ecclesiastes, and the first 77 stanzas of *Hávamál*. The teacher or authority figure is a necessary figure, and there are few works that do not feature an explicit authority figure or the sayings of an authority figure. In dialogues this feature manifests in one character questioning and the other providing answers. This is the case in the Old English *Solomon and Saturn I*, where Saturnus appears as the questioner and Solomon is cast as the wise sage.

There are several wisdom texts from other traditions that will be referenced in later chapters of the thesis, sometimes in more than one, and for the sake of clarity I will briefly describe the features of those poems here to avoid repetition. They will not play a great role in the analysis of this thesis, but they do occasionally serve as useful points of comparison. Of the Old English corpus, the works discussed are: *Precepts*, the *Maxims* poems, and *Solomon and Saturn I*.[18] *Precepts* is staged as a father's advice to his son on how he should

[16] The study of wisdom in both the Eddic tradition and has received much scholarship, with examples ranging from Cavill (1999) and (2017), Larrington (1993) and (2016), Schorn (2017) and (2020), and Murphy (1996). Where appropriate these sources will be used as the basis for what wisdom entails.

[17] Perhaps the best example of this is in *Alvíssmál*, where the two speakers lack the authority to speak on wisdom matters and come across as parodic.

[18] These three poems are all interesting in their own right from a wisdom perspective as they feature a different type of delivery, much as the poems in this thesis have such variety, but I will not go further for the sake of brevity, to see more than these simple descriptions see Fulk and Cain (2002).

behave in life. The father is the primary voice in the poem, and serves as an instructor, but he exists apart from the narrator who introduces him. The child who is receiving the advice is silent for the entire work, and is clearly the avatar for the audience. *Maxims* does not have this framing, and instead instructs the audience about the world directly. *Solomon and Saturn I* is different from the previous poems, and is framed as a discussion between the biblical figure of Solomon and an intellectual rival named Saturnus. Much as the father of *Precepts* is the authority figure, the character of Solomon is used in order to provide the poem with authority for the wisdom that is spoken.

While several of the books of the Old Testament are wisdom literature, the three that are referred to here are Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.[19] Of these three, the latter two are attached to the tradition of Solomon. Ecclesiastes is attributed to a figure called Qoheleth (the teacher/preacher), a mysterious figure who is claimed to be the Son of David, which would suggest his identity to be Solomon, though he is not identified as such in Ecclesiastes.[20] Regardless of the actual identity of the speaker, it is clear that Ecclesiastes is using Solomon as a persona to establish legitimate authority. Proverbs also attaches itself to the Solomonic tradition and uses it to provide authority in connection with the wisdom offered.

The Book of Job is centred on the titular figure and his various trials and tribulations, and the role of wisdom and understanding. It features many voices that serve as instructors, ranging from an unknown narrator to Job himself, and can be divided into different sections of dialogues, first between Job and his friends, and culminating in Job's conversation with

[19] While a study of biblical wisdom is not of relevance to this thesis beyond noting its existence, there is some commonality, for example as seen in Murphy (1996), especially where the discussion falls on Ecclesiastes, which could have some broad parallels with *Grímnismál*, insomuch as it uses a narrator in a pseudonymous persona.

[20] The question of Qoheleth's identity has been explored in depth: see e.g. Crenshaw (1998).

God. As Weeks (2010, 49) notes, the narrative is primarily set up to provide a framework for a series of speeches. Job 28 is focused entirely on wisdom and how humanity can access it. In Job 38, which comprised of God's speech to Job, God is put in a similar manner to an instructor, and imposes his authority over Job by emphasising his own power in comparison to God. These examples, useful as they are to understanding wisdom in these traditions, can struggle to correlate with the wisdom that we will see in Eddic material, specifically in the terms of authority and who has the right to speak. Perhaps the best example of this wisdom authority can be found in Job 28, in which fear of God (and God in general) is seen as the beginning of wisdom.[21] Schorn (2017) identifies this particular problem with connecting the creators of Eddic wisdom to that of the earlier biblical sources:

> It emphatically did not come from a single authority figure, much less from fear of the Judeo-Christian God. But the last part of Sirach I.14 – that wisdom was created in the womb – shares much common ground with the view of the dozen or so Eddic wisdom poems. For their composers, wisdom was an attribute of all sentient beings, human and supernatural alike, which grew exponentially with life and experience. All creatures learned from each other. In practice, however, the spirit of wisdom acquisition was more often competitive and confrontational rather than collaborative. (149)

The idea that wisdom acquisition relies on the competitive and confrontational, rather than a necessarily mystical source, is a recurring theme throughout all the poetry that will be discussed in this thesis. *Hávamál* oscillates between the concepts of *mannvit*, and the Óðinn's struggles to obtain wisdom in his various anecdotes. In Vafþrúðnismál and *Grímnismál*, both would definitely be classed as confrontational, and *Vafþrúðnismál* would also easily fit into the competitive mode. The Sigurðr poems similarly have such framing, with the possible exception of *Sigrdrífumál*, but as will be shown in Chapter 4, it still

[21] Job 28 as a whole is on the value of wisdom, but it is Job 28:28 which features the referenced origin of wisdom. Weeks however notes that this final verse is sometimes removed as a later addition, but nonetheless draws the conclusion that the thrust of Job 28 is still the connection between the availability of wisdom requiring God (2010, 62).

features danger, although obliquely. Even *Sólarljóð*, firmly set in a Christian context, still features the confrontation in its opening eight stanzas. Authority in Eddic poetry then does not need a divine origin, although it can have such, but it is rather how the character is framed in the poem, one of which is by using the formulaic theme as a tool to establish authority.

Many other wisdom traditions and texts exist, for example in the Classical Greek tradition, such as the works of Plato, or those from an even earlier period such as Hesiod, but they are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Legendary Beings

In this thesis there is a disparity in the types of being that feature in the poems and the ways in which they are presented. In the first three poems there is a more human version of wisdom, such as in *Hávamál*, or the mythological, as seen in *Hávamál, Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*. The beings in these poems are either human, or non-human beings that either witnessed or participated in the creation of the world, which provides them with a form of authority. Broadly speaking, in this thesis there are six categories of beings: gods (either the Æsir or Vanir), giants, humans, dragons, dwarves, and valkyries. The first two cover those beings who either witnessed or participated themselves in the creation of the world, or who were closely related to others involved. Vafþrúðnir for example uses his great age and witnessing of such events as a source for his authority.[22] Humans are fairly self-evident, although in this thesis the only speaking humans in poetry are Sigurðr and Grípir, who represent legendary versions of this type of being, for example Sigurðr is an alleged

[22] For more specifically on the various giants in the Old Norse world, see Schulz (2004). Her description broadly defines them as human-shaped, powerful, and different from either humans or gods (29).

descendent of Óðinn, and Grípir has prophetic powers.[23] This also will feature in the divide between chapters 2 and 3, and between chapters 4 and 5, where the former (mythological beings such as gods and giants) are present in a mythological world, the latter (legendary beings such as heroes and dragons) take place in a version of the mundane work, as, barring a brief episode with Loki at the start of *Reginsmál*, the gods are not present in their usual form, with even Óðinn when he appears in *Reginsmál* doing so in the guise of a human. However, there is a dragon central to the narrative, who obviously does not belong in mundane world. When it comes to Fáfnir, and dragons in general, while obviously fantastical, they are not of the same pedigree as gods and giants. They are neither creators nor destroyers of the world, and appear more akin to animals than supernatural beings. Acker (2013) provides a useful overview of the various dragons that appear in the Old Norse world, including the differentiation of the imported *dreki* as opposed to the *ormr*, which, while ably categorising them, does not change the mythological level that they operate on. Dwarves serve in a variety of roles, which will be discussed in chapter 4, and more than any other type of being, perhaps other than Óðinn, they are malleable. Valkyries, which will be discussed more below, are broadly psychopomps of a sort. How these types of beings interact with the formulaic theme and wisdom as whole will be discussed in the chapters they apply to. For example, *Hávamál* is concerned mostly with humans and thus with mundane and practical wisdom. Mythological beings are more obscure in their wisdom and tend to focus on either information or non-literal wisdom. Examples of these are found in *Vafþrúðnismál* or in *Grímnismál*. However, as will be seen in the relevant chapters, through the formulaic theme, beings that otherwise lack the importance of ancient giants or gods can similarly tap into the authority needed to conduct wisdom episodes. With specific characters, however, such as Sigurðr, Fáfnir, and Sigrdrífa,

[23] Sigurðr will be discussed fully in Chapter 4.

the line between types of beings is blurred. While Sigurðr is ostensibly human, he performs great deeds, and he interacts with non-human beings regularly.[24] Fáfnir is the most obviously non-human creature that speaks in the Codex Regius, but he lacks the mythological authority of the giants of the mythological half of the Codex Regius. [25] The various giants and the Æsir represent both the start and the end of the world in Eddic sources, ranging from the creation story in *Vǫluspá* to *Ragnarǫk* in the mythological poems. Beyond the giants and Æsir though, there are few other beings named. A character such as Fáfnir plays no role in the broader history of the world and only interacts with his own siblings and Sigurðr, and despite the wisdom he gains in his death, lacks the memory or personal recollections of a character like Vafþrúðnir. Save for a collection of stanzas in *Fáfnismál*, Fáfnir is treated as an almost mundane part of the world. On the other hand, Sigrdrífa is a valkyrie, and as such is connected to divine figures such as Óðinn, and her instruction of Sigurðr in the various *rúnar* is reminiscent of Óðinn's own area of wisdom. Valkyries are described in *Gylfaginning* as agents of Óðinn who apportion victory and death to the participants of battles (30). By the time Sigrdrífa is met in the story, she has been removed from Óðinn's company and is being compelled to marry (*ok kvað hana aldri skyldu síðan sigr vega í orrustu ok kvað hana giptask skyldu* 'and he said to her that she should never after have victory fighting in battle and he said she should marry'). Her divine connection does make her extraordinary, but by the time she appears in the poem she firmly occupies a 'human' role, insomuch as she is about to enter a relationship with two

[24] Additionally, according to *Vǫlsunga Saga* (1). Sigurðr is a descendant of Óðinn and also interacts with him, which only heightens his status. However, this is not confirmed in either the poetry or the prose of the Codex Regius. Also, see Elizaveta Matveeva's thesis (especially section 2.3 (52-64) for a full list of Óðinn's appearance and interactions with Sigurðr and his family in *Vǫlsunga* saga.

[25] The nature of Hreiðmarr and his family is confusing, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

humans, Sigurðr and later Gunnar. This is noted by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, in her 2020 work *Valkyrie*, in which she comes to much the same conclusion here:

> Eddic poems, the corpus of simply constructed but profound verse relating ancient Norse myths and heroic legends, develop this aspect of valkyries even further, turning them into quasi-human figures who have a mind of their own. The results of their decisions are mixed: one of these valkyries, Sigrdrífa, disobeys Odin, giving victory to his favourite's opponent, but this causes him to punish her. He not only removes her valkyrie powers but also condemns her to marriage – valkyries usually didn't marry – thus barring her from the independent life she previously enjoyed.

This idea of a valkyrie being able to become 'mundane', for want of a better term, shows how there cannot only be a blurring of the mythological and legendary, but that characters can be moved from one status to another. While a valkyrie as Snorri describes them in *Gylfaginning* would be mythological, *Sigrdrífa* clearly operates on the same scale as Sigurðr by the time she appears in the poem.

Chapter 2: Methodology, Formulaic Theme, and Hávamál

This chapter will discuss the use of formulaic theme in Eddic poetry, and then show how it applies to Eddic poetry. *Hávamál* forms the first example, due to its length and internal variety. Barring dialogues, there are examples in *Hávamál* of the other varieties of wisdom delivery found in Eddic poetry and as such the poem serves as a good test case for how formulaic theme can be used to express wisdom in a wisdom context. Having explored how formulaic themes are used in *Hávamál*, this chapter will go on to demonstrate how such methodology can be applied to other Eddic poems, especially to those which are not typically considered to be wisdom poems, allowing for the identification of wisdom elements in poems that are not generally considered to be wisdom poems.

The first section of this chapter analyses the use of theme in poetry, as well as providing definitions for terms used in this thesis. Following this, there is an analysis of Crowne's method of observing the presence of formulaic theme in the Old English poems *Andreas* and *Beowulf*, and how it can be used to analyse Eddic poetry. With this established, the following section will use *Rúnatal* as an example to show how the Markers for the wisdom formulaic theme are identified. Finally, building on the analysis of *Rúnatal*, this chapter will discuss how analysing the use of formulaic theme in *Hávamál* can give rise to a new perspective on its internal sections and how the poem delivers wisdom content.

Definitions

First, it is necessary to provide a brief definition for the following terms that will be used regularly in the thesis.

Formulaic theme

A formulaic theme is a device used by a poet to convey a specific concept or trope to the audience while also giving the poet flexibility in their verse.[26] It is formed by several Markers (see below) appearing in proximity. So long as the Markers appear in close proximity to each other, the poet has the freedom to build around them. Together, the Markers form a skeleton that provides the poet with a means of communicating ideas or prompts to their audience, regardless of the genre. The recognition that the audience experiences prompts them to expect an episode, specific to the type of formula used.[27]

Markers

A Marker[28] is a single element of a text, either a narrative element or a short construction, which, when combined with other Markers, forms the basis of a formulaic theme. A Marker is similar to a motif, Crowne's chosen term for the building blocks of formulaic theme, in that it is a single narrative motif or textual idea.[29] These Markers when put together form a formulaic theme because they reappear multiple times in variable contexts with a clear purpose.

Motifs

A motif is a narrative element that repeats in specific contexts in a text in order to emphasise an idea connected to the motif. This could be a motif of a sword being laid in the

[26] Crowne (1960) is the main source for this study, and I discuss this work fully below. Other scholars have contributed to my analytical method, including Bloomfield and Dunn (1989), whose work looks at the role of poetry in societies including Old Norse and Old English, and presents an image of how these oral traditions arose, as was more fully discussed in the introduction. Renoir (1964) was inspired by Crowne's ideas for how formulaic theme may have been used in the *Nibelungenlied.* See also Acker (1998), especially pages 61-83, in which he studies the use of formulae and themes in Eddic verse, including prophetic dreams in the Edda and the patterns that appear in *Alvíssmál*, which I will analyse in later chapters.

[27] For work specifically on formulae themselves in the traditional sense, see Baldick (1990, 87) which describes the required mechanisms for something to be considered formulaic, which will be used in conjunction with the material in the introduction, and the work below on Lord (1960).

[28] I have chosen to capitalise Marker to distinguish it from other uses of the word.

[29] For example, Crowne lists one of his motifs as a 'flashing light' (1960, 368) occurring in the narrative. Additionally, I have chosen not to use Crowne's terminology to avoid confusion when literary motifs appear that are not related to the construction of a formulaic theme.

lap of a sitting man (*Beowulf* line 1144) to indicate that a vengeful act is about to take place, or for example the head trade (seen, for example in *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 19). Alternatively it could be an environmental feature such as, for example, the night's darkness mentioned in connection with mist as when Grendel attacks in *Beowulf* (lines 710-14). Unlike a Marker, though, a motif is considerably less flexible and less general, as it relies on the repetition of a specific idea. A Marker has meaning only in its proximity to other Markers, while a motif is an independent item.[30]

Episode

An episode is a relatively discrete part of a poem that has either a coherent theme or narrative running through it, and can be identified either by the narrative or by the occurrence of a formulaic theme preceding it. While an episode could be a literal addition to a work, for example a piece of poetry placed in a prose work to illustrate a point, this is by no means required. All that is required of an episode is that it has an observable and finite length within a greater work. Examples include Hroðgar's 'sermon' from *Beowulf* in lines 1700-84, or as will be discussed below, the Billingr's maiden episode from *Hávamál* in stanzas 96-102. I will further discuss the varieties of episodes as they relate to this thesis, how they can be observed, and their specific function in Chapter 3, in relation to *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*.

Audience

Throughout this thesis, I will be referring to an audience who are addressed, directly or indirectly, by characters in the poems. This naturally raises the question of precisely who this audience was. While the Codex Regius is undoubtedly from the thirteenth century, the

[30] Thompson's (1958) collection on the work of folktale motifs can serve as a useful starting point to discovering formulaic elements, although as Markers are only significant in proximity to each other, this work is not useful here beyond a starting point for seeing recurring elements in poetry.

majority of Eddic poetry was composed in an earlier time.[31] However, as will be shown in the penultimate chapter, the formulaic theme was still being used in *Sólarljóð*, a thirteenth-century poem (although as discussed in the Introduction, coming from a considerably later manuscript), as it was in the earlier Eddic poetry. While this is not a perfect analogy, I do believe that it represents enough of a similarity that the audience of the thirteenth century would still be familiar with Eddic styles. Therefore, the audience should be considered as those who would receive the poem in the thirteenth century, although conjectured earlier audiences will be mentioned.[32]

Themes and Oral Poetry

In poems that emerge from an oral tradition, themes are crucial for the creation of meaning, and are thus an essential feature of the communication between the poets and the implied audiences receiving the poems. For poets, the use of formulaic themes allows a story to be reliably conveyed using structural cues, without the need for literal memorisation. For the audience, the presence of a formulaic theme helps them recognise familiar elements, priming them to respond to the narrative appropriately. As literacy developed and a written culture emerged, mechanisms that aided recitation without a written record were no longer needed. However, the impact on the audience can still be seen in how written works like Snorra *Edda* are no less reliant on themes for their composition.

[31] As discussed in the Introduction, and in greater depth in the final chapter, the dating of Eddic Poetry is a complicated matter. Numerous scholars have discussed the relative age of the poetry and the trouble with tracing its transmission. As discussed in the Introduction, Haukur Þorgeirsson (2016) uses linguistics to try and determine the relative age of the poetry. Other works, such as Thorvaldsen (2016) also look at the concept of dating Eddic poetry in a more holistic manner, and serves as a good summary of the various approaches, as well as problematising them. What is of most interest to this thesis, and which I will argue against in a broad sense, is his claim that Eddic poetry was not like the formulaic language that Lord and Parry observed (73).

[32] While it is primarily engaged in a text from a different, albeit similar tradition, Whitelock (1951) provides some engaging thought on the nature of reconstructing audiences. Her point (3-4) on the nature of heathen poems being modified by Christian authors is also worth considering in the general context of Eddic studies, but perhaps more even in *Sólarljóð*'s case.

A formulaic theme is not tied to the genre of a poem in which it features, but tends instead to allow a poem to produce episodes. Despite not being an example of a formulaic theme, Hroðgar's 'sermon' in *Beowulf* (lines 1700-84) illustrates how a poem can contain an episode that does not conform to the genre of the majority of the poem. In this case the episode concerns wisdom instead of being heroic in nature. Hroðgar's sermon does serve as a parallel to what will be seen later in the thesis, best explored in Hansen (1982). In summary, Hansen's article represents an alternative look at how a discrete passage within a larger text can employ a wisdom content in order to further expand on the nature of what is being spoken, culminating in the observation of who can give wisdom, something that will become more important in Chapter 3:

> On each gnomic occasion a speaker, always a figure of cultural authority - most frequently the narrator, but sometimes the hero or a minor heroic character - shares his wisdom with his listeners by uttering a formally and thematically conventional summary of what is characteristic, fitting or right (or wrong) about the specific incident or subject under discussion. (1982, 58)

Hansen makes repeated note of the father/son dynamic that is present throughout the gnomic content of *Beowulf*, which itself shows its similarity to other Old English texts like *Precepts*, but will further distinguish it from its Old Norse parallels in Eddic material.[33]

The presence of this episode alone, however, does not make *Beowulf* a wisdom text. Its purpose in the text is rather to deliver the wisdom episode; with this done, the poet and the narrative move on.

Wisdom poetry as a genre is, superficially, explanatory in its purpose. However, there is often content within a wisdom poem that serves other purposes, either as filler to meet metrical requirements, narrative extrapolations, or for other artistic merit. It is specifically the wisdom episodes, discrete parts of a poem that are united by either theme or narrative,

[33] There is of course the thirteenth-century *Konungs skuggsjá*, which itself is styled as a king's interaction with a prince, but that is itself removed from the Eddic world by many degrees to be of only passing mention here.

and how they can be inserted into Eddic poetry, that are of relevance to this thesis. For an example of what wisdom episodes are, there is the *Rúnatal* episode in *Hávamál*, and then there are others from the same poem, such as the 'Billingr's maiden' episode in stanzas 96-101. Both episodes deal in some way with Óðinn satisfying his desires but have very different conclusions and will be discussed below.

While wisdom poetry has many techniques that it uses to deliver instruction, a prominent tool is the use of themes to deliver the content. The use of a formulaic theme associated with wisdom acts to prime the audience's expectations, informing them that a wisdom episode is about to occur. The key to analysing the appearance of this formulaic theme is to identify the Markers that co-occur at the start of an episode, regardless of the genre of the overall narrative of a piece, and the wisdom episode that follows. Over the course of my analysis I will show how a series of Markers regularly occurs in or before an episode that is designed to inform the audience in some manner. By doing this I can investigate this theme and how it can be applied to the broader Eddic corpus, uncovering previously unrecognised wisdom episodes.

The study of theme in poetry has a long history stretching back to the nineteenth century, where Homeric and various Old Germanic works were studied to determine the use of formulaic constructions. Probably the most significant single figure in the origin of this study is Albert Lord (1960) whose work 'The Singer of Tales', was in turn greatly influenced by the work of Milman Parry, and in Lord's own words regarding the purpose of his work: '…I shall attempt to fulfill Parry's purpose of setting forth with exactness the form of oral narrative

poetry' (1).[34] This culminated in studying epic poetry in conjunction with those of oral poets from Yugoslavia, which determined that the main purpose of this formulaic construction was metrical.[35] Lord's stated definitions of formula, formulaic expression, and theme remain a useful starting point for consideration:

> By formula I mean "a group of words which regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given idea." This definition is Parry's. By formulaic expression I denote a line or half line constructed on the pattern of the formulas. By theme I refer to the repeated incidents and descriptive passages in the songs. (1960, 4)

As the discussion moves to Crowne shortly it can be seen how this series of definitions served as a basis for the idea of a formulaic theme. Indeed, as will be seen, Crowne's ideas do combine all three definitions to varying degrees in order to construct his methodology.

However, a great deal of scholarship has been published since the early twentieth century, and the theory has been revised over the years. Another conflict that this thesis has with Lord is one primarily of intent. Lord is concerned with the singers themselves, whereas this thesis is looking at a very specific calcification of a selection of poetry that itself only exists in a copied form. Barring those few Eddic poems mentioned in the introduction, Eddic poetry is not generally found in its (mostly) complete form outside of the Codex Regius. To avoid going off topic, this thesis will not overly refer to Lord's work, as while invaluable to Crowne, he is primarily concerned with traditional formulas, as shown above. What is useful, and clearly worked to inspire Crowne, was the simple statement '...that the repeated phrases were useful not, as some have supposed, merely to the audience if at all, but also

[34] When referring to this study in the remainder of the thesis I will refer to it only as Lord's. This is not to say that Parry was not also vital to the origin of the study and its development, but it is Lord's codification of it in 1960 that I refer to.

[35] Lord's work (1960) remains one of the most valuable foundations, but there have also been more recent studies of transmission, for example Clunies Ross (2016). At this point in the thesis I do not intend to talk explicitly about the transition and connection between the oral poems and their fixed forms; it will receive more attention in Chapter 7.

and even more to the singer in the rapid composition of his tale.' (1960, 30) A more nuanced analysis of why formula was used in the construction of poetry has developed; variations between traditions have also become apparent. While the use of formulaic theme requires a poet to be aware of a culture's traditions and idioms, it is mistaken to believe that they were working from a static tradition with a fixed set of specific cultural touchstones. Amodio presents an argument for how oral poets worked with development of theme, and how these traditions are shaped by poets themselves, rather than by an ur-culture acting as the primary influence (2004, 7):

> …they [the poets] relate much more dynamically to their tradition because they, in conjunction with the works of verbal art they create via their traditional, uniquely charged expressive economies, *are* the traditions.

Amodio views these poets as both the carriers of tradition and the ones who shape it, and suggests that these poets innovate within their traditions. This is perhaps how something such as a formulaic theme can develop and then see use in a tradition, as poets generate these devices in order to help themselves innovate in their works.

Formulae can be constructed in various ways, but the two primary categories are linguistic and narrative. For example, a formula could be a noun-adjective phrase, as is commonly seen with the use of epithets in the Homeric tradition, such as references to the 'wine-dark sea'.[36] Other types can be seen elsewhere; Acker (1997, 6), for example, identifies other formulae that were used in Old English, such as the *habban and healdan '*to have and to hold' formula, that is found throughout the Old English corpus, or the more specific *bearn and bryd* (man and woman) that occurs mainly in *Genesis A* (1997, 21).[37] Alternatively, it

[36] For examples see *Iliad* 23.316, *Odyssey* 2.421, 5.132.

[37] Riedinger (1985) focuses on the use of formula in the Old English tradition, but nonetheless is helpful in showing how poets used formulae to shape their work. She also references Crowne's work obliquely (295), and her own theory on finding new themes is naturally of interest to this thesis.

could instead be a motif that appears several times in repetition in a variety of works, for example, the recurrence of beasts of battle in Old English poetry that can be seen in poems such as *Battle of Brunanburh* and *Battle of Maldon*.[38]

The linguistic type is undoubtedly useful from a metrical standpoint, in that it allows a memorable stock phrase to preserve the metrical structure and provide a hook for the poet and audience. Narrative formulae on the other hand allow the audience to anticipate an episode, which is dependent on the type of formula used. For example, a wisdom formula precedes a wisdom episode, a heroic formula precedes a heroic episode. By preparing the audience to expect a specific type of story, the poet allows the audience to actively participate in receiving the work. This turns a poem into a cooperative exercise between performer and audience, and gives further insight into the purpose of such works. Gunnell is perhaps the most authoritative source on the role that actual performance would have had in Eddic poetry, and also notes the flexibility that existed in the poetry when these poems had an oral existence (1995, 182).[39]

A poet would be expected to know and perform multiple narratives and by using formulaic themes could build a poem with the appropriate components in a flexible manner, using the story outline of the poem as a skeleton, and the themes to contribute particular episodes. These Markers and themes are continually adapted to the context at hand. Substitution, as shown in Crowne's work, is one way in which these themes are shown to be malleable. For example, the crossing of a threshold need not only represent a transition related to a

[38] For more specifically on the 'beasts of battle' in Old English poetry, see Griffith (1993). Griffith presents the 'typescene' as an expansion on the study of theme, and indeed like Richardson (1987) (who will also be discussed more fully below), he criticises Crowne's analysis of the hero on the beach formula (181).
[39] Once again, the aspect of performance in relation to formulaic theme is not central to this thesis, nor my suggestions relating to the formation of the formulaic theme. However, it will receive more attention in conjunction with the oral origins in Chapter 7.

building but, as will be explored more fully later, may, at its root, simply concern transition from one place or state to another.

Crowne

The inspiration for the methodology in this thesis comes from David Crowne's (1960) work on theme in the poem *Andreas*. While Crowne's work is focused on Old English poetry, he uses comparisons with Greek formulae to highlight how formulae are used differently by different traditions. I shall demonstrate that this method can usefully be adapted to the study of Eddic poetry. Crowne's study is based primarily on the section of *Andreas* lines 235-247, in which the main character, Andreas, appears on the beach after being instructed by God to begin his quest to save Matthew from the Myrmedonian cannibals. In addition to *Andreas*, Crowne also shows that *Beowulf* and other Old English poems have examples of the theme.

In this section the quotations are those mentioned by Crowne, but the text and block translations are from the following: *Andreas* (Clayton, 2013), *Beowulf* (Fulk, 2010), and *Exodus* (Anlezark, 2011). When referring to specific phrases from the poetry the in-text citations are my own translations, rather than the translations from Clayton, Fulk, or Anlezark.

Crowne's work builds on the tradition from the start of the twentieth century of analysing formulae and themes in poetry. Crowne summarises his views on how formulae can be used in an oral society as follows:

> … the function of themes in building the larger structure of an oral poem is analogous to the function of metrical formulae in building lines: both themes and formulae are mnemonic units which enable a singer to compose his songs and to recite them without recourse to word-for-word memorisation or the ability to set them down in the fixity of written texts. Unlike formulae, however, themes are not

> restricted by metrical considerations, and are thus somewhat more fluid in form. (363)

Crowne's goal is to show how repeated elements (what he called motifs but which I call 'Markers') are used by poets to build thematic episodes. As with the scholarship that came before, Crowne uses Homeric texts, particularly the *Iliad*, as a basis for study. He discusses the act of making a bed that occurs in Books IX and XXIV, and how both sections open with the same formulaic construction, which connects the scenes and saves the poet from having to repeat the prior description. Crowne does not use any examples other than the Greek, but the use of formula is present in the Eddic tradition, such as the variation of *Segðu mér þat*, [name] to show a questioning statement found in *Alvíssmál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, and *Fáfnismál*.[40]

The central narrative of the poetic *Andreas*, which is shared with its Greek, Latin, and prose Old English iterations, shows considerable elaboration. As Crowne writes,

> The poem, however, is not simply a versified translation of some one of the prose versions, but is a vigorous re-creation of the foreign story within the traditional native idiom. (366)

The poetic *Andreas* shows no such direct relationship with any original, and instead reframes the narrative. Crowne focuses on the following thirteen lines:

> Gewat him þa on uhtan mid ær-dæge
> ofer sand-hleoðu to sæs faruðe,
> þriste on geþance, ond his þegnas mid,
> gangan on greote; gar-secg hlynede,
> beoton brim-streamas. Se beorn wæs on hyhte,
> syðþan he on waruðe wid-fæðme scip
> modig gemette. Þa com morgen-torht
> beacna beorhtost ofer breomo sneowan,
> halig of heolstre. Heofon-candel blac
> ofer lago-flodas. He ðær lid-weardas,
> þrymlice þry þegnas mette,

[40] For more on formula in *Alvíssmál*, see Acker (1997, 61-6). Example stanzas from the three mentioned are: *Fáfnismál* 12, 14; *Vafþrúðnismál* 11, 13; *Alvíssmál* 9, 11.

> modiglice menn, on mere-bate
> sittan siðfrome, swylce hie ofer sæ comon.
>
> In the early morning, at daybreak, he went, firmly resolved, over the sandy sloped to the sea's edge and his followers walked with him over the shingle; the ocean roared, the sea currents pounded, the brave warrior was joyful when he found on the shore a ship with a large hold. Then the brightest of beacons, holy and radiant in the morning, came hastening over the sea, out of the darkness. The heavenly candle blazed over the waters. There on the boat he found seafarers, three magnificent noblemen, brave men, sitting ready to go, as if they had just come over the sea. [235-47]

From this, Crowne identifies four key Markers that form the formulaic theme:

> … (1) a hero on the beach (2) with his retainers (3) in the presence of a flashing light (4) as a journey is completed (or begun). (1960, 368)

These four Markers can easily be seen in the passage above. The first Marker is found in Andreas himself, and occurs in lines 235 and 236: *Gewat him þa on uhtan mid ær-dæge/ofer sand-hleoðu to sæs faruðe* 'Then he went out at early morning over sand hills to the sea's shore'. Secondly, the presence of Andreas's retainers is clear in line 237: *ond his þegnas mid* 'and with his thanes'. We find the third Marker several times in this passage, as the sun is described as *beacna beorhtost* 'brightest of beacons' in line 242 and as *heofon-candel blac* 'heaven's candle shining', in line 243. The fourth Marker can be located both through the general sense that Andreas's journey is about to begin, and also in the implied, finished journey of the three mysterious seafarers in line 247, where they are said to appear *swylce hie ofer sæ comon* 'as if they had come over the sea', completing their own journey. Crowne then identifies the presence of the same set of four thematic Markers in *Beowulf,* although this example lacks the narrative embellishment of the prior *Andreas* example and is more straightforward:

> Gewát him ðá se hearda mid his hond-scole
> sylf æfter sande sæ-wong tredan,

> wide waroðas. Woruld-candel scan,
> sigel suðan fus.
>
> Then the hardy man set out himself with his crew along the sand, treading the sea-plain, the broad strand. The world-candle gleamed, the sun ardent from the south. [1963-6]

As with the *Andreas* example, the Markers can be easily picked out from the text. The hero appears walking along the beach in lines 1963-5 (1), and in the company of his *hond-scole* *'*retinue' (2); in line 1965 we see the presence of the flashing light (once again in the form of the sun: *woruldcandel*) (3); and the journey is completed (4) in line 1966.

The interest of this theme however is that the poets substitute Markers with broadly similar features for narratively similar effects. The example that Crowne uses comes from the poetic *Exodus*, in which the method of substitution can most clearly be seen with the flashing light Marker:

> Þa wæs hand-rofra here ætgædere,
> fus forð-wegas. Fana up gerad,
> beama beorhtost; bidon ealle þa gen
> hwonne sið-boda sæ-streamum neah
> leoht ofer lindum lyft-edoras bræc.
>
> Then the hand-strong army was assembled, eager for engagements. The standard rode high, the brightest of banners; they all waited yet for the moment when the journey's herald near the sea currents, the light broke through the sky-enclosures across the shields. [247-51]

While the other Markers appear in a similar manner to the previous two examples, the Marker of a flashing light is not represented by the sun, as it was in the previous two examples. Rather, the reference in line 249 is to the battle standard. While in *Andreas* it was the *beacna beorhtost* 'brightest of beacons', in this instance it is instead the *beama beorhtost* 'brightest of banners'. Here the core idea of the Marker, a light that is flashing, is

represented by an item that is not inherently luminous, but can be substituted and provide the same function.

Once again Crowne observes that the substitution occurs in *Beowulf* as well, in lines 301-7a:

> Gewiton him þa feran; flota stille bád·
> seomode on sale sid-fæþmed scip,
> on ancre fæst; eofor-lic scionon
> ofer hleor-beran gehroden golde,
> fah ond fyr-heard; ferh-wearde heold
> guþ-mod grim-mon. Guman onetton,
> sigon ætsomne…
>
> They set out travelling then; the vessel remained still, a wide-girthed ship tied to a rope, fastened to an anchor; boar-images gleamed, covered with gold, over cheek-guards, patterned and fire-hardened; the warlike, helmeted man accorded them safe conduct. [301-7a)

As with the previous example, it is the 'flashing light' Marker that is subject to change, while Markers 1, 2, and 4 can be identified unproblematically. Here, it is the helmets which act as the light-source, as they glitter *eofor-lic scionon* 'boar-like and shining' in lines 303. While less obvious than the substitution of banner for sun that occurred in the *Exodus* example, the helmets' glittering provides the light which is the central function of the Marker, which in *Andreas* is shown by the sun.

It is not just the 'flashing light' Marker that is subject to substitution, however; Crowne further uses *Beowulf* to illustrate how a reference to a different chieftain could still fulfil the requirement for the hero Marker. This example, from lines 1802b-6, is described by Crowne as 'allusive substitution' (369):

> Ða com beorht leoma
> ofer sceadwa scacan; scaþan ónetton·
> wæron æþelingas eft to leodum
> fuse to farenne; wolde feor þanon
> cuma collen-ferhð ceoles neosan.

> Then the bright glow came gliding over the shadows; the raiders then made no delay, the nobles were eager to return to their people; the bold-hearted visitor wanted to be far from there, to go find his ship. [1802b-6]

These five examples all show the four Markers appearing as related components. For example, in *Andreas*, it is Andreas on the beach (1) with his thanes (2) with the sun shining (3) as they start their journey (4). However, the theme does not necessarily require these Markers to form a similar structure, and to show this Crowne once again turns to *Beowulf*. The substitution may be stretched considerably further and still be possible to identify. In the scene featuring the refutation of Unferð's story, the poet is able to use the theme as a series of disparate elements, not connected to each other literally, but still present as a group:

> Næs hie ðaere fylle gefean hæfdon,
> man-fordædlan þæt hie me þegon,
> symbel ymbsæton sæ-grunde neah
> ac on mergenne mecum wunde
> be uðlafe uppe lægon
> sweordum aswefede, þæt syðþan na
> ymb brontne ford brim-líðende
> lade ne letton. Leoht eastan com
> beorht beacen Godes, brimu swaþredon…
>
> By no means did they have the satisfaction of their fill, those evildoers, that they made a meal of me, sat around a banquet on the sea-floor, but in the morning, wounded by arms they lay up among the waves' leavings, put to sleep by swords, so that never again on the high water-way would they prevent ocean-goers from passing. Light came from the east, God's bright beacon; the seas subsided…[562-70]

In this example the Markers do not form part of a coherent narrative like in *Andreas;* instead, each Marker is represented as a different part of the narrative. For example, it is not Beowulf's retainers who fulfil the role of Crowne's second Marker; instead his enemies are metaphorically sitting at the table (lines 563-5) and stand in for the retinue, and it is their lying dead on the shore in lines 565-6 that represents the first Marker. The journey

that has been completed (4) is similarly not that of the hero, but is referring to the past voyages that had been stopped by the monsters, referenced in lines 567-9. Crowne's third Marker, the flashing light, is the one most comparable in appearance to the bright sun described in *Andreas*.

Crowne rightly points out that while substitution may seem obscure, puzzling even, to a modern audience trying to identify these Markers and themes, they were clearly intended to be understood by a contemporary audience receiving the poem. *Andreas* and *Beowulf* are not riddles, after all. These structures allow the theme to be implanted within a myriad of works and understood by the audience when distilled to their key concepts.

From this analysis, primarily of *Andreas* and of *Beowulf*, Crowne summarises the four key Markers of his theme,

> What is left is an outline for any piece of narrative that involves (1) a beach, (2) the *comitatus*-relationship, (3) a bright light, and (4) a voyage. He [the *Beowulf* poet] is still using the same theme, but he has extended its applicability immeasurably. (371)

This malleability allows the theme to be used in multiple locations in works that may not be part of the same genre, and which do not necessarily share a setting.

Crowne finally discusses the previous scholarly perception that *Andreas* and *Beowulf* had a great deal in common and that there was a borrowing from one to the other. Crowne instead argues that both works come from the same poetic tradition, and that multiple poets would have been working from this shared cultural template. Crowne's theory has received criticism over the years: Richardson (1987), for example, makes quite a cutting criticism of Crowne's theory, as well as the continuation of the study that Renoir (1964) undertook. Specifically, regarding Crowne's theory, Richardson argues that the 'hero on the beach' theme is too commonplace to have actual meaning. He criticises Crowne's analysis of

Beowulf, specifically of lines 562-70, arguing against Crowne's claim that these Markers arose from a deliberate effort on the part of the poet, that all the 'hero on the beach' Markers have a reason for appearing outside of the formulaic theme. For example, with regard to the flashing light Marker, Richardson claims that,

> The rising of the sun, as well as following logically the mention of morning (*on mergenne*), is a symbol parallel to Beowulf, who also rises from the sea in the morning. (1987, 116)

The one element that Richardson believes unites the various 'hero on the beach' examples is the thought that a heroic character naturally encounters threshold situations, and that other parts of the 'hero on the beach' theme such as having retainers or beginning a journey are similarly connected to the heroic character. Richardson's conclusion is broadly dismissive of the theme:

> The so-called "Hero on the Beach" has become simply a description of a threshold situation; the free substitutions suggested by scholars have removed "theme" from the stereotype, allowing a range of variation beyond the limits of a single tradition. (1987, 118)

Although Richardson's critique does not, I suggest, disprove Crowne's interpretation, it does provide a warning regarding this method which is particularly relevant to my study. There can be a danger that the Markers are defined too loosely, to such a degree that they can fit any situation, rendering any analysis vague. However, if analysed with care, the appearance of formulaic theme remains a valuable avenue of analysis. The core of Richardson's argument is based on the thought that with a loose enough definition, even a character such as the fourteenth-century fictional version of Dante could be seen in the same way as Andreas. This is my main disagreement with Richardson's dismissal of the study. The study of formulaic theme can be adapted into other traditions, as is the aim of this thesis, but the

specific formulaic themes are not necessarily the same in other traditions. There is clear evidence that poets used Markers to guide their creations. Crowne offers several examples of poets using the same Markers to indicate the same meaning, and while he does not describe them in detail, he claims to have identified the theme not only in the three poems discussed above, but also in *Guthlac*, *Judith*, and *Elene* (1960, 371). The *Andreas* scene that Crowne frames his argument around is repeated almost exactly in his first example from *Beowulf* (lines 1963-6). Most importantly, other than the opening formula, this is not a verbatim retelling. When the example from *Exodus* is added to these two examples, with only a substitution of light-source as a difference, there is clear evidence that three separate poems on three different subjects recorded in three separate manuscripts all reuse the same set of Markers to make a formulaic theme.[41] This shows that Markers were employed to achieve the same effect, and that it was common enough to survive in so many examples.

There have been others who have also tried to develop and criticise Crowne's work on formulaic theme. Griffith, mentioned earlier, is in a sense trying to explain the same sort of phenomena that Crowne was observing, though he described it as a 'typescene', with one primary example being the 'beasts of battle' example in his 1993 article. Griffith directly correlates his own analysis with Crowne's, describing it as,

> Central to the definition of the typescene is that it must occur regularly with a relatively fixed content of a number of motifs, and it shares this in common with the theme. (1993, 181)

As with Richardson, Griffith attacks the supposed 'unsoundness' (181) of the theme at its core principle, arguing that a hero is unlikely to be apart from his retainers, if they are at a beach then they will probably be about to go on a journey, and so on. The only motif (in my

[41] The poems are found in: *Exodus* is in the Junius manuscript (MS Junius 11), *Andreas* in the Vercelli Book (MS CXVII), and *Beowulf* in the Nowell Codex (Cotton MS Vitellius A XV).

parlance, a Marker) that Griffith seems to lend any credence to is the 'flashing light' from Crowne's theme, but he argues that it alone is not sufficient to be a theme, being more akin to the motifs described earlier in Thompson's 1958 work. Griffith's conclusion on his own development of the typescene in Old English poetry is a final rejection of Crowne's own work:

> Formulaic theory still has a place in Old English critical studies as long as it is concerned with the development of a rhetoric that can most economically describe the stylistic features of the texts themselves. (1993, 197).

As with Richardson, I cannot truly dismiss this criticism with my own work here, as there is a barrier between traditions, and while they share aspects in common, no one could truly argue that Old English and Old Norse poetry of any variety, let alone going to specific genres such as heroic poetry or wisdom poetry, are the same. Indeed, there is perhaps even a grain of truth to these criticisms of Crowne, although I would argue that at most it is the theme itself, and not the methodology that Crowne provided. In the context of this thesis, this is the more important part, as it is Crowne's methodology that provided the inspiration, rather than the hero on the beach theme itself.

It is Crowne's theory of 'allusive substitution' and the poets' choice to adapt, modify or substitute Markers, which is of particular relevance for this methodology and when applying this approach to Eddic poetry. The value of thematic analysis like this is that it can be discerned to have been used by different poets for similar effects. It would be very strange if such a procedure were limited to a single theme, and indeed the examples Crowne quotes from Homer suggest that other, very different, Markers were used by poets to alert the audience to expect particular formulaic themes in narrative episodes. It is overwhelmingly likely that poets had an extensive repertoire of themes, as they also had of formulae. I propose to identify Markers and a particular theme in the Eddic poems broadly following

Crowne's methodology. Reading these texts through the lens of formulaic theme allows us to identify items of the text which may be more closely linked to each other than is at first obvious, and indeed to a wider literary tradition. Individually, these Markers could appear in any number of poems from various genres, but when they are all present, they signal specifically the beginning of a heroic journey. Naturally, the presence of one Marker by itself does not necessarily indicate a heroic theme. It is a fact of their function that these Markers rely on being clustered together in order to generate meaning. My purpose in carrying out this analysis is to identify where and how the Markers may have been used in order to establish a wisdom episode. Building on Crowne's influential study, I show that the study of formulaic theme is useful for Eddic poetry.

Theme in Eddic Poetry

With the goal of looking for wisdom in the poems of the *Poetic Edda* that are not traditionally considered wisdom poems, it is sensible to first understand what Eddic wisdom poems themselves look like. There are three wisdom poems in the *Poetic Edda*: *Hávamál* is the first in the collection, the second and third are *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* respectively, which will be the focus of the next chapter. All three poems focus on wisdom and knowledge, and feature Óðinn as the central character; however, although Óðinn is undoubtedly the protagonist of *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, the question of the narrator's identity in *Hávamál* is less clear, as will be discussed presently. What has been absent so far in this chapter is a discussion of the way that theme has previously been analysed in an Old Norse context. While this is deliberate, it is not intended to present the case that this method of analysis is novel. I have chosen to focus on those in the Old English tradition for the reason of Crowne and his relationship with Lord's work. As he worked in the Old English tradition with *Andreas*, it is only right to talk about it and the responses to it

first. This section will focus on the use of theme and formula primarily as it is seen in Eddic material, for more on the oral origin of Eddic poetry in general, refer back to the introduction.

The study of formula and theme in an Old Norse context has had numerous studies, and in conjunction with the definition mentioned earlier by Lord, it has received scholarly attention that will now be discussed. However, rather than start specifically with Eddic material, first I will discuss some ideas on the use of theme in prose, as it in some ways is a more direct parallel to Crowne's work. Lönnroth's 1969 article 'The Noble Heathen: A Theme in The Sagas' represents a fascinating study of the role of theme in a prose context, in which the idea of a 'noble' heathen and the subsequent portrayals in medieval sagas. While Lönnroth does not refer to Crowne's work, there does appear to be a similarity of thought between the two works. This can be seen in Lönnroth's own description of the requirements for the theme:

> It is characteristic of this theme that a pagan hero is shown in a situation where he appears to be a sort of precursor, or herald, of Christianity, at the same time retaining enough of the pagan ethics to emphasize the difference between the old and the new religion. It is, however, essential to the theme that the hero should never have been in close contact with the Christian faith - it is primarily his natural nobility, in combination with his good sense, and a half-mystical insight into the workings of nature, that makes him act as if he were already on the verge of conversion. (1969, 2)

From Lord's earlier description of the three elements he was investigating, to Crowne's thesis of the formulaic theme, it is clear that Lönnroth was working from a similar state of mind, analysing the needed components of the theme i.e. the separation from Christianity, for the theme to be observed.[42] However, there are differences between Lönnroth's analysis and Crowne's, and subsequently my own. Naturally, as this thesis concerns itself

[42] Lönnroth's work on this theme is more detailed than this single example of course, but due to the differences in the use of the theme I will not explore the specifics of this article anymore.

primarily with poetry which used theme to aid in its original creation, there are going to be differences with work created to be a prose story. For example, Lönnroth uses the example of a story found in *Flateyjarbók* and *Reykdæla saga* to show how the same theme can be present in two different genres of story, a religious exemplar for the former which displays piety and virtue and a more traditional saga in the latter showing pragmatism (1969, 13). That it is possible to use a thematic device, recognisable to the audience, for two different purposes is a key difference between this type of theme and the formulaic theme of Crowne and myself, as in Crowne's work there is no other outcome, the theme is there for both the poet and the audience, as a device for construction for the former, and as a device for reception for the latter.

It is however another of Lönnroth's works that provide one of the best responses to Lord's work specifically, and that is his 1971 article 'Hjálmar's Death-Song and the Delivery of Eddic Poetry'. Lönnroth's writing is focused on the development of Eddic poetry from its oral origin to the form that it would eventually take, while also bringing to light the work of Kellog and his dissertation on Eddic poetry and his inferences on the use of formula (1971, 1-3).[43] Lönnroth takes a negative view in regards to the idea of Lord and Kellog on the similarity of Eddic poetry to the Yugoslav poets, arguing that the shorter length and tighter structure suggests that they are memorisations, rather than an oral-formulaic form:

> ...there is a good deal of evidence showing that Eddic poems were memorized, not improvised by the performers, even though the text could vary from one performance to the next. Several poems have been preserved in divergent versions which are generally supposed to represent independent recordings from oral tradition. (1971, 2-3)

There is also a continuation of Lönnroth's thoughts:

[43] Kellog's concordance was later published in 1988.

> By saying this, I do not want to deny that the oral-formulaic theory may prove to be very useful in explaining certain features of Eddic composition and in analysing what Lord and Kellogg would call "the literary grammar" of the Edda. (1971, 3)

In my opinion this is where the development of Lord's theory by Crowne is the missing link between the Eddic tradition and its oral origins. The calcification of Eddic poetry clearly happened before its last transmission if both Icelandic and Danish sources (mentioned by Lönnroth in the same article (3)) could accurately recreate it. However, if a formulaic theme Marker as described by Crowne could have continued to exist in one poem, such as the wisdom poetry that this thesis is focused on, then the same transmission could have occurred elsewhere as well.

Hávamál discussion

Hávamál (3r-7v) is the longest Eddic poem and has received much attention from scholars.[44] *Hávamál* does not appear as a complete poem in any other contemporary source. Fragments of it do, however, appear in other sources. The first two lines of stanza 21 of *Hákonarmál* cite a partial fragment of either stanza 76 or 77 of *Hávamál*, which has its own implications for both the respective age of *Hávamál* and its influencers or its influences. Additionally, stanza 1 of *Hávamál* is quoted in *Gylfaginning* chapter 2, but the influence that *Hávamál* had on *Gylfaginning* will be discussed in more depth later.

In numerous editions of the *Poetic Edda*, and in scholarship on *Hávamál*, the poem is generally split into several parts, but these parts are not always divided in the same way.[45] A general dividing of the poem can be found in Evans's commentary (1986, 8) which serves as

[44] Example works include: von See *et. al.* (2019), Larrington (1993), Gunnell (1995), Schorn (2017), McKinnell (1994) and others. A study of *Hávamál* and the scholarship around it could take a thesis in itself, and as I am only briefly investigating two very discrete sections of *Hávamál*, I will be briefer with it than with future chapters.

[45] Again, *Hávamál's* overall structure is not really of interest to this thesis, although it could provide an avenue for future study. For more on the structure of *Hávamál*, see von See (2019), Evans (1986), and McKinnell (2005).

a useful template to start with: The Guest or Gnomic section (*c.*1-77, possibly including stanzas 78-80), Óðinn's love stories (81-110), *Loddfáfnismál* (111-137), *Rúnatal* (138-145), and *Ljóðatal* (146-163).[46] However, for the purpose of demonstrating the presence of the formulaic theme, I will be focusing on two specific parts of *Hávamál:* the first half of *Rúnatal* (138-41) and the 'Billingr's Maiden' episode (96-101) from the collection of Óðinn's love stories. These two episodes demonstrate a clear presence of Markers culminating in wisdom episodes. The reason that this chapter looks at two discrete parts of a poem, within a poem that is already full of discrete episodes, rather than doing as the later chapters do and analysing the whole poem, is twofold. First, *Hávamál* has so much variety in it that the space simply does not exist to look at it and the wider Eddic corpus. Second, one of the aims of this thesis is to show how wisdom can be presented in non-wisdom poems, and *Hávamál's* connection to wisdom has already been established many times.

Example of the use of theme in Eddic Poetry – *Rúnatal*

In order to investigate formulaic theme in *Hávamál* and the broader Eddic corpus, I will first analyse a small section of *Hávamál* to identify a wisdom theme and its components. I have chosen the first half of the *Rúnatal* section of *Hávamál*, which occurs between stanzas 138-41, for two reasons. First, *Rúnatal* is clearly identifiable as being a discrete section within the poem, both by the change of address from previous stanzas, and its change from being didactic to narrative, albeit still concerned with the gaining of wisdom. Second, that it is about how Óðinn gained his wisdom, and therefore his authority to speak on wisdom matters, clearly identifies it as having a wisdom focus. Four of *Rúnatal*'s eight stanzas discuss Óðinn's development of wisdom; the other four are more eclectic, with some

[46] Evans separates the Billingr's Maiden section from the Gunnlǫð section, but for the sake of convenience I have combined the two here.

discussing practicalities of runes, and more obscure matters, before culminating in a stanza full of gnomic statements.

Starting with the first stanza, the audience are brought into a narrative about Óðinn's hanging.

