

Lorin Renodeyn

Historical Linguistics and Literature Studies

Old Germanic Heritage In Metal Music

A Comparative Study Of Present-day Metal Lyrics And Their Old
Germanic Sources

Promotor: Prof. Dr. Luc de Grauwe

Vakgroep Duitse Taalkunde

Preface

In recent years, heathen past of Europe has been experiencing a small renaissance. Especially the Old Norse / Old Germanic neo-heathen (Ásatrú) movement has gained popularity in some circles and has even been officially accepted as a religion in Iceland and Norway among others¹. In the world of music, this renaissance has led to the development of several sub-genres of metal music, the so-called 'folk metal', 'Viking Metal' and 'Pagan Metal' genres.

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¹ Wikipedia, *Germanic Neopaganism*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_Neopaganism>, 30/07/2010, (05/08/2010)

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Introduction

Throughout my University career, my studies and explorations in the world of music have run parallel, influencing each other from time to time. Though still new to the genre, I had developed a liking for metal music shortly before. At the beginning of my studies for a bachelor's degree in English and Swedish linguistics, I came into contact with people sharing the same taste for music who introduced me to the connected sub-genres of metal commonly known as folk metal, Viking Metal and Pagan Metal. The music belonging to the genres soon drew sparked my interest because of its use of folkloric and mythological elements in the lyrics, two things that have interested me since childhood. Through the music, my curiosity into the Old Germanic past of north-west Europe was sparked, influencing my choice of historical (Old Germanic, to be precise) linguistics for my master courses at University. My musical and linguistic interests coincided when a research subject had to be chosen for the Master's Thesis.

My intentions in conducting the present study are to demonstrate the relevance of Old Germanic texts in present-day music culture by making a survey of the Old Germanic heritage that can be found in Viking Metal and Pagan Metal. I will be comparing lyrics selected lyrics of several bands that contain fragments of Old Germanic texts or are based on them to the original texts to gain an insight in the ways in which the old texts are put to use in modern song writing.

In this introductory chapter, I will say something about what is meant by Viking Metal and Pagan Metal. This will be followed by a brief biography of the bands whose lyrics have been selected, some notes on the use of sources and selection of texts and finally a discussion of the limitations of the present study.

Chapter I will deal with lyrics based on mythology and folklore linked to mythology.

The second chapter will deal with Saga material found in the selected lyrics.

Chapter III will discuss lyrics based on mainly Anglo-Saxon historical texts and some poetry. It will also include a section discussing songs about the Viking exploits in Eastern Europe.

In chapter four I will finally be discussing instances of Old Germanic language use in songs.

By way of conclusion, an index will be made of the stories and characters that appear in the lyrics.

‘Viking’ And ‘Pagan’ Metal

The terms ‘Viking Metal’ (VM) and ‘Pagan Metal’ (PM) are used in the metal¹ community to refer to two closely related labels used in the metal community to categorise artists, CDs and individual songs. There is, however, no consensus about what defines VM and PM. According to some, it is a combination of a certain musical elements, i.e. ‘epic’ sounding compositions and/or influence from folk music², and lyrical themes that can be associated with Vikings or pagan peoples. The latter includes inspiration from mythology, depictions of typical nature, historic events and fictional lyrics set in a pagan past. Others consider the variation in musical styles among bands that label themselves or are labelled by others as ‘Viking’ or ‘Pagan’ metal to be too great to allow a categorisation based on musical elements and instead use these labels purely based on lyrical content. It is important to note that in both cases categorisations are not always applied strictly. A whole CD can be labelled as ‘Viking Metal’, for example, even though not all songs contain ‘Viking’ themes. My own experience has led me to subscribe to the view of VM and PM as lyrical genres and the labels will be used accordingly in sub-genres that have developed since the late 1980s / early 1990s. Both genres are distinguished primarily by their lyrical content, since the range of different styles of metal practised by bands to which these labels are applied varies greatly. Viking Metal, as already indicated by the name, is a primarily Scandinavian phenomenon, though it is not limited to that region. In recent years Viking Metal bands have even emerged in Central and South America, proving

¹ Often the term “heavy metal” is used to refer to all metal music, including the various sub-genres. However, because so many different styles of metal music have developed over the years, the term ‘metal’ is nowadays used by most metal fans and bands to refer to the whole genre while ‘heavy metal’ is seen as only one of the styles. The present paper will follow this latter use.

² Wikipedia, *Viking Metal*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viking_metal>, 29/07/2010, (06/08/2010)

that VM has evolved from a local phenomenon to an autonomous genre. The lyrics deal with the (imaginary) exploits of the pagan Norsemen and the world they inhabited. Pagan Metal, on the other hand, is not specifically linked to any geographical area, though a strong tendency to reach back to the 'own' pagan past, ie the people(s) that inhabited the band's native region or country in pre-Christian times, can be observed. While to an outsider it may seem, if the genres are distinguished by lyrics and 'pagan' refers to any pre-Christian past, that Viking Metal would be a part of the broader Pagan Metal genre, this does not appear to be the case in the eyes of the fans. In my personal experience, both are perceived as parallel genres. However, there are no strict boundaries separating VM and PM and overlapping use of both terms is possible. An explanation for this may lie in the origins of both, which will be explained further in this section.

The earliest roots of VM and PM can be traced back to 1970, when the English band Led Zeppelin recorded Immigrant Song. Although heavy metal and hard rock were not differentiated yet at the time, Immigrant Song is sometimes called the 'first Viking Metal song'. Curiously, the Vikings themselves are not mentioned anywhere in the lyrics. The basic themes that characterise modern VM/PM are already present: fighting and war, seafaring, exploration, invocations of gods and depictions of Nordic nature elements. For example,

*"We come from the land of the ice and snow
From the midnight sun where the hot springs blow"¹*

and

"To fight the horde, sing and cry: Valhalla, I am coming!"²

Since 1970, the Vikings their mythology and Nordic nature have sporadically made appearances in hard rock and metal lyrics. Led Zeppelin has one other song that clearly deals with Old Norse mythology, 'No Quarter' from 1973. Perhaps first metal band to give Viking themes a recurring place in their lyrics was the American Metal

¹ Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin III*, audio recording, Atlantic Records, 1970

² Ibid.

band Manowar, who recorded their first such song on their second album, *Into The Glory Ride*, in 1982. Some members of the metal community consider them to be the founders of Viking Metal as a genre, but this opinion is not shared by a majority. Trafford and Pluskowski¹ attribute the sporadic occurrences of the Vikings and related themes in Hard Rock and Metal before the early 1990s to a close link between the music scenes involved and a fantasy-inspired subculture. Fans of the latter were also more likely to listen to the former two kinds of music, and the popular 'barbarians' from fantasy games, literature and films showed great correspondence to the stereotypical image of the Viking: strong, hard, rough men with an adventuring spirit and a love for battle. Indeed, both the fantasy elements and the Norse themes occur in the lyrics of some of the older bands. The American metal band Manowar has even made both the trademark themes of their lyrics, along with a strong emphasis on masculinity and 'power'. The fourth verse of their song *Thor (The Powerhead)* off the 1984 album *Sign Of The Hammer* clearly illustrates this:

*God of thunder, God of rain
Earth shaker who feels no pain
The powerhead of the universe
Now send your never ending curse²*

This fantasy inspiration has persisted to become part of the modern Viking Metal and related Pagan Metal lyrics writing. Even Quorthon (a pseudonym), frontman of the Swedish band Bathory and often regarded as the founder of the modern VM has stated that his first endeavours into Viking-themed music were heavily inspired by comic strips such as *Conan The Barbarian* in the sleeve notes accompanying the *Blood On Ice* album. Later on, however, Bathory and many other bands of the newly emerging scene turned to the old literature on the Viking Age, and, by extension, other sources on the old Germanic tribes. Today, fantasy and researched literary sources can be seen as the two ends of a spectrum of inspirational sources to base

¹ Trafford, Simon and Pluskowski, Aleks, "Antichrist Superstars: The Vikings in Hard Rock and Heavy Metal." In: *Mass Market Medieval. Essays on the Middle Ages in Popular Culture*. London, 2007, p 57-74

² Manowar "Thor (The Powerhead)" on *Sign Of The Hammer*, sound recording, Ten Records LTD, 1984

lyrics on within the Viking Metal and Pagan Metal scenes, with most bands taking up a position somewhere in between. The present study will focus on bands whose lyrics can be traced at least in part to material from literary and historical sources dating from and/or concerned with the Old Germanic period.

A Short Introduction Of The Bands

Amon Amarth

Amon Amarth (one of the names for Mount Doom in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord Of The Rings*) is a Swedish death metal act with lyrics about Norse mythology, sagas and fantasy Viking exploits. The band was founded in 1992 and recorded their first full-CD in 1996. They are one of the most widely known bands of Viking Metal. Their lyrics are mostly in English with a little Swedish and contain strong anti-Christian themes.

Forefather

Forefather is a two-man band of the brothers 'Athelstan' and 'Wulfstan' (it is unknown to me whether these are nicknames such as often are used by VM and PM band members or their actual personal names). The project was started in 1997 in Surrey, England, with the aim of creating "powerful and epic Metal tributes to their Anglo-Saxon ancestors"¹. Because there are only two members, Forefather has never performed live and does not have any plans to do so. However, the two brothers have managed to generate a following nonetheless. The lyrics are in English with some Old English fragments and are mainly history oriented.

Heidevolk

Founded in 2002 in the Dutch province of Gelderland, Heidevolk is a Folk Metal band that lists "nature, Germanic mythology, folklore and the history of

¹ Forefather Biography <<http://www.forefather.net/>>, viewed 11 July 2010

Gelderland”¹ as their main inspirational sources. Strong emphasis is placed on their Gueldrian origins, among others by performing in front of a flag of Gelderland. All lyrics are written in the band’s native Dutch. Most have been researched to some degree by the band, although historical accuracy varies between the songs².

Helheim

The Norwegian band Helheim was founded in 1992 by core band members V’gandr and H’grimnir³. After releasing two demo’s, their debut full-CD was released in 1995. Helheim’s main source of inspiration are stories from Old Norse mythology. Their early lyrics were written in Norwegian, but later the band switched to English as the language for their songs. Purely musically speaking, Helheim can be considered a member of the Norwegian Black Metal scene and the vocals are done in a harsh voice technique called ‘screaming’.

Svartsot

A Folk Metal band from Denmark that was founded in 2005. The band describes their music as a blend of metal and Nordic folk music⁴. Their brand of metal is Death Metal, with a low pitched, ‘grunted’ vocal style. All of the band’s song texts are written in their native Danish, but English liner notes with short explanations are added along with each song in CD booklets. The lyrics are based on mythology, local folklore and historical sources and “[p]retty much all the lyrics are researched thoroughly”⁵.

¹ Heidevolk, English Biography. In: *Press Package (English)*. <<http://heidevolk.com/www/index2.php?taal=2>>, retrieved 5 July 2010

² Personal email communication with Sebas from Heidevolk.

³ These are contractions of the mythological names Vanagandr and Hrimgrinnir.

⁴ Svartsot - Band <<http://www.svartsot.dk/>>, viewed 11 July 2010

⁵ Personal communication with Cris from Svartsot via email.

Turisas

Turisas is a band from southern Finland, founded in 1997. The music of Turisas is usually called 'battle metal', which is a label used for some Folk, Viking or Pagan Metal bands that try to evoke the atmosphere of a battle through their music and/or lyrics. They belong to the more fantasy-oriented type of VM and do not base their lyrics on specific texts, but only as a vague source of inspiration. This is also reflected in the 'barbarian'-style costumes worn by the members as an important part of their live performances. All of Turisas' lyrics are written in English.

Týr

Týr was founded in 1998 in Denmark by Faroese students and reached their international breakthrough in 2006. Both musically and lyrically, the band is strongly rooted in traditional Faroese folk music that has been passed down orally since the middle ages. Norse mythology forms the second main lyrical inspiration (the band's name is the Scandinavian form of that of the Germanic god of war and justice). This authentic aspect is strongly emphasised by them and has led to lyrics in Faroese, Icelandic and Danish in addition to English.

The Selection Of Texts

Already in very old sources about the Germans, such as the writings of Tacitus, they were reported to pass on their knowledge and history in an oral manner and to write down very little. This oral tradition persisted for a very long time and allowed for texts to be written down even centuries after they were composed. A famous example of this is the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*, thought to have been composed somewhere around the sixth century¹ but only preserved in manuscripts written in the ninth or tenth century. Similarly have many of the Scandinavian sagas and mythological poems only been written down long after their composition. Little

¹ Vandemaele, J. *Het Beowulf-epos*. Gent: Mens en Cultuur Uitgevers. (No year of publication was found in the book.)

textual evidence dating back to the heathen period that forms the focus of Germanic-inspired metal and folk music has been left behind or preserved to this day in continental Europe. The situation in the British Isles, where the heathen Germanic invaders soon were christened after conquering the lands of the Britons, Beowulf being the main exception. However, there are much historical texts from the Old English period still extant, providing a wealth of inspiration for bands who would turn to history instead of mythology. In the words of H.R. Ellis Davidson:

Thus we see why we can learn comparatively little about the heathen myths from England and Germany, where Christianity was established early. We have to turn for information to Scandinavia, where a vigorous heathen population flourished for centuries after Augustine sailed for Kent, or to places in the north-west where the Scandinavian settlers left the marks of their influence.¹

Indeed, the two most famous works of Germanic mythology, the poetic and prose Eddas, have come out of Scandinavian traditions, as have the famous sagas chronicling the history and exploits of the Vikings of the North. However, even the Old Norse and Old Icelandic texts were only written down near the end of the heathen period or shortly after, most between the 10th and 13th centuries. This is also close to the end of the Old Germanic linguistic period. Dates used in periodisation to mark the end of the Old Germanic stages of the languages have therefore not always been strictly observed. Folkloric tales and ballads dealing with parts of the Scandinavian mythology dating from a little after the end of the 'Old' periods or the end of the heathen period, e.g. the Faroese Lokka Tattur, used as inspiration for modern songs have also been taken into account when their links to mythological texts were judged sufficiently strong. I am well aware that this is a subjective judgement, but as those texts appear to be based on even older traditions, they are also an indirect way through which Old Germanic heritage has been passed on, especially in the case of the Faroese ballads that have been orally transmitted from the Middle Ages to the 19th century and later.

