

Dvergatal, Shorthand for a Universe

The Dwarfs of *Vǫluspá*

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FOREWORD

No work is ever the product of a single mind. It is the sum of a great many minds, which have come together to shape the ideas of its author. I therefore have many minds to thank, the most important of which are:

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1. INTRODUCTION

I. Key Question and Arguments

The guiding question to this thesis is a straightforward one: Why is *Dvergatal* in *Völuspá*, and what is its function? This is, in part, inspired by Ursula Dronke's edition of the *Poetic Edda* (Vol. II), in which she asks more or less the same question: “[W]hy should a poet who touches so rapidly on all other myths that concern him, spend seven stanzas on dwarfs?” However, Dronke avoided providing a real answer due to her textual analysis, which led her to conclude that *Dvergatal* is not an ‘original’ part of the poem, rather a later interpolation, and “[w]e might then wish to improve the text... by eliminating stanzas 10-16 [i.e. *Dvergatal*].”¹ By condemning *Dvergatal* in this manner, Dronke suggests that *Dvergatal* does not belong in *Völuspá*, and it serves no useful function in the poem. This would appear to be the last word on *Dvergatal*'s place in *Völuspá* until the present day, as to my knowledge no studies have seriously attempted to challenge Dronke's dismissal of the dwarf list.² This study seeks to renew interest in *Dvergatal* as a legitimate part of *Völuspá* and re-examine its reason for being in the poem; for if it has been included in both attested versions of *Völuspá* as well as in the quotations of *Völuspá* in *Gylfaginning*, it must contribute something to the overall poem, even if that contribution is not immediately apparent to a modern audience. Whether or not *Dvergatal* was included in the earliest formulations of *Völuspá* is irrelevant to the poem as we have it; because it is present, its function must be taken into consideration in order to achieve a fuller understanding of *Völuspá*.

To that end, the names themselves are paramount. *Dvergatal* is more than a list of dwarfs; it is a collection of linguistic units which contain a semantic component, and these names have the potential to convey as much meaning as any other word in the Old Icelandic lexicon. They were at some point intentionally constructed and (perhaps at another time) intentionally arranged into a list and included in *Völuspá*. The ways that the poet and the audience may have understood the meanings of these names thus affects the poem. Using this line of reasoning as a point of departure, this study focuses on the etymological meanings of

¹ Ursula Dronke, ed. *The Poetic Edda: Volume II: Mythological Poems*, ed. and trans. with commentary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 67.

² Terry Gunnell is one exception; his approach to *Dvergatal* is to use its rhythm, meter, and sound devices as evidence for the oral performance of *Völuspá*. This perspective, however, ignores the content of *Dvergatal* and thus does not really challenge Dronke's literary assessment of *Dvergatal* as a superfluous interpolation. See section 2.II for more detail on the use of *Dvergatal* in academic pursuits. Terry Gunnell, “*Völuspá* in Performance,” in *The Nordic Apocalypse: Approaches to Völuspá and Nordic Days of Judgement*, ed. Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers n.v., 2013).

the names and argues for a three-faceted answer to the question of *Dvergatal*'s *raison d'être* and function.

Firstly, at the literal level *Dvergatal* is a list of dwarfs, and it performs this function adequately – although dwarfs are not described in any way in *Vǫluspá*, many of the names' meanings conform to general characteristics of mythological dwarfs that can be distilled from the various mythological sources. This is most strongly supported by the names denoting weapons, tools, and other craftable objects, which relate to the ubiquitous mythical theme of dwarfs as smiths. The list is not a perfect picture of dwarfs, however; a few of the names, particularly those denoting heroic and warrior-like character traits, clash with the characterization of dwarfs in the *Eddas* and sagas. Still, the list as a whole (in all three of its witnesses) is not jarringly un-dwarfish and passes as a catalogue of the creatures.

Secondly, moving beyond the names as dwarfs and looking for patterns of symbolism throughout the list reveals that *Dvergatal* contains strong connections to the rest of *Vǫluspá*, particularly in the category of natural features but also, to a lesser extent, in the imagery of objects and tools as well as individual character traits. The list is arranged in such a way that natural features comprise much of the first portion of *Dvergatal*, a structure which mirrors the mythical world-building in the opening stanzas of *Vǫluspá* and may even supplement it. In addition, at least two of the dwarf names may refer to volcanism, the imagery of which is prevalent throughout the apocalyptic poem. In the course of my argument I identify many examples of volcanic imagery in *Vǫluspá*, some of which have not been pointed out as such by previous scholars. The mirroring of structure and theme between *Dvergatal* and *Vǫluspá* may also be seen in the names denoting character traits, which can mostly be divided up into positive (heroic) traits and negative ones; I attempt to show that this divide echoes the struggle between good and evil that occurs throughout *Vǫluspá*, though this line of reasoning is not without flaws.

Thirdly, examining the names in a wider context – not just *Vǫluspá*, but of all the Old Icelandic mythological sources – reveals a surprising commonality which has been noted but not given any serious attention in the past: Nearly half of the names can be identified (with varying degrees of certainty) as allusions to other mythological figures outside of *Dvergatal*. In some cases these figures are dwarfs, but in many cases they are not; to be specific, many *Óðinsheiti*, names of other gods, giants, and other mythical creatures and objects can be found within the confines of *Dvergatal*. In addition, it is inevitable that there has been a

historical loss of mythological material due to manuscript destruction and the dying out of the specific oral traditions which contained that material; in light of this, it is highly likely that many more allusions could originally have been identified. I do not find it implausible to argue that, in fact, all of the dwarf names in *Vǫluspá* could potentially have been allusions to other mythological figures in addition to the other functions that they serve as part of *Dvergatal*.

A synthesis of the above findings results in a new perspective on *Dvergatal*, namely that it is a dense and complex list of names which simultaneously performs several roles in *Vǫluspá*: It depicts mythological dwarfs; it contains names and groups of names which mirror themes of the overall poem, sometimes quite specifically; and it concisely collects many allusions to figures across its wider mythology. This suggests that the composer of *Dvergatal* was conscious of the meanings of the names and deliberately wove them into a list in such a way that they would fit well in *Vǫluspá* – it is not likely that a list which relates so well to the rest of its poem and wider mythological context would have been inserted haphazardly without regard for its *raison d'être*, nor would it have been copied down with the rest of the poem in medieval manuscripts if it served no purpose in *Vǫluspá*; ink and parchment were (and still are) precious. All of this points to the conclusion that *Dvergatal* belongs in *Vǫluspá*, and serves at least three valuable functions in it.

II. Approach

In the introduction of his article “Dwarf-lore in *Alvíssmál*,” Paul Acker contrasts his methods with those of Lotte Motz in *The Wise One of the Mountain*.³ “Her approach is essentially structuralist, paring away all extraneous details to find the synthesizing archetype. In this study I will take the opposite tack, examining a single, apparently aberrant source of dwarf-lore on its own terms, and then placing that lore within its narrative, generic and mythographic contexts.”⁴ I take a quite similar approach to that of Acker, scrutinizing *Dvergatal* closely before drawing connections to its context, *Vǫluspá*, the manuscripts in which the poem is found, and the occasional relevant piece of skaldic poetry or saga.

The scope of this study is intended to encompass dwarfs as mythical, literary beings in the Icelandic context – effectively, what is contained in the Icelandic sources. Much work

³ Lotte Motz, *The Wise One of the Mountain: Form, function, and significance of the subterranean smith* (Göppingen, Germany: Kümmerle Verlag, 1983).

⁴ Paul Acker, “Dwarf-lore in *Alvíssmál*,” in *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Norse Mythology*, ed. Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington (New York: Routledge, 2002), 215.

has been done in the past in this respect as well as on dwarfs as creatures of folklore; indeed, our modern understanding of dwarfs in Medieval Scandinavia is a result of a combination of these two approaches.⁵ While I acknowledge the deeper understanding of dwarfs that this combined approach brings, I do not draw upon folkloristics for the purposes of this study, nor do I rely heavily on the information on dwarfs found in the sagas. This is because the mythical, literary dwarfs and the dwarfs of folklore appear to be somewhat different in their nature; what survives suggests that they may have diverged and even died off in active belief rather early.⁶ The dwarfs of the eddic poems and the *Prose Edda* are transmitted through the products of a thirteenth-century Christian literary elite with different motivations, education, and understanding of myth than the general population who may or may not have passed around folk tales containing dwarfs. Though both may of course stem from pre-Christian tradition, the one passed through the Christian elite filter while the other was subjected to probably a millennium or more of retellings before being examined in modern form by scholars of folkloristics. As such, it is not tenable to attempt to find direct connections between the dwarfs of *Völuspá* and dwarfs of folklore. The sagas are much closer in time to *Völuspá* and thus could be used as a somewhat better source on dwarfs, but as Motz has observed, the sagas follow a repeating pattern when dwarfs appear – the human character prevents a dwarf, who is always a smith, from returning to his home and extorts from him one of the treasures he has forged.⁷ The sagas are therefore of limited value to an understanding of mythical dwarfs, mostly reaffirming that dwarfs are smiths and live in stones or underground.

Because *Völuspá* itself provides little information on the dwarfs, the first stage is to closely examine the meanings of the names from an onomastic-etymological perspective. Etymology attempts to establish the history of a word based on documented or hypothetical changes in sound and semantic meanings, and to use these historical processes to reconstruct potentially older forms of the word when possible. Onomastics differ from pure etymology in that names do not have ‘meanings’ in the traditional sense – on the literal level a name has a one-to-one correspondence with the person, place, or thing that it designates.⁸ However, as Lena Petersen puts it, “[p]roper names are chiefly formed from morphemes that already exist

⁵ Lotte Motz has been highly influential on this approach to dwarfs, writing several extensive studies discussed below in section 2.II.

⁶ Jan de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte: Band I* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1970), 256.

⁷ Lotte Motz, “The Craftsman in the Mound,” in *Folklore* 88, No. 1. (1997), 47.

⁸ Phillip Durkin, *The Oxford Guide to Etymology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 267.

in the language: root morphemes, derivational morphemes, and inflexional morphemes. These morphemes carry a certain meaning, and it is precisely this meaning you try to find when you interpret, or etymologize, a name.”⁹ Personal names thus have at least two layers of meaning: the named individual and the etymological meaning. The etymological meaning(s) in some cases can be identified, but that does not necessarily mean it (or they) would have been transparent to a contemporary audience. In addition, there is the factor of individual variation, as each person’s personal vocabulary is different.¹⁰ A necessary step in the onomastics of the dwarf names is therefore to assess the transparency of their etymological meanings.

In the case of the dwarf names, unlike place names, they have no documented word history, which makes some of the aforementioned etymological strategies impossible. The only way to determine both the etymological meaning and transparency of each name is therefore to assess its probable construction. The name can be broken down into component morphemes for which a corresponding, attested lexeme or morpheme in Old Icelandic may or may not be found; if one is found, then one can presume that at least some native speakers of Old Icelandic would have recognized that lexeme and associated its meaning with the name. If one is not found, an alternative option is to compare it to related attested and reconstructed languages, especially Proto-Norse and Proto-Germanic (abbreviated in this study as PGmc), for lexemes that, through accepted theories of sound changes, may be related to the morpheme in the name. This argument for a name’s meaning is weaker but still plausible.

For these reasons, I approach each dwarf name in the following way: I assess the construction of the name and then search for possible related lexemes to determine possible meanings. I then assess the probable transparency of those meanings based on the relative certainty that the lexeme would have been known and recognized by a contemporary audience. This strategy is how most scholars in the past have analyzed the dwarf names, especially Chester Nathan Gould who, through systematic analysis of all attested dwarf names, provides statistical detail for the normal methods of construction, and determines that the names appear to have been formulated fairly close in time to the rest of the poem.¹¹ I

⁹ Lena Petersen, “Mono- and Dithematic Personal Names in Old Germanic,” in *Probleme der Namenbildung: Rekonstruktion von Eigennamen und der ihnen zugrundeliegenden Appellativ*, ed. Thorsten Andersson (Textgruppen i Uppsala AB, Uppsala, 1988), 121.

¹⁰ Durkin, *Guide to Etymology*, 268.

¹¹ Gould, “Dwarf-Names: A Study in Old Icelandic Religion,” in *Publications of the Modern Language Society of America (PMLA)*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Dec. 1929), 958-9; 965-7.

differ slightly from my predecessors in that, in many cases, I do not always stick only to the lexeme from which the name was most likely constructed. I also include in my analysis lexemes that are close enough in form to the morpheme(s) in a name that they could have been perceived by the audience as an alternative meaning. This is not only because contemporary human perception would not necessarily have adhered faithfully to what etymologists would determine to be the meaning of the name, but were free to associate whatever vocabulary came to mind with the name; it is also due to the affinity to puns shown in Old Icelandic poetry, especially of the skaldic variety, as well as a medieval tendency to have multiple layers of meaning in any given text.¹²

After establishing the plausible etymological meanings of the dwarf names, I analyze them statistically and separate them into categories based on both meaning and possible allusions. The four significant categories are natural features, tools and everyday objects, character traits, and allusions to mythological figures.¹³ An analysis of the first three categories is presented, each with a view to their contribution to the first two functions of *Dvergatal* identified above – namely, representing dwarfs and connecting the list to the rest of *Vǫluspá*, echoing and supplementing the poem’s themes. This is accomplished by comparing related groups of name-meanings to the characteristics of dwarfs identified in section 2.III, as well as to themes apparent in *Vǫluspá*. Finally, the analysis of the fourth category, allusions, corresponds to the third, allusive function of *Dvergatal*. In that section the wider context of allusions in Old Icelandic poetry is explored and applied to the allusions in *Dvergatal* to support my hypothesis that *Dvergatal* may be comprised entirely of allusive names.

2. CONTEXT

I. Introduction to the Sources

Dvergatal, the ‘dwarf-list,’ is a section in *Vǫluspá* consisting of approximately seven stanzas (10-16)¹⁴ in the *fornyrðislag* type of eddic metre.¹⁵ It appears in both versions of

¹² Puns and word-play in Old Icelandic were called *ofljóst* (‘too clear’); see, for example, the discussion in *Skáldskaparmál* 74.

¹³ I have also found that many of the names can be separated into pairs with apparently related meanings, but the scope of this study does not allow for a proper exploration of this curious, and potentially significant, phenomenon.

¹⁴ Or eight, if stanza 9 concerning the creation of the dwarfs is included; or six, if stanza 10 mentioning only Mótsognir and Durinn is not considered part of the ‘list’ *per se*.

¹⁵ R. D. Fulk, “Eddic metres,” in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 252-4.

Völuspá, namely *Codex Regius* of the *Poetic Edda* (GKS 2365 4to; abbreviated in this study as CR) and *Hauksbók* (AM 544 4to; abbreviated as H), and is quoted in *Gylfaginning* (four versions: *Codex Regius* of the *Prose Edda* (GKS 2367 4to; abbreviated as CRPr), *Codex Trajectinus* (MS 1374), *Codex Upsaliensis* (DG 11), and *Codex Wormianus* (AM 242 fol.)). In addition, a good number of the dwarf names in *Dvergatal* are also included in the *Pulur* in two manuscripts containing *Skáldskaparmál*, AM 748 I 4to and AM 757a 4to. For the purposes of this study, CR and H are the main sources used for *Völuspá*, but the names of *Dvergatal* in the manuscripts of *Gylfaginning* are also included because the dwarf list is quoted from *Völuspá* in full and therefore serves as a legitimate witness. For the text of *Völuspá* I use Dronke's 1997 edition as a standard, which is based primarily on CR but includes variants in H in the apparatus.¹⁶ For the text of *Gylfaginning* I have referred to both Anthony Faulkes' 1988 edition¹⁷ and Gottfried Lorenz's 1984 edition.¹⁸ Variants of the dwarf names are drawn from several different sources: the standardized ones from Dronke, Faulkes, and Lorenz, and the diplomatic ones from the *Medieval Nordic Text Archive* cross-referenced with facsimiles of the manuscripts.¹⁹

To understand the relationships between the various witnesses of *Dvergatal*, it is important to contextualize it in what we know about the transmission of *Völuspá*. It is not within the scope of this paper to make a full investigation of the composition and authorship of both *Eddas*, thus I must address only the points which are vital to *Dvergatal*. Dronke attempts to argue that the versions of *Völuspá* in CR (dated to c. 1270CE) and H (c. 1340CE) stem from one original manuscript (“*R I”), which was the first and only time *Völuspá* was converted from oral tradition into a literary work.²⁰ This perspective has subsequently been challenged by Gísli Sigurðsson who considers it “an unacceptable stretch of the imagination to follow Dronke all the way in her attempts to explain the variations away;” rather, the differences between the two versions of *Völuspá* are better explained by two separate instances of writing down from oral tradition.²¹ That being said, Gísli admits that “[t]he two known versions are too similar for it to be possible or even likely that they should be read as

¹⁶ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 7-24.

¹⁷ Anthony Faulkes, ed. *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning / Snorri Sturluson*, edited with an introduction (London: Viking Society for Northern Research University College London, 1998).

¹⁸ Gottfried Lorenz, ed. *Gylfaginning / Snorri Sturluson: Texte, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, ed. and trans. with commentary (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984).

¹⁹ *Medieval Nordic Text Archive*. www.menota.org (accessed May 21st, 2017).

²⁰ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 62-5.

²¹ Gísli Sigurðsson, “*Völuspá* as the Product of an Oral Tradition: What Does that Entail?” in *The Nordic Apocalypse: Approaches to Völuspá and Nordic Days of Judgement*, ed. Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen, (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers n.v., 2013), 52-3.

reflections of two totally independent oral transmissions of a hypothetical poem composed by a single poet just before the year 1000,”²² and that there might have been influences on the H version due to re-oralization from CR.²³ This is complicated by *Gylfaginning*, of which the oldest manuscripts CRPr and *Codex Upsaliensis* are both dated to c. 1325, but if Snorri Sturluson was the compiler of the *Prose Edda*, then the work must originate from his lifetime (1179-1241).²⁴ Since *Völuspá* is quoted in *Gylfaginning* it would consequently have to be at least thirty years older than CR, and it is unknown whether the quotations are from a physical manuscript containing *Völuspá* or directly from an oral version of the poem.²⁵ To summarize, the composition of *Völuspá* as a cohesive poem could be as early as the tenth century and as late as c. 1200. It has three main versions, CR, H, and *Gylfaginning*, which cannot convincingly be fit into a traditional stemma and seem to be from three separate sources. Nevertheless, they all seem to stem from a common version of *Völuspá* that contained *Dvergatal*.

II. History of Research

Dwarfs are often mentioned in discussions of Old Norse mythology, religion, and poetry, as well as in a concise entry for ‘dwarf’ in relevant encyclopedias and dictionaries, but recent works dealing with Scandinavian dwarfs in any depth are hard to come by. The first quarter of the twentieth century saw a flurry of scholarly inquiry into the dwarfs that was synthesized and expanded upon by Gould in his 1929 article “Dwarf Names: A Study in Old Icelandic.”²⁶ At that time, it was believed that the meanings behind the names were the key to unlocking knowledge about dwarfs in Old Norse mythology, which has remained the case up to the present day. In fact, little has changed in either scholarly approach to the dwarfs or knowledge about them since Gould’s article – one reason for this may be that there is so little information on dwarfs in the literary sources that only so much can be conclusively said about them, and even this is quite vague and debatable. It is no surprise, then, that dictionaries, handbooks, and encyclopedias of Old Norse mythology and the like have been

²² Gísli Sigurðsson, “*Völuspá* as the Product of an Oral Tradition,” 53.

²³ A simple solution to this paradox is that the poem was not, in fact, composed just before the year 1000CE but later. This shorter period of transmission would account for the proportion of similarities and differences between the two versions.

²⁴ Faulkes, “Introduction,” in *Edda*, xiii; xxix.

²⁵ Faulkes, “Introduction,” in *Edda*, xxv.

²⁶ For a summary of nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship on dwarfs up until 1929, see Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 959.

repeating the same few talking points for many decades.²⁷ Most of the productive work on dwarfs has been done on refining the etymologies of the names; to that effort, numerous scholars have weighed in on some or all of the dwarf names, the most influential of which have been Gould, Siegfried Gutenbrunner,²⁸ Hugo Gering and B. Sijmons,²⁹ Jan de Vries,³⁰ Gottfried Lorenz,³¹ and the assemblers of the *Lexicon Poeticum* (LP).³² Gould's article is the only sequential, etymological list of all dwarf names attested in Old Icelandic literature, while the others either tackle only one particular list, or all of them as part of a larger compendium of Old Icelandic words and names. Also of note is Edgar C. Polomé's 1997 article "Notes on the Dwarfs in Germanic Tradition" which is the most recent study that provides the etymologies for all of the dwarf names in a particular list, in his case that of *Gylfaginning* with some reference to the version in *Völuspá*.³³

As mentioned, dwarfs have mostly received attention through studies of their names, for the reason that the names appear to be the only method left to us to find out more about them. This of course relies on the preconception that the names actually contain relevant information, and it is worthwhile to examine in some detail the ways that some scholars have attempted to glean meaning from the names. Helmut de Boor's 1924 study "Der Zwerg in Skandinavien" exemplifies the attitude towards the dwarfs in the early part of the twentieth century, especially prior to Gould's comprehensive list. His main points are that dwarfs are an entirely literary and peripheral figure in Old Icelandic literature and they should not be equated with those of folk belief of the time leading up to the *Eddas*.³⁴ He claims their presence does, however, indicate that dwarfs must have existed in active folk belief at some time, and their main roles in that folklore would have been as smiths and stone-dwellers.³⁵ In terms of their names he can make little sense of their meanings and appears to deem the lists

²⁷ Compare, for example, the similarities in the discussions of dwarfs between E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 233-5; de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 252-6; and Rudolf Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, trans. Angela Hall (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), 67-9.

²⁸ Siegfried Gutenbrunner, "Eddastudien I: Über die Zwerge in der Völuspa Str. 9-13," in *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 70 (Dec. 1955).

²⁹ B. Sijmons and Hugo Gering, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda, Erste Hälfte: Götterlieder*. Halle, Germany: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses (Franckesche Stiftungen), 1927.

³⁰ Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1962).

³¹ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*.

³² Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson, *Lexicon Poeticum Antiquae Linguae Septentrionalis: ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog* (Copenhagen: S.L. Møllers Bogtrykkeri, 1916).

³³ Edgar C. Polomé, "Notes on the Dwarfs in Germanic Tradition," in *Language and its Ecology: Essays in memory of Einar Haugen*, ed. Stig Eliasson and Ernst Håkon Jahr (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), 441-50.

³⁴ Helmut de Boor, "Der Zwerg in Skandinavien," in *Festschrift für Eugen Mogk zum 70. Geburtstag 19. Juli 1924* (Halle an der Saale, Germany: Verlag von Max Niemeyer, 1924), 546-9.

³⁵ De Boor, "Der Zwerg in Skandinavien," 551-2; 556.

of dwarf names mere sound devices and exercises in rote memory, as most of the dwarfs do not directly appear elsewhere in myth.³⁶

Just five years later, Gould published his 1929 article containing all of the extant dwarf names, which made a great impact on the study of dwarfs. His etymologies are not particularly original, nor have they all stood the test of time, but the article is notable for setting the example of grouping the names into categories of meaning. By doing this Gould is able to create a more coherent structure into which to fit the names, and subsequently make some observations about what the names tell us. Though paving the way for later, systematic approaches to the names, his study also demonstrates the dangers of arbitrarily grouping names into categories. The primary flaw in Gould's methodology is to pull the dwarf names out of their various contexts and assemble categories from them – naturally, those categories are based on his (and previous scholars') preconceptions about the dwarfs, and with such a large number of names he is able to find at least a few that seem to fit into each of his categories. For this reason, his results are unsatisfying and some even have a taste of outlandishness; take, for example, one instance of support for his hypothesis that the dwarfs represent the dead: "The dead dwarf may be described by his activities in life – [...] *Grímr*, 'mask,' i.e. the anonymous stranger who died without telling his name."³⁷ Not all of his assessments are equally imaginative – the category of dwarf-artisans with their products as their names is still the most plausible way of understanding such names.