> Veit ek, at ek hekk
> vindga meiði á
> nætr allar níu,
> geiri undaðr
> ok gefinn Óðni,
> sjálfr sjalfum mér,
> á þeim meiði,
> er manngi veit
> hvers af rótum renn.
>
> I know that I hung
> on a windy tree
> through all of nine nights,
> wounded by a spear
> and given to Óðinn,
> myself to myself,
> on that tree,
> that no one knows
> from where its roots run. [138]

In this stanza, it is possible to identify several key items in the text. First, Óðinn is removed from the world and he is hanging (lines 1 and 2). Second, lines 3-4 speaks about Óðinn's state of being and the reason for being where he is. Finally, Óðinn is in a location that he claims is connected to the conception of the unknown, *er manngi veit* 'that no one knows'. While the tree on which he is hanging is a known thing, the source of the tree (its roots) is still mysterious to humanity. Whether Óðinn himself could be considered part of that group is irrelevant, as after all he is not a person but a member of the Æsir; the point that the poem stresses is that the area that Óðinn is in is unknown to people in general. His isolation

here is as literal as can be, as the tree that he hangs on is most likely Yggdrasill, a location that has no human connections, with only various types of mythological fauna living in it. The fact that the tree can be considered Yggdrasill is suggested by the possible meaning of the name 'Óðinn's horse', a kenning for the gallows, which he is hanging upon.[47]

If this first stanza is analysed according to Crowne's methodology, there are four items that begin to emerge. First, Óðinn is separated from other people in this stanza. While there may be others present, as will be discussed shortly, the nature of his hanging is imprisoning him upon this tree. Second, Óðinn is near death. This can be inferred from the fact that he has been hanging for nine nights without reprieve, yet is somehow still not dead in the traditional sense. Third, Óðinn is in mortal danger from being stabbed with a spear. Fourth, he is in a mysterious location. In his example, Crowne used the one example from *Andreas* of the hero on the beach to form the beginnings of his formulaic theme. I will however analyse another stanza of *Rúnatal* before coming to any conclusions.

The following stanza continues the narrative of Odin's hanging:

> Við hleifi mik sældu
> né við hornigi;
> nýsta ek niðr,
> nam ek upp rúnar,
> œpandi nam,
> fell ek aftr þaðan.
>
> With no loaf did they bless me
> nor with a horn.
> I looked down,
> I took up the runes,
> screaming I took them,
> I fell back from there. [139]

[47] This scene in the broader context of Old Norse myth is, like many others, open to interpretation. Kure (2006, 69-70) does offer some options on the relationship between hanging, Óðinn, and Yggdrasill, but it is hard to be entirely convinced. Thankfully, beyond it triggering the Markers, nothing more is needed for the formulaic theme.

In this stanza, we again see either the Markers from the previous stanza, or variations that could be established as similar in principle. Óðinn's imprisonment once again represents isolation, although the existence of an implied group of others by the use of plural form *sældu* 'to bless', and as such they stand in opposition to Odin. While Óðinn is still in his mortally wounded and deprived state, his physical location is also stressed. This can be extrapolated from two facts. First, in lines 3 and 4 we are given two directions mentioned in collaboration with Óðinn: in line 3 he says that he 'looked down' (*nýsta ek niðr*); and in line 4 he states 'I took up the runes' (*nam ek upp rúnar*). While obviously these are two different actions, one looking and the other referring to taking action, the framing of the action puts it in opposition; while he looked down, he then picked them up. Coupled with the fact that he is literally suspended, he is clearly in a liminal environment. While this may not seem similar to being near death, as seen in the last stanza, it is an example of a liminal event. Óðinn is on the threshold of life and death in stanza 138, and in stanza 139 he is caught in between the tree he is hanging from and the runes that are below him, before finally passing from the tree into the hall. The last line in stanza 139 describes Óðinn's exit from the tree. As in Crowne's theory, it is possible to substitute one Marker for a narratively similar item. In this case we may consider what is represented by the *rúnar* if the meaning is of secrets rather than actual physical runes. If this stanza is indeed conforming to the emerging formulaic theme, then the *rúnar* would more likely be intended to mean secrets due to the connection to the unknown.[48]

[48] John McKinnell (2007, 93) notices a connection between the *rúnar* of stanza 139 of *Hávamál* and with the *rúnar* of *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 43 (which will be discussed in Chapter 3), and states that as Vafþrúðnir is clearly talking about secrets, it is not unreasonable to assume that Óðinn is also talking about such here. McKinnell further elaborates on Óðinn's relationship with death, but that is beyond this thesis' scope currently.

Conclusions from *Rúnatal*

From this small part of *Hávamál* it is possible already to see certain items repeating themselves in the way that Crowne's Markers of a formulaic theme do. However, much as Crowne summed up the core tenets of his formulaic theme's Markers by reducing them to the key concepts, so must I with these Markers.

The first concept concerns separation from society, whether unwilling or self-imposed, or perhaps a form of imprisonment. In *Rúnatal* this takes the form of Óðinn's hanging, and his subsequent denial of sustenance by an unknown or absent crowd. Separation need not be a Marker requiring a negative aspect. As I explore other Eddic poems, and especially the wisdom poems, emphasis is placed on travelling alone to a location. This can be seen in *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 5, where Óðinn travels alone to meet the titular giant, or in *Grímnismál* in the prose introduction, where Óðinn travels to the king's hall alone and in disguise.

The second concerns a character experiencing a form of liminality; this may either be a literal crossing, or a metaphorical one. For example, Óðinn is in a liminal space between life and death as he hangs from Yggdrasill in stanza 138. As above, parallels can be drawn with the other wisdom poems from the *Poetic Edda*. In *Vafþrúðnismál* there is the physical liminality of Óðinn entering the hall, but also the ever-present threat of death that hangs over him during his wisdom contest. In *Grímnismál*, on the other hand, Grímnir is positioned between two fires while imprisoned. Like Óðinn in *Hávamál* 138, Grímnir is trapped in

between freedom and confinement, and ultimately while placed in between the two fires, the masked figure transforms from a bound stranger into Óðinn.[49]

The third example requires there to be a degree of danger to a character. *Rúnatal* features danger prominently, as being wounded with a spear is a clear example, but the true case of danger in *Hávamál* relies on the fact that Óðinn is hanging in an unknown place, in this case the tree, Yggdrasill. This danger is also seen in *Vafþrúðnismál*, primarily in stanzas 2 and 19. In stanza 2, Óðinn is warned of the danger that is posed by the titular giant, and in stanza 19 that danger is confirmed by the head-ransom that both Vafþrúðnir and Óðinn agree to. Unlike the liminal state that Óðinn finds himself in stanza 138 of *Hávamál*, for this Marker there must be a risk of harm.

The fourth example relies on the unknown, for instance in terms of location, such as the roots in stanza 138. While the tree as a whole is a known entity, as shown in stanza 19 of *Vǫluspá*, Yggdrasill *stendr æ yfir grænn Urðarbrunni* 'stands green over Urðarbrunnr'. Urðarbrunnr is later featured in *Hávamál* in stanza 111, which suggests that its location is not unknown. However, the poet has chosen to focus on a part of the tree that is unknown. In the other wisdom poems, there are also many examples of a lack of knowledge and the presence of danger. In *Vafþrúðnismál* for example there is the unanswerable question, and in *Grímnismál* there is the mystery of Grímnir's identity.

[49] Unsurprisingly, others have also observed liminality in Old Norse material, specifically regarding Óðinn. Roscoe also comments on connection between wisdom, liminality, and Óðinn (2014, 6). Interestingly, he also notes on the positional relationship that can occur in liminal situations, in his words 'Because it straddles borderlines, wisdom naturally lends itself to a comparative approach.' This is in reference to another stanza of *Hávamál* (134), so there is perhaps the danger of loading too much meaning onto a single poem, but I believe nonetheless that by observing these more obvious liminalities, such as the example I talked about in stanza 139, or Roscoe's from an earlier part of *Hávamál*, then it will be easier to observe less literal example later on in the thesis.

Markers

The above analysis of two stanzas of *Rúnatal* has shown how four ideas can be seen repeating themselves. It is from these four core ideas that I have refined them down to Markers. In further analysis, I will refer to them as Separation, Liminality, Danger and the Unknown. The core of the theme can be represented by the following statement:

> **The character is alone, imprisoned, or otherwise separated from others (Marker A), in a liminal situation (Marker B), while experiencing harm or the threat of danger (Marker C), in an unknown location or experiencing a lack of knowledge (Marker D).**

Throughout this thesis, I will revisit this statement in order to develop it and add specificity as the analysis progresses. The observations in the previous section serve as the basis for these Markers, and how they in combination create the wisdom episodes that are found in poetry.

Marker A - Separation

This Marker occurs where there is an emphasis on the isolation of a character, either the narrator or a character being described in the text, either while travelling or in a static location, such as being imprisoned. This separation from others can occur voluntarily or involuntarily, the former usually where a character is travelling to a new location and the latter when the character is imprisoned or otherwise separated. One of the key ideas for this theme is that the character must separate themselves from others or otherwise be removed from social groups and interactions before they can progress. It is important to note that in the case of travelling and arriving at a new location this separation relies on the character doing the travelling. While there are examples of a character having an encounter

with a single person, such as in *Vafþrúðnismál*, there are many other cases, such as the arrival into the hall in *Hávamál* stanza 1 where a single person travels to a hall with multiple other characters.

This Marker therefore represents one of the two 'beginning' Markers, and it or Marker B (seen below) will traditionally be the first Marker that begins an episode. Incidentally, Marker A is the Marker that had undergone the most change of the course of my research. As is the nature of the formulaic theme, I originally believed that this Marker was best represented by the idea of Solitude, as was seen previously where Óðinn hangs alone and is separated from others. However, there is much evidence that it is rather Separation that should be seen as the truest expression of the idea.

Marker B - Liminality

The Liminality Marker can be classified in three ways. It may be a case of physical liminality, in which a character is in the process of moving to a new location, for example, entering a hall. Liminality can also appear in its literal form when a character crosses over some variety of threshold, such as in *Hávamál* which opens with a character crossing into a new location. It can also be more metaphorical: for example, a character on the cusp of life and death could be said to be in between these two states of being. Finally, we may also identify liminality with identity, which in *Hávamál* can be most easily seen in the narrator and his shifting identity. The liminality comes from uncertainty about the narrator's identity, and how he hovers in between being an instructor and Óðinn. Sometimes, for example in the first half of *Rúnatal,* it is obvious that he is one persona, in this case Óðinn, but in second half it is uncertain as to which identity is dominant, and is therefore not in a fixed persona. The key idea behind this motif is that of transition, where the seeker of wisdom must move between two separate locations or states of being.

Along with Marker A, this Marker also is frequently a beginning Marker, occurring at the start of an episode. Both of these Markers together represent a geographic or spatial function (although both can be metaphorical, for example the aforementioned separation in a hall or being between a living or dead state).

Marker C - Danger

This Marker is represented by either a physical or social threat to a character, or the impression that danger will shortly appear. This danger is usually expressed in terms of physical consequences, such as the wounding in stanza 138 of *Hávamál* or the burning of sparks in *Grímnismál* stanza 1. One of the most literal examples of this danger would be in *Fáfnismál* stanza 1, in which Fáfnir has just been stabbed in the heart and is dying. This danger does not necessarily need a physical component, and can instead refer to social danger, something which is especially common in both the Gnomic and Gunnlǫð sections of *Hávamál*. In addition to the hall itself being a potential location for dangerous occurrences, being placed outside the hall represents not only danger but also the unknown. If characters are cast out of the hall, they are removed from the (relative) safety of civilisation.[50]

This Marker's function is to prompt change, and the need for the characters involved to learn or change themselves.

Marker D – The Unknown

This Marker is represented by the location of the event being unknown or mysterious, or by an item being secret, such as the *rúnar* in stanza 139 of *Hávamál*. A character's inability to recognise wisdom can also satisfy this Marker, for example, as discussed in Chapter 4, the concept of the unknown is Sigurðr's inability to comprehend Fáfnir's advice and recognise

[50] An area of potential further interest is the names that the locations in Norse myth are given. Both humanity and the humanity-like Æsir live in locations with *garðr* as an element, which suggests a place of civilisation, whereas the places that are either dangerous or unknown frequently use *heimr* instead, for example *Jǫtunheimr*.

the danger that will bring his doom. The unknown aspect can take many forms, either in the case of *Rúnatal* occurring in an unknown location, or even a wise character being absent. This Marker is perhaps most emblematic of Eddic wisdom, and as will be seen in subsequent chapters, it is this Marker that represents the mysteries of *Rúnatal*, or the unknown nature of the Norns to Sigurðr. This Marker therefore, like Marker C, is a catalyst for the wisdom episode, as with the Danger Marker, as it is the unknown that forces the character to adapt and change.

Example of the use of theme in Eddic Poetry – Billingr's Maiden and Gunnlǫð

I now turn to a different part of *Hávamál* to demonstrate how these Markers appear. This is a section of *Hávamál* that features two similar narratives in close succession. Both feature Óðinn's attempt to seduce a maiden in order to gain some sort of wisdom, presumably in the former it is to gain some form of wise counsel, and in the latter, it is to gain the wisdom that comes from the Mead of Poetry.[51] This is referred to also in *Hávamál* 140, in which Óðinn claims to get a drink from Óðrerir, the container of the Mead of Poetry. However, in only one of these cases is he successful. In the analysis that follows, I refer to the first in stanzas 96-102 as the Billingr's Maiden episode, and to the second, which occurs in 104-11, as the Gunnlǫð episode.

From the first stanza of the Billingr's Maiden episode, the Markers identified in *Rúnatal* may initially seem to be absent but do in fact appear:

> Þat ek þá reynda,
> er ek í reyri sat

[51] For context, the Mead of Poetry is a mythological substance made from the blood of Kvasir (who was renowned for his wisdom) that provides the gift of poetry to the imbiber, and was stolen by Óðinn. The creation of the Mead can be found in *Skáldskaparmál* (3-5). I have chosen to discuss drinking here as it will be more relevant in Chapter 3.

ok vættak míns munar;
hold ok hjarta
var mér in horska mær,
þeygi ek hana at heldr hefik.

That I then experienced
while I sat amongst reeds,
and waited for my desire;
flesh and heart
was to me the wise maiden,
yet I did not have her. [96]

This stanza frames the narrator as being alone, confirmed by the last line in which he claims that he did not manage to meet with her, an example of Marker A. This, coupled with the repeated use of the first person singular *ek* and other singular verbs *reynda* 'experienced' and *sat* 'sat', reinforce that view. Here we have an example of separation, albeit a separation that is not detrimental to the narrator's health or wellbeing. Further, the narrator's location is a liminal place (Marker B). As in stanza 139 where Óðinn is trapped between the ground and the tree branch, here the narrator is hiding in the reeds – he is in between the bank and the river proper. Marker D, indicated by the narrator's failure to meet the *horska mær* 'wise maiden' represents the unknown due to the narrator's inability to possess this representation of wisdom. Marker C is not present in this stanza, but as will be shown, it will appear in stanza 98.

These Markers are inserted again into this episode. Over the course of the first four stanzas (96-99) Óðinn is frequently said to be coming and going, changing his location and constantly passing into and out of locations and passing in and out of interactions with Billingr's Maiden. This constant changing of location is a demonstration of liminality (Marker B). For example, in stanza 97, the first two lines *Billings mey / ek fann beðjum á* 'Billingr's maiden / I found on the bed' shows that since the end of stanza 96 he has now found her in

bed. The following stanza, 98, then goes against this meeting, *Auk nær aftni / skaltu, Óðinn, koma* 'Again at the evening / Óðinn, you should come', stressing the aspect of passing into and leaving dwellings. In addition to this Óðinn, despite his intended purpose, is always alone as evidenced by the repeated use of *ek*, in the episode (Marker A). One of the curious exceptions to this is in stanza 98, which appears to be speech addressing Óðinn:

> Auk nær aftni
> skaltu, Óðinn, koma,
> ef þú vilt þér mæla man;
> allt eru óskǫp,
> nema einir viti
> slíkan lǫst saman.
>
> Again, towards the evening
> Óðinn, you should come,
> if you wish to speak with the girl;
> all is chaos,
> unless only you both know
> such sin together. [98]

The identity of the speaker is a mystery. There are three possible speakers, and each seems unlikely. The first possibility is that Billingr's Maiden is the speaker, as in the previous stanza Óðinn finds her in bed, asleep, and has now woken up. The second may be Óðinn himself, speaking to himself, which seems like the simplest and most logical solution. Third, and most unlikely, may be the unnamed narrator present for much of *Hávamál* choosing to interject in the narrative. Regardless, this stanza features the first occurrence of Marker C, as there is the risk of negative consequence (*óskǫp*) if Óðinn carries on.

What is most curious about this section is that despite the presence of the theme, the final part of the narrative ends with the narrator's failure. While he believes himself to be successful, he ends up being blocked from seeing Billingr's Maiden by the household warriors in stanza 100, and when he manages to sneak in, he finds a *grey* 'bitch' on her bed.

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

But towards morning
when I had come again,
then were the hall-warriors sleeping;
a bitch I found then
in the good woman's
bed, bound. [101]

There are three possible conclusions to be drawn from this failure to gain wisdom. First, this could suggest that this is not intended to represent a wisdom narrative, and it is therefore not required to use the formulaic Marker to complete the theme. The second option is that it is intended to be a parody, in a similar manner to how *Alvíssmál* is a parody of a wisdom dialogue, as it similarly features a character who appears to be wise being defeated.[52] The third option is that the wisdom episode itself is to represent the failure of those in love, and that the failure is the point of this episode. While stanzas 90 and 91 talk about the relative fickleness of love, stanzas 93 and 94 both discuss the thought that even wise men become foolish when in love. This stanza then demonstrates that, for all the narrator's skill and the wisdom he believes he has, he too is foolish.

In contrast to the Billingr's Maiden episode, Gunnlǫð's episode represents a successful excursion for wisdom, and the story is found in other sources, as a version of it appears in *Skáldskaparmál*. While Gunnlǫð's episode as a whole will be investigated more fully in section 3, here I explore the presence of Markers in the first three stanzas of the episode.

[52] *Alvíssmál* is one of the mythological poems that will not feature, but its role is not irrelevant to wisdom literature in the Eddic corpus, especially due to the prominence of its titular dwarf. Acker (2002) discusses the significance of the information in *Alvíssmál* specifically, and dwarves in general, which will be reiterated in Chapter 4.

Stanza 104 opens in a similar fashion to how stanza 96 opened the previous episode:

> Inn aldna jǫtun ek sótta,
> nú em ek aptr um kominn:
> fátt gat ek þegjandi þar;
> mǫrgum orðum
> mælta ek í minn frama
> í Suttungs sǫlum.
>
> The old giant I sought,
> now I have come back:
> little I got for being silent;
> with many words
> I spoke to my benefit
> in Suttungr's hall. [104]

Now that we have a firm grasp of the key concepts behind the Markers, we can begin to see them in this stanza. Here, Óðinn's separation is represented by travelling alone to Suttungr's hall (Marker A), and the reference to his speech. In reference to liminality, the focus is placed once again on the ability of the narrator to come and go through the entrances to the hall (Marker B). However, this example lacks two of the Markers, specifically the presence of a Marker for the unknown or danger. As this is an episode of a successful obtaining of wisdom, like *Rúnatal*, we might expect to be able to identify the presence of these Markers. However, if we observe the following two stanzas, we can see that in addition to the other Markers being repeated, the unknown and danger Markers (D and C) also appear:

> Gunnlǫð mér um gaf
> gullnum stóli á
> drykk ins dýra mjaðar;
> ill iðgjǫld
> lét ek hana eftir hafa
> síns ins heila hugar,
> síns ins svára sefa.
>
> Rata munn

létumk rúms um fá
ok um grjót gnaga;
yfir ok undir
stóðumk jǫtna vegir,
svá hætta ek hǫfði til.

Gunnlǫð gave to me
on a golden chair a
drink of the precious mead;
an ill gift
I let her have after
for her whole thought,
for her heavy mind. [105]

With Rati's mouth
I obtained a space for myself;
and gnawed rock;
over and under
I stood on the ways of giants
as I risked my head. [106]

Óðinn's passage through the earth in stanza 106 is once again a clear example of liminality because he is passing through something, and he is going *yfir ok undir* 'over and under' and is therefore once again travelling in a middle area apart from the giants' ways (Marker B). We also find an example of the danger Marker, and it too is found in stanza 106 in the final line. As with *Vafþrúðnismál*, the risk that is attached to this quest is specifically to Óðinn's head (Marker C). However, it is not Óðinn who experiences the danger of Marker D. Rather, it is Gunnlǫð herself who is experiencing the harm in stanza 105 in lines 5-7, as she contends with Óðinn's betrayal (Marker D).

Reflection on the two episodes

We can see that these episodes use the identified Markers at or near the start of the narratives, and these prime the audience to expect a wisdom episode. While the apparent failure of the narrator in the Billingr's maiden episode may suggest a parody, the evidence

instead shows that it is confirming the advice given in stanzas 93 and 94. Even though Óðinn ultimately fails in his narrative, the audience are still left with advice that the narrator gave. This may have broader implications as to the nature of the theme, perhaps suggesting that the theme does not promise a successful wisdom experience, rather one that can help the audience understand. We have seen variations of these Markers occur in three separate sections of *Hávamál,* so following these analyses I will now define the Markers.

Both narratives present on the surface a simple story, but on a layer below they instead provide wisdom of two varieties. While this will be discussed fully in the following chapter where it will be properly defined, the Billingr's maiden episode attempts to give the audience practical advice of a sort. Indeed, Óðinn's own failure is itself perhaps a reference to stanza 54 of *Hávamál* where the virtue of being *meðalsnotr* 'mediumly wise'. Here, the audience are comforted that even a figure such as Óðinn can fail and still remain powerful and able to succeed in the following episode. Similarly, the non-Odinic part of the episode reinforces the poem's stance on men and women's interactions. The Gunnlǫð however serves to provide mythological information about characters, as well as helping to establish Óðinn's wisdom authority by his theft of the Mead of Poetry.

This analysis shows that these four types of Markers combined in all three cases lead to a wisdom episode, and that there is therefore great potential for further development. While perhaps not as instantly identifiable as Crowne's 'hero on the beach' theme, this 'liminal wisdom' theme can be seen in several places in *Hávamál.* Once further analysis is carried out, this study can then be applied to other Eddic poems. This formulaic theme occurs prominently in the other two wisdom poems in the Poetic Edda, but it is in the non-wisdom poems that such an analysis can be especially useful.

Markers and *Snorra Edda*

Snorra Edda was discussed in the introduction and will be the revisited in Chapter 3. However, it does also present a potential transference of the Markers from a poetic form to a prose form. Here is a brief discussion of how these four Markers can be seen in the first part of S*norra Edda*, *Gylfaginning*, which has parallels with *Hávamál*.

Gylfaginning is a narrative that focuses on a king, Gylfi, who travels to Ásgarðr to learn the secrets of the Æsir. While *Gylfaginning* is not generally considered a piece of wisdom literature, it does have some striking similarities to wisdom literature, and arguably features a wisdom episode in the story. As I summarise the story, I will point out the Markers, and how Markers appear in a similar manner to those in *Hávamál*. In the story, Gylfi travels alone and in secret to Ásgarðr:

> Hann byrjaði ferð sína til Ásgarðs ok fór með laun ok brá á sik gamals manns líki ok dulðisk svá.
>
> He began his journey to Ásgarðr and went with secrecy and put on the appearance of an old man and so disguised himself. (7)

This is an example of Marker A and of Marker D. As Gylfi is journeying alone, he is clearly experiencing separation (A), and by making himself appear as a stranger, he is making himself unknown (D). When he arrives at Ásgarðr, he is led into the mysterious hall:

> Ok snerisk sá maðr fyrir honum inn í hǫllina. En hann gekk eptir, ok þegar lauksk hurðin á hæla honum.
>
> And the man turned ahead of him and went into the hall. Then he [Gylfi] went after, and immediately the door shut itself on his heels. (8)

This is a clear example of liminality (Marker B) in the literal sense. Gylfi is hovering with the door guard at the threshold, and then crosses into the hall. After he has entered the hall,

Gylfi quotes stanza 1 of *Hávamál* (8).[53] While this connects *Gylfaginning* with *Hávamál*, it also represents an appearance of Marker C: *hvar óvinir sitja á fleti fyrir* 'where enemies sit on the boards already'. As has been shown, there are not only parallels (both explicit and implicit) within the first part of *Gylfaginning*, but there are also examples of the four Markers of my theme.

Additionally, Gylfi is established as an Odinic figure, as he is said to be wise in *Gylfaginning*: *Gylfi konungr var maðr vitr ok fjǫlkunnigr* 'King Gylfi was a wise man and skilled in magic' (8). Gylfi's desire to disguise himself upon entry is also like Óðinn in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*. Finally, and most importantly, the name that Gylfi gives, Gangleri, is one of the names that Óðinn gives himself in *Grímnismál* (46), and the name also appears in *Snorra Edda*, for example in *Skáldskaparmál* (114), as a name of Óðinn.

This may show that in *Gylfaginning* Snorri was trying to replicate the method used by the earlier poets to introduce a wisdom episode in the same way that *Hávamál* introduces its wisdom episodes. This could suggest that Snorri recognised that by using the formulaic theme he could prime the audience to experience the story of *Gylfaginning* as a wisdom episode. That Gylfi is himself trying to know the nature of the Æsir is itself similar to Óðinn's own goal in *Vafþrúðnismál*.

Conclusion

As I have demonstrated in this section, the elements of a formulaic theme can be found in a reading of Eddic poetry. The identified Markers can all be discerned at the start of the separate narrative episodes within *Hávamál*, and when they occur in proximity it is always

[53] There is a reasonable amount of difference between the presentation of this stanza in the Codex Regius manuscript version of the *Prose Edda* and the Uppsala Manuscript version, primarily in the first two lines, which suggests that there were at some point alternative versions of *Hávamál* that could be drawn upon. This does serve as an interesting counterpoint to Lönnroth's claim of them being near identical.

in a context that seeks to introduce a wisdom episode. Even the episode with Billingr's maiden builds upon the theme, despite the narrative ending in the defeat and frustration of the narrator. It is hence most accurate to say that this formulaic theme is used when there is the potential for wisdom (though it does not necessarily mean that the characters will be successful in acquiring wisdom), and that the audience should pay attention to the episode to receive the wisdom themselves. The two examples I have used in this section all form parts of narratives, but as will be seen in the next chapter, this can be expanded to areas where there exists only a light narrative frame connecting differing pieces of advice.

There are many more episodes of *Hávamál* which could be analysed. For example, stanza 111 is generally considered to be the start of *Loddfáfnismál*, but it lacks any of the Markers of the theme. This could suggest that it is actually an ending to the Gunnlǫð episode, and not a beginning. This could lead into a further analysis of the Gunnlǫð episode, or even to investigating *Loddfáfnismál* itself to see if the thematic Markers can be found within it and what this could say about the construction of *Hávamál* as a whole. Additionally, in Chapter 6, parallels with *Sólarljóð* will become apparent, such as the similarities between the opening of the poems, as well as with the introduction of *Gylfaginning*, in which Gylfi quotes *Hávamál* as he enters a mysterious hall. Obviously, the connection is intended, which shows how much awareness of *Hávamál* must have remained in the later medieval Icelandic poetic tradition.

Wisdom poetry provides a basis for this study but moving on from a small subsection of the Eddic corpus, I will show how this formulaic theme permeates Eddic poems that are not conventionally considered wisdom texts, and will show how this informed the delivery of these works to an audience.

Having now established how the formulaic theme appears in *Hávamál*, the next poems that will be discussed are *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, and how the styles of delivery of each poem influence the use of the formulaic theme.

Chapter 3 – *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*

Introduction

This chapter builds on the methodology established in the previous chapter, in which it was shown in *Hávamál* how the formulaic theme is used to introduce wisdom, while also building upon the concepts of wisdom established in the Introduction chapter. The two poems that are primarily analysed in this chapter are *Vafþrúðnismál* (7v-8v) and *Grímnismál* (8v-11r), which are respectively the third and fourth poems in the Codex Regius. These two poems, along with the preceding poem, *Hávamál*, share similarities that provide a starting point for the analysis. First, *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* are wisdom texts, the former being a dialogue and the latter a monologue. Second, both poems have the plot device of Óðinn visiting a hostile hall while in disguise, and in both cases this prompts the wisdom episodes. Third, both poems provide mythological information: *Vafþrúðnismál* focussing on mythological history and *Grímnismál* focusing on the social landscape of the Æsir. This information is also found in *Snorra Edda*, and is attributed to either the narrative voice or to specific characters.[54] In the analysis, I will investigate some of the mythological claims made in the poem, but for a more complete and in-depth view of the mythological information, see Carolyne Larrington (2002). This thesis will not overly concern itself with the actual information that is being given out, for example the names of various cosmological entities or place names or other such items. However, as will be discussed below and in the next chapter, characters can give answers that contradict one another in different poems, but this does not necessarily diminish them as wisdom authorities.

Unlike *Hávamál*, in which there were short narrative sections surrounded by non-narrative wisdom stanzas, both *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* present single coherent narratives,

[54] For example, Vafþrúðnir is said to speak lines 4-6 of stanza 30 and all of stanza 31 in *Gylfaginning* (10). In comparison, *Gylfaginning* attributes stanza 24 of *Grímnismál* to the poem, and not to Óðinn who is speaking it (22). There does not seem to be consistency to whom a stanza is attributed.

although *Grímnismál* features and requires a lengthy prose introduction. *Vafþrúðnismál* tells the story of Óðinn in disguise going to Vafþrúðnir's home to test the wisdom of the giant. Through the course of the story the stakes are consistently raised by the giant, culminating in the two characters risking their heads on the ability of the other to answer questions. At the poem's finale, Óðinn cheats and asks a question to which only he could know the answer, revealing himself to Vafþrúðnir and besting him in the contest which, although this is left unsaid, presumably ends with the death of Vafþrúðnir. *Grímnismál* is similar in that it features Óðinn going in disguise to a hall, although that is where the similarities end. Óðinn is imprisoned by the king of the hall, Geirrøðr, and tortured until the king's son Agnarr gives him a drink. In gratitude, Óðinn recites a list of mythological facts and describes the social hierarchies of the Æsir. At the end, Geirrøðr realises that he has imprisoned Óðinn, but dies accidentally before he can do anything, and Agnarr becomes king as Óðinn predicts.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first two sections analyse and summarise the two poems, first *Vafþrúðnismál* and secondly *Grímnismál*, in order to see what role the formulaic theme has in the delivery of wisdom, and how the use of Markers affects the delivery, and to provide any needed context to the poems (especially the role of prose in *Grímnismál*). Whereas the methodology chapter focused on the short narratives that were included in *Hávamál*, this chapter will show how Markers are used in a single coherent story, and will have a couple of examples of the formulaic theme appearing. Following this, the third and fourth sections will analyse how the formulaic theme can be seen on two thematic axes: on the delivery of the poetry and the speakers involved, and subsequently the role of the hall and hospitality. This thematic analysis, done on poems already believed to be wisdom poems, will aid in future chapters, contextualizing and comparing wisdom poems with non-wisdom poems. These sections will also expand on the role that *Hávamál*

has on these two categories. Finally, the difference between wisdom and information will be discussed, further explaining the inclusion of these poems in the thesis and the absence of others, and using examples from the two poems featured in this chapter and *Hávamál* from the previous chapter, create a working definition of what a 'wisdom episode' is, how they are different from 'information episodes', and how these phenomena are intimately tied to the concept of the formulaic theme.[55]

Vafþrúðnismál

Vafþrúðnismál can be separated into four distinct 'parts' which can be identified by the formula that they use, except for the first part which serves as the introduction to the poem. Unlike *Hávamál* these parts are not potentially distinct poems, but separating *Vafþrúðnismál* into parts aids the analysis of this poem and comparison with *Grímnismál*. The four parts are: Part 1 (stanzas 1-10), which introduces the narrative and sets the stage for the wisdom dialogue; Part 2 (stanzas 11-19), which features Vafþrúðnir questioning Óðinn on the names of geographical phenomena to determine his suitability as an opponent; Part 3 (stanza 20-43), which features Óðinn asking a list of questions about the history of the world; and Part 4 (stanzas 44-55), which focusses on the future of the world and ends the contest with Vafþrúðnir's presumed death.

Vafþrúðnismál is a single coherent narrative, and the story concerns Óðinn going to the hall of the giant Vafþrúðnir to interrogate him about the world.[56] Several parallels can be drawn with episodes that I analysed in *Hávamál* and *Gylfaginning*: for example Óðinn goes in disguise (this time going by the name of Gagnráðr) much as Gylfi embarks in the guise of

[55] *Kommentar* references in this chapter are to von See 1/II (2019).
[56] Curiously, considering that *Vafþrúðnismál* is one of the few Eddic poems to appear in multiple sources, and that it is quoted in *Gylfaginning*, Vafþrúðnir himself seems strangely absent from surrounding stories (for more see *Kommentar* (1000)).

Gangleri; another example is the emphasis placed on the risk to the head specifically, as in stanza 106 of *Hávamál*. The concept of ransoming your own head for a wager or risky endeavour does have parallels in other pieces of Old Norse literature, and it is interesting to see that *Vafþrúðnismál* presents a potential origin for the event, or at least, an earlier form of it. Perhaps the most famous other example of the head ransom also has a poetic context, as it famously appears in *Egils Saga*, in which the titular hero composes and recites the *Hofuðlausn* to save himself.[57] Finlay (2011) explores this parallel explicitly, even further likening it to the eventual decapitation of an Odinic contemporary Mímir, who in *Ynglinga Saga* is himself decapitated (93-4). While this is not of direct use here in terms of analysing *Vafþrúðnismál*, as was discussed in the previous chapter the ability of prose to aid this study is limited, it does show a progression of how narrative elements persisted long after the composition of Eddic poetry, and will be revisited in the final chapter in regard to how the formulaic theme was transmitted.

The majority of the poem involves a simple question-and-answer format which informs the audience about some aspect of the world. There are however narrative sections in the poem that progress with the character's actions. These narrative stanzas are mainly found in Parts 1 and 4, and in stanzas such as 19, in which the contest is established. The formula that the questioner uses remains the same through that part (although the formula in part 3 features an increment in number i.e. *eina*, *annat*, *þriðja*). There is less consistency among the stanzas providing answers, although parts 2 and 3 usually answer with a variation of *x heitir* (x is called). For example, in stanzas 12 and 14 this is given as *Skinfaxi heitir* and *Hrímfaxi heitir*. Part 1 lacks a consistent formula, which is likely because the actual wisdom exchange has not yet started. However, Part 1 does feature the use of a formulaic expression in stanza 3:

[57] There is however the small point of contention, as mentioned by Finlay (95), that the actual preservation of the text of the poem is later than the saga itself, but for the purposes here, it is the composition and the risk itself, rather than the poem that is the point of interest.

Fjǫlð ek fór,
fjǫlð ek freistaða,
fjǫlð ek of reynda regin:

Much I have travelled,
much I have tried,
much I have tested the powers. [3]

This arrangement is nearly identical to the formula that features in Part 4 (first seen again in stanza 44), when Óðinn is questioning Vafþrúðnir about the future of the world. This use of the formula connects Part 1 to Part 4.

In a wisdom dialogue, there are many interactions that can be classed as a 'question-and-answer'. As this thesis is primarily concerned with wisdom episodes that are hidden in the text, and are identified by liminal circumstance and the wisdom theme, these question-and-answer sections represent a different type of episode. They are, however, vital, in that they are a direct expression of wisdom by means of which the poet is trying to instruct the audience. In a sense, the formulaic theme justifies the wisdom that follows. As is shown, there are however many instances where emphasis is given to certain parts of the poem which are themselves discrete episodes.

Part 1 – stanzas 1-10

Part 1 is the introduction to the narrative and sets the stage for the wisdom dialogue that will follow. It introduces the principal characters, establishes their locations, and establishes the threat. As discussed in the previous chapter, these three aspects are all important to the appearance of Markers. The three characters with speaking roles are introduced and the purpose of the poem is clearly stated: Óðinn wants to visit the giant Vafþrúðnir to test his wisdom, Vafþrúðnir wants to see if Óðinn (who is in disguise) is a capable guest, and Frigg wants Óðinn to stay safe.

There is comparatively little on the surface that might indicate a wisdom episode when compared to the narrative introductions of *Hávamál*. While the introduction to the Billingr's Maiden and Gunnlǫð episodes have a context, the fickleness of love or other similar problems, the opening of *Vafþrúðnismál* has no such contextualisation. However, we still find evidence of Markers of the wisdom formulaic theme. The first stanza serves to introduce the narrative and is a clear representation of Marker A (Separation), in the form of the solitary journey that Óðinn is about to make:

> Ráð þú mér nú, Frigg,
> alls mik fara tíðir
> at vitja Vafþrúðnis;
> forvitni mikla
> kveð ek mér á fornum stǫfum
> við þann inn alsvinna jǫtun.
>
> Advise me now, Frigg,
> my entire intention is to go
> to visit Vafþrúðnir;
> I declare a great curiosity
> for old knowledge
> with the all-wise giant. [1]

The Separation Marker (A) is connected to the motif of a character travelling alone, as shown earlier in the *Rúnatal* and 'Billingr's Maiden' episodes. However, unlike the stanzas from the Billingr's Maiden episode in *Hávamál*, there is not an immediate presence of all Markers, so the theme is not yet evident. Óðinn's curiosity may appear to satisfy Marker D (Unknown), but rather it is the testing of knowledge (both Óðinn's and Vafþrúðnir's), which is the purpose of the trip itself. Stanza 2 has an implicit Marker of Danger (C), describing Vafþrúðnir as a mighty individual:

> þvíat engi jǫtun
> ek hugða jafnramman
> sem Vafþrúðni vera.

Because no giant,
I think, is equally mighty
as Vafþrúðnir is. [2]

While it could not be doubted that Frigg is concerned here with the strength of Vafþrúðnir in comparison to Óðinn, this reference lacks the explicit danger that was explored in the *Hávamál* examples.

Stanza 3 opens with the questioning formula that Óðinn uses in part 4. Beyond this similarity, though, there is a parallel between the first stanza of *Hávamál* and Óðinn's stated purpose in *Vafþrúðnismál* for the visit:

hitt vil ek vita,
hvé Vafþrúðnis
salakynni sé.

That I wish to know
who Vafþrúðnir's
household are. [3]

This questioning of who is present in the hall is similar to the warning of *Hávamál* 1, and it is a Marker of Unknown (D). So far, the opening stanzas have used the Markers of the theme sparingly or in an obscure fashion, which suggests that a wisdom episode is being set up, although it has not occurred yet. However, the presence of the Markers primes the audience to expect that one is coming. Stanza 4 is primarily a narrative stanza, in which only Frigg speaks to reiterate what has been said in the previous three stanzas: that Óðinn should travel safely (an example of Marker C (Danger)), and try to be as wise as Vafþrúðnir.

Stanzas 5 and 6 show examples of Markers Separation (A), Liminality (B), and the Unknown (D):

Fór þá Óðinn
at freista orðspeki
þess ins alsvinna jǫtuns;

at hǫllu hann kom,
ok átti Íms faðir;
inn gekk Yggr þegar.

Heill þú nú, Vafþrúðnir!
nú em ek í hǫll kominn
á þik sjalfan sjá;
hitt vil ek fyrst vita,
ef þú fróðr sér
eða alsviðr, jǫtunn.

Then Óðinn went
to test the ability to speak
of the all-wise giant;
to the hall he came,
which Im's father had;
straightaway Yggr went in. [5]

Hail to you now, Vafþrúðnir,
I have now come into the hall
to see you yourself;
this I wish to first know,
if you are wise
or all-astute giant. [6]

We have clear examples of the Markers in these two stanzas. We find repeated references to Óðinn arriving at the hall alone (Marker A), for example in line 4 of stanza 5 and line 2 of stanza 6. We further find an example of literal liminality (Marker B) in line 6 of stanza 5 and lines 1-2 of stanza 6, in which Óðinn enters the hall to contend with the giant.

While the whole of the introduction leads into the wisdom dialogue between Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir, there is evidence that stanzas 7-10 exemplify the use of Markers in preparation for the wisdom dialogue. This episode is the first example of a delivery of wisdom in the poem, culminating as it does with a genuine maxim and not a piece of cosmic geography or history. This section has parallels with stanzas 13 and 14 of *Hávamál*, which also featured

overt myth to deliver a maxim. This episode features Vafþrúðnir's first speaking part in the poem, and establishes the risk inherent in challenging the giant in his hall.

> Hvat er þat manna
> er í mínum sal
> verpumk orði á?
> Út þú né komir
> órum hǫllum frá,
> nema þú inn snotrari sér.
>
> Who is that person
> who in my hall
> is throwing words at me?
> Out you may not come
> from our hall
> unless you are the wiser one. [7]

In the first three lines we can observe the vocalisation of Marker D (unknown) in lines 1-2, as Vafþrúðnir has no idea who has come into his hall. Coupled with this is the threat (line 6) that if this person is less wise (Marker D), he will not be able to leave the hall alive in lines 4-5 (Marker C). Regarding separation (Marker A), Óðinn has clearly travelled alone to the hall, but we may also read this Marker in the depiction of Vafþrúðnir. While in lines 3-5 of stanza 3 Óðinn wants to know who Vafþrúðnir's hall companions are, none are mentioned here, suggesting that Vafþrúðnir, too, is alone.

This stanza is the first time that all four Markers have occurred in close proximity, the previous Markers generally only being one per stanza. However, in stanza 7 there is a rapid delivery of the Markers, and this suggests that this is where the actual wisdom episode is about to begin. Stanzas 8 and 9 reiterate the Markers that appear in stanza 7:

> Gagnráðr ek heiti,
> nú emk af gǫngu kominn,
> þyrstr til þinna sala;
> laðar þurfi
> hef ek lengi farit

ok þinna andfanga, jǫtunn.

Hví þú þá, Gagnráðr,
mælisk af gólfi fyr?
Far þú í sess í sal!
Þá skal freista,
hvárr fleira viti,
gestr eða inn gamli þulr.

Gagnráðr I am called,
now I have come from the way,
thirsty to your hall;
in need of an invitation,
I have travelled far
and (need) your reception, giant. [8]

Why then do you, Gagnráðr,
speak from the floor?
Go to a seat in the hall!
Then shall we test
who knows more,
the guest or the old sage. [9]

Marker B (Liminality) is reiterated in line 3 of stanza 8; *þyrstr til þinna sala* 'Thirsty to your hall'; Marker A (Separation) is again found in lines 4, 5, and 6 *laðar þurfi* / *hef ek lengi farit / ok þinna andfanga, jǫtunn* 'In need of an invitation, I have travelled far and (need) your reception, giant'. The Marker C (Danger) is only implied by the text, as Óðinn is claiming sanctuary at Vafþrúðnir's hall, which is stated earlier in the poem to be a dangerous location. Marker D (The Unknown) is established again by Vafþrúðnir's questioning of whether he or Óðinn knows more in lines 5-6 of stanza 9. There is another strong example of Marker B in stanza 9 as, despite having entered the hall, Óðinn is not truly in it yet. He has crossed the threshold and can now engage with Vafþrúðnir, but he is speaking from the floor in the middle of the hall and is still separated from the giant, so that Óðinn occupies a liminal area. Despite Vafþrúðnir's command to take a seat in line 3 of stanza 9, Óðinn will

continue to occupy and speak from the floor until stanza 19, and it is telling that it is only once Óðinn has demonstrated his worth that he is permitted to join Vafþrúðnir. The reason for Vafþrúðnir being apart from Óðinn at this point could be related to Vafþrúðnir's description as *inn gamli þulr*, which helps to create parallels with Óðinn in his own hall in *Hávamál* stanza 111, in which there is the *þular stóli* 'sage's seat', suggesting that Vafþrúðnir serves as a similar figure in his own hall.[58] In that stanza of *Hávamál*, the narrator makes reference to being silent and thoughtful in the presence of this seat and what it symbolises, which ties into Óðinn's unwillingness to cross fully in until he has proved himself.

For most of the dialogue, there are many times where the questioner of the section asks a question with the expectation of a response of a similar length. Stanzas 7-10 do not follow this pattern. Beyond the question of who has come to the hall, there is nothing typical of the rest of the poem. For example, there are no 'what is x?' questions in the stanzas which feature in the rest of the questioning part of the poem. Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir both introduce themselves and the situation of the hall in a natural manner. This feature makes stanza 10 stand out, as there appears to be no prompt for Óðinn to provide a maxim.

The final stanza of the episode features a maxim, which sums up what has been said in the previous stanzas. While this episode has more narrative space in which to work, it ultimately uses the same structure of a narrative instance, prefaced with the formulaic theme, to express the maxim that is tangentially connected to the previously established story:

Óauðigr maðr,

[58] One of the more in-depth studies on the role of the *þulr* is Tsitsiklis' 2017 work on the subject, and a whole chapter is dedicated specifically to *Vafþrúðnir* himself as a *þulr*. I will avoid going into too much detail for fear of repetition, as Tsitsiklis does much the same as I have, although with the aforementioned focus on Vafþrúðnir, rather than the formulaic theme. What is important is that Tsitsiklis recognises Vafþrúðnir as having the qualities of a *þulr*, and therefore the required authority.

er til auðigs kømr,
mæli þarft eða þegi;
ofrmælgi mikil
hygg ek at illa geti
hveim er við kaldrifjaðan kømr.

The unwealthy person,
who comes to a wealthy one,
needs to speak or be silent:
great loquaciousness,
I think it would be bad
for the one who has come to the cold-ribbed one. [10]

This can be compared to how the maxim from stanza 14 of *Hávamál* was delivered. In that stanza, the story of Óðinn's drunkenness and subsequent recovery are used to provide the maxim that relates to the audience: the best thing about drinking is the return of your faculties when sober again. In the present example, Óðinn's journey to Vafþrúðnir's hall is being used as a prompt for him to deliver a maxim on the nature of guests and travelling, and the virtue of not talking too much.[59] As with *Hávamál*, once the maxim and stanza are delivered, the poem returns to the narrative. What separates this episode from the question-and-answer sections is that it features a form of wisdom episode that is very different from the geographical and historical information that is prevalent in the rest of the poem, and is instead similar to the types of wisdom found in *Hávamál*. Not only does it show that Óðinn is wise, and in a similar way to the practical narrator, but also that he has an awareness of how a guest should behave, and the inherent danger of his situation, something that Vafþrúðnir lacks due to his ignorance about Óðinn.

[59] *Kommentar* notes that this maxim is similar in some ways to *Hávamál* 1 and 7 from a content perspective, as those two stanzas both caution about the role of guests (1025). *Kommentar* also notes that Óðinn here is presenting himself as a humble guest, whereas Vafþrúðnir is the violent and hostile one. While this may indeed be true about Vafþrúðnir, Óðinn is deliberately making this visit for hostile reasons, which may perhaps serve as a later parallel to the Odinic character in *Sólarljóð* stanzas 1-8.

This episode contains the first piece of wisdom in the poem, which confirms not only what the formulaic theme represents, but that there is more wisdom to follow. This could also be what justifies the question-and-answer section, as well as the wisdom credentials of Óðinn and by extension Vafþrúðnir, which is established by the use of the maxim. Óðinn's maxim will go on to be very apt for the poem as will be shown. While Óðinn is in the form of an *óauðigr maðr*, he is in fact the one whom Vafþrúðnir should be cautious about. It is Vafþrúðnir who constantly introduces risks to the meeting, and if he knew to follow Óðinn's advice to say only what was needed, then he perhaps would not have introduced the head ransom.

Part 2 – Stanzas 11-19

Part 2 establishes the form that the rest of the poem will take, with one of the participants asking the other a question. This section serves as a prelude to the wisdom contest, and Vafþrúðnir's threat to Óðinn still hovers over the following verses. What separates this delivery from the example in stanza 10, and as will be seen, stanzas 43 and 56, is the lack of a maxim or other gnomic device.

This whole part is itself a type of episode, set up by the events of Part 1. Unlike the previous episode, and the ones found in *Hávamál*, this episode is a formulaic questioning. The formula that is used by Vafþrúðnir in this part is *Seg þú mér, Gagnráðr,/ alls þú á golfi vill / þíns of freista frama* 'Speak to me, Gagnraðr, since you are on the hall floor and wish to test your advantage'.

Compared to the questions that Óðinn will ask in Parts 3 and 4, Vafþrúðnir's questions are simpler, as they are about the names of various geographical phenomena or important celestial objects. This type of questioning is similar to the simple (yet distracting) questions

that are asked in *Alvíssmál*. Vafþrúðnir does not ask for details or origins of the things he is asking questions about, as Óðinn does in Part 3 and 4. As Þórr questions Alvíss (who is not clever enough to realise he is being tricked, despite his wide knowledge), he asks questions that are similarly superficial to distract him. However, when the roles are reversed in *Vafþrúðnismál*, Óðinn does not make the same mistake.

Stanzas 11-14 concern the names of horses that bring the day and the night. Stanzas 15-16 discuss the river Ifingr which separates the lands of the giants and gods, presumably Jǫtunheimr and Ásgarðr. Stanzas 17-18 are about where the gods will fight Surtr when Ragnarǫk occurs. Of note here is how Vafþrúðnir finishes on an apocalyptic subject, in a similar way to how Óðinn progresses to the same subject in Part 4, and, as will be discussed in the relevant chapter, the same question that Sigurðr asks Fáfnir in stanza 16 of *Fáfnismál*, although Fáfnir gives a different answer.

Part 3 – Stanzas 20-43

Part 3 is formed in the question-and-answer format. This section, however, features some very clear use of Markers towards the end. Óðinn's questions to Vafþrúðnir mirror the questions that he was asked in Part 2. Beyond the styling of the questions, which will be discussed below, there is not much of particular note to summarise here.

While in Part 2 Vafþrúðnir questioned Óðinn on the names of geographical phenomena, it is Óðinn who takes the role of the questioner here. The main formula used by Óðinn is *Seg þú þat it eina, / ef þitt æði dugir / ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir* 'Speak to me of a first thing, if your wisdom is worthy and you, Vafþrúðnir, know'. The formula changes slightly in this part, first through increment in the first line, and secondly through minor variation in the second and

third lines. This is most obvious from stanza 38 onwards, when the content takes on the apocalyptic nature of the questions.

Part 4 – Stanzas 44-55

Part 4 of *Vafþrúðnismál* is focused solely on the concept of Ragnarǫk, possibly Óðinn's main reason for visiting the giant in the first place.[60] It is in this part that the formula from stanza 3 of the poem is used, connecting this part back to the opening of the poem. As Part 4 progresses, this mirroring will become more obvious, as the subjects of the questions asked in Part 2 (the sun, Ragnarǫk) are discussed again, although in Part 4 this questioning concerns the future of the world. This part is primarily concerned with, for the characters at least, future events rather than past histories. As the first stanzas of Parts 2 and 3 were about the origin of the sun, stanzas 46 and 47 are about how the sun will be devoured. While stanzas 38 and 39 are questions about Njǫrðr and rulership, stanzas 50 and 51 are about who will rule after Ragnarǫk. Finally, the poem ends with the implicit death of Vafþrúðnir, who having failed to answer Óðinn's unknowable question, will now seemingly lose his own head.

Grímnismál

This section will analyse *Grímnismál* for the presence of Markers and the formulaic theme. As was shown in *Vafþrúðnismál*, the Markers and formulaic theme herald a wisdom episode, and while this will be investigated more completely in the comparative section, it will become obvious that this theme is present also in *Grímnismál*. *Grímnismál* however has a level of complication that *Vafþrúðnismál* does not, as it features extensive prose

[60] While being a good commentary on the whole of *Vafþrúðnismál*, McGillivray (2018, 146) also raises the interesting question as to the setting in time that *Vafþrúðnismál* takes place in. As Baldr's death has already happened narratively, then the questioning towards Ragnarǫk could also be a Marker of either C (Danger) or D (the Unknown) as a sort of 'setting' Marker, much as Fáfnir's dying state provides the Marker in *Fáfnismál*. There is of course a trap in viewing Eddic material as a linear progression, and this thesis will not seek to identify a 'timeline' for Eddic poetry.

narratives at the start and end of the poem. The prose introduction provides a lot of contextual information about the characters, especially Óðinn and the king, Geirrøðr, as well as the providing evidence for the first Markers that are absent from the beginning of the poetic text, due to the start of the poem being absent from the Codex Regius.