¹ Ellis Davidson, H.R., *Gods And Myths of Northern Europe*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976, p 12

Note On The Use Of Wikipedia And Other Non-academic Sources

The use of non-academic sources, e.g. online reference sites such as Wikipedia, is often frowned upon because they are freely editable by anyone with an internet connection, resulting in articles with greatly varying levels of trustworthiness sometimes difficult to determine. Looking at the bibliography (if present) of an article or entry can provide some indication of its quality. Correspondence between the sources and the content cannot be guaranteed, however, because of the free accessibility. It is therefore not advised to use such sources as primary sources. This does not mean that online reference sites should always be avoided at all costs. In my personal experience, I have found that such sources can provide good starting points in researching certain subjects, especially subjects part of recent popular culture. One reason for this is that popular culture tends to evolve very fast, with new phenomena popping up and disappearing frequently, and that traditional works of reference are often out-dated or too limited in this regard for exactly those reasons. Websites like Wikipedia, on the other hand, are a part of the fast-evolving popular culture and therefore manage to follow it better. Some domains of popular culture, such as the global metal scene, are not or very little documented in traditional sources, whereas the internet sources are much more extensive on the subject. A good example is the Metal Archives-website, which hosts a database of over 70000 band entries. The ease with which such websites can be searched with the help of search-robots and build in search functions and the speed with which these searches are carried out make online reference sites a very handy means of finding a starting point for more thorough research. When elements of popular culture (here: song lyrics) draw upon existing sources, those sources can often be found via this way. Even articles whose content is not academically sound can still help in the preliminary stages of a search, by showing directions in which to proceed with the search. A function for which I have found them to be quite reliable and which has helped speed up the research for the present dissertation to a considerable extent.

Limitations

The present study is limited in nature because of choices that were made and because of practical difficulties. As I have already stated higher, the scenes of VM and PM music are relatively young in the world of metal and are still very much expanding. They contain hundreds of bands – the non-exhaustive list of the combined genres Folk, Viking and Pagan Metal on the Metal Archives website lists 1231 bands¹ – with more arising all the time. A selection of only seven bands can therefore only provide a very limited picture of the situation. Further selecting between the lyrics of those bands has narrowed down the present study even further. However, this has been necessary for several reasons.

First there is the matter of languages. As already stated, there is a tendency among the bands for writing lyrics in their native languages, therefore at least a basic understanding of the language is necessary to comprehend the lyrics in any meaningful way. Being only familiar with English, Swedish and Dutch, I am limited to lyrics in those languages, though knowledge of Swedish also allows me to understand Danish and Norwegian to a limited extent.

Second, the preliminary examination of lyrics I had collected revealed to me that the range of base texts was much greater than expected. With only a limited time to spend on going through the original stories and poetry, sacrifices had to be made and the most important texts were given preference. Moreover not all of the source texts, especially on local folklore, were available to me (in an accessible form). Constraints of time and access to texts have therefore also imposed limitations on the present study.

¹ Metal Archives, *Browse band lists by genre - Folk/Viking*, <<http://www.metal-archives.com/>>, viewed 05/08/2010

Chapter I: Mythology And Folklore

The following section shall deal with texts, themes and elements borrowed from the primarily Scandinavian mythological literature. A thematic approach has been used to allow for the grouping of song texts that deal with a certain element, e.g. an event or a specific deity, but which are inspired by more than one text. This also allows for an effective way to deal with songs which are not inspired by (a) specific text(s) in particular, but mention certain gods and/or events nevertheless. One exception to this approach has been made, namely lyrics inspired by *Völuspá*. These will be dealt with separately because *Völuspá* contains an oversight of many important characters and events from the creation to the rising of the new world after Ragnarök.

Moreover, the first of the Eddic poems has also been quoted and paraphrased more than any other.

Subsections will be ordered according to the order of prominence of the gods that can be found in both Eddas. Events, places and attributes associated with particular gods will be treated as points under the heading of those gods. Deities not occurring in the major works of Scandinavian mythology will be dealt with after those of the North in order of importance as evidenced by the number of occurrences in the lyrics.

The Vision Of The Seeress

Völuspá (*Vsp.*) is the first and most important of the Edda poems. It describes the vision of a *völva*, or seeress, which has been raised from the dead by Odin to tell the history from the beginning of time to the assembled denizens of Asgard. She explains how the 9 worlds were created, how all the different races (*Æsir*, *Vanir*, giants, dwarves, alves, *svartalves* and humans) came to be and tells about the first war, the war between *Æsir* and *Vanir*. She then goes on to predict the events leading up to the final battle between the *Æsir* and *Vanir* and the *Jötun* (giants), the destruction of the world by *Surtr*, and ultimately the rise of a new green world from the waves.

As a wellspring of information about North Germanic mythology, it is not surprising that *Völuspá* speaks to the imagination of song writers and has been used as a basis for many songs, only some of which can be found among the selection for the present study.

Since *Völuspá* contains an oversight or a summary of most of the important events from the mythology, many of these also occur in other poems. In addition, many parts of *Völuspá* are told in a much more extended version in the *Gylfaginning* part of the *Snorra Edda*, where the author uses citations from *Völuspá* as supporting ‘evidence’.

Because of these things, and because the analysis of the lyrics has made clear that some things, e.g. *Ragnarök*, would be better dealt with in a separate section, I have decided to limit the section on *Völuspá* to only those lyrics that appear to be directly inspired by specific parts of the poem, or that contain events that are only told there. The subsections will be ordered in the chronological order of the events.

The Völva Herself

In the second stanza of *Völuspá*, the Seeress introduces herself as belonging to the kin of the primeval giants. A Dutch translation of these lines is quoted in Heidevolk’s song *Reuzenmacht*. The song is constructed as a dialogue between an unnamed character and what must be a seer or seeress such as the *völva* of the Eddic poem. She is asked to tell the tales of the giants in Gelderland, Heidevolk’s home province, and describes them as natural phenomena and forces of chaos and evil. She also calls the giants “*Bergelmir’s zonen*” (‘*Bergelmir’s sons*’), which according to Snorri¹ was the name of the only giant who with his family escaped the flood caused by the death of the primeval creature *Ymir*, thus becoming the progenitor of the giants. As the penultimate verse of the song, *Vsp. 1* is quoted in a Dutch translation by Dr. Jan de Vries from 1978:

¹ Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda*, London: Everyman, 1995, p 11

*Mij heugen de reuzen
In oertijd geboren
Die lang geleden
Het leven mij schonken
Negen Werelden
Negen Ruimten
De Oude Maatboom
Onder de grond.*

The lines are surrounded by quotation marks in the booklet, but the source is not given with it. Due credit and reference is printed on the back side of the booklet in the colofon, however.

Before The World

After her presentation, the völvva summoned by Odin begins her tale with the creation of the world and what came before. Her story starts in the days of Ymir, the first giant.

*Young were the years when Ymir made his settlement
There was no sand nor sea nor cool waves
Earth was nowhere nor the sky above
Chaos yawned, grass was there nowhere¹*

These lines are quoted as the first four lines of a song by the Norwegian band Helheim titled *Mørk, evig vinter* ('dark, eternal winter'). Interestingly, they have not used the version of this stanza as translated by Carolyne Larrington², but the version quoted from *Völuspá* by Snorri Sturluson in his prose Edda. Snorri's version differs only in the first line, which he gives as:

It was at the beginning of time, when nothing was³

From this base, the *Mörk, evig vinter* continues an interesting thought experiment: a reversed version of the future wherein the frost giants conquer the world, cloaking it in the "dark, eternal winter" that gives the song its title. Helheim's description of the

¹ Larrington, Carolyne, *The Poetic Edda*, Oxford, 2008, p 4

² Ibid.

³ Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda*, London, 1995, p 9

war between giants and men bears some resemblance to an all out nuclear war and an ensuing nuclear winter in the following lines:

...where everything will be lit afire (second half of last line from strophe 2)

The smoke of burnt forests rises in a black vapour (fourth line of strophe 5)

The giants' power has left its mark on a once green and beautiful land (middle of strophe 5)

If we follow this interpretation, the song becomes an interesting example of how elements of the modern world can be coupled to the ancient Germanic mythology of the Middle Ages.

Gullveig And The First War

The meaning of the verses about Gullveig and the war between the Æsir and Vanir (Vsp. 21-24) is still not entirely clear. Especially the connection between Gullveig's murder by the gods and this war, if such a connection does indeed exist, remains mysterious. According to P. Vermeyden and A. Quak, "Gullveigh/Heid is connected to the war between Æsir and Vanir somehow, but nobody knows exactly in what way [own translation]"¹. The Dutch band Heidevolk has nevertheless based a song on this part of Völuspá. The track, titled Zwaarden Geheven ('swords held high'), was recorded on their second album "Walhalla Wacht". An English translation will be given first side by side with the concerned verses from the poem, followed by a discussion.

Heidevolk: Zwaarden Geheven²

A cold wind blew over Asgard,

A sign that evil waits

As always fought the Æsir against

The threat of the giants' might

Völuspá³

[21] *She remembers the first war in the world, when they buttressed Gullveig with spears*

and in One-eye's hall they burned her; three times they burned her, three times she

¹ Vermeyden, P. and Quak, A., *Van Ægir tot Ymir. Personages en thema's uit de Germaanse en Noordse mythologie*, Nijmegen: Sun, 2000, p 213

² Heidevolk, *Uit Oude Grond*, audio recording, Napalm Records, 2010

³ Larrington, Carolyne, *The Poetic Edda*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p 6-7

*Gullveig¹ came to the Æsir kingdom
Shining with her golden splendour
Dissention she sowed in Midgard,
Discord has the giant brought*

*I speak to – our gods
I ask for – their holy blessing
I draw strength – from their stories
I walk proud – on their roads*

*Furious were all the Æsir
For what Gullveig had done to us
Three times was the giant burned
Soon it reached Vanir ears
The first war then came to be
Here again is discord born
A war between Ás and Van*

*Out of the sky
Came the Vanir
Out of the sky
They went to battle
Prepared to die*

*Out of the sky
Swords held high
Out of the sky
With all their forces united
They came rushing in*

[own translation]

*was reborn
over and over, yet she lives still*

[22] *Bright One they called her, wherever
she came to houses*

*The seer with pleasing prophecies, she
charmed them with spells;
she made magic wherever she could, with
magic she played with minds,
she was always the favourite of wicked
women.*

[23] *Then all the Powers went to the thrones of
fate*

*The sacrosanct gods, and considered this:
whether the Æsir should yield the tribute
or whether all the gods should partake in the
sacrifices*

[24] *Odin shot a spear, hurled it over the
host;*

*that was still the first war in the world;
The defensive wall was broken of the Æsir's
stronghold
the Vanir, indomitable, were trampling the
plain.*

The first stanza of Zwaarden Geheven cannot readily be linked to the relevant parts of Völuspá. It is well known from the stories about Thor that the Æsir regularly fought the giants, but they are never mentioned in connection with either Gullveig or the 'first war'. By naming Gullveig immediately after the first stanza, Heidevolk seems to imply that she was a giantess. A suggestion which is made explicit in the fourth stanza: "driemaal werd de reus gebrand ('three times was the giant

¹ Here I have used the Old Norse form instead of an English translation, although the original lyrics feature a Dutch translation.

burned' [own translation])". This is a strange identification, since the Jötun, or giants, are as much the enemies of the Vanir as they are of the Æsir. In other words, the Vanir would not at all be likely to start a war with the Æsir because these last ones tried to kill a giantess like in the fourth stanza of the song.

A more common theory¹ regards Gullveig (Vsp. 21) as identical with Heid (Vsp. 22) and links her to the Vanir because she appears to be skilled in seiðr, a form of magic associated with the Vanir. Heidevolk clearly also sees Heid and Gullveig as the same character, since they use the second name in conjunction with content from the stanza from Völuspá about Heid's magical powers. This makes their idea of her as a giantess even more puzzling.

The third verse of the song, which also serves as the refrain, has no basis in Vsp. and seems to be just a praising of the gods.

Stanza four is again based on the poem, with elements from Vsp. 21, 23 and 24 in mixed order. Lines one and two of the stanza refer to the council of the Æsir in Vsp. 23, line three refers back to the burning of Gullveig in Vsp. 21 and lines 5-7 continue with the first war between Æsir and Vanir from Vsp. 24.

