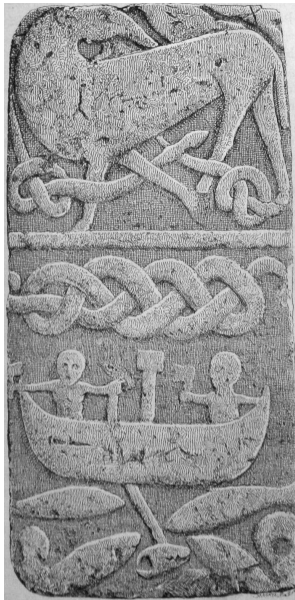


## An Introduction to Old Norse Literature – *Snorra Edda*

### Pórr's fishing trip:



Altuna Runestone, Sweden



The Gosforth Cross, Northumbria, UK



Hørdum Stone, Denmark

### *Skáldskaparmál*, in the *Snorra Edda*:

But these things have now to be told to young poets who desire to learn the language of poetry and to furnish themselves with a wide vocabulary using traditional terms; or else they desire to be able to understand what is expressed obscurely. Then let such a one take this book as scholarly inquiry and entertainment. But these stories are not to be consigned to oblivion or demonstrated to be false, so as to deprive poetry of ancient kennings which major poets have been happy to use. Yet Christian people must not believe in heathen gods, nor in the truth of this account in any other way than that in which it is presented at the beginning of this book, where it is told what happened when mankind went astray from the true faith, and after that about the Turks, how the people of Asia, known as the *Æsir*, distorted the accounts of the events that took place in Troy so that the people of the country would believe that they were gods.

### Snorri's Prologue to the *Edda*:

They learned from their elderly relatives that after many hundreds of years had been reckoned there was the same earth, sun and heavenly bodies. But the courses of the heavenly bodies were various, some had a longer course and some a shorter. From such things they thought it likely that there must be some controller of the heavenly bodies who must be regulating their courses in accordance with his will, and he must be very powerful and mighty...And so they believed that he ruled all things on earth and in the sky, of heaven and the heavenly bodies, of the sea and the weathers.

### Gangleri in front of the three kings:



Then spoke Gangleri: 'Where is the chief centre or holy place of the gods?'

High replied: 'It is the ash Yggdrasil. There the gods must hold their courts each day.'

Then spoke Gangleri: 'What is there to tell about that place?'

Then said Just-as-high: 'The ash is of all trees the biggest and best. Its branches spread out over the world and extend across the sky....'

Gylfaginning, Uppsala ms (early 14<sup>th</sup> c.)

### The 'tricking of Gylfi':

But the Æsir sat down to discuss and hold a conference and went over all the stories that had been told to [Gylfi], and assigned those same names that were mentioned above to the people and places that were there [in Sweden], so that when long periods of time had passed men should not doubt that they were all the same, those Æsir about whom stories were told above and those who were now given the same names. So someone there was given the name Thor – and this means the ancient Thor of the Æsir, that is Oku-Thor – and to him are attributed the exploits which Thor (Hec-tor) performed in Troy. And it is believed that the Turks told tales about Ulysses and that they gave him the name Loki, for the Turks were especially hostile to him.

### Heiti in Skáldskaparmál:

On a man there is what is called a head. This shall be referred to by calling it toil or burden of the neck, land of helmet and hat and brains, of hair and eyebrows, scalp, ears, eyes, mouth...Without periphrasis the head is called skull, brainpan, temple, crown. Eyes are called sight and glance and look, aimers. They may be referred to by calling them sun or moon, shields and glass or jewels or stone of eyelashes or eyebrows, eyelids or forehead. Ears are called auricles and hearing. They shall be referred to by calling them land or by any of the terms for earth or mouth or channel or sight or eyes of the hearing, if allegory is being used.



Óðinn and the mead of poetry (18<sup>th</sup> c.)