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*lays of dead idols*



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from *The Poetic Edda*  
translated by Henry Adams Bellows

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*Give no truces to your enemies.*

Hávamál

It is not uncommon to link fashion to mythical realms of man, drawing parallels between belief systems and our contemporary worship of consumption or rituals of expenditure. Yet, such endeavors correspondingly have given priority to Judeo-Christian frameworks, or myths from ancient Greece. While these narrative structures may expose some important traits within the realm of dress, they also often rely heavily on Freudian ideas of lack, discontent, autoeroticism, and pathetic failure, with undertones of weakness, resentment and sexual repression.

If we are to understand the more competitive, violent, and unforgiving traces of fashion, other spiritual narratives may be of better help. Narratives which do not shy away from the glory of warfare, the great deeds of violent struggle and the force of hostile antagonism and rivalry. Similarly, it could be of great merit

to turn to records of the more brutal realities of life, beyond good and evil, and beyond the “why”, to the halls of real glory where the heroes are but tools of greater cosmic forces.

With such cosmic perspective, fashion is transformed from being merely an aesthetic phenomenon of wrapped bodies, into becoming a dark agency beyond the control of man. Instead of ornament, fashion becomes a beast which has overcome its creator, a shapeshifting raptor, a werewolf, or a carapace preying on its human host: a harrowing passion, which possesses man to enact its will. With human agency displaced, the only means to overcome the average and pedestrian doom of the low-life is enraged heroism, blessed by the ferocious heathen Gods of dress.

And most importantly, there can be no heroism in the tame virtuous deed, the middle-way or the spiteful forgiveness of our enemies, no blessing in the angelic hypocrisy of altruism. Instead, the Gods guide and inspire the violent struggles of man to overcome their own fate of historic indifference, to forcefully strike through the walls of time to enter the eternal fire of blazingly vicious valor.

The old Norse stories offer us a respite from the pathetic anecdotes of loving one’s enemies and celebrating the weakling, to instead celebrate cultural memories which imposes us to lustfully engage in fierce battle. These stories ask us, how could a cultural approach from hea-

then and Norse traditions inform a more ferocious perspective on fashion, one baptized in fire and ice?

The *Völuspá* is the first and most famous of the old Norse Eddic poems. Probably authored by a pagan around the 10th-century, the poem bridges the Norse mythos with elements of the invading Christian beliefs. The poems recollect an important transition within the cultural realm, of the violent history of the Gods, as well as their death. The prophesy, perhaps with a tint of irony, offers a window into a mnemonic past which is soon baptized under the sword into the forgiving faith in Christ, the redeemer. As was the tradition of its time, put to the sword those that disagree.

*Völuspá* tells the prophesy of a sorceress to Othin, chief of the gods. She rises from the grave to tell him of the past, the beginning of years, the end days and death of the Gods, and finally, the rise of a new dawn and new order. But, as a reader will notice, she also tells the story of fashion, that swathed prophesy of the life, death and rebirth of the brutal passions: the violent struggle of our dark enfoldment under the seasons of the black mark.

Like the Norse saying goes, a man who has his feet hacked off cannot scurry far: the Gods are deities of deceit, destruction, and dress. Their fate tell us about the dark underworld that is our shared social realm, a condition of dress we cannot run away from.

The Völuspá helps us see how fashion is a war that can never end. It runs too deep, feeding from the dark abyss that is the splintered soul of man. By its very nature fashion is a crack in time, with its own gravity; a hole inhaling that pulsing desire which is our mimicing and competitive nature. The suction from the vortex of our ambitions pulls us deeper, down the puncture of dark passions. Once you fall into it you can't get out again.

After you put your feet into your first pair of heels, those shiny boots of leather, you are stuck in the Stygian tar of fashion. The dark mire is too deep, too steep, saturated with such unlit pleasures. It holds you. Drowns you. The current drags you towards the gilded halls of those once brave.

Now, feel that lustful embrace of the tight leather, encasing your body like a Norse armor; the shiny attire of a heathen warrior, possessed by the fierce pride of Thor. This is what the Gods spoke of: the attire of veneration. Feel the power, that corrosive burn of battle, the rage that will propel you to the greatest deeds. It enflames the will of a hundred men but it also feasts on your soul. Embrace its call for you, stand tall, with a cutthroat stride, you are chosen for this amaranthine crusted battle.

The dark ether lies like a heavy mist over the battlefield. The soiled earth, that landscape of honor, is an open grave abraded with the blood of endless battles. Feel your heeled

boots transcend the greasy and raw earth, the soft march over the corpses that form the heavy bark of Yggdrasil, the world tree.

Behold, its branches of fate open before your feet. Paths of the blackest mire. Slip and the wet filth of slain weaklings will suck you down, body and soul, deep into that grave which is Hel.

Raise your gaze to the red gilded horizon. Let the praise of fashion breathe into you from its wet mouth. Treasure that kiss of life like the blessing it is. It is a breath from Valfather. Open yourself to it, join that endless raiding party against time itself; the destiny of desire is a battle over reality itself. You must see: fashion is a reality more intense than life itself. It is a reality as thick as water. It will drown you if try to breath it in. Let it enfold you with its unlit pleasure.

Like a bloodied armor from battle, you must keep your fashion fresh and polished. You must crave for battle, like you hunger for blood and the honor of the great deed. Every season, every battle, has an afterlife that casts a beast-like shadow, a creature stalking in disguise. Its skin, a veil which barely hides the crawling intestines of the nightmare we call mortality.

The soul of man, emerging in the undercurrents of Völuspá, bears the mark of humanity's utter loneliness and doom of mediocrity. A dark frost enfolds the soul of man, a cold that burns the hand that touches it. That loneliness

is a part of every man, yet far from us, as far away as the stars; those glowing tinders of frost on the northern dark skies. The hymns of lost passions are those lonely words, carried in concentric circles around themselves, ice cold like frosted vessels, swinging, swinging like the bells of Hel. We kiss fashion, seek its dark embrace like weathered sailors seek shelter within a deserted cave: the homecoming of slain idols. Only in battle and death is man joined with time itself, in the honor that drapes the banners within the halls of Valhalla.