The Prose

The prose of *Grímnismál* is the main source of context for the poem, explaining the purpose of Óðinn's journey to Geirrøðr's hall and that he is in disguise. The prose introduction sets up the episodes that will contain wisdom by describing a contest between Óðinn and Frigg, as in the poetic text it is not until stanza 49 that Óðinn identifies himself. This contest between Óðinn and Frigg also introduces Marker D (Unknown). Without the prose passage, we would not necessarily assume that Óðinn was in disguise at all, were it not for his usual habit of travelling in disguise, nor would we know the reason for his visit in the first place. The prose introduction not only provides the Markers, but also gives the needed context for the wisdom episode. An older version of the poem might have had stanzas that described Óðinn's arrival into Geirrøðr's hall and his disguise, but in the surviving text we only have the prose introduction to provide this information.

The prose can be useful in a similar way that *Snorra Edda* is useful, insomuch that it can help clarify other pieces of poetry and give context. The prose of *Grímnismál* has received attention, for example, Leslie's thesis (2013) has a section specifically dedicated to the prose of the poem (207-10). In *Gylfaginning* there are many instances of direct quotation of *Grímnismál*, but only stanzas 23 (33), 24 (22), and 36 (30) are specified as coming from *Grímnismál*, the rest are unattributed. Additionally, Óðinn's visit to Geirrøðr is said to have happened in *Snorra Edda* (21), although this is not attributed to *Grímnismál* as the other stanzas are; and the information given on Óðinn's names, while being mostly similar,

features omissions and rearrangement as it appears in *Gylfaginning* (21-2). Leslie also notes this occurrence, and presents an interesting thought to why this may be:

> Again, it is difficult to say what this implies for the audience's anticipated knowledge of *Grímnismál* as a poem in its own right. Perhaps certain stanzas were less popular than others and thus less readily identified. (2013, 207)

I believe that this supposition has merit, and shows how some parts of the poem may be retained more easily than others. This again refers to an idea that will be returned to in the final chapter, that of the transmission of the poetry.

One major change in the transmission between the Codex Regius version of the poem and those found in *Gylfaginning* is when stanzas refer to the hall of one of the Æsir the opening line is altered, removing the ordinal. This can be seen for example in stanza 15 of *Grímnismál*, *Glitnir er inn tíundi* 'Glitnir is the tenth', but appears in *Gylfaginning* as *Glitnir heitir salr* 'Glitnir the hall is called' (26). This could have implications on the nature of Eddic poetry, as either the poem has been changed, or it represents an alternative version of the poem that has since not survived. Given the author of *Gylfaginning*, it is not impossible to imagine that the poetry could be changed to suit the narrative, but the potential does remain that this could be a preservation of an alternate version.

To see how the prose introduction matches the poetic text, we may observe whether the Markers appear in the lead up to the poem. The prose relates how the sons of Hrauðungr, Geirrøðr and Agnarr, embark on a fishing trip, their boat is wrecked, and they come across a cottager and his wife, who are revealed to be Óðinn and Frigg. Frigg adopts Agnarr and Óðinn adopts Geirrøðr. Óðinn gets the boys a ship, and they depart for home, but when they get there Geirrøðr, presumably on Óðinn's advice, pushes the boat out to sea with his brother still in it, and Geirrøðr subsequently becomes king. While Óðinn boasts to Frigg of

Geirrøðr's success, Frigg attacks Geirrøðr's character and encourages Óðinn to visit Geirrøðr to test the truth of Frigg's assertion. Óðinn visits the hall in the guise of Grímnir and is tortured by the king. Geirrøðr's son, Agnarr, gives Grímnir a drink, and this prompts the speech.

This information characterises the actors in the poem in a way that the poetic text does not, but it does not contradict anything in the poetry. Additionally, as I will show, the Markers are all present, which indicates that the prose text is at least thematically resonant with the poetry and with the other wisdom poems that lack prose introductions. Marker A (Separation) is represented by several features. The first and most obvious is Óðinn in disguise as Grímnir travelling alone to Geirrøðr's hall. The second is Geirrøðr himself, when he chooses to cast aside his brother and carry on by himself. Marker B (Liminality) is also represented several times in the prose introduction. Grímnir being placed in between the fires puts him in a liminal state, both physically and metaphorically. Literally, he is in the hall, but is apart from everyone else, and is placed between two fires: *Konungr lét hann pína til sagna ok setja milli elda tveggja, ok sat hann þar átta nætr* 'the king tortured him to speak and set him between two fires'. Marker C (Danger) is again featured twice. First there is the danger that Geirrøðr thinks is coming thanks to Frigg's intervention: *Hon bað konung varast, at eigi fyrirgerði honum fjǫlkunnigr maðr, sá er þar var kominn í land* 'She [Frigg's servant, Fulla] bade the king beware that a person skilled in magic who had come ashore there might cast a spell on him', and then the second is the danger that Grímnir suffers at the hands of Geirrøðr as mentioned above; *Konungr lét hann pína til sagna ok setja milli elda tveggja* 'the king tortured him to speak and set him between two fires'. Finally, Marker D (Unknown) is represented by the unknown nature of Geirrøðr's hospitality, the inciting incident of the whole poem.

Thus, the prose not only provides more information about the narrative and contextualises it, but is thematically resonant. While it cannot be accurately used as a substitute for lost parts of the poem, it can be used as a supplement.

The Poetry

In *Grímnismál*, four sections can be observed. Due to the poem being a monologue, there is more flexibility in what might be considered parts. This is not to suggest that these are actual intended divisions of the poem in the mind of the poet or scribe; rather this division into sections is a tool that will aid in analysing the poem and comparing it to others later in the chapter.

Unlike *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál* is a monologue from a single perspective. While other characters are mentioned as being present, only the narrator speaks in the poem. In the story, Grímnir has come to the hall of Geirrøðr to test his character and is imprisoned by the king. The king's son provides Grímnir with sustenance after his imprisonment, and Grímnir makes his speech to the prince in response, describing the various domains of the Æsir and the geographic features of the world. Following this is the revelation of Grímnir's identity as Óðinn and the fate of Geirrøðr.

The four parts are: Part 1 (stanzas 1-3), which sets the stage for the poem's narrative, introducing the narrator and the reason for his monologue; Part 2 (stanzas 4-24), which is the narrator reciting information about the various halls of Ásgarðr and the occupants of those halls, and of the nature of Valhǫll; Part 3 (stanzas 25-44), which features the narrator listing the various mythical fauna of the world, and other geographic features such as rivers; and Part 4 (stanzas 45-54), which features the narrator unveiling his Odinic nature and reciting his various names, as well as condemning Geirrøðr. In comparison to the previous

poem, *Grímnismál* does not utilise formulae as much, but there are some, for example Part 2 uses an incremental count for identifying the various dwellings of the Æsir, but except for stanzas 7, 8, and 11, these stanzas all differ in their construction. Distinctive formulaic structure here is of less use for identifying the parts of the poem; rather, the narrative content of the poem indicates where a part begins and ends.

Part 1 – Stanzas 1-3

Part 1 of the poem establishes Agnarr as the beneficiary of the wisdom and explains the reason that he is receiving the wisdom. As stated in the previous section, the reason for Óðinn's imprisonment between the fires is not established in the poem, nor is the identity of the speaker established at this stage. The narrator refers to himself only through the pronoun *ek*, and while one of Óðinn's names, Veratýr, is mentioned in stanza 3, it is used in conjunction with a third person verb making it an impersonal statement:

> Heill skaltu, Agnarr,
> alls þik heilan biðr
> Veratýr vera
>
> Hail to you, Agnarr,
> since you are commanded to be hailed
> by Veratýr [3]

The use of first-person pronouns is a recurring element in the poem, where the narrator will mention something specific to himself (for example in stanzas 23 and 24 the narrator states *svá hygg ek* 'so I think'). The physicality, or perhaps the humanity, of the narrator is a constant question in the poem. While Óðinn the god is presumably superhuman in many respects, in Eddic poetry and in *Grímnismál* especially, he seems to be subject to the various frailties of humanity. In stanza 1 he is threatened by the flames on his cloak and in stanza 2 he is grateful for the meal Agnarr offers despite in stanza 19 stating that he lives only on wine:

en við vín eitt
vápngǫfugr
Óðinn æ lifir.

But with wine alone
glorious with arms
Óðinn ever lives. [19]

A recurring theme that will be analysed more closely in the comparative section, as well as later on in the thesis, is the relative 'humanity' that mythological characters appear to have when they engage in these wisdom sections.

This Part is short at only three stanzas long, yet it does much with little to establish that the wisdom episode is coming, most of the Markers occurring in stanza 2. Stanza 1 provides little information, and lends credence to the opinion that *Grímnismál* may have at some point had a poetic introduction, especially in how it compares to other Eddic poems in this regard, because important context would be there.[61] This part, in combination with the prose introduction, establishes the theme.

Stanza 1 could contain a variation of Marker C (Danger), primarily due to the threat of the fire. Stanza 2, however, is where we can first see multiple examples of the Markers appear:

Átta nætr
sat ek milli elda hér,
svá at mér manngi mat né bauð
nema einn Agnarr
er einn skal ráða,
Geirrøðar sonr,
Gotna landi.

Eight nights

[61] The origin of *Grímnismál* is still much debated; for suggestions regarding the origins, see *Kommentar* (1185-93). Larrington (2002) also addresses the various controversies regarding the prose's relationship with the poem itself. I agree with her statement that the prose is undoubtedly a necessary part of the poem, albeit through my own perspective: the prose provides the formulaic theme with several Markers, without which the wisdom theme would not begin properly. As the Markers appear later in the poetic text itself, the original poem must too have started with Markers, and therefore in my opinion the prose represents an authentic continuation of the poetry.

> I have sat between the fires here,
> such that no person offered me food
> except for only Agnarr,
> he alone shall rule,
> Geirrøðr's son,
> the Goths' land. [2]

Marker A (Separation) is quite clearly expressed by the first four lines of the stanza. Grímnir is alone in the hall and apart from others, and this is then confirmed by line 3, where Agnarr gives him sustenance. The state of deprivation and the length of the imprisonment are also an example of Marker B (Liminality) for several reasons. Firstly, he is not outside the hall, but neither is he an accepted guest sitting at the benches. Second, this deprivation that he has been subject to would leave a human on the cusp of death, rather as other characters gain their insight when they are dying, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. Third, the fires themselves are a theme that is echoed in other texts, for example in *Hervarar Saga* where the character after talking with her dead father notes the fires burning as she is left uncertain about her place in the world:

> helzt þóttumk nú
> heima í millim,
> er mik umhverfis
> eldar brunnu.
>
> I thought myself now
> to be between worlds,
> when around me
> the fires burned. [chapter 3]

While this is not a direct parallel, the presence of the fires burning around her and the fires that burn around Grímnir are similar in how they make the character's world more liminal; in Hervǫr's case it was dealing with her undead father, and here it is the blending of the mythic world with Geirrøðr's hall that begins in stanza 4. In its own right this would be an

excellent example of Marker B (Liminality). As will be seen in stanza 49, Grímnir is identified as being one of Óðinn's identities. The unknown part would therefore be the fact that the narrator's nature is unknown to the others at this point in the poem.

The Markers are all present, so now it is time to move onto the substance of the poem.

Part 2 – Stanzas 4-26

In this Part we see a pair of wisdom episodes, the first relating the information on how the Æsir and Vanir live in Ásgarðr, and the second on the nature of Valhǫll**.** The poem does not just focus on the buildings themselves, but some information about the gods is contained within the speech. While the poem lacks something as obvious as a maxim, as just seen with *Vafþrúðnismál*, the audience do receive the wisdom in the form of mythological history. While these stanzas do not necessarily contain parts of the formulaic theme, they are being delivered in a novel way, by this thesis' standard at least, For context, I will now discuss some of the information that Óðinn provides the audience with, as it will have a future bearing in the final section of this chapter in the Hall and Hospitality section.

Stanzas 10 and 11, for example description of Valhǫll**,** and it is primarily of note in that a pair of stanzas use a semi-formulaic opening to describe one of Óðinn's halls:

> Mjǫk er auðkennt
> þeim er til Óðins koma
> salkynni at sjá;
> skǫftum er rann rept,
> skjǫldum er salr þakiðr,
> brynjum um bekki strát.
>
> Mjǫk er auðkennt,
> þeir er til Óðins koma
> salkynni at sja:
> vargr hangir
> fyr vestan dyrr,

ok drúpir ǫrn yfir.

It is very easy to recognise,
for those who to Óðinn's hall come
and see the household;
the building is rafted with spear-shafts,
the hall is thatched with shields,
armour strewn on benches. [9]

It is very easy to recognise,
for those who to Óðinn's hall come
and see the household;
a wolf hangs
over the western door,
and an eagle hovers over. [10]

These stanzas by themselves do little other than illustrate the martial nature of Valhǫll**,** but set the scene for Óðinn's hall in comparison to Geirrøðr's, which has no description in the poetic text and only slightly more in the prose. This would probably be because the audience would know how a traditional king's hall would look, whereas the hall of Óðinn would seem so much more fantastic and beyond a traditional frame of reference, perhaps being an example of an expected reality against a mythic one.

With the exception of stanza 11, which talks about Þrymheimr, the following seven stanzas all deal with various personages in Ásgarðr, and discuss the positive traits that each have.[62] For example, in stanza 12, Baldr's hall is referred to as being an honest place:

á því landi,
er ek liggja veit
fæsta feiknstafi

in that land
where I know there lie
Fewest baleful staves. [12]

[62] Þrymheimr curiously is neither in Ásgarðr nor Álfheimr, nor is there much known about it, so it is bizarre that it is mentioned here. *Kommentar* offers an etymological suggestion for the place name, but fails to explain why such a place is named in the same place as the homes of the Æsir (1278).

Similarly, both Heimdallr's and Freyja's halls are spoken of positively, Heimdallr's for his good mead (an ironic comparison with Geirrøðr's hall as he did not serve Grímnir anything), and Freyja who receives half of the dead, presumably a better place to be than in Hel. Stanzas 15 and 16 continue with the positive rulers, with Forseti's hall being a place where peace is made:

> en þar Forseti
> byggir flestan dag
> ok svæfir allar sakir.
>
> and there Forseti
> lives most days
> and soothes all quarrels. [15]

Njǫrðr is similarly praised in the description of his own hall in stanza 16, being described as *manna þengill/inn meins vani* 'the prince of men, without malice', and Viðarr is also praised in stanza 17, which describes his hall. This constant cataloguing of the moral character of the gods is undoubtedly designed to be the wisdom that is imparted. Not only is a mythic knowledge being transmitted, but also there is a didactic subtext teaching how a person should act.[63] Curiously, only positive traits are mentioned, or gods who themselves are positive entities like Forseti and Baldr. This creates a comparison with Geirrøðr's hall, which is clearly a place where these positive traits are not present, and the narrator is using these supernatural trappings to create a guide for what should be. This could also refer to the land being described as *heilagt* 'holy' in, which will also be used to describe the doors of Valhǫll in stanza 22, and later in the river that Þórr wades through in stanza 29.

[63] *Lokasenna* is an inversion of this sequence of *Grímnismál*. Here, the gods' positive traits are their only traits, whereas in *Lokasenna* it is the reverse. One could perhaps extrapolate this as a function of it being a wisdom text and *Lokasenna* being a more traditional dialogue, whereas one wishes to stress virtue and positive qualities, whereas Loki is more interested in the salacious.

Stanza 21 is obscure and it is hard to parse its meaning. The object mentioned in it, Þund, would seem to be a river, and the *einherjar* are referred to as having difficulty wading through it. Stanza 22 however brings us back to the elements of Markers, and as will be discussed in the delivery section, refreshes them to reemphasise them:

> Valgrind heitir
> er stendr velli á
> heilǫg fyr helgum durum;
> forn er sú grind,
> en þat fáir vitu,
> hvé hon er í lás of lokin.
>
> Valgrindr it is called,
> that which stands on the plain
> sacred before holy doors:
> old is that gate,
> but few know
> how it is sealed with a lock. [22]

First in this we have a repetition of the formula used in stanza 18, *en þat fáir vitu* 'but few know', which is again an instance of Marker D (Unknown). This repetition is once again showing that the narrator knows much and can share it, transforming it from the unknown to the known. Secondly, *Valgrindr* is one of the most literal examples of liminality, being a gateway of the dead, which is an example of Marker B. Over the course of the past three stanzas, we have an example of the Markers once again occurring in proximity. This suggests that a new wisdom episode is about to begin. In this case there are two more stanzas relating to Valhǫll, which again feature repetition:

> Fimm hundruð dura
> ok umb fjórum tøgum,
> svá hygg ek á Valhǫllu vera;
> átta hundruð einherja
> ganga senn ór einum durum,
> þá er þeir fara at vitni at vega.

Fimm hundruð golfa
ok umb fjórum tøgum,
svá hygg ek Bilskirni með bugum;
ranna þeira,
er ek rept vita,
míns veit ek mest magar.

Five hundred doors
and forty together,
such I think are in Valhǫll;
eight hundred Einherjar
go together from one door,
when they got to fight with the wolf. [23]

Five hundred sections
and forty together,
such I think Bilskirnir has;
of those buildings,
where I know are rafted,
I know that of my boy to be greatest. [24]

These two stanzas once again reiterate the setting of Valhǫll, and both describe the doors in a repetitive formula. *Grímnismál* frequently seems to use a formula twice, for example this one, the one in stanzas 18 and 22, and the one in stanzas 10 and 11. Again we see the narrator drop his mask in stanza 24, in which he claims to be the father of the owner of the hall. The following two stanzas, 24 and 25, also use a repeating formula to expand on the knowledge of Valhǫll:

Heiðrún heitir geit,
er stendr hǫllu á Herjafǫðrs
ok bítr af Læraðs limum;
skapker fylla
hon skal ins skíra mjaðar;
knáat sú veig vanask.

Eikþyrnir heitir hjǫrtr,
er stendr á hǫllu Herjafǫðrs
ok bítr af Læraðs limum;
en af hans hornum

drýpr í Hvergelmi,
þaðan eigu vǫtn ǫll vega.

The goat is called Heiðrún,
who stands over the hall of Herjafaðir
and bites on Læraðr's branches;
a vat she shall fill
of shining mead;
the drink cannot run out. [25]

The hart is called Eikþyrnir,
who stands over the hall of Herjafaðir
and bites on Læraðr's branches
and from his horns
drips into Hvergelmr,
from there all waters have ways. [26]

These stanzas once again describe Valhǫll, and the final line of stanza 26 runs into the wisdom episode, which features the various names of rivers. In contrast to the subtextual advice of the earlier part of *Grímnismál*, now the narrator is comfortable in changing the type of wisdom to mythological information, much as was seen in *Vafþrúðnismál*. The Markers that were shown in the description of Valhǫll now form the episode, which, like the previous example, is displaying mythological information.

Part 3 – Stanzas 27-44

This part is what might be termed the geographical part, as unlike what has come before, it is focused on natural phenomena that form the mythological superstructure. Additionally, Yggdrasill is the focus of many stanzas, and the fauna that live on and around it are also discussed. The poem does not just look at the past; though it goes into less detail than other poems, it also looks at the apocalyptic future. The origin of the world is also discussed. As many of these stanzas feature information, there is less to analyse here than in other parts. Nevertheless, I will explore how the formulaic theme is present at the start and end.

Stanzas 27 and 28 detail the names of various rivers, and in each stanza there is an interesting aside that will feature in future analysis. In stanza 27, the rivers are said to flow around the gods' property: *þær hverfa um hodd goða* 'they flow around the hoard of the gods'. The rivers in stanza 28 however have a more terminal focus, as they are said to lead down into Hel: *þær falla gumnum nær / en falla til Heljar heðan* 'they fall near people, then fall from here to Hel'. The next stanza (29) reiterates the theme of rivers, but now contains mythical stories and information, in this case the rivers that Þórr must wade across when joining the other Æsir and sitting in judgement, as well as introducing the apocalyptic fact of Yggdrasill's burning.

Stanzas 30-35 all expand upon those who either live in or interact around Yggdrasill. Stanza 30 names the horses the Æsir ride when they go to sit in judgement, while stanza 31 names the various realms that lie beneath Yggdrasill. Curiously this stanza names the lands of Hel, giants, and humanity as being below Yggdrasill. Stanza 32 names Ratatǫskr and Niðhoggr, and stanza 33 names the harts that live in the boughs of Yggdrasill. Stanza 34 details the snakes that live in Yggdrasill and continually bite the tree, and stanza 35 continues this theme of assault on all sides; it rots at the sides and is bitten from both above and below. From these stanzas, we can see that the information is all about Yggdrasil and what troubles it, and about how those who sit in judgement interact with the world. This contrasts with the wisdom episode presented earlier, which was on societal wisdom and the positive traits in hall-owners. Here however is a description of the supernatural world, which contrasts with the mundane world of the audience.

Stanza 36 features another example of the narrator's mask slipping, as he once again refers to himself in Odinic terms, here associating himself with Valkyries:

Hrist ok Mist
vil ek, at mér horn beri,
Skeggjǫld ok Skǫgul,
Hildr ok Þrúðr,
Hlǫkk ok Herfjǫtur,
Gǫll ok Geirǫlul,
Randgríð ok Ráðgríðr
ok Reginleif,
þær bera Einherjum ǫl.

Hrist and Mist
I wish, would bear me a horn,
Skeggjǫld and Skǫgul,
Hildr and Þrúðr,
Hlǫkk and Herfjǫtur,
Gǫll and Geirǫlul,
Randgríðr and Ráðgríðr
and Reginleif,
they bear ale to the Einherjar. [36]

Once again, the narrator slips into the Odinic identity, and at this point in the poem the narrator is almost ready to reveal himself.

The following three stanzas concern themselves with the sun and the various mythological beings that interact with it. Stanza 37 names those who pull the sun and how the Æsir have placed items upon them. Stanza 38 details the protection that the sun enjoys, and what would happen if that protection were not in place**.** These stanzas relate the history of the world, and the reasons for natural phenomena, yet they still contain elements of Markers, as well as serving to continue the wisdom episode. In one sense Grímnir is now providing similar information to that which was given by Vafþrúðnir, perhaps emphasising his sage-like qualities.

The culmination of Part 3 is a series of maxims that describe what is the best type of being. While this is introduced in the last two lines of stanza 43, it is stanza 44 that provides the full set of maxims, with line 2 reiterating stanza 43:

> Askr Yggdrasils,
> hann er æðstr viða,
> en Skíðblaðnir skipa,
> Óðinn ása,
> en jóa Sleipnir,
> Bilrǫst brúa,
> en Bragi skalda,
> Hábrók hauka,
> en hunda Garmr.
>
> The ash of Yggdrasil
> is the best of trees,
> and Skíðblaðnir of ships,
> Óðinn of the gods,
> and Sleipnir of horses,
> Bilrǫst of bridges,
> and Bragi of skalds,
> Hábrók of hawks,
> and Garmr of hounds. [44]

This stanza represents the culmination of Parts 2 and 3, and in many ways can be considered similar to the maxim that is given at the end of *Vafþrúðnismál*, especially in line 4.[64] This set of maxims represents the end of the wisdom episode that began in 36, where the Markers started recurring.

Part 4 – Stanza 45-54

The final part of *Grímnismál* is where the narrator is unveiled and revealed to be Óðinn. This part once again features all four Markers, but they appear here in a diffused state across

[64] One small curiosity in this stanza is the association with Garmr being the best of dogs, as the most famous creatures bearing that name are all involved against the Æsir in Ragnarǫk. *Kommentar* (1423-4) goes into this in greater detail, but it can likely be assumed that this is intended to be a different creature.

numerous stanzas, as the narrator has described the mythological world that Óðinn inhabits, which is now being brought forth. As is said in stanza 45:

> Svipum hef ek nú yppt
> fyr sigtíva sonum,
> við þat skal vilbjǫrg vaka;
> ǫllum ásum
> þat skal inn koma
> Ægis bekki á,
> Ægis drekku at.
>
> My face I have now unveiled
> before the sons of the victory-gods,
> with which the desired shall wake;
> all of the gods
> shall come to
> Ægir's benches,
> to the drinking at Ægir's. [45]

This is the first point at which the mask of the narrator is dropped and Óðinn is truly present. While stanza 46 introduces the various names of Óðinn, this stanza is still the unmasking. In this sense, the narrator is himself in a liminal situation. At various times the narrator has spoken as though he were Óðinn, before retreating back into anonymity. It is here however that he finally discards the disguise and truly embraces the Óðinn identity. This is an example of liminality in a character, as he has crossed fully now into his main identity, which is therefore an example of Marker B (Liminality). The Unknown changing to the known is also represented by the 'masked one' dropping his mask and becoming Óðinn, completing the formulaic theme of all four Markers.

What follows in the remainder of the poem is a list of aliases that Óðinn has been known by. While the previous wisdom described the world, this section describes how Óðinn is known by many names in the world, as he says in stanza 48:

einu nafni
hétumk aldregi,
síz ek með folkum fór.

One name
I have never been called,
since I went among people. [48]

The following two stanzas further describe by what names he is known amongst specific groups.

The final stanza (54) is where the liminal (disguised) nature of the narrator fully drops away, and he declares himself to be Óðinn; *Óðinn ek nú heiti* 'Óðinn I am now called'. In addition, Óðinn lists more names that he has been known by in the past.

The final piece of *Grímnismál* consists of a prose conclusion, in which Geirrøðr dies due to misfortune when he realises that Grímnir is Óðinn, and his son Agnarr becomes the king. That a wisdom poem once again terminates in fatality will be addressed more fully in the comparative section.

Delivery, the Hall and Hospitality, and Wisdom and Information

The following sections will compare what has been discussed in this chapter, how the formulaic theme interacts with *Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*, with both poems against themselves and against *Hávamál*, which was analysed in the previous chapter. These three poems have multiple aspects in common, which serves as the starting point for comparison. First, all three feature Óðinn as a main character. Second, all three are wisdom poems. Third and finally, they are arranged together in the Codex Regius.

These sections will focus upon three points of comparison. The first is on the style of delivery. Both *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* feature very different styles of delivery,

Vafþrúðnismál being a wisdom dialogue, and *Grímnismál* being a wisdom monologue. *Hávamál* separates its wisdom episodes into narrative collections, closer in form to *Grímnismál* than *Vafþrúðnismál*, but still different enough to be in its own category. As I will show, each method of delivery uses formulaic theme in different ways to present wisdom episodes. For example, the narrator of *Grímnismál*, who lacks the breaks in narrative of *Hávamál* or the dialogue companion of *Vafþrúðnismál*, must re-use the formulaic theme to remind his audience when the wisdom is about to be delivered.

The second point of comparison is the locations that the poems establish, and the stages that the narrators or speakers interact on. Hospitality, and the emphasis on the hall, all impact the poems in ways that are relevant to formulaic theme. While the danger of the untamed wildness outside civilisation is always present in the journeys that Óðinn makes across the land, in nearly every example the true danger lies in the opponents that he pits himself against. Vafþrúðnir is undeniably a threat to Óðinn, and Geirrøðr's treachery towards Óðinn is the frame of the whole narrative. This frequently is an example of Marker C, but the various ways that the poems use the Marker is a useful source of comparison. The other side of denied hospitality is when hospitality is provided, for example when Óðinn is provided sustenance. Frequently in *Grímnismál* the concept of food, drink, and satiation is brought up in the context of the hall, and this is also seen in *Hávamál*, especially when it refers to the Mead of Poetry. The offering of food or drink frequently precipitates either the beginning of a wisdom episode or the character experiencing a revelation. Further in relation to drinking, the concept of drunkenness is also explored.

The third and final category of comparison will focus on the concept of memory, as well as on the difference between wisdom and information. The best example of this can be seen in

Vafþrúðnismál, in which Vafþrúðnir claims that his great knowledge comes from an ability to remember the past. Memory is the tool that he uses in his contest with Óðinn, but despite remembering the beginning of the world, he is unable to best Óðinn. Similarly, Geirrøðr is unable to remember the lessons that Óðinn as Grímnir gives, and is subsequently mocked for this fact. This section will also address the difference between wisdom and information, which will be explored more as the thesis progresses. On the surface, the two concepts do not appear to be dissimilar, but as more analysis shows, Óðinn who is wise, will always best those who merely know a lot.

Delivery

When it comes to wisdom texts, there are three types, which can be split into two broad categories: the first of these categories is the dialogue, in which two or more characters interact and either exchange or test knowledge with each other. Through this interaction, the audience is exposed to the wisdom episodes, and these have a broad history in many cultures that create wisdom texts.[65] In Eddic poetry the poems that are wisdom dialogues are: *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Reginsmál*, and *Fáfnismál*.[66] These poems always feature two individuals debating some matter, or being forced to reveal information to the other (the latter two will however be the subject of a later chapter as they have their own unique qualities). The second is the monologue, in which a single voice provides information directly to the audience (although there may be a passive audience in the narrative, for example Agnarr in *Grímnismál*). The style of delivery can be used in the speech of a

[65] As mentioned in the introduction, other cultures' wisdom texts can be identified by their delivery method. For example, the Socratic dialogues of Greece, the monologues in biblical wisdom such as seen in Job: 28.
[66] *Alvíssmál* could also perhaps count in a broad sense, but its satirical nature should exclude it, at least from the other genuine wisdom dialogues mentioned here. Others, such as *Vǫluspá*, could also warrant an inclusion into such a list. However, refer back to the Introduction chapter for why *Vǫluspá* was excluded.

character to another, or it can be more direct and instead address the audience directly. *Grímnismál* features the former, and *Hávamál* features the latter.

Hávamál presents a third category, which is closely related to the monologue. The narrator describes a series of events, or a coherent narrative, or even just a list of maxims or similar instructions, with the goal of instructing the audience. Unlike *Grímnismál*, there are several of the wisdom episodes where there is no specific audience mentioned that the narrator is talking to, and the narrator is explicitly addressing the audience of the poem. As with much of *Hávamál* however, this is inconsistent. The *Loddfáfnismál* section for example has the mute Loddfáfnir as the direct addressee, whereas the narrative in *Rúnatal* is directly related to the audience in a similar manner to *Grímnismál*.

The style of delivery that the poems use allows them to interact with the formulaic theme differently. For example, apart from stanza 5, every stanza in *Vafþrúðnismál* is dialogue that is spoken to a character. This allows the formulaic theme to be introduced and responded to, as Vafþrúðnir himself is a tool for the poet to direct the questions and to allow the wisdom episodes to be delivered. We know that Óðinn has crossed into the hall through both his and Vafþrúðnir's speech, and we can also tell when Óðinn has crossed from the floor to the bench in stanza 18, as we hear the invitation being given by Vafþrúðnir. Having two characters also allows the Markers of the theme to be introduced by both the characters. For example, in stanzas 8 and 9 of *Vafþrúðnismál*, both characters can introduce the Markers, alerting the audience to be aware of what is occurring, and then allowing the wisdom episode to be completed in stanza 10 by Óðinn. Another example of where this happens is in stanzas 54-56, where both characters introduce the various Markers, allowing Vafþrúðnir to issue the final statement about the nature of Óðinn. Additionally, the dialogue

allows reiteration by different characters, perhaps best represented by the reiterated formula in stanzas 3 and 44, which not only signals to the audience that this is perhaps the purpose of the visit, as Óðinn's initial statement of intent to Frigg is reiterated to the unaware Vafþrúðnir, but also that this may indeed be the 'point' of the dialogue. Considering the apocalyptic nature of the questions and answers, this could indeed be the case. This sort of subtlety is not possible in a monologue, as the solo nature of the speaker prevents it. What this also allows is a more traditional, formulaic structure. Once the formulaic theme establishes the wisdom nature of the poem in the first ten stanzas, the rest of the poem can flow in a formulaic manner. For example, from stanza 20 onwards, Óðinn can naturally take on the role that Vafþrúðnir had. Whereas Vafþrúðnir questioned Óðinn on the names of geographical phenomena, it is Óðinn is allowed to take over seamlessly. The main formula used by Óðinn is *Seg þú þat it eina, / ef þitt æði dugir / ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir* 'Speak to me of a first thing, if your wisdom is worthy and you, Vafþrúðnir, know'. The formula changes slightly in this part, first through increment in the first line, and secondly through minor variation in the second and third lines. This is most obvious from stanza 38 onwards, when the content takes on the apocalyptic nature of the questions.

What the dialogue highlights is that Óðinn is feeding back the questions that Vafþrúðnir asked him in stanzas 11-8. Óðinn, however, is not interested in the names of such things, but their origin and purpose. Stanza 20 is an opening about the origin of the world, which is only tangentially connected to Vafþrúðnir's questions, but stanzas 22-25 are very similar to the questions asked in stanzas 11-14. Where Vafþrúðnir asked for the names of the horses, Óðinn asks for the details. This is similar to the questions that Vafþrúðnir asked Óðinn. In this way he is doing as he intended in stanza 3 and is indeed testing Vafþrúðnir.

In his own questions, Vafþrúðnir asked about the day and night, and Óðinn responds with a similar question when it is his turn. This theme of the questions mirroring each other can also be seen in the focus in stanzas 28-9 on the relationship between the gods and giants, which Vafþrúðnir asked about in stanzas 15-6. The following stanzas up to 33 are all about the details of where the giants came from. In this sense the poem is not very different to *Vǫluspá*, inasmuch as it is a recitation of a common history, rather than cloaking wisdom in either the occult or obscure. This could all be considered one extended episode, as established in the first ten stanzas, and reiterated in stanza 19:

> Fróðr ertu nú, gestr,
> far þú á bekk jötuns,
> ok mælumk í sessi saman;
> höfði veðja
> vit skulum höllu í,
> gestr, of geðspeki.
>
> Wise are you now, guest,
> go to the giant's bench,
> and let us speak together;
> head wagers
> we shall have in the hall,
> guest, on wisdom. [19]

Here the Markers are refreshed, allowing the poem to transition from Vafþrúðnir's episode, to Óðinn's. Marker A is satisfied by the coming together of Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir, apart from the unnamed *salakynni* from stanza 3. Marker B is satisfied by the crossing of the hall, Óðinn leaving his place on the floor to join Vafþrúðnir on the bench. Marker C is satisfied by the overt danger mentioned in lines 4-6, with the obvious danger of decapitation. Finally, Marker D is satisfied by the unknown nature of the relative wisdom of the participants. Thus Óðinn's own questions can continue.

There is one further instance of the formulaic theme being refreshed, and it occurs at the end of the poem, and as such, the final set of stanzas in the section warrant further exploration.

> Seg þú þat it tólpta,
> hví þú tíva røk
> ǫll, Vafþrúðnir, vitir,
> frá jǫtna rúnum
> ok allra goða
> segir þú it sannasta,
> inn alsvinni jǫtunn.
>
> Frá jǫtna rúnum
> ok allra goða
> ek kann segja satt,
> þvíat hvern hef ek heim of komit;
> níu kom ek heima
> fyr Niflhel neðan;
> hinig deyja ór helju halir.
>
> Speak to me of a twelfth thing,
> how you of know all the destinies of the gods,
> Vafþrúðnir,
> and [know] the giants' secrets
> and all the gods',
> speak truthfully,
> all-wise giant. [42]
>
> Of the giants' secrets
> and of all the gods
> I can speak truthfully,
> because I have come to every world,
> nine worlds I came to
> below Niflhel;
> thither men die out of hell. [43]

In this set of stanzas, we once again return to the appearance of Markers in stanzas 42 and 43 occurring in a short space, and most of these appear in both Óðinn's question and in Vafþrúðnir's answer. Marker A (Separation) can be seen in line 4 of stanza 43, as Vafþrúðnir

here is claiming that his wisdom comes from his journey through the various worlds.[67] Marker B (Liminality) is similarly present in the final location that Vafþrúðnir mentions, Niflhel. Much as Óðinn gained his wisdom from taking up runes by sacrificing himself and hanging himself on Yggdrasill, Vafþrúðnir's crossing into the realm of death similarly was the prompt for wisdom. Of note is that the same term is used to denote secrets in both *Hávamál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*; in *Hávamál* it is *nam ek upp rúnar*, and here it is *Frá jǫtna rúnum ok allra goða*. While these *rúnar* are more likely to be the metaphorical runes of secrecy, it does help to connect what is being stated here to the physical runes that Óðinn obtained in *Rúnatal*. Marker C (Danger) is not explicitly mentioned in these two stanzas, but can be seen in the broader context of the poem. Firstly, there is the overhanging threat that someone will die if their wisdom is not sufficient, which is re-emphasised by Óðinn's question in stanza 42. Secondly, there is the nature of Óðinn's question, which concerns the destiny of the gods and giants. Marker D (The Unknown) is the emphasis on Vafþrúðnir's knowledge of secrets, specifically in lines 1-5 of stanza 42 and of lines 1-3 of stanza 42. The poem emphasises that Vafþrúðnir knows these secrets although he is not omniscient and his own knowledge of death is lacking in comparison with Óðinn's.

Here, this appearance of the formulaic theme is present to show the 'secrets' that Óðinn wants. These next stanzas do not cover the past, present, or the geography of the world and its various inhabitants, but instead record the future fates of Óðinn, his family, and the destruction of the geographical phenomena that have been discussed.

[67] *Kommentar* makes a note of the comparison seen in *Vǫluspá* stanza 2; *níu man ek heima* (I remember nine worlds) with Vafþrúðnir's statement. (1114) While it is perhaps an interesting parallel, there is a small difference here in the way that each figure contextualises these worlds, the seeress remembers them, while Vafþrúðnir claims to have been to them.

In contrast with *Vafþrúðnismál*, in *Grímnismál* the entirety of the speech rests solely on the narrator to deliver the wisdom episodes. When Grímnir wants to change the focus of the speech, for example between stanzas 44 and 45, it is entirely reliant on his own words. Unlike *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál* does not feature another character to introduce Markers to allow the protagonist to respond. Instead, the narrator must re-use the Markers whenever a new episode is about to be introduced and he must reinsert the Markers to signal to the audience what is about to happen. This is not to say that the monologue does not have its advantages. Firstly, it allows the narrator to speak uninterrupted, and gives Óðinn more space to elaborate than he does when he speaks in *Vafþrúðnismál*. Perhaps one of the main differences between *Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál* in wisdom terms is in the establishment of wisdom credentials, a difference that may not exist if *Grímnismál* was complete, but with the absence of the beginning of the poem this establishment of credentials in the prose introduction exacerbates this issue. In *Vafþrúðnismál*, Óðinn is initially presented as himself and is already established as an authority figure. However, he still needs to prove his credentials to Vafþrúðnir and the audience. This he does to the former through the recitation of names when Vafþrúðnir questions him. To the latter he does this by offering the maxim in stanza 10. In *Grímnismál* however, where the establishment of credentials may have occurred in the poetic text, we have only the prose introduction that provides his identity as Óðinn. However, he justifies his credentials to Agnarr and to the audience through personal experience, something that I will explore more later. Óðinn does not speak in the same way he does to Vafþrúðnir, where he offers facts with little elaboration. Rather, he speaks through personal experience, and introduces the first piece of 'divine' knowledge:

Land er heilagt

er ek liggja sé
ásum ok álfum nær;
en í Þrúðheimi
skal Þórr vera,
unz of rjúfask regin.

The land is holy
which I see lying
near the gods and álfar;
and in Þrúðheimr
shall Þórr be,
until the powers are destroyed. [4]

The narrator is now 'seeing' a holy location, while still present in the hall and having his audience listen to him, and can now reveal a mythological piece of information that, like with the last part of *Vafþrúðnismál,* is concerned partially with the end of the world. In a sense this has transformed the hall into a liminal arena for this part of the poem to take place in, partly being in the familiar location of the hall, and now being also in Ásgarðr. However, the audience is still reliant upon the narrator alone for the information. This is an appeal to the personal experience of Óðinn, a similar situation to how Vafþrúðnir claims his knowledge comes from his memory in stanza 35 of *Vafþrúðnismál*. Stanza 5 follows the information on Þórr's home with information about Ullr's home and Freyr's receipt of Álfheimr. Curiously, none of Þrúðheimr, Ýdalir, or Álfheimr is counted in the list that begins in stanza 6, which opens on number three:

Bœr er sá inn þriði;
er blíð regin
silfri þǫkðu sali;
Valaskjalf heitir
er vélti sér
áss í árdaga.

There is a third settlement;
where blithe powers
thatched with silver the hall;

> Valaskjalfr it is called
> which the god built for himself
> in days past. [6]

This stanza also introduces a hall that according to *Gylfaginning*, belongs to Óðinn, *þar er enn mikill staðr er Valaskjálf heitir. Þann stað á Óðinn* 'there is a great place there which is called Valaskjálf. Óðinn owns that place' (20). As with the example in stanza 2, the narrator does not connect himself to Óðinn.

Óðinn is either the subject or a partial subject of the next four stanzas. He is connected to the goddess Saga, who herself is only mentioned twice in the *Snorra Edda* and nowhere else in Eddic poetry. Although *Snorra Edda* states that she is second only to Frigg, beyond the hall in which she resides and her drinking with Óðinn, nothing else is known. Stanza 8 brings us to the first explicit use of Óðinn, and it describes Glaðsheimr and Valhǫll. This section is a brief deviation from the list of the halls of the Æsir and instead focuses upon knowledge of the dead. The question of how the narrator knows this can be answered in two ways. The first is that the narrator is Óðinn, and that he would obviously know what goes on in his own hall. However, Óðinn has not yet been revealed as the narrator. The source of his wisdom is therefore unknown, but this could also connect it with Part 1. A near-death event like being placed between fires and starved has some important similarities to the hanging episode from *Hávamál.*

Hávamál shares similarities with *Grímnismál* in parts, specifically in the narrative sections like *Rúnatal*, Billingr's Maiden, and the Gunnlǫð episode. These three narratives all use personal experience and recollection as the means through which Óðinn relates the various ways he gains wisdom. Each of these episodes are used in the same manner as *Grímnismál* to place the Markers in them. *Rúnatal* for example has stanzas 138 and 139, in which Óðinn

describes the visceral means by which he mutilated himself to gain wisdom. The Billingr's Maiden episode similarly recounts his personal experience at the start and the end of the episode, where stanza 96 starts with Óðinn's recollection of sitting in wait, and the final stanza, 102, recounts the shame that Óðinn feels at failing in his endeavour. Finally, Gunnlǫð's episode reiterates in the opening lines of stanza 104 the fact that Óðinn has done this himself; *Inn aldna jǫtun ek sótta, nú em ek aptr um kominn* 'The old giant I sought, now I have come back'.

However, there is a lot in *Hávamál* that does not conform to this personal experience in *Grímnismál*, nor to the dialogue of *Vafþrúðnismál*. There are many stanzas where the narrator is not a defined character, and the wisdom is delivered in the form of maxims and other kinds of sayings. While this does not establish the credentials of the narrator in the same way they are established in the other two poems, they are perhaps established properly by stanza 6, in which the narrator appeals to *mannvit* 'common sense', which also separates it from the divine wisdom and information that overtly mythological characters like Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir deliver. What makes this type of delivery similar to that of *Grímnismál* however is the subtle introduction of the narrator's personal views. While it is arguable whether or not the narrator is intended to be Óðinn for the entirety of the poem, there are instances where the Odinic identity seeps in, especially in stanzas 13 and 14, where we see a condensed version of the Gunnlǫð story, but less obviously in stanza 77, where the narrator claims to know at least one thing which happens after death: *ek veit einn* 'I know a single thing'.

These styles offer different benefits for the poet to deliver wisdom episodes. In non-dialogues, personal experience is clearly a key component in establishing the wisdom

credentials, as this stressing of personal experience is clearly important since it always occurs at the beginning of an episode. However, this form of delivery requires the narrator to re-use the Markers to confirm their meaning. Óðinn in *Grímnismál* cannot after all just use the Markers in the beginning and then expect the audience to follow the whole length. The Markers give the opportunity to show where the audience should pay attention. The dialogue on the other hand offers the opportunity for characters to interact, and to prove their wisdom credentials through conversation rather than personal experience. As I come to other dialogue poems there will be more to say about this.

The Hall and Hospitality

All three of these poems are primarily set in a hall, and most times the hall is not owned by the narrator. Some of the episodes of *Hávamál* are probably set in Óðinn's hall (stanzas 111 and 164), but the majority of the wisdom episodes in *Hávamál* are undoubtedly set in foreign locations, such as in stanzas 13-14, 96-106. *Rúnatal* is the sole exception to this, as it is set primarily outside of a hall on Yggdrasill, or alternatively in Óðinn's uncle's hall, which is not a hostile location.[68]

Vafþrúðnismál and *Grímnismál* are set in hostile halls, and this contributes to the appearance of Marker C. This danger is not universally present in all examples, for example in *Grímnismál* the danger to Grímnir in the hall is removed when he begins his recitation. *Vafþrúðnismál* on the other hand reiterates the danger that is present in the hall through the head wager. *Hávamál* tends to use the Marker differently, for example in *Rúnatal* the danger is Óðinn himself as he graphically hangs and wounds himself.

[68] The concept of discussing literary halls in the context of actual archaeological halls has some tangential interest to this study. Both Carstens (2015) and Eriksen (2019) presented ideas on the social functions of halls, and there is potential in adapting these supernatural and unreal halls to their mundane counterparts. However, this would be too great a tangent at this time, so it shall not be further explored

One aspect of all three poems is that they do not take place in Óðinn's own hall, and Óðinn's journey to this new location is significant in and of itself. In *Grímnismál*, we have to rely on the prose introduction for the information on the setting. That Óðinn travels to the hall in disguise, and that his route has been made dangerous by the intervention of Frigg's servant Fulla, is the main inciting incident of the poem and is what leads to his imprisonment and sets the stage for Óðinn's delivery of his speech. *Vafþrúðnismál* forms an interesting parallel, as Frigg is worried for Óðinn as he prepares to travel to Vafþrúðnir's hall, and she states in stanza 2 that she would rather he stayed at home. Again though, the danger waiting for him is at the end of his journey in Vafþrúðnir's hall. Where the narratives appear in *Hávamál*, there are frequently other locations that Óðinn states that he has gone to when the episode occurs, such as the hall in the Billingr's Maiden episode, the two times he visits Gunnlǫð's hall (stanzas 13-14 and 104-110), and even in *Rúnatal* he is outside of a hall when he hangs on Yggdrasill and then proceeds to learn elsewhere. Even in the non-Odinic parts of *Hávamál*, the events appear to take place in locations that are not familiar, such as the hall that is entered in stanza 1. With the sole exception of the place where Óðinn learns in *Rúnatal*, all of these locations are dangerous, or have the potential to be dangerous and this frequently sets up Marker C. Another aspect that all these halls share is the Marker D, as the narrator or Óðinn rarely know precisely what the state of the hall is. In *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, one of the stated intentions of the visits is to find out the status of the hall: in *Vafþrúðnismál* it is to find out who the hall companions are (stanza 3), and in the prose introduction of *Grímnismál* it is to test whether the king is mean with food. *Grímnismál* can also be used to make a comparison with this, as in stanzas 9 and 10 it is remarked that everyone can see who Óðinn's *salkynni* are.

However, as can be seen in all of the poems, people rarely seem to learn anything when they are at home. In this manner both Vafþrúðnir and Geirrøðr are similar, as both fail to realise what is happening to them. With Vafþrúðnir it is subtle, as it is his inability to recognise Óðinn, and to realise the wisdom of his maxim in stanza 10 of *Vafþrúðnismál* that leads him to disaster. Geirrøðr however is more obviously mocked by Óðinn for being unable to learn the lessons he has given in stanza 52 of *Grímnismál*. Even Óðinn leaves home to receive wisdom, as we see in *Rúnatal* stanza 140, where he goes to his uncle's hall to learn the *Fimbulljóð níu* 'nine powerful songs'.

The hall is also an inherently dangerous place, judging by the fates of the owners of the halls that Óðinn visits. *Vafþrúðnismál* ends with the giant admitting that he has been bested, and presumably by the rules of his own wager he will die as he was unable to answer the question. Geirrøðr suffers more graphically, albeit only in the prose conclusion. While his death is not explicitly connected to Óðinn himself, the fact that Óðinn mocks him for his stupidity in stanzas 51-53, and his statement that Agnarr will be king in stanza 2, clearly suggest that Geirrøðr's death is a result of what has happened. Even Óðinn is not immune to consequence when he fails, for example in the Billingr's Maiden episode, although his fate is less severe.

A curious part of the hostile hall location is the relative humanity of the location. While Geirrøðr is clearly meant to be human, he is somehow able to imprison and torture Óðinn for nine days, despite Óðinn's status as a god. Similarly, when Óðinn travels to Vafþrúðnir's hall, he is under immediate threat of death, and this threat only abates at the end of the contest, where Vafþrúðnir, a similarly mythical character, is killed. Despite their obvious mythological pedigree, both Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir seem to suffer and act as people do.

When Óðinn puts himself into a near-death state in stanzas 138 and 139 of *Rúnatal*, the threat of death is not lessened by his seemingly divine nature. Rather, when these wisdom episodes occur, even mythological figures seem to interact as mundane individuals. This will be taken to an extreme in *Fáfnismál*, where an obviously non-human character acts as a person during a wisdom exchange.

Sustenance is one of the main recurring themes in *Grímnismál*, as apart from the inciting incident being the aforementioned meanness of Geirrøðr, one of the torments inflicted upon Grímnir is starvation, and the acceptance of sustenance from Agnarr prompts Óðinn's speech. Once he has had this, he can then perform his speech. Additionally, there are many other times when drinking is explicitly mentioned, for example in stanza 7, in which Óðinn and Saga drink, and the quality of the drinks in Heimdallr's hall, as well as Óðinn's own habits of only drinking wine in stanza 19. Food is repeatedly mentioned as well, especially as it refers to the *einherjar* and the types of food that they eat in Valhǫll. Óðinn and his attendants are all central here:

> Andhrímnir
> lætr í Eldhrímni
> Sæhrímni soðinn,
> fleska bezt;
> en þat fáir vitu,
> við hvat einherjar alask.
>
> Andhrímnir
> has in Eldhrímnir
> boiled Sæhrímnir,
> best flesh,
> but few know
> with what the einherjar are nourished. [18]

The nourishment of a character or characters once again starts the process of the wisdom episode, as we see here a clear, albeit peculiar, example of Marker D (Unknown). This is

unusual because it involves something unknown being revealed to the audience, in this example the mystery of the *einherjar*'s food source, which serves as an example of the Marker. However, there are no other Markers in this stanza, so we must continue.

Clearly, the role of sustenance in the giving of information and wisdom is important in *Grímnismál*. This is seen much less in *Vafþrúðnismál*, as apart from the request in stanza 8, there is little that could be considered relating to sustenance.

Hávamál however features repeated use of sustenance as a feature in its wisdom episodes. In *Rúnatal*, much like in *Grímnismál*, it is the deprivation of sustenance in stanza 139 that is part of Óðinn's sacrifice that leads to his gaining of wisdom, which in turn is also symbolised by getting a drink from Óðrerir in stanza 140. Additionally, Óðinn gets another drink from Óðrerir in stanza 107, which is what allows the wisdom episode to reach its culmination.

There is however the other side of drinking as it relates to wisdom episodes, and that is drunkenness. While the Mead of Poetry may be one of the main sources of wisdom, and Óðinn, who is a symbol of wisdom, lives only on wine, being drunk is clearly a negative trait. The main accusation that Óðinn levels at Geirrøðr in stanza 51 is that Geirrøðr is drunk, and in stanza 52 he connects this to Geirrøðr being unable to remember the lessons. This forms a very strong contrast between Geirrøðr and Óðinn, as one of the conclusions to Óðinn and Gunnlǫð's confrontation which occurs in stanzas 13 and 14 of *Hávamál*:

> Óminnishegri heitir
> sá er yfir ǫlðrum þrumir,
> hann stelr geði guma;
> þess fugls fjǫðrum
> ek fjǫtraðr vark
> í garði Gunnlaðar.
>
> Ǫlr ek varð,

varð ofrǫlvi
at ins fróða Fjalars;
því er qlðr bazt,
at aptr of heimtir
hverr sitt geð gumi.