The last two stanzas of Heidevolk's song continue with a description of the beginning of the war between Æsir and Vanir, making the general structure of the song chronologically ordered despite the mixed fragments in the fourth stanza.

Interesting to note is that the Vanir are described as coming "out of the sky", while the only spatial reference in Völuspá is that they "trampled the plains". Of course one does not exclude the other, but based on both of the Eddas, it is pure speculation to say that the Vanir came from the sky, since the location of Vanaheimr is not mentioned anywhere.

¹ *Edda*, translated by Marcel Otten, Ambo, 2006, p 286; Larrington, Carolyne, *The Poetic Edda*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p265 and Vermeyden P., *Van Ægir tot Ymir. Verhalen en thema's uit de Germaanse en Noordse mythologie*, Nijmegen: Sun, 2000, p 213

The End Of A World

From the history part of Völuspá we now move on to the Seeress' predictions about the future, her description of the fate of the gods and the end and renewal of the world to be precise. Her visions of those events are told in a more elaborate version by Snorri in Gylfaginning, the first part of his Edda. Included in Snorri's version are several verses quoted from Völuspá as support for his account from an authoritative source in his eyes.

It is precisely on this part of the Prose Edda and the Völuspá stanzas cited therein that the Swedes of Amon Amarth have based two songs of their debut album Sorrow Throughout The Nine Worlds. Both songs, The arrival Of The Fimbul Winter and Burning Creation, will be discussed together in this section.

The Arrival Of The Fimbul Winter opens with a verse describing exactly what the title says, the arrival of the terrible winter. According to Snorri, the fimbul-winter ('mighty winter') comes after three winters when there will be fighting all over the world, but in the song those three are included in the the 'mighty winter'.

*The bleak fimbul winter arrived
Raging across the world
With a fury that defied the memory of man
Terrible wars where fought,
The like had never been seen
Men slew without a thought
The ties of kinship were no more¹*

Lines four to seven of this verse correspond to the description in the Prose Edda of the great wars that will be fought:

*[T]here will come three other winters during which there will be reat battles throughout the world.
Then brothers will kill each other out of greed and no one will show mercy to father or son in killing.²*

The first four lines of the second verse continue the narrative of the Prose Edda, with a description of the disappearance of the sun and moon. In the song, the names of the

¹ Amon Amarth, *Sorron Throughout The Nine Worlds*, 1996

² Sturluson, *Edda*, p 53

two wolves responsible mentioned earlier in the Edda are used. Compare the source text (left) and the lyrics of Amon Amarth (right):

<i>[T]he wolf will swallow the sun [...]</i>	<i>Skoll and Hati, the ravenous wolves</i>
<i>Then another wolf wil swallow the moon</i>	<i>Arose and devoured the sun and the moon</i>
<i>[...] The stars will dissappear from the sky</i>	<i>Darkness descended upon the earth</i>
	<i>And the stars fell from the skies.</i>

From this point untill the last three lines of The Arrival Of The Fimbul Winter, the song's text consists of an English translation of the first half of the verses that are quoted by Snorri from Völuspá, with occasionally some half-lines left out without affecting the meaning. These are the second half of verse 46, the first half of verse 47 and verses 48 and 501. Here the citation from the Snorra Edda is interrupted by three lines about Loki's role at Ragnarok:

*Loke leads the legions of the dead
In holy war
Against the justice made by Æsir*

This corresponds to something said by Snorri in his summary of Ragnarok, that "with Loki will be Hel's people". As Hel is a death goddess, this probably means the dead in her care will fight on the side of the giants.

The next song on the same CD, Burning Creation, continues with the rest of the verses from Völuspá quoted in the Prose Edda, except the last one. Moreover, the one but last Völuspá verse in this fragment is not a literal quote, but corresponds to verse 56 from the Poetic Edda and not Snorri's shortened version. The wording has also been changed slightly so as to include Thor's name and leaving out the name Fjorgyn, one of Thor's mother's names. Amon Amarth's words are:

*So comes Hlodyns noble son
Thor he goes to fight the snake
In anger he slays the guardian of Midgaard
Nine steps dying walks Odin's son
Away from the snake who misdeeds not fear
Dying from it venom*

¹ Larrington, Carolyne, *The Poetic Edda*, p 10-11

Carolayne Larrington's translation of the Völuspá verse, in which the name Hlodyn has been replaced by the translation of her other name Jörd, "earth":

*Then the glorious son of Earth,
Odin's son, advances to fight against the serpent,
In his wrath the defender of earth strikes,
All men must leave their homesteads
Nine steps Fiorgyn's child takes,
With difficulty, from the serpent of whom scorn is never spoken.*

In a similar fashion to Amon Amarth, the Dutch band Heidevolk has also made a song, Levenslot ('Fate of life'), that is based on a mix of the account of Ragnarok in the Prose Edda and one verse from Völuspá. Contrary to Amon Amarth's songs, only the one verse from the eddic poem is quoted in the song. Also, it is a pure quote from a translated edition of the poetic edda by Dr. Jan de Vries¹, and not a translation of one of Snorri's citations from it. The other strophes are the band's own adaptation. Because there is considerable overlap between the parts of the story described in the songs of both bands, I will not be discussing Levenslot in detail.

Ragnarök

The myth about the end of the world and the epic battle between the forces of order and the elements of chaos that will lead to the destruction of the world is without a doubt one of the most popular themes of Germanic mythology. The "Twilight of the Gods", as it later became known², was already picked up as a musical subject by Richard Wagner and popularised through his opera *Götterdämmerung*, the fourth part of the *Nibelungenlied* quadrilogy. Since then it has become part of popular culture. It would have been interesting to compare the lyrics of the Viking Metal and Pagan Metal of the last two decades to both the opera libretto and the Old Norse texts to see if and possibly to what extent Wagner may have influenced lyricists of

¹ Heidevolk, *Uit Oude Grond*, audio recording, cd booklet, Napalm Records, 2010

² Vermeyden, Paula, *Van Ægir tot Ymir*, p 153

the metal scene. Due to the constraints mentioned in the introduction, however, this option was not pursued. Instead the VM lyrics have only been compared to the Ragnarök stories found in the Eddic poetry and in Snorri Sturluson's prose text. The importance of Ragnarök becomes clear when trying to identify how many bands have songs that deal with or make references to the event. Out of the ten bands selected for the present study, five, or one in two, have songs that deal with Ragnarök. When disregarding the bands that do not specifically deal with Norse mythology, the ratio becomes five to seven. Naturally these figures only apply to the bands included in the present study, i.e. a fraction of all metal inspired by Norse/Germanic mythology. In order to form an idea of the importance of Ragnarök in VM and PM music in general, one would have to take the song texts of a much larger amount of bands into account. Among the ten bands in the present study, the Swedish Amon Amarth has drawn most inspiration from the Ragnarök stories, with over twice as much songs as any of the other bands.

The number of songs I have found about the end of the world of the Norse mythology is so large compared to all other subjects, that a thorough discussion is impossible in the context of the present study, as it would take up well nigh a full chapter. If the number of bands would be extended, it would be possible to devote an entire study to the use of the Ragnarok motive in metal. From my analysis I have been able to surmise that the lyrics on the subject are remarkably close to the source texts in both Eddas. I have therefore decided to discuss only two of the songs in this section, followed by a listing of all the songs about Ragnarok at the end of this section. The two songs have been chosen because they deviate from the describing manner, i.e. retelling the story, that is usually adopted. Both songs were written by Amon Amarth, and they are used by the band as a means of bringing their anti-christian message across by comparing the last battle to the ideological fight against Christendom. The songs are titled *The Last With Pagan Blood* and *Surtur's Fire*. The first of the two songs is built up as a description of a band of Vikings travelling the world and fighting Christendom physically with swords and shields "to re-erect

the pagan pride”¹. In the fourth and fifth strophes, the protagonists are envisioned as einherjar coming out of Valhalla under Odin’s leadership, causing the Rainbow Bridge to crack. Through these obvious references, their final attack is compared to the battle during Ragnarok.

*The gates of Valhalla open up
The ground beneath us shakes
As Odin leads the Gods to war
The Rainbow Bridge cracks*

*Nothing can stop this final attack
We carve up all in our path
Now there is no turning back
Final battle is here at last²*

In the second song, Releasing Surtur’s Fire, the protagonist of the story is Thor, who seems to have returned after being absent since the Viking age. The first three strophes describe him riding with a demon army to a ruined place called Hammerfest to retrieve his hammer, after which his army attacks. The indication that the song is about a battle against christianity is very covered and only appears in the penultimate strophe where it is said that a tyranny of a thousands years will be ended, a not wholly uncommon way of referring to christianity in pagan inspired metal lyrics.

*The battle of Midgard is almost won
And the thousand years of tyranny will be forever gone
Soon a new world will be born rising from the Sea
Where Asagods again shall reign and humans will be free³*

The rising of a new world from the sea is a clear reference to Ragnarok, and the word itself was also mentioned in the first strophe.

¹ Amon Amarth, *The Avenger*, audio recording, Metal Blade, 2000

² Ibid.

³ Amon Amarth, *The Crusher*, audio recording, Metal Blade, 2001

Odin / Wodan

As oldest of the Æsir, king of asgard, war god and leader of the valkyries and einherjar, Odin is one of the most famous Germanic deities. Yet, Odin has also remained an enigmatic character, often depicted as a wanderer hiding his identity and as dubious in nature. The domains governed by Odin are diverse, ranging from death (choosing fallen warriors for his army), war (deciding who will win, granting warriors strength and battle rage), poetry (Odin procured the mead of poetry for the Æsir and also gives it to humans), magic (he is said to be proficient in seiðr and has other magic tricks at his disposal) and wisdom (he sacrificed one eye for wisdom and became the wisest of the gods).

The two best known stories that have Odin as the main character are the story of how he gave up one of his eyes to gain wisdom from Mimir's well (hinted at in Völuspá and told more fully in the Snorra Edda) and the story of his self-sacrifice by hanging whereafter he found the runes (told in Hávamál and Snorri's Edda). These stories do not occur as often in lyrics as one would expect considering Odin is the highest god and one of the most famous. A more fragmentary approach seems to be preferred, with many songs including only his name and/or one of his functions or attributes. He appears in many more songs as war-god, lord of Valhalla and leader of the einherjar or as a god called upon for guidance and the like than as a key story figure.

Mimir's Well And Odin's Self-sacrifice

The stories about Odin at Mimir's well and his acquisition of the runes are very similar. In both cases he makes a great sacrifice in return for wisdom and knowledge, giving one of his eyes to Mimir and sacrificing himself to himself by hanging and piercing, respectively. The first tale is referred to in Völuspá 28 and told in the Snorra Edda based on the same verse. The second is told in Hávamál. Both will be discussed here, starting with a song by Heidevolk based on both stories and then one by Amon Amarth about Odin's self-sacrifice based on Hávamál.

Heidevolk's song is titled Wodan Heerst ('Wodan reigns') and was first published on a mini-CD with the same title and later included on their 2006 album Walhalla Wacht ('Valhalla awaits'). I will first give my own English literal translation of the whole song and discuss it afterward.

*Wodan knew where he would go, traveled through weather and wind
By giant-mountain and shadowy vales
To Mimir's well, located at the foot of Yggdrasil
Where Wodan came to get eternal wisdom
No man would drink from the well such was fate
But one price would reward the man
Wodan offered Mimir his eye yet he would see better
That which is, and yet will come to us*

*Boundless your anger, your wisdom is great
Grant us victory, the enemy death
No fear of dying, your people fearless
The world will know that Wodan reigns
Boundless your anger, your wisdom is great
Grant me the knowledge of life and death
Open my eyes, unchain my mind
And I will then know that Wodan reigns*

*Wodan hung from the tree, wounded by himself with a spear
A sacrifice to receive rune wisdom
Plagued by his hunger and thirst for nine nights
Thus he adopted the runes
The rune script, the magic writing he gifted to the Midgard folk
A gift to us who fight with his blessing
Now we carve the runes in our sword for victory in the fight
Valkyries we see riding through the heavens*

*From the heavens stare two ravens
They gaze over our dark flat land
And they see how Wodan's people awakens
With Wodan's blessing we go to war
We reach for the sword, the spear and the sax
The enemy hears how our people gives out a warcry
From our throats sound the songs
They sing of Alfater's wisdom and power*

*And we see how the old god awakens
The cowardly enemy that fears our wrath
We fight for the win and otherwise death
And we see how Wodan lives in us¹*

Heidevolk are from the Netherlands and see themselves as continental Germans. Because of that, they use the continental equivalents of the names of the gods, in this case Wodan instead of Odin. Lines two and three correspond to the location of Mimir's well given by Snorri: below the root of Yggdrasil that stretches over frost giant land². The next line refers to how Odin asked for a drink from the well, said by Snorri to be the source of all wisdom and intelligence. The fifth line of the song deviates somewhat from the Prose Edda version. There it is never said that nobody may drink from the well, only that Odin had to sacrifice his eye for it. In the prose version, it is implied that Mimir asked for Odin's eye.