Like the great deed in battle, we seek affirmation from the dead Gods of fashion, the immortality and company of the great halls, the hymns and poems of aesthetic warriors. Yet fashion looks back at us, like the oracle, the Völva: those dark eyes, ancient, jewels, greenish, snake-like. The ancient law of tooth and claw.

You seek through the hymns and images for strength for the coming battle, keeping the creatures of Hel alive in your vision. Fashion, that cohort of frightful fiends, marching behind you, marching with you, treading on your heels towards the fields of glory.

The sun breaks through the dustclouds and haze, and the Valkyries are already charging ahead of you. It is a fine day to die.







Völuspá



1. Hearing I ask | from the holy races,  
From Heimdall's sons, | both high and low;  
Thou wilt, Valfather, | that well I relate  
Old tales I remember | of men long ago.

2. I remember yet | the giants of yore,  
Who gave me bread | in the days gone by;  
Nine worlds I knew, | the nine in the tree  
With mighty roots | beneath the mold.



YHWH FATHER

3. Of old was the age | when Ymir lived;  
Sea nor cool waves | nor sand there were;  
Earth had not been, | nor heaven above,  
But a yawning gap, | and grass nowhere.

4. Then Bur's sons lifted | the level land,  
Mithgarth the mighty | there they made;  
The sun from the south | warmed the stones of earth,  
And green was the ground | with growing leeks.



RE! RUINING +  
of +  
+ THE +  
+ V & 7 1 +

5. The sun, the sister | of the moon, from the south  
Her right hand cast | over heaven's rim;  
No knowledge she had | where her home should be,  
The moon knew not | what might was his,  
The stars knew not | where their stations were.

6. Then sought the gods | their assembly-seats,  
The holy ones, | and council held;  
Names then gave they | to noon and twilight,  
Morning they named, | and the waning moon,  
Night and evening, | the years to number.



Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff, featuring various symbols and characters, including what appears to be a large 'X' or 'M' shape in the center.



7. At Ithavoll met | the mighty gods,  
Shrines and temples | they timbered high;  
Forges they set, and | they smithied ore,  
Tongs they wrought, | and tools they fashioned.

8. In their dwellings at peace | they played at tables,  
Of gold no lack | did the gods then know,--  
Till thither came | up giant-maids three,  
Huge of might, | out of Jotunheim.



9. Then sought the gods | their assembly-seats,  
The holy ones, | and council held,  
To find who should raise | the race of dwarfs  
Out of Brimir's blood | and the legs of Blain.

17. Then from the throng | did three come forth,  
From the home of the gods, | the mighty and gracious;  
Two without fate | on the land they found,  
Ask and Embla, | empty of might.



18. Soul they had not, | sense they had not,  
Heat nor motion, | nor goodly hue;  
Soul gave Othin, | sense gave Hönir,  
Heat gave Lothur | and goodly hue.

19. An ash I know, | Yggdrasil its name,  
With water white | is the great tree wet;  
Thence come the dews | that fall in the dales,  
Green by Urth's well | does it ever grow.



20. Thence come the maidens | mighty in wisdom,  
Three from the dwelling | down 'neath the tree;  
Urth is one named, | Verthandi the next,--  
On the wood they scored,-- | and Skuld the third.  
Laws they made there, and life allotted  
To the sons of men, and set their fates.

21. The war I remember, | the first in the world,  
When the gods with spears | had smitten Gollveig,  
And in the hall | of Hor had burned her,  
Three times burned, | and three times born,  
Oft and again, | yet ever she lives.



+ R I V E N +

+ T H I S + I S + T H E + L A D + T H E + T O T H + A N D + C L A P +

+ C H O R U S +



22. Heith they named her | who sought their home,  
The wide-seeing witch, | in magic wise;  
Minds she bewitched | that were moved by her magic,  
To evil women | a joy she was.

23. On the host his spear | did Othin hurl,  
Then in the world | did war first come;  
The wall that girdled | the gods was broken,  
And the field by the warlike | Wanes was trodden.



RUNES  
RUINS

24. Then sought the gods | their assembly-seats,  
The holy ones, | and council held,  
Whether the gods | should tribute give,  
Or to all alike | should worship belong.

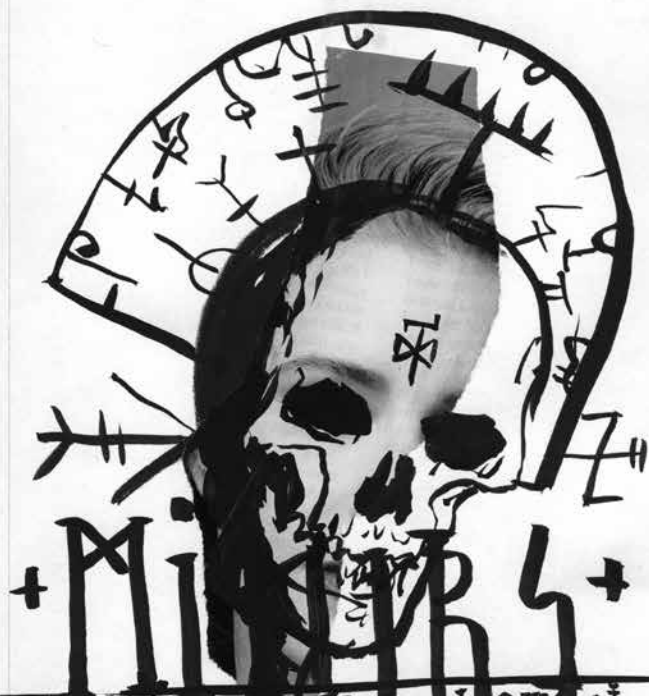
25. Then sought the gods | their assembly-seats,  
The holy ones, | and council held,  
To find who with venom | the air had filled,  
Or had given Oth's bride | to the giants' brood.



heimdall+

26. In swelling rage | then rose up Thor,--  
Seldom he sits | when he such things hears,--  
And the oaths were broken, | the words and bonds,  
The mighty pledges | between them made.

