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THE FIGURE OF LOKI IN GERMANIC MYTHOLOGY

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ICELAND, that island of marvels, has preserved for us, as it has done in most other fields of Germanic culture, nearly all of what we know about the religion of our pagan ancestors. The two Eddas, the Elder (Poetic) and the Younger (Prose) Edda, furnish the whole body of coherent mythology accessible to us. As for the cults themselves, we are much less well informed, but such knowledge as we have is drawn mainly from the Sagas, prose tales dealing with men and events, real and fictitious, of the heathen time, written down two or three centuries after the adoption of Christianity as the state religion in the year 1000, yet seeking to give a faithful picture of the manners and beliefs of the old days, and with scarcely a trace of the intolerance which almost obliterated the pagan traditions in other parts of Germanic territory. The distribution and popularity of the cults, their relative age and gradual expansion have been revealed by the brilliant researches of Professor Magnus Olsen on the Norwegian place-names¹ and by the subsequent studies inspired by his work. The most recent comprehensive treatment of the whole subject, Jan de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*,² devotes a first volume of 335 pages to the discussion of prehistoric and South Germanic religion taken together, while the second, dealing with North Germanic (Scandinavian) material and necessarily highly compressed, runs to 460 large octavo pages. Were it not for the evidence of Old Norse literature, preserved almost entirely in Iceland, our knowledge of the history of Germanic religion would be meager indeed.

¹ *Hedenske Kultminder i norske Stedsnavne* (Videnskabselskabets Skrifter, hist.-filos. Klasse, 1914, No. 4), Kristiania, 1915. See also the same author's revision of P. A. Munch, *Norrøne Gude- og Heltesagn*³, Kristiania, 1922, 210 ff., and his *Farms and Fanes of Ancient Norway: the place-names of a country discussed in their bearings on social and religious history*, Harvard Univ. Press, 1928.

² *Pauls Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*³, 12/1 and 2, 1935-37.

Nevertheless, extensive as the Icelandic material is, it is far from possessing the authority of a primary source, taken as a whole. It has already been mentioned that the manuscripts were written two to three centuries or more after the coming of Christianity. Thus it can scarcely be expected that they represent purely heathen tradition, in spite of the conservatism and conscientious antiquarian interest which have always distinguished the Icelanders. This is particularly true of the *Younger Edda*, a prose treatise on the art of poetry composed by Snorri Sturluson in the first half of the thirteenth century, containing a number of mythological tales. Together with much material that is undoubtedly old and genuine, Snorri has transmitted a great many new narrative motives which belong originally to the common stock of popular tales and are only secondarily attached to the gods, who are introduced as actors in the place of mortals. More than this, Snorri is one of the most remarkable literary artists of the Middle Ages, and there is no question that he adapted his oral and written sources in an aesthetic sense, heightening effects, imputing motives, combining and altering to achieve artistic unity.³ More reliable sources are found in the poems, both *Eddic* and *scaldic*, but here too we must try to sift the genuine old from the later, unoriginal tradition. Few of the mythological poems in their extant redactions are older than the tenth century, when we must assume already a strong influence of Christian religious ideas.

The study of Germanic religion and mythology is thus confronted with many difficult problems. One of the most puzzling of all is that presented by the god *Loki*, about whose essential nature there are almost as many opinions as there are scholars who have occupied themselves with him. The educated layman probably thinks of him as a god of fire, such as he appears, under the name *Loge*, in Richard Wagner's opera *Rheingold*. Following his Old Norse sources, Wagner represents him in his

³ F. von der Leyen, *Das Märchen in den Göttersagen der Edda*, Berlin, 1899; E. Mogk, *Novellistische Darstellung mythologischer Stoffe Snorris und seiner Schule*, *Folklore Fellows Communications* No. 51, Helsinki, 1923; Sigurður Nordal, *Snorri Sturluson*, Reykjavík, 1920.

characteristic rôle as sly and treacherous, standing midway between the doomed gods and the hostile powers which ultimately compass their destruction.⁴

The first scholar who sought to establish the conception of Loki as a fire-god on a scientific basis was Jakob Grimm.⁵ One of Snorri's tales deals with a contest in eating between Loki and Logi, a fire-demon, whose name is identical with the appellative *logi*, 'fire' (German *Lohe*). There is, of course, no question that the inventor of the tale, whether Snorri or another, was conscious of the similarity of names, which contributed to the humorous effect of the burlesque discomfiture of the god who is worsted by his adversary. This probably fortuitous resemblance of the names, which the author turned to account to point the comedy of his narrative, becomes for Grimm a proof of the origin of the Old Norse god (of whom, he remarks, there are no traces in Germany) from an original fire-demon. *Logi* represents fire as a force of nature, *Loki* is a more highly developed figure having certain affinities with Prometheus and Hephaistos. The possibility is discussed that the later form *Loki* may have been secondarily connected with the verb *lūkan* 'claudere,' instead of *liuhan* 'lucere'; *Loki* as 'the closer' may belong with Grendel of the Old English *Beowulf* and the German *hellerigel* 'hell-fire, devil, hag.'⁶ Grimm goes on to cite the modern Scandinavian traditions concerning the sprite Loke-Lokke.