All-father went there and asked for a single drink from the well, but he did not get one until he placed his eye as a pledge.³

This can be interpreted as Heidevolk have done in line six. Namely that only one price would suffice to drink from the well.

The better sight of what is and what will be mentioned in lines seven and eight probably refers to the great amount of wisdom Odin gained from his gulp out of the well.

In the refrain of the song (here given as the fourth strophe), a list is given of characteristics and specialties of Odin. These are in the order of the song: ecstatic rage as known from the berserkers and great wisdom (first line), god of victory in battle (second line), lord of Valhalla, if that is what "no fear of dying" refers to (third line) and knowledge of fate and death (sixth line). Interesting to note here regarding the lack of fear of death, is that the band's T-shirts that have the song's title Wodan

¹ Heidevolk, *Walhalla Wacht*, audio recording, Heidevolk, 2006

² Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda*, p 17

³ Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda*, p 17

Heerst on the back also feature a valknutr, the symbol for one dedicated to Odin that will gladly answer the god's call by dying in battle.

After the refrain, the song switches to the story of Odin's self-sacrifice in the third strophe. The first line of the strophe corresponds to the first two lines of Hávamál 138.

*I know that I hung on a windy tree
Nine long nights¹*

The next line refers to the runes grasped by Odin as reward at the end of his ordeal and the probable reason why he did it. Though it is not said in Hávamál that he gave the runes to the humans as Heidevolk sing in the third line of this strophe, but it is reasonable to assume that's what was believed to have happened. The one but last line of the strophe refers to the occasional custom of carving runes in the blade of a sword to give it magical properties.

The last strophe of the song is not based on a specific story or text, but depicts the narrator and his people as preparing for battle by chanting songs about Odin and raising war-cries.

In contrast to Wodan Heerst, the song Thousand Years Of Oppression (the title refers to Christianity) only includes the Hávamál story, but is based much closer on the original text. The story is told in the first three strophes of the song, while the rest describes the spreading of Christianity and it replacing the old heathen faith, with the narrator, 1000 years later, refusing the christian faith and wishing a return to the lost heathendom.

The first strophe of Thousand Years Of Oppression corresponds to Hávamál 138, told from a third person perspective with some small changes in the wording and the addition of the name of Odin's spear, Gungnir. Compare the song and the poem stanzas:

*He hung on the windswept world tree
Whose roots no one knows
For nine whole days he hung there pierced*

*I know that I hung on a windy tree
Nine long nights,
Wounded with a spear, dedicated to Odin,*

¹ Larrington, Carolyne, *The Poetic Edda*, p 34

By Gugnir, his spear¹

myself to myself,

On that tree of which no man knows

From where its roots run²

The second strophe corresponds to the next verse of Hávamál, leaving out the first line of the poem verse and strengthening the image of Odin's agony instead.

Compare song and poem versions:

Swimming in pain he peered into the depths

And cried out in agony

Reaching out he grasped the runes

Before falling back from the abyss³

*No bread did they give me nor drink from a horn,
downwards I peered;*

I took up the runes, screaming I took them,

then I fell back from there⁴

In the third strophe of the song, the whole story of the sacrifice is summarised. The last line of the strophe, however, appears to confuse the Mimir's Well and self-sacrifice stories, since the self-sacrifice is not explicitly connected to wisdom, while Mimir's Well is.

Valhalla

A very popular mythological theme connected to Odin, at least in metal, references to and mentions of Valhalla are plentiful. Indeed, the earliest predecessor of Viking and Pagan Metal, Led Zeppelin's 1970 Immigrant Song, already mentioned Valhalla.

Since then, the hall of the slain has made steady appearances in the songs of most bands dealing with matters of Norse mythology.

The line in Led Zeppelin's song, "To fight the horde, singing and crying: 'Valhalla, I am coming!'", expresses an enjoyment of battle and the warrior's eagerness to reach Valhalla. Although there is a triumphant feeling to the battle-cry, to reach Valhalla requires one to fall on the battlefield, in other words: to die. When the song is interpreted as describing to the Viking discovery and colonisation attempt in North

^{1,3} Amon Amarth, *Versus The World*, audio recording, Metal Blade, 2002

^{2,4} Larrington, Carolyne, *The Poetic Edda*, p 34

America¹, “to fight the horde” with an outlook of dying can be taken as a reference to the failing of the Vinland settlement.

In the more recent lyrics of the bands specifically selected for this study, Valhalla makes steady appearances. Amon Amarth refers to it in the following songs: As long as the raven flies, across the rainbow bridge, runes to my memory, the mighty doors of speargod’s hall, metalwrath, a fury divine, Valhall Awaits Me and where silent gods stand guard.

Heidevolk mentions the hall of the slain in these songs: Naar de hal der gevallenen, koning radboud, walhalla wacht and Krijgsvolk. In the lyrics of Helheim, Valhalla plays a role in these songs: Evig, Odins Møy and in Svart Visdom (in a kenning for odin: “king of valhalla”²). Týr, finally, included Odin’s famous hall in Valhalla.

Of this long list of songs, the most interesting one to discuss is The Mighty Doors Of The Speargod’s Hall by the Swedes of Amon Amarth, because this song contains the longest description of Valhalla. As can be expected from the title, it is a song about about warriors fallen into battle that are lucky enough to have been chosen to join Odin’s army. Though the going to the hall of the slain is more presented as something the warriors earned, for the fact that they must be chosen is left out of the song.

Throughout the song’s lyrics, descriptions of various aspects of Valhalla as described in the Prose Edda³ can be found in scattered strophes. The first of these is the fourth strophe, which presents an image of the fallen warriors arriving at the hall, where they are greeted by Odin.

*The gates open and into the hall of braves
They silently walk
The one-eyed sits in glory might
Raises his cup and says:*

¹ No explicit place names are given in the song, though “the land of the ice and snow / from the midnight sun where the hot springs blow” can be reasonably taken to refer to Iceland, from where North America lies to the West.

² Helheim, *Jormungand*, Millennium Music, 1995

³ Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda*, p 32-34

In the sixth verse of the song, reference is made to the main activity carried out by the einherjar: training every day from dawn to dusk in preparation for the final battle. This description runs from verses six to eleven.

*Dawn breaks. The Einherjer goes to
Relive their last fight
With passion, swords held high
As they ride in the morning mist*

This is followed by a reference to the daily feast at Valhalla:

*A feast awaits until the next day
When warriors' eyes again shall burn*

As already indicated at the beginning of the discussion of The Mighty Doors Of The Speargo's Hall, Valhalla is depicted here as the goal that warriors strive after in their life of battle and a reward that can be earned by living and dying the right way. This is not only the way of things in this song, but rather seems to be the general perception of the hall of the slain. The fact that Odin hand-picks his future warriors like for example in the Völsunga saga, or the fact that Freyia receives half of the fallen warriors according to the Snorra Edda¹, seem to be completely ignored in Viking Metal lyrics.

The Wild Hunt

According to Paull Franklin Baum, "the Wild Hunt of Odin belongs to primitive Germanic mythology" and has already been mentioned by Tacitus in his Germania². The folkloric myth lived on through the Middle Ages and later and developed a wide variety of forms. The base form has remained the same, however. Usually occurring on dark nights, a host of souls of the dead can be seen and heard racing through the sky. In the Germanic version, the host would consist of einherjar led by Odin himself. This frightening scene is often a warning message to make the one who encounters it change his ways.

¹ Ibid., p 24

² Franklin Baum, Paul, "The Young Man Bethrothed to a Statue", in: *PMLA*, Vol 34, No. 4, 1919, p 538

Heidevolk has recorded a song titled *Het Wilde Heer* (lit. 'the wild army') about this 'myth'. The events in their song are set in the darkest days of the year around midwinter. They describe the phenomenon as an annual occurrence that lasts for twelve nights, a curious deviation from the usual version in which the passing of the Wild Hunt is very short, intense and a singular occurrence.

Twelve nights storms through the sky

The Wild Hunt with loud clamour

[...]

On the horizon the sun dies

And darkness will fall

The army of dead returns

From the high halls

[own translation]¹

After twelve nights, the Wild Hunt disappears again, taking with it the lifeless dark of the deep winter in Heidevolk's song.

Twelfth night, life beckons

When homewards goes Hunt

From the south returns the sun

To the north again.

It seems to me that Heidevolk have made a very unique interpretation of the Wild Hunt in their song and I think it likely that their song text actually contains a mix up of various folklore elements. However, their Wild Hunt itself, Odin's army raging in the skies on a winter night, is still the Germanic version of the story.

The norwegian band Helheim also has a song dedicated to the Wild Hunt story titled *Åsgårdsreien*. It is both much shorter and much more simple than the song of Heidevolk. The lyrics are sung in Norwegian, but an English translation is provided by the band. *Åsgårdsreien*'s setting is a dark stormy night, but here no season is specified.

When the storm sets and tears trees apart

Then, around the darkest hours the dogs of Odin will gather²

¹ Heidevolk, *Walhalla Wacht*, audio recording, Heidevolk, 2006

² Helheim, *Blod & Ild*, audio recording, 2000

In this version, the phenomenon does not occur at regular intervals at all, but is a chance encounter instead. Furthermore not everyone can see it, only warriors according to Helheim. I think they might have interpreted the Wild Hunt as a sign to a warrior that he will soon be joining the einherjar in Valhalla. As in Heidevolk's version, the hunting party here is also made up of a group of einherjar led by Odin himself.

*But you will never see us
Before you become a warrior yourself
[...]
Odin's hunt Asgardsreien
Odins dogs Einherjen¹*

The Danish Folk Metallers of Svartsot have also recorded a song about the Wild Hunt, Jagten, but theirs seems to be a purely folkloric version that is not linked to Odin or his warriors. Because of this, I will not enter into a discussion of the lyrics.

Thor

After the king of the gods Odin himself, the second most famous of the Æsir is his son Thor². According to Paula Vermeyden³, he was also one of the most worshipped gods in the northern pantheon and his name occurs more than any other god's in place- and personal names and is often mentioned in skaldic poetry and runic inscriptions. The popularity of Thor in VM and PM seems to reflect his historical popularity, as the amount references to him by name in the lyrics selected for the present study is only second to the number of mentions of names of Odin. As was the case with his father, Thor, too, often is only mentioned by name without having a role in the songs. Most of the mentions are either about his role as the god of thunder and

¹ Ibid.

² Vermeyden, Paula, *Van Ægir tot Ymir*, p 180

³ Ibid., p 185

lightning, as a formidable fighter against giants or he is called upon for strength in a fight. I will now discuss the songs in which Thor plays a more important part.

Thor's Fishing Trip

In the Snorra Edda, it is said by High that there are many stories about Thor¹.

Among the bands in this study, however, only one of those stories has been used to base lyrics on: the account of Thor's fishing trip with the giant Hymir. The tale is told in Hymir's poem and in the prose Edda.

The god of thunder was sent to Hymir to procure a kettle in which Ægir would be able to brew enough mead for all the gods that he had invited for a banquet. Once Thor arrives at Hymir's place, the giant gives him some challenges he must overcome, one of which is going along on a whale-hunt. Thor, however, instead of fishing for whales, catches the Midgard serpent, Jormungandr, and almost manages to kill it.

The song *Twilight Of The Thunder God* by Amon Amarth is based on the actual reeling in of the serpent and the one blow that Thor manages to deliver against his enemy. The title is somewhat strange in connection with the content, since the events described take place a while before Thor's deadly fight with the serpent at Ragnarok. In the opening verses of the song, the great serpent is just being pulled above the waves. This is described in a way that is reminiscent of the way the serpent is said to writhe during Ragnarok:

*There comes Fenris' twin
His jaws are open wide
The serpent rises from the waves*

*Jormungandr twists and turns
Mighty in his wrath
The eyes are full of primal hate²*

¹ Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda*, p 22-23

² Amon Amarth, *Twilight Of The Thunder God*, Metal Blade, 2008

The refrain which follows is not a part of the story, though it is of a little interest because it mentions one of the other names of Thor's mother Jörd, namely "Hlodyn" ('grassland'). This is one of the rare mentions of one of the Asyniur, and peculiar because it is not her main name.

Strophes four and five describe how Thor faces his catch with Mjölnir held ready and manages to wound the serpent.

*Vingtor rise to face
The snake with hammer high
At the edge of the world*

*Bolts of lightning fills the air
as Mjölnir does it's work
the dreadful serpent roars in pain.¹*

Notice that in the first line, not the regular name but one of Thor's nicknames is used. The third line refers to the fact that Thor had rowed the boat much further out on the ocean than Hymir liked². The same thing is told in a little detail in verse seven of the song. Added there are a description of Thor gripping the serpent by its tongue, for which I have not found a parallel in the source texts, and a description of the serpent sinking back in the waves corresponding to the last line of Hymir's poem verse 24: "then that fish sank into the sea."³

The story of the fishing trip also appears in Amon Amarth's song Prediction Of Warfare from 2006 as a foreboding dream of one of the characters in the song's story about an expedition of presumably Norwegian Vikings against the Irish. Since it is only a small part of the song, the tale of the fishing trip is limited again to the same part as in Twilight Of The Thunder God and told in fragmentary way with a fast pace. The fragment occurs about halfway through the song.

¹ Ibid.

² Larrington, Carolyne, *The Poetic Edda*, p 81

³ Ibid.