Lotte Motz uses the same strategy of pulling all the names out of context to the same unsatisfying effect in her 1973 article "New Thoughts on Dwarf Names." That study attempts to draw parallels between modern European Christmas and New Years traditions and the meanings of the dwarf names, arguing that dwarf-smiths were originally part of Yule celebrations and lists of dwarf names related to the actual festivities were recited during the celebrations, but throughout the article the overall connection feels forced and arbitrary, much like Gould's categories. Sure enough, Motz admits that about a third of the names listed in Gould's article (her source) fit into her festive categories.³⁸ Considering the quite broad nature of her subject matter and the large number of dwarf names to choose from, this is roughly how many names one would expect to randomly match up with features of the celebrations. The argument is further undermined by the lack of any concrete evidence

³⁶ De Boor, "Der Zwerg in Skandinavien," 547; 549.

³⁷ Gould, "Dwarf-Names," 960.

³⁸ Motz, "New Thoughts on Dwarf-Names in Old Icelandic," in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 7, No. 1 (1973), 111-2.

linking dwarfs and the celebrations – without something explicit, such as parallel lists of names or a prominent place of dwarfs among the modern traditions, the article is moot. More useful are Motz’s other works on dwarfs, in particular “The Craftsman in the Mound,” which examines the recurring motif of the underground dwarf-smith in both Old Icelandic literature and Germanic folk traditions, and *The Wise One of the Mountain*, a study on smiths generally in Germanic myth and folklore with some focus on dwarfs. In these studies dwarfs are given much attention and many of their demonstrable characteristics based on the literary context are elaborated on; these characteristics remain part of what appears to be common knowledge about dwarfs today, and are discussed below.

Since Motz’s inquiries, the dwarfs have received only occasional attention, the names themselves even less so.³⁹ Polomé’s article focuses on the names in *Gylfaginning* but does not contribute much new beyond a skepticism of long-held assumptions, such as the dwarfs as figures of death.⁴⁰ One recent work on the dwarfs is Werner Schäfke’s quite extensive 2010 study “Was ist eigentlich ein Zwerg? Eine prototypesemantische Figuranalyse der *dvergar* in der Sagaliteratur;” this study, however, focuses on dwarfs in the sagas, not the mythology, and is not concerned with the meaning of their names.⁴¹ To my knowledge, this thesis is the first study of the names in twenty years, and possibly the only dedicated study of *Dvergatal* with a focus on the context of *Völuspá*.

III. Mythological Dwarfs

The entirety of what we confidently know about dwarfs according to the Old Norse mythic texts is so small that it can be concisely summarized in just a few paragraphs; because of this, it is fairly easy to encapsulate what traits dwarfs possessed and the things they were commonly associated with in the mythology. Entries on dwarfs in encyclopedic or dictionary-style works address the same few points, as have most articles focused on dwarfs: Dwarfs are smiths and craftsmen; they can and do produce magical or wondrous objects, including the mead of poetry. They live underground or in stones, and cannot venture into the sun. Some,

³⁹ One way of using the dwarf names today is to lump them in with the other lists of names in Old Icelandic poetry as mere memory-training tools; Guðrún Nordal for example writes that “[c]atalogues in verse form such as these were common in the Middle Ages and were intended for training the memory; the subjects could be as different as a library catalogue and a Latin grammar, and it is probable that this was the purpose of the *þulur* in the training of the young poets.” Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy: The Role of Skaldic Verse in Icelandic Textual Culture of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 5.

⁴⁰ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 448.

⁴¹ Werner Schäfke, “Was ist eigentlich ein Zwerg? Eine prototypesemantische Figuranalyse der *dvergar* in der Sagaliteratur,” in *Mediaevistik 23* (Peter Lang AG, 2010).

like Alvíss, possess great wisdom. They were either created from the flesh of Ymir (*Gylfaginning* 14), from Brímir's blood and Bláinn's limbs (*Völuspá* 9), or simply from earth (*Völuspá* 10), and four dwarfs (Norðri, Suðri, Austri, and Vestri) hold up the four corners of the sky. Their physical appearance is unknown save that Alvíss has a startlingly pale complexion – descriptions of the small size and ugliness of dwarfs come from later sagas.⁴²

That dwarfs, as a whole, are smiths chiefly comes from the attribution of many (or even most of) the magical objects in Old Icelandic literature to their craftsmanship.⁴³ Dwarfs are said to have created, for example, the Brísingamen (*Sqrla þátr* 1), Freyr's pocket-boat Skíðblaðnir, his boar Gullinbursti (*Skáldskaparmál* 35), and various legendary swords such as Dáinsleif “*er dvergarnir gerðu*” (‘which the dwarfs made;’ *Skáldskaparmál* 50). Because of this, modern scholars approach dwarfs with a built-in assumption that they are all smiths, so much so that Motz regards the words ‘dwarf’ and ‘smith’ as interchangeable in the *Prose Edda*, asserting that it is sufficient that Reginn of *Reginismál* is a smith to assume he is a dwarf, despite contrary indications in text; he is a dwarf in stature only,⁴⁴ and his family is not of the dwarf race.⁴⁵ When dwarfs definitely appear in the mythological sources, they are explicitly called *dvergr* (pl. *dvergar*). Moreover, there are other smiths in the literature who are not dwarfs – the “*smiðr nokkurr*” of *Gylfaginning* 42 who turns out to be a giant, and Völundr of *Völundarkviða*; the latter possesses features strongly reminiscent of dwarfs but he is definitely not one himself.⁴⁶ Therefore, from the available evidence it is safe to say that dwarfs generally function as smiths, but not all smiths are dwarfs.

Skáldskaparmál G57 gives an account of the creation of the mead of poetry from Kvasir's blood by the dwarfs Fjalarr and Galarr (as does *Hávamál* 104-10, but it is lacking the agency of the dwarfs), and numerous kennings for mead involving dwarfs confirm this as a widely-known detail.⁴⁷ Consequently, a conventional approach to the dwarf names would be to look for references to mead in their meanings, but only three can be plausibly connected to mead: Fjalarr ‘hider;’ Mióðvitnir ‘mead-wolf, mead-prover, mead-seeker;’ and Veigr ‘strong drink.’

⁴² Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 68.

⁴³ Motz, “New Thoughts on Dwarf-Names,” 108; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 68; de Boor, “Der Zwerg in Skandinavien,” 556; Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North*, 233; de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 254.

⁴⁴ See the entry for Reginn in section 3.I; note that this suggests dwarfs are of unusual size, probably small.

⁴⁵ Motz, “New Thoughts on Dwarf-Names,” 108-9.

⁴⁶ Motz, “The Craftsman in the Mound,” 49.

⁴⁷ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 209; de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 255.

Fjalarr is undoubtedly one of the dwarfs who brewed the mead.⁴⁸ Mióðvitnir is doubtful as a *heiti* for Fjalarr or Galarr, as it works better as an *Óðinsheiti* because Óðinn, not the dwarfs, actually sought out, stole, and drank the mead. Veigr could indeed be a reference to the mead of poetry, but also to Gullveig (*Völuspá* 21). Thus, while the connection to mead is present in *Dvergatal*, it is by no means a significant portion of the names.

Although it is generally ‘known’ that dwarfs live underground and in stones,⁴⁹ *Völuspá* itself gives conflicting information on their whereabouts, and it requires some imagination to find any names in *Dvergatal* that refer to dwarfs as chthonic beings. On the one hand, *Völuspá* is fairly clear on the dwarfs’ habitat:

(49) “ <i>Stynia dvergar</i>	‘Dwarfs groan
<i>fyr steindurom,</i>	before stone-doors,
<i>veggbergs vísir.</i> ” ⁵⁰	wall-rock’s wise ones.’

Doors made of stone (cf. the dwarf Durinn ‘door,’ perhaps) would seem to be a synecdoche for the Salarsteinn ‘hall-stone’ (i.e. a stone like a hall?) mentioned in *Völuspá* 15, whence the dwarfs seek Jǫruvellir; and that they are wise ones of the ‘wall-rock’ could indicate that they live in mountains (the imagery invoking a cliff, maybe) or perhaps fissures or caves. On the other hand, in contrast to these possibly underground dwellings, several of the place names where dwarfs supposedly live indicate fields – the aforementioned Jǫruvellir ‘sand-fields’⁵¹ and Aurvangar ‘loam-fields,’ found together in *Völuspá* 15. A prevailing theory is that the “*salr ór gulli*” (‘golden hall’) in *Völuspá* 36 belongs to the dwarfs because the mysterious figure Sindri is attested elsewhere as the name of a dwarf,⁵² even though the poem itself does

⁴⁸ Roberta Frank has argued that parts of the creation of the mead of poetry in *Skáldskaparmál* were invented by Snorri Sturluson to explain kennings such as “*kvasis dreyri*” (‘blood of Kvasir’) which he did not understand. In this case, *Skáldskaparmál* may be the original source for the dwarfs creating the mead of poetry, and all allusions to the mead of poetry in *Dvergatal* would thus be eliminated. Although I find Frank’s arguments to be feasible, it is worthwhile to leave in discussions of dwarfs and the mead of poetry in this study for the sake of inclusiveness – in a survey of the dwarf names such as this, it is better to mention a potential connection, even if it may not be to an original myth, than to leave it out. See also the discussion of Snorri’s agency in section 4.IV of this study. Roberta Frank, “Snorri and the Mead of Poetry,” in *Specvlvm Norroenvm: Norse studies in memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. Ursula Dronke et al. (Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1981), 157-60.

⁴⁹ Motz, “The Craftsman in the Mound,” 47-8; de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 254; de Boor, “Der Zwerg in Skandinavien,” 546; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 68. Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 966. Gould notes that none of the dwarf names in any of the sources directly refer to this quality of living in stones or underground.

⁵⁰ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 20-1. The translation is my own.

⁵¹ Stefan Brink and John Lindow, “Place-names in eddic poetry,” in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 176.

⁵² Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 953.

not clarify who Sindri is, just that the hall belongs to his race.⁵³ If it is indeed to be connected with the dwarfs, the hall stands on Niðavellir, meaning something like ‘dark plains’ or ‘waning moon plains’ (cf. the dwarf Niði ‘waning moon’).⁵⁴ Here the dwarfs appear to be found somewhere above-ground. Perhaps not coincidentally, if one looks to the names of *Dvergatal* for help, one finds Aurvangr ‘loam-field, gleaming meadow’ and Hlévangr ‘shelter-field.’ Indeed, from the evidence found in *Völuspá* considered in isolation, one is forced to conclude that dwarfs seem to live above-ground. The only other evidence to the contrary would be the dwarfs Nár (‘corpse,’), Náinn (‘the nearing,’ but conceivably also ‘corpse’), and Dáinn (‘the dead’), whose names could refer to being buried, thus ‘living’ underground.⁵⁵ It seems most prudent, then, to evaluate the insight from *Dvergatal* as to where the dwarfs live as inconclusive.

These corpse-names have been related to another quality of the mythological dwarfs, namely that they cannot venture into the sun and are correspondingly pale.⁵⁶ The evidence for this trait comes solely from the dwarf Alvíss of *Alvíssmál*, whom Þórr asks whether he has spent the night with a corpse because he has a pale nose (*Alvíssmál* 2). At the end of the poem, Alvíss is caught by the sun’s rays and, it has long been assumed, turned to stone (*Alvíssmál* 35). Acker has argued convincingly that this assumption is deeply flawed – there is no evidence in the poem or elsewhere that all dwarfs necessarily turn to stone in sunlight, only related beings such as giants and trolls, and many of the dwarfs in myth seem to have no issues conducting business in the daylight. Some of them, however, occasionally seem to fear the sun.⁵⁷ Therefore, although Dvalinn ‘the delayed’ has been interpreted as a dwarf turned to stone, the connection is probably not viable.⁵⁸ It would be better to interpret the name as a dwarf who has been caught in the daylight like Alvíss without assuming what the consequences are. Leaving this trait behind, the corpse-names can be interpreted one way to refer to the dwarfs’ pale skin, like that of corpses. Glói(nn) ‘the shining’ might also be a

⁵³ Sindri is probably derived from *sindr*, m. ‘cinder, slag;’ Brink and Lindow connect this with the dwarfs as smiths to argue in favour of the golden hall belonging to the dwarfs. In this case Sindri would be the only name in all of *Völuspá* with any direct connection to smithing! Brink and Lindow, “Place-names in eddic poetry,” 178.

⁵⁴ Brink and Lindow, “Place-names in eddic poetry,” 178; Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 16.

⁵⁵ Gould runs with this image, arguing that the dwarfs are dead creatures and thus related to *draugar*. This theory has not held up over the decades. Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 959-60.

⁵⁶ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 443.

⁵⁷ Acker, “Dwarf-lore,” 219.

⁵⁸ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 220.

reflection of the dwarf's pale skin. Besides these few names, there is no other evidence in the mythological literature for the paleness of dwarfs.

Alvíss is also the primary piece of evidence for the wisdom of dwarfs; as he engages in a wisdom contest with Þórr in *Alvíssmál* he is shown to possess great knowledge of the names of things. A few names from *Dvergatal* corroborate wisdom – Vittr 'wise,' Nýráðr 'new-council,' Reginn 'advisor, ruler,' and Ráðsviðr 'council-wise.' Elsewhere, dwarfs are not sought out for their wisdom, but rather their ability to produce magical artifacts; nor is it explicitly noted that they are wise creatures, although the ability to use magic may, at the time of active transmission, have been considered a type of knowledge.⁵⁹

The three contradictory origins for the dwarfs can be reconciled if one considers them poetic circumlocutions for one basic concept: that dwarfs were originally made from the Earth. *Völuspá* seemingly gives two separate origins for the dwarfs – that, on one hand, they were made “*ór Brimis blóði / ok ór Bláin[s] leggiom*” (‘from Brimir’s blood / and from Bláinn’s limbs;’ 9), or simply “*ór iorðo*” (‘from earth;’ 10); either way it would seem that the Æsir were the agents of creation. *Gylfaginning*, on the other hand, says that they were quickened like maggots “*í holdi Ymis*” (‘in [the] flesh of Ymir;’ 14). This appears to be three separate origins, which Dronke uses as support for her theory of *Dvergatal* as a poorly-integrated interpolation.⁶⁰ However, a little investigation into Brimir and Bláinn reveals that there may be some poetic circumlocutions occurring in this section of *Völuspá*. Brimir is only attested in *Völuspá* as a giant (9 and 37) and in *Gylfaginning* 51 as the name of a drinking hall, which “is obviously a misinterpretation of *Völuspá* 37... where Brimir is the name of the giant and not the room itself.”⁶¹ Meanwhile, Bláinn is only attested in *Völuspá* 9 and as a dwarf listed in the *Pulur*.⁶² These beings are thus quite enigmatic and have led to the supposition that they may be alternative names of Ymir.⁶³ This is because the various body parts of Ymir were used to create the cosmos, as recounted in *Gylfaginning* 8: “*Þeir tóku Ymi ok fluttu í mitt Ginnungagap, ok gerðu af honum jorðina, af blóði hans sæinn ok vötnin. Jorðin var gør af holdinu en björgin af beinunum*” (‘They took Ymir and flung him into the middle of Ginnungagap, and made from him the Earth, from his blood the sea and lakes. The

⁵⁹ Acker, “Dwarf-lore,” 218.

⁶⁰ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 67.

⁶¹ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 44.

⁶² Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 38.

⁶³ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 38; 44.

earth was made from the flesh and the mountains from the bones’).⁶⁴ To create dwarfs from blood and limbs in *Völuspá* thus parallels this formation in *Gylfaginning* and strongly suggests that Brimir and Bláinn are simply Ymir, especially since the specific words match in the poem and the prose (*blóð, hold, jorð, bein*, etc.). The resulting interpretation of *Völuspá* 9-10 is thus: Dwarfs were made from Ymir’s blood (the sea) and limbs (mountains) but also the earth (Ymir’s flesh). *Gylfaginning* 14 corroborates the latter origin. Since the creation of the dwarfs did not occur during the initial shaping of the Earth, it must be assumed that these were not raw materials directly from Ymir’s body but rather from the Earth once it had already taken shape. One need not give priority to any of the three components of dwarfs; suffice it to say that they were probably created from the Earth, from a mythological perspective.

Gylfaginning 8 relates how Bur’s sons set a dwarf underneath each corner of the sky to hold it up: Austri, Vestri, Norðri, and Suðri. This is corroborated by: the presence of those four dwarfs in *Dvergatal*; the kennings “*níðbyrðra Norðra*” (‘burden of the kinsmen of Norðri’ = [sky]⁶⁵) in Hallfreðr Vandræðaskáld’s *Olafsdrápa* 26, “*byrði dverganna*” (‘burden of the dwarfs’ = [sky]) and “*hjálmm Vestra ok Austra, Suðra, Norðra*” (‘helm of Vestri and Austri, Suðri, Norðri’ = [sky]; *Skáldskaparmál* 23); and the use of *dvergar* in Old Norse to refer to the beams supporting a roof.⁶⁶ De Vries postulates that this is an imitation of the four angels standing in the four corners of the sky in *Revelation* 7.⁶⁷ The composition *Olafsdrápa* is tentatively dated to Hallfreðr’s lifetime (the second half of the tenth century) and Hallfreðr was certainly influenced by the conversion to Christianity, and in any case the verses could have been composed or modified later and still attributed to him – based on language and integration with the saga which contains it, the poem is probably not later than the twelfth century.⁶⁸ It is plausible that all extant accounts of the dwarfs as personifying the four cardinal directions contain influences from Christianity. Nevertheless, it does appear to have been common mythological knowledge at the time of writing the manuscripts in which

⁶⁴ Text from Faulkes, *Edda*, 11. The translation is my own.

⁶⁵ Throughout this study the kennings are quoted in the following format: “*kennning in Old Icelandic*” (‘literal English translation’ = [referent]).

⁶⁶ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 358.

⁶⁷ De Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 255. “And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree” (KJV *Revelation* 7:1).

⁶⁸ Diana Whaley, “Myth and Religion in the Poetry of a Reluctant Convert,” in *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society: Proceedings of the 11th International Saga Conference, 2-7 July, 2000, University of Sydney*, ed. Geraldine Barnes and Margaret Clunies Ross (Sydney: Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney, 2000), 556-7; 565-9.

Vǫluspá is found, even if that common knowledge was that of Christians and not of practicing pagans.

3. DVERGATAL

I. Detailed List of the Dwarf Names⁶⁹

Legend:⁷⁰

CR = *Codex Regius* of the *Poetic Edda* (GKS 2365 4to): *Vǫluspá*

H = *Hauksbók* (AM 544 4to): *Vǫluspá*

CRPr = *Codex Regius* of the *Prose Edda* (GKS 2367 4to): *Gylfaginning*

T = *Codex Trajectinus* (MS 1374): *Gylfaginning*

U = *Codex Upsaliensis* (DG 11): *Gylfaginning*

W = *Codex Wormianus* (AM 242 fol.): *Gylfaginning*

A = AM 748 I 4to: *Pulur*

B = AM 757a 4to: *Pulur*

Mótsognir (H & *Gylf. Móðsognir*) – ‘Wrath-Sucker,’ ‘Weary-Sucker,’ ‘Wrath-Sea,’ ‘Weary-Sea’

Variants: CR, B motsogn^{ir}; H, T, U, W moðsogn^{ir}; CRPr mo[ð]sognir (*torn*); A motsogni

Construction: Possibly a compound of *móð-* from *móðr*, m. ‘agitated mind, wrath’ or as an adjective ‘weary,’ and *-sognir* from *súga* ‘to suck.’ In CR, the *-ð-* has become devoiced due

⁶⁹ This section should be considered a work-in-progress, as entire articles can be written on the etymology of one particular name, and one could spend a lifetime researching the minutiae of *Dvergatal*. The list therefore represents what can be realistically accomplished in the time and space appropriate to a Master’s thesis, and it does not purport to be the final word on the etymologies, merely one student’s findings from the guiding perspective of determining transparency.

⁷⁰ Rather than providing all variants in all MSS, I primarily list the normalized versions of the names found in Dronke, Lorenz, and Faulkes, referring to variants when their differences seem significant. For this reason, the *Gylfaginning* names are not referred to by manuscript but rather the work, abbreviated as *Gylf*. Unless otherwise specified, names are given in their normalized form from CR. Dronke provides a table of the dwarf name variants in all extant versions of *Vǫluspá* and the *Pulur* (see Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 90-2) but these variants do not always agree precisely with the more recent readings found in the *Medieval Nordic Text Archive*. This may be partially due to the continued degradation of the manuscripts over time; in some cases, what is legible today differs from what was legible thirty or a hundred years ago. In particular, early scholarly efforts to read the manuscripts sometimes caused irreparable damage to the pages – for example, obscuring watermarks can be seen on CR where water has been poured over the text to make it temporarily more legible.

to proximity to *-s-*.⁷¹ The latter element *-sognir* is probably formed from the stem *sog-* of *súga*'s preterite participle *soginn* plus the suffix *-nir*, making the agent noun 'sucker.'

Another way to understand the second element is *sogn-* plus *-ir*;⁷² in that case, a relationship to *sog*, n. 'eddy, sea, ship' (poetic) is possible, and *sogn*, m. is attested in the Old Norse place-name Sogn ('Sognefjörd') and poetically where it means 'sea, lake.'⁷³

Transparency: The variant in H and *Gylf.* is probably relatively transparent. Less certain is whether native speakers would have understood the *-t-* in CR as a devoiced *-ð-* and thus interpreted the element as 'wrath-' or 'weary-.' That *Gylf.*, which is younger, contains the *-ð-* may indicate that the scribe (or some other intermediary) changed it from *-t-* to make it look and sound more like the usual *móð-* found in other names. It could also mean that *Mótsognir* was an opaque name.

Although the intended meaning is difficult to pinpoint, *móðr* remains the best option as the first element, as it is present in many other compound names, both as the first and the second element, for example: *Móð(h)eiðr*, *Móðólfr*, *Móðrekr*, *Ármóðr*, *Bjarnmóðr*, *Fjólmoðr*, *Reginmóðr*, *Pórmóðr*, and *Qlmoðr*. However, the possibility of punning with other words should not be ignored, such as with *mót*, n. 'stamp, mark' or 'meeting, encounter' and *móð*, n. 'hay-waste, seed, fruit.'⁷⁴

Attempts to construct a coherent meaning have been, to be frank, strange. De Vries translates it as "*der die Kraft aus dem Körper saugt*" ('he who sucks strength from the body')⁷⁵ and LP translates "*som suger mod i seg*" ('he who sucks courage into himself').⁷⁶ I choose to translate the compound relatively unaltered into English equivalents, even if this does not necessarily clarify the meaning.

Durinn – 'Sleep;' 'Door'

⁷¹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 391-2.

⁷² In Old Icelandic the suffix *-ir* often (but not always) formed an agent noun. Compare, for example, *læknir* 'doctor' (literally 'healer,' from *lækna* 'to heal') and *mælir* 'measure' (from *mæla* 'to measure'). Haraldur Bernharðsson, *Icelandic: A Historical Linguistic Companion, 5th draft* (Reykjavík, Iceland: University of Iceland – The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, 2016), 233.

⁷³ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 529.

⁷⁴ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 391-4.

⁷⁵ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 392.

⁷⁶ Sveinbjörn and Jónsson, *Lexicon Poeticum*, 412.

Construction: Possibly derived from *dúrr*, m. ‘nap’ or *dúra* ‘to nap’ using the masculine suffix *-inn*; *dur-* is also found in the compound *durvǫrðr*, m. ‘door-guard’ with the meaning ‘door,’ and *dura-* is found in several other compounds with the same meaning.⁷⁷

Transparency: Both ‘sleep’ and ‘door’ likely registered with the audience.