The Danish scholar N. M. Petersen remarks, after calling attention to the apparent breadth of the conception of Loki in the sources, that 'his nature must probably be expressed in his name,' which is derived from *lūka* 'to end'; according to Uhland he is 'the limit and end of the gods' power,' according to others 'the tempter, the deceiver.'⁷ Theodor Wisén continues to accept the etymological connection of the names *Loki* and *Logi*, and hence the original character of Loki as a fire-god,

⁴ 'Loge bist du, doch nenn' ich dich Lüge!' 'Verfluchte Lohe, dich lösche' ich aus!' Scene 2. 'Zur leckenden Lohe mich wieder zu wandeln spür' ich lockende Lust.' Scene 4.

⁵ *Deutsche Mythologie*⁴ 1, 199 ff.

⁶ Cf. T. von Grienberger, *Zts. f. d. öster. Gym.* 47, 1009.

⁷ *Nordisk Mythologi*¹, Copenhagen, 1849, 355 ff.

but maintains that he acquired broader functions in the course of his development as shown in the Old Norse sources: a god of water (his offspring *Fenrir* connected with *fen*), a god of the air (his by-name *Loptr*).⁸ A little later Viktor Rydberg, starting with the likeness of Loki to Prometheus, represents him as a fire-god going back to Aryan times. In an etymological interpretation of the names *Byleistr* and *Fárbauti*, borne by relatives of Loki, he sought evidence to prove that he had been specialised into a god of the lightning.⁹

R. Much finds no essential trait in Loki 'which cannot easily be understood primarily or secondarily from his nature as a fire-god.' He rejects the interpretation 'closer, ender' as too abstract to be original, likewise the theory of S. Bugge which would make *Loki* a shortened form of *Lucifer*, since it is not conceivable that the Northmen could have heard the latter name from the lips of the Anglo-Saxons (there is no trace of any such popular use in Anglo-Saxon territory). In general, he is convinced that Bugge has overestimated Christian influence on the figure of Loki. He himself (with some hesitation, to be sure) suggests a connection with OE. *loca* 'prison,' supposing that a postulated OIcel. appellative **loki* with the same sense became the name of the god as the first and most important being confined in the subterranean prison (the Northern equivalent of the Greek Tartaros), much as the original local name *Hel* (Gothic *halja*) developed into the name of the goddess of the dead.¹⁰ He finds no virtue in the theory of E. Mogk, which sought to explain Loki as originating from the power of the heaven-god 'which could not only perform all things, but also conclude all things, which revealed itself to men not only on the pleasant, but also on the unpleasant side.'¹¹

I pass over the manuals of P. Herrmann,¹² E. H. Meyer,¹³

⁸ Oden och Loke, 1873, 62 ff.

⁹ Undersökningar i germanisk Mythologi, 1886, 1, 450 f.

¹⁰ Der germanische Himmels-gott, Festgabe Heinzel, 1898, 236 ff., especially 245 f.

¹¹ Pauls Grundriss d. germ. Phil.², 3, 348. Mogk later withdrew this idea in favor of a conception of Loki as a fire-elf, Hoops' Reallexikon d. germ. Altertumskunde, article *Loki*.

¹² Nordische Mythologie, 1903, 403 ff.

¹³ Germanische Mythologie, 1891; Mythologie der Germanen, 1903, 163 ff.

and R. M. Meyer,¹⁴ since they contribute nothing new. The everpresent difficulty for the writers of handbooks who wished to give their readers a consistent picture of the important and interesting god Loki was how to reconcile the various and often conflicting traditions about him, both in Old Norse literature and in modern popular belief. Nevertheless, the fire-god still seemed to most to be the core of the figure; G. Wilke connects Loki with the fire which Caesar reports was one of the chief objects of Germanic worship, and by way of Prometheus, Vulcan, and Agni arrives at the conception of a common Indo-European fire-god.¹⁵

Those who preferred the explanation 'the closer' were led, of course, in quite a different direction. Thus W. Golther defines Loki as 'the closing god, the god who brings about the end of the world.' A fire-demon, Logi, was confused with the god because of the similarity of name, also perhaps because the world was thought of as destroyed by fire.¹⁶ Chantepie de la Saussaye finds it difficult to credit either the theory of the fire-god or the interpretation 'closer,' but is at a loss to suggest another hypothesis.¹⁷ The Icelandic scholar Finnur Jónsson, prone to categorical statement of his views, who accepted the explanation 'closer,' regarded Loki as a giant closely connected with the evil and destructive powers in the world and without any relation to forces of nature or to fire.¹⁸

A third view conceived Loki as a god of the dead, his original character appearing in his relation with Hel.¹⁹ H. Schück had a similar conception of him as a chthonic deity,²⁰ but after the publication of Axel Olrik's studies he admitted that the figure was probably a mixture of the death-god and the servant of the thunder-god.²¹ In primitive religion there is a well known

¹⁴ *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 1910, 335 ff.