*That night I was haunted by dreams
An omen, of what was to come
The serpent arose from the sea*

*Ready to strike
With hammer in hand
The serpent in pain,
twisting in furious rage!
Fought for its life
The serpent escaped
Thor was in rage
My dreams began to fade*

There does not appear to have been anything added to the story compared to the source texts, though it has been presented more dramatically to fit the idea of an ominous nightmare.

Loki, The Two-sided God

Loki can be considered one of the three great Æsir next to Odin and Thor, both by his importance in the stories of the gods and by his popularity in modern culture. As a character, Loki is a two-sided figure. In many stories about the early times in northern mythology, he is mischievous and often causes trouble for the other gods, but he is always the only one who can get his fellow Asgardians out of trouble again. As time progresses, Loki gradually becomes a truly evil character, responsible for the death of Baldr for entertainment's sake and eventually one of the leaders of the armies advancing against the gods at Ragnarok. His role there is often referenced to in songs about the end of the world war in VM, as we have already seen.

Loki appears as the principle character of two of Helheim's and two of Týr's songs. Three of those four tell different stories about the god and one song is a characterisation of Loki with himself as the one saying the lines.

The Forging Of Mjöllnir

A good example of Loki on the side of good but full of mischief can be found in the Prose Edda story of how he cut off Sif's (the wife of Thor) hair which led to the forging of Thor and Odin's personal weapons and some other objects. The story is told from Loki's side in The Hammer Of Thor on the album Ragnarok published by Týr in 2006. Instead of re-telling the story, the lyricist has imagined the events described including dialogues and used his idea of the dialogues to write the song's text.

In the opening strophe we see Loki just as he got caught and threatened by Thor. Snorri describes the moment as follows.

[W]hen Thor found out, he caught Loki and was going to break every one of his bones until he swore that he would get black-elves to make Sif a head of hair out of gold that would grow like any other hair.¹

Týr's version is much more vivid, with a terrified Loki making his promise to a Thor that is left out of the picture. The strophe is a creative guess of the actual words the evildoer could have said to Thor.

*Mercy, spare me, I was but jesting
Didn't mean to cut all her hair off
Listen, I will make the sons of
Ivald forge her, you won't regret this
New hair, see here,
Dwarfs are fine craftsmen
Simple, you know, they may let me²*

The first strophe is followed by two lines whose reference, if they have any, is unclear to me. For the third verse, the refrain, songwriter Heri Joensen of Týr has again used his imagination to come up with an idea of what the dwarf Brokk, one of Ivald's sons, may have said when handing over the hammer Mjöllnir to Thor. Loki had wagered with the dwarf after he had forged new hair for Sif and Odin's spear Gungnir, that he would not be able to again create such good objects. Mjöllnir was one of the things forged as part of that wager.

¹ Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda*, p 96

² Týr, *Ragnarok*, audio recording, Napalm Records, 2006

The next verse appears to be directed at the dwarves or svart-alves contacted by Loki, though it is not clear who the words belong to. I doubt that the lines are intended as Loki's, because only mentions that he would ask them to make new hair for Sif. The weapons seem to have been forged by the dwarves of their own accord. Who else could speak the lines is unknown to me, however. In the last verse of the song, there appear to be references to the characteristics of Mjölnir and its intended use.

*War marches up to your door
If you don't stand before the Giants of Chaos
Once thrown there's no way back
To the way things were before¹*

The second line may refer to the intended use, made clear by the decision of the gods that "the hammer [...] provided the greatest defence against frost-giants"². The last two lines probably refer to the hammer's characteristics explained by Brokk:

[W]hatever the target, the hammer would not fail, and if he threw it at something, it would never miss.

Loki's Adultery

In the Gylfaginning part of his Edda, Snorri Sturluson states briefly in his description of Loki that he at some point had committed adultery with a giantess named Angrboda and that from this union came the three monsters Fenrir, Jormungand and Hel³. His adultery is the first act of real harm (as is revealed later) done by Loki that he does not try to right again, thus becoming at least partly evil already. This act has been chosen by Helheim as the subject of a song titled Jernskogin ('iron-forest'). Loki himself is not mentioned in the song, only Angrboda and Fenrir are. The first verse describes the birth of the three creatures, with an added element of it occurring during a thunderstorm ("In a hellish crash Thor thundered"⁴).

¹ Týr, *Ragnarok*, audio recording, Napalm Records, 2006

² Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda*, p 97

³ Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda*, p 26

⁴ Helheim, *Terrorveldet*, audio recording, Ars Metall, 1999

The title and the last two lines of the song appear to refer to a verse from *Völuspá*:

*In the east sat an old woman in Iron-wood
And nurtured there the offspring of Fenrir;
A certain one of them in monstrous form
Will be the snatcher of the moon.*

Whether the old woman is the same as Angrboda is not clear, but in this song Helheim seem to interpret the *Völuspá* verse as both women being the same.

Lord Of Lies And God Of Slander

When Baldr is dead and the plans to bring him back from the death-realm of Hel are thwarted, the gods of Asgard guess that the giantess Thokk – the one that thwarted the plan – was Loki in disguise and seek to punish him as revenge. He tries to escape by fleeing and shapeshifting, but is finally caught and chained to a rock with the entrails of one of his sons below a venomous snake, causing earthquakes when the venom hits his eyes. His bound state is described in the first verse of Týr's *Lord Of Lies* from 2006.

*Shakes the ground in agony the Lord of Lies
Once for every drop of venom in his eyes
Anger festers in his heart and loud he cries
My revenge will be the end and you will*

Their description corresponds to the one given in the Prose Edda¹.

It is immediately clear from the title that Loki is no longer seen as just mischievous here, though his mischief may have been partly responsible for earning the nickname "lord of lies". The Loki in this song is the one punished by the gods for his actions and looking forward to a revenge he knows will come. The fifth verse refers has Loki saying precisely how long he will lie there bound, namely the day the sun disappears during Ragnarok. The middle two lines of the verse refer to Ragnarok itself.

*Bound upon the ground until the
day the sun will go away*

¹ Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda*, p 52

*Three winters snow falls in a row;
your bonds will break from me*

In the final verse of the song, time has skipped to the day when Loki comes free at last. The last two lines are references to Ragnarok, when Jormungand will stir the sea in his rage and the ship Naglfar, made from the nails of the dead according to Snorri1, sets sail.

*End, it has begun, now I am free,
Your ending sails with me
My serpent son stirs up the sea;
The Ship of Nails breaks free.*

A similar characterisation as the title of Týr's song can be found in the lyrics of God Of Slander by Helheim. The song's text is written as a description of himself spoken by Loki, e.g. line 1: "I am the god of slander"². The song contains references to numerous aspects of the god and his life. The first verse contains references to his skill at shapeshifting and the fact that, although he is part of the Æsir, he will oppose them in the end.

*I am born among the highest gods
But I never foresee myself
By their side
I take the forms of many
A beast my words for the hypocrisy³*

In the second strophe, he claims responsibility for Baldrs murder, which he does not see as an act of evil but just good sport. The reference to the murder put into his mouth by Helheim is less transparent than in Lokasenna, however. Compare:

I allure the purest to fall⁴

And

¹ Ibid., p 53

² Helheim, *Yersinia Pestis*, Dark Essence Records, 2003

³ Helheim, *Yersinia Pestis*, Dark Essence Records, 2003

⁴ Ibid.

For I brought it about that you will never again

See Baldr ride to the halls¹

The third verse of the song has Loki identifying himself as the father of the bound beasts, i.e. Fenrir, Jormungand and Hel. This is followed up with a description of Loki as an egoist, “I choose myself above all”, and a reference to his bound state under the dripping snake venom in verse four of *God Of Slander*. The song ends with a reference to Ragnarok where Loki and his children will fight the gods, ending in the death of both parties.

Ostara

Only two references to this presumed spring and fertility goddess have survived from the Old Germanic period, both of which were written by Christian monks. Bede Venerabilis, an Anglo-Saxon monk, used the existence of a goddess named ‘eostra’ to explain the origins of the Old English ‘*eastur-mônath*’ in the 8th century. The other mention is in a 9th century Old High German translation of the Rule of Benedictus, where Easter is called ‘*Ôstara*’. Based on these facts, a goddess Ostara was assumed to have existed. This theory is now very much in doubt and even dismissed by many scholars, though it lives on in popular belief and also among some scholars. Thus Ostara surfaces in popular culture from time to time. Of the bands whose lyrics have been selected for the present dissertation, two have made songs about the ‘goddess’. Forefather recorded a track titled *Eostre* on their 2008 album *Steadfast*. It is an instrumental track, however, and can therefore only serve to illustrate the persistence of the myth. The second song can be found on the *Uit Oude Grond* recording published by Heidevolk in 2010 and is titled *Ostara*. Luckily, this track does have lyrics, which we will now take a closer look at.

The song is built up out of descriptions of nature at sunrise and at the passing from winter to spring. Instead of a refrain, the name “Ostara” is chanted after every half of the first two verses, almost like a kind of invocation:

¹ Larrington, Carolyne, *The Poetic Edda*, Oxford, 2008, p 89

<i>In de vroegte, als de dag begint</i>	<i>In the early morning, when the day begins</i>
<i>En de zon het sterrenveld verblindt</i>	<i>And the sun blinds the field of stars</i>
<i>Als de lente winter overwint</i>	<i>When the spring winter overcomes</i>
<i>Ostara</i>	<i>Ostara</i>
<i>Bij de Dageraad, door ons aanschouwd</i>	<i>At the dawn, by us beheld</i>
<i>Baant het zonlicht zich een pad van goud</i>	<i>Sunlight paves itself a way of gold</i>
<i>Door de kille nevels in het woud</i>	<i>Through the chilly mists in the wood</i>
<i>Ostara¹</i>	<i>Ostara [own translation]</i>

The last verse begins with a description of the spring equinox (“Nacht en dag bereiken evenwicht” (‘Night and day attain balance’)), then continues to describe the receding of winter cold and the return of life with the new growth of plants. Finally, the last two lines of the song appear to describe a morning worship and/or spring ritual, confirming the impression that the chanting of “Ostara” may have been an invocation. Interesting to note, especially with regard to the doubts regarding the actual existence of the goddess, is that no where in the song, it is mentioned who or what exactly is. A listener who hears the song without knowing about ‘ostara’ or ‘eostre’ beforehand, can therefore come to believe that the name is just some kind of spell or prayer. However, from my personal experience it seems more likely that a listener of this type of music who does not know the character yet would look up the name on the internet (likely on Wikipedia), where she is often presented as a generally accepted Germanic goddess. Thus maintaining and strengthening the belief that this goddess is sure to have existed.

Nehalennia

On their latest CD, *Uit Oude Grond* (2010), the Dutch band Heidevolk has included a song about the goddess Nehalennia. Altars of this goddess dating back to approximately the third century have been found in the Dutch province of Zeeland. She is considered to be an exclusively ‘Dutch’ goddess, i.e. only worshipped in areas that are part of the modern-day Netherlands. In the song *Nehalennia*, the image is

¹ Heidevolk, *Uit Oude Grond*, sound recording, Napalm Records, 2010

created of a group setting out on a sea journey and calling upon the goddess for help and protection in the first and second verses:

*Hier aan de vrouwe van leven en dood,
bescherm ons op volle zee!*

*Here to the lady of life and death
protect us on the open sea.*

*Een offer gebracht op het Zeeuwse strand
Bij 't altaar van de godin.
Brengrster van welvaart, handel en licht
Wees ons goed gezind.*

*A sacrifice made on the Zeeland beach
At the altar of the goddess
Bringer of wealth, trade and light
Show us favour. [own translation]*

This plea contains an interesting list of domains related to the goddess. Paula Vermeyden¹ considers it likely that Nehalennia was a goddess of fertility or prosperity, based on the many depictions of her with fruits, plants and horns of abundance. Inscriptions on the recovered altar-stones nearly always mention seafarers or traders as establishers of the altar. At the very least, the goddess must have been closely linked to trade, which provides some support for Heidevolk's depiction of her as a trade goddess.

The last domain mentioned by Heidevolk, light, is somewhat strange. Based on depictions with a dog or similarities with the goddess Nerthus, she has been linked to the underworld or loyalty and the earth, respectively. As evidenced by the first verse, Heidevolk follows the former theory. All of these domains are removed quite far from being a light deity. The link in the song, on the other hand, is quite strong and reinforced by images of the setting sun in the following line of the song, "Ver van land, over zee, in de rode avondgloed" ('Far from land, over sea, in the red evening glow'), which is repeated twice. It would seem then that the band has made up an additional function for the goddess or perhaps used a speculative source of information.

¹ Vermeyden, P. and Quak, A. Van Ægir tot Ymir. Personages en thema's uit de Germaanse en Noordse mythologie. Nijmegen: Sun. 2000.

Chapter II: Sagas

The Sagas, especially the Icelandic ones, are also a very famous part of the Old Norse literature. The word 'saga' has even become a living concept in many languages and is used in a much broader context than the Nordic family histories. My personal experience with music from a much larger number of artists and bands that can be labelled VM or PM has taught me that, however well known they may be, the saga's are in general not used very often to base lyrics on. Instead, their appearances in metal seem rather sporadic. For some reason, most bands seem to concentrate either on the mythological tales in the Poetic Edda and the Snorra Edda or on self-invented stories of wars, battles and adventures. Luckily, the sagas are not completely absent from the song writing of the bands that have been selected for the present study.