Nýi – ‘Waxing Moon/New Moon’

Construction: The substantive *ný*, n. ‘new moon’ plus the suffix *-i* to form a weak masculine name. *Ný* is closely related to *nýr*, adj. ‘new’ (< PGmc **neujaz-* ‘new’) – cf. the dwarf *Nýr* below.⁷⁸

Transparency: Probably transparent. *Nýi* is also homophonous to the masc. nom. sg. weak form of the adjective *nýr*.

Niði – ‘Waning Moon;’ ‘New Moon’

Construction: The substantive *nið*, n. pl. ‘waning moon’ or ‘new moon’ plus the weak masculine suffix *-i*.⁷⁹

Transparency: Probably transparent. *Niði* is also homophonous to the accusative singular case of *niðr*, m. ‘son, kinsman, relative,’ which may have brought to mind associations with that word; however, an accusative substantive would not have been perceived as a nominative name, and *Niði*’s pairing with *Nýi* makes the meaning ‘waning moon’ most likely.⁸⁰

Norðri – ‘North’ ; **Suðri** – ‘South’ ; **Austri** – ‘East’ ; **Vestri** – ‘West’

Construction: *norðr*, n. ‘the north;’ *suðr*, n. ‘the south;’ *austr*, n. ‘the east;’ *vestr*, n. ‘the west’ plus the suffix *-i* to form masculine names.

Transparency: Certainly transparent. The *-i* ending of the names is also their declension in the dative singular, which would have been familiar to native speakers in expressions such as *frá vestri* ‘from the west,’ and etc.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Geir T. Zoëga, *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), *dúrr*, *dúra*, *dur-vörðr*, *dura-dómr*; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 88.

⁷⁸ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 443; Vladimir Orel, *A Handbook of Germanic Etymology* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003), 284.

⁷⁹ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 443.

⁸⁰ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 409; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *niðr*.

⁸¹ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *norðr*; *suðr*; *austr*; *vestr*.

These dwarfs were probably well-known in mythology as the bearers of the four corners of the sky, and thus personified the cardinal directions in figurative language (see section 2.III for a more detailed discussion).⁸²

Alpiófr – ‘All-thief’

Construction: The intensifying prefix *al-* (carrying the meaning ‘all,’ as opposed to the prefix *all-* which has the more general meaning of ‘very;’ cf. OI *aleiga* ‘one’s entire property’ versus *allsterkr* ‘very strong’)⁸³ combined with the substantive *þjófr*, m. ‘thief.’⁸⁴

Transparency: The name uses a common prefix combined with a common substantive, thus its literal meaning was probably quite transparent.

Could “*der, der alles stielht*” (‘he who steals everything’) potentially refer to death?⁸⁵

Dvalinn – ‘Delayed,’ ‘Delayer’

Construction: Probably a nominalization of the preterite participle *dvalinn* from *dvala* ‘to delay, put off’ or *dvelja* ‘to delay.’ Scholars in the past have attempted to link Dvalinn with ‘winter sleep’ (hibernation) through *dvǫl*, f. ‘delay’ and Danish *dvale* ‘hibernation,’ but there is no evidence that *dvǫl* ever carried the meaning of ‘hibernation’ in Old Icelandic.⁸⁶ De Vries connects Dvalinn to *dvala*, f. ‘hesitation,’ which would require a conversion to a masculine substantive through the suffix *-inn*.⁸⁷

Transparency: Any native speaker would have recognized *Dvalinn* as the masculine preterite participle of *dvala* or *dvelja*. The suffix *-in-* (as well as *-an-*, *-un-*) was frequently used to create nouns and it is possible the audience might have perceived Dvalinn as a noun formed by attaching a suffix to something like **dval-* or *dvǫl-*.⁸⁸ An alternative translation in light of an agent-forming suffix could consequently be ‘delayer.’

Gutenbrunner imagines Dvalinn as a dwarf turned to stone (thus eternally ‘delayed’) when struck by sunbeams, a common (but imaginative) interpretation what happens to the

⁸² Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 443.

⁸³ Haraldur Bernharðsson, *Icelandic: 5th Draft*, 235.

⁸⁴ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 220; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 443

⁸⁵ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 220.

⁸⁶ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 220.

⁸⁷ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 88.

⁸⁸ Haraldur Bernharðsson, *Icelandic: 5th Draft*, 233.

dwarf Alvíss in *Alvíssmál* (see section 2.III for a discussion of dwarfs and sunlight).⁸⁹ In that case the name could be an allusion to that poem and this dwarf could be Alvíss in the same way that an *Óðinsheiti* disguises Óðinn. On the other hand, Alvíss himself mentions the dwarf Dvalinn by referring to the sun as “*Dvalins leika*” (‘Dvalinn’s plaything;’ *Alvíssmál* 16); could the dwarf be referring to himself by another name?

Dvalinn occurs in the *Óðinsheiti Hanga Dvalinn*,⁹⁰ and as a dwarf is attested in *Hávamal* 143, *Alvíssmál* 16, and *Gylfaginning* 15, as well as the father of Norns according to *Fáfnismál* 13; he was also a dwarf-smith who helped to make the necklace of the Brisings (*Sþrta þáttr*). Finally, Dvalinn (or variant Dvalarr) is also a stag who eats the leaves of Yggdrasil (*Grímnismál* 33; *Gylfaginning* 15).⁹¹

Bivǫrr (H & *Gylf. Bifurr*) – ‘Trembler’

Construction: Possibly derived from or related to the word *bifask*, ‘to tremble, shake’ or ‘to be moved,’ ultimately from PGmc **bībōjanan* ~ *bībēnan* (cf. Old English *beofian* ‘to tremble, to quake’).⁹² In this case Bivǫrr/Bifurr might have been constructed from the stem *bif-* plus the suffix *-ǫrr/-urr* to form a masculine name. An alternative explanation of Bivǫrr as a borrowing from Low German *bever*⁹³ (from PGmc **bebruz*, cf. Old English *beofor*) has proved fruitless and far-fetched,⁹⁴ in part because Old Icelandic already had the attested word *bjórr*, m. ‘beaver, beaver pelt’ from **bebruz*.⁹⁵

Transparency: Unknown, but an association with *bifask* is quite plausible.

If ‘trembler’ is an accurate translation, this name could be the personification of an earthquake.

Bávǫrr – [Unknown]

Variants: CR bavaǫR; H, CRPr bafvR; T bafR; U bauur; W bavur; A blavǫR; B bavor

⁸⁹ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 220. Unfortunately, I am unable to access Gutenbrunner’s original article at this time, thus I must rely on Lorenz for Gutenbrunner’s work throughout this paper.

⁹⁰ Motz, “New Thoughts on Dwarf-Names,” 110.

⁹¹ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 67.

⁹² Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 45; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 221; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 35.

⁹³ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 37; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 444; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 22.

⁹⁴ De Vries deems this outright impossible. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 22.

⁹⁵ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 40.

Construction: The only suggestion for a source has been Gutenbrunner’s PGmc **ḥabō*, related to Latin *faba* ‘bean, barley, mead,’ which de Vries in particular dismisses as unappealing;⁹⁶ however, both barley and mead appear as possible elements in other dwarf names (cf. below: Nipingr for barley and Miðvitnir and Veigr for mead), thus meaning alone is no reason to dismiss **ḥabō*. More significant is the lack of surviving attested words demonstrably from **ḥabō*, and furthermore **ḥabō* is not listed in Orel’s *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*. Factors for finding other possibilities include the following:

- The initial consonant *b-* would have been *ḥ-* in Proto-Germanic.
- All MSS show a short *-a-* as the initial vowel following *b-*; the long *-á-* is therefore editorial normalization, which could be misleading.
- The medial consonant is either *-v-* or *-f-* in all MSS, thus the corresponding consonant in the Proto-Germanic word would probably have been *-ḥ-*.
- The ending *-orr* (MSS *-ar*, *-ur*, *-r*, *-r*) is certainly a suffix as in *Bivorr/Bifurr*, and could have formed an agent noun in this case.

No attested words match these criteria exactly. I have only been able to find *bófi* ‘rogue’ (< PGmc **ḥōbōn*) to match the consonants, which has been related to Icelandic *babba* ‘to say, to talk, to chat;’ the long *-ō-* in the Proto-Germanic could thus potentially have resulted in a name related to *bófi* with a short *-a-*.⁹⁷

Transparency: Unknown. The large number of variant spellings may indicate that the name was opaque.

Bávorr has presented much difficulty to previous scholars, leading some to consider it a mere sound variation of Bivorr.⁹⁸ However, this is the only dwarf name for which this argument has been used – all other names which have sound variations, despite being problematic, have not been dismissed as mere phonological devices – why, then, should we abandon the search in this particular case?

⁹⁶ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 22; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 222.

⁹⁷ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 51.

⁹⁸ “[W]ohl lautvariation neben Bífurr” (‘Probably sound variation alongside *Bífurr*’); de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 22; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 444;

Bǫmburr – ‘Drum, Drummer, Boomer’?

Variants: CR *bǫmbur*; H *bǫmbur*; CRPr *bavbavR*; T *baumbr*; U *bambavR*; W *bombur*; A, B *bvmbvr*

Construction: Possibly **bǫmb-* plus the suffix *-urr* to form a masculine noun. An Old Icelandic word containing **bǫmb-* is not attested but Old Icelandic *bumba*, f. means ‘drum’ and modern Icelandic *bumba*, f., means ‘drum’ with secondary meanings ‘paunch,’ ‘heavy-set horse,’ and ‘fat barrel,’ likely figurative terms derived from the primary meaning.⁹⁹

Probably related words are Danish *bumpe*, ‘strike with a fist;’ Norwegian *bomme*, ‘to drum’ (apparently from Old Norse *bumba*, ‘to drum’),¹⁰⁰ German *bummen* and Dutch *bommen* ‘to hum, buzz.’ These words have no reconstructed Proto-Germanic root but seem to have a common ancestor, perhaps of a form beginning with **b̥am-* to account for u-umlaut of *-a-* to *-ø-* in Old Icelandic.

Transparency: Unknown, but speakers may have related *Bǫmburr* to *bumba*.

Some scholars have chosen to interpret this name as ‘the fat one’ but the above evidence shows that its meaning in Medieval Iceland was more likely to be ‘drum’ or perhaps ‘drummer, boomer’ if an agent noun/name.¹⁰¹ The booming of a drum could be interpreted as a thunderclap, or the explosion during a volcanic eruption (see section 4.I).

CR Nóri (*Gylf. Nóri*) – ‘The Small;’ ‘Ship’

Construction: Previous scholars have translated *Nóri* as ‘the shrunken one’ based on similarity to Old Saxon *naru* and Old English *nearu* ‘tight, pressed, pressed together’ with the Old Icelandic word reconstructed as **nǫrr* (dative **nǫrve*). However, Modern Icelandic *nóri* now means ‘a little cut off piece’ or ‘tot, little fellow.’¹⁰² Orel connects the Old Norse word *nór* ‘ship’ to the PGmc root **nōwaz*, related to Sanskrit *nāu*, Latin *nāuis*, etc. meaning ‘ship.’¹⁰³ In this case the name is most likely the stem *nó-* plus the masculine suffix *-ri*, as the

⁹⁹ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 444.

¹⁰⁰ *Bokmålsordboka* (Universitetet i Bergen i samarbeid med Språkrådet, 2016), http://ordbok.uib.no/perl/ordbok.cgi?OPP=+bumba&ant_bokmaal=5&ant_nynorsk=5&begge=+&ordbok=begge.

¹⁰¹ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 444. Cf. Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 222.

¹⁰² Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 222.

¹⁰³ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 289.

suffix *-r* in *nór* is the masculine nominative singular ending and would probably not have been re-evaluated as part of the stem.

Transparency: An association with *nór* ‘ship’ is quite likely, and the existence of Modern Icelandic *nóri* suggests an unattested word relating to ‘small’ in Old Icelandic.

Nóri is also a sea-king in the *Pulur*.¹⁰⁴

Gylf. Óri - ‘Quarrel, Quarreler;’ ‘Wanderer?;’ ‘The Insane?’

Construction: The simplest derivation could be from *óra* ‘to quarrel,’ plus the weak masculine suffix *-i*, thus ‘quarrel’ or ‘quarreler.’¹⁰⁵ If not, it is possibly related to Old English *wōrian* ‘to wander, to roam, to deteriorate from age’ and thus descended from PGmc **wōra*.¹⁰⁶ Óri could also be related to *ærr* ‘crazy, confused, furious’¹⁰⁷ or *órar*, f. pl. ‘numbness, (fits of) insanity.’¹⁰⁸ De Vries’ translation “*der berückende*” (‘the captivated one’) does not appear to be supported by any attested meaning of *ærr*.¹⁰⁹

Transparency: The derivation from *óra* is probably transparent, and the transparency of the meaning ‘insane’ is strongly suggested by similarity *órar* as well as, to a lesser extent, *ærr*.

Óri is also the name of a serpent in the *Pulur* (*Orma heiti*).¹¹⁰

Án – ‘The Lacking’?

Construction: De Vries considers *Án* a shortened form of the (reconstructed) name **Avin*, constructed out from the genitive morpheme *ánar* < **AwnaR* < **aða-winaR*. Thus, the name would be a compound of *að(a)-* (extant as *aðal*, n. ‘chief, head, noble, courtly, etc.’ in compounds) and *-vinr* ‘friend.’ The etymological translation would thus be ‘noble friend.’¹¹¹

Transparency: The derivation from the ancestors of *aðal* and *vinr* would probably not have been apparent to the audience, as most of the recognizable elements in the words have been lost. *Án* is also homonymous to the preposition *án* ‘without,’ but it is highly unlikely that the

¹⁰⁴ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 236.

¹⁰⁵ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 419.

¹⁰⁶ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 222; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 444;

¹⁰⁷ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *ærr*; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 684.

¹⁰⁸ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 419; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *órar*.

¹⁰⁹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 420; 684.

¹¹⁰ Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 960 (footnote 72); Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 254.

¹¹¹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 1; 9.

audience would have considered this a preposition in the midst of a list of proper names. Perhaps they could have perceived it as a nominalization meaning ‘(the) lacking,’ even though this would have been an undesirably negative connotation in a name: *Án* is also an Old Icelandic personal name, attested as the name of, for example, the saga character *Án Hrísmagi* in *Laxdæla saga*.

Ánarr (H & *Gylf*. **Ónarr**) – ‘Hope;’ ‘Hoper’

Construction: The word *ón* is a variant of *ván*, f. ‘hope, expectation,’¹¹² to which the suffix *-arr* could be attached to form a masculine name. De Vries instead derives *Ánarr* and *Ónarr* from the name *Án* (see *Án* above).¹¹³

Transparency: The meaning ‘hope, hoper’ is plausibly transparent.

Some scholars have connected *Ánarr* with *Annar* (the husband of *Jörð* in *Gylfaginning*), whose name means ‘other, second,’ but Sijmons and Gering do not find this possible, due to their reconstruction of the name in Proto-Germanic as **anu-harjis*.¹¹⁴ Linguistically speaking the dwarf and the god probably come from different origins, but this does not mean the audience would have seen no connection between the two.

Ái – ‘Great-Grandfather;’ ‘River;’ (‘Owner’)

Construction: Identical in form to *ái* ‘great-grandfather,’ but alternatively it could be a derivative of *á*, f. ‘river’ plus the suffix *-i* to form a masculine name.

Transparency: Fully transparent for the meaning ‘great-grandfather,’ but uncertain for the construction meaning ‘river.’ A pun with *á*, the present indicative singular of *eiga* ‘to own’ is also possible.

CRPr & T **Óinn** – ‘The Fearful’

Construction: *Óinn* could be derived from *ó-*, the stem of *óask* ‘to be afraid,’ plus the suffix *-inn* to form a masculine name. Thus the meaning would be something like ‘the shy one, the fearful one.’¹¹⁵

Transparency: Plausible.

¹¹² Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *ón*.

¹¹³ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 9; 419.

¹¹⁴ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 222; Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 14.

¹¹⁵ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 223; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 417.

Óinn is the name of a serpent in the *Pulur* (*Orma heiti*).¹¹⁶

Mióðvitnir (CRPr **Móðvitnir**) – ‘Mead-Wolf,’ ‘Mead-Prover,’ ‘Mead-Seeker;’ CRPr: ‘Wrath-Wolf,’ ‘Weary Wolf’

Variants: mióðvitnir in all MSS except CRPr, which reads móðvitnir¹¹⁷

Construction: Compound; likely the variant stem *mióð-* of *mjǫðr*, m. ‘mead’ plus *vitnir*, m. ‘wolf’ (meaning somewhat contested, see below).

Transparency: The name in *Vǫluspá* likely has something to do with mead, whereas the CRPr variant could alternatively mean ‘wrath-wolf’ or ‘weary wolf.’

Vitnir, m. ‘wolf’ is a poetic construction.¹¹⁸ Literally taken, *-vitnir* can be seen as the stem *vitn-* of the verb *vitna* ‘witness, prove, attest (to something)’ plus the suffix *-ir* to form a masculine agent noun/name ‘witness, prover, attester.’¹¹⁹ Alternatively, Gutenbrunner takes the stem *vit-* of the verb *vitja* ‘to go to a place, to visit’ or ‘to look for something’ plus the suffix *-nir* to form a masculine name ‘seeker.’¹²⁰

The scholarly consensus is that CRPr *móð-* is simply a variant of *mjǫð-*, yet in Old Icelandic *móðr*, m. means ‘wrath, excitement, passion’ and *móðr* as an adjective means ‘weary, worn out.’¹²¹ Moreover, the word *mjǫðr* must have arisen through the u-breaking of Proto-Norse **meðuR* > Old Icelandic *mjǫðr*, analogous to Proto-Norse **skelduR* > Old Icelandic *skjǫldr*.¹²² For the *-j-* to drop is irregular and there is no attested variant of *mjǫðr* lacking it. It therefore possible that in CRPr the word instead means something like ‘wrath-wolf’ or ‘passion-seeker’ in light of the above alternatives for *-vitnir*. The scholarly desire to see *móð-* as a variant of *mjǫð-* has probably been influenced by the creation of the mead of poetry by the dwarfs Fjalarr and Galarr (*Skáldskaparmál* G57; see section 2.III); since dwarfs are thus closely associated with mead, the mythological connection has superseded what is indicated by the textual and linguistic evidence.

¹¹⁶ Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 960 (footnote 72).

¹¹⁷ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 90.

¹¹⁸ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *vitnir*; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 670.

¹¹⁹ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 444.

¹²⁰ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 223; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *vitja*.

¹²¹ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *móðr*.

¹²² Haraldur Bernharðsson, *Icelandic: A Historical Linguistic Companion, 4th draft* (Reykjavík: University of Iceland – The Árni Magnusson Institute for Icelandic Studies, 2014), 133.

Mióðvitnir may at least allude to the mead of poetry; and ‘mead-wolf’ or ‘mead-seeker’ would function quite well as an *Ódinsheiti*, as Óðinn was the one who actually sought out and stole the mead of poetry.

Veigr, etc.¹²³ – ‘Strong Drink;’ ‘Vigour;’ etc.

Variants: CR Veigr(i); H veggr CRPr, T, W vigr; U viġr

Construction: Perhaps *veig*, f. ‘strong beverage, strength’ plus the suffix -r(i) to form a masculine name. *Veig* is descended from PGmc **waiǰō* (whence also Gothic *waihjo* ‘battle’),¹²⁴ itself derived from **wīxanan* ~ **wīzanan*; numerous descendants thereof have the meaning ‘to fight’ (OI *vega*, Gothic *weihan*, Old English *wīzan*).¹²⁵ Gutenbrunner also connects *veigr* with Old High German *weigar* ‘defiant, reluctant, proud, stiff.’¹²⁶

Transparency: Several variant spellings in different manuscripts allow for multiple interpretations. This indicates that Veigr (or whatever its original form may have been) was perhaps not so transparent and reinterpreted one of several more recognizable words:

- H reads as the variant *veggr*, which is identical to *veggr*, m. ‘wall;’ ‘wedge.’¹²⁷
- CRPr, T, W read *vigr*, identical to *vigr*, f. ‘spear’ (poetic). Can also be read with a long vowel as *vīgr*, which would relate to *vīgr*, ‘in a fighting condition’ and *vīg*, n. ‘battle’ (both from PGmc *wīzanan*, derived from **wīxanan* ~ **wīzanan*).¹²⁸
- U reads *viggr*, which resembles *vigg*, n. ‘steed’ (poetic) plus the suffix -r to form a masculine name. *Vigg* is descended from PGmc **wezjan* and related to OEng *wicȝ*, Old Frisian *widze*, and Old Saxon *wigg*, all meaning ‘steed.’ **wezjan* is derived from **wezanan* whose various Germanic descendants (including OI *vega*), have some combination of the meanings ‘to move, to carry, to weigh’ (eg. Gothic *ga-wigan* ‘to move, to shake;’ Old English *wezan* ‘to move, to bear, to carry’).¹²⁹

¹²³ Veigr is normalized as such because CR appears to read thus; however, the *Medieval Nordic Text Archive* reads ‘Veigri.’ The manuscript is difficult to read in that place, but there does appear to be an -i written after Veigr, and it is darker than the surrounding letters – perhaps it is a later correction or addition?
<http://clarino.uib.no/menota/document-element?session-id=242765018157677&cpos=1269793&corpus=menota>

¹²⁴ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 440.

¹²⁵ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 465.

¹²⁶ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 223-4.

¹²⁷ Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 950; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 650.

¹²⁸ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 465.

¹²⁹ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 452.

Therefore, it would appear that Veigr was a complex name for the audience of *Völuspá*. Its variants and their likely meanings are connected with PGmc roots for strength, battle, and movement. How a native speaker might have interpreted the name is difficult to say, but it is highly possible that many of the Old Icelandic words proposed above may have come to mind, especially for a native speaker. I have thus chosen (with tongue somewhat in cheek) a similar-sounding English translation for Veigr with similar connotations (and a very distant relative of *veig*, etc. through Latin *vigor*).

Veig- is also found as an element in the compound name Gullveig (*Völuspá* 21-2).

Gandálfr – ‘(Magic) Staff-Elf’

Construction: Probably a compound of *gandr*, m. ‘magic staff, magic,’ also ‘wolf’¹³⁰ plus *álfr/alfr*, m. ‘elf, fairy.’¹³¹

Transparency: Probably highly transparent. The meaning ‘wolf’ for *gandr* is found primarily as the second element in compound names, not the first, thus a meaning ‘wolf-elf’ is unlikely (cf. *Vánargandr* ‘wolf of the Vanir’ = Fenrir; *Jǫrmungandr* ‘wolf of the horse/ox’ (Jǫrmuni is also an *Óðinsheiti*¹³²) = ‘wolf of Óðinn’).¹³³

Vindálfr – ‘Wind-Elf, Storm-Elf’

Construction: A compound of *vindr*, m. ‘wind, storm’¹³⁴ plus *álfr/alfr*, m. ‘elf, fairy.’¹³⁵

Transparency: Probably highly transparent.

Þráinn (*Gylf. Þróinn*) – ‘The Defiant;’ ‘The Yearning;’ ‘The Twisted’?

Variants: CR, U, A, B þrain; H þrainn; CRPr, T þroī; W þroenn

Construction: The suffix *-inn* attached to *þrá-/pra-*, from one of several words. Previous scholars have connected *Þráinn* with the adjective *þrár* ‘defiant.’¹³⁶ Other possibilities include *þrá*, f. ‘longing, yearning’ and the clearly related *þrá* ‘to long, to yearn.’¹³⁷ *Þráinn* is written as *þrainn* in both versions of *Völuspá* without the long *-á-*; it could thus be related to

¹³⁰ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 155.

¹³¹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 5-6.

¹³² De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 295.

¹³³ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 155; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 444; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 224.

¹³⁴ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 665.

¹³⁵ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 5-6; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 444; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 224.