¹⁵ *Die Religion der Indogermanen in archäologischer Beleuchtung* (Mannus-Bibliothek 31), 119.

¹⁶ *Handbuch d. germ. Mythologie*, 1895, 406 ff.

¹⁷ *The Religion of the Teutons*, 1902, 259 ff.

¹⁸ *Goðafærðir Norðmanna og Íslendinga eftir heimildum*, Reykjavík, 1913, 96.

¹⁹ O. Schonning, *Dødsriger i nordisk Hedentro*, Copenhagen, 1903.

²⁰ *Studier i nordisk Litteratur- och Religionshistoria* 2, 125.

²¹ Schück and Warburg, *Illustrerad svensk Litteraturhistoria*², 1, 159.

connection between gods of death and gods of fertility (Osiris, Attis, Adonis); hence we are not surprised to find Loki interpreted as a vegetation-deity by F. R. Schröder,²² though to be sure he reaches his conclusion by another way (the god's bisexual character, appearing in several myths, and an etymology proposed by J. Sahlgren, *Namn och Bygd* 6, 1918, 28 ff., which is accepted by de Vries and others, but is convincingly disputed by W. Krogmann in the article cited below, p. 324). In a recently published article on 'Germanische Urmythen,' *Arch. f. Rel.* 35, 201 ff., Schröder seeks (p. 213) further to reinforce this hypothesis. For the moment I postpone discussion.

The suggestion of a connection between Loki and Prometheus was as old as the discussion of the problem, having been made, as we have seen above, by Jakob Grimm himself. Prometheus stole the fire from the gods, and Loki was both a fire-god and a notorious thief, though curiously it is never told of him that he stole fire. It was assumed, nevertheless, that an older lost myth must have related this exploit of him also.

Prometheus and Loki are undeniably alike in many features, which they share with still another figure who plays an important rôle in primitive religions all over the world, the culture-hero.²³ Charles Godfrey Leland was the first to notice the resemblance between Loki and the culture-hero of the North American Indians.²⁴ His book belongs to the period when American writers were in the habit of looking in the most unlikely places for traces of the Vinland voyages: he suggests that the Norsemen may have communicated their tales of Loki to the Eskimos with whom they came in contact, who in turn transmitted them to the Indians.²⁵ The significance of Le-

²² *Germanentum und Hellenismus* (Germ. Bibl. 2, 17), 1924, 115 ff.

²³ See A. van Deursen, *Der Heilbringer, eine ethnologische Studie über den Heilbringer bei den nordamerikanischen Indianern*, Groningen, 1931.

²⁴ *The Algonquin Legends of New England or Myths and Folk Lore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Tribes*, Boston, 1884. See also Ellen Russell Emerson, *Indian Myths*, Boston, 1884, 361 ff.

²⁵ *Op. cit.* v f., 168 f. 'A re-perusal of the Eddas has impressed me with the remarkable resemblance of Lox, the Wolverine, to Loki. . . . But the most remarkable point is that the general immoral character of the Lox, [*footnote*: The coincidence of name amounts to nothing, as Lox is not, I believe, an Indian word.] or Wolverine, is so much like that of Loki, consisting of evil or mischief of the worst kind, always tempered by

land's observation remained unregarded until 1909, when Professor Friedrich von der Leyen took it up in his book *Die Götter und Göttersagen der Germanen* (*Deutsches Sagenbuch* 1), 222 ff.²⁶ 'Not the connection with fire is the oldest element in Loki's nature, and not from this connection have we to derive and to understand all the stories concerning the god — on the contrary, his slyness, his skill as a thief, the fact that he steals their possessions from the giants and brings them to gods or men, his inventiveness, all this remains the original and the characteristic feature of Loki, and this recurs in every tale about him, whereas it is only a few late accounts which know him as a fire-god.' Loki was originally an elflike being, the helper and benefactor of gods and men, on whom they called to extricate them from every difficulty by his sly devices. When the Christian devil came to Iceland, Loki was attracted into the sphere of the diabolical, his character rapidly worsened under the hands of the poets of the Viking Age, and at last the helpful sprite became a malevolent giant, the treacherous slayer of the Christlike Balder and a leader of the powers of death in the ultimate catastrophe of Ragnarok. In Iceland too, where volcanic outbreaks inspired terror, he was identified with the fire-demon Logi.

It is curious that so rational an explanation, which seems at last to furnish the key to the enigmatic nature of the god, failed to convince more than a few scholars. The great Danish folklorist Axel Olrik accepted it as it affected one side of Loki's character, but he was already engaged in pursuing a different line of investigation which he believed would lead to important results. In an article on the thunder-god and his servant²⁷ he set out from an eighteenth-century Swedish tradition which he took to be a modern descendant of the Old Norse tales of Thor and Thjalfi, the frail and nimble boyish companion of the mighty thunderer, who seems to change places with Loki in the myths dealing with Thor's adventures in Giantland. Thence

humor, which provokes a laugh. Now to find a similar and very singular character supported by several coincidences of incident is, if nothing more, at least very remarkable.'