27. I know of the horn | of Heimdall, hidden  
Under the high-reaching | holy tree;  
On it there pours | from Valfather's pledge  
A mighty stream: | would you know yet more?



+ MINKY +

+ THE MINKY + THE MINKY + THE MINKY +

+ PRINK +

28. Alone I sat | when the Old One sought me,  
The terror of gods, | and gazed in mine eyes:  
“What hast thou to ask? | why comest thou hither?  
Othin, I know | where thine eye is hidden.”

29. I know where Othin's | eye is hidden,  
Deep in the wide-famed | well of Mimir;  
Mead from the pledge | of Othin each mom  
Does Mimir drink: | would you know yet more?



+ SKULD +



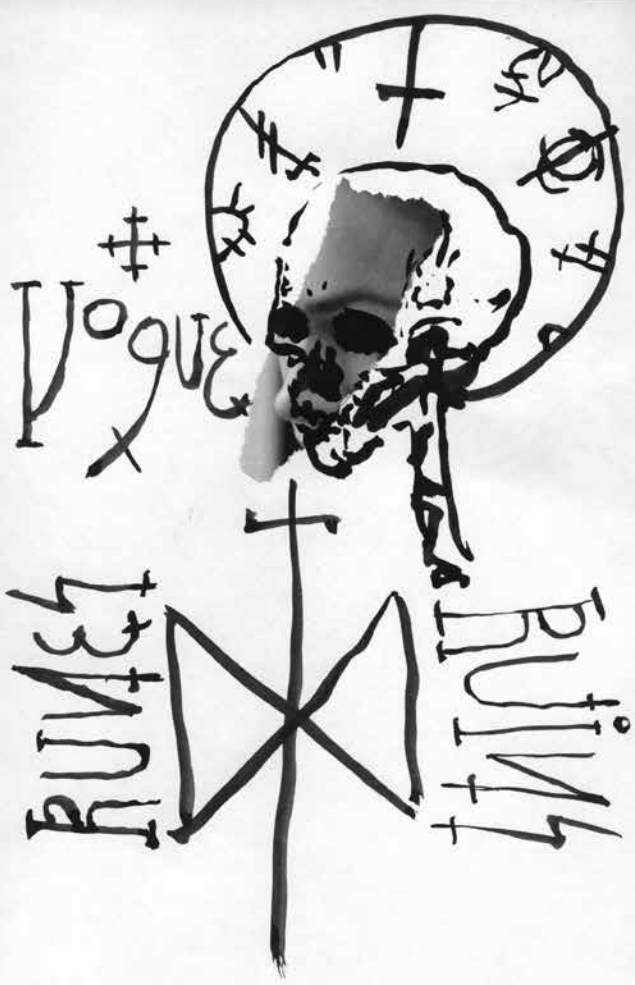


30. Necklaces had I | and rings from Heerfather,  
Wise was my speech | and my magic wisdom;

. . . . .

Widely I saw | over all the worlds.

31. On all sides saw I | Valkyries assemble,  
Ready to ride | to the ranks of the gods;  
Skuld bore the shield, | and Skogul rode next,  
Guth, Hild, Gondul, | and Geirskogul.  
Of Herjan's maidens | the list have ye heard,  
Valkyries ready | to ride o'er the earth.



32. I saw for Baldr, | the bleeding god,  
The son of Othin, | his destiny set:  
Famous and fair | in the lofty fields,  
Full grown in strength | the mistletoe stood.

33. From the branch which seemed | so slender and fair  
Came a harmful shaft | that Hoth should hurl;  
But the brother of Baldr | was born ere long,  
And one night old | fought Othin's son.



34. His hands he washed not, | his hair he combed not,  
Till he bore to the bale-blaze | Baldr's foe.  
But in Fensalir | did Frigg weep sore  
For Valhall's need: | would you know yet more?

35. One did I see | in the wet woods bound,  
A lover of ill, | and to Loki like;  
By his side does Sigyn | sit, nor is glad  
To see her mate: | would you know yet more?

Hehō. of hōm



771+

38. A hall I saw, | far from the sun,  
On Nastrond it stands, | and the doors face north,  
Venom drops | through the smoke-vent down,  
For around the walls | do serpents wind.

39. I saw there wading | through rivers wild  
Treachorous men | and murderers too,  
And workers of ill | with the wives of men;  
There Nithhogg sucked | the blood of the slain,  
And the wolf tore men; | would you know yet more?



+ HÖNIR ÞING

ÞING ÞING

+ ÞRÖJA +



40. The giantess old | in Ironwood sat,  
In the east, and bore | the brood of Fenrir;  
Among these one | in monster's guise  
Was soon to steal | the sun from the sky.

41. There feeds he full | on the flesh of the dead,  
And the home of the gods | he reddens with gore;  
Dark grows the sun, | and in summer soon  
Come mighty storms: | would you know yet more?



42. On a hill there sat, | and smote on his harp,  
Eggther the joyous, | the giants' warder;  
Above him the cock | in the bird-wood crowed,  
Fair and red | did Fjalar stand.

43. Then to the gods | crowed Gollinkambi,  
He wakes the heroes | in Othin's hall;  
And beneath the earth | does another crow,  
The rust-red bird | at the bars of Hel.



44. Now Garm howls loud | before Gnipahellir,  
The fetters will burst, | and the wolf run free;  
Much do I know, | and more can see  
Of the fate of the gods, | the mighty in fight.