Eiríks Saga Rauða

Or The Saga of Erik the Red, as it is known in English. One of the most famous Icelandic sagas, it tells of the travels of Eirik the Red and his sons Leif the Lucky and Thorstein, who sailed first from Iceland to Greenland to become Greenland's first settlers, and of the later expeditions undertaken by Eirik's sons to what is now known as Labrador on the North American continent. Research has also shown that it is one of the sagas most rooted in actual history¹, as opposed to some of the more fictional sagas. The sense of adventure exhibited by the main characters and the perilous sea journeys they undertake fit perfectly into the image of the Vikings as hardy seafarers longing for the next adventure. First two songs that are loosely based on the Icelandic Saga by Led Zeppelin (1970) and Týr (2006) will be discussed, followed by an analysis of Rebellion's take on the subject from 2005.

The "first Viking Metal song", Led Zeppelin's Immigrant Song, contains a number of references that may indicate that it was based on the Saga of Erik the Red. The first five lines of the song are as follows:

¹ *Eirik the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas*. Translated by Gwyn Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p xiii

*We come from the land of the ice and snow,
From the midnight sun where the hot springs blow.
Hammer of the gods will drive our ships to new land,
To fight the horde, sing and cry: Valhalla, I am coming!*

On we sweep with threshing oar, Our only goal will be the western shore.¹

The first two lines of the song can easily be interpreted as a reference to Iceland with its many volcanoes and hot springs. Line three then describes how a fleet of unknown size has set out towards “new land”, guided by the weather sent by Thor in his capacity as weather god. From line five, we know that the ships have set off in a western direction, the direction of Greenland and America. All of this is consistent with the story of Eirik the Red’s expedition to Greenland. However, from the saga it appears that Greenland was found to be uninhabited, which is in contradiction with the fourth line of the song, which says that the seafarers will “fight the horde” where they are headed. Whereas the expeditions to North America by Thorstein and Leif the Lucky did come across natives and even had to fight for their survival. There are only two inconsistencies with the saga, one minor and one slightly larger. Namely that the expeditions to America set out from Greenland and not directly from Iceland and that the Vikings did not know what they would find there, much less that there would be a “horde” to fight, respectively. In the light of the saga, the first difference in the song can be taken as poetic license as Eirik and his family travel first from Iceland to Greenland and later from Greenland to America (first a failed attempt under the command of Eirik’s son Thorstein and then a more successful one led by Thorfinn Karlsefni). The Greenland part could have been left out to create a more dramatic image. The second discrepancy may be a deliberate change inspired by either the knowledge of the battle which took place during the expedition or the stereotypical of the image of the Vikings as plunderers.

In more recent years, the Faroese band Týr has published a CD titled Eric The Red in 2006 on which the title track is also loosely inspired by the saga. Rather than plainly

¹ Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin III*, sound recording, Atlantic Records, 1970

telling a story, Týr's song appears to take the form of a dialogue (or monologue) between an "I" person and an unnamed 'friend'. Only the "I" side of the conversation is sung:

*Why I take refuge here, my father was outlawed from the old land in east
A story of bloodshed and I too was outlawed, now I take refuge here.*

*What brings you here my friend, what brings you north to where hell is of ice
South from the sand dunes where hell is of fire, why have you come so far
Anywhere, you don't care where you*

*Go as long as there are faithless you can make believe need help
And that you have the cure, of your intentions I'm sure
I can bring it all to reason you've convinced these people that all
Their ancestors are wrong, disoriented they do not know where they belong¹*

Although no names are given in the course of the song, the title makes it probable that the "I" is Eirik himself. Line one then refers to the flight from Norway of Eirik and his father, which occurs at the beginning of the second chapter in the saga:

*Thorvald's son was called Eirik the Red, and both father and son left Jadri in Norway for Iceland
because of some killings²*

From the context it is not possible to ascertain which "story of bloodshed" is meant in line two. There are two possibilities. Either the killings in Norway that are the subject of line one, or a later incident in which Eirik and his followers were outlawed from Iceland that occurs further in the same chapter.

*[Eirik] asked for his beams, but could not get them. Eirik went to Breidabolstad after the beams, but
Thorgest gave chase, and they came to blows a short way from the house at Drangar. Two of Thorgest's
sons fell there as well as certain other men.*

[...]

Eirik and his following were outlawed at the assembly for law at Thorsnes³

The 'friend' who is mentioned in line three is also hard to identify. From verse three we can deduce that they must have come to convert Eirik and his people and

¹ Týr, Eric The Red, sound recording, Napalm Records, 2006

² Eirik the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas. Translated by Gwyn Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Publishers, 2008, p 127

³ Ibid., p 128

therefore be of Christian faith. Now, in the saga it is said that Leif Eiriksson, the youngest son of Eirik the Red, who had gone to serve in the bodyguard of Olaf Tryggvason in Norway brought Christianity to Greenland. It seems not likely, however, that the father would address his son as “my friend” and ask what brings him north if he was born there. No other people come to convert Greenland are mentioned in the saga of Eirik the Red. According to *Heimskringla*, however, Leif took a priest back home with him from Norway. This provides us with a plausible identification of the mysterious ‘friend’. In *Eiríks saga rauða*, Eirik is sceptical and not very willing to change his faith¹, which would explain his rather cold reception. However, although there is a base for the enmity in the saga, it is likely that those sentiments have been substantially enlarged in the lyrics of the song. Several of Týr’s other song also contain anti-Christian and pro-heathen elements. The opposition against the new faith is even stronger in the rest of the song, to reach a climax in the final verse.

*Like a virus you’ll go on, and when I’m dead and gone
Both sides waging war will be for one true divinity
Just convert the whole wide world, into the abyss we are hurled
Sentenced come end of the world, spare me your selfrighteous word²*

There is no clear link between the text of the song after the first two verses and the saga text. Instead, the story of Eirik the Red seems to have been taken as a starting point to describe the doubts and scepticism held by a pagan about to be confirmed against the new faith proposed to him. The first two lines are quite closely based on the saga, but that connection soon disappears. It can be concluded that, although the connection is more explicit in Týr’s song (mostly through the title), Led Zeppelin’s *Immigrant Song*, in fact deviates less from what is told in the Old Icelandic text. We turn now to a song that is based more closely on the saga text, a song with the same title as the one by Týr, i.e. *Eric The Red*, but published one year before (in 2005) by the German Power Metal band Rebellion. The song is part of the first album,

¹ *Ibid.*, p 139

² Týr, *Eric The Red*, sound recording, Napalm Records, 2006

Sagas of Iceland - The History Of The Vikings Volume I, in a series where the band focuses exclusively on Scandinavian history and mythology, with much attention for the sagas.

The first part of the song corresponds to events from the second chapter of the saga, beginning with a reference to the events that caused Eirik the Red to be outlawed from Iceland and flee to Greenland (c.f. higher).

*Away from Iceland's shores I must,
The king says I must go
Some neighbours asked a fight with me
And I laid their bodies low¹*

Again, as with Týr, the speaker is not identified in the song text, but by the title only. Eirik's reason for emigrating is given clearly and in much more detail here, but with one striking error: the attribution of the decision to a 'king'. It is well known about Iceland, that the island was governed by a Thing, a gathering of free men, instead of a monarch during the Viking age. This error is repeated two more times in the refrain. The second stanza deals with the voyage to Greenland.

*Now my face is in the wind again
And friends are by my side
The green land we are looking for
And we trust in Odin's might.²*

The wind on the speaker's face is probably intended to indicate that he has left the island and is now at sea, with the intention to find what he later would call Greenland (c.f. below). In the saga it is said that his friends escorted him out through the islands lying off of the eastern coast of Iceland, but that Eirik first reached the new land without them:

Thorbjorn, Eyjolf, and Steyr escorted Eirik on his way out through the islands, and they parted on warm terms of friendship [...] He told them he meant to look for that land Gunnbjorn Ulf-Krakuson sighted the time he was storm-driven into the western ocean [...]³

¹ Rebellion, *Sagas of Iceland - The History Of The Vikings Volume I*, Massacre Records, 2005

² Ibid.

³ *Eirik the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas*. Translated by Gwyn Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Publishers, 2008, p 128

He did return to Iceland to invite his friends later, but by then he had already made a settlement on Greenland and thus was sure where to find it. It is possible that Rebellion misinterpreted the saga at this point; or that they combined both journeys in one fragment. One could say that this provides listeners without prior knowledge of the saga with a wrong impression, but still constitutes only a small departure from the original.

The song's refrain, which comes in after the second stanza very clearly is a representation of Eirik's invitation to his friends who had remained in Iceland to come join him in his newly settled country, though with inclusion of the aforementioned error about a king.

The third stanza, repeated along with the refrain at the end of the song, appears to continue the description of the voyage from stanza two. This impression comes chiefly from the third line, which talks of "new land"¹. Notice that the traveler here is going through a storm, whereas no mention of a storm is made in the saga in connection with Eirik's first voyages to Greenland. The only storm that would fit in this context is the one encountered by a fleet of twenty-five ships that sailed from Iceland, of which only fourteen arrived in Greenland.² However, this was after Eirik had already returned to his new home, whereas the song implies that the traveler would be him:

*In the wind and storm I'll raise my head
Eric The Red³*

The second part of the song skips to a part further in the story, right before the setting out of the expedition to find Vinland (presumably the second one organised). Eirik himself is portrayed here as much older, and seeing himself as too old to go adventuring, urging his son Leif to give in to his desire for adventure. From the saga we know that Leif inadvertently discovered the land that was later named Vinland

¹ Rebellion, *Sagas of Iceland - The History Of The Vikings Volume I*, Massacre Records, 2005

² *Eirik the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas*. Translated by Gwyn Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Publishers, 2008, p 129

³ Rebellion, *Sagas of Iceland - The History Of The Vikings Volume I*, Massacre Records, 2005

while apparently lost at sea on his way from Norway to Greenland. This was most certainly not a deliberate discovery, however. According to Gwyn Jones' translation, "Leif put to sea, and was at sea a long time, and lighted on those lands whose existence he had not so much as dreamt of before"¹. Here again the song deviates from the source, describing how Eirik sends Leif off adventuring and to go look for Vinland. As if he already knew it existed before Leif's discovery or as if he had some premonition about it.

*My son I see the fire in your eyes
As I felt when I was young
And I've listened to the Skalds and tales, you've gotta
Go as I have done*

*But it's your way Leif Eriksson,
The Red has come too old
The Vinland you will find I know,
Ride the wind be strong and bold*

Given that the first stanzas of the song are spoken by the main character rather than described or told by an external narrator, it is possible that Rebellion chose to the one-sided dialogue to continue the established style. Though the song's second part contains bits and pieces of information corresponding to the saga, the image created is at odds with the source. In general, however, Rebellion's take on the saga of Eirik the Red is both more detailed in its representation of the saga material and has remained more true to the original story content-wise than the previously discussed songs by Led Zeppelin and Týr.

Chapter III: History, Fiction And Poetry

This section will be concerned with lyrics that are based on or inspired by historical or semi-historical events from the Old Germanic period such as are known from historical research and medieval historical sources such as the Anglo-Saxon

¹ *Eirik the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas*. Translated by Gwyn Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Publishers, 2008, p 139

Chronicle (ASC). Other non-mythological texts will also be treated in this chapter. The events from the Nordic sagas which have been treated above will be left out. Consequently, the focus of this section shall lie primarily with the Germanic tribes that invaded and occupied England in the Early Middle Ages and to a lesser extent their cousins on the continent.

The two brothers of the English band Forefather have specialised in writing lyrics about the Anglo-Saxon period of England. They stand out among the other bands for the near total absence of mythology in their songwriting, with the only exception being the instrumental song dedicated to 'Eostre' mentioned earlier. For this reason, Forefather's lyrics will form the basis for the first part of this chapter and will also be used as the main example for the cases where they share a subject with an other band.

Further on in this chapter we will also take a look at other lyrical subjects which have some form of historical basis not part of the sagas. The main focus will then shift to Eastern Europe and the exploits of the 'Varangians' there.

The Anglo-Saxon Invasion Of England

Vortigern's fifth century invitation to the Saxons with a request to help the Britons in their fight against the Picts and the subsequent conquest of 'Englaland' by the Angles, Saxons and Jutes is probably the most defining event in English history. Furthermore it marks the beginning of Germanic history in the British Isles. The story is relatively well known and it comes therefore as no surprise that it is a recurring subject in Forefather's songs.

Vortigern's Invitation And The Coming Of The English

According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle¹, the "English" were called upon for aid in the year 449 by the British king Vortigern, who promised them land in the south-east of the country in exchange for defeating the Picts on his behalf. The first Saxons came

¹ Crossley-Holland, Kevin, *The Anglo-Saxon World. An Anthology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p 37

in three ships to Ebbsfleet and they soon defeated the designated enemies, after which they sent word home about “the cowardice of the Britons and the excellence of the land”¹.

The contents of this entry in the Chronicle have been put to music in the song Three Great Ships on Forefather’s 2008 album *Steadfast*. The story is told from the point of view of a descendant of the English. The first strophe is a summary of the events that have just been described until the arrival of the larger invading fleet. For comparison’s sake I have put the first part of the song (left) alongside a translation of the relevant part of the ASC entry (right).