²⁶ See now the same author's *Die Götter der Germanen*, Munich, 1938, 190 ff.

²⁷ 'Tordenguden og hans Dreng,' *Danske Studier* 1905, 129 ff.

he proceeded to bring together an Esthonian myth concerning the thunder-god and his son with two of the Eddic poems in which Thor is the chief actor, reaching the conclusion that Loki was originally the son (or the servant) of the god. The difficulty involved in the existence of two independent names for the same mythological figure he solved by the assumption that Loki belonged to the countries 'beyond the Baltic Sea' (Finland and Esthonia), while Thjalfi was originally confined to Sweden. He left unexplained the odd circumstance, under the conditions of his theory, that the Thjalfi-district should be situated *between* the Loki-districts on both extremes (Finland-Esthonia on the east, Iceland on the west).

Olrik went on to subject the modern folklore material on Loki to a thorough study, reviewing all the available traditions in Iceland, the Faroes, the Shetlands, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.²⁸ The harvest resulting from this careful gleaning, it must be admitted, is but slender — Loki appears as a goblin, in Sweden connected with the hearth, in Denmark with the quivering heat over the fields in summer (*lysflimrevætte*); he is both mischievous and helpful, like other such familiar beings of popular belief.

Olrik's views of the folk-traditions were vigorously attacked by his Swedish colleague Hilding Celander in his monograph *Lokes mytiska Ursprung*.²⁹ Celander added considerably to the popular material, but his own theory that the evidence showed Loki to have been a chthonic spirit connected with the cult of the dead has found few adherents.

Before making a spirited reply to Celander's criticism (in *Danske Studier* 1912, 90 ff.), Olrik brought his Loki studies to a conclusion with his article 'Myterne om Loke,' *Festskrift Feilberg*, 548 ff. He represents the god as a composite figure in whom are united at least four originally distinct beings: (1) Othin-Loki, in tales of Othin, West Scandinavian; (2) Thor-Loki, in myths of Thor, East Scandinavian; (3) the devilish Loki, who originated with the Goths in the period of the mi-

²⁸ 'Loke i nyere Folkeoverlevering,' *Danske Studier* 1908, 193 ff., 1909, 69 ff.

²⁹ *Språkvetenskapliga Sällskapets i Uppsala Förhandlingar* 1907-09, Uppsala, 1911, 18 ff.

grations; (4) the culture-hero, probably the oldest component. Loki in modern folklore can be fitted into the scheme only with difficulty.

An Utrecht doctoral dissertation by Elizabeth Johanna Gras treats the Old Norse myths of Loki and their relation with one another.³⁰ The author states her conclusions on p. 122 ff.: the myths of the wicked Loki teach us nothing about his original nature. Drawn into the Balder myth under the influence of the Christian opposition of Christ and Satan, he passed through a development in the course of which his originally innocent traits were interpreted more and more *in malam partem*. Finally he was identified with the fettered giant of the Caucasus³¹ and thus lost his old character so completely that he could be associated with the foes of the gods in the last struggle. Only in the myth of the invention of the fishing-net, accidentally interwoven in the cycle of the evil Loki, do we find the remnant of an ancient cultural or nature myth. The other myths are so overlaid with folklore motives that it is almost impossible to discover a primary nucleus. Yet he appears everywhere as the crafty and mischievous god, playing a rôle consistent with the popular conception of his character. Snorri and his precursors, who knew also the devilish Loki, found it easy to combine the two conceptions, but we find both in Snorri and in the poems of the skalds many contradictory features. Loki acts as the helpful god, but Snorri imputes to him all sorts of base motives and the poet Þjóðólfr cannot refrain from allusions to the real wickedness of his hero. Loki's association with Othin must rest on an old tradition; his relation with Thor, on the other hand, must be a literary creation, though it may be very ancient. The original companion of Thor is not Loki but Thjalfi. Miss Gras agrees with Celandier that there is not a shred of evidence that Loki was ever considered to be a fire-demon. His pronounced liking for water

³⁰ De Noordse Loki-mythen in hun onderling Verband, Haarlem, 1931.

³¹ First suggested by Axel Olrik, 'Om Ragnarok,' Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie 1902, 157 ff., and 'Ragnarokforestillingernes Udspring,' Danske Studier 1913, 1 ff. German edition of both parts transl. W. Ranisch, Ragnarök, die Sagen vom Weltuntergang, 1922.

points in quite a different direction. In this connection the author returns to a note by Grüner Nielsen and Olrik ³² suggesting a connection with a Dutch watersprite Kludde or Lodder. The existence in the same district of a goblin Loeke points to a parallel with Loki and *Lóðurr*, which seems to be a byname of Loki in some Old Norse sources. This is corroborated by evidence from Germany in the name *Logapore* on the Nordendorf brooch.