¹³⁶ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 225.

¹³⁷ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *þrá*.

PGmc **prēanan* which, according to Orel, is the ancestor of the proper name Þrainn.

**prēanan* seems to have had a meaning like ‘turn, twist’ in light of Old English *ðráwan* ‘to turn, to twist,’ Old Saxon *thraian* and Old High German *drāen* ‘to turn.’¹³⁸

Transparency: The connection to *þrár* ‘defiant’ and *þrá* ‘longing, yearning’ is most certain; a relationship to an unattested word meaning ‘twist’ is naturally much less certain, but worth taking into consideration.

CR & *Gylf*. **Þekkr** – ‘The Liked’

Construction: A nominalization of the adjective *þekkr* ‘agreeable, liked.’¹³⁹ All variants of Þekkr show the doubled consonant resulting from assimilation of *-nk-* > *-kk-* from PGmc **þankjaz*, making any relation to *þekja* ‘to thatch, cover’ or *þekja*, f. ‘thatch’ unlikely.¹⁴⁰

Transparency: The name Þekkr and the adjective *þekkr* are identical in form, making transparency almost certain.

Þekkr is also attested as an epithet and *Óðinsheiti* (*Grímnismál* 46).¹⁴¹

Þorinn – ‘The Daring’

Construction: Possibly the stem *þor-* of the verb *þora* ‘to dare (to), to have the courage to do something’ plus the suffix *-inn* to form a masculine name.¹⁴² *Þor-* is also the first element of many personal names derived from the name of the god Þórr.¹⁴³ In addition, *-þorinn* is attested as an adjective in the compound adjective *gunnþorinn* (poetic) ‘battle-brave,’ where it means ‘brave.’¹⁴⁴

Transparency: The meaning ‘the daring’ is probably transparent due to the closeness to *þora* (*þorinn* would be the masculine preterite participle of *þora* if the verb were not intransitive), and the affinity to personal names beginning with *Þor-* would not have been missed due to their high frequency.

H **Þrár** – ‘The Tenacious’

¹³⁸ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 426.

¹³⁹ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 226; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 607.

¹⁴⁰ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 416.

¹⁴¹ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 313; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 445; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 607.

¹⁴² Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 224.

¹⁴³ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 616.

¹⁴⁴ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 617; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *gunnr*.

Construction: A nominalization of the adjective *þrár* ‘tenacious, persevering’ (< Proto-Norse **þranhaz*¹⁴⁵ < PGmc **þranxaz*,¹⁴⁶ cf. Modern Icelandic *þrár* ‘tenacious, persevering’).¹⁴⁷

Transparency: More or less certain.

Gylf. Þró – ‘Increase’

Construction: Probably the stem *þró-* from *þróask* ‘to increase, to grow’ or ‘to thrive’ plus the masc. nom. ending *-r* to form a masculine name.¹⁴⁸

Transparency: Probably fairly transparent. A number of translations have been proposed for *Þró* including ‘the fertile,’ ‘the inseminator/the fertilizer’ (“*der Befruchtende*”),¹⁴⁹ ‘the popular,’ and ‘the chubby.’¹⁵⁰ I prefer to tread carefully and translate faithfully to the source verb.

Þró is also an *Óðinsheiti* (*Grímnismál* 49), as well as the name of a boar and a sword (*Þulur*).¹⁵¹

Vitr – ‘The Wise’

Construction: Most likely a nominalization of the adjective *vittr* ‘wise.’¹⁵²

Transparency: Highly transparent. Many related words and compounds relating to wisdom have *vittr-* as the first element (eg. *vittra*, f. ‘wisdom;’ *vittringr*, m. ‘wise man;’ *vittrleikr*, m. ‘wisdom, sagacity’).¹⁵³

Litr – ‘Colour;’ ‘Oar’

Construction: Probably a nominalization of *litr*, m. ‘colour.’¹⁵⁴ In *Völuspá* 18 the word *lito* (*litr*, in the accusative plural) probably means ‘complexion’ in the context of Askr and Embla,¹⁵⁵ although Anatoly Liberman proposes an alternative: The word *litom* in the line “*ferk opt litom þopta*” (‘I often travel by means of oars in boats’) in *Bergbúabáttr* may designate ‘oars,’ as well as in the line “*langt myndir þú nú kominn, Þórr, ef þú litom færir*”

¹⁴⁵ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 619.

¹⁴⁶ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 424.

¹⁴⁷ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 619.

¹⁴⁸ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 623.

¹⁴⁹ Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 14.

¹⁵⁰ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 225.

¹⁵¹ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 225; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 329.

¹⁵² Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 226.

¹⁵³ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *vittr*; *vittra*; *vittringr*; *vittrleikr*.

¹⁵⁴ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 359; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 226.

¹⁵⁵ Dronke translates *lito góða* as ‘comely hues;’ *The Poetic Edda II*, 11.

(‘you would have been right in it if you had worked your oars’) in *Hárbarðzlióð* 50. He admits this is speculative but the reading is supported by evidence of words from various Germanic languages with the consonants l-t/l-d that seem to denote a long piece of wood or stump. Liberman thus proposes the secondary/symbolic meaning ‘penis.’¹⁵⁶ As such, Litr could also mean ‘oar’ assuming a derivation with the suffix *-r* from the stem **lit-* of a noun with an uncertain gender.

Transparency: Similarity to *litr*, m. ‘colour’ would have been quite transparent; the relation to *lítill* is (probably) less obvious; and finally, as **lit-* is only possibly attested in one or two instances, it was likely a rarer word for ‘oar’ – if the audience happened know *litr*, m. ‘oar’ as a colloquial term it would have been highly transparent, less so if the word was not a masculine a-stem.

Litr happens to be the dwarf that Þórr kicks onto Baldr’s funeral pyre in *Gylfaginning* 49. It has been argued that Litr is not an original part of the Baldr tradition, but is taken arbitrarily from *Dvergatal*;¹⁵⁷ yet, that this passage in *Gylfaginning* could be influenced by *Dvergatal* in *Völuspá* does not indicate that the choice of name is necessarily arbitrary. The moment when Þórr kicks Litr into the fire appears superfluous, serving only to showcase Þórr’s rage if one does not consider Litr’s name. However, one could interpret Litr’s name as meaning ‘colour’ and apply it to the story – Þórr kicks Litr, a personification of colour, into the flames, symbolically burning colour to lament the death of Baldr. Alternatively, if Litr is taken to mean ‘oar’ it is a rather appropriate scenario that Þórr should kick an oar onto a boat.

Nár¹⁵⁸ – ‘Corpse’

Construction: Identical in form to *nár*, m. ‘corpse.’

Transparency: Certainly transparent; *nár* is used elsewhere in *Völuspá* to mean ‘corpse:’ “*slítr nái neffǫlr*” (‘pale-beaked rips corpses;’ 47).¹⁵⁹

H & Gylf. **Náinn** – ‘The Nearing;’ ‘Corpse’

Construction: Either formed from *ná* ‘to get a hold of, to reach, to overtake’ plus the suffix *-inn* to form a masculine name, or the nominalization of the adjective *náinn* ‘near,’ itself

¹⁵⁶ Anatoly Liberman, “Ten Scandinavian and North English Etymologies,” in *Alvíssmál* 6 (1996), 80-1.

¹⁵⁷ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 226.

¹⁵⁸ In H and *Gylf.*, *Nár* comes much earlier in the list: In the place where *Nár* occurs in CR we find instead *Nýr*.

¹⁵⁹ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 20.

derived from *ná* (PGmc **nēxwēnan* ~ **nēxwjanan*¹⁶⁰). Another possibility is a construction based on *nár* ‘corpse.’¹⁶¹

Transparency: Proximity to *Nár* results in two opposing forces. On the one hand, there is the echo of the syllable *ná-* and the corresponding meaning ‘corpse.’ On the other hand, in a name list it would have been jarring and redundant to have the same meaning repeated twice in a row – it is stylistically more plausible that the names have two different meanings, and that the similarity in sound is intentional wordplay. Therefore, ‘the nearing’ is more likely as a transparent primary meaning.

Náinn is also the name of a serpent in the *Pulur* (*Orma heiti*).¹⁶²

H & *Gylf*. **Nipingr** – ‘Drooping;’ ‘Stem of Barley’?

Construction: Probably *nip-* or *hnip-* (source and meaning uncertain, possibly ‘barley shoot’ or ‘drooping’) plus the masc. diminutive suffix *-ingr* to form a masculine name.

Transparency: Unknown.

No Old Icelandic words with a similar form are attested, save *nípt* ‘female relative, sister,’ but the lack of *-t-* in the stem (which goes back to PGmc **neftiz*) makes this derivation unlikely.¹⁶³ Lorenz and others have drawn a comparison between *Nipingr* and the Gothic verb *ga-nipnan* and Old English *ge-nīpan* ‘to become dark,’ which have not yet been traced to a PGmc root.¹⁶⁴

Gutenbrunner compares *Nipingr* with *hnipinn* in *Alvíssmál*, roughly translated as “*Gerstling*” (‘slender stem of barley’), thus the reconstructed name would be **Hnípingr*.¹⁶⁵ The translation ‘slender stem of barley’ is rather uncertain; in the stanzas in which *hnipinn* is found, Óðinn asks *Alvíss* “*hvé þat sáð heitir, er sá alda synir, heimi hverjum í?*” (‘what is that seed called, which sons of yore sow, in each world?’ *Alvíssmál* 31)¹⁶⁶ – replies *Alvíss*:

¹⁶⁰ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 286.

¹⁶¹ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 221.

¹⁶² Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 960 (footnote 72).

¹⁶³ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 283.

¹⁶⁴ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 221.

¹⁶⁵ Gutenbrunner, “Eddastudien,” as quoted in Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 221.

¹⁶⁶ Text from *Alvíssmál*, in *Eddukvæði I: Goðakvæði*, Íslensk Fornrit Eddukvæði, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 2014). Translations are my own with reference to Henry Adams Bellows, trans. *The Poetic Edda: Translated from the Icelandic with an introduction and notes* (Chicago: C. S. Petersen, The Regan Press, 1923).

(32) *"Bygg heitir með monnum,
 en barr með goðum,
 kalla vøxt vanir,
 æti jøtnar,
 álfar lagastaf,
 kalla í helju hnipinn."*

It is called ‘**grain**’ with men
 and ‘**corn**’ with the gods,
 Vanir call it ‘growth,’
 giants ‘eaten,’
 elves ‘liquid-staff,’¹⁶⁷
 in Hel it is called [‘**slender stem [of
 barley]’?** or ‘**the drooping’?**].

That *bygg* and *barr* here mean ‘barley’ is inferred because it is the most likely grain that Icelanders would have been cultivating and eating at the time the poem was written down.¹⁶⁸ The attested adjective *hnipinn* means ‘drooping, downcast;’ perhaps ‘the drooping’ would be a more plausible translation, in which case the meaning ‘slender stem of barley’ might not be a valid translation outside of this passage if *hnipinn* ‘the drooping’ is being used figuratively.¹⁶⁹

This idea of the loss of initial *h-* opens up comparisons of Nipinigr to *hnípa* ‘to droop, be downcast’ and derived *hnipinn* ‘drooping, downcast,’ making ‘(little) drooping one, (little) downcast one’ another possible (and perhaps better) translation.¹⁷⁰

A further alternative perhaps worth exploring could be a relation to Niflheim, though the element *nifl-* also has a contested etymology.¹⁷¹

H & Gylf. **Dáinn** – ‘The Dead’

Construction: Probably formed from the stem *dá-* of *deyja* ‘to die’ (from PGmc **đawjanan*)¹⁷² or, alternatively, from *dá*, n. ‘trance, senseless state’ plus the suffix *-inn* to form a masculine name.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷ Bellows translates *lagastaf* as ‘drink-stuff’ in accordance with Hugo Gering’s translation, even though he doubts it and “can suggest nothing better.” My translation is based on the first element as *logr*, m. ‘liquid,’ ‘lake’ and the second element as *stafr*, m. ‘staff, stick’ which at least imitates the shape of a stalk of barley, and is supported by Klaus von See et al. (see for a full discussion of *lagastaf*). Klaus von See et al. *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda, Band 3: Götterlieder* (Heidelberg, Germany: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2000), 353-6; Bellows, *The Poetic Edda*, 190-3 (footnotes to 24; 32); Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic, stafr*.

¹⁶⁸ Bellows, *The Poetic Edda*, 192-3 (footnote to 32); David Zori et al, “Feasting in Viking-Age Iceland: Sustaining a chiefly political economy in a marginal environment,” in *Antiquity* 87 (2013), 154.

¹⁶⁹ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic, hnipinn*.

¹⁷⁰ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic, hnípa; hnipinn*; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 243.

¹⁷¹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 409.

¹⁷² Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 70.

¹⁷³ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 221.

Transparency: *Dáinn* is the masc. nom. sg. preterite participle of *deyja*, thus native speakers would most likely have recognized the name *Dáinn* as such; and in proximity to the other names related to death this is the most likely transparent primary meaning. A secondary connection with the *dá* ‘trance, senseless state,’ is also possible.

Dáinn appears as a dwarf as a co-creator of the boar *Hildisvini* (*Hyndluljóð* 7); in an eleventh-century poem by *Sigvatr Þorðarson*; as the representative of the elves, presumably as an elf (*Hávamál* 143); and *Dáinn* is also the name of a stag residing in the branches of *Yggdrasill*.¹⁷⁴ The name is also found as part of the compound-name *Dáinsleif*, a mythical sword (*Skáldskaparmál* 63).

H & Gylf. Nýr – ‘The New’

Construction: A nominalization of the adjective *nýr* ‘new.’

Transparency: Certain.

Nýráðr – ‘New-Council’

Construction: A compound of *ný-* ‘new’ and *ráð*, n. ‘plans, (wise) council, advice,’ plus the nominative ending *-r* to form a masculine name.

Transparency: Probably transparent.

A common interpretation of *Nýráðr* is something like ‘determined to execute new plans’ but this is probably overstepping the bounds of what the name can confidently tell us; I provide the more literal translation ‘new-council.’¹⁷⁵

Reginn – ‘Advisor, Ruler’

Construction: Probably derived from *regin*, n. pl. ‘the ruling powers, the gods;’¹⁷⁶ ‘the advising ones, conferrers.’¹⁷⁷

Transparency: *Regin ǫll* (‘all the powers, all the gods’) is repeated several times in *Völuspá*, and it is difficult to imagine that the audience would have missed the connection between *Reginn* and *regin ǫll*; however, this does not mean that the name would have been interpreted

¹⁷⁴ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 55-6.

¹⁷⁵ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 445. Cf. Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 227.

¹⁷⁶ Zoëga, *Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *regin*. <http://norse.ulver.com/dct/zoega/r.html>

¹⁷⁷ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 436-437.

as ‘god.’ Instead, proximity to Nýráðr and Ráðsviðr pushes in the direction of ‘council’ or ‘advice.’

Reginn is the name of a being of dwarf-like stature who appears in *Reginismál*; *Fáfnismál* 25, 36, 39; and *Völsunga saga* 13 as the brother of Ótr and son of Hreiðmarr.¹⁷⁸ CR and H agree on Reginn (regin), while all manuscripts of the *Prose Edda* contain Rekk.¹⁷⁹ Perhaps because the *Prose Edda* is a more cohesive work, the scribe or author noticed that Reginn is not a dwarf *per se*, only in stature (“*Hann var hverjum manni hagari ok dvergr of vöxt*,” prose introduction to *Reginismál*¹⁸⁰), and replaced the name with the similar-sounding Rekk in *Dvergatal*.

Reginn is also an *Óðinsheiti*.¹⁸¹

Gylf. Rekk – ‘Hero, Warrior’

Construction: A nominalization of *rekk*, m. ‘hero, warrior;’¹⁸² ‘straight, upright man’.¹⁸³

Transparency: Fully transparent.

Rekk has parallels in the Old Swedish place name Rinkaby, Burgundian **rinks* ‘warrior,’ Old High German *rinc*, *hrinc* and Old English *rinc* ‘man,’ ultimately leading back to PGmc **renkaz*.¹⁸⁴ This is related to PGmc **rankaz*, which has something to do with straightness, slenderness, and uprightness (cf. Old Icelandic *rakkr* ‘straight, slender;’ Old English *ranc* ‘proud, haughty;’ and Middle Low German *rank* ‘long and thin.’¹⁸⁵ Therefore, Rekk may have carried a connotation of uprightness and tallness, which seems counter-intuitive since the aforementioned phrase “*dvergr of vöxt*” from *Reginismál* (see Reginn, above) seems to imply that dwarfs are short.

Ráðsviðr – ‘Council-Wise;’ ‘Council-Swift;’ ‘Council-Tree’?

Construction: One possible construction is a compound of *ráð*, n. ‘advice, council’ and *svinnr/sviðr* ‘wise’¹⁸⁶ (Orel prefers ‘quick, swift’ – the Germanic root led to cognates

¹⁷⁸ This is part of the *Sigurðr Fáfnisbani* cycle. Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 262.

¹⁷⁹ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 91.

¹⁸⁰ Text from *Reginismál*, in *Eddukvæði II: Hetjukvæði*. Íslensk Fornrit Eddukvæði, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 2014), 296. Translation is my own.

¹⁸¹ Hjalmar Falk, *Odensheite* (Kristiania: A.W. Brøgger's Boktrykkeri A/S, 1924), 24.

¹⁸² De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 441.

¹⁸³ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 302.

¹⁸⁴ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 302.

¹⁸⁵ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 297.

¹⁸⁶ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 227.

meaning ‘strong’ or ‘hard,’ as in for example Gothic *swinþs* and Old English *swíð* ‘strong’).¹⁸⁷ *Svið-* is also found in several words attested in Old Icelandic related to singeing, for example: *sviðna* ‘to be singed’ (derived from *sviða* ‘to singe’); *svið*, n. pl. ‘singed sheep’s heads;’ *sviði*, m. ‘the smart from the burning’ and so on (cf. the dwarf *Sviðrr*, below).¹⁸⁸ In context, ‘council-wise’ or ‘council-swift’ make more sense than ‘sing-council.’ Another possible way to divide the compound into the genitive form *ráðs-* and the word *viðr*, m. ‘tree,’¹⁸⁹ in which case the name would mean ‘council-tree.’

Transparency: Both ways of dividing up the compound would make for highly transparent meanings. The name could very possibly be a pun with a dual meaning of ‘wise-council’ and ‘council-tree.’

Fíli – ‘Board;’ ‘File;’? ‘Elephant’?

Construction: De Vries and others interpret *Fíli* to mean ‘file’ by way of a loanword from Old Frisian/Low German *file* ‘file,’ even though the normal word in Old Icelandic for file was *þél*, f. Other possible derivations could be a weak masculine derivation of *fila*, f. ‘board’ or even a transformation of *fill*, m. ‘elephant’ into a weak noun.¹⁹⁰

Transparency: The meaning ‘file’ relies on the existence of an unattested (loan)word, which makes it difficult to support. In this case the previous scholarship has probably gotten carried away with the dwarfs as craftsmen and pushed for a more linguistically uncertain etymology when attested alternatives like *fila* and *fill* exist. I suggest ‘board’ as the most likely transparent meaning.

Another line of reasoning is to connect *Fíli* to the word *fél*, f. ‘file,’ attested once poetically; hesitant reconstructions of the Proto-Norse form are **finhlja* or **filhja*.¹⁹¹

Kíli – ‘Keel’

Construction: De Vries connects *Kíli* with *kíll*, m. ‘narrow arm of sea,’ made into a weak noun though the suffix *-i* but he and Lorenz also give credence to Gutenbrunner’s translation ‘wedge-smith.’¹⁹² Gould supports the meaning ‘wedge’ through evidence in Modern

¹⁸⁷ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 394.

¹⁸⁸ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *sviðna*, *sviða*, *svið*, *sviði*.

¹⁸⁹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 660.

¹⁹⁰ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 119-120; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 444; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 224-5; Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 16.

¹⁹¹ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 225.

¹⁹² De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 308-309; cf. Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 225.

Scandinavian languages of a loanword from Frisian or Low German *kil*, but admits that Icelandic never picked up the loanword and retained *veggr*, m. ‘wedge’ instead.¹⁹³ *-Kili* with a short vowel also exists in the compound *einkili*, m. ‘shipmate,’ a poetic term derived from *ein-*, meaning ‘together’ in compounds, and *kjǫlr*, m. ‘keel,’ also made into a weak noun through the suffix *-i* and an interpretation of the base vowel of the root as *-i*.¹⁹⁴

Transparency: It is uncertain whether *einkili* was a commonly known moniker for a shipmate; however, *Kíli* is nearly homonymous with *kili*, the dative singular form of *kjǫlr*. For an audience with at least a rudimentary knowledge of boats and seafaring (as is likely with an island like Iceland) the connection was probably somewhat transparent, as well as with *kíll*. It is possible that one or both meanings registered simultaneously with the audience, or that they may have extrapolated to ‘wedge’ through the (potentially) similar shapes of keels and (mountainous) inlets or narrow bays.

Fundinn – ‘The Found’

Construction: Probably a nominalization of the preterite participle *fundinn* of *finna* ‘to find.’¹⁹⁵ A definite form of *fundr*, m. ‘find, discovery’ missing the nominative *-r* is possible, but such a construction does not seem to be paralleled in any of the other dwarf names.¹⁹⁶

Transparency: As *Fundinn* is homonymous with the preterite participle of *finna*, a semantic connection with ‘to find’ is undoubtable. How to interpret this is more difficult; Gutenbrunner translates this as “*der, dem man begegnet ist*” (‘that which one is confronted with’).¹⁹⁷ Another interpretation of ‘found one’ could be ‘treasure,’ or at least something that one was looking for or was hoping to acquire.

Fundinn might be an *Óðinsheiti*, found in a kenning by Einarr Gilsson.¹⁹⁸

Náli – ‘Needle’

Construction: Possibly *nál*, f. ‘needle’ plus the weak masculine suffix *-i*, *nál* being descended from PGmc **nēplō*. De Vries also proposes a connection to the Old High German name

¹⁹³ Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 950.

¹⁹⁴ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 312-313. In u-breaking, *-e-* was subjected to both u-breaking and i-umlaut, causing a disappearance of the original *-e-* ablaut grade. Native speakers may have reinterpreted the root vowel therefore as *-i-* since it appears in the dative singular and nominative plural. See Haraldur Bernharðsson, *Icelandic: 4th draft*, 133; 279.

¹⁹⁵ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 225.

¹⁹⁶ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 147.

¹⁹⁷ Gutenbrunner, “Eddastudien,” as quoted in Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 225.

¹⁹⁸ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 96.

Nahilo, which he compares to Latin *nex*, f. ‘murder’ and *necare* ‘to kill,’ although the corresponding Proto-Indo-European root **nek-* does not seem to have any other descendants in Germanic languages.¹⁹⁹

Transparency: Whether or not de Vries is correct about the etymology of Náli, it is certainly similar enough to *nál* that the meaning ‘needle’ would have been fairly transparent, while the lack of any Old Icelandic words with a similar form and semantic meaning to Nahilo seems to rule out its transparency, barring unattested words.

Anatoly Liberman hypothesizes that Nál (and alternative name for Laufey, the mother of Loki) means ‘earth’ through an older form **Náley* ‘bud-island’ (cf. Laufey ‘leafy-island’) (*nál* means both ‘needle’ and ‘bud’ in modern Icelandic). His support for this form is that the two names for Loki’s mother should be synonyms. As this is relatively speculative I leave it out of my translation of Náli, but it is worth mentioning that ‘bud’ could have been another meaning that registered with the audience.²⁰⁰

Gylf. Vali – ‘The Slain;’ (‘Choice;’ ‘Round Bar;’ ‘Moaner’)

Construction: Possibly *val-* from *valr*, m. or, more likely, *val*, n. II ‘the slain on the battlefield’ plus a weak masculine suffix *-i*. With or without a long *-á-*, could be identical to *Váli/Vali*, Óðinn’s son – possible etymologies could be: < Proto-Norse **Wanilo* (diminutive, cf. *valr*), thus ‘the little Vanir’ (which, as de Vries points out, he is not); related to Old Saxon *wanum* ‘bright;’ or < Proto-Norse *waihalaR* ‘the warlike,’ ‘the little warrior’ (cf. Gothic *waihjō* ‘battle’). Other options include *val*, n. I ‘choice,’ III ‘round bar;’ or perhaps even *vála* ‘to moan.’²⁰¹

Transparency: Since Vali is found in a mythological context, in which several other figures bear names containing *val-* (cf. Valkyrja, Váli, Valhǫll) it seems most likely that the name would foremost be associated with *valr/val* (as well as Váli himself), and that the other meanings should be considered puns. Thus, the dwarf’s name is most likely transparent as ‘the slain.’