*Across the sea they heard the call
Blood to spill and gold in hand
Charged to flash their deadly steel
And defend this fruitful land.
Straightaway they waged their war
And swiftly came to victory
And all of those who were left behind
Beheld the messengers’ sign
And the ships filled the shoreline³*

And in [Mauritius and Valentianus’] days Vortigern invited the English hither [...]. King Vortigern gave them land in the south-east of this land on condition that they should fight against the Picts. They then fought against the Picts and had the victory wherever they came. They then sent to Angeln, bidding them to send more help [...]. They then immediately sent hither a greater force²

As can be observed, the song lyrics follow the ASC text quite closely, with only one alteration. Line 2 of the song implies a reward of gold, whereas the Chronicle clearly states that the English were promised land. Lines 7-9 describe the receiving of the message by the Anglo-Saxons instead of it being set from Britain and the landing of their fleet, consistent with the English viewpoint used.

The first part of the second strophe goes back to the first three ships, describing their journey to Britain. The rest of the verse then takes a little more distance and is told in a triumphant tone from the perspective of someone already knowing how it ended, departing from the ASC entry.

*They made their masters slaves
Destined to reign*

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Forefather, *Steadfast*, audio recording, Seven Kingdoms, 2008

*Foes forlorn
A sacred myth was born
Wrought a new age¹*

Bede, in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, does mention that some of the conquered Britons surrendered to slavery under the Saxons, but definitely not all. According to him,

[s]ome through hunger surrendered themselves into the enemy's hands, and engaged to be their slaves fore ever in return for a maintenance; some in sorrow went beyond the sea; some timidly abode in the old country, and with heavy hearts lived a life of want in woods and wilds and on lofty rocks.²

Leaving the island and fleeing to the woods, the second and third reaction described by Bede, occur later in the song, near the end of the third stanza.

*The survivors fled to cower in the woods
For a life of ignominy
Or sadly crossed the sea*

By separating the two parts of Bede's description, however, the lyrics create a sense of confusion and contradiction. In the song text, it is unclear whether the Britons became slaves or fled, or perhaps both. Curiously, whereas Miller's translation of Bede has it that they fled "in sorrow", Forefather uses "sadly" instead, allowing for the interpretation that the band is also saddened by the departure of the Britons.

The third stanza refers to the war of the English against the Britons to conquer the land and how the Christian Britons and their altars were burned by the still heathen invaders, with an emphasis on the victory of the heathens over the pious Christians. This is followed by a reference to the fleeing of the defeated Britons as mentioned above. These events are also related by Bede in his account of the conquest, and Forefather's lyrics follow his account closely. Compare

*The worthless host harried and slain
From the east to western seas*

¹ Forefather, *Steadfast*, audio recording, Seven Kingdoms, 2008

² Miller, Thomas, *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, p 26

*Altars razed by iron and fire
The pious slaughtered ruthlessly¹*

and

[T]hey burned and plundered and slew from the sea on the west to the sea on the east; [...] [B]y every altar priests and clergy were slain and murdered.²

Generally speaking, it can be concluded that *Three Great Ships* follows the accounts of Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* quite closely, though they are told from the perspective of someone prejudiced in favour of the invading Germanic peoples and who thinks that the conquest was a positive event.

An earlier album, *Engla Tocyme* ('the coming of the English'), from 2002 featured a title track that was also based on Bede's version of the arrival of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes in 449. Its lyrics consist of three stanzas written by Wulfstan and an added recital of a fragment from the Old English version of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English people*. This fragment will be dealt with later in the chapter on Old Germanic languages. Here only the modern English lines of the song will be discussed.

The first stanza is a description of the sea-voyage in which the Anglo-Saxons are called "men of the sea". According to a fifth century letter, quoted in Dalton's translation by H.R. Ellis Davidson³, the Saxons were expert sailors, supporting Forefathers words.

In the second stanza, the singer identifies himself as a descendant of those mariners, looking through their eyes at the past. This stanza includes a number of lines (the third, fifth and sixth) whose meaning is unclear to me:

*With their spirit I shall bring down my blade
[...]
Their callings I have heard
For their honour I shall bring down my blade*

¹ Forefather, *Steadfast*, audio recording, Seven Kingdoms, 2008

² Miller, Thomas, *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, p 26

³ Ellis Davidson, H.R., *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, Harmondsworth: Penguin books, 1976, p 129

I remain clueless as to the meaning of the fifth line, though a possible explanation for lines three and six of the second stanza may be found in the Old English fragment at the end of the song (cf. below).

In the first line of the third stanza, a reference is made to "Offa's sons". Someone with a vague knowledge of the Hengest and Horsa legend could assume that the brothers are meant with this. However, both Bede and the ASC clearly state that they are the sons of Wihtgils, son of Witta, son of Wecta, son of Woden¹, ruling out the possible reference to Hengest and Horsa. In the Old English poem *Widsith*, Offa is mentioned as a king of the Angles. Perhaps with "Offa's sons", the people of the Angles is meant, seen as descended from Offa. The second line of the stanza includes the name of the English homeland on the continent, "Angeln", supporting my interpretation of the Offa reference. The other two lines of the stanza refer to the sea voyage and the future claim of the island, in that order.

The Persecution Of The Britons

The flight of the harried British people had already been touched earlier in a song titled *To The Mountains They Fled* from 2004, most likely inspired by the account by Bede cited higher of what happened to the natives. Just as *Three Great Ships*, and *Forefather's* songs in general, it is told from the point of view of the invaders. It is even told from the "we" point of view ("From beyond we sailed the sea"²), identifying the singer as part of the invading force. Besides their flight (strophe 2), the burning of the natives' towns and their overwhelming defeat are also mentioned in the first strophe. The wording conveys a strong feeling of superiority from the part of the Saxons.

*On the fields we cut them down
Stole their pride and burned their towns*

¹ Miller, Thomas, *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, p 25
And

¹ Crossley-Holland, Kevin, *The Anglo-Saxon World. An Anthology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p 37

² *Forefather, Ours Is The Kingdom*, audio recording, Seven Kingdoms, 2004

The first strophe and the refrain (second verse) mention the stealing of the natives' pride (cf. above) and their being ashamed, something which is not mentioned in Bede's text and again evidencing the feeling of superiority, e.g. "[r]outed and ashamed to the mountains they fled"¹. Contrary to Three Great Ships, only the flight to the wilds is mentioned in this song, creating the image that all Britons fled to the woods as opposed to what Bede wrote.

Line nine of the song text, "A new force had arrived to remain", makes abstraction of the revolt in which the invaders were almost driven out some years after the invasion. The image is biased, though we know from history that the Germanic tribes did indeed remain in England, so it cannot be called wrong either.

Lines thirteen and fourteen contain a reference to the lack of mercy shown by the plundering Germans. Forefather's lines:

*We offered them no mercy
Ruthlessly they felt our might*

And in the words of Bede:

Bishops and people, without regard for mercy, were destroyed together

At the end of the song, the refrain is repeated, with the final word being the name the Angles gave to the conquered lands that later became the name of the nation: England.

Hengest And Horsa

The legend of Hengest and Horsa, the two captains of the original three ships that sailed from Saxony on the continent to answer Vortigern's request for help is a part of the history of the Germanic invasion of England. The brother pair has become so famous, however, that they have become a legend of their own. Heidevolk, who identify themselves with the continental Saxons, have written a song named after the two brothers: Hengist en Horsa. Its lyrics are only loosely based on the legend and

¹ Forefather, *Ours Is The Kingdom*, 2004

the accounts of their arrival. Therefore only parts that struck me as interesting will be discussed.

In the first verse, the brothers are named as leaders of the Saxon army sailing towards the land of the Britons. Interestingly, the last line of the verse contains a kenning for the sea. In my translation: "Over Aegir's realm to Briton land".¹

The first two lines of the second verse refer to the battles fought by the mercenary army against the Picts and the later war against the Britons.

*Angelen en Saksen hieven het zwaard
Kelten en Picten werden niet gespaard*²

[*"Angles and saxons raised the sword
Celts and Picts were not spared", own translation*]

Line seven of the song breaks with the strongly Anglo-Saxon oriented image Forefather uses and deviates from the ASC and Bede's account by saying that both the invaders and the natives showed courage:

*Vriend en vijand toonde moed*³
[*"Friend and foe showed courage", own translation*]

However, there is a contradiction between this line and line twelve, where it is said that "the land was of the cowardly cleansed"⁴ (own, literal translation). Perhaps line seven refers to the Picts and twelve to the Britons.

The third verse refers to the second, larger fleet dispatched from the continent carrying the invading force of Angles, Saxons and Jutes. In line fourteen (fourth verse), a reference is made to the death of Horsa, mentioned in the entry for 455 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, though in the entry no name is given for Horsa's slayer while Heidevolk sing it was Vortigern's son. The next line states that Hengist prevailed and became king, as is stated in the same entry from the ASC.

^{1, 1, 3, 4} Heidevolk, *De Strijdlust Is Geboren*, audio recording, Heidevolk, 2005

Ethelfleda Of Mercia

We now advance about four hundred and fifty years in the Anglo-Saxon history to the early tenth century for a discussion of the second track on Forefather's 2008 album *Steadfast*, *Cween of the Mark*. In an interview with *Masterful Magazine*¹, Athelstan has revealed that the song is "based on the legend of Athelflad of Mercia, who was the daughter of Alfred the Great". He also added that "[s]he was instrumental after Alfred's death in completing the re-conquest of territory lost to the Danes."

His statement about her being the daughter of Alfred is certainly correct. According to the king's biographer Asser², she was the oldest of his children and when she reached "a marriageable age, was united to Ethered³, earl of Mercia". Her name also appears in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* from 910 onwards, where she is frequently called "Ethelfleda, lady of the Mercians" or "lady of Mercia"⁴. She appears to have taken over the reign of her deceased husband Ethelred of Mercia, thus becoming queen of the Mercians. This validates the title of the song, which uses a spelling resembling the Old English word for queen, *cwén*, though with a double e.

Let us now turn to the lyrics. The song tells in a Romanticised way about Ethelfleda and her actions to reconquer lost territory from the standpoint of a Mercian subject. In the first line she is described as "warrior maiden, blood of the kings". She was of the line of the kings of Wessex as already stated. "Warrior maiden" most likely refers to her military achievements chronicled in the *ASC*⁵. Line five, "for far too long they've soiled our land"⁶, must refer to the Danes that occupied a part of England at the time and almost conquered the English kingdoms at the end of the previous

¹ *Masterful Magazine*, *Forefather*, <<http://masterful-magazine.com/wywiad.php?wyw=601>>, (02/08/2010)

² Giles, J.A., *Life of King Asser*, <<http://omacl.org/KingAlfred/part2.html>>, January 1997, (01/08/2010)

³ The translation at the OMACL website has the spelling Ethered, but it is probably misspelled. The correct spelling appears to be Ethelred, the name mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

⁴ Ingram, James, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, London, 1912, p 69-70

⁵ Ingram, James, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, London, 1912, p 69-70

^{6, 3, 4, 5} *Forefather*, *Steadfast*, 2008

century. The last lines of the first strophe appear to refer to the retaking of some lost territories by Ethelfleda.

*We will have our just revenge
When by our steel they're slain³*

The next strophe also refers to this reconquest, but from the point of view of a soldier preparing for a battle at hand who glorifies his queen as a battle commander:

*As we prepare for the battle
The lady's our beacon of light
Their bodies will break on our blades
With the Cween of the Mark at our side⁴*

The third and final strophe of the song begins with four lines containing a description of Ethelfleda as a blonde horsewoman below the Mercian banner.

*Golden hair frames her solemn face
High up on her steed
Beneath the banner of the mark
Fluttering in the breeze⁵*

I have not been able to find a source for this image as neither Asser nor the ASC give any description of what Ethelfleda looked like. It appears to be a romantic image created by Wulfstan of Forefather. The second part of the strophe repeats the last four lines of the first.

Although the lyrics of Cween of the Mark may present a quite romanticised image of Ethelfleda – the song's text could be called historical fiction, since it places words and thoughts into the mind of an anonymous soldier of whom we have no sources –, it does not seem to contain any blatant historical errors either. Therefore, while the song is not based on a specific text but on very brief mentions of Ethelfleda's actions in the ASC, it is still an interesting case of Old Germanic heritage for bringing a less famous historical person to the attention of a modern audience. The song may spark some curiosity because of its intriguing female protagonist, prompting listeners and readers of the interview (cf. above) to look up the character of Ethelfleda.

The Battle Of Brunanburh

A heroic poem is recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as the entry for the year 938 (or 937), describing the defeat of an army of Scots and Picts led by Constantine and their Irish Viking allies by the English king Athelstan and his brother Eadmund. The battle is said to have taken place at Brunanburh somewhere in north-west England, though the precise location is still unknown according to Kevin Crossley-Holland¹. On the Steadfast album, Forefather have recorded a song based on the entry from the Chronicle. Its lyrics consist of two parts, first seventeen lines composed by Wulfstan and then a fragment from the Old English text of the poem, which will be discussed later. Here, the modern English lyrics will be compared to the translation of the poem by Crossley-Holland², with Forefather's lines coming first and the poem lines second. The first line of the song is a summary of lines one to three from the poem, with a substitution of 'king' (original) for "lord of warriors", which is basically the same, and leaving out the second leader, prince Eadmund. He is left out consequently throughout the song text. Compare:

Our lord of warriors eternal glory won

And

Æthelstan, the king, ruler of earls

And ring-giver to men, and Prince Eadmund

His brother, earned this year fame everlasting.