The forgetting heron it is called
who stands over drinkers,
he steals men's wits;
with this bird's feathers,
I was fettered
in the home of Gunnlǫð. [13]

Drunk I became,
overly drunk,
at the wise Fjalar's;
it is the best ale-party
when recovers back
each man his disposition.[14]

While alcohol seemingly has the ability to fetter Óðinn, to the extent that he loses his wits, Óðinn manages to recover in stanza 14 and closes the wisdom episode with a maxim related to drinking and the benefits of sobriety after it. Geirrøðr, on the other hand, is not able to come through his drunkenness and dies. The narrator condemns him for being drunk:

Ǫlr ertu, Geirrøðr,
hefr þú ofdrukkit;
miklu ertu hnugginn,
er þú ert mínu gengi,
ǫllum einherjum
ok Óðins hylli.

Drunk you are, Geirrøðr,
you have become over-drunk.
you are greatly robbed,
when you are without my company,
all of the einherjar
and Óðinn's grace. [51]

This condemnation of Geirrøðr connects itself with the concept of sustenance that has been reiterated several times in the poem. Additionally, there are parallels that will be explored

more properly in the comparative section, especially the concept of drinking rendering someone unable to think. The following stanza continues the condemnation of Geirrøðr and his inability to remember what has been said. This statement about being unable to remember information when drinking finishes the wisdom episode (*Fjǫlð ek þér sagðak, / en þú fátt of mant*, 'Much I have said, but you remember little'), while also connected to the statement from stanza 20 about the loss of Muninn. Quinn (2010, 198), however, presents an interesting way of looking at drunkenness, specifically how it was related in the above *Hávamál* stanza. She notes that it was specifically *gumar* (men) who seemed to suffer at the hands of the drunkenness, and that Óðinn as a god is immune ultimately to such consequence, even likening it to the narrative in which Óðinn transforms into a bird to escape with the mead of poetry. I believe however that this should be seen more as an expansion to the wisdom, and that Óðinn nonetheless recovers as others do, as the end result is the receiving of wisdom, in this case in the form of poetic knowledge.

Ultimately the hall serves as an arena of sorts for wisdom exchanges, and the hospitality received can be a prompt for a wisdom episode. All poems caution against insincere hospitality and the threat of civilisation against a hostile outside, and the hostile hall against the non-hostile hall. Vafþrúðnir calls Óðinn further into the hall as the narrative progresses, and each level is more dangerous. In *Grímnismál* Grímnir progresses though the various halls of the gods, and then to his own hall, and then to the cosmic outside. Both these texts present a movement from one location to the next, which helps to reinforce the need for travel and journeying in wisdom. Characters like Geirrøðr and Vafþrúðnir stay static in their own halls, and as such cannot benefit. When these characters realise what is happening it is too late to move, literally in Geirrøðr's case, as when he moves to Óðinn, he falls on his sword by accident.

Wisdom, Information, and Memory

Information

Within wisdom poetry, we can distinguish two episode-types, wisdom episodes and information episodes. The former, the subject of this research, show a connection to the formulaic theme and feature those elements which alert the reader to the presence of a wisdom episode. Information episodes, on the other hand, present the reader or audience with information (even if what is true or objective fact can be difficult to discern),[69] but this functions to either establish the speaker's authority, or to directly inform the audience. As a means of providing authority to the speaker, these episodes should be seen as a component of wisdom, in the same ways that other speakers prove their right to speak, for example the vǫlva of *Vǫluspá* talking about her ability to remember the past in stanza 1, or Vafþrúðnir in *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 43 describing his experiences travelling throughout the world.

However, distinguishing a wisdom episode from an information episode can be difficult, and there are instances where a wisdom episode can contain information. In both *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, there are sections of the poem that present mythological information (such as the names of celestial objects, or the names of divine halls). The means of testing each other's knowledge in *Vafþrúðnismál* is the exchange of such information between the two characters. Similarly, *Alvíssmál* is a dialogue between two individuals that, like *Vafþrúðnismál*, ends in the death of one of the participants, but it is not a wisdom poem despite its superficial similarity. It recites information and poetic synonyms, but this information alone does not make it a wisdom poem, as it lacks the other components of a wisdom episode, such as the appearance of a credible authority figure to give the wisdom. The practical and mythological wisdom featured in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* is clearly

[69] The most obvious difference will be discussed in Chapter 4, but to briefly discuss it here, Vafþrúðnir and Fáfnir disagree on where the final conflict of Ragnarǫk will take place.

something distinct from the information episodes from *Alvíssmál*, as in the former two poems the wisdom given is framed around both the authority of the speaker and the formulaic theme surrounding it, whereas in *Alvíssmál* the information is ultimately useless to Alvíss, who dies, and to Þórr, who does not care. As such, while Alvíss can speak in a manner recognisably similar to the speaker of a wisdom dialogue, he never moves beyond this recitation of facts.

These information episodes, therefore, are best understood to function in a manner similar to the formulaic theme itself. The information helps to justify the speaker's authority, but without the addition of either the formulaic theme to justify the wisdom episode or similar wisdom elements, such as lists of maxims or sayings,[70] the episode remains distinct from a wisdom episode. One could have an information episode without it being a component of a wisdom episode; a wisdom episode can similarly exist without any information provided, due to the presence of the Markers discussed.

Memory

In *Vafþrúðnismál*, despite his eventual loss, Vafþrúðnir has a great memory that allows him to answer many of Óðinn's questions, and while it is most likely flattery, Vafþrúðnir is said to be wise by Óðinn. During their exchange, Óðinn asks Vafþrúðnir what he first remembers, and connects that to Vafþrúðnir being 'all astute':

> Segðú þat it átta,
> alls þik *svinnan* kveða,
> ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir,
> hvat þú fyrst *of* mant
> eða fremst of veizt,
> þú ert alsviðr, jǫtunn.
>
> Ørófi vetra

[70] For example the translation of *Catonis Disticha*, *Hugsvinnsmál*.

áðr væri jǫrð of skǫpuð,
þá var Bergelmir borinn;
þat ek fyrst of man
er sá inn fróði jǫtunn
var á lúðr um lagiðr.

Speak to me of an eighth thing,
they say you are entirely astute,
and you, Vafþrúðnir, know,
what is the first thing you remember
or know to be earliest,
you are all-astute, giant. [34]

Uncountable winters
before the world was shaped,
then was Bergelmir born;
that I remember first,
when the wise giant
was laid on the coffin. [35]

This set of stanzas features the partial repetition of one of Vafþrúðnir's answers, as in stanza 29 the first three lines of stanza 35 also appear. Vafþrúðnir remembers a being from before the creation of the world, or at the very least, when Bergelmir died. These questions occur in the third section of *Vafþrúðnismál*, which focuses on the history of the world, and memory is what connects these information episodes. However, Vafþrúðnir is the one who loses the wisdom contest, so we must establish why. Despite his great ability to recall facts, there are two instances in the poem when Óðinn gains the upper hand. The first occurs in the first section, where Óðinn is accepted into the hall, and he issues his maxim in stanza 10. Despite his great intelligence, Vafþrúðnir does not realise the threat that is implicit in the maxim, and does not consider the wisdom of strangers. Vafþrúðnir does not question the maxim that he is given, and instead asks Óðinn about information, all which Óðinn gives him. The second time occurs in stanza 19, where Vafþrúðnir invites Óðinn to his bench, allowing him to cross from the floor to the bench, and chooses to raise the stakes of the

contest. Despite being *alsviðr* 'all-astute', it is Vafþrúðnir who creates danger for Óðinn and himself. This can be seen in the re-emergence of the Markers at the end of Part 3 of *Vafþrúðnismál,* which introduces a new wisdom episode, in addition to the reiteration of Óðinn's formula from stanza 3. Additionally, this Part culminates in the presumed death of Vafþrúðnir, as he fails to answer Óðinn's question in stanza 54:

> Fjǫlð ek fór,
> fjǫlð ek freistaðak,
> fjǫlð ek of reynda regin;
> Hvat mælti Óðinn,
> áðr á bál stigi,
> sjalfr í eyra syni?
>
> Ey manni þat veit,
> hvat þú í árdaga
> sagðir í eyra syni;
> feigum munni
> mælta ek mína forna stafi
> ok of ragnarǫk.
>
> Nú ek við Óðin deildak
> mína orðspeki;
> þú ert æ vísastr vera.
>
> Much I have travelled,
> much I have tried,
> much have I tested the powers;
> what did Óðinn say,
> before he climbed the pyre,
> into the ear of his son? [54]
>
> No person knows that,
> what you in previous days
> spoke into your son's ear;
> with doomed mouth
> I have spoken my old lore
> and of Ragnarǫk. [55]
>
> Now I have with Óðinn
> shared my wisdom;
> you are forever the wisest of men. [56]

These stanzas once again feature the appearance of Markers and represent an embedded wisdom episode, and much like that wisdom episode seen at the end of Part 1, this too has a realisation featured at the end of it. While Óðinn has flattered Vafþrúðnir in his questions and made mention of his wisdom and astuteness, as well as his great memory, he nonetheless asks a question that cannot be answered.[71] Stanzas 55 and 56 are the only time that Vafþrúðnir speaks twice in a row, and this emphasises his realisation of both his own foolishness and impending doom. The statement at the end of stanza 56 is effectively the closing argument of the poem, and while it is not the worldly wisdom statement that occurred in stanza 10, it is rather a recognition of the wisdom of Óðinn, and by extension, the foolishness of testing the wisdom of strangers, as well as an acknowledgement of Vafþrúðnir's unjustified pride. Had Vafþrúðnir understood this maxim before he engaged with Óðinn, he would not be in the state that he is. After all, it is Vafþrúðnir who constantly raises the danger levels in the poem, from his threat to Óðinn in stanza 7 and not recognising the warning that Óðinn gives in stanza 10, to the actual wager he makes in stanza 18. Vafþrúðnir's final realisation, that Óðinn is wisest of all, also gives legitimacy to what has been said previously in the poem. Óðinn's compliments to Vafþrúðnir in Part 3 in his formulaic questioning, coupled with Óðinn's own proven wisdom, justify the information that has been given. This also is an inversion of what would be considered typical in a wisdom episode, as the expected outcome would be that the person being visited would be the wiser one: here it is Óðinn instead.

In terms of the Markers that are present in this episode, Marker A (Separation) and Marker D (the Unknown) can both be represented by the fact that Óðinn alone knows what he

[71] This unanswerable question is repeated nearly identically in *Hervarar Saga* (chapter 9), which again features Óðinn in disguise using this question to win a contest, and the question reveals Óðinn's identity to his opponent.

spoke into Baldr's ear, which is in lines 4, 5, and 6 of stanza 54 and in lines 1, 2, and 3 of stanza 55. Marker B is represented in line 5 of stanza 54, in which Óðinn mounts the pyre. This is not dissimilar to Óðinn hanging himself in stanza 138 of *Hávamál*, as both feature Óðinn approaching a 'death space' and a connection to secrets that are known only to Óðinn. Marker C refers to Vafþrúðnir himself and his recognition of his failure in line 4 of stanza 55. Not only that, this realisation spells doom for Vafþrúðnir, and tragically there is nothing that he can do now to prevent his fate even though he has learnt this wisdom. A parallel could even be drawn to the culmination of *Hávamál* in stanza 164 in which the narrator states *óþǫrf jǫtna sonum* 'useless to the sons of giants'. Much as with the wisdom of *Hávamál* being useless to giants, here Vafþrúðnir's realisation will not help him in the future.

The re-use of Óðinn's formula from stanza 3 gives the poem a cyclical quality. This structure of the poem being cyclical, or in a sense mirrored, can be seen elsewhere in the poem. While in this part, Óðinn drops his disguise and speaks as he did in Part 1, Vafþrúðnir also mirrors Óðinn. Not only is he now in the position of the answerer, which was Óðinn's role in Part 2, he also mirrors Óðinn by being alone in his hall and in a position of danger. This creates a parallel with *Hávamál*, as even in the Billingr's Maiden episode where there were no named characters other than Óðinn, the hall companions are mentioned as being present in stanza 101; *þá var saldrótt of sofin* 'there the hall-company were all asleep'. In this hall, however, only Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir are mentioned. Similarly the risk that Vafþrúðnir threatened Óðinn with in stanza 7 is turned back on Vafþrúðnir, as he presumably will not be leaving his hall alive.

Similarly, Geirrøðr is criticised by Óðinn in stanza 52 of *Grímnismál* for being unable to remember what Óðinn has said, *Fjǫlð ek þér sagðak, en þú fátt of mant* 'Much I have said to you, but you remember little'. This lack of memory, or inability to remember, is a key part of Geirrøðr's downfall, and creates a comparison with Vafþrúðnir, who similarly is killed (presumably) at the end of the narrative. In one case, there is a being that can remember history from before the creation of the world, and in the other there is a king who cannot remember what is needed. This raises the question of what role memory plays at all in wisdom episodes, as in both examples at both extremes the event ends with defeat by Óðinn. After all, if either a lot of memory or no memory at all leads to death, does memory have any impact on a wisdom episode?

Despite it seeming to do no good to Óðinn's victims, memory is fundamental to a character possessing wisdom and to a wisdom episode in general. Óðinn clearly values his memory and the connection it gives him to his intellect, as evidenced by his statement in *Grímnismál*, as well as by the series of maxims he gives in *Hávamál*:

> 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.
>
> At home a man should be glad
> and with guests be cheerful,
> he should be astute himself,
> with good memory and talkative
> if he wishes to be greatly wise,
> and should speak often of goodness;
> a great fool he is called,

the one who knows little to say,
that is the nature of the imprudent. [103]

Here the ability to remember, and remember well, is clearly part of being recognised as being wise. As mentioned, in the same stanza it is not only his memory but also his intellect that is important to Óðinn. There are two incidents in these three poems where the memory or intellect of a character is connected to drinking and drunkenness. There are other instances in Eddic poetry that feature alcoholic drinks being used as a memory aid, for example in stanza 5 of *Sigrdrífumál*, and in stanzas 49 and 50 of *Hyndluljóð*. Quinn's 2010 chapter 'Liquid knowledge' discusses the various impacts that drinking specifically has on the memory and wisdom of the imbibers, analysing the whole of the Eddic corpus from this perspective. Her observations show how not only in the poems already discussed, such as Óðinn's condemnation of Geirrøðr (2010, 195), but also notes the interaction in *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 8, in which Óðinn stresses that he has come *þyrstr til þinna sala* (thirsty to your hall), highlighting the role specifically of thirst. This will also be seen in Chapter 4, where Sigrdrífa also gives Sigurðr beer in the context of learning (stanza 6 of *Sigrdrífumál*).

Grímnismál presents one of the most overt focuses on memory in Stanzas 19 and 20, the former discusses the wolves that accompany Óðinn, as well as his habit of requiring no food and only needing wine. While Óðinn and his wolves can be grouped under that standard sort of mythological information found elsewhere in *Grímnismál*, it is stanza 20 that presents the most relevant information regarding the value of memory:

Huginn ok Muninn
fljúga hverjan dag
Jǫrmungrund yfir;
óumk ek of Hugin,

> at hann aptr né komit,
> þó sjámk meirr of Munin.
>
> Huginn and Muninn
> fly every day
> over Jǫrmungrundr:
> I fear for Huginn,
> that he should not come back,
> but I fear more for Muninn. [20]

As with many other stanzas in *Grímnismál,* such as those discussed earlier (for example the various halls and their personages), there is a lot of information in this stanza. From a perspective on the Markers, there can be seen to be a strong example of Marker C (Danger), which as discussed in the previous chapter, usually indicates the transformative part of the formulaic theme. The emphasis of Óðinn's ravens, and their various travels are of note, and Pernille Hermann's overview of them is of note:

> The raven Muninn (memory) is one of a pair and occurs only in combination with the raven-partner Huginn (a word deriving from hugr and hugi "thought/mind"). This indicates that the two mythological ravens would personify mutually dependent capacities of the mind, thought and memory. (2018, 81)

Hermann's description of them, and their codependent nature is of note, but it is how the poem chooses to frame one as more important that the other that is of note, and while this could say something on a more spiritual recognition, that the memory is more important than the intellect, it is also a way for the poem to refresh a Marker. Unlike the usual appearance of this Marker, that of physical harm or of negative social consequence, here the danger is intellectual (except presumably for the ravens themselves). Second, that Huginn 'Thought' not returning is considered a grave loss, but that Muninn 'Memory' is something to worry about more. While on the surface this is merely Óðinn talking about literal ravens, the implicit worry is for the loss of these intellectual, or even spiritual, concepts. Additionally, as pointed out in *Kommentar* (1300), even if the ravens are precisely

that (i.e. merely animals), they are still Óðinn's source of knowledge in the world. Lindow (2014, 44) also comments on the ravens and their relationship with Óðinn, although his interest is more on the literal side of memory, he does also discuss an idea that the ravens could indeed be a different, shape-shifted form, of Óðinn himself, which as will be discussed in Chapter 7, is a fundamental part of the formulaic theme.

This could also connect to the emphasis of the mythic hall as opposed to the real hall of Geirrøðr*,* as the expected heightened reality allows these ravens to represent intellectual traits. This is exemplified by the narrator's personal fear for the ravens. Whereas Geri and Freki are referred to dispassionately, and the information about Óðinn is similarly unemotional, there is concern for Huginn and Muninn. Perhaps this is the narrator dropping the mask, so to speak, or perhaps it represents a more common worry about the loss of intellect and memory.[72] While there are two ravens, their journey across the world is as a unit, and represents Marker A (Separation), while additionally separating themselves from Óðinn. The raven Muninn (memory) is one of a pair and occurs only in combination with the raven-partner Huginn (a word deriving from *hugr* and *hugi* "thought/mind"). This indicates that the two mythological ravens would personify mutually dependent capacities of the mind, thought and memory.

Wisdom

Information, wisdom, and memory connects to all four of the Markers to various degrees. Marker D is perhaps the most frequent, as there are several examples in all three poems where that Marker emphasises the lack of information. For example, in *Grímnismál* it is the disposition of Geirrøðr that is unknown, and that prompts the whole narrative. Similarly in

[72] This could also be an oblique reference to alcohol, as in *Hávamál* stanza 13 it is said that the *Óminnishegri* 'forgetting heron' takes away men's intellect.

Vafþrúðnismál it is Óðinn's desire to test Vafþrúðnir's knowledge that is the inciting incident.

As I have shown, information is clearly separate from wisdom. Several times in Eddic poetry, characters are referred to as *alsviðr* 'all-astute' or similar constructions. Vafþrúðnir is frequently described as such in *Vafþrúðnismál*, yet that raises the question of how he fails in the wisdom contest. In the last line of *Vafþrúðnismál* there is the revelation about Óðinn: *þú ert æ vísastr vera* 'you [Óðinn] are the wisest of all men', and in *Grímnismál* there is the collection of maxims in stanza 44, one which is about the greatness of Óðinn:

> Askr Yggdrasils,
> hann er œztr viða,
> en Skíðblaðnir skipa,
> Óðinn ása,
>
> The ash of Yggdrasill,
> it is the best of trees,
> and Skíðblaðnir of ships,
> Óðinn of the Æsir, [44]

While not explicitly related to wisdom, it is like the maxim in *Vafþrúðnismál* in that it recognises the superlative nature of Óðinn. What can be the source of the wisdom can be identified by what Óðinn says to Frigg in stanza 3 of *Vafþrúðnismál* and also when questioning Vafþrúðnir about the future, where he states that he tried and tested both rulers and powers. Additionally, he states in *Grímnismál* stanza 48 the numerous peoples who all know him by different names. Coupling these two facts to *Hávamál* is the variety of incidents that Óðinn takes part in, all of which contribute to his wisdom, even in those narratives in which he fails such as with Billingr's Maiden from *Hávamál*. It is clearly the experience, that his memory allows him to remember, that contributes to his ability to use wisdom.

Wisdom is hard to define, but it seems to ultimately reside in personal experience, rather than in just intellect. Memory is a key part of this, as the ability to remember what has happened and apply it to current situations is key, which is part of the reason Geirrøðr fails because he cannot remember. This could explain why segments often end with a maxim: the brief wisdom saying represents what has been learnt and what should be internalised. Óðinn is the wisest because he has intellect and memory, as represented by his ravens, and it is his ability to recall what he has done that makes him wise, even after he has become exceedingly drunk, and this is why he worries more for Muninn.

Chapter 3 Conclusion

Vafþrúðnismál and *Grímnismál* are the two Eddic poems that feature Óðinn as the protagonist and which are also explicit wisdom texts. *Hávamál* is similar, as it is a wisdom text, and has Óðinn as occasional narrator. Both *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* use the formulaic theme as a framing device to impart wisdom episodes, perhaps the most obvious being in *Vafþrúðnismál* stanzas 7-10, where there are clear elements of all four Markers threaded into the narrative, before a maxim is given to cement the episode.

The three types of delivery that the three poems use are the same that occur in the other poems that will be analysed in the next chapters, so by analysing them in an explicit wisdom context I can now apply these analyses to poems that are not in themselves wisdom poems, primarily the Sigurðr poems.

The role of the hall and of hospitality will undoubtedly be useful when it comes to analysing and understanding how the formulaic theme interacts with wisdom episodes. Markers A and B, and often C and D, deal with the hostile hall, as the journey undertaken in these episodes is nearly always that of a lone protagonist who crosses into the hall. Occasionally

there is a further separation, such as in *Vafþrúðnismál* where Óðinn must cross into the hall and then the floor, and then to the bench. Additionally, these halls tend to be dangerous. In both *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* Óðinn crosses into a hall and finds varying degrees of hospitality, where Vafþrúðnir merely threatens to kill him and Geirrøðr actually tortures him, and yet the danger ends up being fatal to his hosts.

One thing that shall be key moving forwards is the separation of practical and mythological wisdom from information, and what can be deduced further from this. Information episodes are rather obvious, and wisdom episodes tend to be harder to detect. Separating the two however will help, especially when it comes to poems that are not already considered wisdom poems and lack the signalling that an information episode provides. Memory as well is an intriguing line to follow, as while it is undoubtedly an important part of wisdom, as evidenced by Óðinn's fear of losing it, there are characters who are similarly capable of great memory like Vafþrúðnir who do not benefit from it in the same way, and thus fail in the end when presented with an Odinic character.

Overall, evidence can be observed that the formulaic theme exists in both the poems analysed in this chapter, and from here we will move to the Sigurðr poems, and explore what this can say about formulaic theme and the awareness of wisdom, as they lack the obvious wisdom traits of the poems in this chapter.

Chapter 4: The Early Sigurðr poems

This chapter will focus on the heroic poems found in the Codex Regius. The poems analysed here will be *Reginsmál* (28v-30r), *Fáfnismál* (30r-31v), and *Sigrdrífumál* (31v-32v), all of which deal with the early story of Sigurðr and the legendary beings he encounters as he develops into a hero. A prose version, likely based on the poems that made their way into the Codex Regius, appears in *Vǫlsunga saga* chapters 13-22, and while there are differences and expansions to the narrative, there is not anything significantly different, save for the rationalisation of the valkyries into a single character. A condensed version of the narrative is also featured in *Skáldskaparmál*, although there are differences between the Codex Regius version of *Snorra Edda* and the Uppsala version of *Skáldskaparmál* (found in DG 11 4to).

While the previous two chapters looked at poems that feature mythological characters and, barring Geirrøðr's hall (which itself was transformed into a mythic landscape), mythological settings, this chapter will primarily look at legendary figures operating mostly in a version of the 'real' world. This chapter will focus on those characters who are more than 'human', i.e. legendary, but who interact with mythological figures or other non-human beings. While none of these three poems is considered to fall into the category of wisdom literature, all three undeniably feature elements that would be expected in wisdom literature. Not only that, but the same Markers occur in places where characters are issuing maxims or gnomes, and so the wisdom theme is being signalled to the audience.

These poems represent the start of the Sigurðr story and his interactions with the sons of Hreiðmarr and with the valkyrie Sigrdrífa. Mythological characters, such as Loki and Óðinn, also appear briefly in *Reginsmál*, and are otherwise referenced in the other two poems. As

these texts are heroic in nature, and are focused on a legendary past rather than a mythological setting such as Ásgarðr, it might be natural to assume that they would use wisdom episodes in different ways to the mythological poems. However, as will become clear, all three of them use the formulaic theme to insert such episodes into the poems in a similar manner to that which has been shown previously. The three poems are analysed in the order they appear in the manuscript, presenting a comparative reading in which I will demonstrate how the formulaic theme from the previously analysed mythological poems has been used in other contexts. Unlike the poems in the mythological section, the legendary poems in the Codex Regius describe the comparatively human world of Sigurðr and his family and associates. These poems still feature gods and other supernatural beings, but except for *Helreið Brynhildar*, they are all set in a recognisably human world, as opposed to the mythological domains such as Ásgarðr and Jǫtunheimr. The objective of this chapter is to show how wisdom and the use of formulaic theme found in the mythological poems may be seen in heroic, non-wisdom, non-mythological contexts.

While this chapter is designed to address the young Sigurðr poems, it will not address *Grípisspá* for two main reasons. First, *Grípisspá* is a much later poem than any of the three that I am addressing here, as discussed in the Introduction on the dating of Eddic poetry. Its composition, therefore, while important in its own right, is different enough that a comparison here with the other Sigurðr poems would be distracting.[73] Second, the poem is not presented as a narrative and instead primarily summarises the Sigurðr story. There are some narrative sections though, and *Grípisspá* will therefore be analysed in the following

[73] Earlier, the prose of *Grímnismál* was discussed in relation to the poem, despite being of a similar age to *Grípisspá*. This was because the prose there was providing direct context for the poetry, whereas, as mentioned, *Grípisspá* is a summary piece of the whole Sigurðr story and younger than the other poems.

chapter, before the *Sólarljóð* chapter, as the poems represent two different types of continuation of the formulaic theme.

Reginsmál, Fáfnismál, Sigrdrífumál form the first part of the Sigurðr cycle. These feature the start of Sigurðr's story and the origin of the cursed treasure, his encounter with Regin and Fáfnir, and then finally his encounter with Sigrdrífa. A linear study will best show the development of Sigurðr and how wisdom appears. The lacuna after 32v in the Codex Regius, as discussed in the Introduction, serves as a good point to end this discussion, as after this Sigrdrífa and other legendary beings are absent, and even Sigurðr dies, and the story moves to Guðrún.

The first two are not traditionally considered amongst the canon of wisdom literature in the Eddic corpus, but they do contain wisdom elements, which is why they warrant further study.[74] As with the wisdom poems from the previous chapters, wisdom is frequently tied to development, both physical and intellectual, and Sigurðr engages in dialogues with legendary figures (Regin, Fáfnir, and Sigrdrífa). These poems have been analysed from a wisdom perspective before, although obviously to a lesser degree than *Hávamál* and the other mythological poems. For example, Carolyne Larrington (1993) divides the poems by the central theme of wisdom that is present in each: omens for *Reginsmál*, mythological wisdom for *Fáfnismál*, and runic lore and social wisdom for *Sigrdrífumál* (73). These three categories are a good starting point, but I believe that there is more nuance to be found, especially in *Reginsmál,* as I will discuss shortly.[75]

[74] As referred to in the Introduction, Larrington (1993,2) explicitly counts *Reginsmál* and *Fáfnismál* as not being wisdom texts. Later on, she does liken *Sigrdrífumál* to *Hávamál* in its instructional qualities (86).
[75] *Kommentar* references in this chapter are to von See (2006).

Unlike the previous chapter, this chapter will look at the poems from a linear perspective, to highlight how each poem utilises the formulaic theme.

A summary of Sigurðr

Sigurðr's slaying of a dragon is a widespread legend throughout Europe, and can be found in numerous traditions outside the Icelandic.[76] In Icelandic, there are two main surviving sources of the myth, the Sigurðr poems found in the Codex Regius and the prose narrative of *Vǫlsunga Saga*. Additionally, the Sigurðr tale is featured in *Snorra Edda* and *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, although the latter is not strictly Icelandic.[77]

The Sigurðr story

The Sigurðr story features recurring characters that appear in variations of the story, as well as characters and details that are unique to the Eddic poems. Sigurðr himself obviously appears in all forms of the story. The dragon Fáfnir also appears as the main antagonist of Sigurðr. Beyond these two, the cast of characters is variable. The valkyrie that Sigurðr interacts with is Sigrdrífa in the poem but Brynhildr in *Vǫlsunga Saga*, and the poetry after the lacuna in the Codex Regius also features Brynhildr. The story is mostly consistent between the various versions, and all share the following themes: the dragon-slaying, the encounter with a valkyrie, and the eventual betrayal of Sigurðr. These elements form the core of the Sigurðr story.

[76] The story of Sigurðr can be found in a variety of narratives and on several runestones, most obviously Eddic sources and *Vǫlsunga saga* from Scandinavia, but it can also be found in the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, and the narrative is mentioned, albeit not in detail¸ in *Beowulf* lines 884b-885. However, as Acker (2012) notes, the poetry in *Beowulf* attaches the slaying of the dragon to Sigmundr, Sigurðr's father, so while the event itself is renowned, the actors in it are flexible, which we will see in greater detail when it comes to Sigrdrífa. When it comes to the role of the spread of the Sigurðr story, Jesch (2015) provides an overview of the chronology and geographic spread of the Scandinavian tradition (150-158).

[77] *Þiðreks saga* is a translation of a continental text, and was likely produced in Norway (for more detail see the entry in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (2010)). While interesting as a re-emergence of the story in a Scandinavian context, it is ultimately too removed from the original Eddic material to be of value here, beyond being an example of how this narrative was transmitted throughout the medieval world.

Outside the Codex Regius poems, *Vǫlsunga Saga* is the most complete source for the Sigurðr narrative.[78] The composer of the saga was clearly aware of the poetry in the Codex Regius and used it as the foundation, as *Sigrdrífumál* is quoted in the saga during Sigurðr's meeting with Brynhildr. The saga does have differences from the poems, however, for example that Brynhildr is the valkyrie that Sigurðr interacts with rather than Sigrdrífa, but due to its close relationship with the poetry it is still a reasonably reliable source for filling in the gaps of the Eddic narrative. However, as I am not looking past *Sigrdrífumál* in the Codex Regius it will not be overly necessary to rely on the saga, but in places it may be possible to present an expanded version of the narrative.

Reginsmál

Reginsmál is the first of the older Sigurðr poems, and the poem details part of Sigurðr's youth before he has his confrontation with Fáfnir.[79] There is a lengthy prose introduction to the poem that not only sets up the interaction between Sigurðr and Reginn, but also the mythological story that is the prompt for Fáfnir's transformation into a dragon, and presents the narrative involving Loki that would otherwise seem to be unrelated. Unlike *Grímnismál*, there are frequent interruptions in the poetry where prose sections are introduced to connect different stanzas. There are instances where there is only a single stanza sandwiched between prose interruptions, for example stanzas 5 and 15. These prose interruptions are common in all three of the poems in this chapter, but *Reginsmál* features the greatest frequency of prose interruptions, which means that there are times where stanzas appear to have little relation to each other. In some ways this problematises seeing

[78] To get into *Vǫlsunga Saga*'s peculiarities or its broader relationship with the other *Fornaldarsögur* would take up more space here than it would be worth for this study as it relies on the poetic originals. Rowe (2013) provides a good overview of the saga's place in the canon.

[79] As mentioned previously, technically *Grípisspá* appears before it, but as discussed in the Introduction, is so clearly a younger poem that is has little relation to it in form or structure.

elements of the Formulaic theme, such as repeated Markers, as the poetry can on occasion have little relation to what surrounds it. However, as was shown with *Grímnismál*, prose can still be useful to establish where Markers may have appeared in missing poetry.[80]

As with the previous poems, for convenience I have split it into four sections as follows: stanzas 1-5, which cover the exchange between Loki and Andvari; 6-12, which is Fáfnir's quarrel with Reginn; 13-15, which introduces Sigurðr in the poetry; and 16-27, which features the appearance of Óðinn in disguise, and his conversation with Reginn and Sigurðr.

From this overview alone, it can be seen that *Reginsmál* differs from the poems previously analysed. The fixed setting of the hostile hall as a place to exchange wisdom and threats has been abandoned for numerous locations, ranging from rivers to ships, and it has now moved into other places that anticipate either violence or journeys. *Reginsmál*, alone of the Sigurðr poems, retains an overtly mythological beginning, and Loki's interaction with Andvari serves as a comparison with the poems discussed in previous chapters.

Mythological beginnings – Prose introduction and stanzas 1-5

Unlike any other poem in the 'heroic' section of the Codex Regius, *Reginsmál* features members of the Æsir in major speaking roles. While Óðinn is briefly mentioned in a prose interruption in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, there are no other poems that feature mythological characters to the same degree. Not only are mythological characters present, but the opening stanzas are an interaction between two mythological beings, in this case, a god and a dwarf. However, dwarves do not seem to operate on the same mythological scale as the gods and giants of the mythological poems do. While the Æsir and the giants had important roles in the creation of the world and its earliest histories, as well as being

[80] Much of the commentary on the role of the prose can be found in the Introduction and Chapter 3.

involved in the end of the world, dwarves do not appear to have the same metaphorical weight in cosmic affairs. This is important for two main reasons. First, it immediately sets one of the participants, Loki here, over the other, as one is a god and associate of Óðinn and the other is not. Second, it allows characters such as Andvari, and later Reginn and Fáfnir, a fluidity to their nature and allows them to become the 'wise' characters in subsequent episodes, even when they are the inferiors in others.[81] As will be seen later, a purely human character like Sigurðr struggles when he tries to be the wisdom authority in later exchanges.[82]

As with *Grímnismál,* the prose introduction sets up the narrative, with Sigurðr coming to Hjálprekr's home and meeting Reginn, who offers to foster him. This elaboration is used to introduce Sigurðr to Reginn, while framing the mythological content in a story that Reginn is telling Sigurðr about the origins of Reginn's and Fáfnir's disagreement. Óðinn, Loki, and Hœnir are responsible for the death of the third brother, Otr.[83] The Æsir flaunt their fortune at the home of the family of Otr and are taken captive, and they in turn send Loki out to collect the ransom they need. Loki goes to the dwarf Andvari to try and extort from him the money needed to pay the ransom. Here, the first lines of poetry appear, and we begin to see what is more typical of Eddic poetry.

---

[81] As discussed in Chapter 2, Acker (2002) goes into dwarves' role in mythological society, ranging from their apparent, albeit inconsistent weakness to sunlight (184) and to their relative wisdom, or lack thereof (183). Acker does not draw any overt conclusions on the supposed wisdom of dwarves, but that helps my point, in that dwarves can be seemingly wise when necessary, but also foolish enough to let Þórr trick one into death.

[82] It is important to note that *Alvíssmál* is a parody of a wisdom dialogue not merely because Þórr is the protagonist, but also that it is a dwarf, rather than a giant, who is his opponent.

[83] Hœnir is a peculiar travelling companion for Óðinn and Loki. While he is attested in other texts, including *Vǫluspá* where he plays a role in the creation of humanity, his name is occasionally used for either Óðinn himself or a companion to Óðinn. As he plays no real role in the text and has no presence in the poetry, his addition is peculiar, unless the compiler is trying to further connect the theme of childbirth in his role as a creator being of humanity (see *Vǫluspá* stanza 18). For more on these specifics, see *Kommentar* (279). Quinn (2010, 204-5) presents the interesting idea of Hœnir being related to wisdom through his connection to Mímir in *Ynglinga saga*, so perhaps there is a further element of wisdom to him, as while Hœnir is portrayed as a poor ruler without Mímir, he is still connected to a wisdom concept.

However, in the prose introduction, elements similar to the previous poems can be seen. Firstly, there is the relative fragility of the Æsir. As the prose introduction says, *Þá tókum vér þá hǫndum ok lǫgðum þeim fjǫrlausn at fylla otrbelginn með gulli ok hylja útan með rauðu gulli* 'then we captured them and ordered from them a ransom that they fill the otter-bag with gold and cover the outside with red gold'. As in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* characters such as Óðinn are vulnerable when visiting the homes of other characters, and judging by Reginn's words as he relates the story to Sigurðr, the Æsir are compelled to comply with the request. There are elements of the formulaic theme present, especially towards the end of the prose introduction, which have parallels with the poetic Markers and the other common traits of the wisdom poems. For example, the Æsir come to the hall: *Þat sama kveld sóttu þeir gisting til Hreiðmars* 'That same evening they sought to rest at Hreiðmarr's'. In the same way that Óðinn came to Vafþrúðnir's hall, we once again have characters coming to another's hall and the characters end up in captivity. There is undoubtedly danger, as Hreiðmarr compels a ransom from the group after capturing them for the death of Otr, which parallels the threat that Vafþrúðnir issues when challenging the disguised Óðinn when he comes to his hall. Perhaps the most obvious Marker from the prose is when Loki is sent out alone to collect the gold, which allows him to interact with Andvari alone, an example of Marker A (Separation): *Þá sendu þeir Loka at afla gullsins* 'They then sent Loki to procure the gold'. Finally, there is the liminal nature of Andvari's being, as he is a dwarf but also lives in the form of a fish: *Einn dvergr hét Andvari. Hann var lǫngum í forsinum í geddu líki ok fekk sér þar matar* 'A dwarf there was called Andvari. He was in the waterfall for a long time in the likeness of a pike and he got himself food there'.

While this interaction is by itself, perhaps, a little weak in suggesting the presence of the formulaic theme, the poetic interaction between Loki and Andvari features several elements

of a wisdom dialogue, and there are elements of the formulaic theme. As seen in *Grímnismál*, the prose introductions can nevertheless serve to introduce Markers, especially when poetic material is fragmentary.

The first two stanzas of the poem introduce the characters and establish the stakes and what Loki wants.

> Hvat er þat fiska
> er renn flóði í,
> kannat sér við víti varask?
> Hǫfuð þitt
> leystu helju ór,
> finn mér *lindar* loga.
>
> Andvari ek heiti,
> Óinn hét minn faðir,
> margan hefi ek fors um farit;
> aumlig norn
> skóp oss í árdaga,
> at ek skylda í vatni vaða.
>
> What is that fish,
> who runs in the water,
> doesn't know how to avoid danger?
> Your head
> you can ransom out of Hel,
> find for me the snake's flame. [1]
>
> Andvari I am called,
> my father was called Oinn,
> much I have travelled the waterfall,
> a wretched norn
> shaped us in old days,
> that I should in water move. [2]

This set of stanzas and the following pair are in the question-and-answer format that was previously seen in *Vafþrúðnismál*. The motif of the risking of the head is seen in stanza 1, although in this case it is the traveller issuing the threat, and the cost is presumably the gold

that Loki seeks (indicated by the *lindar loga* kenning). In terms of Markers, there is the evidence from both these stanzas, and from the prose introduction. Loki is sent out alone of the captive Æsir, which is a representation of Marker A (Separation). The net that Loki has captured Andvari with, and the captivity of the Æsir in the prose introduction, and in *Grímnismál* were interpreted as examples of Marker C. In terms of Liminality (Marker B), there is the separation of Loki from Andvari, as Loki is on the shore and Andvari is in the waters, and they are talking on the shore. In terms of Marker C (Danger) there is in lines 4-5 of stanza 1 Loki's threat to Andvari's life, and again, the prose introduction has the danger of Hreiðmarr to the Æsir. In terms of the fourth Marker (The Unknown), there are two instances. The first is the literal act of unknowing, where Loki taunts Andvari for not knowing how to avoid danger in line 3 of stanza 1. The second, and less obvious one, is uttered by Andvari himself in lines 4-5 of stanza 2, where he laments how a norn has given him a bad fate. The norns and the concept of fate are frequently shown to be mysterious and unknowable in their ways.

Stanzas 3 and 4 are an example of what might be considered a typical example of a wisdom dialogue, and would not seem out of place in *Vafþrúðnismál.*

> Segðu þat, Andvari,
> -kvað Loki -
> ef þú eiga vill
> líf í lýða sǫlum,
> hver gjǫld fá
> gumna synir,
> ef þeir hǫggvask orðum á?
>
> Ofrgjǫld fá
> gumna synir,
> þeir er Vaðgelmi vaða;
> ósaðra orða,
> hverr er á annan lýgr,

oflengi leiða limar.

Speak of that, Andvari,
-Loki said-
if you want to hold
onto your life in men's halls,
what recompense
do the sons of men get,
if they wound each other with words? [3]

A bad recompense do
the sons of men get,
who wade in Vaðgelmir;
untrue words,
when one lies to another,
for too long he'll loathe consequences. [4]

These stanzas are similar to the wisdom exchanges in *Vafþrúðnismál*. For example, Loki's question opens with the *segðu þat* construction that is common throughout *Vafþrúðnismál* and in other dialogues. In terms of wisdom content, Andvari offers a practical answer to Loki's question in the form of a maxim in lines 4-6 of stanza 4. Once again, a wisdom exchange has occurred following the appearance of Markers. In many ways, this is similar to the construction of *Vafþrúðnismál* stanzas 7-10. Not only is there the presence of Markers before the wisdom episode, but also there is the usefulness of the wisdom provided. Here there is the obvious threat of the cursed treasure in the moment with Hreiðmarr and Loki, but also that when Reginn belittles Sigurðr, he too suffers consequences. The comparison also extends to the natures of the participants. In *Vafþrúðnismál*, the only 'practical' wisdom is uttered when Óðinn enters Vafþrúðnir's hall, the rest being non-literal or information. Only when Óðinn's nature is disguised, and his own status as a mythological being seemingly hidden beneath a veil of mundanity, does practical wisdom appear. Here in *Reginsmál* there is a similar disparity in the characters, as the mythological Loki is interacting with a dwarf, a mythological being certainly, but lacking the status of a god or a giant. Once again, the

disparity prompts a practical form of wisdom that the audience could receive, specifically on the nature of consequence.

Once this wisdom exchange is completed, the poetry is interrupted with a prose passage that inserts the cursed ring into the story. The ring otherwise does not appear at all in the poetry. Apart from an otherwise unmentioned Gust being referred to as a previous owner of the hoard, stanza 5 merely reiterates the cursed nature of the treasure and the eventual deaths of Reginn and Fáfnir.

In many ways this section of the poem mirrors much of what was seen in the previous chapters, specifically in regard to the setting and the nature of the characters. Much as with *Vafþrúðnismál*, the poem is setting up a conflict between a divine being, Loki, and an otherwise contemptuous host, Andvari. However, while this section does mirror the previous poems, it does dispense with a key part of the poems in the terms of its setting. The hall, which was a vital part of the other poems is entirely absent in the text of the poem. Interestingly in *Grímnismál*, the prose does provide an example of the hostile hall, perhaps trying to connect the poem in that manner to the other wisdom texts.

Character interactions, and the use of prose – Stanzas 6-13

This section of the poem details the consequences of Loki giving Hreiðmarr the cursed gold, Hreiðmarr's eventual murder by Fáfnir, and the flight of Reginn from Fáfnir. There are a couple of gnomic statements hidden towards the end of the section that are of interest. Additionally, the presence of and interaction of legendary beings with mythological ones makes this section worth analysing. There is also a peculiarity in which the prose seemingly contradicts what is said in the poetry.

This section carries on from the previous prose section, as these stanzas foretell the eventual ruin of all involved. It begins with the reluctance of the Æsir to hand over the cursed ring. Here, the poetry departs from the narrative established by the prose. Firstly, the ring has apparently been transferred from Loki to Óðinn, and the Æsir are seemingly unaware of the peril, as they seek to keep it for themselves. This though is immediately contradicted by the content of stanza 6:

> Gull er þér nú *reitt*,
> -kvað Loki-
> en þú gjǫld hefir
> mikil míns hǫfuðs;
> syni þínum
> verðra sæla skǫpuð;
> þat verðr ykkarr beggja bani.
>
> Gold is now to you given,
> -Loki said-
> and you have a great recompense
> for my head;
> to your son
> a good fate will not happen;
> that will become the bane of you both. [6]

Here it can be seen how the prose is seemingly reliable in transmitting what should be there but is missing in the poetry, though with a slight inconsistency in narrative, as while there are minor departures, such as the swapping of possession of the ring from Loki to Óðinn, this does not impact on the theme.

Of note is the nature of the characters involved. While the Æsir are obviously mythological in nature, Hreiðmarr and his family occupy a much more obscure space. While Hreiðmarr is never identified as any specific sort of character, Reginn is referred to as a dwarf in the introduction; *Hann var hverjum manni hagari ok dvergr of vǫxt* 'He was a skilful man and a dwarf in growth'. Fáfnir, however, is referred to as a giant by Reginn in *Fáfnismál* stanza 29:

inn aldna jǫtun 'the old giant'.[84] Regardless of what type of being they could all be classed as, all possible permutations would be those of a non-human being. If Fáfnir were a giant, however, his sudden ability to talk on matters of cosmic importance would be less surprising.

At the end of the section, there is something that could potentially be classed as wisdom. The characters are trying to inform another character about something, and the information could fall under the umbrella of practical wisdom. Stanzas 7 to 9 are all concerned with Hreiðmarr's response to Loki's warning about the treasure:

> Gjafar þú gaft,
> gaftattu ástgjafar,
> gaftattu af heilum hug;
> fjǫrvi yðru
> skylduð ér firrðir vera,
> ef ek vissa ek þat fár fyrir.
>
> Enn er verra,
> þat vita þykkjumk
> niðja stríð um neppt;
> jǫfra óborna
> hygg ek þá enn vera
> er þat er til hatrs hugat.
>
> Rauðu gulli
> -kvað Hreiðmarr-
> hygg ek mik ráða munu
> svá lengi sem ek lifi;
> hót þín
> hræðumk ekki lyf,
> of haldið heim heðan.
>
> Gifts you gave,
> given not as love-gifts,

[84] Reginn is also, confusingly, referred to as a giant in *Fáfnismál*. While this could be a pejorative against Reginn by describing his height in such a manner, it seems more likely that this is trying to tie him to the mythological sources of wisdom, much in the same way that Fáfnir is being brought closer to a wisdom ideal with his one description of being a giant.

you did not give them with your whole mind,
your lives
should have been taken from you,
if I knew of this before**.** [7]

It is worse
that I think I know,
the strife of kinsmen,
the princes are not born
who I think that
this hatred is intended**.** [8]

Red gold
-said Hreiðmarr-
I think I will have myself,
so long as I live;
your threats
I do not fear a bit,
now go away and to home. [9]

On the surface, this seems to be merely a monologue to further the narrative. The Æsir are cast out, Hreiðmarr does not appear to believe the curse, or at least believes it will affect other people, and the stage is set for the next prose section in which Fáfnir will mortally wound Hreiðmarr after being refused a share of the gold. There is however more beneath the surface. The first point of interest is Hreiðmarr's seeming ability to see the future and know that the curse on the treasure is not directed at him. An ability to know the future is something commonly associated with non-human beings who can dispense wisdom. In *Skáldskaparmál* (45), Hreiðmarr is described thus: *hann var mikill fyrir sér ok mjǫk fjǫlkunnigr* 'he was imposing and a great wizard', and *fjǫlkunnigr* is a term that is used in the prose introduction of *Grímnismál* to describe Óðinn. There are instances of Markers A and D (Separation and The Unknown) in the three stanzas. The Æsir being cast out and told to go on a journey could be considered an instance of Marker A, especially as, outside of the prose, the poetry refers to a single person that Hreiðmarr is talking to. In stanza 7, he says

Gjafar þú gaft ‘gifts you gave’ and uses the singular pronoun and verb form, rather than a plural. In terms of Marker D, this could be Hreiðmarr’s realisation that he did not know who his guests were in stanza 7 line 6. So after the three stanzas of poetry, there is a smattering of Markers, along with other elements that are seen in wisdom episodes. However, it is in the prose and the subsequent two stanzas that we start to see what could be considered a completed set of Markers, or at the very minimum, significant enough allusions to the Markers that suggest an awareness of the formulaic theme and what it is meant to be doing.

In the prose, after Reginn and Fáfnir are refused a share of the treasure, Fáfnir wounds Hreiðmarr and leaves him for dead. Following this, Hreiðmarr calls out to his daughters to attend him. Obviously, this would satisfy Marker C (Danger) as Fáfnir has just attacked his father. Second, we have here an example of a character being in between life and death and still speaking, much as in *Hávamál* stanza 138 where Óðinn is mortally wounded when hanging on Yggdrasil, and as Fáfnir himself will do in the next poem. These two examples, coupled with the ones from the previous three stanzas, complete the formulaic theme, and in stanzas 10-12, Hreiðmarr issues a gnome and a precept to his daughters, and one of the daughters, Lyngheiðr, also issues a similar statement.

> Lyngheiðr ok Lofnheiðr,
> vitið mínu lífi farit,
> margt er þat er þǫrf þéar.
>
> Fá mun systir,
> þótt fǫður missi,
> hefna hlýra harms.
>
> Al þú þó dóttur,
> -kvað Hreiðmarr-
> dís ulfhuguð,
> ef þú getrat son
> við siklingi;

fá þú mey mann
í meginþarfar,
þá mun þeirar sonr
þíns harms reka.

Lyngheiðr and Lofnheiðr,
know that my life has gone,
great is that, which compels need. [10]

Few sisters may,
though missing a father,
avenge harm on their brother. [11]

Conceive a daughter,
-said Hreiðmarr-
wolf hearted lady,
if you do not get a son
with a prince;
get the maiden a man,
in great need;
then may their son
wreak your vengeance. [12]

In these two stanzas Hreiðmarr issues the maxim in stanza 10 line 3, *mart er þat er þǫrf þéar* 'great is that, which compels need', similar to stanza 4, in which a practical gnome appears at the culmination of the episode. Both Hreiðmarr and Lyngheiðr also issue sententious statements to each other on the nature of vengeance, Lyngheiðr in stanza 11, and Hreiðmarr in the whole of stanza 12.

There are two reasons working in tandem to consider this the culmination of a wisdom episode. The first is the presence of Markers, and while some of them may be uncertain, when taken with the second point, it is more likely that they are intended to be Markers. The second is the absence of Hreiðmarr's daughters outside of this poem. These sisters do not appear anywhere else in the Eddic corpus, nor anywhere in *Snorra Edda*. While on the surface it may seem that the poem is setting up some future character to appear in the

cycle, much as the poem has previously been setting up the deaths of Reginn and Fáfnir, and the confrontations with Gunnar and Sigurðr, this is not the case. These statements do not further the narrative, so must serve another purpose. The presence of the Markers, I suggest, indicates the culmination of a wisdom episode, and the maxim, and the other two statements, are the concluding part of the wisdom episode, much as the maxim in stanza 10 of *Vafþrúðnismál* concluded that wisdom episode.

Following this, there is another prose section that details Hreiðmarr's death and Fáfnir's seizure of the whole of the treasure and Reginn's inability to get a share. The last stanza of this section is on Lyngheiðr counselling Reginn not to fight Fáfnir.

Sigurðr's introduction – Stanzas 14-16

This section is solely narrative, containing two prose sections, one before stanza 13, and the other between stanzas 15 and 16. Stanzas 14 and 15 are speeches by Reginn concerning Sigurðr, recognising him as Sigmundr's son and Sigurðr's own great strength. The prose after stanza 15 is lengthy and talks about Fáfnir's new form as a dragon, and introduces the various armaments that will appear later in the poetry, namely the sword Gramr and the Œgishjalmr. This sets up the journey that Sigurðr and Reginn will take in the last section of the poem. Overall, this section does not contribute any more to the analysis.