¹⁹⁹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 404; Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 287.

²⁰⁰ Liberman, “Ten Etymologies,” 78.

²⁰¹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 641-2.

Note only is Vali similar to Váli, but two *Óðinsheiti* contain *val-*, namely Valtyr (‘the god of the slain;’ *Háleygjatal* 15)²⁰² and Valkjósandi (‘chooser of the slain;’ by the skald Kormákr).²⁰³

Hepti – ‘Haft’

Construction: A nominalization of *hepti*, n. ‘haft, shaft.’ The name is presumably masculine, thus the neuter ending *-i* would have been repurposed as a weak masculine *-i* suffix.

Transparency: More or less certain.

Vili (H **Fili**) – ‘Will;’ ‘Hardship;’ (‘Entrails’)

Construction: *Vili*, m. ‘will’ is attested (as well as *vil*, f./n. ‘will,’ and *vil*, n. pl. ‘entrails’ – both words would have been made masculine through the suffix *-i*). With the long vowel a relationship to *víl*, n. ‘hardship’ is also possible, also through the addition of the weak masculine suffix *-i*.²⁰⁴

Transparency: All meanings likely registered with the audience; however, ‘entrails’ would probably be a pun.

Vili/Víli is also the name of Óðinn’s brother, and ‘Vili’s brother’ has been used as a reference to Óðinn in skaldic poetry (*Ynglingatal* 3; *Sonatorrek* 23).²⁰⁵

Gylf. **Heptifili** – ‘Shaft-Board;’ ‘File with a Handle?’ ‘Haft-Filer’?

Construction: A compound of *hepti*, n. ‘haft, shaft’ and *fili*. As discussed above, the etymology of *fili* is controversial. Previous scholars such as Gutenbrunner and Sijmons and Gering have interpreted the combination to mean ‘haft-filer’ through the uncertain connection to *fél*,²⁰⁶ and Gould translates it as ‘file with a handle’ via *fili*.²⁰⁷ Following my above interpretation of *fili* < *fíla*, f. ‘board’ a possible translation could be ‘shaft-board,’ which at least makes sense conceptually.

Transparency: At least as transparent as *Fíli*, and possibly more with the highly transparent *Hepti-* to give context.

²⁰² Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 350.

²⁰³ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 348.

²⁰⁴ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 663.

²⁰⁵ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 362.

²⁰⁶ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 229; Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 16.

²⁰⁷ Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 948.

It is of note that Heptifili in *Gylfaginning* appears to have been formed from an interpretation of Hepti and Víli as a single name. This indicates that Heptifili made some sense as a compound and that its meaning was therefore fairly transparent.

Hannarr – ‘The Skilled’

Construction: A nominalization of the adjective *hannarr* ‘skilled.’

Transparency: Fully transparent.

CR Svíorr (*Gylf. S<v>íarr*) – ‘The Declining;’ ‘The Swede’? ‘Wanderer’?

Variants: CR *svior*; H *sviðr* (see Sviðrr below); CRPr *síar*; T *sniar*; U *seg^{ir}*; W *sviar*

Construction: The stem *sví-* plus the suffix *-orr/-arr* to form a masculine name. Some scholars have proposed *svífa* ‘to wander’ or ‘to turn, to swing’ as the basis of the name (notably Gutenbrunner and Sijmons and Gering), but this assumes an unexplained dropping of the *-f-*.²⁰⁸ De Vries compares Svíarr to Modern Icelandic *svía* ‘to decline, to diminish,’ probably descended from Old Icelandic *svina* ‘to subside’²⁰⁹ (< PGmc **swinōjanan* < **swīnanan*, cf. Western Frisian *swine* and Old High German *swīnan* ‘to fade’).²¹⁰ There is also superficial similarity to Old Frisian *swīar* ‘mother-in-law’ (from PGmc **swexrō*) and Old Icelandic *Svíar*, m. pl. ‘the Swedes’ but the former’s counterpart in Old Icelandic is *sværa* (not to mention the semantic incongruities between a female person and a masculine construction)²¹¹ and the latter is, according to Polomé, not valid.²¹² Nevertheless, an association with *Svíar* should not be ruled out, even if it is not the source of the name.

Transparency: Uncertain; the most likely of the proposed scenarios is that an unattested **svía* was the root of the name, and a contemporary audience would probably have perceived the similarity to *Svíar* ‘the Swedes.’ However, the spelling is drastically different in every manuscript, which suggests the name was partially opaque.²¹³

H Sviðrr – ‘Singe;’ ‘Spear’

Construction: Possibly *svið-* plus the strong masculine suffix *-r*; grammatically confusing is why the name appears to have two nominative *-r* endings. One (odd) possibility is an

²⁰⁸ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 229; Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 16.

²⁰⁹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 571.

²¹⁰ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 396-7.

²¹¹ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 393.

²¹² Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 447.

²¹³ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 91.

unattested feminine or neuter word **sviðr* with an *-r-* in the stem, plus an additional *-r* to form a masculine name. As previously mentioned, *svið-* is found in *sviðna* ‘to be singed’ (derived from *svíða* ‘to singe’); *svið*, n. pl. ‘singed sheep’s heads;’ *sviði*, m. ‘the smart from the burning’ and so on.²¹⁴ Another source could be *sviða*, f. ‘burning’ but also ‘spear.’²¹⁵

Transparency: An association with singeing or burning (thus ‘Singe’) is likely, as well as with *sviða* ‘spear.’

Sviðrr is very similar to the *Óðinsheiti* *Sviðrir*, *Sviðuðr*, *Sviðarr*, and *Sviðurr*. De Vries does not connect these with burning as I have above, but rather connects them to Old English *sweðrian/swiðrian* ‘to withdraw’ or *sviða*, f. ‘spear’ (thus ‘the spear god’).²¹⁶

H **Billigr** – ‘Moment-ling;’ ‘Twin;’ ‘Drooping’

Construction: The stem *bil-* or *bill-* plus the diminutive suffix *-ingr* to create a masculine name. De Vries proposes *Billigr* as a name meaning ‘twin, hybrid,’ perhaps derived from an alternate meaning ‘identical’ of *bil*, n. (normally ‘a stay, a moment, a, low place’), or from Proto-Norse **bila* ‘twin, identical pair.’ Evidence for the latter would be Norwegian and Swedish *billing* ‘hybrid’ and Middle Low German *billik* and Old High German *billih* ‘fitting’ (de Vries: “*passend*”).²¹⁷ The former stems back to PGmc **bilan* ~ **bilaz*, which may be derived from **bhei* ‘to cut, to strike,’ in which case the sense could originally have been ‘cut in two’ > ‘pair; twin(s).’²¹⁸ Another possibility is a formation from *bila* ‘to give in, to become droopy, to collapse.’ The meaning could therefore be ‘droop-ling.’

Transparency: With extant evidence for ‘twin, hybrid’ only scant, the audience may have been more likely to associate *Billigr* with *bil*, n., thus ‘the product of a moment’ (‘moment-ling’). ‘Drooping’ from *bila* could potentially have registered as well.

Billigr appears in *Hávamál* 97, but the poem does not specify what kind of creature he is; since he is the father of a maiden who attempts to seduce *Óðinn*, he might not be a dwarf. The name *Billigr* also shows some similarity to the dwarf *Berlingr* (*Sǫrla þáttr*), who helped craft the necklace of the Brisings.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *sviðna*; *svíða*; *svið*; *sviði*.

²¹⁵ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 569.

²¹⁶ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 569.

²¹⁷ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 36.

²¹⁸ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 45.

²¹⁹ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 34.

H **Bruni** – ‘Brow;’ ‘Edge;’ ‘Burn;’ ‘The Brown’

Construction: Probably formed from the stem *brun-/brún-* and the weak masculine suffix *-i*. De Vries suggests *brún*, f. ‘eyebrow’ (from PGmc **brūwō*) as the source and translates as ‘the [one] with the bushy eyebrows.’²²⁰ *Brún*, f. can also mean ‘edge,’ which has a slightly different etymology (PGmc **brūnaz II*); **brūnaz I* led to the word *brúnn* ‘brown’ which could also be a potential source for *Bruni* (thus ‘the brown’).²²¹ Also identical is *bruni*, m. ‘burning, fire’²²² or ‘burned lava field’ (from PGmc **brunjaz - *brunōn*).²²³

Transparency: As many different associations as above, and probably more, likely registered with the audience. *Bruni* should be considered a complex name; proximity to a blade-like name (*Billdr*, below) could plausibly speak to the primary meaning ‘edge.’

Brúni is an *Óðinsheiti* found in the *Pulur*.²²⁴

H **Billdr** – ‘Blade,’ ‘Knife,’ ‘Arrow’

Construction: Most likely a nominalization of *bíldr*, m. ‘bloodletting knife’ or the stem *bíld-* of *bílda*, f. ‘arrow, dart’ plus the masculine suffix *-r*. The apparent short vowel *-i-* and doubled *-ll-* in the orthography is most likely due to inconsistent treatment of doubled *-ll-* in early medieval Icelandic manuscripts and a common scribal convention of writing *-ll-* before *-d*.²²⁵

Transparency: Both words are attested and both meanings may have registered with the audience. Clearly the imagery would have been of a blade-type object.

H **Buri** – ‘Resident;’ ‘The Born;’ ‘Producer’

Construction: Probably the stem *bur-/búr* plus the weak masculine suffix *-i*; or, the stem *bú-* plus the suffix *-ri* to form a masculine name. De Vries connects *Buri* to *bera* 3 ‘to carry, to lead, to give birth’ and translates it as ‘the producer,’ but also considers *búa* ‘to live, to dwell’ as another possible source.²²⁶ *Búri*, m. ‘resident of a commercial town’ is also attested but is

²²⁰ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 61.

²²¹ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 60.

²²² De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 61.

²²³ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 58; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 61.

²²⁴ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 46.

²²⁵ Hreinn Benediktsson, *Íslensk Fornrit, Vol. 2 (Series in Folio): Early Icelandic Script as Illustrated in Vernacular Texts from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Reykjavík: The Manuscript Institute of Iceland, 1965), 47.

²²⁶ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 33; 65.

probably a loanword from Middle Low German *būre* ‘builder.’ Other words with similar forms include *búr*, n. ‘chamber, room, pantry,’ *burr*, m. ‘son,’ and *bú* ‘house, dwelling.’²²⁷

Transparency: The numerous words containing *bú(r)*- and having to do with dwelling cannot have been overlooked by the audience, but whether Buri would have been associated with *bera* is uncertain. As a strong verb *bera* does not have a *-u-* ablaut grade as a result of a-umlaut in the preterite participle leading to *borinn*; however, in other verbs such as *nema* – *numinn* the a-umlaut of *-u-* has been blocked by the nasal. Perhaps the audience could have associated Buri and *borinn* by analogy to *nema* – *numinn*.²²⁸ Another route could be through *burr* ‘son,’ which is descended from PGmc **buriz*, derived from **beranan* (> *bera*). Since the two words have a common ancestor and the same consonants there is a chance that the audience could have therefore perceived the relationship between *bera* ‘to bear’ and *burr*, lit. ‘the one that is born(e).’²²⁹

In *Gylfaginning* 6, *Búri* is also the ancestor of the gods, as the father of Borr, father of Óðinn, Víli, and Vé.²³⁰

Frár (H fror) – ‘Swift one’

Construction: A nominalization of *frár* ‘swift, quick’ (from PGmc **frawR* < **frawaR*).²³¹

Transparency: Fully transparent.

Frá- appears in the *Óðinsheiti* *Fráriðr* ‘the swift rider’ or (perhaps) ‘the one riding away’ (*Pulur*).²³²

Hornbori – ‘Horn-bearer;’ ‘Horn-borer;’ ‘Bastard’

Construction: Probably a compound of *horn* ‘horn, corner’ and *-bori*. A cognate could be Old English *hornbora* ‘horn-blower’ but de Vries finds this “*nicht ganz befriedigend*” (‘not completely satisfying’). He points to *horna*, f. ‘concubine’s daughter’ (literally ‘a girl conceived in the corner’) or *horna*, n. ‘corner of a house’ as other possibilities; this would make the name mean something like ‘corner-born’ or simply ‘bastard’ (*-bori* being derived from *bera* ‘to bear;’ see Buri above). On the other hand, a masculine equivalent to *horna*

²²⁷ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 65.

²²⁸ Haraldur Bernharðsson, *Icelandic: 4th draft*, 365-6.

²²⁹ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 41; 64.

²³⁰ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 65; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 47.

²³¹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 140.

²³² De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 140; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 89.

already exists, namely *hornungr*, m. ‘concubine’s son’²³³ or ‘bastard son.’²³⁴ Perhaps a better parallel would be Old Icelandic *hornbora*, f. ‘horn-bearer;’ Hornbori could be a weak masculine form via the suffix *-i*.²³⁵ Another option is *bora* ‘to bore, to drill;’ *bori* is found in the compound *holdbori* ‘raven’ (literally, ‘flesh-driller’) which pushes in the direction ‘horn-borer.’²³⁶

Transparency: All options are viable. The name is probably a multi-layered pun, perhaps concealing the creative meaning ‘bastard’ behind more everyday roles.

H Fornbogi – ‘Old Bow’

Construction: A compound of *forn* ‘old’ and *bogi*, m. ‘bow, blood-spurt,’²³⁷ descended from PGmc **buzōn*.²³⁸ *Bogi* led to the meaning ‘inlet in a beach’ in the Norn language of Shetland; this could indicate that *bogi* was used colloquially to refer to curved water features in landscapes such as beaches and rivers. Therefore, the proximity to Lóni (see below) might not be a coincidence.²³⁹

Transparency: The meaning ‘old bow’ is probably transparent, especially in proximity to *Billdr*, which could mean ‘arrow’ (see above).

Hornbori and Fornbogi are clearly variants of one name, with a change in consonants that suggests an oral tradition in which *h-* and *-r-* were misheard (or misremembered) as *f-* and *-g-* (or vice-versa). A non-intentional scribal error where the letters *h-* and *-r-* in the exemplar were mistaken for *f-* and *-g-* is unlikely due to their quite dissimilar orthographical forms, thus the difference must be either deliberate or oral.

Frægr – ‘The Famous’

Construction: A nominalization of the adjective *frægr* ‘famous,’ from PGmc **frēgjaz*.²⁴⁰

Transparency: Fully transparent.

Lóni – ‘Lagoon;’ ‘Idle Person?’

²³³ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 249.

²³⁴ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *hornungr*.

²³⁵ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 49.

²³⁶ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 51; Sveinbjörn and Jónsson, *Lexicon Poeticum*, 274.

²³⁷ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 47.

²³⁸ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 61.

²³⁹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 47.

²⁴⁰ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 145; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 89; Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 16.

Construction: Possibly *lón*, f. ‘calm place in a river, lagoon’ plus the weak masculine suffix -i.²⁴¹ De Vries also proposes a connection to Norn *-lōni* ‘lazy person,’ Norwegian *lōna* ‘to meekly slip away’ and Swedish *lōna* ‘to stop working’ (the latter two dialectal).²⁴² Sijmons and Gering find the connection to *lón* unconvincing and instead traces *Lóni* back to Proto-Indo-European *leuk, luk* with the approximate meaning ‘the gleaming’ or ‘the dazzled,’ but this would probably not have been transparent to a contemporary audience.²⁴³

Transparency: The connection to *lón* is fairly transparent, but an association with idleness is less certain due to a lack of attested Old Icelandic words.

Aurvangr – ‘Loam-Field;’ ‘Gleaming Field’

Construction: Possibly a compound of *aurr*, m. ‘loam (sand mixed with small bits of stone and clay)’ or ‘brilliant, gleaming’ and *vangr*, m. ‘field, meadow, hayfield.’²⁴⁴ However, *aur-* is also found as the first element in several compounds and names. In words such as *aurborð* ‘plank of a ship’s keel,’ *aurfalr* ‘lower tube of a spear-shaft,’ and *aurvasa* ‘deceased, decrepit’ it has the meaning ‘lower, back.’ In names it makes less sense as ‘loam’ or ‘lower, back’ and more sense as ‘brilliant, gleaming,’ such as in *Aurgelmir* (*aur-* and *galmr* ‘sword’: ‘loam-sword’ or ‘gleaming sword’?),²⁴⁵ *Aurgrímr* (*aur-* and *Grímnir* (a giant, a buck, and an *Óðinsheiti*) – perhaps ‘masked one?’ (cf. *gríma*, f. ‘mask’): ‘loam-buck’ or ‘gleaming-buck’?),²⁴⁶ *Aurnir* (‘mud-dweller’ or ‘brilliant one’?), and *Aurbóða* (*aur-* and *boða* ‘boon’: ‘loam-boon’ or ‘brilliant-boon’?).²⁴⁷ All of these etymologies are problematic but overall ‘loam’ does not seem likely to be the normal meaning of *aur-* when found in compounds. The reconstructed PGmc form of *aur-* is **aūr* with no particular meaning deduced.²⁴⁸

Transparency: ‘Loam-field’ would have been transparent. ‘Gleaming-field’ might have been more natural in light of the probability that the name is a compound, but considering that *aurr* appears in *Völuspá* 19 in the compound *hvítauri* ‘(with) white loam,’ it is more plausible that *aur-* in the case of *Aurvangr* would have been perceived as ‘loam.’

²⁴¹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 366; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *lón*; Sveinbjörn and Jónsson, *Lexicon Poeticum*, 384.

²⁴² De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 366.

²⁴³ Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 16.

²⁴⁴ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 20; 643.

²⁴⁵ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 20; 154.

²⁴⁶ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 20; 188

²⁴⁷ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 20; 40.

²⁴⁸ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 20.

A plural form of the name Aurvangr also appears in “*Aurvanga siqt*” (‘(to the) homes of loam-fields’ or ‘(to the) host of loam-fields:’ *Vqluspá* 14) where it probably designates a geographical location called Aurvangar (Simek suggests the name simply means ‘the one from the Aurvangar’²⁴⁹).

Iari – ‘Conflict’

Construction: Possibly *jara*, f. ‘conflict, dispute’ (poetic, from PGmc **erōn*) made into a weak masculine name through the suffix *-i*.²⁵⁰

Transparency: As *jara* is a poetic term it is uncertain how transparent the name might have been to a general audience. The common words *jarl*, m. ‘chieftain, nobleman, warrior’ and *jorð*, f. ‘earth, ground’ could also have come to mind, even though a derivation from either word is linguistically unlikely due to the final consonants.

Eikinskialdi – ‘Oakenshield;’ (‘Angry Shield’)²⁵¹

Construction: A compound of the adjective *eikinn* I ‘oaken’ or II ‘violent, angry, furious’²⁵² plus *skjoldr*, m. ‘shield, split piece of wood’ without u-umlaut, plus the weak masculine suffix *-i*.²⁵³

Transparency: ‘Oakenshield’ is a literal translation but the name could mean ‘the one with an oaken shield;’²⁵⁴ it is also impossible to ignore that the name can also mean ‘angry shield,’ which is rather strange and perhaps comical concept, but could nevertheless be a pun with ‘oakenshield.’

Lofarr – ‘Praise;’ ‘Praisers;’ ‘The Permitting’ (‘Threshing Floor;’ Flat-Hand’)

Construction: Possibly *lofa* ‘to praise, to permit, to promise’ plus the suffix *-arr* to form a masculine noun.²⁵⁵ With a long vowel, could instead be derived from *lófi*, m. I ‘threshing floor’ or II ‘flat hand,’²⁵⁶ though this seems less likely.

Transparency: The connection to *lofa* (also *lof*, n. ‘praise, permission’) is transparent but whether the name is an agent noun (thus ‘praisers;’ ‘the permitting’) or a personification of

²⁴⁹ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 25.

²⁵⁰ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 290.

²⁵¹ Translated puns in the name-meanings are indicated with parentheses.

²⁵² De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 96.

²⁵³ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 496.

²⁵⁴ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 231-2.

²⁵⁵ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *lofa*.

²⁵⁶ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 363.

praise/permission/promise is up to interpretation. Sijmons and Gering liberally translate Lofarr as ‘the praiseworthy warrior,’²⁵⁷ which is partially supported by the words *lofði*, m. ‘the praiseworthy’ and *lofðar*, m. pl. ‘men, warriors’ (derived from *lofa*).²⁵⁸ Due to the similarity to *lófi* a pun meaning ‘threshing floor’ or ‘flat hand’ is possible.

Draupnir – ‘Dripper,’ ‘Drooper’

Construction: The proposed source for Draupnir has been either the weak verb *dreyppa* ‘to let drop, to drip’ or the strong verb *drjúpa* ‘to drip, to hang one’s head.’²⁵⁹ If derived from the former, *dreyppa* has no grammatical forms with the diphthong *-au-*, thus the process of formation is obscure. If from the latter, *draup-* occurs in the preterite singular conjugations. To this stem the suffix *-nir* would be added to form a masculine agent noun ‘dripper, drooper.’ A derivation from the preterite form of the verb would be a deverbative process similar to that in *Mótsognir* (see above).²⁶⁰

Transparency: The connection to *drjúpa* is the most transparent, barring any non-extant words with *draup-* as an element or vowel grade, thus ‘dripper, drooper’ is a relatively confident translation.

Draupnir is also the name of a magical ring possessed by Óðinn, from which eight identical rings drop every ninth night.²⁶¹ Simek suggests that Draupnir means ‘dripper of rings’ and therefore ‘goldsmith.’²⁶²

The frequency of words meaning ‘droop’ as possible components of some dwarf names (cf. *Nipingr*, *Billingr*, *Draupnir*) is noteworthy. Perhaps ‘drooper’ could designate a hunchback.

Dólgþrasir – ‘Furious Enemy;’ ‘Battle-Eager’

Construction: Possibly a compound of *dolg/dólg*, n. ‘hatred, enmity, battle’ or more likely the derived noun *dolgr/dólgr*, m. ‘enemy, troll’²⁶³ plus *þrasir* ‘the furious’ (derived from *þrasa* ‘to violently storm’). *-Þrasir* is found in a few other compound names such as *Lífþrasir* and

²⁵⁷ Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 17.

²⁵⁸ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 363.

²⁵⁹ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 227; cf. de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 83-4.

²⁶⁰ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 445.

²⁶¹ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 227.

²⁶² Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 66.

²⁶³ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 78-9; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *dólg*; *dólgr*; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 227. De Vries shows *dolg/dolgr* with short vowels whereas Zoëga shows long vowels.

Mogþrasir in which it seems to mean ‘the furious.’²⁶⁴ Thus the meaning seems to be ‘furious enemy’ or something of the like; it would be conceptually odd for a dwarf to be named ‘troll of hatred’ unless the name were an obscure kenning. Lorenz prefers LP’s translation ‘the war-eager’ (interpreting the second element as *þrasi* ‘eager’) or ‘the one threatened in battles.’²⁶⁵

Transparency: Probably fairly transparent with multiple layers of meaning; whether a short or long *-á-* was original to the name may have determined the primary meaning.