45. Brothers shall fight | and fell each other,  
And sisters' sons | shall kinship stain;  
Hard is it on earth, | with mighty whoredom;  
Axe-time, sword-time, | shields are sundered,  
Wind-time, wolf-time, | ere the world falls;  
Nor ever shall men | each other spare.



46. Fast move the sons | of Mim, and fate  
Is heard in the note | of the Gjallarhorn;  
Loud blows Heimdall, | the horn is aloft,  
In fear quake all | who on Hel-roads are.

47. Yggdrasil shakes, | and shiver on high  
The ancient limbs, | and the giant is loose;  
To the head of Mim | does Othin give heed,  
But the kinsman of Surt | shall slay him soon.





48. How fare the gods? | how fare the elves?  
All Jotunheim groans, | the gods are at council;  
Loud roar the dwarfs | by the doors of stone,  
The masters of the rocks: | would you know yet  
more?

49. Now Garm howls loud | before Gnipahellir,  
The fetters will burst, | and the wolf run free  
Much do I know, | and more can see  
Of the fate of the gods, | the mighty in fight.

Wulf

+ Mail +

+ Mail +

+ Mail +

+ The Last Ship + of the +



50. From the east comes Hrym | with shield held high;  
In giant-wrath | does the serpent writhe;  
O'er the waves he twists, | and the tawny eagle  
Gnaws corpses screaming; | Naglfar is loose.

51. O'er the sea from the north | there sails a ship  
With the people of Hel, | at the helm stands Loki;  
After the wolf | do wild men follow,  
And with them the brother | of Byleist goes.



52. Surt fares from the south | with the scourge of branches,  
The sun of the battle-gods | shone from his sword;  
The crags are sundered, | the giant-women sink,  
The dead throng Hel-way, | and heaven is cloven.

53. Now comes to Hlin | yet another hurt,  
When Othin fares | to fight with the wolf,  
And Beli's fair slayer | seeks out Surt,  
For there must fall | the joy of Frigg.



54. Then comes Sigfather's | mighty son,  
Vithar, to fight | with the foaming wolf;  
In the giant's son | does he thrust his sword  
Full to the heart: | his father is avenged.

55. Hither there comes | the son of Hlothyn,  
The bright snake gapes | to heaven above;

. . . . .

Against the serpent | goes Othin's son.



+ FATE +  
+ OF +  
+ HYMBOLZ +  
+ OR +



56. In anger smites | the warder of earth,--  
Forth from their homes | must all men flee;-  
Nine paces fares | the son of Fjorgyn,  
And, slain by the serpent, | fearless he sinks.

57. The sun turns black, | earth sinks in the sea,  
The hot stars down | from heaven are whirled;  
Fierce grows the steam | and the life-feeding flame,  
Till fire leaps high | about heaven itself.



+ PASSION +  
+ OF THE PAST +

59. Now do I see | the earth anew  
Rise all green | from the waves again;  
The cataracts fall, | and the eagle flies,  
And fish he catches | beneath the cliffs.

60. The gods in Ithavoll | meet together,  
Of the terrible girdler | of earth they talk,  
And the mighty past | they call to mind,  
And the ancient runes | of the Ruler of Gods.



RUIN + OF + MAN

61. In wondrous beauty | once again  
Shall the golden tables | stand mid the grass,  
Which the gods had owned | in the days of old,  
. . . . .

62. Then fields unsowed | bear ripened fruit,  
All ill grows better, | and Baldr comes back;  
Baldr and Hoth dwell | in Hropt's battle-hall,  
And the mighty gods: | would you know yet more?



MORE FAIR THE SUN IS BALT I SEE



63. Then Hönir wins | the prophetic wand,

. . . . .

And the sons of the brothers | of Tveggi abide  
In Vindheim now: | would you know yet more?

64. More fair than the sun, | a hall I see,  
Roofed with gold, | on Gimle it stands;  
There shall the righteous | rulers dwell,  
And happiness ever | there shall they have.





65. There comes on high, | all power to hold,  
A mighty lord, | all lands he rules.

. . . . .

. . . . .

66. From below the dragon | dark comes forth,  
Nithhogg flying | from Nithafjoll;  
The bodies of men on | his wings he bears,  
The serpent bright: | but now must I sink.



## Notes

The translation of the *Völuspá* (The Völva's Prophecy) comes from *The Poetic Edda*, as "Voluspo: The Wise-Woman's Prophecy", by Henry Adams Bellows (1936). The following comments add to those of Bellows', but takes a specific angle to unravel how the Norse mythology can reveal fashion from a previously disregarded viewpoint, but also how the lens of fashion may put a new light on the Norse world view.

As noted in the foreword, this perspective aims to unveil how competitive and aggressive inter-human relationships condition the realm of appearances and dress. In this endeavor, some stanzas that have been deemed irrelevant have been omitted, most notably 10-16, the *Dvergatal*, the "Catalogue of Dwarves" (only stanza 9 is left in this version).

The main recourse of the comments are the notes from Bellows' translation, but also from other editions, primarily that of Ursula Dronke (1997).

1. **Holy races:** probably means those few of mankind who can transgress their prosaic and cowardly destiny. **Valfather/Valföðr** ("Father of the Slain") is Othin, chief of the gods, so called because the slain warriors were brought to him at Valhall ("Hall of the Slain") by the Valkyries ("Choosers of the Slain"), his bouncers and pickers, see stanza 31. Valfather also connotes the father of slain fashions worth becoming immortal, and thus his power rules the continuous birth and death of seasons and expressions of dress, a dark godly power, transcending the realm of man.
  