Conversation with Hnikarr – Stanzas 17-27

The final section of the poem features the fewest prose interruptions, and details the journey that Sigurðr and Reginn take to avenge Sigurðr's father before he can attempt to attack Fáfnir. What makes this section interesting is that it features a character named Hnikarr who engages Reginn and Sigurðr in conversation when Sigurðr goes to avenge his father. However, Hnikarr is in fact one of Óðinn's various identities, as said in *Grímnismál*

stanza 47. As is typical of an Odinic character, he issues a series of statements on the nature of the world to Sigurðr and Reginn when prompted to speak on what he knows in stanza 20 of *Reginsmál*. Despite being present in the prose, Sigurðr is silent for the duration of the discussion, and it is Reginn who takes part in the dialogue. While Sigurðr may be the audience in the narrative, he contributes nothing to the discussion, and is not even used as a narrative prompt like Agnarr in *Grímnismál*.

The section opens with a prose passage that tells how Hjálprekr gives Sigurðr a ship and how, during a storm, they encounter a man on a cliff who asks them their identities:

> Hverir ríða þar
> Ræfils hestum
> hávar unnir,
> haf glymjanda?
> Seglvigg eru
> sveita stokkin,
> munat vágmarar
> vind um standask.
>
> Who are those riding
> the sea-king's horses
> on high waves,
> the thunder of the sea?
> The ships are
> splattered with spray,
> may not the wave steeds
> stand to the wind. [17]

As in *Vafþrúðnismál* the question is always the identities of the people arriving. However, the setting is not the hall of the mythological poems, but the water's edge, which serves as a similar liminal area. This will be a recurring theme, where characters interact on the periphery of civilisation and in liminal areas, rather than in a hall.

The following stanza features Sigurðr and Reginn identifying themselves to the stranger, and the stranger's, Hnikarr, response to Reginn forms the basis for his future interaction:

> Hnikar hétu mik,
> þá er hugin gladdi
> Vǫlsungr ungi,
> ok vegit hafði;
> nú máttu kalla
> karl af bergi
> Feng eða Fjǫlni;
> far vil ek þiggja.
>
> Hnikarr I was called,
> when the raven was gladdened
> by Young Vǫlsungr,
> and had fighting:
> now you may call
> a man from the cliff
> Fengi or Fjǫlnir:
> I wish to have a journey. [19]

There is the recurring theme of an unknown Odinic figure appearing in disguise and giving a deceptive name to people interrogating him. Here though, Hnikarr is establishing his connection to Sigurðr, albeit obliquely, through Vǫlsungr.[85] Additionally, Hnikarr is requesting passage, in which he will engage with wisdom.[86] Following this, the prose describes how Hnikarr comes aboard the ship, and Reginn begins interrogating him:

> Segðu mér þat, Hnikarr,
> alls þá hvárttveggja veizt
> goða heill ok guma:
> hver bǫzt eru,
> ef berjask skal,
> heill at sverða svipun.
>
> Speak to me of that, Hnikarr,

[85] There is also the possibility that Hnikarr is trying to connect himself directly with Sigurðr and is in fact referring to Sigurðr in the stanza. For more on this possibility, see *Kommentar* (326-7).
[86] Once again, it is an interesting tangent that a parallel can be drawn to Crowne's analysis, as his Hero on the Beach theme features a request to board a ship to have a journey.

all that of two things you know
the omens of the gods and men,
which are best,
if one shall fight,
luck for swinging swords. [20]

This stanza is comparable to many of the interrogative stanzas that have been discussed in *Vafþrúðnismál,* and will be seen in *Fáfnismál*. The first and most obvious point of similarity is the *segðu mér þat*, which we have seen repeatedly. The next and most obvious is the content of the question, regarding the nature of omens or fate and the relation that it has with gods.

The various Markers which have appeared leading up to this point of the poem are: Marker A (Separation) relates to Hnikarr who appears by himself, and there is also the fact that Reginn is the only speaker on his side of the conversation. Marker B (Liminality) lies in the location, with the separation between the sea and the cliff. There is also the act of Hnikarr crossing onto the ship. Marker C (Danger) appears in the storm that stops Sigurðr and Reginn from continuing, and there are also the constant reiterations of battle and fighting in stanzas 19 and 20. Hnikarr himself fulfils the requirements for Marker D (The Unknown), as he is in disguise and hiding his identity. There is also the nature of Reginn's question on the omens of the gods in line 3 of stanza 19. As shown, the formulaic theme is completed and now the audience and the characters are primed to receive wisdom.[87]

Hnikarr's monologue takes the form of a list of various suggestions for how to gain luck. His first point in stanza 21 relates back to Reginn's question about swinging swords in battle, but he then carries on, unprompted, with other battlefield situations. The nature of

[87] Larrington (1993) uses this section as her focus for talking about *Reginsmál* (76-78), but as I will discuss in the *Fáfnismál* section, I do not believe that Sigurðr can be seen as the intended target of the wisdom episode, as Reginn is the speaker here, and it would further the parallel with the start of the poem, where a god (Loki) interacted with a non-human being (Andvari).

Hnikarr's advice ranges through all the various wisdom categories. The first three stanzas all focus on mystical or otherwise obscure knowledge and the benefits thereof, and these are placed in an ascending list (e.g. *annat, þriðja*). However, once the mystical wisdom ends, Hnikarr then moves on to practical advice. For example, Hnikarr's statement in stanza 20 is mystical wisdom:

> Mǫrg eru góð,
> ef gumar vissi,
> heill at sverða svipun;
> dyggja fylgju
> hygg ek ins døkkva vera
> at hrottameiði hrafns.
>
> Many are good,
> if men knew them,
> omens while swinging swords:
> a trustworthy escort,
> I think the dark one to be,
> a raven for the warrior. [21]

Once Hnikarr has finished his list of three observations relating to omens, he then moves on to a more practical section:

> Engr skal gumna
> í gǫgn vega
> síð skínandi
> systur Mána;
> þeir sigr hafa,
> er sjá kunnu,
> hjǫrleiks hvatir,
> eða hamalt fylkja.
>
> No man should
> fight towards
> late shining
> sister of Máni;
> those have victory,
> who are able to see,
> brave sword-players,

> or position themselves in a phalanx. [24]

In comparison to the previous observations about the benefits of seeing a raven, here Hnikarr is talking about common sense when fighting, specifically relating to formation and to not fight with the sun in the eyes of warriors. This forms a parallel with the previous poems. Both *Hávamál* and *Vafþrúðnismál* tend to open with practical wisdom, for example in *Hávamál* we see the 'gnomic' guest section, before moving on to *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal*. Similarly, in *Vafþrúðnismál* we see the challenge at the door in stanzas 7-10, before moving on to mythological and historical information. Here, Hnikarr starts with obscure/non-practical wisdom and then moves on to practical advice.

After this, Hnikarr talks for two more stanzas, giving advice that is primarily practical, with a brief mention of the *dísir* in stanza 25. However, there is no conclusion to the wisdom episode in the terms of that narrative. A final maxim concludes the episode, *illt er fyr heill at hrapa* 'it is bad to rush past one's fate'. This connects the practical advice to the more obscure wisdom of the previous stanzas. This concept of fate is similar to the maxims at the end of *Grípisspá*, which also concerned fate.[88] After this final stanza, Hnikarr is not referred to again, and this is the last continuous section of poetry in the poem.[89]

Finally, there is a short prose passage that discusses Sigurðr's victory, and Reginn praises Sigurðr,

> Øngr er fremri,
> sá er fold ryði,
> hilmis arfi,
> ok hugin gladdi.

[88] Interestingly, a very similar saying is found in *Sólarljóð* stanza 9 (1-3), which also deals with fate. For more on this, see *Kommentar* (345).
[89] This event is recorded, and quoted, in *Vǫlsunga saga*, and in the saga Fjǫlnir (Hnikarr/Óðinn) is merely said to disappear (29).

None are more outstanding,
than the one who reddens a field,
the ruler's inheritor,
and made a raven glad. [27]

While this statement serves as the finale to the poem, the gnome at the end of stanza 25 is the true end of the episode, as it connects back to the subject at hand, namely fate and omens. This statement however is unrelated to what has been established in the prior episode, and it is not spoken by the narrator of the wisdom episode.

After the last stanza, there is one more brief section of prose before the poem ends, but there is no clear separation in the actual text, which makes discerning whether this is the end of the poem difficult. This problem with the end of *Reginsmál* and the start of *Fáfnismál* will be addressed more fully in the final comparative section.

Reginsmál **Conclusion**

Reginsmál clearly retains elements of the formulaic theme when wisdom appears, as shown in sections 1 and 4, and also the two different types that have been seen in earlier stanzas. Section 1 bears many similarities with *Vafþrúðnismál* in its use of dialogue. Section 4, on the other hand, has more in common with the lists in *Loddfáfnismál*, *Rúnatal*, and *Ljóðatal*. However, prose interruptions make analysing the poem less straightforward than in the mythological poems.

Fáfnismál

Fáfnismál features the dragon-slaying that Sigurðr is famous for, although the fight itself is only in a prose section.[90] The poetic portion of the poem comprises a series of two dialogues and one pseudo-dialogue; the first and longest is between Sigurðr and Fáfnir, the second is between Sigurðr and Reginn, and the final one is between the birds and Sigurðr, although there is not much interaction between the two parties. There are numerous prose sections in this poem, although they are not needed as much to separate different narrative sections as they were in *Reginsmál*. Here, the prose is primarily at the start, end, and after stanza 31. The prose is used to contextualise what is happening in the story, as nearly the whole poem takes place in one location. There are no gods or giants (in the traditional sense) in this poem, and the only talking characters are Sigurðr, Reginn, Fáfnir, and the birds Sigurðr speaks to. In *Vǫlsunga saga* chapter 18, Óðinn is present and gives Sigurðr the advice needed to kill Fáfnir, but no such character is mentioned here in either the poetry or the prose.

Fáfnismál can be split into two distinct halves, with the conversation between Fáfnir and Sigurðr as Fáfnir lies dying being the first, and the second being the appearance and death of Reginn, and the commentary of the birds. I have further broken the poem down in order to analyse it more fully: stanzas 1-10, which feature the start of the dialogue between Fáfnir and Sigurðr; 11-15, which feature Sigurðr asking about concepts such as fate and the end of the world; 16-19, a section that breaks the pattern of the poem as Fáfnir speaks again about his own strength and possessions; and 20-22, which ends with Fáfnir's death and Sigurðr rejecting Fáfnir. The remaining part of the poem, stanzas 23-44, is not so simple to break

[90] It is of note that no poetic text survives of Sigurðr's fight with Fáfnir, considering the significance of the act. While it is of only tangential note, Watkins (1995), specifically chapter 43, provides an interesting exploration of dragon fighting in the older Germanic world.

into sections: there are perhaps two elements, Sigurðr and Reginn, and Sigurðr and the birds, but I have chosen to treat this as a single section, as I will explain below.

Prose introduction and the first conversation – Stanzas 1-10

The prose introduction of *Fáfnismál* leads directly from the prose conclusion of *Reginsmál*, and discusses Sigurðr and Reginn's journey to Fáfnir's lair. In this version, there is no mention of Sigurðr receiving any advice on how to kill Fáfnir; instead he formulates the plan himself. After striking Fáfnir, Sigurðr confronts him, and the poetic text begins. The first stanza opens with Fáfnir, and with one exception in stanza 16, each of the characters utters a stanza before the other responds. As usual, the first question asked by Fáfnir concerns identity:

> Sveinn ok sveinn,
> hverjum ertu svein um borinn?
> Hverra ertu manna mǫgr,
> er þú á Fáfni rautt
> þinn inn frána mæki?
> Stǫndumk til hjarta hjǫrr.
>
> Boy and boy,
> to whom were you born a boy?
> of which man are you a son,
> that you on Fáfnir redden
> your glittering sword?
> The sword stands in my heart. [1]

A character's first question generally involves asking the identity of the person they are conversing with. However, in this example, there is also Fáfnir's evident shock that he has been mortally wounded. Before Sigurðr can respond, there is a prose interruption that reveals that Sigurðr intends to hide his identity from Fáfnir, which seems to be setting up the Unknown (D) Marker.

Stanza 2 confirms this, while also adding Marker A (Separation):

> Gǫfugt dýr ek heiti,
> en ek gengit hefk
> inn móðurlausi mǫgr,
> fǫður ek ákka
> sem fira synir;
> æ geng ek einn saman.
>
> Noble beast I am called,
> and I have gone as
> the motherless son;
> I have no father
> as the sons of men have them.
> I ever go alone. [2]

Here we have Sigurðr hiding both his identity and his parentage, while at the same time in line 6 of the stanza emphasising that he goes alone. So far, this would seem to nearly complete the theme, as there is the aforementioned mystery of Sigurðr's solitary and disguised nature, but there is also Fáfnir's experience of a liminal circumstance, as he is hovering between life and death and is still talking with his assailant. While one might argue that Sigurðr's assault on Fáfnir would qualify as Marker C (Danger), I feel that the event is not sufficiently emphasised. This could however be the prose serving once again to add a Marker, as there is more elaboration. Here, the text could be trying to introduce Marker D (the Unknown), by showing Sigurðr hiding his identity. However, this will be discussed below, as the poetic text immediately goes against this.

The following stanza features Fáfnir questioning Sigurðr further, and Sigurðr responds curiously, and identifies himself fully:

> Ætterni mitt
> kveð ek þér ókunnigt vera
> ok mik sjalfan it sama;
> Sigurðr ek heiti,

-Sigmundr hét minn faðir-
er hefk þik vápnum vegit.

My descent
I say is unknown to you
and me myself the same;
Sigurðr I am called,
-Sigmundr was my father-
I have with weapons killed you. [4]

While Sigurðr stating that his family and himself are unknown to Fáfnir still completes the theme, this is another instance where the prose seemingly contradicts the poetic text, as the prose between stanzas 1 and 2 explicitly states that Sigurðr tries to hide his name, and this is confirmed by Sigurðr's obfuscation in stanza 2. For no apparent reason, other than perhaps Fáfnir being persistent in his question in stanza 3, Sigurðr freely gives his name and lineage. In one sense, it is almost an anti-marker, as it is deliberately going against the theme of the Marker. Despite this, Sigurðr's insistence in line 2 stresses the unknown aspect, so it would still qualify. Sigurðr's reiteration that he has killed Fáfnir himself would also count as Marker C (Danger), completing the theme, so at this point we would expect a wisdom episode imminently.

In Stanza 5 once again Fáfnir questions Sigurðr about who attacked him. A curious aspect of this stanza is that Fáfnir seems to imply that he knows Sigmundr in line 5, *þú áttir fǫður bitran* 'you had a spirited father'. This may just be Fáfnir inferring this as the source of Sigurðr's strength, and it is not enough of an 'anti-marker' to negate the theme, in the same way that Sigurðr revealing his own name and lineage might do.

Stanza 6 gives us our first proper wisdom episode, as Sigurðr equivocates on who urged him to kill Fáfnir and instead talks about courage:

Hugr mik hvatti,

hendr mér fulltýðu
ok minn inn hvassi hjǫrr;
fár er hvatr,
er hrøðask tekr,
ef í barnœsku er blauðr.

My mind whetted me,
my hands helped
and my keen sword,
few are brave
when they begin to age,
if they are cowards in childhood. [6]

This stanza is the culmination of the previous elements of the formulaic theme, and has a practical maxim as its first wisdom utterance. The maxim, in lines 4-6, applies to Sigurðr, and perhaps also insults Fáfnir, as in *Reginsmál* he is said to have killed his father while the latter slept in the prose after stanza 9. Regardless, it is a practical maxim, issued to both Fáfnir and the audience at large, and like the maxim issued in stanza 10 of *Vafþrúðnismál*, it has the dual purpose of informing the audience and setting up later events, as Sigurðr will reiterate this theme when confronting Reginn. As Fáfnir moves the conversation on after this utterance, and does not respond to it, we can assume that this is the intended conclusion, and we can start analysing the text to see if there are more Markers further in.

Having established Sigurðr's identity, Fáfnir changes the subject and instead questions Sigurðr on his lack of companions. Curiously, Fáfnir makes the claim that Sigurðr is a prisoner, *nú ertu haptr / ok hernuminn* 'now you are a prisoner and prisoner of war'. While on the surface this may seem to be a non sequitur, as Sigurðr is the victorious one and Fáfnir is the defeated party, this may in fact be part of what will become a recurring theme of the first half of *Fáfnismál*, and that is that Sigurðr ignores Fáfnir when Fáfnir talks about Sigurðr's doom, perhaps implying that he is a captive of fate, which while being an example of Marker A (Separation), it could also be an example of Marker C (Danger) as it is referring

to Sigurðr's fateful death, or even Marker D (the Unknown) as Sigurðr ignores Fáfnir. Sigurðr responds, rejecting Fáfnir's statement:

> Því bregðr þú mér, Fáfnir,
> at til fjarri sják
> mínum feðrmunum;
> eigi em ek haptr,
> þótt ek væra hernumi;
> þú fannt, at ek lauss lifi.
>
> You accuse me, Fáfnir,
> That I am far
> from my father's care;
> I am not a prisoner,
> though I was a prisoner of war;
> you found that I live free. [8]

Here Sigurðr is rejecting Fáfnir's claim that he is a prisoner, and is in fact completely free, although he states that he was a prisoner once. This is an example of Marker A (Separation), as there have been instances in previous poems of being imprisoned, such as in the opening of *Grímnismál*, where Óðinn is imprisoned between fires. More broadly, this stanza and the sayings in it reinforce a recurring theme through these three poems, namely the transitions from youth to adulthood to death. These topics themselves help to emphasise several Markers, Liminality and Danger specifically, and their appearance here helps prepare the audience for what is to come.

The final stanza of this section is Fáfnir's first warning to Sigurðr about the true nature of the treasure and Sigurðr's doomed fate:

> Heiptyrði ein
> telr þú þér í hvívetna.
> en ek þér satt eitt segik:
> It gjalla gull
> ok it glóðrauða fé,
> þér verða þeir baugar at bana.

Hateful words only
you hear in everything.
but I say to you one true thing:
this ringing gold
and the red-gold wealth,
those arm-rings will become your bane. [9]

Fáfnir is perhaps confirming the previous suggestion, that it is fate itself that Sigurðr is a prisoner of. In *Reginsmál*, a great number of beings connected to obscure and unknown aspects, such as Hreiðmarr's description in *Snorra Edda* as *fjǫlkunnigr*, and here Fáfnir in his dying state, all seem to be able to see what Sigurðr cannot and will not realise. This, coupled with Sigurðr's words in lines 1-3 of the following stanza help to show Sigurðr's unwillingness to listen:

Fé ráða
skal fyrða hverr
æ til ins eina dags,

control of wealth
shall every man have
forever until his last day,[10]

What is interesting here is that Sigurðr is inverting what a wisdom dialogue is meant to be, as he is contradicting Fáfnir, who is in the role of the sage at this point. However, despite this disagreement occurring in the narrative, the formulaic theme continues, making the whole interaction more of a contest than a dialogue. This stanza, coupled with Fáfnir's warning in line 6 of stanza 9 and Sigurðr's questionable imprisonment in lines 4-5 of stanza 7, fulfils the conditions for Markers A, C, and D (Separation, Danger, and The Unknown), and with the general state of Fáfnir contributing to Marker B (Liminality), we once again have the completed theme present, and can expect a wisdom episode to occur.

Wisdom Episode – Stanzas 11-15

This section has what could be considered the most traditional form of wisdom dialogue, similar in tone and content to *Vafþrúðnismál*, even replicating its use of the questioning formula. As we saw in the previous section, all four Markers appear in proximity, so we would naturally expect a wisdom episode to appear. The content of the episode is similar to *Vafþrúðnismál*, as the poem has moved from the practical and into information about the world and how it functions.

While in the previous stanza, Sigurðr remarked on the ability to control wealth, Fáfnir reiterates the subject of stanza 9, and discusses the nature of fate with Sigurðr:

> Norna dóm
> þú munt fyr nesjum hafa
> ok ósvinns apa;
> í vatni þú drukknar,
> ef í vindi rœr;
> allt er feigs forað.
>
> The norns' judgement
> you will have before the coast
> and as a stupid fool;
> in the water you drown
> if in the wind you row,
> all is danger for the doomed. [11]

Here Fáfnir is issuing a maxim to Sigurðr about the nature of fate in line 6. What started with the practical in stanza 6 of *Fáfnismál*, has now progressed to the obscure in stanza 11, as it deals with the concept of fate. Unlike the example in stanza 6, however, the wisdom episode does not end here, and is instead continued by Sigurðr in the next stanza:

> Segðu mér, Fáfnir,
> alls þik fróðan kveða
> ok vel margt vita,
> hverjar ro þær nornir,
> er nauðgǫnglar ro

ok kjósa mœðr frá mǫgum.

Sundrbornar mjǫk
hygg ek at nornir sé,
eigut þær ætt saman;
sumar eru áskunngar,
sumar alfkunngar,
sumar dœtr Dvalins.

Speak of that to me, Fáfnir,
you are said to be entirely wise
and know well a great amount,
who are those norns,
who are those who come to help
and choose mothers from sons. [12]

Of many different births
I think the norns are,
they are not of the same family
some are god-kin,
some are elf-kin,
some are Dvalinn's daughters. [13]

Here is an excellent example of an information piece of wisdom being given, namely the natures of the norns and what, implicit in Sigurðr's question, they do, and areas that they have influence in. By using a variant of the *segðu mér* formula, Sigurðr further casts Fáfnir as a character worth listening to. This can provide context to Fáfnir's character. Prior to this, with perhaps the exception of stanza 9 in which Fáfnir reiterates the curse, Fáfnir has not displayed any quality that would lead him to be considered an authority to speak on any wisdom matter. While he is connected to Hreiðmarr, who was described to have some form of power, it is not said whether Fáfnir possesses the same power. Unlike Óðinn, whose wisdom credentials are not in doubt, Fáfnir has no authority, nor can he be considered typical of a wisdom-giver. Prior to this, Fáfnir is portrayed as violent, greedy, and antagonistic to his family. He has never sacrificed, nor has he travelled, nor has he tested

himself and others. However, in his dying moments he is given the authority to speak of the norns, something that he has no reason to know anything about. Not only that, but Sigurðr himself compliments Fáfnir on his wisdom, that up to this point had never been mentioned. And yet, because of the liminality of his death, and the presence of the formulaic theme, Fáfnir's wisdom seems not only acceptable, but natural.[91]

The role of Fáfnir as a sage here is worth exploring some more, as while the formulaic theme presents him as a wisdom authority, he does lack several of the qualities that would traditionally be associated with one. As discussed in the previous chapter, Vafþrúðnir naturally fits the role of the *þulr*, bearing many of the qualities that such a figure would be expected to have. Fáfnir, on the other hand, is as far in nature from Vafþrúðnir as it is possible to be, at least, when performing his role as a sage. There is also the fact that the liminality of the situation, Fáfnir being on the cusp of death, allows the wisdom exchange to take place. Schorn (2017) for example describes the encounter between them as such:

> Getting wisdom from the dying, it suggests, is possible, but it puts the seeker in a precarious position as it is precisely in this state that an enemy may prove to be most powerful. Sigurðr takes advantage of the opportunity to question the dying dragon in the opening section of *Fáfnismál*, but he exercises caution, initially attempting to conceal his name. (2017, 97)

The interaction between the two characters would seem to lend itself well to the dialogue, but I think to an extent does not rationalise how Fáfnir could know what he says, either here about the norns, or below when discussing mythological facts. However it is the role of the formulaic theme that allows the audience to perceive Fáfnir as a sage-like figure, and therefore capable of meting out the wisdom.

[91] Larrington (1993, 81) claims that it is the mention of the norns that triggers the wisdom exchange, and questions its relevance. Through the formulaic theme I argue that the wisdom exchange was both predictable and necessary, the poet having provided all the required Markers together in such a way that there was never a choice for there to be a wisdom episode. The next question similarly builds upon the first, that on fate and doom, but in this next question there is not really any relevance to Sigurðr himself, but the formulaic theme demands that it continue.

The second thing of note here is the blending of the practical and the informational. While on the surface the question seems to be solely concerned with the nature of the norns, a purely informational topic, he frames it around childbirth, and more specifically, death in childbirth and why mothers survive, and children do not and vice versa.[92] As it is not related to the question directly, Fáfnir does not contextualise it further. The framing of an informational question in a mundane context is similar to *Grímnismál*, where the knowledge of the various halls provides context for how a person should behave in a social setting.

Now that Sigurðr and Fáfnir are building a rhythm of asking and answering questions, Sigurðr chooses to ask another question, using the same formula, although here the framing of the question is very different:

> Segðu mér þat, Fáfnir,
> alls þik fróðan kveða
> ok vel margt vita,
> hvé sá holmr heitir
> er blanda hjǫrlegi
> Surtr ok æsir saman?"
>
> Óskópnir hann heitir,
> en þar ǫll skulu
> geirum leika goð;
> Bilrǫst brotnar,
> er þeir á brú fara,
> ok svima í móðu marir.
>
> Speak to me of that, Fáfnir,
> you are said to be entirely wise
> and know well a great amount,
> what is that island called,
> where blended will be the sword-liquid
> of Surtr and the Æsir both? [14]
>
> Óskópnir it is called,

[92] This is one interpretation, but there is a chance that Sigurd is only concerned with the survival of mothers over children specifically in relation to his own immediate concerns.

and there shall all
the gods shall play with spears,
Bilrǫst will break
when they go on the bridge,
and the steeds will swim in the great river. [15]

This question, and its answer, are undoubtedly informational, as it concerns a future event, but its inclusion is a bit curious. This is also the only attestation for Óskópnir. While it can be translated as Mis-shaped or Unshaped or similar, *Kommentar* (438-9) offers some interesting alternatives, although the specifics are ultimately not relevant here. Regardless, this could relate back to the question of 'right' in the terms of information. Even though Vafþrúðnir gave a different answer, here Fáfnir has established himself enough through the theme and as such his words have value. However, the question does have a certain 'mythological' weight to it, as it concerns itself with the fate of the gods and Ragnarǫk, which connects it to the question about the norns. Again, this is a question that Fáfnir has no real right to know the answer to and yet through the positioning of the theme and Markers, his answer is at least framed as being seemingly correct. This provides an interesting comparison with *Vafþrúðnismál*. In *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 17-18, the topic of Ragnarǫk comes up as well, specifically the question where the final battle between the Æsir and giants will take place. Most curiously, Vafþrúðnir gives a completely different answer than Fáfnir does, which raises several questions about whether one of these two characters is correct or not. Larrington interprets this section of the poem as where Sigurðr gains mythological wisdom, as opposed to the omens he learnt in *Reginsmál* and the social and rune wisdom he will gain in *Sigrdrífumál* (82). However, I would argue that Sigurðr was not the target of the wisdom in *Reginsmál*, and it was instead Reginn who was the recipient, and here I think it is not Sigurðr either, due to his own refusal to take the advice. Perhaps instead it is meant to be addressed to the audience.

As discussed in the previous chapter, whether a statement can be considered 'true' or not is not overly relevant to the question of whether a character can be said to have wisdom. Wisdom, it seems, relies more on the authority of a character to speak it, and the credentials they present themselves with. While Fáfnir is not a wisdom figure in the same way as Vafþrúðnir is, he is nonetheless given the same reverence and compliments that one would expect to see of a wisdom character who can provide mythological information.

It is at this point that the part of the poem most like a wisdom dialogue ends. The poem goes back to how it was at the start, and this section also makes the only break in the Sigurðr/Fáfnir continuity, as the next stanza will be again spoken by Fáfnir.

Œgishjalmr – Stanzas 16-20

This is the penultimate section of the dialogue between Sigurðr and Fáfnir, and in many ways presents as curious a stanza as Sigurðr's question was in stanza 14. Rather than carry on the wisdom dialogue, the poem unexpectedly shifts away from any form of question-and-answer format, and Fáfnir instead talks about his own might and his possession of the Œgishjalmr (literally the 'terror-helm'):

> Œgishjalm
> bar ek of alda sonum,
> meðan ek um menjum lák;
> einn rammari
> hugðumk ǫllum vera,
> fannka ek marga mǫgu.
>
> Œgishjalmr
> I bore over the sons of men,
> while I lay on the treasure:
> singularly mighty
> I thought myself to entirely be,
> I did not find such a mighty man. [16]

This stanza is the first time that Fáfnir talks about himself, other than describing his injury, and we can see the wisdom episode is over most plainly by the fact that Fáfnir only talks about his might. The Œgishjalmr is the only element of mystery, as this stanza is solely focused on Fáfnir's physical presence, and his belief in his supreme nature. While these could, perhaps, be Markers A and D (Separation and the Unknown), as the next few stanzas unfold, there are no more examples of a completed wisdom episode shaped by Markers.

The following stanzas are mostly concerned with either Sigurðr refuting Fáfnir's statements, perhaps emphasising the adversarial nature of the discussion, or Fáfnir talking about his actions while guarding his treasure. Now that the explicit wisdom interaction has ended, the narrative moves towards its conclusion, with Fáfnir blowing out poison (stanza 18) and Sigurðr talking about the poison and the Œgishjalmr again (stanza 19); these are not very relevant to the formulaic theme. There is however one last part of the poem that feels oddly inserted into the overall narrative.

Fáfnir's Death – Stanzas 20-22

This final section consists of three stanzas, followed by a brief prose section reintroducing Reginn, which will be looked at in the next section. As the Œgishjalmr section is inserted after the questioning section, breaking a format that exists throughout the poem, this section opens with Fáfnir trying to give Sigurðr advice:

> Ræð ek þér nú, Sigurðr,
> en þú ráð nemir
> ok ríð heim heðan;
> it gjalla gull
> ok it glóðrauða fé,
> þér verða þeir baugar at bana.
>
> I advise you now, Sigurðr,
> and you should take this counsel,

and ride home hence,
the ringing gold
and the red-gold wealth,
these arm-rings will be your bane. [20]

The last three lines of the stanza are identical to the warning that Fáfnir gave Sigurðr in stanza 9. The first two lines of the stanza additionally are similar in form to *Loddfáfnismál*, as *ráða* is used twice while the speaker is imploring the listener to heed their words. However, there is no direct introduction to the stanza or the advice. Rather than the authoritative voice of Fáfnir in stanzas 13 and 15, there is the physically monstrous Fáfnir who should not be listened to. Without the formulaic theme to fill in the gaps in Fáfnir's wisdom credentials, both the audience and Sigurðr ignore him, and his advice, while accurate, is ignored.

The following stanza confirms Sigurðr's rejection of Fáfnir, and confirms that Sigurðr is ultimately an unsuccessful wisdom combatant, as he will ultimately gain no advantage from his interaction with Fáfnir. Sigurðr leaves Fáfnir for dead, and expresses his intent to take the treasure in lines 2-3 of stanza 21, and he does not speak to Fáfnir again. Fáfnir's last stanza does not provide any new wisdom material, beyond expressing his sorrow at losing. One point of note is his prediction in line 3 of stanza 22, *hann mun okkr verða báðum at bana* 'he will become the bane of both of us'. Except in the most roundabout way, Reginn is most certainly not the bane of Sigurðr, so we are left with the appearance of this once wisdom figure having his final utterance be incorrect, further cementing Fáfnir's wisdom as fallible and transitory.

The Second Half of *Fáfnismál* – Stanzas 23-44

At this point *Fáfnismál* changes in tone, and for this reason I have read the final twenty-two stanzas as one section. Perhaps it is now that the poem is out of its liminal setting, but at

this point the poem is almost entirely narrative. While there are undoubtedly examples of the Danger Marker, such as the apparent threat to Sigurðr's life and Sigurðr's slaying of Reginn, and there are perhaps a few examples of Sigurðr being described as apart from Reginn, or as a mighty person, there are never any instances where the formulaic theme is completed.[93] There are perhaps some elements of Liminality in this section where Sigurðr engages the birds, but not in a way that ends with a wisdom episode. There are however a couple of points of interest in this section.

The first of these is the nature of both Reginn and Fáfnir. In stanza 29, Reginn refers to Fáfnir as *inn aldna jǫtun* 'the old giant', and in stanza 38 the birds refer to Reginn as *inn hrímkalda jǫtun* 'the rime-cold giant'. As mentioned in the *Reginsmál* section, Reginn is identified as a dwarf in the prose introduction. Neither Reginn nor any of his family are said to be any specific type of being in *Snorra Edda* or *Vǫlsunga saga*.[94] In fact, the main evidence for Reginn being a dwarf appears to be the prose introduction of *Reginsmál*. That being so, then there is an equally likely chance that he is actually a giant, as the poetry in *Fáfnismál* is almost certainly older than the prose in *Reginsmál*. If Fáfnir is intended to be a giant, then that would make more sense from a wisdom perspective, as while it is admittedly a small corpus to be working from, the only dwarf we see engaging in a dialogue is Alvíss, who is a fool, while we see giants such as Vafþrúðnir being wise figures. Fáfnir, however, is explicitly referred to as *inn fráni ormr* 'the glittering serpent' in stanza 26 of *Fáfnismál*. That Fáfnir can be seen as both a giant and as a dragon is perhaps a clue as to how Fáfnir was originally perceived to be justified in being a wisdom authority.

[93] For example, in stanza 33: *vill tæla mǫg/þann er trúir hánum* 'he wants to deceive the boy, who trusts him'. This would be an example of Marker C (Danger). Beyond examples like this there are never a collection of Markers in close enough proximity to justify the theme.

[94] Perhaps they have undergone the same euhemerising that *Snorra Edda* did to the Æsir.

Despite the lack of the formulaic theme, there are two stanzas which contain wisdom sayings, both put in Sigurðr's mouth, and once again these break the usual pattern of the speakers alternating speeches:

> Hugr er betri
> en sé hjǫrs megin,
> hvars vreiðir skulu vega,
> þvíat hvatan mann
> ek sé harðliga vega
> með slævu sverði sigr.
>
> Hvǫtum er betra
> en sé óhvǫtum
> í hildileik hafask;
> glǫðum er betra
> en sé glúpnanda,
> hvat sem at hendi kømr.
>
> Spirit is better
> than the sword's strength,
> where wrathful ones must fight,
> because when a man
> I see fighting harshly
> has been victorious with a dull sword. [30]
>
> Boldness is better
> than un-boldness
> in battle-play:
> It is better to be glad
> than to become afraid,
> what such may come to hand. [31]

Both of these stanzas are practical statements on the quality of bravery and spirit when fighting, and these refer to what has been happening in the poem, as in stanza 28 Sigurðr rebukes Reginn for not being there when he was fighting Fáfnir. While this is definitely a collection of sayings, the lack of the formulaic theme means it is not a wisdom episode. This is coupled with Sigurðr's lack of authority to speak. When Fáfnir was dying and in a liminal

state, the poem presents him as an authority, and Sigurðr in turn responds to him, however briefly, as though he were such an authority. On the other hand, in these two stanzas, there is no response from Reginn, there is nothing marking Sigurðr as being any different than his usual self. Therefore, while these are genuine statements, they do not constitute a wisdom episode, due to the lack of the theme building up to the episode, and Sigurðr's own lack of wisdom authority.

Fáfnismál conclusions

As shown above, the two parts of the poem are completely different in how they approach the narrative, and there are no examples of the completed theme in the second part, only elements, despite the two gnomic stanzas. The first half, on the other hand, is fascinating, for many reasons. The first, and most pertinent, is the stanzas that conform almost perfectly to a wisdom dialogue. The progression of stanzas 11 to 15 follows almost identically that found in *Vafþrúðnismál* and the poem treats Fáfnir as an authoritative voice speaking wisdom. There is also the contrast in how Sigurðr is presented between the two parts of the poem. In the second part, when Sigurðr issues his statements on bravery, there is no introduction to them, nor is there any response. Contrast this with the statement that Sigurðr issues in stanza 6. Here, the poem has used the various Markers to set up a wisdom episode. In this moment, as opposed to the one in stanzas 30-31, Sigurðr is set up by the poem to say it, and thus the moment has more resonance.

Additionally, despite the first half of *Fáfnismál* being more coherent from a wisdom perspective, there is the curious section involving the Œgishjalmr. This section breaks the format of the poem, and not only does not reference anything that has happened previously, but immediately casts Fáfnir as he was at the start of the poem, his wisdom credentials gone and all that is left is his strength. When we come to the comparative

section, there will be much to say on what the formulaic theme can tell us about the construction of the texts.

Sigrdrífumál

Of the three poems discussed in this chapter, *Sigrdrífumál* is both the most coherent, and frustratingly the most incomplete. *Sigrdrífumál* is the poem that is interrupted by the lacuna in the Codex Regius, and there is no source that reliably relates the ending of the poem. While *Vǫlsunga saga* obviously records a version of the narrative, the actual content of the end of the poem is a mystery. This in turn makes *Sigrdrífumál* unique amongst the poems being analysed, as it has no surviving ending in either poetry or prose.

However, of all the poems of this chapter, *Sigrdrífumál* has perhaps the greatest obvious connection to the wisdom poems that have been analysed previously. In form, it is primarily a monologue, with the occasional stanza by Sigurðr clarifying or furthering the narrative. Unlike the previous two poems, this is set in one location and the participants remain the same throughout the poem; and while there are prose interruptions, they are not as impactful as the ones in either *Reginsmál* or *Fáfnismál*. In many ways this poem seems to be in the style of *Grímnismál, Rúnatal,* and *Ljóðatal*, as there are many occasions where there is a single speaker directing the flow of the narrative, as was the case in *Rúnatal*, and finally there is the list-like format of *Ljóðatal* seemingly inspiring the first of Sigrdrífa's monologues.

Sigrdrífumál will be analysed by splitting it into sections, thus: 1-5, the only narrative part of the poem, and the only time in the poem that Sigurðr is identified by name, as well as a series of praises to various phenomena such as day and night, and to the Æsir; stanzas 6-20,

which detail the various runes and charms that will be useful to Sigurðr, and his request for more knowledge; and finally 21-38, a list of practical wisdom that Sigrdrífa gives to Sigurðr.

Meeting Sigrdrífa – Prose introduction and Stanzas 1-5

This section covers the opening of the poem, and the initial interaction between Sigurðr and Sigrdrífa. The poem begins with a continuation of the prose that ended *Fáfnismál*, and sets up the events of the poem, detailing Sigurðr's journey and entrance into a *skjaldborg* 'shield fortress'. While this is presumably meant to be a series of shields blocking the way, this is the closest that these three poems get to an enclosed area in which the interaction occurs. As we will see, this will encourage comparison with *Hávamál*, especially *Ljóðatal* and *Loddfáfnismál*, later. Once Sigurðr has passed through the shields, he cuts the armour from Sigrdrífa and begins to speak with her.[95]

The first two stanzas cover the interactions between the characters, and help establish the formulaic theme:

> Hvat beit brynju?
> Hví brá ek svefni?
> Hverr felldi af mér
> fǫlvar nauðir?
>
> Sigmundar burr,
> - sleit fyr skǫmmu
> hrafn hrælundir -
> hjǫrr Sigurðar.
>
> What bit my armour?
> Why was I broken from sleep?
> Who from me has toppled
> pale constraints? [1]

[95] One aspect of this thesis that could prove fruitful for future study is the role that gender plays in wisdom in the Eddic tradition. At the current time, this is beyond the scope of the thesis, especially as Sigrdrífa does not use Markers in a different way to the male figures previously analysed, but it warrants further investigation. As it concerns 'regular' humans, Evans' (2020) work is not of immediate use in its analysis of gender, but it does provide a starting point for the future.

Sigmundr's son,
a short time ago slit
the raven's corpse-grove [dead warrior],
the sword of Sigurðr. [2][96]

From this, and the prose introduction, we can see that the formulaic theme is already beginning to take shape, as there are several Markers occurring in close proximity. The first Marker (Separation) is represented by both Sigurðr and Sigrdrífa, as both were alone, Sigurðr while travelling and Sigrdrífa while she slept alone. The example of Liminality (Marker B) is the same that we saw in *Vafþrúðnismál*, as Sigurðr is said to enter the enclosure in the prose introduction: *Sigurðr gekk í skjaldborgina ok sá at þar lá maðr ok svaf með ǫllum hervápnum* 'Sigurðr went into the shield fortress and saw that there lay a person and they were asleep with all their weapons'. Marker C (Danger) is less clear, but could be represented by lines 2-3 of the second stanza, which is referring to the deaths of either Reginn or Fáfnir. However, Marker D (the Unknown) is represented by Sigrdrífa herself, and by her questions in the first stanza, as Sigurðr himself is the 'unknown' aspect of the encounter. This stanza is the only time in the poem where Sigurðr is referred to by name, as throughout the poem it is only the prose that explicitly names Sigurðr after this point. This could be an attempt by the poet to untangle the wisdom from Sigurðr himself and make it more broadly applicable, and so he turns Sigurðr from a heroic figure into the anonymous audience of *Hávamál*.

The following stanza (3) is about Sigrdrífa's sleep, and how it was brought about, which connects Óðinn back to the narrative. As Davidson notes (1943, 155), Sigrdrífa's words and awakening in the prose and in stanza 3 are highly reminiscent of those of the various

[96] Line 3 of stanza 2 is mildly contentious in the use of *hrafn hrælundir*. I will not go further into that here as it has little if any impact on the formulaic theme, but for more see *Kommentar* (535-6).

seeresses that appear in the Eddic material, especially the seeress from *Vǫluspá*, which perhaps likens Sigrdrífa to such a being. More curiously, as seen in *Vǫlsunga saga*, Óðinn is present in the telling of the story, and considering the close links between *Vǫlsunga saga* and the poetry in the Codex Regius, it is highly bizarre that there is no mention of him in the poetry, or even in the prose surrounding the poem. What is most interesting however is the prose section that immediately follows stanza 3:

> Sigurðr settist niðr ok spyrr hana nafns. Hon tók þá horn fullt mjaðar ok gaf honum minnisveig.
>
> Sigurðr set himself down and asked her name. She then took a horn full of mead and gave him a memory-strengthening drink.

As in *Hávamál* and in *Grímnismál* there is once again the connection between a wisdom aspect (memory) and consumption, specifically the drinking of mead.[97] We had the section in *Hávamál* where Óðinn is crippled by drinking, but later recovers and gets his mental faculties back (*Hávamál* stanzas 13-14), but then there are also the events of stanzas 107 and 140 of *Hávamál*, in which Óðinn is driven by his need to drink mead, and these are both connected to his acquisition of wisdom, explicitly in stanza 140, where it is connected to both his learning and sacrifice, and his ability to grow and thrive. The entirety of the poetic section of *Grímnismál* is also prompted by the giving of a drink to another, although in this case the drink is being given by the one who will be speaking, whereas in *Grímnismál* it is the drink that enticed Óðinn to talk. Here, the drink serves to make Sigurðr remember what is about to be said, which, once again, brings us back to *Hávamál*, specifically stanza 111, in which the character at the time who is about to receive wisdom listens to what is being said after entering a new location.

[97] Drinking has been a recurring motif through several of the episodes, so clearly has a role in the transmission. Unlike Sigurðr though, Óðinn's mind comes back to him despite his drinking, and Sigurðr presumably would suffer from the same consequences any other person would.

Comparisons with *Hávamál* continue further, as the following two stanzas involve a blessing to others:

> Heill dagr!
> Heilir dags synir!
> Heil nótt ok nift!
> Óreiðum augum
> lítið okkr þinig
> ok gefið sitjǫndum sigr!
>
> Heilir æsir!
> Heilar ásynjur!
> Heil sjá in fjǫlnýta fold!
> Mál ok mannvit
> gefið okkr mærum tveim
> ok læknishendr meðan lifum!
>
> Hail day!
> Hail to the sons of day!
> Hail night and her kinswomen!
> Friendly eyes
> look upon us both
> and give us, sitting, victory! [4]
>
> Hail the Æsir!
> Hail the Ásynjur!
> Hail the very useful earth!
> Speech and common sense
> give to us two famous ones
> and healing hands, while we live. [5]

This collection of lines has a lot in common with the final stanza of *Hávamál*, as it reuses the word *heill* several times as a blessing. In *Hávamál* it is to the people who had listened, but here it is instead various cosmological phenomena, and to the gods and goddesses, and to the earth.

After this, there are prose interruptions that provide further context about Sigrdrífa's nature and how she came to be imprisoned.

Teaching Sigurðr – Stanzas 6-20

Following the blessings, the poetry abates for a period, and we get a prose section that contextualises what has happened to Sigrdrífa and how she came to be here. The prose also contains the only source we have for Sigrdrífa being a valkyrie. However, unlike Reginn, Sigrdrífa is never referred to as anything but a valkyrie, so we can be relatively sure she is as the prose describes her, as the knowledge she gives on the various types of runes would be something that a person connected to Óðinn would know.

The prose carries on describing the event that won her Óðinn's displeasure, which came about when Sigrdrífa killed one of Óðinn's favourites: *Sigrdrífa felldi Hjálm-Gunnarr í orrustunni* 'Sigrdrífa felled Hjálm-Gunnarr in battle'. As a result, Óðinn causes her to sleep and insists that she will not fight again and must marry. The death of Hjálm-Gunnarr that is mentioned would fulfil the conditions for Marker C (Danger), and now there is the completed theme, and a wisdom episode can be anticipated.[98] Sigurðr himself prompts this, by asking Sigrdrífa to provide her wisdom in the last of the prose sentences of the segment: *Hann segir ok biðr hana kenna sér speki, ef hon vissi tíðindi ór ǫllum heimum* 'he spoke to her and bid her speak her wisdom, if she knew tidings from all the worlds'.

Stanza 6 gives a poetic example of what was described in the prose section following stanza 3:

> Bjór fœri ek þér,
> brynþings apaldr,
> magni blandinn
> ok megintíri;
> fullr er hann ljóða

[98] While it may be contentious to class the death of Hjálm-Gunnarr as evidence for a Danger Marker, insomuch as the character is already dead long before the narrative of the poem, this is again evidence of the substitution found in formulaic theme. That his death is mentioned in connection with Sigrdrífa shows that it is part of the story, especially as it is being added in a prose expansion. Clearly, the scribe knew that there was something missing, and felt the need to interrupt the poetry to explain it.

ok líknstafa,
góðra galdra
ok gamanrúna.

Beer I give to you,
battle apple-tree,
blended with strength
and great glory:
it is full of charms
and healing staves,
good spells
and pleasure-bringing runes. [6]

Here, however, it is beer, rather than mead, which is being used to impart the more 'magical' parts of the wisdom.[99] Still, there is a connection to how this was performed in *Hávamál*. In stanza 140, Óðinn getting a drink from Óðrerir is connected to his learning of the *fimbulljóð níu* (nine mighty charms) after his own ordeal. Presumably in that case, there is also the connection between the drink allowing the retention of knowledge and of information. We see a similar occurrence as well in the non-Codex Regius poem *Hyndluljóð*, in which Freyja requests a drink for her follower in order that he may remember what is said:

Ber þú minnisǫl
mínum gelti,
svá hann ǫll muni
orð at tína
þessar rœðu
á þriðja morgni,
þá er þeir Angantýr
ættir reikna.

Bear you memory-strengthening ale
to my boar,

[99] There is an interesting semantic argument for what precisely Sigrdrífa has given Sigurðr, and whether it is intended to be a different drink. While it deals with the Old English tradition specifically, Fell (1975) investigates the specifics of one drink over the other. For the purpose here though, it is more the act of drinking that is comparable, rather than the specific liquid.

so he can remember all
words to recount
on the third morning,
at this council,
when he and Angantýr
reckon their lineages. [45]

In this instance the drink is explicitly there to allow a character to remember something. In the case of *Hyndluljóð* it is to remember information, and in *Sigrdrífumál* it is similarly to allow Sigurðr to be able to remember what Sigrdrífa is telling him.

Following Sigrdrífa's gift of ale to Sigurðr, she mentions the *gamanrúnar* 'pleasure-bringing runes' as being part of the gift. With this we see our most obvious parallel to the mythological and obscure parts of *Hávamál*, as stanzas 7 to 20 are about the various types of *rúnar* that will benefit Sigurðr in his life. Unlike the *rúnar* that Óðinn takes up in *Rúnatal,* in *Sigrdrífumál* there is repeated reference to the cutting and carving of the various runes, implying that they are indeed physical things to be placed on objects, rather than mysteries or secrets.[100] As these stanzas are all part of an established wisdom episode, I will not go into detail about all of them, but there are certain stanzas that connect with the mythological poetry analysed earlier that perhaps can refine how we see *Sigrdrífumál*. Additionally, stanza 9, while having no direct parallel to mythological poetry, is curious in its continuation of a theme from *Fáfnismál*.

Stanzas 6-8 cover a variety of topics, ranging from battle to drinking. On the surface these pieces of advice are obscure or mystical, but they seem to be presented in a practical way.[101] Stanza 10, however, is on a subject that rarely features in the previously discussed Eddic wisdom poems, except in *Fáfnismál*, and that is the topic of childbirth. As we saw in

[100] While the *rúnar* that Óðinn takes up in stanza 139 of *Hávamál* are seemingly formless, there are examples of runes cut and shaped in stanzas 142-144.
[101] For more on runes and healing, see Jesch and Lee (2017), in particular (388-9) for *Sigrdrífumál*.

Fáfnismál stanza 12, Sigurðr explicitly connects the norns as agents of fate to childbirth, and it is curious that this is the only other wisdom context for such a connection. *Hávamál* is silent on the matter, as are *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, and yet it has appeared twice in relatively close succession in the Sigurðr poems:

> Bjargrúnar skaltu kunna,
> ef þú bjarga vilt
> ok leysa kind frá konum;
> á lófa þær skal rísta
> ok of liðu spenna
> ok biðja þá dísir duga.
>
> Birth runes you should know,
> if you wish
> to save and loose children from women;
> one shall cut them in palms
> and clasp (them) over joints
> and bid then the dísir for help. [10]

Here in this stanza is the confluence of both previous Sigurðr poems, as pressing the *dísir* for help is mentioned in *Reginsmál* stanza 24*,* and the concerns with childbirth are a reiteration of the topic from stanza 12 of *Fáfnismál*. This continuation of both themes helps connect *Sigrdrífumál* to the previous Sigurðr poems: despite its different form, by paying attention to a rare point of discussion, *Sigrdrífumál* is clearly building upon what has come before. Childbirth seems to be a recurring point of interest for Sigurðr, specifically death and its connection to childbirth.[102] Whereas Fáfnir offered knowledge of the role of the norns, here Sigrdrífa is giving Sigurðr practical advice. While perhaps coincidental, this interest also helps to further separate the three poems in this chapter from *Grípisspá*, as in that poem there is no mention of this theme at all.

[102] One curiosity arising from this is why this is information that Sigurðr needs to know. One suggestion might be the aforementioned generalisation of the audience, but it could also have other implications, such as a narrative reason i.e. Sigurðr's own questions around his birth.

The next stanza that is of interest is stanza 14, as it again connects back to the events of *Rúnatal*.

> Hugrúnar skaltu kunna,
> ef þú vilt hverjum vera
> geðsvinnari guma;
> þær of réð,
> þær of reist,
> þær um hugði Hroptr
> af þeim legi,
> er lekit hafði
> ór hausi Heiðdraupnis
> ok ór horni Hoddrofnis.
>
> Mind runes you should know,
> if you wish to be
> more strongly minded than each man;
> they were read,
> they were carved,
> Hroptr thought them
> from the liquid,
> which had leaked
> from the skull of Heiðdraupnir
> and from the horn of Hoddrofnir. [14]

This stanza is of note for several reasons. The first is the curious nature of the two beings named in the last two lines of the stanza. Like the sisters of Reginn and Fáfnir, neither of these characters appears in any source outside of this stanza, suggesting that their presence may be to emphasise the unknowability of the runes that Óðinn had taken (Hroptr being a name of Óðinn in *Hávamál* stanza 142 and in *Grímnismál* stanza 8).

The final stanza of this section is a summary stanza, and it collects the various runes that have been discussed:

> Þat eru bókrúnar,
> þat eru bjargrúnar
> ok allar ǫlrúnar

ok mætar meginrúnar,
hveim er þær kná óvilltar
ok óspilltar
sér at heillum hafa;
njóttu, ef þú namt,
unz rjúfask regin.