A century of learned discussion ³³ culminated in 1933 in the exhaustive monograph of Jan de Vries, *The Problem of Loki*, FF Communications No. 110. De Vries reviews and criticises the opinions of his predecessors before attacking the problem anew. This clearing of the ground is one of the most valuable contributions of his study, which is marked throughout by cool sagacity and logical restraint. Himself a competent folklorist, he is at his best in his demolition of the extravagant claims of the scholars who have tried to correct the Old Norse sources on the basis of the exiguous modern traditions. This includes the work of Olrik and Celander, as well as Miss Gras's attempt to draw conclusions from the folklore of her native country (*Lodder*). I am so entirely in agreement with his findings that I will merely refer the reader to his discussion of this side of the problem, with a single exception, which I will mention here.

Olrik, *Danske Studier* 1908, 200, called attention to an English charm reported from Lincolnshire by the Rev. Robt. M. Heanley. ³⁴ The informant writes:

We had a great deal of ague in the marshes in those days [the autumn of 1858 or 1859], and my dear mother dispensed much quinine amongst the poor. I often took it to their houses for her. Going one day with a second bottle to a certain old woman, whose grandson had a bad attack, I was met with the remark: 'I knows a deal better cure than yon nasty bitter stuff. See here, lad!' And with that she took me into his room, and to the foot of the old four-poster on which he lay shivering and shaking. There in the centre of the footboard were nailed three horseshoes with a hammer fixed crosswise upon them. Taking down the hammer she sharply tapped each shoe, saying words to this effect as she did so:

³² 'Loeke, Lodder i flamsk Folketro,' *Danske Studier* 1912, 87 ff.

³³ Since Jakob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*¹, 1835.

³⁴ *Folklore* 1898, 186.

'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Nail the devil to this post.
With this mell I thrice do knock,
One for God,
And one for Wod,
And one for Lok.'

'There, lad!' she said, 'yon's a sure charm that will hold the old one as fast as t' church tower when next he comes to shake 'un.'

When I returned home and repeated this to my mother, she at once pointed out the extraordinary mingling of Christianity and paganism — God, Woden, and Lokki.³⁶

Olrik took this charm as evidence that a triad of gods was known in England corresponding to Othin, Loki, and Hœnir, who appear together in the Old Norse myths. Since they are also found together in a Faroese ballad, *Loka táttur*, it is possible that the Norsemen introduced the tales into Britain in the Viking Age, but Olrik thought it simpler to suppose that a triad of gods containing Woden and 'Lok' was known and worshipped by the pagan Anglo-Saxons when they migrated from the continent to England. Hœnir is a nebulous figure in the myths, but there is evidence that he is the faded descendant of a once important deity, and Olrik believed that he had been supplanted by 'God' in Christian times. Professor E. A. Philippon, *Germanisches Heidentum bei den Angelsachsen*, 1929, 153, thinks it more likely that the tradition came in after the conversion from the Faroes, citing the evidence of the *Loka táttur*.

F. Ohrt, *Trylleord fremmede og danske, Danmarks Folke-minder* 25, 82 f., received the charm with scepticism, pointing out that Loki was nowhere mentioned outside of Scandinavia, and expressing doubt of the reliability of the witness who professed to recollect a verse heard forty years before. The fact that it was communicated in two versions from the same source seemed to him also to cast suspicion on it. De Vries shares this suspicion in still higher degree. 'It is surprising that no one,

³⁶ Cf. *County Folklore* 5, 125, where the charm is given in the dialect, in a slightly different version: 'Feyther, Son and Holy Ghoast, / Naale the divil to this poast. / Throice I smoites with Holy Crok, / With this mell Oi throice dew knock, / One for God / An' one for Wod, / An' one for Lok.'

before enunciating such far-reaching conclusions, has asked if this piece of English folk-lore is quite reliable. For one may wonder that a boy who once has heard a magic formula under rather nerve-straining circumstances, recollects it about forty years later without one single alteration. Moreover is it possible that a formula has been handed down during a period of fourteen ages without considerable changes in form and contents, especially if we consider that it must have been originally an alliterative poem and that it has been recast into the modern form of a rhyme-verse? F. Ohrt has cast doubt upon the trustworthiness of this formula and I think it also quite inadmissible to make use of this questionable evidence for the reconstruction of the old Teutonic belief. *God* of course belongs to the Christian belief, *Wod* may denote the heathen god, whom people remembered even in Christian times as the principal deity of their pagan forefathers. But what of *Lok*? As a divine triad is obligatory in this kind of formula, a third one had to be added and its name had to rhyme with the words *crok* and *knock* in the preceding lines. Moreover, there are so many fanciful words and names in charms, used in modern times, that we must be very careful in abusing them as reliable documents from the heathen period.’³⁶

But would not the precise circumstances under which the boy heard the charm have operated to impress it strongly on his memory? No doubt it underwent considerable changes in the process of transmission from pagan times; the substitution of ‘God’ is one such, and the first two lines are a familiar formula in Christian charms. The verse as we have it is just the sort of thing we should expect to get in a mixture of pagan and Christian belief. It is not, I take it, contended that we have to do with the direct descendant of an alliterative formula, merely that the verse contains a vague reminiscence of the divine triad.