On its own, the related name Þrasarr ‘the furious’ is an *Óðinsheiti*.²⁶⁶

Gylf. Dólgþvari – ‘War-Spear, War-Staff’

Construction: Probably a compound of *dolg/dólg* or *dolgr/dólgr* (see Dólgþrasir above) plus *þvari*, m. ‘drill, stick, rod; sword, spear, bolt.’²⁶⁷ A sensible translation would be ‘war-spear’ or possibly LP’s ‘war-staff.’²⁶⁸ Less sensible would be the meaning ‘enemy drill,’ ‘enemy spear,’ etc.²⁶⁹

Transparency: Probably fairly transparent.

‘War-spear’ could be an allusion to Óðinn’s spear Gungnir.

Hár – ‘High one;’ ‘Oarlock;’ ‘Dogfish Shark;’ ‘Blind one;’ ‘One-Eyed’

Construction: As a lexeme, *hár* has many meanings even in Old Icelandic. The name could be a nominalization of the adjective *hár* ‘high,’ in this context meaning ‘the high one.’ Alternatives could be *hár*, m. ‘oarlock, thole’ or ‘(dogfish) shark;’ *hár*, n. ‘hair;’ or finally the adjective *hár* ‘blind, one-eyed’ found in the *Óðinsheiti Hár* which could mean ‘the one-eyed god’ (from Proto-Norse **haiha-* ‘one-eyed;’ cf. Gothic **haihs* ‘one-eyed’ and Latin *caecus* ‘blind’).²⁷⁰

Transparency: All meanings were probably transparent and potentially valid, especially from an oral perspective.

²⁶⁴ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 620.

²⁶⁵ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 227; Sveinbjörn and Jónsson, *Lexicon Poeticum*, 83.

²⁶⁶ Falk, *Odensheite*, 29-30; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 328.

²⁶⁷ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 628; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *þvari*.

²⁶⁸ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 227; Sveinbjörn and Jónsson, *Lexicon Poeticum*, 83.

²⁶⁹ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 63.

²⁷⁰ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 229; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 209-10; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *hár*; Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 160.

Hár is an *Óðinsheiti* meaning ‘the one-eyed.’²⁷¹ *Hár* ‘high’ was also turned into the weak masculine name Hávi, which is an *Óðinsheiti* found in *Hávamál*.²⁷² Hár is also the name of one of the three gods in *Gylfaginning* who answer Gylfi’s questions – the scene parallels numerous other myths in which Óðinn and other gods engage in knowledge contests, sometimes disguised with an assumed name like Gylfi’s Gangleri.

Gylf. Haurr – [Unknown]

Haurr has no accepted etymology. It has been connected to *hárr* ‘gray, gray-haired,’²⁷³ but Polomé argues that this connection is invalid because the Proto-Germanic root must have a -w-.²⁷⁴ In this case, the personal name Hávarr (< runic hau[h]aRaR²⁷⁵) is probably the best clue for Haurr; its source *hau(h)aR-* likely stems from PGmc **xauxaz*, the ancestor of *hár* ‘high.’²⁷⁶

Haugspori – ‘Hill-Treader;’ ‘Hill-Track;’ (‘Hill-Spur’)

Construction: Probably a compound of *haugr*, m. ‘hill, mound’ and *spor-* from *spora* ‘to tread on’ plus the weak masculine suffix *-i*; thus a reasonable translation could be ‘hill-walker.’²⁷⁷ *Spor-* could also be derived from *spor*, n. ‘track, footprint,’ with the meaning understood as ‘hill-track.’ *Spori*, m. is also an attested word meaning ‘spur’ (the type used when riding horses), in which case the meaning ‘hill-spur’ would likely be metaphorical.²⁷⁸ Perhaps this could refer to a rocky outcrop on a hill or even a tree.

Transparency: All three meanings could conceivably have registered with the audience; in the case of ‘hill-spur,’ the meaning would have been either understood as metaphor or a pun coupled with ‘hill-treader’ or ‘hill-track.’

‘Mound-treader’ calls to mind scenes from the sagas (eg. *Grettis saga*, ch. 35) in which undead spirits (*draugar*) rise from their burial mounds and harass the inhabitants of nearby farmsteads. The name could therefore possibly be a type of kenning for ‘*draugr*’ and

²⁷¹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 212.

²⁷² De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 215.

²⁷³ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 212; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 229; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *hárr*.

²⁷⁴ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 446.

²⁷⁵ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 214.

²⁷⁶ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 166; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 214.

²⁷⁷ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 446; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 227.

²⁷⁸ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *spor*; *spori*.

the audience may have made the association between Haugspori and *draugar*.²⁷⁹ On the other hand, *Gylf*. shows the variant Hugstari which may suggest that Haugspori was partially opaque or did not carry much meaning for the scribe or audience.

Gylf. **Hugstari** – ‘The Rigid-Minded;’ ‘Thought-Starling;’ ‘Mind-Gazer’

Construction: Possibly a compound of *hugr*, m. ‘thought, mind, courage’ and *star-* from the adjective *starr* ‘rigid, inflexible,’ thus ‘the rigid-minded’ or ‘one with inflexible courage.’²⁸⁰ Polomé finds this unconvincing and prefers the meaning ‘star’ for *stari*; however, *stari/starri*, m. in Old Icelandic seems to have referred to a starling (a type of bird), while the common word for ‘star’ (the cosmological object) was *stjarna*, f.²⁸¹ A third option is to derive *stari* from *stara* ‘to stare at, to gaze’ with the approximate meaning ‘mind-reader.’²⁸²

Transparency: It is possible that any of these meanings could have registered with the audience, although the derivation from *stari* ‘star’ may be a false friend for modern English and German speakers (i.e. similarity in those languages causes the meaning ‘star’ to seem more valid than it actually is). The alternation with CR and H Haugspori may also indicate that the name was partially opaque or nonsensical.

Apart from wolves, commonly used poetically, animal names are uncommon in this list of dwarfs, which would make the translation ‘mind-starling’ seem out of place. On the other hand, in light of Óðinn’s raven Huginn ‘mind, thought,’ Hugstari could conceivably be a *heiti* for this mythological bird.²⁸³

Hlévangr (H **Hlévargr**) – ‘Shelter-Field;’ H: ‘Shelter-Wolf;’ ‘Shelter-Outlaw’

Construction: Appears to be a compound of *hlé*, n. ‘shelter, lee side’ and *vangr*, m. ‘field’²⁸⁴ Sijmons and Gering imagine that this name refers to the dwarf’s dwelling place, a field protected from the wind.²⁸⁵ In H the variant Hlévargr appears to have *vargr*, m. ‘wolf, thief, outlaw’ as the second element.²⁸⁶ Semantically ‘shelter-wolf’ seems to make even less sense than ‘shelter-field.’ On the other hand, the association between shelter and outlaws would be

²⁷⁹ I am not the first one to notice this parallel. Gould compares Haugspori to a benevolent *draugr*, but I see no reason why malicious *draugar* could not also be referenced in light of the often adversarial position of dwarfs in myth. Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 960.

²⁸⁰ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 228.

²⁸¹ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *stari/starri*; *stjarna*; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 459.

²⁸² Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 446.

²⁸³ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 265.

²⁸⁴ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *hlé*; *vangr*.

²⁸⁵ Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 18.

²⁸⁶ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 645-6; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *vargr*.

appealing if *hlé* were used in the Icelandic law codes to refer to giving shelter to outlaws (specifically, prohibiting it), but to my knowledge, it is not. Another line of thinking is that outlaws were forced to live in the woods or in caves away from settlements; ‘outlaw-shelter’ could thus refer to a cave (or a forest), which ties in with the variant *Hleðiólfr* (see below; perhaps a *heiti* ‘wolf of the hatch’ = ‘cave-dweller’ = [bear]).

Transparency: In CR, ‘shelter-field’ seems to be fairly transparent. In H the meaning ‘outlaw-shelter’ = ‘cave’ or ‘woods’ would be likely if the audience accepted the name as such; however, the order of the elements suggests that the name should be read ‘wolf of shelter’ or ‘outlaw of shelter’ which is rather obscure today.²⁸⁷

Interestingly, *hlé-* appears as the first element in two other *Óðinsheiti*: *Hléfreyr* and *Hléföðr*. De Vries suggests a relation to *hljóða* ‘to silence,’ thus ‘the god who silences storms.’²⁸⁸ An alternative spelling of these two names is *Hlæfreyr* and *Hlæföðr*, which points to the verb *hlæja* ‘to laugh’ (preterite participle: *hleginn*) as a possible source of the first element.²⁸⁹ Etymologically, *Hlévangr* and *Hléfreyr/Hléföðr* might then be unrelated, but an informed audience could have made the connection between the dwarf and *Óðinn*.

Gylf. **Hleðiólfr** – ‘Hatch-Wolf’

Construction: Possibly a compound of *hleði*, m. ‘hatch, shutter, sliding door’ and *úlfr*, m. ‘wolf’ with a variant spelling *ólfr*.²⁹⁰ Polomé translates the name as ‘the wolf of the hatch’ and postulates it as a kenning for a cave-dweller.²⁹¹ This pairs well with the *Óðinsheiti* *Jólfr* (probably from PGmc **ehwa-wulfaz*, literally ‘horse-wolf,’ ie. ‘bear’²⁹²). With a long vowel, the adjective *hléðr* ‘famous(?)’ (thus: ‘famous wolf’) is a possible alternative, but it would

²⁸⁷ In Old Icelandic compounds the conventional order is such that the first element modifies the second element, best expressed in English as ‘[element 2] of [element 1]’ or hyphenated as ‘[element 1]-[element 2]’ – thus, in *Hlévangr* the base concept is *vargr* ‘wolf,’ ‘outlaw’ which is modified by *hlé* ‘shelter.’ The result is ‘wolf of shelter’/‘shelter-wolf’ or ‘outlaw of shelter’/‘shelter-outlaw’ where the name designates a wolf or outlaw which is to be understood in light of shelter. A wolf of shelter might perhaps refer to one who attacks shelters; an outlaw of shelter seems to be a redundant concept, as outlaws in Medieval Iceland were by definition expelled from the protection of society. For a list of compounds demonstrating the above convention, see Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874), XXXIII.

²⁸⁸ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 236.

²⁸⁹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 241.

²⁹⁰ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *hleði*; *úlfr*.

²⁹¹ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 446.

²⁹² De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 292.

have to have been nominalized with a weak masculine suffix *-i* to explain the *-i-* in Hleðiólfr, which does not make much sense in a compound.²⁹³

Transparency: Based on the orthography, ‘hatch-wolf’ is probably the most transparent primary meaning. Harder to say is whether the audience would have viewed it as a *heiti* for ‘cave-dweller,’ or whether it sounded close enough to Hlédiólfr for them to register ‘famous wolf.’

Of note is the semantic, but not phonetic, similarity between the second elements of the variants Hleðiólfr and H Hlévangr – both can mean ‘wolf.’ Is this a trace of oral tradition where the meaning of one element has been partially preserved across the two variants, but reproduced using synonyms?

As with Hlévangr/Hlévangr above, Hleðiólfr begins with an element reminiscent of *Óðinsheiti*, though the addition of *-ð-* may weaken that connection somewhat. The second element is also identical to the *Óðinsheiti* Jólfr.²⁹⁴

Glói (*Gylf. Glóinn*) – ‘The Shining’

Variants: CR *gloi*; H, CRPr, T, W, A, B *glóinn*; U *gloni*

Construction: Either derived from *glóa* ‘to shine, glitter’ (PGmc **zlōōjanan* < **zlōanan*²⁹⁵) via the masculine suffixes *-i* or *-inn*, or related to dialectical Swedish *glōna* ‘to stare.’²⁹⁶ De Vries instead derives *glóa* from PGmc **glōwan*. The only cognate for Swedish *glōna* is Norwegian *glora* ‘to stare,’ from PGmc **zlōrōjanan* (cf. Old Frisian *glōren* ‘to glow’ (> **zlōraz*, which probably refers to a hue of yellow or glowing; cf. Greek *χλωρός* ‘greenish-yellow’ and East Frisian *glor* ‘bright embers’).²⁹⁷ Glowing and staring thus seem to be distantly connected, at least linguistically.

Transparency: Only U shows the variant spelling ‘gloni’ to support de Vries’ derivation from *glōna*.²⁹⁸ The rest have forms which make the transparency of ‘shining one’ much more likely.

Gylf. Dóri – ‘Peg-Hole’? ‘Damager’? ‘Gate’? ‘Fool’?

²⁹³ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic, hléðr*.

²⁹⁴ Falk, *Odensheite*, 20.

²⁹⁵ Orel, *A Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 137.

²⁹⁶ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 446; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 228; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 175.

²⁹⁷ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 137.

²⁹⁸ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 92.

Construction: Origin unknown. One clue is the seemingly-related Modern Icelandic *dór* ‘bore,’ Norwegian *dor* ‘iron peg’ and *dore* ‘iron rod,’ and Faroese *dori* ‘plug for a hole,’ ‘auger,’ ‘iron bolt,’ which could suggest an Old Icelandic word related to pegs, peg-holes, and the like; another option is a relation to Old English *derian*, Old Frisian *dera*, Old High German *tarēn*, *tarōn*, etc. ‘to inflict damage.’²⁹⁹ A third option is to consider an unattested word stemming from **đūran* ~ **đūrō*, which probably referred to a large door or gate based on the various descendants (cf. Gothic *daur* ‘door, gate;’ Old English *dór* ‘large door;’ Old Saxon *dor* and Old High German *tor* ‘gate;’ etc.).³⁰⁰ Motz suggests *Dóri* is related to *dara* (Cleasby and Vigfusson: *dára*³⁰¹) ‘to mock, fool.’³⁰²

Transparency: All of the words potentially related to *Dóri* remain valid routes to explore, but without an attested word in Old Icelandic they cannot be more than guesses in terms of transparency.

Gylf. Dúfr – ‘Dove;’ ‘Wave;’ ‘Diver’

Construction: Probably derived from *dúfa* which has several meanings: as a feminine substantive, ‘dove, pigeon’ (from PGmc **đūbōn*³⁰³) and also ‘wave’ (origin unknown, but probably related to the verb), or as a weak verb ‘to plunge, to dive (from PGmc **đūbanan*³⁰⁴).’³⁰⁵

Transparency: Any or all of the meanings could have been transparent to a contemporary audience.

Dúfa is one of the nine daughters of *Ægir* and *Rán* (*Skáldskaparmál* 22; 58).³⁰⁶

Gylf. Andvari – ‘Vigilance;’ ‘Soul-Defender’?

Construction: Identical to *andvari*, m. which means ‘care, anxiety, vigilance,’³⁰⁷ probably constructed from the elements *and-* (a prefix meaning ‘against’) and *varr* ‘aware,

²⁹⁹ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 446; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 228; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 79; Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 944.

³⁰⁰ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 79.

³⁰¹ Cleasby and Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 98.

³⁰² Motz, “New Thoughts on Dwarf-Names,” 114.

³⁰³ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 80.

³⁰⁴ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 80.

³⁰⁵ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 86; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *dúfa*; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 446; Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 80.

³⁰⁶ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 66.

³⁰⁷ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *andvari*; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 446; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 9.

cautious.’³⁰⁸ Another possibility is a compound of *qnd*, f. ‘soul’ (lacking u-umlaut, thus *and-*) and *verja* ‘to defend’ (lacking i-umlaut, thus *-var-*) plus the weak masculine suffix *-i*, thus making the name ‘soul-defender’ or, more poetically, ‘protector of life.’³⁰⁹

Transparency: The meaning ‘care, anxiety, vigilance’ is almost certainly transparent; meanwhile, ‘soul-defender’ is a much more speculative construction and it is uncertain whether the audience would have ignored the primary meaning and instead perceived forms of *qnd* and *verja*.

Andvari is also a dwarf in *Reginismál* who is caught by Loki in a net and curses the eponymous golden ring of the Ring Cycle.³¹⁰

Skirvir (H **skirf** *ir*; CRPr **skirpir**) – ‘The Sharp’? ‘The Bunched-Up’? ‘Spitter’? (‘Bright Wire’)

Construction: Appears to be the root *skirv-/skirf-/skirp-* plus the masculine suffix *-ir*. The source of the root is uncertain; one option is to connect Skirvir with the Norwegian dialectal word *skjerva* ‘to join beams with a diagonal section’ or ‘to connect, seam, cut.’³¹¹ De Vries points to the related Norwegian words *skirvel* and *skjervel* ‘cut-off piece’ and Middle Low German *schervel* ‘shard’ as clues.³¹² To the discussion I add the PGmc strong verb **skarpaz* (> *skarpr* ‘sharp’) and weak verb **skarpjanan* (> Old East Scandinavian *skærpa* ‘to press, to tuck’; Old Saxon *gi-skerpian* ‘to sharpen’). In addition, Orel points out the participle form *skorpinn* ‘shrivelled’ which probably came from the strong verb **skerpanan*.³¹³ All of this evidence points to a potential Old Norse/Old Icelandic word with a form similar to **skerpa*/**skirpa* (albeit *skerpa*, f. is attested and means ‘sharpness,’ and *skirpa* is an attested variant of *skyrpa* ‘to spit’ (etymology unknown, perhaps from *skrapa* ‘to rasp’³¹⁴)³¹⁵) or **skerfa*/**skirfa*, with the meaning something like ‘to sharpen’ or ‘to press, to tuck, to bunch up’ etc., from which Skirvir was derived.

Transparency: Due to the common alternation of *f/p* and *i/e* in Old Icelandic, the above Old words might have registered with the audience. In particular, the CRPr variant Skirpir might

³⁰⁸ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *and-*; *varr*; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 9; 647.

³⁰⁹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 10; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 446.

³¹⁰ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 16.

³¹¹ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 230-1; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 447.

³¹² De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 493.

³¹³ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 335.

³¹⁴ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 501; 510.

³¹⁵ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *skerpa*; *skirpa*; *skyrpa*.

have led the audience of CRPr to perceive the name as ‘spitter,’ even though linguistically the origin of the name is probably unrelated.

Phonetically, Skirvir sounds relatively close to *skírr vírr* (*skírr* ‘bright, pure’ [of glass, metal, water, sky] and *vírr*, m. ‘wire, thread of metal’), thus ‘pure wire, bright wire,’ etc., although at best this could be a pun, not the actual meaning of the name, as *vírr* would have remained unaltered or acquired the suffix *-i* (thus ‘*Skírvíri’) in accordance with the normal patterns of name formation in *Dvergatal* and elsewhere.³¹⁶ Skirvir also sounds close to Skírnir (‘bright one,’ from *skírr* plus the masculine suffix *-nir*), Freyr’s servant/messenger.³¹⁷

Skirvir is probably related to the sobriquet *skirfill*, m., which also has no accepted meaning but is probably related to words discussed above.³¹⁸ Perhaps not coincidentally, the same pattern is found in the following dwarf name Virvir, which is probably related to the name Virfill (see below).

Virvir (*Gylf. Virpir*) – [Unknown]

Construction: De Vries links Virvir to Virfill, the name of a sea-king and also a poetic term (*virfill*, m.) for a horse; he relates both names back to *orf*, n. ‘handle, scythe’ (< PGmc **wurfan* ~ **wurfaz*) due to the related Latin *verpa* ‘penis’ and Old High German *worb* ‘rod.’³¹⁹ It would seem that de Vries imagines an unattested Old Icelandic (or older) word **verf*/**verp* meaning ‘rod,’ even though the vowel change from **wurfan* > *orf* seems to rule this out. Much closer in form is Old Icelandic *verpa* ‘to throw’ and *verpill*, m. ‘die, barrel, cask’ (both from PGmc **werpanan*, led to various Germanic words meaning ‘to throw’);³²⁰ however, a direct derivation from either of these words (through the masculine suffix *-ir*) would probably be **verpir*. A change to Virvir in *Völuspá* would subsequently have required the shift from /p/ to /f/ and then to /v/,³²¹ as well as i-umlaut of /e/ to /i/. Gould takes a different approach, sourcing Virvir to a loanword from Frisian *verver* ‘dyer’ based on Frisian cloth exporting.³²²

³¹⁶ Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *skírr*; *vírr*.

³¹⁷ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 494.

³¹⁸ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 493.

³¹⁹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 420; Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 476; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 447.

³²⁰ Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 450, 457.

³²¹ *F* and *p* were sometimes used interchangeably in consonant clusters in Old Icelandic script; cf. the alternate spellings *eftir/eptir*, *oft/opt* – evidence for the clusters *pr* and *fr* can be seen in the adjacent dwarf name Skirvir/skirf^u/skirpir. *F* and *v* were also used interchangeably for both voiced and voiceless labio-dental fricatives. Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, 26.

³²² Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 963.

Transparency: Unknown.

Skáfiðr (*Gylf. Skafiðr*) – ‘Good Finn;’ ‘Crooked Finn’?

Construction: Possibly a compound of *skár* ‘good’ or ‘careful, prudent’³²³ and *fiðr*, m. (= *finnr*) ‘Finn.’³²⁴ Some scholars (LP, Lorenz, and Polomé) have found it useful to connect *Gylf. Skafiðr* with the word *skeifr* ‘crooked, askew, oblique’ (< PGmc **skaiþaz*), but also admit the name might not be a compound.³²⁵ Simek instead goes by the spelling *Skáviðr* in the *Pulur* and translates as ‘good tree’ via *viðr*, m. ‘tree,’ but the -v- is not present in any variants in either *Völuspá* or *Gylf*.³²⁶

Transparency: ‘Good Finn’ is probably transparent; ‘Crooked Finn’ is less evident due to the diphthong in *skeifr*.

Alfr – ‘Elf’

Construction: Identical to *alfr*, m. ‘elf.’ All MSS show a short vowel; however, with a long *á-* (as *Álfr* is normalized in Dronke’s edition of *Völuspá*³²⁷ and both Lorenz and Faulkes’ editions of *Gylfaginning*³²⁸) the dwarf could be read as the personal name *Álfr*, which according to de Vries might be descended from PGmc **AþawulfaR* and thus be a compound of *aða-* (from *aðal* ‘chief, head, noble’ in compounds³²⁹) and *úlfr*, m. ‘wolf.’³³⁰

Transparency: In light of a mythological poem, it is safe to assume that ‘elf’ would have been the transparent meaning, not the personal name (the meaning ‘noble wolf’ in any case was probably not transparent to a contemporary audience, having lost much similarity to *aðal* and *úlfr*).

Yngvi (*Gylf. Ingi*)

Construction: Yngvi is a name given to the god (Yngvi)-Freyr as a by-name. It probably stems from the PGmc name of the god **Ingwaz*. The etymology of this word and its daughter forms in various Germanic languages has been hotly debated, with proposed

³²³ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 483-4; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 447; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *skári*.

³²⁴ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 119-121; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 447.

³²⁵ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 231; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 447; Sveinbjörn and Jónsson, *Lexicon Poeticum*, 503; Orel, *Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 331.

³²⁶ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 288; Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 92.

³²⁷ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 11.

³²⁸ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 209; Faulkes, *Edda*, 16.

³²⁹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 1.

³³⁰ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 6; 632-3.

meanings/relations including (but not limited to): Greek ἔγχος ‘spear, striking weapon;’ Greek ἄγγω and Latin *ango* ‘to torment, to choke;’ Latin *unguis* ‘nail;’ High German dialectical *unker* ‘penis;’ Old High German *engirinc* ‘maggot, worm;’ Greek ὀγκάομαι ‘scream;’ Latin *uncare* ‘the roar of a bear;’ PGmc **angū* ‘water;’ Old Icelandic Yngvinn > **Ingwanaz* ‘yew-god;’ and Tocharian *onk/enkwe* ‘man.’³³¹ De Vries admits these relationships are all problematic to some extent, with the Tocharian words for ‘man’ “*besonders weit hergeholt*” (‘especially far-fetched’)³³² In light of a lack of scholarly consensus it seems futile to choose one meaning, for Yngvi/Ingi, and unhelpful to analyze them all simultaneously.

Transparency: Whatever else the name might have meant, Yngvi would certainly have been associated with Yngvi-Freyr by an audience knowledgeable in Old Icelandic mythology.³³³ Yngvi would also probably have been associated with the Ynglings, a Swedish dynasty in *Ynglingasaga*.³³⁴

CR Fialarr– ‘Hider,’ ‘Board, Plank;’ ‘Plenty?’