There are book runes
there are birth-saving runes
and all the ale runes
and valuable might runes,
for whom can be unconfused
and unspoilt
can have them well himself;
benefit, if you learnt them,
until the powers are torn. [20]

This stanza concludes the episode by summarising what has been said previously and stressing the value of what has been said.[103] This stanza is clearly influenced by *Hávamál* and by *Vafþrúðnismál*. Line 8 of the stanza is similar to line 7 of the last stanza of *Hávamál*; *njóti sá, er nam* 'May he benefit, who learned'. With the exception that the line in *Hávamál* is impersonal, whereas in *Sigrdrífumál* the line is addressed directly at Sigurðr (or perhaps to the audience), the sentiment and placement of the line is identical. The narrator is imploring the audience to remember what has been said, and the positive nature of taking advice. This stanza is also sharing the motif found in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, as its final line is almost identical in phrasing to stanza 52 of *Vafþrúðnismál*, and stanza 4 of *Grímnismál*, as it refers to the powers (gods) being torn. In *Vafþrúðnismál* it is one of Óðinn's questions to Vafþrúðnir questioning him about the future, but in *Grímnismál* it is used similarly to *Sigrdrífumál*, as it is a statement that something will last until the powers are torn.

[103] *Bókrúnar* are worth a brief mention. This is the only attested appearance of this word in the Codex Regius, and could mean something similar to alphabet, but also it could be a misspelling of *bot-rúnar* (healing runes) (*Kommentar* 591). I think the spelling error is much more likely in context, and in Sigurðr's general quest for healing knowledge.

This is the end of the more obscure part of the poem, but Sigrdrífa still has a great deal more to say.

Practicalities – Stanzas 21-37

The next section of the poem is different from what has come before it in many ways, but it is also an additional list of wisdom sayings for both Sigurðr and the audience. While the previous section featured a list of wisdom couched in the mythological, this section instead is eminently practical and broadly mundane, with advice about behaviour towards family and how to engage others in social settings. Once again, the tone of the poem bears many similarities with *Hávamál*, although in this instance it is the gnomic section and *Loddfáfnismál* that are most similar.

Once Sigrdrífa has finished her statement on runes, she stops her monologue and directs her attention back to Sigurðr, and offers him a choice, and Sigurðr accepts her offer:

> Nú skaltu kjósa,
> alls þér er kostr um boðinn,
> hvassa vápna hlynr;
> sǫgn eða þǫgn
> hafðu þér sjalfr í hug;
> ǫll eru mein of metin.
>
> Munka ek flœja,
> þótt mik feigan vitir,
> emka ek með bleyði borinn;
> ástráð þín
> ek vil ǫll hafa;
> svá lengi sem ek lifi.
>
> Now you shall choose,
> since the choice is yours,
> sharp weapon-maple [warrior]
> speech or silence
> have for yourself in mind,
> all harm is measured out. [21]

I may not flee,
though you may know me to be doomed,
I am not with cowardice born,
your loving counsel
I will have all of it,
so long as I myself live. [22]

From this we can see the formulaic theme being established immediately after the previous wisdom episode ended, as there are many examples of the Markers in this short space. The first example of Marker A (Separation) is Sigurðr's focus on himself, and the knowledge that his fate is his own. Additionally, Sigurðr's and Sigrdrífa's isolation would count as an example of the Marker. Marker B (Liminality) is represented by lines 1-2 of stanza 21, where Sigurðr is in between choices, and could decide to go either way. Marker C (Danger) is in both Sigrdrífa's warning in line 6 of stanza 21, that all harm will be measured out, and in line 2 of stanza 22, where Sigurðr acknowledges his doom. The only questionable Marker is D (the Unknown), but it appears to be present, nonetheless. While it could be the very nature of Sigrdrífa that is unknown, as she is occupying the position of a wisdom informant, it is Sigurðr's speech in lines 1-2 of stanza 22 that holds the key, especially what he says in line 2. An absence of knowing is also an appropriate form for the Marker to take. If this is the case, this is the completion of the theme, and the rest of the section is again full of advice.

Sigrdrífa keeps her advice primarily practical throughout this section, even the advice that is on more magical subjects, such as stanza 27:

Þat ræð ek þér it fjórða,
ef býr fordæða
vammafull á vegi,
ganga er betra
en gista sé,
þótt þik nótt of nemi.

That I counsel you about a fourth,
if by the way
you meet a witch full of vices,
it is better to go
than be a guest,
though you are taken by night. [27]

This stanza concerns itself with witches (*fordæða*) and how to deal with them; the advice is presented in practical terms. This stanza is comparable with *Hávamál* stanza 113, in which the narrator advises Loddfáfnir to avoid witches, and it too is presented in a neutral and practical sense. This contrasts nicely with the more obscure approach that we see in *Hávamál* stanza 155, in which the narrator uses a magical example to deal with witches; here the advice is to carry on and not to be a guest.

Rather than go through all the stanzas one by one, I will briefly discuss the general themes of each of the subsections. Stanzas 23-26 are about how one should behave with family or at gatherings; stanza 27 is about dealing with witches; stanzas 28-33 are warnings about personal interactions with men and women, and the danger of alcohol.[104] Stanzas 34-35 discuss funerary practices, and the need to bury the dead properly, and stanzas 36-38 end on the concept of quarrels. It is at this point however that we come to the lacuna of the Codex Regius, and the content of the end of the poem is unknown. *Vǫlsunga saga* can be used partially, but there is no way of knowing what poetry would have been present, as the poetic quotes in *Vǫlsunga saga* end at stanza 21. However, the remainder of the encounter that is preserved in the poetry of *Sigrdrífumál* is presented as prose precepts. In *Vǫlsunga saga*, Sigurðr speaks at the end of Sigrdrífa's speech: *Sigurðr mælti: "Engi finnsk þér vitrari maðr, ok þess sver ek at þik skal ek eiga, ok þú ert við mitt æði"* 'Sigurðr spoke**: "**there are none to be found who are a wiser person, and this I swear to you that I shall marry you, and

[104] It is curious here that we once again have negative descriptions of alcohol, despite the earlier praise of its memory benefits. In this way, *Sigrdrífumál* is also mirroring the events that happened to Óðinn in *Hávamál* stanzas 13-14, although there is no mention of the possibility of recovering wits.

you are with me in mind"' (40). The start of Sigurðr's statement is similar to what we would expect to find at the end of a wisdom text, similar to Vafþrúðnir's final statement on the wisdom of Óðinn. Therefore, it is possible that Sigurðr's statement was likely also to have originally been poetical, and would have served as the culmination of the poem. As to the missing precepts, it is impossible to say what they may have been about. However, contrasting the ending with the others that I have analysed previously, it is likely that Sigurðr's line would have been the final one, or at the very least, the culmination of the wisdom episode.

Sigrdrífumál Conclusion

The last of the Sigurðr poems is filled with the wisdom that we saw in both *Hávamál* and in *Grímnismál*. *Sigrdrífumál*'s unknown ending is ultimately not relevant to the presence of the formulaic theme. While *Vǫlsunga saga* offers a potential ending for what the poem may have been that would be appropriate for a wisdom poem, by acknowledging the formulaic theme's presence, it is probable that the poetry would have also ended in a similar manner as the saga dictates.

Comparisons

This section will focus on what these poems have added to observations on the formulaic theme and how they add to the idea of how the theme interacts with wisdom.

All three of these poems feature prose interruption and contextualisation, and this requires more thought than any of the mythological poems did. After all, only *Grímnismál* has any amount of prose to contextualise it, and that complicated interpretation. While *Fáfnismál* and *Sigrdrífumál* contain less prose, and could still perhaps function without it, that is not the case with *Reginsmál*. There are times when the prose is the only connection between

what is happening from stanza to stanza, such as the connection between Loki and Andvari's conversation and the conversation between Hreiðmarr and the Æsir. The prose gives us more context than is perhaps immediately obvious, as in *Fáfnismál* both Reginn and Fáfnir are described as being giants, yet in the prose we are authoritatively told that Reginn is a dwarf. While giants do have more mythological 'weight' than dwarves, as will be discussed in the Chapter 4, by the text casts Reginn as a dwarf, he is being described as such for a reason, potentially to separate him from a wisdom authority such as Vafþrúðnir.

Moving on from this, the authority of a speaker is vital, and decidedly important in Fáfnir's case. Fáfnir does not start as an archetypally 'wise' character, he is violent, impulsive, and murders his own family in cold blood. Yet, for five stanzas of *Fáfnismál* he is treated as though he were a sage on the level of Óðinn or Vafþrúðnir or Sigrdrífa. In this case, it is the framing of the formulaic theme that lets him appear as a figure who can ponder the end of the world, and this will be significant when I move onto *Grípisspá* and *Sólarljóð*, so it is important to define the role of the speaker in the wisdom provided. Óðinn previously was authority enough to present during a wisdom episode due to his intrinsic connection with wisdom, but these three poems have all primarily (with a small exception in *Reginsmál*) featured non-divine characters as both givers and receivers of wisdom.

Contextualising the prose in the three poems

The prose in these poems helps with the construction of the formulaic theme by providing Markers and other wisdom signifiers. *Reginsmál* and *Fáfnismál* are good examples of how the prose sections can be used to interpret the poems in separate sections. In both *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*¸ there is a clear and unbroken narrative, with no interruption to the poetry. *Reginsmál* and *Fáfnismál*, on the other hand, are so disparate in

their various sections that it is highly likely that they were compilations of a variety of works before being combined in the Codex Regius.

Let us take *Reginsmál* as the first example. Without prior knowledge of the story, the poetry by itself would be almost incoherent as a narrative. It is only through the prose's intervention that we can see how the various episodes connect to each other, but like in *Grímnismál,* the prose supplies the missing elements of the formulaic theme. Loki's meeting with Andvari, for example, and the wisdom episode in stanzas 3-4 that mimics *Vafþrúðnismál*, is set up partially by the poetry, but it is the prose that provides Markers A and B. Indeed, where the prose tells us how Óðinn came to Geirrøðr's hall which sets up Marker A, here the prose tells us how Loki is sent out alone to find the ransom. That we see a genuine wisdom exchange, preceded by prose supplementing the poetry, shows an awareness by the compiler of *Reginsmál* of what was needed for the wisdom episode to feel authentic. Going from the Loki episode, however, to the Hreiðmarr section would be nonsensical without the prose providing the connecting tissue.

Fáfnismál on the other hand, is more coherent than *Reginsmál*, as it takes place in a single location, but like *Reginsmál*, relies extensively on the prose to provide information on the story. The actual fight with Fáfnir, arguably the act for which is Sigurðr is most famous, is only present in the prose. However, *Fáfnismál* is less reliant on the prose to fulfil the formulaic theme to anticipate the wisdom episode. The only time it happens is in the prose in between stanzas 1 and 2 where Sigurðr hides his identity, which is an example of Marker D, but this is immediately spoiled by Sigurðr in stanza 4 revealing himself entirely. Such a contradiction of the prose is bizarre, and as I discussed in the *Fáfnismál* section, this could almost be an example of an anti-Marker, in that it actively goes against the theme.

However, this could also be the poem moving from one Marker to the next, in this case moving from the Unknown Marker to the Danger Marker, and the compiler, knowing that there needed to be this additional Marker, introduces it through the prose interruption.

Chapter 4 Conclusion

At the start of this chapter, the Sigurðr poems were cast as being in opposition to the mythological poems from a wisdom perspective. However, as has been shown, these poems still use the formulaic theme in a manner consistent with the mythological poems, and the wisdom episodes of *Reginsmál*, *Fáfnismál*, and *Sigrdrífumál* are no less examples of their kind than the ones featured in the mythological poems. That there are Markers consistently seen throughout these three poems show that they are not merely artefacts of 'pure' wisdom poems, but are instead in the tradition itself.

Throughout these three poems there are undoubtedly mythological elements, the beginning of *Reginsmál* especially, but compared to the three previous poems featuring the Æsir and giants prominently, the Sigurðr poems are more grounded in a human, albeit extraordinary, world. Whether this impacts on the wisdom provided is debatable. The one reference to giants comes from Reginn in *Fáfnismál* stanza 29, and it is true that Fáfnir is the only being to make cosmic pronouncements in stanzas 13 and 15 of *Fáfnismál*, but much more crucially, and in keeping with this thesis, it is the theme that sets him up to deliver this information.

While the previous chapter focused on the three mythological poems and how they combined and interacted with each other to provide wisdom, the Sigurðr poems cannot fulfil the same role. They are not considered to be wisdom texts to the same degree as the

three mythological poems discussed earlier. By showing the themes the three poems share with the previously analysed poems, I suggest that all three should at least be considered as wisdom-adjacent, and in the case of *Sigrdrífumál*, as a wisdom poem in its own right.[105] After all, in a merely surface reading, there is little that it possesses that is not present in other wisdom texts, and perhaps its overt framing as a heroic text has led to it being discounted.

However, before a true comparison can be made, this thesis will now turn to the last two of the comparatively later poems, *Grípisspá* and *Sólarljóð*, to show how the formulaic theme was further used in non-traditional wisdom poems.

[105] Schorn (2017, 106) also describes *Sigrdrífumál* as a wisdom poem. Larrington also likens it to the lists found in *Ljóðatal* (1993, 220).

Chapter 5: *Grípisspá*

Grípisspá is the first poem in the Codex Regius featuring Sigurðr, and details his interactions with his maternal uncle Grípir.[106] *Grípisspá* (27r-28v) is a late Eddic poem, and its purpose is generally considered to be to summarise the story of Sigurðr as a whole, in preparation for the poems that are about to come, for example in *Kommentar* (133-6). In many ways it parallels *Vǫlsunga Saga*, in that it presents the Sigurðr story in its entirety, although in a poetic format and in the form of Grípir's foretelling of Sigurðr's life, rather than presenting the action as it happens. *Grípisspá* is also criticised for its content and form, and compared to other Eddic poems receives less scholarly attention, for example Richard Harris' work (1971) sums up the classic criticisms of the poem at the time of his article. However, he focuses primarily on the content of the poem that summarises existing Sigurðr stories, rather than looking at the material that is unique to *Grípisspá* as I am doing, and as such does not talk about the parts most relevant to this thesis. This narrative content occurs on three occasions during the poem, and consists of: the interactions between Sigurðr and Grípir where Sigurðr is greeted, when Grípir is reticent about providing information, and finally when Sigurðr leaves at the end of the poem. These parts of the poem are where *Grípisspá* has what can be classed as its own narrative, rather than summarising the content of the broader Sigurðr story. I will primarily deal with the stanzas that have relevant Markers, or are otherwise interesting from a wisdom perspective.

The reasons that *Grípisspá* is being analysed in this chapter apart from the other Sigurðr poems are twofold. First, the poem is similar to both *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, as it features a guest in a hall and a dialogue exchange, the similarities between the two

[106] *Kommentar* references unless otherwise stated in this chapter are to von See (2006).

mythological poems and *Grípisspá* are in places more than superficial.[107] Second, despite its late nature, *Grípisspá* retains some elements of the formulaic theme and other tropes that are common in wisdom dialogues.[108] There is the visit to a hall, there is the superior and the inferior character, and there is the threat of death coupled to the revelation. This is not to say that *Grípisspá* is a wisdom poem, but it does feature many elements of the formulaic theme, albeit in an incomplete version. While it is impossible to say why the poet chose to frame this poem in the same way as a mythological wisdom dialogue, we can theorise why this may be the case. First, it may be to help separate the Sigurðr poems from the Helgi poems, emphasising Sigurðr over Helgi by casting his first appearance as one more akin to an Odinic narrative by featuring a meeting between a lone wanderer and a wise sage. Second, it may be to establish Grípir's authority to speak and summarise the particular version of the Sigurðr story that the poet is relating.

One of the key elements of this thesis is the thought that the same tools were used by various poets from the earliest compositions to the latest to inform the audience about similar concepts, even in comparatively later works, albeit not without some transformation. If *Grípisspá* has the same elements, and uses the same techniques to inform its audience, then it can be compared to wisdom poems, and can even serve as a connecting element between these wisdom poems and the Sigurðr poems.

Summary and Grípir

The poem is set in the hall of Grípir, who is Sigurðr's maternal uncle. Sigurðr has come to the hall seeking information about his future. In the overall narrative, the poem is set before the

[107] Additionally, as with the Sigurðr poems and *Grímnismál*, there is a significant prose introduction.
[108] This helps show the continued use and development of Markers, as I showed in the methodology chapter with the use of Markers in *Snorra Edda*, and which will again be seen in the next chapter, in which *Sólarljóð* will be discussed.

events of the other poems, as Grípir tells Sigurðr about his slaying of Fáfnir and Regin. Curiously, though Brynhildr is called by name later in the poem, the valkyrie Sigurðr is intended to meet after killing Fáfnir is unnamed, perhaps suggesting that the poet was aware that there were differing versions of the same story. Sigurðr prompts Grípir to tell the rest of the story, and Grípir does so despite his reluctance, telling Sigurðr about the circumstances of his death.

As a character, Grípir himself and the whole meeting between him and Sigurðr, are only represented in two texts, *Grípisspá* and *Vǫlsunga saga*. In *Vǫlsunga saga* he appears only in chapter 16 briefly and is never mentioned again, and in the Codex Regius he is only referred to in his own poem. In none of the prose, save for that immediately preceding *Grípisspá*, is he referred to. He is absent from any of the other Eddic poems describing Sigurðr's life, and is similarly absent from *Snorra Edda*. Additionally, he does not appear in any of the continental variations of the story, such as the *Nibelungenlied*, or the imported *Þiðreks saga af Bern*. On a surface level he mirrors Óðinn's own teacher in stanza 140 of *Hávamál*, who was similarly a maternal uncle.

The poem

The poem is similar in style to *Vafþrúðnismál*, being a dialogue with a third character appearing only at the start to provide context, a role occupied by Frigg in *Vafþrúðnismál* and by Geitir here. As with previously discussed poems, *Grípisspá* features both poetry and prose, although much more of the former than the latter. In contrast to the other three poems discussed in this chapter, however, while *Grípisspá* does feature a prose introduction, it does not feature any interruptions of prose in the poetic text. This is perhaps evidence for a more 'artificial' origin for *Grípisspá*, as older poems such as *Reginsmál* and

Fáfnismál are frequently interrupted by prose clarifications, and coupled with *Grípisspá's* later nature, I would suggest that the poem was designed in response to the others without the need for an oral origin, and that its use of formulaic theme proves that.[109]

The sections of the poem that I am analysing here are what I term the 'narrative' sections of the poem, as opposed to the 'summary' sections. The narrative sections are those stanzas that do not relate directly to an event that occurs in any of the other Sigurðr poems. Grípir's appearance in the narrative and reticence to speak also appear in *Vǫlsunga saga* (28), but due to his absence from other sources, I have discounted them from the summary sections.[110] Overall, there are potentially 18 stanzas of the poem that do not directly relate to some other part of the Sigurðr story. However, there are several stanzas of the 18 that merely set up the summary sections. I will be analysing 11 stanzas from *Grípisspá*: 2-4, 5-6, 7-8, 18-22, and 53.

Prose and Stanza 2-4

The prose opens the narrative with Sigurðr arriving alone to the hall of Grípir, which is an immediate example of Marker A (Separation). Stanzas 2-4 show proper introduction of dialogue in the poem. It is also the arrival in poetic form, despite also being mentioned in the prose introduction.

> "Er horskr konungr
> heima í landi?
> Mun sá gramr við mik
> ganga at mæla?
> Máls er þarfi
> maðr ókunnigr,
> vil ek fljótliga
> finna Grípi."

[109] *Kommentar* (134-7) discusses possible origins for the poem to varying degrees.
[110] Additionally, as discussed in the introduction, *Vǫlsunga saga* was almost certainly drawing from a similar set of sources as the Codex Regius scribe, so this in turn narrows the tradition.

"Þess mun glaðr konungr
Geiti spyrja,
hverr sá maðr sé,
er máls kveðr Grípi."
"Sigurðr ek heiti,
borinn Sigmundi,
en Hjǫrdís er
hilmis móðir."

Þá gekk Geitir
Grípi at segja;
"Hér er maðr úti
ókuðr kominn;
hann er ítarligr
at áliti;
sá vill, fylkir,
fund þinn hafa."

"Is the wise king
at home in this country?
Will the prince, with me,
come to speak?
Speech is needed
by the unknown man,
I wish immediately
to find Grípir." [2]

"The glad king would wish
to ask Geitir,
who the man is he sees,
who would speak words with Grípir.
I am called Sigurðr,
born of Sigmundr,
and Hjǫrdis was
the king's mother." [3]

Then went Geitir
to speak to Grípir;
there is a man outside
of unknown comings;
he is noble
in appearance;

he wishes, king,
to meet you." [4]

The first half of stanza 2 is a parallel of stanza 7 of *Vafþrúðnismál*, as both stanzas are questions on the nature of the inhabitants. In *Vafþrúðnismál* it is Vafþrúðnir questioning who Óðinn is, and here it is Sigurðr asking about Grípir. However, the prose casts Sigurðr in a different light to Óðinn, as despite the guard not knowing who he is, the prose states that *Sigurðr var auðkenndr* (Sigurðr was easily recognisable). Despite Sigurðr being obvious in his identity, he is still questioned as to who he is, much as Óðinn is when he appears in poetry, and calls himself a *maðr ókunnigr* (unknown man), a sentiment that is repeated in stanza 4, although in this case it is *ókuðr kominn* (having come unknown).

The prose's comments, that Sigurðr is not recognised, creates an additional parallel with *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, as in both of those poems Óðinn travels in disguise in order to not be recognised. In this manner Sigurðr is taking on an Odinic role as the mysterious traveller. However, as with many of the wisdom aspects that appear in *Grípisspá*, once this similarity is made it is swiftly ignored, as Sigurðr gives his identity in the following stanza. However, and perhaps most curiously, a repetition of the event in *Fáfnismál* takes place, and Sigurðr immediately proclaims his identity, along with claiming Sigmundr as his father.

Sigurðr is stopped outside the hall and prevented, albeit temporarily, from entering. Here there are three of the four Markers being used in almost an identical fashion as they were used in *Vafþrúðnismál*. So far then there is the appearance of Marker A (Separation) being represented by Sigurðr arriving alone to the hall, and Marker B (Liminality) is represented by the character not being accepted into the hall and being held outside. Marker D (the Unknown) is represented by the character stating that he is unknown, despite the prose's statement to the contrary. Much as the Unknown Marker is represented in *Grímnismál* by

Óðinn going around in disguise and not being recognised, here Sigurðr is fulfilling the same role.

Marker C (Danger) is however absent, which not only fails to complete the theme, but also helps differentiate the poems. The guard, Geitir, is not threatening Sigurðr, nor is there a more general warning, such as Frigg's warning in *Vafþrúðnismál*.[111] However, while *Vafþrúðnismál* ends its first section with a maxim on the nature of guests, *Grípisspá* does not feature any wisdom statement, which is the first sign that something is unusual, despite the appearance of Markers. There is a parallel between Sigurðr's stated need to speak in stanza 3 with the maxim from *Vafþrúðnismál* 10, but there is a lack of any overall wisdom content in it compared to *Vafþrúðnismál*.[112]

As we can see from this example, the stanzas map from one poem onto another in enough ways that it suggests this is not coincidental. While it lacks one of the Markers, Sigurðr's approach at the start of this poem is analogous to Óðinn's approach to Vafþrúðnir or to Geirrøðr as one of the protagonists of a wisdom dialogue.

Stanzas 5-6

Once Sigurðr has given Geitir his name and lineage, Grípir comes out to meet him and welcomes him to the hall, while also separating Grani and Geitir from the two of them. Stanza 5 not only features Sigurðr and Grípir speaking, but also the impersonal narrator. This narrator only speaks in stanzas 4, 5, and 6, and in a similar manner to the narrator of *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 5, and describes the characters.

[111] Perhaps the name of the guard could be ironic, as *geitir* can be translated as giant. This is most likely coincidence, but does serve as a tenuous connection between the two poems. It can however also just be a name or poetic device, so not too much can be read into this. For more on this see *Kommentar* (149-150).
[112] While perhaps a tenuous connection, *Kommentar* (151) notes the similarity of the maxim with *Hávamál* stanzas 3-5, and especially with the focus on conversation in lines 5-6 of stanza 4. If this were the case though, it would offer another link between a wisdom poem and *Grípisspá*.

Gengr ór skála
skatna dróttinn
ok heilsar vel
hilmi komnum:
“Þiggðu hér, Sigurðr,
væri sœmra fyrr,
en þú, Geitir, tak
við Grana sjalfum.”

Mæla námu
ok margt hjala
þá er ráðspakir
rekkar fundusk.
“Segðu mér, ef þú veizt,
Móðurbróðir,
Hvé mun Sigurði
snúna ævi?”

Went out from the hall,
the lord of warriors,
and greeted well
the ruler who had come:
“Accept hospitality, Sigurðr,
Sooner would have been seemlier,
and you, Geitir, take
Grani with you.” [5]

They began to speak
and to talk much,
when the wise counselling
men met.
“Tell me, if you know,
Uncle,
how may Sigurðr’s
lifetime turn out?” [6]

While the parallel is less obvious than with the previous stanza, once again *Vafþrúðnismál* can be used as a comparison point, specifically stanzas 8 and 9 of *Vafþrúðnismál*, in which Óðinn gives his (false) name, and Vafþrúðnir asks him questions, and in which Óðinn’s death is threatened if Óðinn fails. There are also elements of stanza 6 of *Vafþrúðnismál* in which

Óðinn asks if Vafþrúðnir is wise, as Sigurðr asks Grípir in line 5 of stanza 6 if he knows the future. Additionally, the request for hospitality by Óðinn in *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 8 is mirrored here by Grípir offering it in stanza 5. The joining together of Sigurðr and Grípir in many ways mimics the surface appearance of a wisdom dialogue or contest, specifically in lines 1-3 of stanza 6 where the meeting mirrors what happens in stanza 19 of *Vafþrúðnismál,* where Óðinn is invited to cross the hall's floor and sit with Vafþrúðnir. Here however the only question concerns Sigurðr's identity, rather than any testing of knowledge, the only test being about Sigurðr's lineage. Grípir is clearly presented as wise, but apparently does not need to prove it.

The markers of *Vafþrúðnismál* are used in a similar manner, yet without the full set we are once again without a wisdom episode. Marker A (Separation) is represented by Sigurðr and Grípir separating themselves from Grani and Geitir and their private discussion, similarly to how Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir were alone during theirs. Marker B (Liminality) is present again in the same way that it is present in *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 18; Sigurðr has implicitly crossed into the hall (although the lack of any specific mention is telling that the poet does not even feel the need to state it) and is brought into discussion with Grípir. Finally, Marker D (the Unknown) is present in Sigurðr's question to Grípir about his future. Once again it is Marker C (Danger) that is absent, as there is no threat to Sigurðr or Grípir either socially or physically, especially considering the importance of the relationship of the maternal uncle.

Stanza 8

Following this, the next stanza is Sigurðr's first response to Grípir's statement on Sigurðr's fame, and is the start of the flattery that was common in *Vafþrúðnismál*.

"Segðu, gegn konungr,

gerr en ek spyrja,
snotr, Sigurði,
ef þú sjá þykkisk:
Hvat mun fyrst gørask
til farnaðar,
þá er ór garði emk
genginn þínum?"

“Say, just king,
more completely than I ask,
wise-one, to Sigurðr,
if you think you can see:
what will first happen
in my fortune,
when I have from your enclosure
gone?” [8]

This is a formulaic type of questioning. First, there is the command to speak, then two compliments relating to the wisdom of the one being questioned. In this stanza, there is the command *segðu* (say), then the first compliment is *gegn konungr* (just king) and the second is *snotr* (wise one). This forms a nice parallel with Óðinn’s questioning of Vafþrúðnir in stanza 24 of *Vafþrúðnismál*:

Seg þú þat it þriðja,
alls þik svinnan kveða
ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir,

Say about a third thing,
all say you are astute
and you, Vafþrúðnir, know. [24]

Here there is the command to speak, then the dual compliments that people say he is astute in line 2 and then that he ‘knows’ in line 3. A similar formulaic question is asked in *Fáfnismál* stanzas 12 and 14.

However, despite this similarity to wisdom sections in other poems, stanza 8 has little in the way of Markers or other indicators of wisdom, beyond Grípir’s own wisdom status,

unproven as it is. This stanza marks the start of what can be considered the summary sections of the poem, where there is a lack of original material, as they are mostly a condensed version of the Sigurðr story. However, as we can see from these stanzas so far, the Markers are alluded to, and Sigurðr is undergoing a similar journey to the one that Óðinn took in *Vafþrúðnismál*, although as we will see these similarities end as the poem progresses. Much as when Óðinn is introduced as a character, Sigurðr's own wisdom is not discussed, whereas his opposite in the conversation is established as an authority. An additional parallel can be drawn between the events in *Grípisspá* and those in *Hávamál* in which Óðinn travels to his own maternal uncle to expand his wisdom.[113] However, the formulaic theme does not complete itself, and the poem is now going to summarise the first part of the Sigurðr story for the next ten stanzas.

Stanzas 18-22

There is one last large section of the poem that features original content that cannot be found in other sources. *Vǫlsunga Saga* mentions Grípir's reticence (28), but this is apparently an understatement, as in the poetry we see the uncondensed version, and we see that rather than mere reticence, Grípir in fact tried to end the conversation early. This stanza also shows the reappearance of Markers that have been absent elsewhere in the poem.

> "Nú er því lokit,
> numin eru frœði
> ok em braut þaðan
> búinn at ríða;
> leið at huga
> ok lengra seg:
> Hvat mun meir vera

[113] Óðinn's maternal uncle is an unknown figure, but he learns from him in stanza 140 of *Hávamál*. *Kommentar* 1/I (891) explicitly calls Óðinn's uncle a giant, which would obviously have wisdom implications.

minnar ævi?"

"Now it is completed.
the knowledge has been learned
and I thence along the way
am ready to ride;
on the way to think
and longer say:
what more may be
of my lifetime?" [18]

This is an interesting part of the exchange that does not appear in the previously discussed wisdom dialogues, specifically in that the dialogue appears to be ending halfway through the poem. In all the previous poems there have been examples of characters who cannot speak more on a subject, but there are no characters who choose not to say more.[114] This is similar to when there was a change of section in *Vafþrúðnismál*, as the language has changed, as has the subject matter.

The following two stanzas both reiterate Grípir's unwillingness to speak further on Sigurðr's future, and both Sigurðr and Grípir comment on it. Further emphasising how this is an inversion of a wisdom episode is Grípir's declaration in the following stanza that he is not wise.

"Lá mér um œsku
ævi þinnar
ljósast fyrir
líta eftir;
rétt emka ek
ráðspakr taliðr,
né in heldr framvíss,
farit þats ek vissak."

"The youth of

[114] Perhaps an additional parallel is with the speakers of *Vǫluspá* and *Baldrs draumar*, although in the former case it is a question of whether to continue, rather than a reticence on behalf of the speaker. In the latter there is definite antagonism present which prevents the conversation continuing, rather than Grípir's reasons of love.

your lifetime lies
clearly before me
to examine;
rightly I am not
said to be wise in counsel.
nor held to be foreknowing.
what I know is at an end." [21]

This stanza, which features a character who up to this point has been described as wise and prophetic, shows one of the few cases of a denial of personal wisdom, despite all the evidence to the contrary. Grípir's argument that he was only describing Sigurðr's youth is an obvious lie, as at this point the slaying of Fáfnir has not yet taken place, from Grípir's own words in stanza 11, and from its position in *Vǫlsunga Saga*. Sigurðr clearly sees through the deception, and reiterates Grípir's credentials for speaking.

"Mann veit ek engi
fyr mold ofan,
þann er fleira sé
fram en þú, Grípir;
skalatu leyna,
þótt ljót sé
eða mein gørisk
á mínum hag."

"I know no person
above the earth,
who can see more
than you, Grípir;
you shall not hide,
though it is loathsome
or harm is done
to my circumstances. [22]"

This stanza convinces Grípir to speak further on Sigurðr's fate, and reveal that he will be killed at some point in the future. These stanzas are the last time the poem has a narrative of its own, save for the last stanza, as from this point onwards the poem goes back to

summarising the Sigurðr story, introducing both Gunnarr and Brynhildr, as well as the other characters from the latter half of the Sigurðr story.

First, the characters are still alone in their discussions, and Sigurðr's declaration that he is leaving in stanza 18 would represent Marker A (Separation). Marker C (Danger) makes its first appearance in this section, as it is about Sigurðr's death, first appearing in stanza 22 when it discussed the negative circumstances that are about to affect him. Marker D (the Unknown) is represented here by Grípir's denial of his own wisdom, as well as Sigurðr not knowing his fate. Marker B (Liminality) is missing, much as Marker C (Danger) was from the previous section, but the presence of three of the Markers at least suggests an awareness of what is needed for a wisdom episode. Sigurðr stressing Grípir's credentials and ability to speak are also what would be expected in such a dialogue.

Stanza 53

After the summary of Sigurðr's fate, the poem has one last stanza that is not a summary and is Sigurðr's farewell to Grípir:

> "Skiljumk heilir,
> munat skǫpum vinna,
> nú hefir þú, Grípir, vel
> gǫrt sem ek beiddak;
> fljótt myndir þú
> fríðri segja
> mína ævi,
> ef þú mættir þat."
>
> "We part hale,
> none may resist fate,
> now have you, Grípir, well
> done as I asked;
> quickly did you
> favourably say
> of my lifetime,
> if you could have." [53]

Like stanzas 7 and 8, there is not really any evidence of Markers in this final stanza, beyond the overarching Danger Marker, relating to Sigurðr's inevitable death. However, Sigurðr has one final opportunity to offer a maxim on the nature of fate in line 2. This parallels all the previously discussed wisdom texts, for example Vafþrúðnir's warning on the nature of Óðinn, or in *Grímnismál,* where the inability to remember is condemned. Here, the maxim is appropriate to what has happened in the rest of the poem, Sigurðr has pressured Grípir to tell him his fate and he knows now how he will die and does not seek to change it. Curiously, this maxim is almost identical to one issued in stanza 23 of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, in which Helgi, himself a half-brother of Sigurðr, speaks about the inevitability of fate; *vinnat skjǫldungar skǫpum* 'Skjoldungs [royal descendants] cannot resist fate'.[115] This could be the poet working again to take elements from other, older poems to create *Grípisspá*. Theoretically, the poet, being aware that the wisdom texts that had served as inspiration usually feature a maxim or other gnomic statement at the end chose to take a maxim issued by a similar heroic character.

What *Grípisspá* has shown

Originally there was an expectation that *Grípisspá* would not have any genuine wisdom episodes within it (and indeed it does not), as while it is more interesting than it is usually given credit for, its main function is to summarise the Sigurðr narrative in preparation for the more significant poems like *Reginsmál* and *Fáfnismál*. However, in the parts of the poem that are unique and not just talking about the other stories, the poet of *Grípisspá* shows a keen awareness of what should be present in such a dialogue. That the Markers from

[115] *Kommentar* (222) also likens this to a statement in *Vǫlsunga saga*, in which the narrator claims Sigurðr cannot go against fate (58).

Vafþrúðnismál can be so easily mapped onto Markers in *Grípisspá* shows that it is trying to present a familiar style for the audience to observe. That the Markers reappear when the poem moves into its own narrative suggests an awareness on behalf of the poet that is perhaps not appreciated. The most likely reason is to assert the authority of Grípir and justify his ability to speak on the life of Sigurðr.

Grípir's own rejection of his wisdom is also something that is not repeated elsewhere in Eddic poetry. There are plenty of characters who are wise, and plenty who are not but think they are, but there are no others that reject their own wisdom and foresight. Additionally, Grípir breaks the mould of the human, legendary, and mythological archetype, as he is undoubtedly human yet has the foresight more associated with giants and gods, despite having no connection to them.[116] Perhaps the main difference between a character like Grípir and Vafþrúðnir or the *vǫlva* of *Vǫluspá* is that his memory does not appear to be linked to his foresight. While both mythological characters are able to recall the history of the world and are able to know the future, Grípir appears to be limited only to knowing what is to come. As this is not ultimately a wisdom text, Grípir does not break the pattern, but by being so close to it he perhaps strains it in a way that must be considered when dealing with other characters.

One absence from the narrative that Grípir relates to Sigurðr is his encounter with Óðinn, either in *Reginsmál* in which he meets Óðinn in the guise of Hnikarr, or in the meeting attested in *Vǫlsunga saga*. Larrington (1993, 75) dismisses the absence of Óðinn as a conscious effort on behalf of the poet to purge mythological information from the poem

[116] Brian McMahon (2020) looks at the connection between memory and prophecy in his article, and also notes the relative powerlessness of prophets in their ability to change fate, and his article goes into greater detail on the role of prophecy specifically. I have not gone into Grípir's prophetic nature for the simple reason that the pseudo-wisdom episodes I have analysed are all set in the present action. However, it does remain an important part of Grípir's character.

and to make it more human, but I do not agree. The poet goes to great lengths to make the poem mythological, not only with Grípir's foresight, but also in the appropriation of a wisdom setting and the appearance of Markers. If the poet wanted to copy a more 'human' encounter, there are numerous poems to mimic from the latter half of the Codex Regius. That the poet tried to copy a mythological poem, and nearly succeeded, shows that this was an attempt of the exact reverse, to mythologise the interaction more, and give Sigurðr more of an Odinic connection.

Markers, Episodes, and Comparisons

Grípisspá is not a wisdom text, and is mostly a summary of the Sigurðr story. The events of the poem are briefly mentioned in *Vǫlsunga Saga* (p.28), but little information is given on what is meant to occur or as to the nature of Grípir, beyond his role as an instructor. Unlike the other three poems of the previous chapter that featured Sigurðr, there are no obvious wisdom episodes within the poem, although there are maxims and other wisdom devices appearing as we have seen. However, the poet of *Grípisspá* had a clear understanding of the story of Sigurðr, and uses elements that can be found in *Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*. It is not only *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* that can serve as comparisons to *Grípisspá*. Sigurðr comes to his maternal uncle's hall to learn obscure knowledge (in this case seeing the future), which is also a parallel of stanza 140 of *Hávamál*, in which Óðinn learns obscure knowledge (*Fimbulljóð níu* (nine mighty songs)) from his maternal uncle. That one character has come to another to see the future also creates a parallel with *Vǫluspá*, although Sigurðr and Grípir do not share the antagonistic relationship of Óðinn and the vǫlva. Despite its youth, the poem is clearly creating a similarity between Sigurðr and Óðinn, as both characters behave in a similar manner and are given similar characteristics and are similarly described well. In *Grípisspá*, Sigurðr comes alone to the hall in the prose introduction, is

presented as being unknown upon arrival in stanza 2. He then directly describes Grípir as his maternal uncle in stanza 6, before asking to know about his own demise in stanza 50. In stanza 52 Grípir describes Sigurðr as being the mightiest, and finally in stanza 53 Sigurðr ends his speech with a maxim. All these examples can be seen in poems featuring Óðinn as well, such as his arrival in disguise in *Grímnismál*, to being described as being the wisest at the end of *Vafþrúðnismál*.

The poem does however seem to use elements of the wisdom texts I have identified, and I can use this to infer what the poet was trying to convey. In one sense, it is right to finish the Sigurðr section of this thesis with *Grípisspá*, as it is the latest of them. However, it is of interest how the elements and Markers of a wisdom text are repurposed for a non-wisdom context. It also helps to show how the Markers developed from the early poems and how they impact the wisdom. *Grípisspá* will serve as guide for how the use of Markers progressed and were reinterpreted for a then contemporary audience. It is not unreasonable to expect that the poet would have anticipated his audience's ability to recognise the techniques that are being used in *Grípisspá*, and that Markers and other thematic elements are used in a similar manner to the originals suggest a familiarity not only with the content of the original poems and stories but the method with which they were put together. That this late poem appears to use Markers in a similar manner to older ones shows that there was a continuity of use. However, there is variation, as we see only some of the Markers being used together, and as they do not necessarily lead to wisdom episodes this suggests a loosening of the formulaic theme. However, enough of it remains to be observable.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

By contextualising the Sigurðr story as a whole and investigating *Grípisspá* I am now ready to move away from the material found in the Codex Regius and move onto the final poem analysed in this thesis. While there were no true wisdom episodes in *Grípisspá*, the fact that there were still Markers being used suggests that the poet may have been aware of them. For example, by seemingly consciously aping the entrance in *Vafþrúðnismál* in a non-mythological poem shows that there could be examples of the Markers and wisdom motifs to be found.

Chapter 6: *Sólarljóð*

Having analysed a variety of mythological and heroic poems for their wisdom content, it is now time to turn to a poem that is considerably later than others found in the Codex Regius without an earlier inspiration. In this chapter, *Sólarljóð* will be analysed in the same way that previous poems have been. *Sólarljóð,* in contrast to the previously analysed poems, is not found in the Codex Regius, and the earliest version survives in the seventeenth-century paper manuscript AM 166b 8°ˣ (45v-48v). While the text of *Sólarljóð* is from a similar period to the Codex Regius, it is nonetheless a younger poem than the mythological poems. The introduction in Larrington and Robinson (2007, 287-91) gives a full history of the manuscript and the poem's potential history, and lists the various estimates as to the poem's true age. While there is nothing truly certain, the thirteenth century is given as an approximation, which would make it contemporary with the Codex Regius. However, despite differences in content, it uses the *ljóðaháttr* metre along with other tropes of Eddic poetry to deliver a wisdom narrative framed in Christian imagery. On the surface, *Sólarljóð* has many differences from the mythological wisdom poetry of the Codex Regius, but it retains some key similarities to the earlier mythological poems, especially *Hávamál*. It is for this reason that, despite its different tone and cultural context, it was chosen to be included here.

Context

Few Eddic-style poems are as puzzling as *Sólarljóð*. On the surface, it appears to be a dream or vision poem, common in medieval literature.[117] The poem has many similarities to the mythological poems of the Codex Regius. In form, the poem resembles *Hávamál* in both its episodic nature (although *Sólarljóð* is more coherent in its narrative structure) and in using

[117] Dream visions have received a great amount of consideration in scholarship, and works such as Spearing (1976) provide a good basis (although Spearing's work is focused on the English tradition during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, it provides a good overview of dream visions in general).

the danger concerning guests as a starting point to branch off onto other topics. The focus on personal revelation, and connecting the revelation to suffering, also mirrors the hanging scene in *Rúnatal*. The otherworld vision of the *Sólarljóð* narrator, and the revelation it provides him, also bears a similarity to the connection Vafþrúðnir draws between his own wisdom and travelling through various worlds. It lacks many of the earlier settings that have been previously explored, such as the hall, and characters such as Óðinn do not appear at all.[118] The most significant difference is in the overtly Christian nature of the poem. On the surface, both giants and the Æsir have been left behind. In the overarching narrative of *Sólarljóð*, an unnamed narrator tells several short narratives that include a moral of some sort, before revealing that he himself has died and experienced a vision of the sun and various afterlives of sinners and of a few moral exemplars. The poem ends with the narrator revealing that he is addressing his heir, and finally discussing the benefit that others would gain from hearing *Sólarljóð*. However, there is more to *Sólarljóð* than is immediately obvious.

Sólarljóð can be seen as belonging to a received tradition, perhaps influenced by biblical or continental sources, but also in response to the Eddic tradition that came before. The poet seems to have been familiar with the poetry of the Codex Regius (although it is uncertain whether the poet was familiar with the exact versions that have survived) due to the similarity between the openings of *Hávamál* and *Sólarljóð*, and the similarities that *Sólarljóð* has with *Vafþrúðnismál*, discussed below, and that it is also in an Eddic metre, *ljóðaháttr*. In terms of style, *Sólarljóð* is most like *Hávamál*, as both poems have an unknown narrator who recounts a series of episodes to illustrate a point, followed by a section of personal

[118] There is a brief reference to Óðinn in stanza 77 that is in reference to Frigg. Other than that, Njǫrðr is the only other established mythological character named. Interestingly, in *Grímnismál* stanza 16, Njǫrðr is established as being a good ruler, perhaps making his presence here acceptable.

anecdotes on his own life, followed by some form of vision after a fatal encounter. The dual nature of the world is an additional source of comparison. Both *Hávamál* and *Sólarljóð* feature an introduction that is set in a mundane world of guests and travellers, and on observations of life that an audience would recognise. Both poems also contain episodes set in a non-mundane world, and while in *Hávamál* it is in the mythological world of giants and gods, *Sólarljóð* chooses instead to focus on a Christian view of Heaven and Hell. The journey of the *Sólarljóð* narrator is not similar to any one part of *Hávamál*, but his journey through a supernatural otherworld is comparable to the journeys mentioned in *Vafþrúðnismál*. Naturally there are points of divergence between *Sólarljóð* and the other Eddic poems, and the narrator's Christianity is one of the most fundamental differences between this text and the earlier Eddic material. While little is known about the narrator of *Sólarljóð*, we can be relatively certain that he is human, rather than the unknown and potentially Odinic narrator of *Hávamál*. Even as he undergoes an event that transforms him, he is not presented as being a mythological or historical figure, but instead remains in anonymity.

In terms of form, *Sólarljóð* is different from other later texts with wisdom elements, such as *Málsháttakvæði* and *Hugsvinnsmál*. These texts contain proverbial advice, but neither share much in form with the Eddic genre, although there is an element in *Hugsvinnsmál* insomuch as it is also *ljóðaháttr*. The former is a skaldic composition, which Frank claims is 'culturally and geographically' closer to Britain and continental Europe than it is to Norwegian compositions (2004, 4). In this sense *Málsháttakvæði* is doubly removed from the production of Eddic material. *Hugsvinnsmál*, on the other hand, is a translation of *Disticha Catonis*, although there are significant changes from the original Latin. *Hugsvinnsmál* also uses *ljóðaháttr*, but in all other respects is so different from earlier Eddic material that it is hardly comparable.

Sólarljóð can be divided into several sections. Previous scholars have divided *Sólarljóð* differently. Bjarne Fidjestøl (1979, 19) saw the poem as being in three separate sections (1-32, 33-52, 53-82) concerning life, death, and post-death (1979, 19). While this is an interesting way of dividing the poem, for the perspective of this analysis the episodes and the beginning and end are unique enough to warrant separate sections, while the middle two (the moral judgements and the visions) represent two different yet whole sections. The poem lends itself to an episodic view as seen in *Hávamál*, and *Sólarljóð*'s various episodes can be broadly split into four parts: 1-8, which features a variation of the introductory 'guest' section, and like *Vafþrúðnismál*, ends with a stanza summarising the lesson given; 9-38, which features a variety of short narratives of characters suffering from various moral weaknesses; it is in this section that the narrator first identifies himself, and details how he believes people should act and the dangers of the world; 39-74, which is about the sun and the effect it has on the narrator, and the narrator's thoughts on God and observations of the various worlds; and finally 75-83, which concludes the poem, summarising it and naming it.

Part 1 – Stanzas 1 - 8

Sólarljóð introduces itself in a similar manner to *Hávamál,* albeit from an inverted position. This section is perhaps the most similar to earlier Eddic material, and could be the poet starting with the familiar, in order to progress to the less typical. In stanza 1 of *Hávamál*, the guest is warned to be wary in an unfamiliar hall. In stanza 1 of *Sólarljóð*, however, the poet introduces a violent man as the first character:

> Fé ok fjörvi rænti fyrða kind
> sá inn grimmi greppr;
> yfir þá götu, er hann varðaði,
> mátti enginn kvikr komaz.

> Wealth and life were stolen from the family of humanity
> By the cruel brave man;
> over the way, of which he was the keeper,
> none could come past alive. [1]

From the outset we can see an instance of Marker C (Danger), as well as Marker B (Liminality) with the *gata* 'way' as something that must be travelled on and over. although there are no other possible Markers at this point. However, as was seen in *Hávamál*, in these episodic narratives the Markers are frequently spread out in the lead up to a wisdom episode. From the next stanza, the similarities with *Hávamál* become more evident:

> Einn hann át, opt, harðliga;
> aldri bauð hann manni til matar,
> áðr en móðr ok meginlítill
> gestr gangandi af götu kom.
>
> Alone he ate, often, grimly;
> never did he ask a person to a meal,
> before a sorrowful and weak
> guest came walking from the way. [2]

Here we have what could be considered an Odinic character appearing in the poem, and here the appearance of the Odinic *gestr* in line 4 is providing an example of Marker D (The Unknown), similar to the way in which Óðinn provides the Marker in *Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*. One point of comparison however is the lack of emphasis on the hall, or even any type of dwelling. Whereas the advice in *Hávamál* is concerned entirely with the conduct of those in halls, that setting has been lost, and it is the *gata* and the exterior of the hall that serves as the setting. While a residence may be implied in the text, the fact that it goes unmentioned makes it different from the previously discussed poems, where the hall itself was an area of focus.

What is interesting as a parallel to the mythological poems is that it is the seemingly hostile host who is the protagonist of this episode. The third and fourth stanzas emphasise the guest's need for sustenance and invitation, itself an event that is typical of a wisdom episode such as those in *Vafþrúðnismál* or in *Hávamál*, but this is where the similarity ends. Rather than the guest performing some sort of wisdom act, it is instead the cruel man who realises that he is wicked, and this revelation leads into the next stanza. The fifth stanza leads to the realisation that it is the guest who is the dangerous one of the two characters, and *ilt hann hugði* (he thought with evil), and the host is murdered in his sleep. No longer is it the hostile hall that is the venue of wisdom, rather it is the home location that serves as the stage and it is the guests that bring danger, rather than wisdom.[119] However, despite this innovation, the wisdom theme is present as the poem continues.

The sixth stanza features an example of the speaking dead, recalling the hanging of *Rúnatal*, and the mortally wounded Fáfnir's monologue, as the murdered man decides to speak to God to request some form of absolution:

> Himna guð bað hann hjálpa sér,
> þá er hann veginn vaknaði,
> en sá gat við syndum taka,
> er hann hafði saklausan svikit.
>
> He asked God of heavens to help him,
> when he awoke slain,
> then the guest took the sins on himself,
> who had deceived the innocent one. [6]

Here we have a character who had categorically died, but who can still speak in some fashion. There are differences, as the slain man is not giving wisdom at this point, and is instead making an intercession to God, and his words have the effect of the murderer taking

[119] Although it should be mentioned that in *Vafþrúðnismál* Óðinn is himself ultimately a source of danger in the broad sense, the primary emphasis is on the danger that Vafþrúðnir presents.

on his sins in line 3. However, this is still an example of Marker B (Liminality), as the speaker is undoubtedly dead yet maintains his ability to speak and interact in some manner with the world.

Stanza 7 carries on the journey of the murdered man, as he leaves behind the world and goes to heaven:

> Helgir englar kómu ór himnum ofan
> ok tóku sál hans til sín;
> í hreinu lífi hon skal lifa
> æ með almátkum guði.
>
> Holy angels came down from the heavens
> and took his soul to themselves;
> in a clean life it shall live
> ever with almighty God. [7]

In this stanza we have the culmination of this narrative episode, and we also can see our final Marker, as the murdered man being separated from the world and leaving with the angels is an example of Marker A (Separation). Similarly, the fate of the man who murdered him could also be an example of the Marker, as he too is left alone once the dead man has gone to heaven. The journey of the murdered man is similar to the journey Óðinn takes in *Rúnatal*, in which Óðinn seemingly dies, before journeying to a presumably more hospitable location, although in that case Óðinn becomes arguably more alive, as in 141 of *Hávamál* he becomes both wise and fertile, while the man from *Sólarljóð* is in oneness with God and removed from the world. However, both are clearly benefiting from their wisdom, and as Óðinn's own experiences justify his wisdom, here the *Sólarljóð* narrator has now established that he too can speak on wisdom matters.