The scepticism of scholars regarding the English charm was thoroughly justified so long as it was assumed that the god *Loki* was confined to Scandinavia. But this, as we shall see, was an erroneous assumption.

³⁶ Loc. cit. 48 f.

On the constructive side de Vries's book is equally sober and judicious. After sifting the material and carefully studying the evidence he recognizes as reliable, he reaches a conclusion very like that of von der Leyen: the core of the Loki-figure is the culture-hero. He compares the Norse god with Prometheus and Hermes, and finds the greatest similarity of all in the traditions of the American Indians, as reported by American ethnologists (Boas, Alexander, Lowie, Gifford, Skinner and Satterlee).

The next contribution to our understanding of the problem, and a most important one, came from an American scholar, Dean Gilbert T. Hoag of Kenyon College, in a Harvard dissertation of 1937, entitled *Two Norse Myths of the Thieving Hawk*.³⁷ Dean Hoag has succeeded in proving (in my opinion conclusively) that the Norse myths of the theft of the mead of poetry and of the apples of Iðunn, transmitted in the *Prose Edda* and in older, poetic monuments, both go back to a common source which agrees even in detail with one version of the Hindu myth of Soma. According to Dr. Hoag Othin has in the first myth, the tale of the winning of the mead from the giant Suttungr, supplanted Loki, who appears in the second myth as the being who rescues from another giant, named Þjazi, the goddess Iðunn and the apples of youth, which, in turn, have been substituted for the magic beverage. Thus Loki was in the original version the god who in the form of a bird stole the life-giving mead from its demon guardian. Hoag argues that Loki was originally a 'heroic hawk,' who first stole the mead from the giants for the gods and was then persuaded by the offer of blood-brotherhood with Othin and acceptance among the number of the gods to repeat the theft, this time in behalf of his new patrons and comrades. This theory, it is maintained, offers a satisfactory explanation of the enigmatically ambivalent nature of the god, which has exercised the ingenuity of generations of scholars and has been the subject of discussion particularly in recent years.

On the basis of his hypothesis Hoag seeks to establish a new etymology of the name of Þjazi, the giant who in the second myth carries off Iðunn and her apples. The previously ac-

³⁷ Typewritten manuscript in the Harvard College Library.

cepted etymology of Elof Hellquist³⁸ derived the name from a *Lallwort* *bet-* or *peð-*, compounded with the determinative *-se* (*-si*), and having the sense 'father' or 'grandfather' ('daddy,' 'granddad'). Hoag points out that in the Hindu myth of Soma one of the most important figures is the god *Tvaṣṭṛ*, and he suggests tentatively that there may be an etymological connection between the names *Tvaṣṭṛ* and *þjazi*. He compares the side-form *taṣṭṛ* 'a carpenter,' 'a maker of carriages' with *þjazi*, finding that to the Indo-European *t* corresponds regularly the Primitive Germanic and Old Norse *þ* (the spirant *th*), and to the Sanskrit *a*, going back to IE. *e*, the ON. *ja* which arose historically from a diphthongising ('breaking') of *e* before a following *a* (assumed in the stem-inflection, as also by Hellquist). He finds himself unable to carry the comparison farther, remarking that with regard to the consonant-group *str*, 'which corresponds to IE. *str* or *stri*,' he has not succeeded in tracing a development into Norse *ssi* or *zi* (variant spellings). Nevertheless, 'because of the great likeness of the myths,' he puts forward his suggestion in the hope that it will lead to further investigation.

If we proceed from the striking similarity of the myths to which Dr. Hoag has called attention, and assume that the Hindu god T(v)ṣṭṛ (or *Tvaṣṭar*³⁹), who is obviously an original culture-hero, goes back to an Indo-European god whose name we reconstruct on the basis of the Sanskrit form, we get a hypothetical **Tek̑p̑tȓ*, with the same meaning as that of *Tvaṣṭṛ*, 'the maker,' 'the artificer,' 'the creator.' Tracing the development of **Tek̑p̑tȓ* into Primitive Germanic we find that *t* becomes *þ*, *e* remains, *k* becomes *h* (the velar *χ*), *þ* becomes *s*, *t* remains after *s*, the syllabic *ṛ* becomes *ur*: **þehstur-*. Let us now see what would happen to this base in Old Norse. Assuming the

³⁸ 'Om jättenamnet þjaze,' Ark. f. nordisk Filologi, 21, 1905, 132 ff.