2. **Nine worlds:** the worlds of the Æsir/gods (Asgarth), of the Wanes (Vanaheim), of the elves (Alfheim), of men (Mithgarth), of the giants (Jotunheim), of fire (Muspellsheim), of the dark elves (Svartalfaheim), of the dead/ice (Niflheim), and presumably of the dwarfs (perhaps Nithavellir) but the ninth world is uncertain, but is most probably Paris. **The tree:** the world-ash Yggdrasil, symbolizing the universe, binding together the nine worlds.
  
3. **Ymir:** the giant from whose body the gods made the world. **Yawning gap:** "Ginnungagap" the empty universe.
  
4. **Bur's sons:** Othin, and his two brothers, Vili and Ve, or Wóðin, Wili, Wé, (in proto-Germanic Wōdinaz, Wiljô and Wīhą). In Old Norse Vili means "will", while Wé refers to a type of Germanic shrine; a vé. Thus the world

is created by inspiration/knowledge (Othin), cognition/will (Vili), and numen/spiritual power of the surrounding world (Ve). **Mith-garth** ("Middle Dwelling"): the world of men, a world of ordinary, middle-of-the-road mediocrity, thus explicitly the "middle dwelling", neither hot nor cold, "in" nor "out". A place Wotan reserved for sissies and ugly short men. At their death all cowardly men fall down to the icy darkness of Hel, whereas heroes will be picked by the Valkyries to enter the gilded halls of Valhalla.

5. **The sun and moon:** as daughter and son of Mundilferi, in the beginning of time there were no seasons, no fashion, no purpose of dress or life. Their fate is sealed from the dawn of time, to be devoured by the wolves Sköll ("Treachery") and Hati ("He Who Hates"), see notes to stanza 40 & 41.
6. **Naming:** like in branding, everything designation has a price.
7. **Ithavoll/Iðavoll** ("Field of Deeds", not yet the same as the "Killing Fields") - At this point the Æsir are called Regin ('powers') and Ginnheilög goð ('most holy gods'); they sit on Rókstólar ('thrones of judgment'). Iðavoll or Iðavellir, could be connoting íð or iða ('to be moving' as in an ever-renewed whirlpool, but also as in Iðunn, whose name suggest it means "renewal"). Iða also returns at the end of days, in stanza 60 and 62 as 'the fields unsowed,

bears ripened fruit' where the surviving gods meet after Ragnarök, at the dawn of a new time.

8. **Tables:** a game, such as chess or checkers, but also connotes making up rules for social performance and interaction at the tailor's table, as games and play are a basic human activities that helps define culture, expectations and performances. Games promote the formation of social groupings and sets its own proper boundaries of time and space according to shared rules. This stanza defines the proper origin of the game of dress. **Jotunheim:** the world of the giants.

9. Here begins the interpolated catalogue of the dwarves (stanza 10-16 omitted). The dwarves are a race of underlings, craftsmen and producers, to whom the Æsir outsource labor. Their importance is negligible, thus they require no more attention. **Brimir:** "the bloody moisture"

17. **Three gods:** Othin, Hönir and Lothur. **Ask and Embla:** ash and elm; Snorri gives them simply as the names of the first man and woman, but says that the gods made this pair out of trees. **Empty of might:** unexceptional and mediocre, without the spirit for any Great Deed (thus man belongs in Mithgarth). For example in the sagas of Halfdan Eysteinson, the mediocre Halfdan, "the halfling/half-man", only becomes worthy of being a man

by his great deeds, which in turn are worth the saga bearing his name, *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*; deeds only rivaled by those of *Beowulf*.

18. **Hönnir**: lesser known god, occasional ally who appears in the poems in company with Othin and Loki, and survives Ragnarök, and in the new age offers the world the gift of prophesy (stanza 63). **Lothur**: an older name for Loki, the treacherous but ingenious god. He was adopted by Othin, and probably represents the blending of two originally distinct figures, one of them an old fire-god, hence his gift of heat to the newly created pair.

The stanza exposes three characteristics of man, a Norse Trinity: soul, sense/reason and heat/passion, each given by a god to man, and the story resonates with the origin of the world (stanza 4). Othin gives soul/knowledge, Hönnir gives sense/cognition/will, however, with the creation of man, Lothur/Loki gives heat/passion or desire, a deceptive force of fire that complements but also undermines the two previous gifts, and which will also be the doom of man.

As the stanza also adds, Lothur's gift adds a "goodly hue", thus pleasurable appearances, once again a gift of Loki, appearance as a form of deception and cunning, a gift which will incite competition, strife and future violence between men.

Hönnir also becomes the negotiator between the two forces represented by Othin

and Loik: knowledge/truth vs. lie and deception, inner soul vs. outer appearance etc. It is Hönir's role in the reborn world to reconcile these forces after Ragnarök, yet preserve the will to fashion.

19. **Urth** ("The Past"): one of the three great Norns. Yggdrasil, the world-ash, has one of its roots in the well of the Norns.

20. **The maidens**: the three Norns (Old Norse: Norn, plural: Nornir), comparable to the Moirai or Fates in Greek mythology. Urth, Verthandi and Skuld: "Past," "Present" and "Future." Urðr (Old English Wyrð, Weird) also means "fate", Verða means "to be", Skuld is derived from skulla, "that which should become, or that needs to occur" (which may also connote how the future is indebted to the past, that is, fate). **Scoring of Wood**: the magic Runes controlling the destinies of men were cut on pieces of wood. In other texts the Norns spin the threads of fate, a theory being that the word Norn may derive from a word meaning "to twine" and which would refer to their twining the thread of fate, as in "Mightily wove they, the web of fate." (in Helgakviða Hundingsbana)

21. **The war**: the first war was that between the Æsir and the Wanæs. The cult of the Wanæs (Vanir) seems to have originated among the seafaring folk of the Baltic and the southern shores of the North Sea, and to have spread



thence into Norway in opposition to the worship of the older gods; hence the “war.” Finally the two types of divinities were worshipped in common; a treaty ended the war with the exchange of hostages. Chief among the Waners were Njorth/ Njörðr and his children, Freyr and Freyja, all of whom became conspicuous among the gods. **Gollveig** (“Gold-Might”): the first of the Waners to come among the Æsir, her ill treatment being the immediate cause of the war. Whereas Gollveig may be another name for Freyja, it also relates to the influence of gold onto the Æsir. **Three times burned**: symbolizes the refining of gold by fire, but also how gold and greed are always reborn: gold is drawn to gold, greed feeds greed. As the name says, Gollveig: the Might of Gold. **Hor/Hárr** (“The High One”): Othin.