The first part of *Sólarljóð* has thus represented the full formulaic theme with Markers in close proximity, and as such we would now expect to see a wisdom episode. In *Grímnismál*

or in *Vafþrúðnismál*, Óðinn would be expected to deliver this wisdom; instead, here the wisdom is delivered by the unnamed narrator. While his identity will be revealed at the end of the poem, for now the narrator of *Sólarljóð* is unknown, yet he has now established his authority to speak by using the formulaic theme. Stanza 8 is in many ways similar to stanza 10 of *Vafþrúðnismál*, in which the narrative is suspended to relate a maxim that is relevant to both the characters of the narrative and to the audience:

> Auði né heilsu ræðr enginn maðr,
> þótt honum gangi greitt;
> margan þat sækir, er minst of varir;
> enginn ræðr sættum sjálfr.
>
> Neither riches nor health can a man control,
> though it goes passably for him;
> that he seeks much, he has little caution;
> no one controls his own settlements. [8]

Both lines 1 and 4 of this stanza feature maxims on the nature of fate, property, and control. The inevitability of fate is seen elsewhere in the Eddic corpus, perhaps paralleling *Grípisspá* stanza 54. Line 4 could perhaps be seen as a repetition of the first line, as they are both about the control a person has over their property. The nature of the narrator is unclear, and could be read in two ways. This anecdote could be similar to the ones found in *Hávamál*, in which unnamed characters act out narratives to provide the narrator with examples; or it could be seen as a personal recollection to provide closure to a narrative event in a similar manner to *Vafþrúðnismál*. Overall this distinction will be important, but that will not become evident until later.

This whole episode could be read as a response to the opening episode of *Hávamál*, and indeed even a criticism of it and Óðinn's usual place in the narrative. Regardless of the host's previous violent tendencies, he is identified as being wise in stanza 5 by the term

fróðr. Contrast this too with the guest, who for his crimes is laden with his victim's sins, and presumably nothing else for his trouble. In the three mythological wisdom poems, Óðinn is always the guest, and it is his host that is invariably the poorer for the visit. However, the wisdom of the victim comes from his own recognition of his sin, and as a result he receives an eternal reward in heaven. In her article, Schorn (2011) goes into detail on the nature of this episode's connection to *Hávamál*, and the almost paradoxical nature of the victim's claim to wisdom while presumably being lax about his own personal safety (135-6). Schorn also identifies a lack of overt gnomic content until stanza 8, but the comparison with *Hávamál* as developed here suggests otherwise. While it is true that *Hávamál* immediately provides gnomic statements of several varieties, *Sólarljóð* is obviously building up to the same type of wisdom episode as any in *Hávamál*. It features a typical progression of Markers, and therefore the wisdom episode is not surprising, nor is its practical wisdom. I would argue that in using a 'standard' form of wisdom that is familiar to an Eddic audience, the poet establishes his wisdom credentials. As Schorn puts it, 'the *Sólarljóð* poet suggests a way of approaching the moral dictates of Christianity that reveals them to be as amenable to *mannvit* as the gnomes of traditional wisdom poetry.' (138) While the latter parts of *Sólarljóð* vary more from the traditional stylings of an Eddic work, the form that the poet uses is instantly familiar to any person familiar with *Hávamál*, even if the roles of characters are reversed.

Part 2 – Stanzas 9-38

The next 30 stanzas concern themselves with similar, albeit shorter, episodes that criticise lack of virtue. Unlike the previous 8 stanzas these episodes are not recollections of an anonymous individual and instead feature named characters that act out various sins before

being punished for them.[120] These episodes include criticisms of women, especially as causers of dissent, and in this manner the poem is resurrecting themes from *Hávamál*, especially stanzas 90-95, although in *Hávamál* this leads into episodes of Óðinn's own attempted seductions, whereas here the poem is content to leave the criticism as it stands without elaboration.

Curiously, and in a sense a minor inversion of the traditional Eddic formula, is that all the examples of bad behaviour and the wisdom sayings connected to them happen in reverse. In earlier Eddic material, a narrative is presented, and then a wisdom saying is given to confirm or criticise the narrative. Here though, the wisdom saying is given, then a narrative to confirm it. For example, in stanza 10, the wisdom saying is a precept relating to desire, and then in stanza 11 two characters are introduced who are undone by their desire. If the wisdom mode had not already been introduced by the guest section, this would be one of the most puzzling parts of the poem, as there is no chance to introduce the formulaic theme outside of a narrative framing. However, as the theme has already been introduced, this remains a curiosity rather than an example of rejection of the theme.

Once the various episodes are over, the poet comes to a more personal topic, not only introducing the narrator as a distinct voice, but also showing how he came to be here. There is an instance of *ek* in the 24th stanza, where the narrator offers his opinion on the fates of certain people. In a way this is like the events of stanzas 13-14 of *Hávamál*, wherein the narrator briefly takes on a different identity to provide context to a lecture on drunkenness. The shift from the anecdotal to the personal is one that frequently happens in *Hávamál*, for example the change in personas from *Loddfáfnismál* to *Rúnatal*. However, just as Óðinn's

[120] As Larrington and Robinson note (301), these names are perhaps allegorical relating to the actions of the characters. This is unlike most instances in the Eddic corpus, with perhaps the sarcastic naming of Alvíss from *Alvíssmál* as an exception.

recollections still used the Markers of the formulaic theme, the narrator of *Sólarljóð* also uses his recollections to expand on the theme:

> Síðla ek kom snemma kallaðr
> til dómsvalds dura;
> þangat ek ætlumz; því mér heitit var;
> sá hefr krás, er krefr.
>
> Late I came, called early
> to the powerful judger's doors;
> thither I intend myself; that was promised to me;
> he has a delicacy who demands [it]. [29]

The doors are a focus of where the narrator wishes to be, and they are significant. This is a prime example of Liminality (Marker B), as the character is expressly coming to an otherworldly doorway, perhaps similar to the doors mentioned in *Grímnismál*. Additionally, the narrator's admission that he came late could be an indicator of Marker A (Separation), as the narrator is both apart from where he came from, but is not yet at his destination.

The next stanza (30) is a declaration of the nature of sorrow and fear, and how it can afflict humanity. The following stanza has an instance of the Danger Marker (C), as it likens men who have dangerous hearts to wolves; *Úlfum líkir þykkja allir þeir, sem eiga hverfan hug* (I think they are all like wolves, who have a changing mind'. The following stanza completes the theme, with the discussion of wisdom:

> Vinsamlig ráð ok viti bundin
> kenni ek þér sjau saman;
> görla þau mun ok glata aldri;
> öll eru þau nýt at nema.
>
> Friendly and wit-bound counsels,
> I teach you seven together;
> altogether remember them and never forget them;
> all of them are useful to learn. [32]

This stanza is interesting for several reasons. First, there are the counsels that have apparently been spoken. As in *Rúnatal*, where the mighty spells that Óðinn apparently learned go unnamed, here the counsels that the narrator has allegedly taught are obscure.[121] In this sense the narrator is providing Marker D (The Unknown), but as in *Hávamál*, there is no mention of what the counsels are. They are similarly using an important number, seven here, instead of the nine spells Óðinn learns.[122] Having once again completed the formulaic theme, the narrator is showing that a wisdom episode is appearing. While the previous example is in the vein of *Vafþrúðnismál,* here the narrator is using a similar mechanism to *Hávamál*, where a personal recollection provides a justification for the wisdom that is being shown. The narrator similarly completes the theme, then moves on to expound other wisdom sayings.

Part 3 – Stanzas 39-74

Following the narrator's recollections, the poem takes an active view of the narrator's visions, and this is the part of the poem that most likely gives the poem its name. The recurring line through stanzas 39-46 is *Sól ek sá* 'I saw the sun' which forms the first part, and the second part is the section of the poem that has most in common with the various dream visions of medieval literature.[123] In this section the poet sees the sun as a symbol of God; he stands in awe of it throughout the section and uses it as a reference point for his visions. The stanza can be compared quite thoroughly to *Hávamál* stanza 139, due to the focus on a narrator discussing a personal revelation that they have seen:

[121] It seems unlikely that this is anything related to what the narrator has already said. Depending on what the narrator is counting, he has taught anywhere between three and twelve lessons.
[122] Seven is an important number in Christianity (for example as seen in Parsons (2008, 27), which discusses the significance), and it is seen again in stanzas 52 and 56 in positive contexts. This could be an attempt to depart from the (slight) focus on nine in earlier Eddic texts. However, nine does feature in stanza 51, perhaps showing a sign of recognition of earlier works.
[123] Larrington (2020, 249-50) contrasts the dream vision in this part of *Sólarljóð* with other medieval otherworld journeys, such as the works of Dante or Chaucer.

Sól ek sá setta dreyrstöfum;
mjök var ek þá ór heimi hallr;
máttug hon leiz á marga vegu
frá því, sem fyrri var.

The sun I saw set with bleeding-staves;
greatly I was then inclined out of the world;
powerful she looked in many ways
from that which was before. [40]

First, there is the presence of the *dreyrstöfum* (bleeding-staves), whose presence is not dissimilar to the *rúnar* that Óðinn perceived while he was hanging and wounded. Why these staves are bleeding is unknown, perhaps emphasising the mysterious nature of the sun. The *Sólarljóð* narrator is similarly undergoing a vision after a mortal wounding, and these staves are a part of the event and perhaps the bleeding staves represent the narrator's own death. Second, there are the events of the second line. While in *Rúnatal*, Óðinn carried on his vision by falling from the tree, *fell ek aftr þaðan* 'I fell after that', here the narrator is moved away from his location.

The following stanzas detail the dream vision, with line 2 of stanza 40 being repeated verbatim in the same position in stanza 44. Other than that, the narrator seems to be recounting his death and turning away from the sun. As we approach the end, however, the narrator's vision turns to torment and suffering, and he loses sight of the sun in stanza 45:

Sól ek sá síðan aldri
eptir þann dapra dag,
þvít fjalla vötn lukðuz fyrir mér saman,
en ek hvarf kaldr frá kvölum.

The sun I saw never again
after that downcast day,
for the waters of the mountains locked before me,
then I turned cold from pains.[45]

Whereas the prior vision was filled with glorious imagery, the narrator has now moved away from that by his speech in lines 1 and 2. In a sense, this could fill in for Marker C (Danger), as the narrator is away from the sun, and therefore God. However, there is a definite presence of the marker in the last line, as the narrator mentions the pains, *kvölum*, that he is suffering. By putting himself in a position of pain, the narrator is emphasising his loss. Additionally, the poet's admission that he will never see the sun again could be an example of the Unknown Marker (D), and would henceforth be unknown to him, although it would be an unusual representation of the Marker.

The final stanza of this section does not feature the *Sól ek sá* line, but instead closes the vision with perhaps a metaphorical retelling of the narrator's death and rebirth:

> Vánarstjarna fló — þá var ek fæddr —
> burt frá brjósti mér;
> hátt at hon fló; hvergi hon settiz,
> svát hon mætti hvílð hafa.
>
> A hope-star flew – then was I born–
> away from my breast;
> high she flew; she settled nowhere,
> such that she might have rest. [46]

As we are now at the close of an episode, we would expect to see Markers reappearing to trigger a new episode. From this stanza, we can see an instance of Marker A (Separation), as the narrator has now had his hope removed. Additionally, the narrator is still talking during his death and rebirth, and this is a continuation of the Liminality Marker (B). If the Unknown Marker was indeed present in stanza 45, then we would expect to see a wisdom episode appear in the following stanzas.

The *Sól ek sá* section presents an interesting point on the nature of the religion of the poet. While the poet definitively likens the sun to God in stanza 41, and bows to it, there has been

some scholarly interest in this act as a point of syncretism by the poet. Amory (1990) discusses this stanza, and while he connects the poet's vision of the sun to the biblical sun of Malachi 4:2, he also connects it to a pagan conception of the sun as a deific figure that rose to prominence in works such as *Sólarljóð* (254-5). Such an occurrence could be another instance of the poet using earlier traditions to connect to the modern Christian presentation.

With the end of the solar vision, the poet finds himself back in the world, and reflects upon its nature:

> Virði þat ok viti inn virki guð,
> sá er skóp hauðr ok himin,
> hversu munaðarlausir margir fara,
> þótt við skylda skili.
>
> May the work-God value that and know,
> the one who shaped land and heaven,
> how many travel loveless,
> though parted with kin. [48]

This stanza reinforces the Separation Marker, and coupled with the following stanza, confirms that the theme has been completed and that the narrator is ready to issue wisdom episodes again:

> Sinna verka nýtr seggja hverr;
> sæll er sá, sem gótt gerir;
> auði frá mér ætluð var
> sandi orpin sæng.
>
> Every person benefits from his own work;
> blessed is the one, who does good;
> I am away from riches, intended for me was
> a sand filled bed. [49]

As with the previous examples, here the narrator breaks away from the narrative to issue a maxim on the nature of deeds, with parallels to stanzas 76 and 141 of *Hávamál*, both of

which discuss the value of works done by people. The poet's focus is on the mundane world and the practicalities of it. This stanza, in conjunction with stanza 47, could be seen as a comparison with stanzas 13 and 14 of *Hávamál*. There, Óðinn relates his problems at Gunnlǫð's hall, and uses that to connect to a maxim about drunkenness. Here, the *Sólarljóð* narrator connects his death and vision of the sun as a segue into the value of a person's works.

Stanza 50 provides a similar level of advice, with a focus on more practical aspects of life. The following stanzas, however, seem to veer away from practicality in a manner that *Hávamál* never does within a single episode, as the narrator embarks upon another vision journey:

> Á norna stóli sat ek níu daga;
> þaðan var ek á hest hafinn;
> gýgjar sólir skinu grimmliga
> ór skýdrúpnis skýjum.
>
> Utan ok innan þóttumz ek alla fara
> sigrheima sjau;
> upp ok niðr leitaða ek æðra vegar,
> hvar mér væri greiðastar götur.
>
> On the norns' chair I sat for nine days;
> thence was I onto a horse raised;
> the ogress's suns shone fiercely
> out of the cloud-drooper's clouds. [51]
>
> Outside and in I thought myself to travel everywhere
> in the seven victory worlds;
> up and down I sought other ways,
> where to me were the freest roads. [52]

In these stanzas, the narrator is invoking the wisdom credentials that both Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir claimed, although obliquely. While Óðinn hung for nine nights in *Hávamál* 138, here the narrator is sitting on the norns' seat for nine days. However, the similarity to

Vafþrúðnismál is clear in stanza 52, as the narrator uses his travels through the *sigrheima sjau* 'seven victory-worlds' to explain his ability to see the way, in the same way that Vafþrúðnir claims that his knowledge comes from travelling through all the worlds in stanza 43 of *Vafþrúðnismál*. Even though the narrator of *Sólarljóð* lacks the mythological pedigree of Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir, he still manages to show his wisdom credentials. Because of this, the narrator can provide the audience with informational and non-literal wisdom, primarily his visions to come.

After this, the narrator continues to expand on what he has seen in his travels, including worlds that he seems to have travelled through, the *kvölheima '*pain-worlds'. This is further coupled with imagery of the various scenes that the narrator has experienced in his journey. Larrington (2020) notes that the poet is using the imagery of hell rather than that of heaven, which she labels as 'less unique and vivid' (254). In many of the poems analysed previously, and additionally a Marker in its own right, danger and torment are important to both the delivery and retention of wisdom. The narrator is journeying himself, and in an Eddic wisdom text, this is generally a vital part of the wisdom narrative. By also explicitly mentioning the danger involved (the *kvölheima* in this case), the poet may be trying to connect this comparatively modern innovation with a more traditional one.

This whole section of the poem is not as relevant to the study of wisdom, as while there are some minor elements that will be discussed shortly, most of this part of the poem is based in description. There are however some stanzas that insert gnomic sayings into the vision, and there are elements in several stanzas that are reprises of what has been discussed earlier in the text. Perhaps the most likely comparison is with the early part of the poem, where the various characters are used to criticise behaviour, and here the fates of various

sinners and their punishments are discussed. One possible link is stanzas 16 and 66: both stanzas discuss the concept of pride and a punishment of fire. While punishment is not a topic that was seen much in the poems discussed earlier, the narrator reiterating a concept to guide the audience is a technique that was seen, such as how Grímnir does in *Grímnismál* in order to refresh the theme.

Part 4 – Stanzas 75-83

Stanza 75 opens with a prayer to God, to release everyone from suffering. This prayer starts the next section, as the narrator temporarily brings back named characters to illustrate his point:

> Inn mátki faðir, inn mæzti sonr,
> heilagr andi himins!
> Þik bið ek skilja, sem skapat hefr,
> oss alla eymðum frá.
>
> The mighty father, the most famous son,
> holy spirit of heaven!
> I ask you separate, as you have shaped,
> us from all wretchedness. [75]

This stanza, in addition to restarting the episode, also provides an instance of Marker C (Danger) as the poet is asking for himself and all people to be released from wretchedness, which could fall under either a physical harm, or perhaps even a social one if one considers the negative state of the world. It could also be an example of Marker A (Separation).

The poet then begins his anecdotes, and the 76th stanza features more Markers:

> Bjúgvör ok Listvör sitja í Herðis dyrum
> organs stóli á;
> járnadreyri fellr ór nösum þeim;
> sá vekr fjón með firum.
>
> Bjúgvör and Listvör sit at Herðir's doors
> on an organ stool;
> iron blood falls out of their noses;
> that wakes enmity among people. [76]

In the fourth line there may be another instance of the Danger Marker, and in lines 1 and 2 there is an example of Liminality (Marker B), as the two characters are sitting in a third character's doorway.

Stanza 77, while not featuring any Markers that have not already been discussed, is unique in that it is the only mention of Óðinn in the poem, and even then, it is only in a kenning for Frigg. Óðinn's absence is not unexpected, due to the Christian nature of the poem, but it is peculiar that he is referred to at all.[124] One could argue that in the first eight stanzas, the guest character is an Odinic figure, but other than that there is little trace of him. Considering his importance in wisdom texts, it perhaps represents one of the starkest differences between *Sólarljóð* and poems such as *Hávamál*. An argument could be made that the narrator is using the original guest narrative as a means of establishing the wisdom content, although Óðinn cannot be seen to be a protagonist, and therefore serves as the victim of the narrator, rather than victor.

Following this, the narrator once again inserts himself into the narrative, and changes the form of the poem to the father-son dialogue, similar to poems such as the Old English *Precepts*:

> Arfi, faðir einn ek ráðit hefi,
> ok þeir Sólkötlu synir
> hjartarhorn, þat er ór haugi bar
> inn vitri Vígdvalinn.
>
> Heir, I the father alone have advised,
> and the sons of Sólkatla,
> the hart's horn, that was carried out of the mound
> by the wise Vígdvalinn. [78]

[124] For more on unexpected mythological appearances, see Males (2020), specifically his section on the use of mythological figures in poetry (39-48). Males also contrasts this with the absence of mythological characters to the resurgence they experienced after *c.*1150-1200, albeit one more controlled than it had been previously.

In this stanza we can see several examples of Markers, most notably the narrator describing that he alone knows the secrets in line 1, which is an example of Separation (Marker A). While he does mention the sons of Sólkatla also being aware of it, by stressing himself, he qualifies for the Marker.

More interestingly, this stanza rephrases the entirety of the poem into a paternalistic dialogue, with the narrator assuming the role of the wise father, similar to the framing of the Old English *Precepts*.[125] While *Hávamál* does this to a certain extent in its final stanza, where the unnamed narrator returns and blesses the audience, that stanza at least uses the hall setting to stage it in. Here the narrator introduces a previously unmentioned heir who is listening to him. The heir is not mentioned again anywhere in the text, and has little impact on the poem. Perhaps the poet of *Sólarljóð* knew that it was common for Christian wisdom texts to feature the father-son interplay, and added it in as an afterthought, or perhaps as with *Hávamál* the poem was compiled from several sources, and the original did not include such a device.[126] Regardless, we are still missing Marker D.

The following stanza provides us with the completion of the theme:

> Hér eru þær rúnir, sem ristit hafa
> Njarðar dætr níu,
> Böðveig in elzta ok Kreppvör in yngsta
> ok þeira systr sjau.
>
> Here are the runes, as carved
> by nine daughters of Njǫrðr,
> Böðveig the eldest and Kreppvör the youngest
> and their seven sisters. [79]

[125] For more on *Precepts,* see Cavill (2017, 4).
[126] The *Konungs skuggsjá* could be an interesting future parallel, as it too features a didactic interplay between a father and son in a Christian context.

This stanza brings back runes into the poem, which can be perhaps connected to the *dreyrstöfum* which have been seen previously in *Sólarljóð*, and as seen frequently in *Hávamál*, runes can often indicate Marker D (The Unknown).[127] In this example, while these are physical items, they are still mysterious objects. Whether these are meant to be similar to the staves that the narrator saw in stanza 40 is unclear, although it could be an additional occurrence of the poem reprising an early element. This stanza also features another mythological reference to Njǫrðr, specifically his daughters who are unattested elsewhere, which is unusual as he is usually absent from the Codex Regius and is not in any way connected to wisdom, although *Grímnismál* does connect him to ruling well in stanza 16.

With this, the poet has completed the theme, so we would expect to see a wisdom episode appearing soon. While the next stanza (80) is extra narrative content, the remainder of the poem contains the last piece of wisdom: that the poem itself is worthy of repetition:

> Kvæði þetta, er þér kent hefi,
> skaltu fyr kvikum kveða,
> Sólarljóð, er sýnaz munu
> minst at mörgu login.
>
> Hér vit skiljumz ok hittaz munum
> á feginsdegi fira;
> dróttinn minn gefi þeim dauðum ró
> ok hinum líkn, er lifa.
>
> Dásamligt fræði var þér draumi kvadd,
> en þú sázt it sanna;
> fyrða engi var svá fróðr skapaðr,
> er áðr hefði heyrt Sólarljóðs sögu.
>
> This poem, which I have taught you,
> You must speak before alive ones,
> Sólarljóð, which may seem
> least like great lies. [81]

[127] Additionally this stanza also reiterates the number nine, perhaps referring back to the various important aspects of mythology that also used nine, such as the runes Óðinn receives in *Hávamál* stanza 139, or the nine worlds that Vafþrúðnir visits in *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 43.

Here we two separate and we meet
on people's day of joy;
may my Lord give to the dead peace
and mercy to the others who live. [82]

Glorious wisdom was in a dream spoken to you,
and you saw the evidence;
no one was shaped so wise,
that beforehand he heard Sólarljóð's story. [83]

These three stanzas provide the ending, and the naming of the poem. While *Hávamál* used its last stanza to emphasise the value of the poem, here too the poet of *Sólarljóð* is referring to what he has said, although in this case the narrator personally connects with the audience through the use of *vit* in stanza 82. While this could be the son from a few stanzas ago, it could just as easily be a more general audience member. The final stanza is often rejected as a later addition (Larrington and Robinson, 357).

Perhaps a final mark of innovation in the poem could be found in the last two lines, which not only emphasise the worth of the poem but also the uniqueness of it. None of this wisdom is attributed to any being. While in a Christian wisdom text you would expect a reference to God as the source of it, here the narrator is not connecting it to any particular being, only himself.

Discussion

Sólarljóð is undoubtedly a fascinating poem, a fusion of past and present genres. While there are numerous innovations that set it apart from other Eddic poems, the poet of *Sólarljóð* was clearly familiar with the Eddic tradition. The opening is undoubtedly inspired by *Hávamál*, and that the poet knows to still use Markers in constructing wisdom episodes suggests a great familiarity with not only the Eddic tradition but also specifically the wisdom genre.

In terms of the poem's purpose, and the wisdom that it intends to deliver, *Sólarljóð* seems to be in two minds. Beyond societal protocols in *Hávamál*'s first section, Eddic wisdom poetry is ambiguous on morality, with one exception discussed below. History, mythology, and topics unavailable to humans are common scenes in both *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, and *Hávamál* and *Sigrdrífumál* both discuss more occult topics such as magic and curses. In contrast, *Sólarljóð* seems to care a great deal about morality and proper behaviour, especially in the examples given between stanzas 9-23. On the topic of the visions of the afterlife in *Sólarljóð*, and the mythological geography and society in earlier Eddic texts, it is impossible to say whether they would mean the same things to their respective audiences, but by the inclusion of these visions there is the suggestion that they were to some extent expected. They are presented in the same way, for example the various halls of the Æsir in *Grímnismál* are presented as unambiguously as the afterlife that the *Sólarljóð* narrator sees. Similarly both narrators, Grímnir and the *Sólarljóð* narrator, use their personal experiences to relate an otherworld. While the *Sólarljóð* narrator's vision is connected to morality, to an extent so is Grímnir, as he uses his description of the halls and their inhabitants to describe good behaviour. While *Sólarljóð* has a different focus on wisdom, it seems to use the same tools as earlier Eddic material to deliver it.

While it could be argued that *Sólarljóð* shares much and is greatly inspired by traditional Christian wisdom verse, primarily in its content, there is still a great deal that it shares with Eddic sources. Perhaps the greatest example of this is the narrator himself. While he is, on the surface at least, the traditional father providing sapiential content to a son, he nonetheless uses his own experiences as the source of his wisdom. For example, while the dream vision is a common motif in medieval literature, in this example it provides the narrator with the wisdom to talk on the nature of world, in a manner consistent with

Vafþrúðnir's own source of wisdom, or even Grímnir's descriptions of the supernatural otherworld that he describes. Additionally, there is the personal, almost secretive connection to wisdom that is found in stanza 78, which so often was referred to in *Hávamál*. The narrator does not share this interpretation with the audience, much in the same way that Óðinn shares neither the spells he learns from his uncle in *Hávamál* stanza 140 nor the spells he describes in *Ljóðatal*. This wisdom comes from personal study and interpretation, and most importantly from sacrifice and death. After all, the narrator would not be saying any of this without his own death to provide the impetus. While it is not the direct self-sacrifice of Óðinn, it is similar to the wide travels of Vafþrúðnir, whose own travels finished down in Hel in stanza 43 of *Vafþrúðnismál*. In this manner *Sólarljóð* continues the tradition of connecting death to revelation, and the subsequent ability to speak on subjects that are otherwise barred to humanity.

On a deeper level, the poet of *Sólarljóð* also clearly understood what was required of an Eddic wisdom text. The Markers are used in a similar manner to those that have been discussed in previous chapters. While the content of the wisdom itself emphasises different concepts, most obviously in the first eight stanzas compared to *Hávamál*'s guest section, the poet still understands how to frame the narrative in a way that suggests that wisdom itself is about to be delivered. The poet uses episodes to reintroduce Markers in preparation for a gnomic stanza, and then again in narrative sections to re-prepare the audience to be prepared for wisdom.

However, *Sólarljóð* represents innovations in the use of formulaic theme. The Liminality Marker is perhaps the most changed. While metaphorical liminality is present, such as a character being between life and death, the poet of *Sólarljóð* has abandoned, for the most

part, the hostile hall as a location to set wisdom episodes in. There is no dwelling specifically mentioned in stanzas 1-8, and indeed, there are no interiors in the entire poem. Twice we see a doorway being mentioned, in stanzas 29 and 76, the doors of judgement and Herðir's doors, respectively. Both doorways seem to connect to an otherworld of some variety, but the narrator never describes entering them. While the *Sólarljóð* poet was clearly familiar with the settings of earlier works, he perhaps saw them as a less important part of the theme.

As was discussed with *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, the setting of a wisdom exchange is an important part of the delivery of wisdom, and *Sólarljóð* has perhaps in this its greatest departure narratively from the earlier works. The narrator is unmoored from any one location, and aside from stanza 78 in which the heir is addressed, there is no implied audience within the text or setting for the wisdom to take place in. However, while *Sólarljóð* is a departure from the traditional Eddic model, it nonetheless uses a narrative as its main method of delivering wisdom, which is typical of the Eddic genre. In contrast, the Old English wisdom tradition rarely does so, for example *Precepts, Vainglory*, and *Maxims* do not consistently use a narrative with defined characters, with only *Precepts* having a potential 'character' in the form of the father. In this way, *Sólarljóð* combines both traditions, taking its content from Christianity, while using the Eddic narrative as its method.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

In conclusion, *Sólarljóð* represents a continuation of the tradition that *Hávamál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, and *Grímnismál* belonged to, although there is innovation: in terms of content, the poem shares little with its precursors, but the narrator's delivery, and the sources of his wisdom retain their Eddic roots.

Chapter 7: Development of the Wisdom Theme

Having now analysed a wide range of Eddic material, it is time to address what these analyses can say about the delivery and contexts of wisdom in Eddic poetry, specifically in relation to the formulaic theme. One of the primary aims of this thesis is to analyse poems from both the mythological and legendary parts of the Codex Regius, and then to comment on later works to show how the formulaic theme developed over time. While the mythological poems that were analysed are already generally considered to be wisdom texts, and it is no revelation that they contain wisdom, the manner in which they are presented and how they frame various types of wisdom served as the basis for moving on to poetry that contained less obvious wisdom content. The various young Sigurðr poems all contain wisdom episodes to greater or lesser degrees, and the formulaic theme that was found in *Hávamál* is present also in these poems. Wisdom in Eddic poetry has received much study; the focus of my study here is formulaic theme, which suggests that narrative can be presented in such a way that there is a clear progression to a wisdom episode, and that it is vital that it is prepared in order for the audience to realise it.

This chapter will show how the style discussed had an impact on the use of the formulaic theme and how the Markers developed, starting from the wisdom texts before moving onto the Sigurðr poems, and how the formulaic theme finally culminated in two variants, one which represented continuation in the form of *Sólarljóð*, albeit with a different context, and the other *Grípisspá*, in which a different form of transmission led to a poem that possesses elements of wisdom but not a clear understanding of it. Following this, the chapter will consider the various wisdom episodes, and the wisdom that they are conveying, and how this develops from the earlier Eddic poems to the Christian *Sólarljóð*. One aspect that becomes clear when analysing the corpus of Eddic poetry is the way that the formulaic

theme is clearly embedded in the delivery of wisdom. This formulaic theme survives even the cultural and traditional shift from the Eddic mythology to the Christian standard that is seen in *Sólarljóð*.

Forms of the poems

All eight of the poems featured have wisdom elements and these elements are seen in proximity to the appearance of Markers. *Grípisspá* stands alone in that it does not complete the formulaic theme in such a way to as produce a full version of the theme, and also lacks any identifiable wisdom episodes. However, it does still have the trappings of a wisdom dialogue, and concludes with a genuine maxim. This section will categorise the poems by their modes of delivery, along with a brief overview of what types of wisdom are seen in each category. For more specific analysis of the three types refer back to Chapter 3.

Monologues

There are only two poems that can be classified as solely monologues: *Grímnismál* and *Sigrdrífumál*. While *Sigrdrífumál* has a pair of stanzas put into Sigurðr's mouth, Sigrdrífa does not respond directly to him and speaks uninterrupted for most of the poem. *Grímnismál's* poetic section does not feature any speaker other than Grímnir, although in the prose introduction there is speech between other characters.

Both poems feature either informational or non-literal wisdom. Although they feature elements of practical wisdom, in *Grímnismál* this is more through implication than though literal sayings, as the various halls of the Æsir and the positive virtues of their owners are brought into contrast with the inhospitable hall of Geirrøðr. *Sigrdrífumál* dispenses with the hall setting entirely and instead alternates between describing various types of *rúnar* and their uses and more obvious social wisdom. As *Sigrdrífumál* does not have a true ending,

due to the lacuna in the Codex Regius, it is uncertain if the type of the wisdom would have changed. *Vǫlsunga saga* would suggest that it does not meaningfully change, so it is reasonable to assume that there were no great changes in the content.[128]

What can be seen from both poems is that the narrators frequently reintroduce Markers repeatedly in their speech, and in each instance, this culminates in a wisdom episode. The narrators also use their own non-human natures as a starting point for wisdom. For example stanza 3 of *Grímnismál*, in which Grímnir is subtly revealing his true identity, as Veratýr is an Odinic name, and by using this name he identifies his non-human nature. Sigrdrífa also has her non-human nature established, although in this case it is done in a prose interruption in stanza 4 and she does not identify herself as such. As Davidson notes (155), Sigrdrífa's words and awakening in the prose and in stanza 3 of *Sigrdrífumál* are highly reminiscent of the various seeresses that appear in Eddic material, especially the seeress from *Vǫluspá*, which perhaps likens Sigrdrífa to another type of non-human being.[129] Thus both texts establish their speakers as something other than human, and are also connected to Óðinn.

Dialogues

The remainder of the Sigurðr poems, and *Vafþrúðnismál*, are dialogues of varying types. *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Fáfnismál*, and *Grípisspá* follow a similar form, as the majority of each poem comprises a pair of characters reciting a single stanza each and then the other character responding. *Reginsmál*, due to its fragmentary nature, does not follow this formula as

[128] *Vǫlsunga saga,* as discussed in Chapter 4, is reliable in transmitting the overarching story and quotations, minus obviously the confusion between Sigrdrífa and Brynhildr, that it seems reasonable to assume there was no large paradigm shift in what was being conveyed. Further investigation might provide a more nuanced answer, but that is beyond the current scope of the thesis.

[129] As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, the ability to see the future is not something typically assigned to normal humans.

rigidly, although it features several sections that are dialogue segments similar to the others.[130]

All four of the poems feature a variety of wisdom, with *Vafþrúðnismál* focused primarily on Information and *Reginsmál* and *Fáfnismál* split primarily between non-literal and practical. While parts of *Reginsmál* are set in a hall, the poem's fragmentary episodes give it the widest variety of settings, which is unusual for any of the other dialogues. However, the majority of the poem is not set in a hall, and *Fáfnismál* takes place entirely in outside locations. This staging of the dialogues ironically gives *Vafþrúðnismál* more in common with *Grípisspá.*

Reginsmál and *Fáfnismál* feature a large prose section in both their introductions and as interruptions. When used mid-poetry, the prose serves to connect and contextualise the actions and narratives surrounding the characters and the prose on occasion serves as the delivery system for Markers. *Fáfnismál* uses prose to connect the two parts of the story, and in a sense the two halves of the poem are only loosely connected in terms of theme and delivery, as the latter half of the poem scarcely features any wisdom elements or Markers. This large stylistic difference could perhaps suggest that the first part was originally a separate work and was only later attached to the dialogue.

Vafþrúðnismál lacks any sort of prose interruptions or settings, although curiously it does use a stanza (5) to provide a narrative elaboration and to transition the poem from the hall of the Æsir to Vafþrúðnir's hall.[131] *Vafþrúðnismál* is typical of a wisdom dialogue, with the

[130] What is of note is the overall lack of displayed violence in these dialogues, despite the levels of danger and the threats issued. While he focuses primarily on Homeric and Old English traditions, Ward Parks (1990) has some interesting analyses of this sort of verbal duelling (see especially his chapter 2 (42-95)), but are ultimately in too different a context to have further relevance.

[131] While by no means proof by itself, it does show that Eddic poems that are focused on speech, especially *Grímnismál*, could have had poetic stanzas at some point that did not rely on speech to provide narratives.

characters taking it in turn to speak to each other. *Grípisspá* is superficially similar, as like *Vafþrúðnismál*, it lacks prose interruptions, although there is a short prose introduction that introduces the mysterious Grípir. As with *Vafþrúðnismál* the poem is centred on Sigurðr and Grípir talking to each other, with Sigurðr in his usual role of questioner.

Didactic poems

The remaining two poems, *Hávamál* and *Sólarljóð*, are different in delivery from the other two types of poems and warrant their own section. While they are similar to the monologues, they lack clear narrators and dip into and out of self-contained narrative episodes and both poems use anecdotes to deliver wisdom that is unrelated at times to other parts of the poem. For example, the nameless narrator of *Hávamál* sometimes relates Odinic narratives, but then also expounds generic gnomic statements that are tangentially related. Similarly, the *Sólarljóð* narrator opens with a narrative about a guest, but by the end is describing an otherworldly journey through the afterlife.

The reason that these poems are labelled didactic is that they, more than even the monologues, represent the poem addressing the audience directly without the need for an audience surrogate, with the narrator frequently using *ek* when speaking. Presumably, this focus on a direct address would be an aid in directly instructing the audience in whatever the poem is trying to say. Both poems also feature an addressee at a point in the poem, the heir who is introduced in stanza 78 of *Sólarljóð*, and Loddfáfnir from *Hávamál*. In both cases these characters are silent and there is no indication of who they are beyond their name/title. Both characters serve as surrogates for the audience, and allow the narrator to speak with more authority.

Comparisons

The three categories have much in common, but each shares similarities with both the mythological and legendary poems. Despite their entirely different contexts, there is a great deal of similarity in the delivery of wisdom in *Hávamál* and *Sólarljóð*, as both use a narrator to take the audience through a series of narratives, recollections, and general gnomic advice, with some anecdotes featuring characters other than the central narrator. Similarly, of the types of wisdom being delivered, all three types of wisdom (information, non-literal, and practical) are represented to differing degrees. *Vafþrúðnismál* and the Sigurðr dialogues tend to focus on information and the non-literal, rather than practical, although there are instances of practical advice. When maxims are issued, they are usually hidden within the dialogue, rather than the literal instruction that is provided by *Hávamál* and *Sólarljóð*. *Grímnismál* and *Sigrdrífumál* focus on different aspects of wisdom entirely, the only main divergence between two poems in the same category. *Grímnismál* focuses on Information primarily, with an implication of practical wisdom hidden beneath. *Sigrdrífumál* on the other hand focuses on non-literal wisdom in the first half of the poem when discussing *rúnar*, and practical wisdom in the second when talking about social protocol.

Grípisspá stands apart from all other poems, as it is not itself a wisdom text, but represents an imperfect recognition and use of the theme, where Markers are introduced in preparation for speech.

The Formulaic theme and Markers

Having established the delivery that these poems employ, it is now time to talk about how the Markers appear in the corpus as a whole. There have been many instances where the formulaic theme has appeared and a wisdom episode of some variety has followed, and this has occurred both in poems that have previously been identified as wisdom poems by

earlier scholarship, and poems that have not. While the mythological poems previously discussed use tropes that are common to wisdom traditions outside an Eddic context, as well as the formulaic theme, the Sigurðr poems use the formulaic theme as the primary mechanism to introduce wisdom.

Sigrdrífumál is perhaps the most obvious in its similarities to the mythological texts, as it features a (mostly) silent audience receiving wisdom from a mythological figure. However, both *Reginsmál* and *Fáfnismál* also use the formulaic theme to introduce wisdom episodes into what would otherwise be narrative segments. In terms of didactic dialogues, perhaps the segment between Loki and Reginn in *Reginsmál* stanzas 1-4 and the segment between Sigurðr and Fáfnir in *Fáfnismál* stanzas 12-15 bear the most overt similarity to those found in the mythological poems, but there are still elements of the formulaic theme to be found heralding these segments.

Prose

Several of the poems that have been discussed use prose introductions, conclusions, and interruptions, all of which provide contexts that would be absent if only the poetry was analysed. Indeed, in some instances the presence of the formulaic theme relies on the prose to be completed. Whoever added the prose either must have been familiar with the narratives in the poems, and coincidentally included the Markers, or more likely, knew what was needed to be inserted to provide wisdom.

In *Grímnismál*, the prose is vital for establishing two of the Markers, primarily A (Separation) and C (Danger), and without it the theme would be incomplete. However, it is when it comes to the Sigurðr poems that the prose plays a greater role, as all of them use prose in the texts. *Reginsmál*, which would be almost incomprehensible without the prose

accompaniments, uses a prose introduction in the beginning to set up the theme and introduces Loki and Andvari's conversation, and then further uses it to guide the narrative to Sigurðr's meeting with Óðinn. Similarly *Fáfnismál* uses the prose to establish Marker D (the Unknown) in the prose interruption between stanzas 1 and 2.

Markers and their place

In the preceding chapters, I have presented how my recognition of the Markers developed from the mythological poems, starting as they first appeared in *Hávamál*, to the legendary poems, and finally to *Sólarljóð*. In the mythological poems, they were relatively consistent in how they were used and the ways in which they appeared. However, once Sigurðr poems appear, the Markers seem to change slightly. Here is a brief overview of the Markers as they commonly appear within the poems, and how they have developed.

Marker A

At the start of the formulation of this thesis, the first Marker was thought to be Solitude, as this was how it was perceived to be based on analysis of *Hávamál*. In *Hávamál*, the Marker was frequently seen as a character being alone, sometimes when journeying somewhere, but occasionally when lying in wait or performing some action, such as the hanging scene from stanza 138, where Óðinn is separated from all others and left alone. Similarly, the beginning of the Billingr's Maiden section (stanza 96) features Óðinn waiting alone on a shoreline, recounting and emphasising his separation.

This was then seen with both *Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*, as in the former Grímnir is kept in prison, which was originally perceived to be an example of solitude, although perhaps at that point the Marker was showing that Solitude was not the right term.

Vafþrúðnismál similarly features Óðinn's lone journey to the hall of Vafþrúðnir, and as will be shown, this too needs development.

In the Sigurðr poems, barring *Grípisspá*, Solitude was not sufficient as a definition. During *Reginsmál*, *Fáfnismál*, and *Sigrdrífumál* the characters never have their solitude specified, but the similarity comes from the fact that the characters are drawn away from locations where they are comfortable. In all the poems, Sigurðr is drawn away and separated from civilisation, be it Reginn taking him away by ship to take vengeance, or Sigurðr fighting Fáfnir on the heath, to him and Sigrdrífa talking in the abandoned fortress. In all these cases, the characters are separated from their natural environment. Even *Grípisspá* recognises this, and specifically separates Sigurðr and Grípir from the others in stanza 5, with both Grani and Geitir being told to leave once Grípir has met Sigurðr. This is one of the reasons that *Grípisspá* manages to make itself a semi-authentic imitation of the wisdom dialogue, as Sigurðr and Grípir are removed from the other named characters in the scene.

Sólarljóð also uses the idea of Separation frequently, notably in stanza 45 (see Chapter 6, 210). Here, one of the key preceding elements before the narrator undergoes his afterlife vision, is that he is taken away from a source of light.

This also connects *Sólarljóð* to the previous poems where it seemed mostly correct to call the Marker Separation. In *Grímnismál*, Grímnir is indeed in solitary confinement at the other end of the hall, but it is more correct to say that he is separated from the others. In *Vafþrúðnismál* Óðinn leaves his home location and family and is separated from his wife. Even in *Hávamál* it occurs where Separation is perhaps more appropriate, as was seen in stanza 140, where Óðinn was separated and then is able to re-join his family.

Marker B

One of the key Markers that form the formulaic theme is the presence of liminality, or characters undertaking actions that allow them to cross liminal thresholds. Of all the Markers, this one seems to be the one that generally prompts the other Markers in the mythological poems, and allows the wisdom episode to begin. Perhaps the most obvious version of the Marker is when thresholds are literally crossed, specifically when characters enter a hostile hall. *Hávamál* and *Sólarljóð* both feature a guest and a host in their opening sections and in *Hávamál* the first stanza advises the audience on what should happen when a hall is crossed into. In this instance, crossing the threshold represents a liminal situation, and it is in this location that the exchange of wisdom can begin, and the threshold is clearly important by its prominence. The act of physically crossing is emphasised less in *Sólarljóð* but that it relies on a guest and hospitality nonetheless suggests that it is still important. *Vafþrúðnismál* also features the entry into the hall, although *Grímnismál* does not have the same emphasis. This is likely due to the loss of the poetry in the introduction and it is probable that there would have been at some point in the poem's history a similar entrance.

However, *Grímnismál* provides a good example of non-literal liminality being used as a Marker. The prose, which was light on the topic of entry into a hall, is however very clear on Grímnir's position in the hall in the build up to the poetry: *Konungr lét hann pína til sagna ok setja milli elda tveggja, ok sat hann þar átta nætr* 'the king had him tortured and set him between two fires, and he sat there for eight nights'. Here the liminality comes from two aspects: the first being Grímnir within the hall but not accepted into it, as Óðinn is in *Vafþrúðnismál* where he is not allowed to cross the floor until he has proven himself; and the second is that he is between the fires, similar to *Hervararkviða* where Hervǫr sees fires and imagines herself to be between worlds (for more refer to Chapter 3). Hervǫr's confusion

and likening herself to being between worlds as the fires burn around her, placing her in a liminal position, is similar on two counts to *Grímnismál*. First there is the literal nature of her being between fires, and second there is her confusion of being between worlds, just as Grímnir is about to blend the worlds when describing Ásgarðr in Geirrøðr's hall. This shows how the liminality that can be found when placed in between fires can lead to more extreme versions of liminality, such as the perception of being between worlds.[132]

Beyond this physical liminality, there is of course the more subjective liminality of state of being. This is perhaps found most clearly in *Hávamál* and *Fáfnismál*. In *Hávamál*, there is the famous scene of Óðinn hanging himself while wounding himself as the first step to his wisdom described in stanza 138, followed by his starvation in stanza 139. Here the liminality comes from the fact that Óðinn is dying while hanging, trapped in between life and death. This would come alone from his deprivation, but the hanging and wounding confirm that this would otherwise be a fatal incident. That this begins the wisdom episode and culminates in his reception of the various *rúnar* is significant. Similarly, Fáfnir is struck by Sigurðr and left dying, and yet it is at this point that he can contribute to the dialogue in a meaningful way, despite there being no previous indication that he was anything but a brute, who would not have the authority to speak on matters such as the norns and Ragnarǫk.

Marker C

In the poetry, other than *Grípisspá*, the characters are usually experiencing a sense of danger, either in a physical sense or in a societal one, where the risk is to their reputation.

[132] Schjødt goes into great detail on the various views that scholars have had on the significance of the fires that Grímnir is placed between (specifically in 30-4). In his own argument, Schjødt seems to disdain the similarity between *Grímnismál* and *Hávamál* as little more than superficial, although he approaches it from the perspective of an initiation. However, I would argue that as the function in both poems appears to be part of the wisdom delivery, separating the two as one being a rite and the other being theatre is unnecessary.

Starting from *Hávamál*, Danger appears in various forms. The narrator of the guest section frequently talks about the various threats that exist, but it is when the Óðinn episodes arrive that the danger to status appears most clearly. In the stanza at the end of the Billingr's Maiden episode, Óðinn is humiliated by his failure, and this in turn allows him to issue a statement on the nature of relationships and how he has suffered. In *Vafþrúðnismál*, the danger is most obvious by the head ransom. Óðinn cannot afford to be wrong, as danger is stressed to him by Frigg in the beginning and is later confirmed when Vafþrúðnir issues his threat. When the poem ends however, Vafþrúðnir's own impending danger allows him to issue the statement on the superlative nature of Óðinn. Similarly, it is the threat of danger to Grímnir that begins *Grímnismál*, and from this original point of danger the poem can progress. An important aspect of the Marker is that it is not always the protagonist that is exclusively in danger, it can at times be his opponent who is about to suffer.[133]

In the Sigurðr poems, *Reginsmál* uses danger in its opening section in the dialogue between Loki and Andvari in stanza 1, in which he threatens Andvari's life. *Reginsmál* uses the prose introduction to frame the narrative and express the danger of Hreiðmarr to the Æsir. *Fáfnismál* uses danger, although in a different way. The most common expression of it is in the terms of a future threat to Sigurðr, specifically in the doom that taking the treasure will lead him to, although Fáfnir's own declaration of power in stanza 16 could also count. *Sigrdrífumál* is perhaps the least clear in its use of Marker C, as there are less obvious examples, but all revolve around physical danger. The first instance of the Marker is where Sigrdrífa is describing, in a prose interruption, that she was responsible for a king dying and was punished for it. There is also an appearance in Sigrdrífa's warning in line 6 of stanza 21,

[133] *Vafþrúðnismál* presents the most obvious case of the Danger Marker applying to a character other than the protagonist, but this also links *Vafþrúðnismál* to the head ransom motif. For more, see McGillivry (2018), especially 105-7 for details on this specific wager.

in which Sigrdrífa states that all harm will be measured out, and in line 2 of stanza 22, where Sigurðr acknowledges his doom.

Sólarljóð is similar to *Hávamál*, as it uses the same danger of guests, although this is from a reversed perspective. This poem also is perhaps best at using the social danger, as the moral exemplars in the first part of the poem frequently suffer consequences for their actions. In *Grípisspá*, Marker C is missing from the introduction; this absence causes the wisdom episode to be unrealised. There is never any danger to Sigurðr, and it is not until halfway into the poem that his fate is discussed. When this appears, there are no other Markers in proximity to complete the theme. Why this Marker was not included is uncertain, although it could be that the connection between gaining wisdom through hardship had been lost to poetry at this point.

Marker D

Perhaps the most striking difference between wisdom found in the Eddic corpus and that which is found elsewhere is the reticence to share wisdom and an emphasis on personal learning. While, for example, in the Old English tradition there are sages and fathers who are ready to mete out wisdom such as in *Precepts* or *Vainglory*, in the Old Norse tradition there is a great emphasis on what is personally known, and in wisdom texts the specifics are frequently connected to this concept. Similarly, characters frequently encounter strange or unknown things when questing for wisdom, or they themselves have changed their own identities and go about in disguise.

Starting in *Hávamál*, the Unknown element can be seen frequently. Stanza 1 is obvious, as it instructs the audience that there is a lack of knowledge of those already present in the hall. Similarly, stanza 138 mentions what is presumably Yggdrasill, as the tree that is unknown as

its setting. These elements show the variety of ways the Marker can appear, either personal unknowability or being in an unknown location. *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* show this well through Óðinn, as he goes about in disguise through both poems. Clearly, there being an element of the Unknown was vital in the delivery of wisdom, as it is always present in some form.

In the Sigurðr poems, this element of the Unknown is still frequently seen. In *Reginsmál*, Loki taunts Andvari for not knowing how to avoid danger in line 3 of stanza 1. The second, is uttered by Andvari himself in lines 4-6 of stanza 2, where he laments how a Norn has given him a bad fate. The Norns and the concept of fate are frequently shown to be mysterious and unknowable in their ways. Beyond this, there is also the opening of *Fáfnismál*, where Sigurðr takes on an Odinic role and hides his identity at the start of the poem (although he curiously reneges on this anonymity shortly after). The aforementioned lines in *Grípisspá* also show the emphasis on the unknown as Sigurðr is called the unknown man in the second stanza when he arrives. This is perhaps the subtlest difference between Sigurðr and Óðinn when it comes to wisdom matters, as while Óðinn always goes by a false name, Sigurðr uses titles or simply does not say his name.

In *Sólarljóð*, we have the examples of the various *rúnar* that the narrator mentions in stanzas 40 and 79. In their original appearance, the runes were a symbol of the unknown in *Hávamál*, and they retain the usual significance here.

Marker Observations

From these observations, it is possible to see how the four Markers were used in the poems and to what effect. Marker A is the one that required the most development, and this is one of the reasons that using wisdom texts with non-wisdom texts is an important part of this

thesis. By contrasting a poem that is suffused with wisdom, and texts that feature only brief interludes of wisdom in an overall narrative frame, it is possible to see how it can be used to deliver wisdom.

If each poem is looked at in terms of its first wisdom episode, then it is either Marker A or Marker B that appears first. In *Hávamál*, *Sólarljóð*, *Fáfnismál*, and *Sigrdrífumál*, it is Marker B that is the opening Marker, and in all three cases it is used when characters are transitioning to a new location, and in *Hávamál* and *Sólarljóð*, this is coupled with the Danger Marker. *Sigrdrífumál* does not do this, but it still uses liminality as its starting point. *Fáfnismál* presents an interesting perception of the Marker, as it is Fáfnir himself who embodies the Marker due to his mortally wounded status. As this is what allows him to interact with the wisdom dialogue in the first place it seems appropriate to consider this the first Marker in this poem. Additionally, *Hávamál* is an interesting example, as due to its composite nature it stops and starts several times, but in many of the narrative wisdom sections, an observable liminal situation is also emphasised. In the Billingr's Maiden episode, Óðinn is on a bank sitting amongst reeds and in *Rúnatal*, there is also Óðinn's own mortally wounded status. For Marker A, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál*, and *Reginsmál* all feature it as the opening Marker, although this is complicated with the latter two as in both poems the Marker appears in prose.

The various types of wisdom – What is being said?

In this section the various types of wisdom will be discussed. As was first introduced in Chapter 3, wisdom can broadly be split into the three categories of information, non-literal, and practical. Each of these categories is introduced by the formulaic theme without exception, but some of the categories use the formulaic theme in a repeated manner. This

also is influenced by the style of delivery. Poems usually feature several types, for example *Vafþrúðnismál* comprises information primarily but then there is an instance of a maxim on the nature of guests.