Construction: *Fial-* plus the masculine suffix *-arr* making an agent noun. De Vries derives Fialarr (= Fjalarr) from *fela* ‘to hide’ therefore ‘hider,’ referring to the dwarf who created the mead of poetry along with Galarr from the blood of Kvasir (*Skáldskaparmál* 5).³³⁵ Fialarr could also be derived from *ffjöl*, f. ‘board, plank’ or (in compounds, as an adverb) ‘much, very’ although de Vries finds the latter derivation “*höchst unwahrscheinlich*” (‘most implausible’) because a name being derived from an adverb would be unique to *ffjöl*.³³⁶ That being said, the *Óðinsheiti* Fjölfnir appears to be derived from *ffjöl* ‘much, very’ and could mean ‘the one who [knows] much.’³³⁷

³³¹ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 678-9; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 231; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 447; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 378-9.

³³² De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 679.

³³³ Although Yngvi-Freyr is only attested in *Ynglinga saga*, and thus could be an invention of the author (Snorri?), Simek raises the possibility of a long tradition: “Yngvi could... be a derivation from **Ingwaz* and be interpreted as ‘the Ingaevone’, and Yngvi-Freyr from **Ingwia-fraujaz* ‘lord of the Ingaevones’ whereby a great age for the construction Yngvi-Freyr must be assumed;” he supports this with the name of the Germanic tribe of Ingaevones (Tacitus, *Germania* 2) and “[t]he Gothic name for the yew-rune, *enguz*, [which] also points to the great age of the god Ing.” None of this is direct evidence, however, and the originality of Yngvi-Freyr to *Ynglinga saga* remains in question. Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 379.

³³⁴ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 379.

³³⁵ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 122-3; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 232; Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 447.

³³⁶ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 122-3, 125; cf. Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 232; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 85.

³³⁷ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 84-5.

Transparency: A derivation from *fela* is possible and perhaps transparent, as might have been the meaning ‘board, plank’ from *ffjól* as well as ‘much’ (nominalized above as ‘plenty’).

The aforementioned name Fjǫlnir is an *Óðinsheiti* as well as one of the Vanir. Fjalarr is also the name of several giants (*Hávamál* 14; *Hárbarðsljóð* 26) and also the rooster found in Galgviðr (*Völuspá* 41).³³⁸ In addition, Fjalarr is a dwarf in *Egils saga ok Ásmundar* and *Qrvar-Odds saga*.³³⁹

Gylf. Falr – ‘Spear-Socket;’ ‘Hider’?

Construction: Identical to *falr*, m. ‘the tube into which the shaft of a spear is inserted’ but could also be derived from *fela* ‘to hide’ (see Fialarr above).³⁴⁰

Transparency: The primary meaning ‘spear-socket’ would have been transparent; less certain is whether the audience would have looked beyond a familiar word and perceived a derivation from *fela*.

Falr is probably referenced in the kenning *Fals veigar* (‘Falr’s strong drink’ = [poem]).³⁴¹

CR Frostri (Gylf. Frosti) – ‘Frost’

Construction: The noun *frost*, n. ‘frost’ plus the suffix -ri (or -i in *Gylf.*) to form a masculine name.

Transparency: Fully transparent.

Frostri (as Frosti) is a dwarf in *Egils saga ok Ásmundar* and *Qrvar-Odds saga*.³⁴²

CR Finnur (Gylf. Fiðr) – ‘Finn’

Construction: Identical to *Finnr*, m. ‘Finn.’

Transparency: Transparent in that a person from somewhere in the region of Finland is meant, but it is not clear why only this particular dwarf received a human demonym.³⁴³

Polomé asserts that *Finnr* is “a frequent designation for someone indulging in magic” due to

³³⁸ De Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 122; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 84.

³³⁹ Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 19.

³⁴⁰ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 447; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 78.

³⁴¹ Rudolf Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden: Ein Beitrag zur skaldischen Poetik* (Bonn and Leipzig: Kurt Schroeder, 1921), 428.

³⁴² Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 19.

³⁴³ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 232

the reputation of the Finns during the Middle Ages as magic-workers, and dwarfs certainly had a magical quality to them.³⁴⁴

CR **Ginnarr** – ‘Deceiver’

Construction: Probably *ginn-* from *ginna* ‘to deceive, to fool, to beguile’ or ‘to bewitch’ (< *ginn*, m. ‘deceit, falsehood’) plus the suffix *-arr* to form a masculine (agent) name.³⁴⁵

Transparency: Probably transparent.

Ginnarr is reminiscent of the title *Gylfaginning* which contains *-ginning*, and is almost certainly derived from *ginn* or *ginna*.

Ginnarr is an *Óðinsheiti* in the *Pulur*, presumably due to Óðinn’s strong association with magic.³⁴⁶

II. Statistical Observations³⁴⁷

Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda:

CR contains sixty-one unique names (there are sixty-three names, but two are repeats).

Twelve names are also *Óðinsheiti*, contain elements also found in *Óðinsheiti*, or are reminiscent of *Óðinsheiti*:

- **Dvalinn** (cf. Hanga Dvalinn), **Mióðvitnir** (cf. the mead of poetry), **Þekkr**, **Reginn**, **Fundinn**, **Víli** (‘Víli’s brother’ = Óðinn³⁴⁸), **Frár** (cf. Fráriðr), **Dolgþrasir** (cf. Prasarr), **Hár** (*Völuspá* 21; cf. Hávi), **Hlévangr** (cf. Hléfreyr and Hléfǫðr), **Fialarr** (cf. Fjǫlnir), **Ginnarr** (*Pulur*).

Eight names are dwarfs found in mythological stories and poems, as well as sagas, besides *Völuspá*:

- **Norðri**, **Suðri**, **Austri**, **Vestri** (the four corners of the sky – cf. *Gylfaginning* 7), **Dvalinn** (*Hávamal* 143, *Alvíssmál* 16, *Gylfaginning* 15, *Fáfnismál* 13, and *Sǫrla þáttr*) **Litr** (*Gylfaginning* 49), **Fialarr** (*Skáldskaparmál* 1).

³⁴⁴ Polomé, “Notes on the Dwarfs,” 448; Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 82.

³⁴⁵ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 232; Zoëga, *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, *ginna*; de Vries, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 167.

³⁴⁶ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 109.

³⁴⁷ For more specific information on the connections and allusions listed, see the corresponding entry for each dwarf name in section 3.I.

³⁴⁸ This is not an *Oðinsheiti per se*, merely a reference, but I have included it for sake of completeness.

- In sagas: **Fialarr** and **Frostri** (as Frosti) appear as a pair of dwarfs in *Egils saga ok Ásmundar* and *Orvar-Odds saga*.³⁴⁹

Sixteen names are also other mythological beings or objects, or could plausibly allude to them:

- **Dvalinn** (cf. Alvíss), **Nóri** (a sea-king), **Ánarr** (cf. Anarr, husband of Jǫrð), **Miðvitnir** (cf. the mead of poetry), **Veigr** (cf. Gullveig, also the mead of poetry), **Gandálfr** (elf³⁵⁰), **Vindálfr** (elf), **Reginn** (*Reginismál*; *Fáfnismál* 25, 36, 39; *Vǫlsunga saga* 13;³⁵¹ also, cf. *Vǫluspá* refrain “*Pá gengu regin ǫll*”), **Vili** (Óðinn’s brother), **Draupnir** (Óðinn’s magic ring), **Hár** (cf. the figure in *Gylfaginning*), **Haugspóri** (debatable – cf. *draugr*), **Alfr** (elf), **Yngvi** (cf. Yngvi-Freyr), **Fialarr** (several giants and a rooster), and **Ginnarr** (cf. *Gylfaginning*).

Hauksbók

H contains sixty-five unique names. It is mostly similar to CR, although the order and spelling of many of the names is different, and it lacks some of the names but has a few additional ones relevant to the above categories:

- **Nóri**, **Pekkr**, **Fialarr**, **Frostri**, **Finnr**, and **Ginnarr** are missing, removing the corresponding allusions.
- **Billigr**, **Bruni**, **Billdr**, **Buri** are found only in H; **Billigr** appears in *Hávamál* 97, **Bruni** is an *Óðinsheiti*, and **Buri** is an allusion to Búri, the grandfather of Óðinn, Vili, and Vé (*Gylfaginning* 6).
- **Náinn**, **Nipingr**, **Dáinn**, and **Nýr** are found in H (and *Gylf.*) but not CR; **Náinn** is a serpent found in the *Pulur*, and **Dáinn** is a dwarf found in *Hyndluljóð*.
- **Ónarr** is found instead of **Ánarr**, making an allusion to Anarr less likely in H.
- **Veggr** is found instead of **Veigr**, removing the allusion to Gullveig in H.
- **Fíli** is repeated instead of **Vili**, removing the allusion to Vili in H.

³⁴⁹ Sijmons and Gering, *Kommentar*, 19.

³⁵⁰ It is not entirely certain whether dwarfs and elves were considered distinctly different creatures, as the *Prose Edda* calls the dwarfs *svartálfar* (‘black/dark elves;’ *Skáldskaparmál* 35). Most likely they and their characteristics were conflated somewhat. Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 68.

³⁵¹ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 262.

- **Sviðrr** is found instead of **Svíorr**, adding allusions to the *Óðinsheiti* Sviðrir, Sviðuðr, and Sviðurr.
- **Fornbogi** is found instead of **Hornbori**.
- **Hlévargr** is found instead of **Hlévangr**; similarity to *Hlé*-containing *Óðinsheiti* remains.

Gylfaginning

Gylf. contains sixty-two unique names, and is more similar to H, with some differences:

- **Nóri, Pekkr, Frostri, Finnrr, and Ginnarr** are not missing; the corresponding allusions are thus present.
- Rather than H **Sviðrr**, *Gylf.* contains forms more similar to CR **Svíorr**, thus it is lacking allusions to the corresponding *Óðinsheiti*.
- **Óri, Óinn, Þrórr, Haurr, Dori, Dúfr, Andvari, and Heptifili** are found only in *Gylf.*; **Óri** and **Óinn** add allusions to serpents in the *Pulur*; **Þrórr** adds allusions to an *Óðinsheiti*, a boar, and a mythical sword; **Dúfr** adds an allusion to Dúfa; **Andvari** adds an allusion to the dwarf in *Reginismál*;
- **Móðvitnir** is found in CRPr instead of **Mióðvitnir**, removing the allusion to the mead of poetry and Óðinn.
- **Vigr/Viggr** is found instead of **Veigr/Veggr**, removing the allusion to Gullveig and the mead of poetry.
- **Vali** is found instead of **Náli**; cf. Óðinn's son Váli and the *Óðinsheiti* Valtyr and Valkjósandi.
- **Þróinn** is found instead of **Þráinn**.
- **Rekkrr** is found instead of **Reginn**, removing the allusion to *Reginismál* and the other poems of the *Sigurðr Fáfnisbani* cycle.
- **Dolgpvari** is found instead of **Dolgþrasir**; possible meaning 'war-spear' (cf. Gungnir).
- **Hugstari** is found instead of **Haugspori**, removing a possible allusion to *draugar* but adding a potential allusion to the raven Huginn.

- **Hleðiólfr** is found instead of **Hlévangr/Hlévangr**, adding an allusion to the *Óðinsheiti Jólfr*.
- **Haurr** is found instead of **Hár**, possibly removing allusions to the *Óðinsheiti Hár* and *Hávi*.
- **Falr** is found instead of **Fialarr**, arguably removing allusions to the dwarf, rooster, and giants named *Fjalarr*.

Summary:

- *Óðinsheiti*: CR: 12 (19.7%); H: 10 (15.4%); *Gylf*: 8 (12.9%)
- Mythological Dwarfs: CR: 8 (13.1%); H: 7 (10.8%); *Gylf*: 9 (14.5%)
- Other mythological figures: CR: 16 (26.2%); H: 13 (20%); *Gylf*: 14 (22.6%)

Total Allusions:³⁵²

- CR: 27 (44.3%)
- H: 25 (38.5%)
- *Gylf*: 28 (45.2%)
- Average across the three versions: 42.7%

Other Categories:

In addition to mythological references, it is useful to separate the potential meanings of the dwarf names into broader categories.³⁵³

- Natural features: CR: 16 (26.2%); H: 15 (23.1%); *Gylf*: 13 (21%).
23.4% average.
- Tools or everyday objects: CR: 13 (21.3%); H: 17 (26.2%); *Gylf*: 14 (22.6%). 23.4% average.
- Character traits: CR: 39 (63.9%); H: 39 (60%); *Gylf*: 38 (61.3%).
61.7% average.

³⁵² These numbers represent the total number of names in each version which may allude to something; names which refer to more than one thing (eg. both *Óðinsheiti* and dwarf(s)) are not counted twice.

³⁵³ Numbers are inclusive rather than conservative; I have even included names which could potentially refer to the things in the various categories (eg. *Bívǫrr* ‘trembler’ is included in natural features because the name could be perceived metaphorically as an earthquake). The numbers are also not exclusive – one name might fall into multiple categories.

4. ANALYSIS

I. Dwarf Names and Natural Features

Natural features and place names appear frequently throughout *Völuspá*; thus, it is no surprise that parts of *Dvergatal* appear to describe natural features immediately present in Iceland. I argue that a close examination of these names and the corresponding sections of *Völuspá* that refer to geographical features display a seemingly conscious and careful set of parallels between the dwarfs and the poem – parallels which touch on various layers of the poem from mythological creation to the apocalypse. This is especially meaningful with respect to volcanic imagery in *Völuspá*, a feature which, to my mind, has not been explored nearly enough in the past.

The overtly geographical names appear in clusters that mirror parts of *Völuspá*. The very first name, Mótsognir, could plausibly mean ‘wrath-sea’ or ‘weary-sea.’ Then, skipping Durinn ‘sleep, door,’ six names in a row – Nýi, Niði, Norðri, Suðri, Austri, and Vestri are all related to the sky and human orientation in both space and time, being two phases of the moon and the cardinal directions. Also in close proximity to these are Bívorr ‘trembler’ and Bǫmburr ‘drum, drummer, boomer;’ thinking in terms of natural features it is not a great leap to see how the former could designate an earthquake and how the latter could stand for the loud booming of either a thunderclap or a volcanic eruption. Following Bǫmburr four names later is Ái, the primary meaning of which is ‘great-grandfather’ but due to the regularity of derivations of names using the suffix *-i* the secondary meaning ‘river’ is also possible and would have been transparent. At this point *Dvergatal* takes a break from natural features and picks them up again later on with the pairs Lóni ‘lagoon’ and Aurvangr ‘loam-field, gleaming meadow;’ and Haugspóri ‘hill-treader, hill-track’ and Hlévangr ‘shelter-field’ (the H variant Hlévangr ‘shelter-wolf, shelter-outlaw’ does not work here). Ái is repeated and then near the end of the CR list, Frostri ‘frost’ is found. *Gylfaginning* adds one more name, Dufr ‘wave,’ to this category. As previously discussed, not a single name in *Dvergatal* (or indeed in the entire corpus of dwarf names) directly refers to stones or living beneath the earth, which reinforces the notion that the names of the dwarfs have to do with something other than their status as mythical beings.³⁵⁴ Instead, the concentration of natural features in certain sections suggests that *Dvergatal* is partly concerned with establishing or drawing attention to the world surrounding the audience. This mirrors the composition of *Völuspá* as a whole; the wider

³⁵⁴ Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 966.

poem sometimes concerns itself with the physical world of the mythological figures, but it meanders organically in its descriptions and is not particularly systematic or comprehensive about describing the mythological world, in contrast to *Gylfaginning* which has a clear task of systematically explaining the world from a mythological viewpoint. With *Völuspá* the audience is either expected to be familiar enough with the world described that the place-names (which are often compounds of a geographical feature plus a distinguishing attribute) and natural features of the world fit in with a wider, known context; or, the uninformed are expected to piece together what they can from the scattered references to natural features. So too with *Dvergatal*: Not enough information is given in the list to form a coherent natural/geographical context, but some details are present, and a clever or informed audience may have been able to fit them in with background knowledge acquired orally or through another source now lost and unknown.

Indeed, even a not-so-well-informed audience could have made such connections between *Dvergatal* and other parts of *Völuspá*. Stanzas 4-6 establish and recount the origins of many natural features – seashores, the land, stones, green vegetation, the sun, the moon, stars, night ‘and her offspring’ (“*nótt ok niðiom*,” the similarity between *niðiom* and the dwarf *Niði* is hard to miss, even though the poem itself says these offspring are the times of day, not the moon phases; 6). Missing, however, are the cardinal directions, the moon phases, the seas, rivers, pools, and more, which follow just four stanzas later in *Dvergatal*. Is the list of dwarfs, then, partially completing this description of the world? It certainly adds to it, and none of the names are obviously redundant, which supports this possibility.

Some of the names appear elsewhere in *Völuspá* alone, in compounds, or in parallel formations, not describing dwarfs but rather natural features. Compare *Aurvangr* and *Aurvanga* ‘loam fields’ (*Völuspá* 14) which is probably a place name, not the dwarf due to its plural inflexion; *Niði* and *Niðavellir* ‘waning-moon plains’ (*Völuspá* 36) as well as *Niðafjöll* ‘waning-moon mountains’ (*Völuspá* 62); *Nár* (CR) / *Náinn* (H) – *Nástranda* ‘corpse-shore;’ and *Fialarr* (*Völuspá* 41).

Of particular interest is *Fialarr*, who is not only a dwarf in *Völuspá* (CR) but is also a rooster (*hani*; 41); I argue that *Fialarr* and *Bomburr* refer to a section of stanzas in *Völuspá* with strong volcanic imagery. As mentioned previously, one way to interpret the name *Bomburr* ‘drum, drummer, boomer’ in the context of natural features is as the booming sound of a thunderclap or a volcanic eruption. Iceland is a land full of volcanic activity, and the

audience of *Völuspá* surely knew about volcanic eruptions either from stories or firsthand.³⁵⁵ It should therefore be not just possible but expected to find references to the dramatic event of an eruption in the poetry and literature, and some scholars have located just such references in *Völuspá*, to which I add my own interpretations.³⁵⁶ The following stanzas present multiple accounts and poetic circumlocutions for such an event:

(37) “ <i>Sal sá hón standa</i> <i>sólo fiarri,</i> <i>Náströndo á,</i> <i>norðr horfa dyrr.</i> <i>Fello eitrdropar</i> <i>inn um lióra.</i> <i>Sá er undinn salr</i> <i>orma hryggiom.</i> ” ³⁵⁷	‘A hall she sees standing far from the sun, on Corpse-Shore, north face the doors. Poison-drops fell in through the roof-vent. That hall is woven with serpents’ spines.’
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That the hall is “*sólo fiarri*” (‘far from the sun’) could refer to volcanic ash clouding the sky. The *eitrdropar* (‘poison-drops’)³⁵⁸ falling in through the roof-vent would likely be ash and tephra (and other poisonous gasses, which the Icelanders at the time were probably not aware of), which can be deadly when inhaled.

(40) “ <i>Fylliz fiqrvi</i> <i>feigra manna,</i> <i>rýðr ragna siqt</i> <i>rauðom dreyra.</i> <i>Svört verða sólskin</i> <i>of sumor eptir,</i> <i>veðr öll válynd.</i> ” ³⁵⁹	‘Is filled with life of doomed men, reddens ruler’s homes with red gore. Black becomes the sunshine during summers after, weather(s) all ill-natured.’
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³⁵⁵ A. Mathias Valentin, *Of Fire and Water: The Old Norse Mythical Worldview in an Ecomythological Perspective*, PhD dissertation (Aarhus: Aarhus University, 2013), 132-3.

³⁵⁶ Most recently, the above 2013 PhD dissertation *Of Fire and Water* by Valentin examines volcanism in Old Norse literature in detail, focusing on the creation myth of Ymir and the myth of Kvasir in particular. The study also contains a thorough exploration on previous research on volcanism in Icelandic literary works (see pp. 122-4).

³⁵⁷ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 17. All translations are my own.

³⁵⁸ *Eitr* is also found in the compound *eitrkvikja* ‘poisonous flows’ in *Gylfaginning* 5, where it is arguably describing the process of lava flows hardening into rock. Valentin, *Of Fire and Water*, 130-3.

³⁵⁹ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 18.

Painting homes with red gore seems to poetically describe a lava flow engulfing a house. “Black becomes the sunshine in the summers that follow, weathers all ill-natured” more or less accurately describes the effect of a massive eruption on local and global weather patterns;³⁶⁰ Iceland experienced at least some of the disastrous repercussions of such an eruption from Hekla in 1104CE,³⁶¹ roughly a century and a half before *Völuspá* was included in the *Codex Regius* compilation, as well as from Eldgjá in 934/938CE.³⁶²

(41) “ <i>Sat þar á haugi</i>	‘Sat there on a mound
<i>ok sló hǫrpo</i>	and struck a harp
<i>gýgiar hirðir,</i>	the giantess’ shepherd,
<i>glaðr Eggþér.</i>	cheerful Eggþér.
<i>Gól um hánom</i>	Crowed about him
<i>i Galgviði</i>	In Galgviði
<i>fagrrauðr hani,</i>	the bright-red rooster,
<i>sá er Fialarr heitir.</i> ” ³⁶³	who is called Fialarr.’

The shepherd striking his harp could be a reference to the loud explosion of an eruption, as could the crowing of the rooster Fialarr (normalized as Fjalarr), who shares a name with the dwarf of *Dvergatal*. The figure of a *fagrrauðr hani* (‘bright-red rooster’) is arguably chosen

³⁶⁰ Bo Gräslund and Neil Price instead relate these passages to the so-called *fimbulvetr* mentioned in *Gylfaginning* 51; the authors argue that both descriptions of cold summers and blocking-out of the sun’s rays stem from a social memory of a catastrophic volcanic event which occurred in the mid-sixth century. That stories about such a catastrophe could survive over six hundred years through oral tradition is possible but uncertain. A source from the more immediate experiences of the Icelanders is preferable, not in the least because the aftermath of a volcanic eruption blocking out the sun is here in *Völuspá* connected with the more violent and lava-filled events of the eruption itself. If the story had been passed down through generations from the Migration Period, the peoples who witnessed the cold summers would not have known that it was a volcano which caused it – there are no volcanoes in Northern Europe, and Iceland was not settled until the late eighth century. For the effects on the sun and the weather to have been connected with the explosive and fiery nature of a volcanic eruption, someone (in this case, Icelanders) must have witnessed them as the dual results of a single event. Bo Gräslund and Neil Price, “The Twilight of the Gods? The ‘dust veil event’ of AD 536 in a critical perspective,” in *Antiquity* 86, Issue 337 (June 2012), 437

³⁶¹ The Hekla H1 eruption in 1104CE destroyed many farms and deposited a layer of tephra all over the island, thus it must have had a similar effect on the weather at least locally and temporarily. An eruption of the scale that caused the dramatic upheavals in 536CE is probably not possible or it would have been recorded in texts all over Europe and the rest of the world, thus the ‘summers after’ quote is suspicious. “Hekla Volcano” (Reykjavík: Institute of Earth Sciences, University of Iceland, 2007), https://web.archive.org/web/20070212095558/http://www.earthice.hi.is/page/ies_hekla (accessed May 5th, 2017); Sigurður Thorarinnsson, *Hekla: A notorious volcano*, trans. Johann Hannesson and Petur Karlson (Reykjavík, Almenna Bókafélagið, 1970).

³⁶² This was a huge eruption in terms of tephra released (4.5³ km on land), and lava flows destroyed many farms and two settlements in 934, but there is no mention of ‘darkness’ from eruptions of the Katla volcanic system in any of the literary sources until the 1264 Mýrdalsjökull eruption. Guðrún Larsen, “Katla: Tephrochronology and Eruption History,” in *Developments in Quaternary Sciences 13: The Mýrdalsjökull Ice Cap, Iceland. Glacial processes, sediments and landforms on an active volcano* (2010), 25-7; 28-30.