³⁹ Corresponding, sound for sound, to Lat. *texitor*, which has the specialised sense of 'weaver.' Greek τέκτων shows the original, general significance of 'artisan,' 'craftsman,' meaning in Homer 'stone-cutter,' 'carpenter,' 'ship-builder,' 'wagon-builder,' 'horn-turner,' and 'ivory-carver.' See O. Schrader, Reallexikon d. idg. Altertumskunde² 1, 394, art. *Gewerbe* §5. The IE. root *tek̑p-* has a large number of derivatives in the descendant languages, among which may be cited Old English *þeor* 'spear' and Old Icelandic *þezla* 'adze.'

a-stem noun-inflection and adding the Germanic nominative case-ending *-z*, corresponding to *-s* in Greek and Latin, we get a nominative form **pehsturaz* as the god's name in Primitive Germanic. In Old Norse the *h* would be lost. The next vowel (*u*) would normally remain, but I assume here a loss in adaptation to the monosyllabic stem-form of **punr-aR*, the Primitive Norse name of the great thunder-god Thor, with whom Loki in the mythological tales is constantly associated. The stem-vowel *a* would produce breaking of the preceding *e* to *ja*, resulting in a stem **þjastra-*, and with later syncope of the stem-vowel **þjastr-*. Attaching the determinative *-si*, we get **þjastr-si*. The *r* would be regularly lost in such an accumulation of consonants, and the first *s* likewise by the process called dissimilation. This gives us *þjatsi*, the historical name of the giant in the Norse myth (the name is usually spelled *þjazi*, the *z* in ON. orthography having the same value, *ts*, as in modern German).

But this is not all. The argument receives unexpected and welcome support from the existence of the man's name *þjóstólfr*, widely disseminated in West Norse territory in historical times,⁴⁰ the derivation of which has hitherto been obscure.⁴¹ There can now be no doubt that it belongs to the class of theophorous personal names (*þórólfr*, *Ásólfr*, *Ingólfr*), compounded of a divine name and the second element *-ólfr* 'wolf.' *þjóstólfr* shows *u*-breaking of the root-vowel, which regularly took place preceding a labial vowel, *e* becoming *jo*, while the side-form *þestólfr* (see Lind, loc. cit.) has the primary vowel unbroken, confirming the assumption that the ON. *ja* in *þjazi* goes back to IE. *e*. *þjóstarr*, a personal name which occurs much less often than *þjóstólfr*, has *u*-breaking instead of the expected *a*-breaking, probably by analogy with the more frequent *þjóstólfr*. All these forms without the determinative *-si* show, of course, the undissimilated *s* of the root-syllable, which disappeared in **þjast-si*. A difficulty, at first sight, is presented by the lack of the *r* of the agent-suffix (**pestr-*, **þjastr-*, **þjostr-*); it may have been obscured by the *-r* of the nominative case-ending in ON., with which it coalesced, giving a new stem *þest-*, *þjost-*.

⁴⁰ E. H. Lind, *Norsk-isländska Dopnamn*, lists a long series of variant forms from various periods and districts.

⁴¹ See Lind, *Ark. f. n. Fil.* 11, 269.

In any case, in view of the other linguistic facts, it will scarcely be possible to deny the connection with *þjazi*.⁴²

After working out the argument stated above, I read the article 'Loki' by Willy Krogmann in the *Acta Philologica Scandinavica*, 12, 1938, 59 ff., which brings additional evidence. It deals particularly with the runic inscription on the famous brooch of Nordendorf, discovered in 1843 during the building of the railway between Augsburg and Donauwörth. The brooch was found in a large burial-field near the village of Nordendorf; numerous coins made it possible to date the finds as belonging to the sixth or seventh century. The runes on the reverse side of the brooch represent two inscriptions of different dates. The older one consists of three lines, one below the other, which were first read correctly in 1866 by C. Hofmann.⁴³ The lines run:

LOGAþORE
WODAN
WIGUþONAR

(The third line is read by some WIGIþONAR.)

The runes of the second series are obviously the divine name *Wodan* (OE. *Woden*, ON. *Óðinn*). The third line has been variously interpreted, but there can scarcely be any doubt that Wolfgang Krause was right in connecting it with the ON. *Vingþórr*, a by-name of Thor.⁴⁴ Thus lines 2 and 3 both contain a god's name. This makes it extremely likely that line 1 also represents a divine appellation of some kind. Here again it was von der Leyen who first suggested the correct interpretation. In an article, *Zts. d. Vereins f. Volkskunde* 25, 136 ff., he brought the word together with *Lóðurr*, which occurs in some ON. sources, apparently as a by-name of Loki (see above), and his suggestion was adopted and further supported by W. von Unwerth, *ibid.*, 26, 81 ff., and Krause, *loc. cit.*, in an attempt to clear up certain morphological and semantic difficulties. The ultimate solution was found by Krogmann in the article already referred to; he calls attention to conclusive evidence

⁴² The technical proof is presented in greater detail in my article *Loki und *Tekþtr*, ein bisher unbekannter indogermanischer Gott, which has just appeared in the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 63, 457 ff.

⁴³ *Sitzb. d. königl. bayer. Akad. d. Wissenschaften* 1866, 2, 138 ff., 207 f.