Information

Perhaps the most prevalent type of wisdom is that which can be categorised as information. This topic covers everything ranging from historical details to geographical phenomena and personal information. It is frequently used as a tool by which a character can establish themselves as a wisdom authority. *Vafþrúðnismál* has perhaps the best example of this, as when asked to prove his right to speak to Vafþrúðnir, Óðinn answers Vafþrúðnir's questions on the nature of the world and the names of supernatural beings responsible for the day and night cycle. Once Óðinn has displayed this knowledge, he is allowed to progress and participate fully in the wisdom exchange, and Vafþrúðnir in turn shows his own facility in this branch of wisdom. It can also be seen in *Fáfnismál*, as when Fáfnir first mentions the Norns in stanza 11, this causes Sigurðr to question him on them, which in turn allows the wisdom dialogue to begin by Fáfnir answering a question on the nature of the Norns and the role they play in people's lives. Other than establishing authority in wisdom contexts, Information is also used as a final point of wisdom, as seen in *Grímnismál*, where it is the acknowledgement of Óðinn's nature that concludes the poem.[134] Memory is a key part of this branch of wisdom. Both Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir use memory as a means for explaining their ability to provide wisdom, Vafþrúðnir because he remembers the history of the world

[134] Larrington (2002) provides a detailed description of the variety of information that is on display in both *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*. In addition, she notes that, according to Snorri and *Vǫluspá*, Óðinn would have been present at the creation of the world, despite him asking the question (68). While this could perhaps be Óðinn trying to stay in character and not revealing what he knows, I would argue that it is instead being used as proof of what Vafþrúðnir knows.

clearly, and Óðinn as Grímnir who uses Huginn and Muninn to remember, which connects with his ability to see the otherworld.

Non-Literal

The next type of wisdom that can be seen is the non-literal. This is a catch-all term that covers concepts that seem to have little grounding in a practical physical world, but at the same time do not impart information of a historical or societal nature. It would cover details such as magical spells, and other supernatural occurrences that are designed to inform the audience of some facet of life, or when it involves some sort of revelation the narrator has experienced but of which they will not share the details. Both the largest discussions of *rúnar* would qualify as non-literal, as both Óðinn and Sigrdrífa are clearly trying to inform the audience, but the precise mechanics are uncertain. While this appears to an extent in sections of *Hávamál*, most notably in *Ljóðatal* and a couple of examples in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, other than that this type of wisdom is mostly absent from the mythological poetry. However, in contrast, the heroic poetry of Sigurðr features a larger amount, especially the first half of the *Sigrdrífumál* and the first half of *Fáfnismál*. *Sólarljóð* as well features several examples, for example the counsels mentioned by the narrator in stanza 32 would qualify, purely because they are unknown, despite being surrounded by more practical advice. This is the wisdom that can best be branded as 'Odinic', as the majority of instances of it appearing come either from Óðinn, or in Sigrdrífa's case, a character closely connected to Óðinn.

Practical

The final branch of wisdom seen in Eddic sources is the practical. All of the poetry in this corpus has practical wisdom to some degree, although the amount varies, as well as what type of practicality is being discussed. *Hávamál* is perhaps the most obvious in its practical

wisdom, ranging from the entrance into the hall, to the perils of drinking, to practicalities of travelling. *Vafþrúðnismál* is less obvious, but has at the very minimum one stanza that is eminently gnomic, stanza 10, which discusses the appropriateness of speaking and being a guest. This stanza comes after Vafþrúðnir has invited Óðinn into the hall, and is in a sense Óðinn establishing himself as the true wisdom authority in the poem. *Grímnismál* is subtler in its practicality, as the lists of various halls and the personages within serve as exemplars, while being cloaked in the genre of information. A curious part of wisdom is the nature of Óðinn. In both poems the formulaic theme sets up a wisdom episode, and in each poem, this is some revelation about Óðinn. In *Vafþrúðnismál* it is that Óðinn is the wisest, and in *Grímnismál* it is the various guises of Óðinn. Whether this can be considered practical or non-literal is questionable, and would ultimately depend on the audience.

The Sigurðr poems have fewer instances of wisdom, perhaps due to the lower overall frequency of wisdom episodes in them, as they are primarily telling a heroic narrative, rather than presenting a wisdom text. *Reginsmál* features the advising section where Hnikarr gives Reginn and Sigurðr advice on both omens and martial matters. Sigurðr issues the maxim to Fáfnir on the nature of courage in stanza 6 of *Fáfnismál*. Finally, in *Sigrdrífumál*, Sigrdrífa spends the last 16 stanzas of the poem giving Sigurðr multiple pieces of advice on social practicalities.

Experience and Memory

Experience is a common theme in wisdom, and all of the various poems build on it to various extents, but as would be expected it also primarily is referenced when discussing Practical wisdom. *Hávamál* is perhaps the most obvious in this, as the narrator, be he Óðinn or the otherwise Odinic narrator, constantly uses his own experiences as a basis for his

various statements. In this manner, the experience on display creates authority in the speaker: he can provide wisdom because he has experience in what he is talking about, and this works as a substitute for the wisdom credentials that a character like Vafþrúðnir must provide. In *Vafþrúðnismál* we see Óðinn issue his maxim in stanza 10, in *Grímnismál*, it is the lived experience of Grímnir that allows him to see the halls of the Æsir and comment on the character of the occupants. This stress on personal experience also seems to drop once we reach the heroic poems, as while *Reginsmál* and *Fáfnismál* both feature wisdom episodes, there is less stress on personal experience, with a few exceptions that are found in *Fáfnismál*. In *Fáfnismál*, Sigurðr uses his own example of personal bravery, and Fáfnir curses Sigurðr with the Norn's curse. In *Reginsmál*, Óðinn's discussion of battle tactics would likely qualify, but the stress in this case is not on what Óðinn himself has learnt. Similarly, in *Sigrdrífumál*, there are many examples of wisdom episodes, but Sigrdrífa does not claim personal experience of them. This is, however, reversed when it comes to *Sólarljóð*, as here the poet uses his own personal experience to provide wisdom, ranging from his otherworld journey to the instruction he gives explicitly to his heir about the *hjartarhorn* (see stanza 78).

Memory, however, does seem to be the sole domain of mythological figures, and in these cases it is always associated with a mythological being. In *Hávamál* the only real reference to memory occurs in the Gunnlǫð section in stanza 103, and outside of this memory does not feature in the practical section at all. However, memory is a vital tool for Vafþrúðnir in establishing his ability to speak, and Óðinn himself benefits from his raven *Muninn* in *Grímnismál* stanza 20. As both poems heavily feature Information as their type of wisdom, this perhaps suggests that memory is primarily connected to this branch of wisdom.

For non-literal wisdom, it seems that experience is also important in that regard. The most obvious example is *Hávamál* stanza 138, in which Óðinn tortures himself. However, the *Sólarljóð* narrator's death is what provides him with the ability to speak, which would surely count as experience. Other instances such as Vafþrúðnir realising that Óðinn is the wisest at the end of *Vafþrúðnismál* would also count as practical experience of a sort.

Formulaic Theme and Wisdom

In this section I will discuss how several recurring elements of poetry, both the wisdom poems of Chapters 2 and 3, along with the heroic and Christian poetry, reveal recurring ways in which the Markers of the formulaic theme are represented.

Óðinn

Óðinn has a peculiar relationship to the delivery of wisdom, as he appears in all the mythological poems and even appears in *Reginsmál* and potentially *Sólarljóð* (although in this instance he, or an Odinic figure exceedingly similar to the *Hávamál* narrator, is the one who fails). Most interesting though is his role as the *Hávamál* narrator. *Hávamál* contains all three types of wisdom. There is the practical wisdom of the first section which is obsessed with social decorum primarily, but with aspects of actual advice for travellers. The *Rúnatal* section is focused on a mix of non-literal and informational wisdom. *Ljóðatal* closes the poem, and would count as featuring non-literal wisdom. Óðinn himself narrates all three types at various points in the poem, but he does not need to establish himself with Information as he does in *Vafþrúðnismál*. Similarly *Grímnismál* allows Óðinn to begin talking immediately without a need to establish himself.

Óðinn is explicitly in only one of the Sigurðr poems, *Reginsmál*, but his presence is nonetheless felt in the others (with the exception of *Grípisspá*). He is explicitly referred to in

Sigrdrífumál, both in his role of authority over Sigrdrífa, and as a member of the Æsir. Only *Fáfnismál* does not feature or refer to him, but in *Vǫlsunga saga* chapter 18, Óðinn is present and gives Sigurðr the advice needed to kill Fáfnir. As there is an extended prose section in between Sigurðr meeting with Hnikarr and his first speech to Fáfnir, it is not difficult to think there may have been a poetic section where Óðinn instructs Sigurðr on how to kill Fáfnir.

Finally, there is *Sólarljóð*. *Sólarljóð* is complicated on this matter as having Óðinn appear in an overtly Christian poem is unlikely. However, he is still named in the poem in a kenning for Frigg, *Óðins kván* 'Óðinn's wife'. Additionally, the guest in the first 8 stanzas bears an uncanny similarity with the guest in the opening of *Hávamál*, and that the *Sólarljóð* guest ends up suffering horribly could be seen as a criticism of Óðinn, while at the same time connecting the poem to the earlier poems that it takes its inspiration from.

Óðinn as a character is a lens through which wisdom can be seen most clearly in Eddic poetry, and he most reliably of all characters uses the varieties of Markers in order to present wisdom episodes. Indeed, it could be argued that Óðinn himself is almost some kind of super Marker, insomuch that he represents an incoming wisdom episode. This is not to say that the poetry does not still emphasise the Markers when Óðinn appears in the narrative (for example the separation in Geirrøðr's hall, or the liminality of his death in *Rúnatal*) but rather that Óðinn's presence in the narrative usually coincides with such displays, and that he himself can act as a specific Marker when needed. Óðinn is so integral to wisdom that his presence survives the Christianisation of Eddic poetry, albeit in a reduced form in *Sólarljóð*.

Changes of Setting

In this thesis, there have been interesting points that have emerged in individual poems that, when compared to others, can provide rewarding lines of inquiry. The first is the use of narrative when dealing with wisdom, or even the concept that the narrative exists to deliver wisdom. As *Hávamál* was the starting point, it makes sense to start there, though this poses problems immediately. Due to its various sections, *Hávamál* has a great deal of internal variety, with the narrator and the settings changing. When the unnamed narrator speaks, the generic hostile hall is the setting, and beyond the warning about danger, the hall is not developed as a location. Additionally, as Larrington notes in *A Store of Common Sense*, the poem dispenses with any framework or introduction (1993, 20). Instead the poem immediately thrusts the audience into this generic location, which is transformed in stanzas 13 and 14, when Óðinn emerges and gets to complete the wisdom episode and utter his final maxim, all while using a story of his own encounters with Gunnlǫð as the basis. The nameless narrator is dropped, and the generic becomes specific. This happens again in *Rúnatal*, where Óðinn once again takes over from the nameless narrator, and the encounter which creates Óðinn's authority is related, before culminating in the final stanza in which Óðinn can once again offer gnomic observations on the world, as seen in stanza 145:

> Betra er óbeðit
> en sé ofblótit,
> ey sér til gildis gjǫf;
> betra er ósent
> en sé ofsóit.
> Svá Þundr um reist
> fyr þjóða rǿk,
> þar hann upp of reis,
> er hann aptr of kom.
>
> To not pray is better
> than to over sacrifice,

a gift ever repays itself;
to not send is better
than to over slaughter.
So Þundr carved
before the destiny of the people,
then when he rose up,
when he came back after. [145]

These observations are the culmination of a narrative that provides three things. First, it reintroduces the formulaic theme almost immediately; second, it establishes Óðinn's authority; and third, it finishes the segment on a gnomic saying. Here, the narrative is entirely subservient to the wisdom.

Vafþrúðnismál has the maxim in stanza 10, which works on two levels, first for the audience implicitly listening to the poem, but also Vafþrúðnir himself. If he had understood it, he might have survived, but by not listening to it, he dooms himself, the implicit criticism being that the audience should listen to Óðinn or suffer a similar fate. *Grímnismál* also uses this sort of narrative, as when Grímnir is describing Ásgarðr he uses the positive traits of the hall owners to subtly criticise his own host. For example, Forseti's home is said to be one of peace in stanza 15. Outside of the wisdom poems themselves, it is harder to see this sort of multi-layered approach, as the wisdom episodes are woven into the overall narrative, with the exception of *Sigrdrífumál* which is more like the mythological poems.

It is possible to see this as well in the latest poem in this corpus, *Sólarljóð*. Here, the narrative is focused upon an unknowable narrator, who is also here to dispense wisdom to the audience, and later is revealed to his own heir. While other precept-style poems in other traditions keep such narratives to a minimum, *Sólarljóð* nonetheless uses a narrative as its main method of delivering wisdom. The narrative of the host and his guest murderer are

there to end with the wisdom of repentance and acceptance of God, while the following exemplars of moral decay provide similar smaller narratives to comment on.

Two forms of development – *Sólarljóð* and *Grípisspá* and the Liminality Marker

Having now looked at the Markers and the types of wisdom as they appear in the various poems, it is possible to make some observations on how the formulaic theme changed as it was used. First, a discussion of how *Sólarljóð* and *Grípisspá* represent developments of the formulaic theme, which naturally occur, then a look at a single Marker throughout the poetry analysed in the thesis.

Sólarljóð and *Grípisspá* – Developments

What is most interesting about the formulaic theme and how it applied to wisdom is the different ways in which it developed that can be seen in *Sólarljóð* and *Grípisspá*. As shown, the formulaic theme is present in all the mythological poems analysed, and in the Sigurðr poems. However, one aspect that has only been touched on briefly so far is the relative age of the poetry, beyond its presence in the Codex Regius. Many of the poems discussed in this thesis are undoubtedly older than the manuscript, not least because several of them are quoted in *Snorra Edda* which was produced approximately half a century before. Despite being in the Codex Regius, *Grípisspá* is potentially the latest poem in the manuscript. Haukur Þorgeirsson (2017) has written about the dating of Eddic poetry, and mentions *Grípisspá* specifically as being a late poem (for more refer back to the Introduction). He contrasts this explicitly with other Eddic poems such as *Fáfnismál*, *Hávamál*, and *Vafþrúðnismál* as being some of the earliest (14). The creation of *Grípisspá* has received a reasonable amount of scholarly speculation, although beyond *Kommentar* there has been less modern research than other Eddic poems, probably due to the poem's unpopularity when compared to more

traditionally interesting poems. Harris (1971, 346-8) remains one of the best sources on it, and he provides a useful summary. There have been more modern studies that have been undertaken, such as Francesco Colombo's 2022 thesis 'The Young Sigurðr Section of the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda (GKS 2365 4to): Compositional History and Interpretative Reading', which interrogates the young Sigurðr poems. They do however disagree with my point below in regards to the authorship of *Grípisspá* (2022, 63). I however believe that there is evidence for it. I propose that one potential author is the composer of the prose segments within the Codex Regius. That composer seemingly had an understanding of Markers, and perhaps when creating a poetic text rather than merely amending existing poetry they were incapable of fully expressing the formulaic theme. This would explain its narrative quirks, and how the formulaic theme is only half implemented, suggesting that the creator was unfamiliar with how it was supposed to be put together without a base text to work from (in the instance of *Grímnismál* for example), and chose to use only certain elements. It seems at times that the *Grípisspá* poet is similar to someone who knows how to drive, and that road signs exist, but lacks the context to give specific information. As mentioned in the Introduction, Bjarne Fidjestøl's description of a modern audience being too separated by time to truly understand the context of Eddic poetry could even be extended to the *Grípisspá* poet. *Sólarljóð*, on the other hand is the most removed in terms of context due to the explicit Christian nature of it. *Sólarljóð* is undoubtedly a Christian poem created for a Christian audience. Elements of it show influence from continental Europe, such as the dream vision, which are not found elsewhere in Eddic material, with the possible exception of *Baldrs Draumar*, although in that poem the audience are not presented with the dream itself, only its negative implications. Despite

these seemingly large changes in the culture that created the earlier material, *Sólarljóð* nonetheless retains the style of the earlier wisdom texts.[135]

The poet of *Grípisspá* seems to understand that when a character travels to receive information, they must go through a set course of events. Sigurðr goes alone, and he and Grípir are separated from other characters in their dialogue (Marker A). Sigurðr enters the hall and passes through it, much as Grípir crosses the entrance of the hall to greet him (Marker B). Sigurðr refers to himself as the *maðr ókunnigr* 'unknown man', which emphasises the mystery of his character (Marker D). However, there is no hint of danger. After all, the poem stresses that Grípir is a familial relation, indeed, one very similar to the relationship seen in *Hávamál* stanza 140, where Óðinn is similarly taught by a maternal uncle. Whereas Óðinn endured his torments before receiving his instruction, Sigurðr is immediately in this safe environment, and it is this lack of threat that makes the formulaic theme incomplete.

While it could be suggested that the poet dismissed danger as unneeded, it seems likely that the poet was trying to replicate the success of *Vafþrúðnismál* and intended an homage.[136] However, if this was the case, then it suggests that the poet had an inadequate understanding of what was needed. The lack of the Danger Marker and the absence of wisdom episodes suggest that the poet lacked the experience or context that this is what made *Vafþrúðnismál* what it was. Instead the audience are presented with a poem that seems to hit the same beats as a wisdom dialogue, but comes across as slightly hollow.

---

[135] Although it has been referenced previously with regard to *Hávamál*, Schorn's work includes analyses of *Sólarljóð,* and its place in the Eddic corpus, and she rightly points out that, especially in the guest section, the *Sólarljóð* poet is seeking to expand on the past traditions, rather than replace them (2017, 129).

[136] Similar to Haukur Þorgeirsson's work, though predating it, Machan (1992) also addresses the use of alliteration of Eddic poetry in his attempts to date the work and provide the context for it in the thirteenth century. His work is of interest, as well as the theorising he discusses on what an 'original' *Vafþrúðnismál* would have looked like.

Sólarljóð, on the other hand, shows a continuity of style. From the very start of the poem, it states its intent by revisiting the guest section of *Hávamál* albeit with a different view and an unfortunate fate for the Óðinn character. Despite this implicit criticism of the previous wisdom poems, due to the unpleasant fate suffered by the Odinic character, the same Markers are used in the same way as they appear in the opening of *Hávamál*, which places *Sólarljóð* in a succession of both the Eddic tradition and the Christian one that now occupied the people.[137]

Grípisspá and *Sólarljóð* differ from the established Eddic canon in different ways, the question must be raised as to whether the changes represent a purposeful keeping of convention and tradition, or are merely a symptom of a changing poetic tradition. In one sense the formulaic theme itself is a convention that was used and eventually discarded, but as can be seen in comparing the young Sigurðr poems to *Grípisspá*, it did not vanish all at once, but rather decayed in such a way that superficial parts of it remained, which is why it is possible to see Markers appearing in proximity but not completely.

This can tell us several things about Eddic poetry and its development. Despite its place in the Codex Regius, the poet of *Grípisspá* clearly did not understand the tradition he was writing in and was reading the text from a removed context. While he succeeded in creating a facsimile of what a dialogue should be, it is ultimately hollow. There was enough understanding left to issue a maxim in the final stanza, *munat skǫpum vinna* 'none can resist fate'**.** Compared with the gaps however, where the theme is nearly completed, this is a startling absence that any poet of the same era as the earlier poems would have recognised as being incomplete.

[137] As discussed in the *Sólarljóð* chapter, there are definite elements of syncretism in *Sólarljóð*, and while the belief framework is undoubtedly important, further discussion here is not needed. Amory (1990) remains valuable as a source for analysing this perspective, however.

Sólarljóð presents a different alternative though, as despite its Christian message, it uses the techniques established to present the narrator with the credentials to speak and with the experience to match. While the narrator did not hang to gain his wisdom, he did die and travel across a liminal series of worlds, and through this he can tell his heir, the *arfi* from stanza 78, what he has seen.

Even without this familial connection, the narrator would have the authority to speak on what he has seen because of his journey and struggles, and can be seen as a wisdom authority no less than other figures in Eddic literature. While he has not seen Ásgarðr, as Grímnir had, he has seen the seven victory-worlds (*sigrheima sjau*). He has seen dwellers of other worlds and can describe them, much in the way that Grímnir could describe the natures of the Æsir. This suggests that the poet of *Sólarljóð* was at the very least familiar with the tradition that the mythological poems sprang from, rather than the *Grípisspá* poet who appears to not understand the mechanics. It could further suggest that the Eddic style did not die out with the mythological poems and Christianity, and despite the change in context and intent, the styles that had existed previously proved effective in the transmission of wisdom. In a sense the *Grípisspá* poet was a tourist in a familiar land, whereas the *Sólarljóð* poet was traversing new ground with a familiar technique.

Liminality

It is perhaps best to start with how one of the Markers changed, and this can be seen in how the Liminality Marker is used as an opening Marker. How the Marker appears in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* as opposed to how it appears in the Sigurðr poems provides the best comparisons.

When it appears in the mythological poems, the Liminality Marker is used explicitly. In both the mythological poems there are two types of liminality. First, both poems have Óðinn accepted into the hall but remaining apart from it. In *Vafþrúðnismál*, this can be seen in stanzas 9 and 19. In the first Óðinn is still apart from Vafþrúðnir, but in the latter he is accepted at the table. In *Grímnismál,* this is represented by the imprisonment in the flames spoken of in the prose introduction and in stanza 1. Once again, Óðinn is in the hall, but still remains apart from the rest of the hall's inhabitants. In both cases, even though Óðinn has entered the hall, he is still yet to be truly part of the hall's occupants. The second type of liminality is the separation between a hostile 'outside' and an interior. In *Vafþrúðnismál* stanza 5, Óðinn is described as entering the hall after having travelled there from his own home. In *Grímnismál*, it is less literal, but in this case, it is the hall itself that is the hostile 'outside' and the various halls of the Æsir that Grímnir sees. Óðinn's crossing from one location, metaphorically, to another constitutes the liminality. This focus on the hostile outside can be seen in a similar way in *Hávamál*, specifically in stanzas 138-140, as in these stanzas the liminality comes not only from Óðinn's dying state, but also his 'passage' from hanging to his uncle's hall. in both cases of *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* the protagonist of the poem is either moving across a doorway or is setting themselves between separate worlds.

In the Sigurðr poems, the liminality is far less pronounced. The focus tends to be on one of the other Markers, in *Reginsmál* Separation is the Marker that is focussed upon first in both the prose introduction and stanza 1 of the poem. In *Reginsmál* it is possible to see instances such as Loki and Andvari talking at the water's edge in stanzas 1-4 (perhaps similar, or even a reference, to Óðinn in stanza 96 of *Hávamál*), and then later when Sigurðr and Reginn are standing on a cliffside with Óðinn in stanzas 15-19. In these instances the liminality is less of

crossing over, and more being at a natural boundary point. Similarly, in *Sigrdrífumál* the prose introduction represents the Liminality Marker, in which Sigurðr enters the *skjaldborg* to find Sigrdrífa. There is no concept of a hostile exterior existing before Sigurðr travels to an interior, although there is no emphasis in the poetry or even the prose that the exterior was dangerous and that it was an effort to pass through. The liminality here is less transitional and more just a presence in the world.

Fáfnismál perhaps exemplifies this best, as there are no cases of a 'crossing over' in the poem, either as it appears in the mythological poems or as can be seen in the other Sigurðr poems, rather, it is liminality of the mortally wounded, not unprecedented due to *Hávamál*, but not one given the same import in the mythological poems.

In the later poems, *Grípisspá* and *Sólarljóð*, the Liminality Marker shows how the Marker developed. In *Sólarljóð*, there are two main occurrences of liminality, the first being the guest section in stanzas 1-8, in which the poem mimics the opening of *Hávamál*. However, there is less of an emphasis on the actual transition. Certainly, the characters are not intended to be meeting in an outdoor location, but there is never the stress that is seen in the mythological poems of the transition. The other main occurrence of Liminality comes from the narrator's own status. Much like Fáfnir or Óðinn, he is in a dying state which gives him the ability to speak on matters that he would not otherwise be able to. This is understandable, as *Sólarljóð* represents a continuation of the conventions of the formulaic theme. Therefore it is not unreasonable that *Sólarljóð* is more akin in its use of the formulaic theme to the Sigurðr poems than to the mythological poems, despite its similarity in overall form to *Hávamál*.

Grípisspá tries to ape the mythological poetry and the formulaic theme as, and unlike the other Sigurðr poems, it has an explicit focus on liminality occurring in stanza 5, and no emphasis otherwise. While its direct parallels with *Vafþrúðnismál* were discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, it is important to reiterate that *Grípisspá* provides a good facsimile of being superficially similar to the hall entrance of *Vafþrúðnismál*. This perhaps confirms the theory that I suggested earlier that, by the time of *Grípisspá's* construction, the convention in poetry had changed to such a degree that nothing but a surface understanding of how to construct Eddic poetry remained.

On The Origins of The Texts

Throughout this thesis I have endeavoured to present the poems as they appear in their earliest forms, although as discussed previously, the Codex Regius and the *Sólarljóð* manuscript are both considerably removed from the creation of the poetry. As discussed in Chapter 2, Eddic poetry had already calcified before the creation of the Codex Regius, as it was known in separate parts of the world in a similar form, something that would not happen if the poems were still oral works, the like of which Lord and Parry studied. This does raise the question on what the formulaic theme can tell us about the poems as they existed prior to their recording. However, I have shown how vastly in disparate poems, even ones clearly separated chronologically from the others such as *Grípisspá*, there were attempts to normalise the use of these Markers. However, *Grípisspá* does not use them correctly, even though the poet clearly understood that there was something missing.

The most revealing part of all this though is why such a collection as the Codex Regius could come about, as there is a unifying theme to at least seven of the poems within it. None would claim the Codex Regius scribe authored the poems, save as I have argued potentially *Grípisspá*, but there must have been a recognition that the poems were the same, beyond

merely being metrically alike. The formulaic theme provides a potential answer, and I believe it would be present in the rest of the Eddic corpus. In both *Grípisspá* and *Sólarljóð*, the use of theme can be used to track where these poems were finalised in their calcified state as recorded literature. Therefore, it would be useful to try and track when each poem was first fixed in position. So far, the only poem that it is possible to do this with is *Grípisspá*, which others have already determined through other methods, but I believe with further study it would be possible to determine other poetry's first recording and fixing.

Conclusion

In Eddic poetry, when there are wisdom episodes, there has been evidence of Markers and the formulaic theme. These occur with such regularity that it is unlikely that it is coincidental, and instead represents a specific convention that was ingrained in the transmission of Eddic poetry that when wisdom was to be given the Markers and formulaic theme were used. By using poetry that was filled with wisdom episodes, such as the mythological poems, it was possible to see how even in non-wisdom texts the same Markers were being used in the same combination. Following on from this, there is a clear suggestion of the theme continuing even into a new tradition with *Sólarljóð*, which authentically and correctly used the Markers to convey wisdom, albeit, wisdom from a different source. A poem like *Grípisspá* shows a potential point at which the formulaic theme can be seen to have ended, as despite a superficial understanding of it, the poet either could not or would not mimic the Eddic style correctly, and so perhaps shows a point where it was no longer in use.

In the previous chapters there has been an attempt to show how the various poems as a whole used Markers and the type of wisdom that each style of delivery used. Additionally, the specifics of how a single Marker progressed represent an example that can be replicated for the other Markers.

Having now established how I believe the formulaic theme was seemingly woven into the fabric of Eddic poetry through a fine-detail analysis, I shall now move to resolve any lingering issues that remain, as well as where a future development of this study could go. This conclusion will achieve four main objectives. The first will be to expand the role of Markers into the broader Old Norse poetic corpus, as well as to show what the Markers and

broader formulaic theme can inform us about the people who composed the poems originally, and to present an abstract view of the formulaic theme. Thus, the study of formulaic theme in regard to wisdom in Eddic poetry can lead to not only greater understanding of the composition of such poetry, but also to the specific worldviews of the poetry's original poets. The second is to what extent this can inform us about the relationship between wisdom and the Old Norse tradition. The third will be a suggestion of what can be theorised about the chronology of Eddic poetry. The final section will discuss where the study undertaken here could carry onto in future work.

Abstracting Markers

In the previous chapters, I have shown in specifics how Markers were seemingly consistently used to present a concept of wisdom in a variety of forms, ranging from literal narrative events, such as passing through a doorway to show Liminality, to figurative versions, such as framing a dialogue while one participant of it is dying. This was the case in the accepted wisdom poems, and in the various heroic poems. That *Sólarljóð* and *Grípisspá* also used the formulaic theme, albeit incompletely in *Grípisspá*, shows that it was a bridge which united a broader corpus than the poetry found in the Codex Regius.

After an analysis of eight Eddic poems, I have shown what the key concept behind each Marker is. While the wisdom poems were fundamental in identifying the core of what each Marker represented, the key part of what the Markers do is not defined by those specific poems. The wisdom poems merely provide the most obvious versions of them. In *Hávamál*, there are instances of virtually every permutation of Markers, and while there is not a variety of representation to the same extent in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*¸ they both still express each of the four Markers in a variety of ways. What *Hávamál* does best of the

wisdom poems is to show how the substitution aspect of the Markers occurs. *Rúnatal* is perhaps the best example of a Marker being shown as a non-literal version of itself, as the hanging and revelation scenes in stanzas 138-141 portray a full wisdom journey that is couched solely in the formulaic theme, and this forms a contrast with the start of *Hávamál* where there is a literal threshold crossing. Outside the mythological poems, such obvious staging is not as common, but the Markers remain identifiable. For example, Sigurðr's own journey is similarly expressed, albeit with a different focus. While Óðinn experienced everything for himself directly, being sacrifice, student, and traveller, other figures in the Eddic tradition were not bound by such rigidity. Sigurðr, for example, does not need to sacrifice himself for wisdom, and yet Fáfnir dies for the sake of Sigurðr's revelation and development. The *Sólarljóð* narrator similarly does not need to be a living individual who travels for his own edification, rather his journey merely completes a cycle that allows the unnamed heir of stanza 78 to prosper.

Across the poems previously analysed the main observation that can be made is that the substitution of specific narrative items connects back to Crowne's own observation mentioned in Chapter 2, and that is that the ultimate viability of the Markers relies on their mutability, and their ability to express the same concept even when the narrative takes a vastly different tone. That a Marker can appear in an obvious wisdom text such as *Vafþrúðnismál,* and then appear in a similar form in a heroic text, such as *Fáfnismál*, shows that these Markers are versatile, and are ultimately disconnected from a previous definition of genre.

Final Thoughts on Wisdom and Theme

Having discussed the broader role that Markers have in Eddic poetry, let us now move onto what can be said about their interaction with wisdom, partially as a specific part of poetry, but mainly from the point of view of genre. As discussed in the Introduction chapter, the three mythological poems that this thesis investigated are frequently grouped as wisdom poems. What this study of formulaic theme can do for future analysis of the role of wisdom in Eddic poetry is to show that it could be seen as playing a larger part in the minds of Eddic poets than has been previously thought, and therefore other Eddic poems can be analysed for wisdom from a new perspective. While it is not possible definitively to say that the poets were aware of the necessity of wisdom in their works, the fact that it appears so readily outside the observed wisdom poems shows that was unlikely to be an arbitrary inclusion. That it also appears so wholly in heroic or Christian dream poetry in the same manner shows that it was more important than existing in one genre, and instead represented a worldview that these poets had. What I have shown through analysing the formulaic theme is that wisdom not only existed outside of the wisdom poems, which is an uncontroversial statement, but that the mechanisms that deliver wisdom are themselves still present, even in seemingly innocuous places. Wisdom need not come in the form of overt structures, i.e. maxims or proverbs, but can be built directly into a narrative and related through other means, such as explanatory recollections, hypothetical scenarios, and even failed attempts.

Two of the best examples of this can be seen in comparisons between *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Fáfnismál.* I will not go into overmuch detail on specific comparisons here, as I have done so already in the relevant chapters. However, an example here illustrates this point well. In *Vafþrúðnismál* every stanza in the opening section catapults Óðinn to his meeting with *Vafþrúðnir*, and elements of the formulaic theme are commonplace. That maxims and other

wisdom types appear is expected, as it logically follows. One being who is renowned for wisdom is going to interrogate another being, and so there is no doubt that a wisdom episode would follow. *Fáfnismál* on the surface has none of this preparation for its wisdom dialogue. Sigurðr is a young heroic figure, and indeed Fáfnir's first address of him (*sveinn ok sveinn*) immediately diminishes him. By contrast, Fáfnir is described in various negative fashions, and his own actions do nothing to speak of an intellect to be respected. Yet, by introducing Markers in both the narrative setting and in the characters' dialogue, the deficiencies no longer matter, and a full wisdom exchange can take place in stanzas 12-15. While the traditional sage in a hall distributing wisdom and the history of the world is gone, even a previously brutish character such as Fáfnir can opine on the nature of the cosmos, so long as he does so formulaically, and Sigurðr, despite being a brash young heroic figure, is fit to question him on it.

Chronology

It is worth revisiting the two different developments that are represented in *Sólarljóð* and in *Grípisspá* in the terms of theorising a chronology of Eddic poetry. Both poems are undeniably later than the majority of other identified Eddic works, but through analysing how they each use the formulaic theme a suggestion of chronology can be made. Both poems are significantly later than any of the other poems discussed here, not least for what was discussed in the introduction chapter, but also for the way they use the theme. The *Grípisspá* poet seems to have identified the theme, and by featuring several aspects of it in close succession, suggests that the poet was not long removed from the Eddic tradition, but enough differences show that both poet and the environment surrounding him had moved on to such a degree that this mode of structuring an encounter, so similar on the surface to

mythological encounters such as Óðinn's and Vafþrúðnir's, was not lost to him, but nor was it something he was trained in.

Sólarljóð, on the other hand, represents a genuine poetic innovator, who was not only aware of the Eddic tradition and the dream-vision poetry style, but also capable of creating new works in the same style as both. The *Sólarljóð* poet was aware of not only the surface level guest/host interaction, as the *Grípisspá* poet was, but was capable of inverting it to fit the new Christian environment he existed in.

In one sense this shows the weakness of formulaic theme as a dating method, at least in the context of this thesis. While a broader study may show specific substitutions were more common than others in earlier poems, this specific study can at least show that larger changes in cultural transformation, for example the Christianisation of Old Norse poets, are identifiable. While both poems can be through various methods traced to the thirteenth century, through the formulaic theme the *Sólarljóð* poet appears to come closer to the Eddic tradition that the *Grípisspá* poet. This is not to diminish the *Grípisspá* poet, but it is clearly more removed from an active tradition. While there is every possibility that the *Grípisspá* poet was merely less skilled than the *Sólarljóð* poet, the more likely suggestion is that he came from a later, more removed tradition, perhaps merely the extent of a single generation.

Future of the Study

As this thesis comes to an end, there are several final thoughts that need to be discussed. First, there are the various ways this thesis could be expanded, and where future

development of this study should go.[138] A potential expansion of this study would naturally be to include detailed analysis of the remainder of the Eddic corpus, to provide greater context on the various forms that Markers can appear in. The three mythological poems featured in this thesis all feature Óðinn, or an Odinic identity, as the main character. Similarly, the Sigurðr poems, while more varied than the mythological poems, do form a semi-continuous narrative. While ideally every Eddic poem could receive the same level of analysis done here, I believe that *Alvíssmál* and *Atlakviða* would be the most interesting first areas to expand. *Alvíssmál* in particular is fascinating in that it is seemingly a parody of the wisdom genre, and the presence or lack of Markers and the formulaic theme could speak multitudes about the poem. *Atlakviða*, on the other hand, would be fascinating as it is among the earliest of the surviving Eddic poems. If the formulaic theme were present, it would most likely be one of the earliest instances of it, and could expand our knowledge of the development and use of this theme.

Another direction that further study could go in is to expand analysis outside the corpus of Eddic poetry, and to analyse other sources of Old Norse literature. An analysis of the Skaldic corpus, for example could provide a greater insight as to the spread of the theme. If Markers are used in a similar way it that corpus, it would go on to show how the worldview of the poets was founded in a subconscious need for wisdom. What would be a most logical entry would be to analyse works such as *Málsháttakvæði*, as it already shares some elements that poems analysed in this thesis have. Other non-Eddic poems, such as *Hugsvinnsmál*, would also be interesting sources of future study, However, as so many of

[138] In terms of Eddic poetry, there is still more to be done in terms of analysing the whole corpus, which is beyond the current scope of this thesis. The problem of what exactly constitutes an Eddic poem is complicated by the poetry that survives in other sources, primarily in sagas. However, these can be considerably later than the Codex Regius. For more on the age of the poetry in *Hervarar saga*, and in other *Fornaldarsögur*, see Clunies Ross (2016), specifically pages 28-30.

the Markers are reliant on narrative events or dialogue, there is a point at which the formulaic theme would not be able to work in a work such as *Hugsvinnsmál*.

Closing Statement

To conclude the thesis, all that there is to say is that there existed a structure in the minds of the Eddic poets and they used this framework to reliably provide wisdom, either in the form of maxims or historical and legendary information, or through more practical ideas couched in a mythological context. The Markers they used so flexibly allowed them to create the expectation in their audiences that there was something coming, something worth paying attention to, and that this can be seen so repeatedly across a spectrum of poems shows that it was far from rare.

That it survived into a Christian society is not in doubt, as the very manuscript that they survive in comes long after the conversion period, but it was clearly more than merely some artefact of a previous era. Both *Grípisspá* and *Sólarljóð* show that there was an interest in carrying on the style, albeit transformed. *Sólarljóð* especially shows that, in at least one post-Christianisation work, there was an effort to not only carry on the core concepts behind using Markers to deliver wisdom, but to transition the theme into a purely Christian context.

While the formulaic theme was clearly losing relevance by the thirteenth century, with *Grípisspá* being evidence that it was losing its use, it is impossible to say when its use truly ended, it clearly made enough of an impact on the minds of numerous poets that they themselves considered it important and valuable. What I have attempted here is to show the intricacies of their work, and show how this analysis could tell us more about genre and wisdom in general in an Eddic context.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Anlezark, Daniel. ed. 2011. *Old Testament Narratives*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press

Clayton, Mary. ed. 2013. *Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press

Evans, David A. H. ed. 1986. *Hávamál*: Glossary and index, compiled by Anthony Faulkes, Text series (Viking Society for Northern Research); v. 7, pt. 2, London: Viking Society for Northern Research

Faulkes, Anthony. ed. 1987. *Glossary and Index to* Hávamál, London: Viking Society for Northern Research

Faulkes, Anthony. ed. 2005. *Snorri Sturluson. Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, London: Viking Society for Northern Research

Faulkes, Anthony. ed. 1998. *Snorri Sturluson. Edda: Skáldskaparmál* I, London: Viking Society for Northern Research

Finch. R. G. ed. 1965. *The Saga of the Volsungs - Vǫlsunga saga - Edited and Translated with Introduction, Notes and Appendices*, London: Nelson

Fulk, R. D. ed. 2010. *The Beowulf Manuscript*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press

Heimir Pálsson. ed. 2012. Snorri Sturluson. *Edda: The Uppsala Edda*, trans. by Anthony Faulkes, London: Viking Society for Northern Research

Heusler, Andreas., Wilhelm Ranisch. ed. 1903. *Eddica Minora*, Dortmund: Fr. Wilh. Ruhfus

Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason. ed. 2014. *Eddukvæði*, A: *Goðakvæði* i-ii; B: *Hetjukvæði* i-ii. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag Völsunga saga. English & Old Norse

Larrington, Carolyne., Peter Robinson. ed. 2007. 'Sólarljóð', in *Poetry on Christian Subjects,* ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross, I, Turnhout: Brepols Editors, 287-357

Murray, A. T., trans., Rev. Dimock, George E., 1919. Homer: *Odyssey*, Volume I: Books 1-12. Loeb Classical Library 171. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Murray, A. T., trans., William F., Rev. Wyatt, 1925. Homer: *Iliad*, Volume II: Books 13-24. Loeb Classical Library 171. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Tolkien, Christopher. ed. 1960. *Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins Vitra - The saga of King Heidrek the Wise*, London: Thomas Nelson

Whaley, Diana. ed. 2012. *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas*, 1, Turnhout: Brepols

Secondary Sources

Acker, Paul. 2012. 'Death by Dragons', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 8, 1-21

Acker, Paul. 2013, 'Dragons in the Eddas and in Early Nordic Art', in *Revisiting the Poetic Edda*, ed. Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington, New York: Routledge, 75-97

Acker, Paul. 2002. 'Dwarf-lore in Alvíssmál' in *Revisiting the Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Heroic Legend*, ed. Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington, New York: Routledge, 213-27

Acker, Paul. 1997. *Revising Oral Theory: Formulaic Composition in Old English and Old Icelandic Verse*, London: Garland

Amodio, Mark C. 2004. *Writing the Oral Tradition: Oral Poetics and Literate Culture in Medieval England*, Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press

Amory, Frederic. 1990. 'Norse-Christian Syncretism and *Interpretatio Christiana* in *Sólarljóð*', *Gripla* 7, 251-266

Baldick, Chris, ed. 1990. *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Bloomfield, Morton W., and Charles W Dunn. 1989. *The Role of the Poet in Early Societies*, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer

Carstens, Lydia. 2015. 'Powerful space. The Iron-Age Hall and its Development During the Viking Age', in *Viking Worlds–Things, Spaces and Movement*, ed. Marianne Eriksen Hem, Unn Pedersen, Bernt Rundberget, and Irmelin Axelsen, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 12-27

Cavill, Paul. 1999. *Maxims in Old English poetry*, Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer

Cavill, Paul. 2017. 'Wisdom Literature' in *The Encyclopaedia of Medieval Literature in Britain* ed. R. Rouse, S. Echard, H. Fulton, G. Rector and J.A. Fay, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118396957.wbemlb022, [accessed 01/07/24]

Clunies Ross, Margaret. 2016. 'The Transmission and Preservation of Eddic Poetry', in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 12–32

Crenshaw, James L. 1998. *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press

Crowne, David K. 1960. 'The Hero on the Beach: An Example of Composition by Theme in Anglo-Saxon Poetry', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 61.4, 362-372

Davidson, Hilda Roderick Ellis. 1943. *The Road to Hel: A Study of the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Eriksen, Marianne Hem. 2019. *Architecture, Society, and Ritual in Viking Age Scandinavia: Doors, Dwellings, and Domestic Space*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Evans, Gareth Lloyd. 2020. *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature*, ed. Evans, Gareth Lloyd and Jessica Clare Hancock, Boydell & Brewer, Limited, 59-76

Fell, Christine. 1975. 'Old English Beor', *Leeds Studies in English* 8, 76–95

Fidjestøl, Bjarne. 1999. *The Dating of Eddic poetry: A Historical Survey and Methodological Investigation*, ed. Odd Einar Haugen, Copenhagen: Reitzel

Fidjestøl, Bjarne. 1979. *Sólarljóð: Tydning og Tolkningsgrunnlag*, Nordisk Instituts skrifteserie 4. Bergen, Oslo and Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget

Finlay, Alison. 2011. 'Risking one's head: *Vafþrúðnismál* and the Mythic Power of Poetry,' in *Myths, Legends, and Heroes: Essays on Old Norse and Old English Literature*, ed. Daniel Anlezark, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 91-108

Frank, Roberta. 2004. *Sex, lies and Málsháttakvæði: A Norse Poem from Medieval Orkney*, Centre for the Study of the Viking Age

Friðriksdóttir, Jóhanna Katrín. 2020. *Valkyrie*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing

Fulk, Robert D. 2016. ‘Eddic Metres’, in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 252–70

Fulk, Robert D., and Christopher M Cain. 2002. *A History of Old English Literature*, Newark: John Wiley & Sons

Griffith, Mark S. 1993. ‘Convention and Originality in the Old English ‘Beasts of Battle’ Typescene’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 22, 179-199

Gunnell, T. 2016. ‘Eddic performance and Eddic audiences’, in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 92-113

Gunnell, Terry. 1995. *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia*, Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer

Haimerl, Edgar., Frotscher, Antje. trans. 2013. ‘Sigurðr, a Medieval Hero’, in *Revisiting the Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Heroic Legend*, ed. Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington, New York: Routledge, 32-52

Hansen, Elaine Tuttle. 1982. ‘Hrothgar's 'Sermon' in "Beowulf" as Parental Wisdom’*, Anglo-Saxon England* 10, 53-67

Harris, Richard L. 1971. ‘A Study of "Grípisspá"’, *Scandinavian Studies* 43. 4, 344-355

Haukur Þorgeirsson. 2016. ‘The Dating of Eddic Poetry - Evidence from Alliteration’, in *Approaches to Nordic and Germanic Poetry*, ed. Kristján Árnason *et al.*, Reykjavík: Institute of Linguistics, University of Iceland Press, 33-62

Hermann, Pernille. 2018. 'Mythology', in *Handbook of Pre-modern Nordic Memory Studies. Volume 1: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Jürg Glauser, Pernille Hermann and Stephen A. Mitchell, Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 79-92

Jackson, Elizabeth. 1994. 'A New Perspective on the Relationship between the Final Three Sections of Hávamál and on the Role of Loddfáfnir', *Saga-Book* XXIV, 33-57

Jesch, Judith. 2015. *The Viking Diaspora*, London: Taylor & Francis Group

Jesch, Judith, and Christina Lee. 2017. "Healing Runes." *Viking encounters: Proceedings of the Eighteenth Viking Congress*. Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 386-398

Kellogg, Robert L. 1998. *A Concordance to Eddic Poetry*, East Lansing, Michigan: Colleagues Press

Kramarz-Bein, Susanne. 2010. 'Þiðreks Saga af Bern', in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages,* Oxford University Press, https://www-oxfordreference-com.nottingham.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662624.001.0001/acref-9780198662624-e-5649 [accessed 03/07/24]

Kure, Henning. 2006 'Hanging on the World Tree', in *Old Norse Religion in Long Term Perspectives*, ed. Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert, and Catharina Raudvere, United States: Casemate Group, 68-71

Larrington, Carolyne. 1993. *A Store of Common Sense: Gnomic Theme and Style in Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Larrington, Carolyne. 2002. '*Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*: Cosmic History, Cosmic Geography', in *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Mythology*, ed. Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington, London: Routledge, 63-77

Larrington, Carolyne. 2020. 'Eddic Poetry – A Case Study: *Sólarljóð*', in *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, ed. Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington and Sif Rikhardsdottir, Melton: Boydell & Brewer, 245-58

Larrington, Carolyne., Judy Quinn, Brittany Schorn, ed. 2016. *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Leslie, Helen Frances. 2013. 'Prose Contexts of Eddic Poetry, Primarily in the *Fornaldarsǫgur*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bergen), [accessed 03/07/24, https://www.academia.edu/3881074/Prose_Contexts_of_Eddic_Poetry_Primarily_in_the_Fornaldars%C3%B6gur]

Lindow, John. 2014. 'Memory and Old Norse Mythology', in *Minni and Muninn: Memory in Medieval Nordic Culture*, ed. Pernille Hermann, Stephen A. Mitchell, and Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, Turnhout: Brepols, 41-58

Lord, Albert Bates. 1953. 'Homer's Originality: Oral Dictated Texts', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 84, 124-134

Lord, Albert Bates. 1960. *The Singer of Tales*, London: Harvard University Press

Lönnroth, Lars. 1971. 'Hjálmar's Death-Song and the Delivery of Eddic poetry', *Speculum* 46.1, 1-20

Lönnroth, Lars. 1969. 'The Noble Heathen: A Theme in the Saga', *Scandinavian Studies* 41.1, 1-29

Machan, Tim William. 1992. 'Alliteration and the Editing of Eddic Poetry', *Scandinavian Studies* 64.2, 216-227

Males, Mikael. 2020. *The Poetic Genesis of Old Icelandic Literature*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter

Matveeva, Elizaveta. 2015. *Reconsidering the Tradition: The Odinic Hero as Saga Protagonist*, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham), [accessed 03/07/24, http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/33637/]

McKinnell, John. 1994. *Both One and Many: Essays on Change and Variety in Late Norse Heathenism*, Rome: Il Calamo

McKinnell, John. 2005. *Meeting the Other in Norse Myth and Legend*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: DS Brewer

McKinnell, John. 2007. 'Wisdom from the Dead: The "*Ljóðatal*" Section of *Hávamál*', *Medium Aevum* 76.1, 85-115.

McGillivray, Andrew. 2018. *Influences of Pre-Christian Mythology and Christianity on Old Norse Poetry: a Narrative Study of Vafþrúðnismál*, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications

Mcmahon, Brian. 2020. 'Remembrance of Things to Come: Memory and Prophecy in Old Norse Literature', *Medium Aevum* 89.1, 138-155.

Murphy, Roland E. 1986. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 2nd edn. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans

Parks, Ward. 1990. *Verbal Dueling in Heroic Narrative: The Homeric and Old English Traditions*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press

Parsons, Mikeal C. 2008. 'Exegesis 'by the numbers': Numerology and the New Testament', *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 35.1, 25-43

Quinn, Judy. 2010. 'Liquid Knowledge: Traditional Conceptualisations of Learning in Eddic Poetry', in *Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations and their Implications*, ed. Slavica Ranković, Leidulf Melve, and Else Mundal, Utrecht studies in medieval literacy 20, Turnhout: Brepols, 175-217

Renoir, Alain. 1964. 'Oral-Formulaic Theme Survival: A Possible Instance in the 'Nibelungenlied'', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 65.1, 70-75

Richardson, John. 1987. 'The Critic on the Beach', *Neophilologus* 71.1, 114-119

Riedinger, Anita. 1985. 'The Old English Formula in Context', *Speculum* 60. 2, 294-317

Roscoe, Brett. 2014. '*Sagacious Liminality: The Boundaries of Wisdom in Old English and Old Norse-Icelandic Literature'* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queens University, Ontario), [last accessed 12/07/24, https://qspace.library.queensu.ca/items/381e1de9-0f74-4a66-9479-5c1f60d3924b]

Rowe, Elizabeth Ashman. 2013. '*Fornaldarsögur* and Heroic Legends of the Edda', in *Revisiting the Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Heroic Legend*, ed. Paul Acker, and Carolyne Larrington, New York: Routledge, 202-218

Schjødt, Jens Peter. 1988. 'The "Fire Ordeal" in the *Grímnismál*: Initiation or Annihilation?', *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 12, 29-43.

Schorn, Brittany. 2011. 'Eddic Poetry for a New Era: Tradition and Innovation in *Sólarljóð* and *Hugsvinnsmál*', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 7, 131-150

Schorn, Brittany. 2016. 'Eddic Style', in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 271–87

Schorn, Brittany. 2017. *Speaker and Authority in Old Norse Wisdom Poetry*, Berlin: De Gruyter

Schorn, Brittany. 2020. 'Wisdom', in *A critical companion to Old Norse literary genre,* ed. Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Rikhardsdottir, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 211-26

Schulz, Katja. 2004. *Riesen: von Wissenshütern und Wildnisbewohnern in Edda und Saga*, Heidelberg: Winter

Shippey, Thomas. 1976. *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old English*, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer

Spearing A. C. 1976. *Medieval dream-poetry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Thompson, Stith, 1958. *Motif-index of Folk-literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-books, and Local Legends,* Copenhagen*:* Rosenkilde and Bagger

Thorvaldsen, Bernt Ø. 2016. 'The Dating of Eddic Poetry', in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 72-91

Tsitsiklis, Kieran R.M. 2007. *Der Thul in Text und Kontext: Þulr/Þyle in Edda und altenglischer Literatur*, Berlin: De Gruyter

von See, Klaus, et al. ed. 2006. *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, 5, Heidelberg: Winter

von See, Klaus, et al. ed. 2019. *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, 1/I, Heidelberg: Winter

von See, Klaus, et al. ed. 2019. *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, 1/II, Heidelberg: Winter

Watkins, Calvert. 1995. *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*, Oxford: University Press on Demand

Weeks, Stuart. 2010. *An introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature*, London: T & T Clark

Whitelock, Dorothy. 1951. *The Audience of Beowulf*, Oxford: Clarendon Press