22. **Heith/Heiðr** (“Fame”, “Shining One”, “Gleaming” or “Honor”): a name for a wise woman or prophetess, but also the third incarnation of Gullveig. The application of this stanza to Gollveig may reference the magic and destructive power of gold, and how it “sought their home”, seeping into every relationship. As a Norse saying goes; Deceit sleeps with greed. But as the stanza suggests: what a joy her evil ways are!

23. The stanza describes the Æsir–Vanir War, a conflict between two groups of deities. Carolyn Larrington (1996) translates the stanza a little more clearly as:

*“the defense wall was broken of the Æsir’s  
stronghold;  
the Vanir, indomitable, were trampling the  
plain.”*

24. The Æsir–Vanir War ultimately resulted in the unification of the Æsir and the Vanir into a single pantheon with to equal rights of worship. Ursula Dronke (1997) points to the wordplay on Gildi/Gildr and whether the Æsir will surrender their monopoly on human tribute and join the popular Vanir.

The Æsir however attack again, thus signaling how the Othin/Loki dynamics have a much more aggressive and violent potential for domination than the nature powers of the Vanir gods such as Njörðr and Freyr/Freyja.

25. The stanza pints to the rebuilding of Asgarth after its destruction by the Wanes. The gods employed a giant as builder, who demanded as his reward the sun and moon, and the goddess Freyja for his wife. The gods, terrified by the rapid progress of the work, forced Loki, who had advised the bargain, to delay the giant by a trick, so that the work was not finished in the stipulated time. The enraged giant then threatened the gods, whereupon Thor slew him. A cleaved head no longer plots, as the Norse aphorism goes. **Óðr/Oth’s bride:** Freyja. Oth is frequently absent, she cries tears of red gold for him, and searches for him under assumed names, positing how desire always searches for an unattainable object.

26. **Thor:** the thunder-god, son of Othin and Jorth (Earth) **The Oaths Broken:** the gods, by violating their oaths to the giant who rebuilt Asgarth, aroused the undying hatred of the giants' race, and thus the giants were among their enemies in the final battle.

27. Here some scholars suggests Snorri has confused the hearing of Heimdall with the Gjallarhorn ("Shrieking Horn"), with which he will summon the Gods to the last battle. In Ursula Dronke's translation (1997) she instead suggests:

*"She knows Heimðallr's | hearing is couched  
beneath the bright-nurtured | holy tree"*

**Valfather's pledge:** Othin's eye, which he gave to the water-spirit Mimir (or Mim) in exchange for the latter's wisdom. Referring here as a drinking-vessel, from which Othin drinks Mimir's wisdom as magic mead, a special diet. The ash Yggdrasil also has a root in Mimir's well of wisdom.

28. **The Old One:** Othin. The Völva here addresses Othin directly, intimating that, although he has not told her, she knows why he has come to her, and what he has already suffered in his search for knowledge regarding his doom.

29. A stanza refering back to the mead of Mimir in stanza 27, referring back to the pledge of Othin sacrificing one eye for wisdom, thus

seeing clearly into wisdom, but with the inability to weight one vision against the other: to never compromise, to never see two sides or have any empathy for the weak. One cannot make a pledge with one's foe, or as the Norse proverb says: A head stuck on a pike no longer conspires.

30. **Heerfather** ("Father of the Host"): Othin, hosting the event, or time itself. Here the Völva is rewarded by Othin for her knowledge of the past, to now proceed with her real prophecy: the coming war. Her reward is not by honor or recognition, but with jewelry and ornament, thus a treacherous gift from the Wolf-king.

31. **Valkyries/Wælcyrge**: 'Choosers of the Slain' are the "pickers" of Othin, who bring the bravest warriors killed in battle to Valhall, in order to re-enforce the gods for their final battle during Ragnarök. The unheroic dead from battle go to the goddess Freyja's afterlife field Fólkvangr. The Valkyries are also called "Wish-Maidens," as the fulfillers of Othin's wishes.

The conception of the supernatural warrior-maiden was later interwoven with the tradition of the shapeshifting swan-maiden. Valkyries also appear as lovers of heroes, and sometimes accompanied by ravens, the messengers of Othin. **Herjan** ("Leader of Hosts"): Othin. It is worth noting that the name Hild ("Warrior") is the basis of Bryn-

hild ("Warrior in Mail Coat"), a warrior in a scaled armor, but also a predator in dress.

32. **Baldr:** the son of Othin and Frigg. The story of Baldr and his fate is fully told by Snorri. Frigg had demanded of all created things, saving only the mistletoe, which she thought too weak to be worth troubling about, an oath that they would not harm Baldr. Thus the Æsir came to hurl weapons at Baldr, who, of course, was totally unharmed thereby. Loki, the trouble-maker, found the weakness of Baldr and brought the mistletoe to Baldr's blind brother, Hoth, and guided his hand in hurling the twig. Baldr was slain, and grief came upon all the gods, as was written in the Runes by the Norns.

The death of Baldr was the first of the great disasters to the Æsir, corrupting their community and set them adrift towards war. Compare: Wotan/Othin and Vogue: "fashion, success;", but also "fashion, reputation", "drift, swaying motion (of a boat)", as in Old High German wagon "to float, fluctuate," literally "to balance oneself;" German Wege "wave, billow," wogen "fluctuate, float." The death of Baldr, of truth, innocence and purity, marks the swaying drift towards total fashion, the civil war of gods against gods. The death of purity sets off Ragnarök.