³⁶³ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 18.

doubly for his loud call and for his red comb and perhaps bright plumage, which evokes the colours of red-hot lava during an eruption. The following stanzas continue this theme of loud animal calls; stanza 42 contains Gullinkambi ('golden-comb,' a volcanic caldera?), who crows over the Æsir and wakes the warriors in Valhøll, and an unnamed *sótrauðr hani* ('soot-red rooster') who crows beneath the earth. Again, the imagery is strongly reminiscent of volcanos, where the colours of the roosters could invoke yellow and dark-red lava.

(43) “ <i>Geyr [nú] Garmr miøk fyr Gnípahelli – festr mun slitna, en freki renna.</i> ” ³⁶⁵	‘Barks Garmr much before Overhanging-Crag Cave ³⁶⁴ – rope will snap, and the wolf run.’
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This particular passage, repeated several times throughout the poem, seems to refer to Fenrir, tied up by magical fetters as recounted in *Gylfaginning* 34,³⁶⁶ however, the verses could also refer to a volcano about to erupt: A series of earthquakes often precede large eruptions – perhaps symbolized by the mythological wolf’s ‘barking;’ and the *festr* (‘rope,’ but probably better symbolized with Dronke’s ‘fettters’) holding back the lava is about to break, letting it run. This is supported by the notion that Gnípahellir is the supposed entrance to Hel,³⁶⁷ in both explosive and non-explosive volcanic eruptions, lava flows often emerge out of the sides or ground of the volcano, which could easily push in favour of a mythological connection to the underworld. Preceding the final repetition of this refrain in *Völuspá* is the following stanza:

(54) “ <i>Sól tér sortna, sígr fold í mar, hverfa af himni heiðar stiǰrnor. Geisar eimi við aldrnara,</i>	‘The sun grows black, the earth sinks into the sea, turn from the sky bright stars. Vapour rages against fire,
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³⁶⁴ Brink and Lindow note that *Gnípahellir* is most probably a compound of *gnípa*, f. ‘overhanging crag’ and *hellir*, m. ‘rock cave.’ I have translated above quite literally but a more artistic translation could perhaps be ‘Craggle Rock-Cave.’ Brink and Lindow, “Place-names in eddic poetry,” 178.

³⁶⁵ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 18.

³⁶⁶ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 80; Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 412-9.

³⁶⁷ Brink and Lindow, “Place-names in eddic poetry,” 178.

<i>leikr hár hiti</i>	high heat plays
<i>við himin síálfan.</i> ³⁶⁸	with the sky itself.’

Besides the earth sinking into the sea, these details are again consistent with a massive volcanic eruption.

If this interpretation is correct, then multiple types of sounds are used to signify the noise of a volcanic explosion: *á slá harpu* ‘to strike a harp;’ *gala* ‘to crow;’ *geyja* ‘to bark.’ In light of these metaphorical terms, the proposed meaning of *Bomburr* ‘drum, drummer, boomer,’ is even closer to the actual sound of an eruption and matches the concept of a musical instrument’s song signifying an eruption noise. In light of this, *Fialarr* and *Bomburr* add geographical connections between *Dvergatal* and *Völuspá* that require an interpretation beyond the literal meaning of the stanzas to arrive at the conceptual meaning, which a contemporary Icelandic audience would probably not have missed.

The inclusion of geographical features in the dwarf names can therefore be considered a multi-layered device which draws connections between the dwarfs, the creation of the mythological universe, its landscape, and the apocalyptic overtone of the poem. Though none of the dwarf names directly refer to living in stones or underground, as a race they were undoubtedly closely associated with nature.³⁶⁹ The structure of creation in the beginning stanzas as well as the brief but frequent descriptions of the mythological universe in *Völuspá* are both mirrored and supplemented in *Dvergatal*; this includes passages which require some degree of interpretation in order to understand the connection, as may be the case with *Fialarr* and *Bomburr* and the corresponding volcanic imagery found in various stanzas. Finally, *Völuspá* is ultimately an apocalyptic poem; the universe is built in the beginning only to be destroyed and built anew, and few things would feel as immediately apocalyptic as a volcanic eruption. If *Fialarr* and *Bomburr* do indeed refer to volcanic eruptions then the cycle of birth and death is contained within *Dvergatal*, just as it is the main narrative of *Völuspá*.

³⁶⁸ Dronke, *The Poetic Edda II*, 22.

³⁶⁹ Simek postulates the origin of the dwarfs as either nature spirits or demons of death, but leans towards the latter interpretation. De Vries places them in the same category as local deities, nature spirits, and death-spirits without emphasizing one origin in particular. The frequency of dwarfs being associated with mountains, stones, and other natural features in various kennings supports the impression we get from the mythology that the dwarfs are fundamentally connected with the Earth – see section 2.III of this study. Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 68; de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 253; Meissner, *Die Kenningar*, 256-7.

II. Dwarf Names and Objects

One-fifth to one-quarter³⁷⁰ of the dwarf names in *Dvergatal* may designate some sort of object or tool, and nearly all of them are human constructions that would have been made by smiths or craftspeople. The most plausible explanation of these names is therefore that they represent products made by the dwarfs themselves. Gould postulates that names designating weapons are supposed to portray that dwarf as a warrior – *Billdr* ‘blade,’ *Falr* ‘spear-socket,’ and *Fornbogi* ‘old bow’ are examples.³⁷¹ This might be convincing if there were any examples of dwarfs fighting in *Völuspá* or any of the other literary sources, but there are not – in *Völuspá* the dwarfs are passive creatures when it comes to actual combat, merely groaning before their stone doors when the signs of *Ragnarøkkr* appear (*Völuspá* 49). The only violence perpetrated by any dwarfs is found in the story of the mead of poetry, in which *Fjalarr* and *Gallar* sneakily kill *Kvasir*, drown the giant *Gillingr*, and drop a millstone on his wife’s head (*Skáldskaparmál* 5). These are not the actions of warriors but rather of guile. There is also no evidence in *Völuspá* of dwarfs actively creating any objects, but the dwarfs appear in an active capacity as smiths and/or craftspeople in nearly every other instance except for this poem. Therefore, the other mythological sources support the smith/craftsperson role extensively (see the section 2. III, above), unlike the idea of dwarfs as warriors, which is only supported by the etymological meanings of the names (see section 4. III, below).

If one examines *Völuspá* itself for objects and tools in the same ilk as those in *Dvergatal*, there are only a few things to compare. *Völuspá* is mostly populated with natural features (both landscapes and individual things such as trees), characters, and halls; it does, however, contain a fair number of weapons, and when they appear they designate impending doom or combat.³⁷² Should, then, the names which designate weapons indicate dwarfs who engage in battle? That is indeed one line of interpretation, but it is a stretch lacking any combative dwarfs in the poem itself. There is also a mention of the *Æsir* establishing forges and making tongs and tools (*Völuspá* 7), and *Óðinn* apparently grants “*hringa ok men*” (‘rings and necklaces’) to the *vǫlva* (29). The former instance occurs in close proximity to *Dvergatal*, only two stanzas before the account of the creation of the dwarfs, and it may be

³⁷⁰ CR: 13 (21.3%); H: 17 (26.2%); *Gylf*.: 14 (22.6%). 23.4% average.

³⁷¹ Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 962.

³⁷² The *Æsir* kill *Gullveig* with *geirom* (‘[with] spears,’ *Völuspá* 21); *Skuld*’s *skildi* (‘shield,’ *Völuspá* 30); *sǫxom ok sverðom* (‘knives and swords,’ 35); “*skeggöld, skálmöld / skildir ro klofnir*” (‘axe-age, sword age / shields are cloven’ 44).

significant; in fact, this may be the missing link between dwarfs as smiths, *Völuspá*, and *Dvergatal*. The Æsir initially establish the art of smithing, then create the dwarfs, some of whom are named for crafted objects and tools; in conjunction with the high probability that the audience would have been well acquainted with the dwarfs as smiths and craftspeople, it is likely not a coincidence that these stanzas seem to be connected. This could be why the dwarfs do not actually craft anything in *Völuspá* – the audience is presumed to know that the magical objects were created by the dwarfs, especially because that information is provided elsewhere in the manuscripts. The names themselves and the fact that they are dwarves provide all the clues necessary for one to make the connections.

III. Dwarf Names and Character Traits

Approximately sixty percent³⁷³ of the dwarf names in *Dvergatal* can be considered character traits. One line of reasoning is to assume that each name is the primary character trait of the corresponding dwarf, but since the dwarfs are not individual characters within *Völuspá*, this does not go very far. A further step is to examine the character traits as a group and ask whether they tell us anything about dwarfs generally. Gould does this and finds three main types of character traits across all the dwarf names: death-like traits, warrior-like traits, and wisdom.³⁷⁴ Part of his conclusion is therefore that dwarfs could be warriors, even though (as mentioned above) there are no examples of dwarfs participating in combat.³⁷⁵ This also cannot be taken very far. A better approach would be to look at the character traits in the context of *Völuspá*, though this approach produces only limited results: I have found some parallels between *Dvergatal* and *Völuspá* which could further strengthen the notion that *Dvergatal* is composed partially to echo the poem in which it is found. The main struggle in *Völuspá* is the struggle of the Æsir, intended to be perceived as a force of good by the audience, against their enemies, who are (to put it bluntly) evil.³⁷⁶ The character traits of the dwarf names can be divided up between these two opposing forces such that *Dvergatal* partly

³⁷³ CR: 39 (63.9%); H: 39 (60%); *Gylf*: 38 (61.3%). 61.7% average.

³⁷⁴ Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 959-63.

³⁷⁵ Gould, “Dwarf-Names,” 961-2.

³⁷⁶ John McKinnell notes that although the Christian context of *Völuspá*’s transmission might suggest some contemporaries would have viewed the heathen gods as associated with the devil, the very fact that the poem was written down indicates that it was not universally considered blasphemous; rather, it is more likely an instance of euhemerism, where the gods are perceived as partially historical characters and thus worth cheering for. John McKinnell, “Heathenism in *Völuspá*,” in *The Nordic Apocalypse: Approaches to Völuspá and Nordic Days of Judgement*, ed. Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers n.v., 2013), 97-8.

mirrors the cosmic struggle. Taking this vantage point solves the problem that heroic and warrior-like traits in dwarfs are not corroborated by any of the literary sources.

A number of the character traits fall under the umbrella of what can be considered heroic or warrior-like in a Nordic context: Dólgþrasir ‘battle-eager;’ Iari ‘conflict;’ Frægr ‘famous;’ Hanarr ‘the skilled;’ Vili ‘will;’ Þorinn ‘the daring;’ Þekkr ‘liked;’ Þráinn ‘the defiant;’ Veigr ‘vigour;’ Ánarr ‘hope;’ Ori ‘quarreler;’ Vigr ‘battle,’ ‘vigour;’ Þrár ‘tenacious;’ Rekkir ‘hero, warrior;’ and Andvari ‘vigilance,’ ‘soul-defender.’ That none of these traits are part of dwarfs’ characterisations in any of the mythical sources suggests they may allude to something or someone else. In *Völuspá* the natural choice for heroic and warrior-like qualities would be the Æsir, who engage in a good deal of fighting.

Other traits can be classified as negative, or at least something that might be associated with the antagonists of *Völuspá*: Mótsognir ‘weary/wrath-sucker;’ Alþjófr ‘all-thief;’ Dvalinn ‘the delayed;’ Biforr ‘trembler;’ Án ‘lacking;’ Nár ‘corpse;’ Náinn ‘corpse;’ Vili ‘hardship;’ Sviorr ‘the declining;’ Iari ‘conflict;’ Draupnir ‘drooper;’ Fialarr ‘hider;’ Ginnarr ‘deceiver;’ Hlévargr ‘shelter-wolf/outlaw;’ Ori ‘the insane;’ Dáinn ‘the dead;’ and Vali ‘the slain.’ Negative character traits are more in line with the mythical characterisation of the dwarfs, but not all dwarfs are malign beings; many supply the gods with helpful equipment.

There are, admittedly, several problems with this approach: None of the positive character traits are directly applied to any of the gods; and of the negative traits, only Nár as a noun (*nár*, m., acc. pl. *nái*) is actually found elsewhere in *Völuspá*, as the chew-toys of Niðhoggr.³⁷⁷ Furthermore, the above lists have a few names in common which can be positive or negative depending on one’s interpretation and which possible meaning one chooses. To that effect, Vali and Dáinn are also ambiguous, as Óðinn is closely associated with the slain. Therefore, while the good/evil dichotomy is paralleled between *Dvergatal* and *Völuspá*, the degree to which it is convincing is largely reliant on subjectivity, both now and then: How did contemporaries truly feel about the gods and their enemies? How did they feel about dwarfs? Those questions are open to debate but are ultimately unknowable. A more fruitful endeavor concerning the dwarf names that signify character traits might be to closely examine the semantics of each name and see if they correspond to any other names or *heiti* in the literature in the same manner as the *Óðinsheiti* identified above; in that case, the character

³⁷⁷ “Þar saug Niðhoggr / nái fremgengna” (‘There sucked Niðhoggr / corpses of the dead;’ *Völuspá* 38).

traits could potentially be allusions to other figures in the mythological universe. Such detailed inquiry is, unfortunately, outside the scope of this paper but the concept itself is dealt with in the following section.

IV. Dwarf Names and Allusions

In *Gylfaginning* 20, Þriði gives a list of *Óðinsheiti*, to which Gangleri replies “*Geysi mǫrg heiti hafð þér gefit honum. Ok þat veit trúa mín at þetta mun vera mikill fróðleikr sá er hér kann skyn ok dæmi hverir atburðir hafa orðit sér til hvers þessa nafns.*” (‘Very many names have you given him. And it is my belief that it must take much knowledge to be able to understand and judge which events have given rise to each name.’).³⁷⁸ In this passage Gangleri identifies a theme in Old Icelandic literature whereby names are assumed to have arisen from some specific event or concept – a knowledgeable individual is capable of knowing the meaning and reasons behind each name, if only they are well-versed enough in the relevant lore. There is no reason why this cannot apply to names for individuals other than Óðinn. Across the witnesses of *Dvergatal* found in the *Poetic* and *Prose Edda*, I have been able to identify a good number³⁷⁹ of allusions to Óðinn and *Óðinsheiti*, dwarfs in other mythological sources, and other mythological figures, objects, or places. The allusions make up nearly half the list (42.7%, taken as an average across the three versions), which warrants serious consideration of their implications for *Dvergatal*’s function in *Völuspá*. In light of the central importance of allusions in Old Icelandic poetry, seen especially in the abundance of skaldic and eddic kennings, it is possible that the allusions in *Dvergatal* are not incidental but rather fundamental to its existence in *Völuspá*. In addition to the allusions which can be identified with more or less certainty, it may be that all of the dwarf names have an allusive function.

Besides the more than 170 identified *Óðinsheiti*,³⁸⁰ allusions in all forms are a prominent component in the Old Icelandic literary corpus, especially in poetry. In this art of the highly-educated elite, one of the main ways a poet could show off their skill and creativity was to construct complex circumlocutions in order to obfuscate straightforward concepts. Kennings in skaldic poetry, in which two nouns are paired to stand in place of another noun (the referent), demonstrate one form of allusive language taken to nearly the

³⁷⁸ Faulkes, *Edda*, 22. Translation is my own with reference to Turville-Petre’s explanation in *Myth and Religion of the North*, 61-2.

³⁷⁹ CR: 27 (44.3%); H: 25 (38.5%); *Gylf*: 28 (45.2%).

³⁸⁰ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 248.

limit of human ability, where understanding each half-stanza requires one to grasp every metaphorical relationship between the words, otherwise the passage is more or less gibberish. Quite often these kennings use allusions to mythology as a method of obscuring the referent, and one must be familiar with the underlying myth to make the appropriate connections.³⁸¹ The kenning “*níðbyrðra Norðra*” (‘burden of the kinsmen of Norðri’ = [sky]; *Olafsdrápa* 26), mentioned earlier in this study, requires knowledge of the dwarfs as the bearers of the sky, and moreover that one of them is named Norðri, for one to recognize [sky] as the referent. In *Völuspá*, kennings mostly refer to individuals and indicate kinship or interpersonal relationships, as exemplified by “*mōgr Sigfōður*” (‘son of Victory-father’ = ‘son of Óðinn’ = [Víðarr]; *Völuspá* 52) and “*bani Belia*” (‘bane of Belja’ = [Freyr]; *Völuspá* 51).³⁸² In the former case, Víðarr is immediately named, and thus the kenning functions as a supplement to the referent rather than outright replacing the referent; but in the latter case the referent [Freyr] would be obscure if one did not know who killed Belja.

In some cases, we do not understand the allusions because the material which would have provided us with the necessary background is presumably lost. The low probability of survival for medieval manuscripts generally, combined with the high likelihood that “[t]here was more eddic poetry in Icelandic oral tradition than ever made it into written form” (and, indeed, not just eddic poetry but other forms of mythological material as well), means that some allusions must unfortunately remain opaque.³⁸³ The reference to “*Heimdall[lar] hlióð*” (‘Heimdall’s hearing’ or ‘Heimdall’s horn,’ depending on the interpretation) in *Völuspá* 27 has continually baffled all attempts of understanding, probably for the reason that the myth which would make the allusion transparent did not survive.³⁸⁴ A further complication with allusions is the question of whether the form of the myths as they have been recorded is original to the pre-Christian culture which produced them, or if they have been altered somewhat over the course of their transmission in a Christian society. In addition, a popular notion among scholars of the *Prose Edda* is that Snorri Sturluson made his own changes to the myths as he compiled the work, a hypothesis which is ultimately unprovable but highly

³⁸¹ Judy Quinn, “Kennings and other forms of figurative language in eddic poetry,” in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 288-9.

³⁸² Quinn, “Kennings,” 298.

³⁸³ Margaret Clunies Ross, “The transmission and preservation of eddic poetry,” in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 31.

³⁸⁴ Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, 136.

possible.³⁸⁵ In these cases both allusions and the things being alluded to could have been altered or removed, especially those which directly clashed with Christian values.³⁸⁶ Allusions could alternatively have been added if Snorri invented new myths or parts of myths, as for example with the dwarf Litr at Baldr's funeral (*Gylfaginning* 49) whose name might have been lifted arbitrarily from *Dvergatal*.³⁸⁷ These cases would consequently be identified as allusions today even though they would not have been at the time *Dvergatal* was composed, and we often have no practical way of discerning whether a myth is original or Snorri's (or someone else's) later invention.³⁸⁸

Since a portion of the mythological corpus has almost certainly been lost, and the allusions to that material have also been lost or become opaque, it is therefore plausible that more allusions than what I have identified (and I admit that some of the connections I have made are far from certain) exist in *Dvergatal*. In fact, it is possible that all of the names in *Dvergatal* originally alluded somehow to the rest of the mythology. This would explain the problematic dwarf names, such as those whose meanings denote heroic character traits which, as discussed above, are incongruous with the typical characterizations of dwarfs as a race in the mythological sources. It would also do a great deal to justify *Dvergatal*'s place within *Völuspá*: The poem continuously alludes to various stories throughout its narrative, but pays them only the briefest attention for the most part, leaving the audience to fill in the sketches of the stories with their own knowledge. So too could *Dvergatal* be considered a concise collection of allusions which supplements the material of *Völuspá*. As with Gangleri's assessment of the great number of *Óðinsheiti*, a fully knowledgeable individual may have been able to identify the story behind each dwarf name, which did not necessarily have to do with dwarfs but could have referred to anything in the mythology. *Dvergatal* might be, then, a form of shorthand for a universe, waiting to be deciphered.

³⁸⁵ Faulkes, "Introduction," in *Edda*, xxvii-xxviii.

³⁸⁶ McKinnell, "Heathenism in *Völuspá*," 96-8.

³⁸⁷ Lorenz, *Gylfaginning*, 226.

³⁸⁸ Frank's method in "Snorri and the Mead of Poetry" of examining kennings older than the *Prose Edda* and how they seem to have been (mis)interpreted and turned into full myths in that work is one such avenue of approach.

5. CONCLUSION

In the quest for knowledge it is often disappointing to encounter a wall which one cannot cross. The conclusion that *Dvergatal* might allude to myths and stories that we will never know might be considered one such disappointment, but in arriving at this conclusion, I have unearthed several new ways of understanding the dwarf list. Not only do the meanings of the names serve as an adequate catalogue of dwarfs, but they also resound in remarkable harmony with themes in *Völuspá*, from natural features to weapons, to the cosmic struggle between good and evil ending in apocalypse and rebirth. The list also further connects *Völuspá* to the greater mythological context evident in the surviving Old Icelandic sources through a large number of allusions, and probably to further myths and stories that have not survived. *Dvergatal* may not be central to the plot of *Völuspá*, yet it certainly enhances the themes and allusions that are already in the poem. This, then, is what its function is in *Völuspá*, and it does not perform this function in a straightforward way. Like much of the mythological material it hides its meaning in several layers of interpretation, and one is required to keep digging to find the tendrils reaching out to various parts of *Völuspá* and beyond. In this way *Dvergatal* is as riddled with hidden meanings and difficult to understand as skaldic poetry, and deserves a place in critical approaches with these masters of obfuscation, not the place it currently occupies today: an ignored set of names worthy of only occasional curiosity.

This study does not aim in any way to be the final word on *Dvergatal*; rather, it is intended as a touching point for future research. To accomplish this I have discussed only some of the most obvious connections to *Völuspá* and Old Icelandic mythological literature, and I am quite certain that further avenues of approach could be found. In particular, the Christian context of *Völuspá* has not been addressed here due to limitations of space. Such a study of dwarfs and Christianity may prove highly fruitful, for if Christian influences have been identified throughout *Völuspá*, there is no reason why the dwarf list could not have been reinterpreted in a similar symbolic, medieval Christian way.³⁸⁹ The dwarfs representing hosts of angels or demons comes to mind, and the meanings of the names could even allude to figures in the Bible or Christian history. Such a duality of alluding to both Old Icelandic mythological stories and Christian concepts would be a true masterpiece of multi-level

³⁸⁹ See, for example, Pétur Petersson, “Manifest and Latent Biblical Themes in *Völuspá*,” in *The Nordic Apocalypse: Approaches to Völuspá and Nordic Days of Judgement*, ed. Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers n.v., 2013).

meaning and would further speak to the preservation of pre-Christian religious material in post-conversion Iceland.

A final thought on the relevance of *Dvergatal* to the present day: Dwarfs are popular today arguably due to the influence of J. R. R. Tolkien, whose literary works are largely responsible for the proliferation and standardization of the modern fantasy genre. Tolkien took the concept of the Germanic dwarf and transmuted it into a fictional race with a well-explained backstory and even a common language with a rune-like writing system; this is evident in his choice of names for the fictional dwarfs in his *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* series, most of which are lifted from *Dvergatal*. Being intimately familiar with the Old Icelandic material, he must have picked up on the mysterious nature of dwarfs and desired to breathe life into them. Consequently, our modern understanding of dwarfs is heavily coloured by Tolkien's intervention, and when one encounters the word 'dwarf' today it likely calls to mind images of short, bearded humanoids with Nordic helmets and axes. Though they may share common names, fantasy dwarfs have thus diverged considerably from their ancient cousins. This modern concept of dwarfs would probably be rather foreign to a contemporary audience of *Vǫluspá*, who likely understood dwarfs merely as mythical creatures possessing the traits discussed in section 2.III above, and even that is uncertain. As relatively ambiguous and mysterious beings they would have been ideal to use in a list such as *Dvergatal*, where they were not bogged down by a great amount of established lore and therefore free to symbolize whatever the poet desired through clever name-weaving. The dwarfs of *Dvergatal* are thus names without faces, creatures without life; it is a *tal* told by a poet, full of sound and allusions, signifying something.

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