⁴⁴ *Zts. f. d. Altertum*, 64, 269 ff. For the meaning, see now Krogmann, *loc. cit.*, 63 ff.

hitherto overlooked, in OE. glosses of the period following the date of the Nordendorf inscription. A vocabulary of the eighth century has *Cacomicanus logðor*, a glossary of the tenth the same. Finally, an eleventh century manuscript has the glosses *Cacomicanus logþer* and *Marsius loþer*. *Marsius*, says Krogmann, had the sense 'snake-charmer,' 'sorcerer,' since the Marsi were believed to be able to heal snake-bites and had a reputation as snake-charmers. *Cacomicanus* is *κακομήχανος* 'treacherous,' 'deceitful.'⁴⁵

The importance of Krogmann's observation is at once clear. The inscription of Nordendorf gives us our only evidence that Loki was worshipped in continental Germanic territory; the English charm immediately acquires a much greater color of authenticity. A point which is constantly raised in the discussion is the fact that neither sagas nor place-names give any hint of a *cult* of Loki; de Vries notes this too, but suggests the possibility that it may be due to the private character of his worship. It may now be pointed out that among primitive peoples the culture-hero occupies a place midway between gods and men; we can scarcely speak of a cult devoted to him. When one considers the pitiful *dissecta membra* which are all that is left to us of the old religion in England and Germany (we are sometimes reduced to the names of the days of the week for our most conclusive evidence), one need not be surprised at the paucity of the evidence in this case, and we should be on our guard against the facile argument from silence.⁴⁶

Our conclusion can be stated in a few words. All the threads of the investigation converge upon a single focus.⁴⁷ An Indo-European myth of the theft of the divine drink by the god *Tekþtǵ, of the culture-hero type, was transmitted in India and

⁴⁵ The etymology of the Germanic word does not concern us here, since the meaning is clear from the glosses. But see Krogmann, loc. cit. 68 f.

⁴⁶ It is pure chance that we are informed about the existence of such private cults as the *álfablót* (sacrifice to the elves) and the cult of *Vǫlsi*, the horse-phallus. A bit of evidence not to be lightly disregarded is the name *þjóðstólfr*, the very type of personal names described by H. Usener, *Götternamen*, 350, given to children in artisan families to place them under the protection of the patron god (though, to be sure, the name is no doubt very old and its significance was no longer understood in the historical period).

⁴⁷ I agree with de Vries that in these matters etymology should never be the point of departure, divorced from a careful study of the religious phenomenon as such. But when this condition is fulfilled, it may often furnish the decisive proof.

in Germanic territory to the literary period. In India the name was preserved (Tvaṣṭar), but the rôle of the thief was taken over in most versions by the bird Garuḍa and the god Indra, or Indra in eagle-form.⁴⁸ The Teutons, on the contrary, kept the culture-hero in his original rôle — *pehsturaz at first, and later Logapōre-Lóðurr-Loki (the last a hypocoristic form, see Krogmann, loc. cit., 60), when the god's by-name 'the crafty one' had displaced his original name 'the fashioner,' 'the creator.' In Scandinavia the original divine name was by some misunderstanding transferred to the hostile giant.

The myth of *Tekþtr was a primitive, artless tale, showing a naïve delight in the wiles of the sly god which reminds us vividly of the culture-hero myths in America and Melanesia. It is at least a round thousand years older than the Egyptian fairy-tale of the two brothers in its traditional version, the discovery of which in the last century, with its dating from the middle of the second millennium B.C., profoundly altered the conception of the age of the folk-tale.⁴⁹ The god who was known in Scandinavia as Loki is one of the oldest figures in Germanic religion.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ A very ancient motive; cf. the 'Minoan bird-epiphany,' Martin P. Nilsson, *A History of Greek Religion*, 34; see also 56 f., 65.

⁴⁹ G. Maspero, *Les contes populaires de l'Égypte ancienne*⁴, 1 ff.

⁵⁰ The most recent contributions to the discussion, by Franz Rolf Schröder, *Arch. f. Rel.*, 35, 1938, 201 ff. (especially 213), and Hermann Schneider, *ibid.*, 237 ff., both the productions of learned and ingenious scholars, suffer from the methodological faults so incisively criticised by de Vries. Schröder clings to his interpretation of Loki as a vegetation deity, Schneider presents the god as a death-demon, and reverts to the discredited etymology of *Loki* as 'the closer.' Schröder (224) believes that Othin as the possessor of the eight-footed horse Sleipnir was originally a *Totendämon* in horse-form; Schneider (249), because Loki was the parent of Sleipnir, draws the same conclusion in regard to Loki. It is evident that such speculations cannot further the search for the truth.

I would only cite here the warning of Axel Olrik, 'Tordenguden og hans Dreng,' *Danske Studier* 1905, 137, a warning which, alas! he himself did not always regard: 'Når sammenlignende mytologer har fået ud af sagnet, at Thjalfe var en Prometheus der bragte ilden til jorden, er det en ganske vilkårlig omtydning, og den er kun mulig ved at løsrive Thjelvar-sagnet fra det organisk sammenhørende stof. En anden sag er det, at det muligvis er en mytisk Thielvar-Thialfe, der bryder øens trolddom, — men da vi aldrig har ham optrædende uden i Thors følge, svæver en sådan gætning ret højt i det blå. Ilden som middel mod troldskab er så almindelig i folkeskik (Feilberg, *Ordbog* II 12), at den ikke byder nogensomhelst sandsynlighed for, at sagnet rører sig i gudernes verden.'