33. **The brother of Baldr:** Vali, whom Othin begot expressly to avenge Baldr's death. The day after his birth he fought and slew Hoth.

34. **Frigg**: Othin's wife and Baldr's mother. Some scholars have regarded her as a solar myth, calling her the sun-goddess, and pointing out that her home in Fensalir ("the sea-halls") symbolizes the daily setting of the sun beneath the ocean horizon.

35. The *Hauksbok* has the same final two lines, but in place of the first pair has,

*"I know that Vali \ his brother gnawed,  
With his bowels then \ was Loki bound."*

Loki's fate is also captured in *Gylfaginning*: "Then were taken Loki's sons Vali and Nari or Narfi. The Aesir changed Vali into a wolf, and the latter tore into pieces his brother Narfi. Then the Aesir took his entrails and therewith bound Loki." A serpent was fastened above Loki's head, and the venom fell upon his face. Loki's wife, Sigyn, sat by him with a basin to catch the venom, but whenever the basin was full, and she went away to empty it, then the venom fell on Loki again, so he shook the earth with his painful struggles. "And there he lies bound till the end." A club drenched in blood easily finds its mark, as the Norse aphorism goes.

38. **Nastrond** ("Corpse-Strand"): the land of the dead, ruled by the goddess Hel. In this realm of icy darkness the wicked undergo endless torture. **Smoke vent/Vindr-auga**: the opening in the roof serving instead of a chimney in the Icelandic house. Vindr-auga is the

root of Window in english, thus also signaling how the venom enters the house of Being through vision, the corruption of the visual culture through Hel and Loki's manipulation of appearances. The torture of the senses by starving the body into a living corpse is the fate of Loki.

39. **Nithhogg/Níðhöggr**, ("the Dread Biter"): the dragon that lies beneath the world tree Yggdrasil and gnaws at one of its roots, thus symbolizing the continuous destructive elements in the universe. Nithhogg is also chewing the corpses of the inhabitants of Náströnd/Hel, those guilty of murder, adultery, and oath-breaking, which Norse society considered among the worst possible crimes. **The wolf:** presumably the wolf Fenrir, one of the children of Loki and the giantess Angrboða. Fenrir was chained by the gods with the marvelous chain Gleipnir, fashioned by a dwarf (possibly Sindri) "out of six things: the noise of a cat's step, the beards of women, the roots of mountains, the nerves of bears, the breath of fishes, and the spittle of birds." The chaining of Fenrir cost the god Týr his right hand.
40. **The giantess:** the giantess of Járniðr ("Ironwood"), her name is nowhere stated. The children of this giantess and the wolf Fenrir are the wolves Sköll ("Treachery") and Hati ("He Who Hates").

41. **Dark grows the sun:** the end of the world is approaching. The Fimbulvetr/Fimbulwinter (“Awful, Great Winter”), the harsh winter that precedes Ragnarök.

Sköll chases the chariot which contains the sun (Sól) through the sky every day, trying to eat her and the horses Árvakr (“Early awake”) and Alsviðr (“Very quick”), that drag the chariot. Hati chases the moon (Máni). At the end of the Fimbulvetr both Sköll and Hati will succeed in their quests, leaving the world lit only by the fading stars. At this moment, Fenrir breaks free, and Ragnarök begins.

42. **Eggthér/Egdir:** this giant and herdsman, is the watchman of the giants, as Heimdall is that of the gods and Surt of the dwellers in the fire-world. **Fjalar:** the rooster in the wood Gálgviðr, whose crowing wakes the giants for the beginning of Ragnarök.

43. **Gollinkambi** (“Golden Comb”): the rooster who wakes the gods and heroes, as Fjalar does the giants. **The rust-red bird:** the name of this bird, who wakes the people of Hel’s domain, is nowhere stated.

44. **Garm/Garmr** (“Rag”): the blood-stained watchdog that guards the gates of Hel’s kingdom. **Gniparhellir** (“the Cliff-Cave”): the entrance to the world of the dead. **The wolf:** Fenrir.



45. The Fimbulsvetr will set off innumerable wars and ties of blood will no longer be respected: the next-of-kin will lie together in incestuous relations, and brother will kill brother, the spear of no man will not spare his brother.

The final killing seasons begins, the total fashion of full civil war, four ages afoot: axe-age and sword-age, the times of war, followed by the wind-age and wolf-age, where the worlds finally crumble and fall. Note similarities between Fimbulsvetr and the arriving Nuclear Winter in Moore and McLaren's *Fashion Beast* (2012/2013).

46. **The sons of Mím:** the spirits of the water (or Mimir), "sons" of Mím are at play while "fate burns". **Gjallarhorn:** the "Shrieking Horn" with which Heimdall, the watchman of the gods, calls them to the last battle.

47. **The giant:** Fenrir. **The head of Mim:** refers to the story that Mimir was sent by the gods with Hönir as a hostage to the Wanes after their war, and that the Wanes cut off his head and returned it to the gods. Othin embalmed the head, and by magic gave it the power of speech, thus making Mimir recite secret knowledge and counsel to him. **The kinsman of Surt:** the wolf Fenrir, who slays Othin in the final struggle. Surt/Surtr is the giant who rules the fire-world, Muspellsheimr/Múspellsheimr, the realm of the accursed share, feeding the circuit of cosmic flames

which burns with inescapable destruction and expenditure. The fires of superabundance are fuelled from the outpouring of celestial energy and the surpluses produced by all cosmic forces, which are in turn drained into the Yawning gap, “Ginnunga-gap”. It would today be known as *Faust Fashion*.

48. **Jotunheim/Jötunheimr:** land of the Jötnar, or giants. The River Ifing/Ífingr separates Asgard, from Jotunheim.

49. Refrain-stanza, identical with stanza 44.

50. **Hrym** (“Decrepit”): the leader of the jö-tunn/giants, who comes as the helmsman of the ship Naglfar toward the battlefield of Vígríðr (“Battle-surge”) to confront the gods in the final battle. **The serpent:** Mithgarthsormr/Miðgarðsormr, one of the children of Loki and Angrbotha (Fenrir and Hel the other). The serpent was cast into the sea, where he completely encircles Mithgarth, as it grasp his own tail (like the Ouroboros). **The eagle:** the giant Hræsvelg (“Corpse Swallow”), who sits at the northern edge of heaven in the form of an eagle, and makes the winds with his wings. **Naglfar:** the ship which was made out of dead men’s nails to carry the giants to battle.

51. **The wolf:** Fenrir. **The brother of Byleist:** Loki.

52. **Surt/Surtr:** the ruler of the fire-world, Muspellsheim/Múspellsheimr. **The scourge of branches:** fire.
53. **Hlin** (“Protectress”): a name associated with Frigg, Othin’s wife. She is fated now to see Othin slain by the wolf Fenrir. **Beli’s slayer:** the god Freyr, who killed the giant Beli with his fist. **The Joy of Frigg:** Othin.
54. **Sigfather** (“Father of Victory”): Othin. His son, Vithar/Víðarr (“Wide ruler”), is the silent god associated with vengeance, and strength, which is little less than Thor’s. He is foretold to avenge his father’s death and survives Ragnarök. **The giant’s son:** Fenrir.
55. **Hlothyn:** another name for Jorth/Jörð (“Earth”), Thor’s mother; his father was Othin. **The snake:** Mithgarthsorm. **Othin’s son:** Thor.
56. **The warder of earth:** Thor. **The son of Fjorgyn/Fjörgynn:** again Thor, who, after slaying the serpent, is overcome by his venomous breath, takes nine steps before succumbing, and dies.
57. Here the account of Ragnarök ends, fire eats the whole world, and Yggdrasil is scorched.
59. A new world arises from the wreckage of the old. Some interpreters have proposed this introduces the arrival of Christianity to

the Norse world or Nordland, but it may also present the arrival of the “New Look” to the charred ruins of the West.

60. **The girdler of earth:** Mithgarthsorm. **The Ruler of Gods:** Othin. **The runes/runo** (meaning “secret” or “whisper”) were both an alphabet as well as magic signs, generally carved on wood, and sung or spoken charms. The runes were a gift of Othin to man, like the Icelandic magical staves, or not least the Sigruno, the “victory runes”, mentioned in *Sigrdrífumál* (“sayings of the victory-bringer”). Runes are also used in a Galdr (“spell, incantation”)

61. **Golden tables:** new golden games are invented for this new world, a new level of the game of life. Some interpret this as a prophesy of late capitalism and the second gilded age of magic fashion.

One such new golden game can be the example of the Icelandic witchcraft ritual of the Nábrók (“death underpants”), sometimes called Necropants. These are a pair of pants made from the skin of a dead man, which will bring the new owner an endless supply of gold. As the myth reads:

*“you must dig up his body and flay the skin of the corpse in one piece from the waist down. As soon as you step into the pants they will stick to your own skin. A coin must be stolen from a poor widow and placed in the scrotum along with the magical sign, nábrókarstafur, written*

*on a piece of paper. Consequently the coin will draw money into the scrotum so it will never be empty, as long as the original coin is not removed."*

62. Baldr and his brother, Hoth, who unwittingly slew him at Loki's instigation, return together, their union being a symbol of the new age of reconciliation and peace. **Hropt:** another name for Othin. The "battle-hall" is Valhalla rebuilt for the new lineages of dead heroes.

63. **Hönir:** As Hönir survives Ragnarök he returns to the new age with the gift of foretelling the future. **Tveggi** ("The Twofold"): another name for Othin. His brothers are Vili and Ve, restoring the gifts of Will and Numen (see notes to stanza 4). Little is known of their future in Nordland, and nothing, beyond this reference, of their sons. **Vindheim** ("Home of the Wind"): heaven, the home of the Fallen, Beautiful, Adored, The Grave of Love, The Yesterday.

64. **Gimle:** Snorri makes this the name of the hall itself, while here it appears to refer to a mountain on which the hall stands. It is the gold-roofed home of the happy, as opposed to another hall, not here mentioned, for the dead. It is thus not Valhalla, a hall for the slain, but a new home for heroes, a new spiritual state or plateau of heeled hate.

65. Late paper manuscripts add two lines, clearly denoting the new laws of fashion for the new world:

*“Rule he orders, | and rights he fixes,  
Laws he ordains | that ever shall live.”*

66. **Nithhogg:** the dragon at the roots of Yggdrasil leaving Nithafjöll/Niðafjöll (“the Dark Crag”), the new world is built on the ashes and ruins of Hel. **Now must I sink:** the Völva returns to the dead, her prophesy is finished, a New Look has arrived, the golden violence will commence in the new gilded age.







*A ship is burning | out at sea  
Flames in the dark | caught on the breeze  
Watched from the shore | with tear-stained eyes  
The king is dead | but a phoenix will arise  
From yesterday | till tomorrow*

*On ancient stones | on misty moors  
Are carved the names | of those who came before  
Washed in moonlight | the shadows move  
Their voices | calling out to you  
From yesterday | till tomorrow*

Sol Invictus: 'A Ship is Burning'







A man who has his feet hacked off cannot scurry far,  
as the Norse saying goes.

The *Völuspá* is the first and most famous of the old Norse Eddic poems, capturing the birth and violent death the *Æsir*. The myths of the dark battlefields of the Gods reveal the violent nature of the social realm of dress. Fashion is part of our shared reality, a condition of our world we cannot run away from.