The second line of the song corresponds to lines four and five of the translation. Together with the first line, it manages to sound very much as one would expect an Anglo-Saxon poem to, at least to my ears. Here nothing is changed between the song and the poem, only summarised.

By the sword's edge at Brunanburh

Vs

with the blades of their swords in battle

At Brunanburh; with their well-wrought weapons

The first half of line three in Forefather's text corresponds to lines six and seven of the poem, but its second half does not correspond to any specific line of the original.

¹ Crossley-Holland, Kevin, *The Anglo-Saxon World. An Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p 6

² *Ibid.*, p 19-21

It does match the poem in a more general way, as the invaders were driven back. The only difference between Wulfstan's wording and the seventh line of the poem translation is the verb. Perhaps he copied them from a different translation.

Smashed the shield-wall and rove them from the land.

Vs

Cut through the shield-wall;

Line four of the song, "[t]he enemy doomed they fell and the field was dark with blood", sums up lines 10b to 12a of the poem in its first half and 16b-17a in its second. The identification of the enemies found in the poem is left out, but apart from that only minor changes have been made to the original version:

The enemey perished,

Fated Scots and seafarers

Fell in the fight;

[]

the battlefield flowed

With dark blood.

In the next two verses of the song, this system of summarising the poem is continued. Thus we find that line five of the lyrics continues where line four left off, summing up lines 17b to 18a of the poem in its first half, while the second half corresponds to lines 32b-33a and 53-54 in the poem.

Shot with spears, the crushed assailants fled

Comes from:

Many a warrior lay there,

spreadeagled by spears

[...]

There, the Norse king,

Was foreced to flee

[...]

Then the Norsemen made off in their nailed boats,

Sas survivors shamed in battle,

The next line from the song also contains references to multiple parts of the poem. Its first half, “in revenge we rode them down”, sums up the poem lines twenty-one to twenty-three:

*In troops together, the West Saxons
Pursued thoes hateful people,
Hewed down the fugitives fiercely from behind.*

The second half of the song line, “and the vanquished took to sea”, most likely refers to the same fragments as the second half of the previous line of the song.

For line seven of Forefather’s song, we move towards the end of the poem, more precisely lines 57 to 59. But while the poem refers to the West Saxon leaders by their titles, Forefather has instead chosen to identify them by the name of their father.

Compare:

Edward’s sons victorious in war

And

*Likewise both brothers together
King and prince, returned to Wessex,
Their own country, exulting in war.*

The following line by Forefather, “Made mountains of the slain and the wolves and crows did feast”, continues with a summary of the lines immediately following in the poem, i.e. lines 60 to 65a.

*They left behind them to devour the corpses,
Relish the carrion, the horny-beaked raven
Garbed in black, and the grey-coated
Eagle (a greedy war-hawk)
With its white tail, and that grey beast,
The wolf in the wood.*

The next two strophes of Brunanburh are not as closely based on the poem as those discussed hitherto. References to the poem are not completely absent, however. Line one of the third strophe probably refers, at least partly, to lines 65b and 66 of the poem text. In Wulfstan’s words:

Great slaughter made and the field of Britain tamed

And in the original version:

*Never, before this,
Were more men in this island slain*

The following line in the lyrics is another reference to Athelstan's victory, though not specifically based on one or more lines from the poem. Interesting to note is that the king is referred to as "Lord of the fyrd" here. The fyrd was a militia consisting of soldiers from the districts of the kingdom that were under attack.

In line 11b of the song, "the hearst of the beatens hamed", we find the last direct correspondence to a line from the poem, namely line 54: "sad survivors shamed in battle".

Also included in the third strophe is a line half in Old English, half in Latin, which translates as "King of the English - King of all Brittain". The latin part is not historically correct, since the island was not yet united under one rule; the Scottish and Pictish territories were still independent.

There is one more reference to a person or an event, namely "Senlac's fame" on line 15, which I have not been able to identify.

The last part of Brunanburh, which is an Old English recital from the original text of the poem will be discussed in the following chapter. From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the material of the poem has been very well preserved, even to the point of incorporating translated parts, by Forefather in this song.

Æthelred II, The Ill-advised

We move on to the reign of King Æthelred II, also known as Æthelred the Ill-advised, who was king from 978 (979) to 1013 and from 1014 again to 1016 according to the ASC. The Danish Folk Metallors of Svartsot chose the unlucky king who suffered frequent raids by Danish Vikings as the subject for the opening track of their latest album Mulmets Viser. The song was named after the king, Æthelred. Svartsot's lyrics are all in Danish, including this song. For its discussion, I will use my own translation of the lyrics into English; the original lines can be found in the appendix.

The first two lines of the second verse refer to the bad advice Æthelred received from his entourage during his kingship, which caused the meaning of his given name, ‘noble advice’, to become untrue and earned him the notorious nickname Unræd (literally ‘no advice’, though it has also been taken as “the ill-advised”)¹.

*Noble-advice it was, he was called,
Essentially not quite true.*

Lines eleven to sixteen refer to the frequent Danish Viking raids recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle during Æthelred’s reign and which the English were unable to withstand². The first of these lines could also be a first reference to the tribute he would eventually agree to pay the Danes to stop the attacks because of its reference to the king’s treasure.

*On his treasures and his legacy
Would others lay claim.
Vikings watched cautiously,
Having seen his worth before,
Watched with keen eye,
Called up men and sailed thither.*

The next four lines, which make up the refrain of the song, refer to the Danegeld that Æthelred eventually proposed (following advice of Siric) to the Vikings as a last resort means to buy peace from them. According to the ASC, a tribute of 10 000 pounds was first paid in 991:

*A.D. 991 [...] In this same year it was first resolved that tribute should be given, for the first time, to the Danes, for the great terror they occasioned by the sea-coast. That was first 10,000 pounds. The first who advised this measure was Archbishop Siric.*³

In the song, the situation is viewed from the perspective of the Danes, who see the tribute as just another means to obtain more loot:

*Ten thousand pounds pure silver
To drag us from his coast*

¹ Wikipedia, *Æthelred the Unready*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Æthelred_the_Unready>, 31/07/2010, (02/08/2010)

² Ingram, James, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, London, 1912, p 86 ff.

³ Ingram, James, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, London, 1912, p 86

*Next time we ride the wave
We will have twenty thousand more.*

Indeed, in the Chronicle it is recorded that the raids carried on after a short space of time and that on several occasions during Æthelred's reign (in 994, 1002, 1007 and 1012)¹ increasing sums of tribute were demanded. The next tribute, 16 000 pounds, was literally the "twenty thousand more" from the refrain, but that is clearly a figure of speech to illustrate the Danish greed or the opportunity the Danes saw.

The fourth verse of the song refers to the inability of the English armies to fend off the raiding parties of the Vikings, concluding with another reference to the advice that was given to Æthelred to pay the plunderers tribute.

*Not on the battlefield won he victory
Although he tried long
His bravest and his best
Was the black raven predation
But the kingdom would be saved
And good advice was costly
His council advised debt
To allay the Danes' fury*

The entry for 998 in the ASC contains one example of the failed attempts at self-defence of the English:

Often was an army collected against [the Danes]; but, as soon as they were about to come together, then were they ever through something or other put to flight²

Lines twenty-nine to thirty-two describe a meeting of the Danes with the king, in which they demand a tribute and promise to sail away when it is paid. I have not found any such encounter in the entries in the Chronicle, however. The idea of paying tribute seems to have come from the Anglo-Saxons instead. The rest of that strophe is very similar to the refrain, but now told from the perspective of someone looking back at history.

The last strophe of the song is a narrative in which the councillors say that if they fail to pay up the Danegeld, they will never be rid of the Danes. The narrative is

¹ Ingram, James, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, London, 1912, p 87 ff.

² Ingram, James, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, London, 1912, p 88

fictitious, though it is not hard to imagine saying such a thing given what we know from the entries in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

Svartsof's Æthelred is an interesting piece of Viking Metal (or Folk Metal) because it combines the stereotypical image of the plundering Vikings, presented here as shrewd opportunists, with a strong historical basis. Moreover it tells a tale from English history without leaving the grounds of Viking Metal by telling it from their own Danish perspective. Finally, similarly to what Forefather did with Cween Of The Mark, the song brings a historical figure that is not very well known to those unfamiliar with late Anglo-Saxon history to the attention of the listeners, who may try to find out more about king Æthelred.

1066

When the armies of William of Normandy defeated the defending English armies at Hastings in 1066 and conquered the England, the Anglo-Saxon era came to an end and the Old English linguistic period entered its final days. The normandic invasion marks nearly as big a change in English history as the Anglo-Saxon invasion six hundred years earlier, with one major difference. The new invaders did not did not kill and drive out the native English. Their defeat was unfortunate, since earlier the same year they had already managed to successfully fend of an invading army of Norsemen at the Battle of Stamford Bridge somewhere in northern England. As the second turning point in the Anglo-Saxon history of England, the year 1066 is the major theme of Forefather's debut album *The Fighting Man*. They are the only selected band to have written songs about these events.

In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for 1066¹, it is told that King Harold had received warning that William of Normandy planned to invade his kingdom. Harold assembled a massive army to prevent this from happening, but before the French launched their assault, the Norwegian king Harald Fairhair tried to invade invade the North of England. King Harold marched with his army to meet the Norwegians

¹ Crossley-Holland, Kevin, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, p 41-43

and successfully defeated them. Thereafter, the army had to March from the north to the south of the country in very little time to battle the William the Conqueror and his army. Of the army's march south itself there are no records in the Chronicle.

There are three songs on the The Fighting Man album dealing with these events, all three describing the march of the army towards the battlefield at Hastings. The first song and title track of the album describes the army as marching under the personal banner of the king, known as the 'Fighting Man'. The song contains only one very covered reference to the actual battle, in the last three lines:

*The Fighting Man in two was torn
A new flag flies but soon we'll see a new dawn*

*Under the Fighting Man.*¹

The second song about the fateful year, The Last Battle, is a little clearer in its references. Its first strophe refers to the battle won in the north and the forced march to the south immediately afterwards, without time for the troops to recover fully.

*The chaos has reigned, the battle has been won
No time to rest, we must re-group and March
The final hurdle lies upon the horizon
One more push, our will shall see us through*²

Strophes three and four deal with the weariness of the soldiers and their need to go on, drawing strength from the victory just won though their numbers are diminished. The last verse of the song corresponds to a part of the ASC entry, where it is mentioned that both armies fought well.

*We struck our blows ferociously
We warred with passion as one
We spilled their blood without fear
From the last battle our honour lives on*³

The last song of the album, then clearly reveals Forefather's sentiments to the outcome of the war against William of Normandy: When Our England Died. The

¹ Forefather, *The Fighting Man*, audio recording, Seven Kingdoms, 2000

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

song is an imagined version of the long hike across the country through forests, across fields and over streams. The song contains one historical guess, though not entirely implausible. In the opening strophe, the warriors are described as knowing they are marching to their deaths.

Wearily to the last battle they strode

Onward through day and through night

To death they did go but they let them know the power of Angelisc might¹

They could obviously not have known that, though it's well possible that they sensed the defeat coming after a hard battle and with a heavy trek ahead.

The Ruin

Written in the eighth century by an anonymous poet and preserved in a somewhat damaged form in the Exeter book, *The Ruin* is one of the surviving Old English elegies. The forty-two lines² contain the musings of an Anglo-Saxon over what are thought to be the Roman ruins of Bath³. Ruins of Roman stone buildings inspired awe into the hearts of the early Anglo-Saxons, because they did not know how to build in stone⁴.

A sense of decay is strongly present in the verse lines describing vividly how everything falls into ruin. Yet there is no strong sense of loss connected to the decay. The ruins clearly belong to a different culture that came before that of the poet and to which he is not connected. While letting his gaze wandering over the remains, the poet imagines how the ruins must have looked in their glory days when they were still inhabited. He appears to be amazed at how they have withstood time, despite that the power of *wyrd* ('fate'), which was a very important concept in Germanic mythology and in the Anglo-Saxon outlook on life, combined with a noticeable lack of

¹ Forefather, *The Fighting Man*, audio recording, Seven Kingdoms, 2000

² In the translation by Kevin Crossley-Holland containing markings where parts are missing.

³ Crossley-Holland, Kevin, *The Anglo-Saxon World. An Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p 49

⁴ *Ibid.*

christian elements, makes *The Ruin* a perfect source of inspiration for the kind of “Anglo-Saxon metal” that the two brothers of Forefather try to produce. Their song *Smashed By Fate*, from the 2004 album *Ours Is The Kingdom*, was closely inspired by the poem. Instead of just putting the poem to music, Forefather have constructed a songtext from it that not only uses much of the imagery of the poem, albeit not always in the exact same form and order, but also approaches the poem’s wording very closely at times. The translation of the poem used as comparison is that of Kevin Crossley-Holland found in *The Anglo-Saxon World, An Anthology*¹. In side-by-side comparisons of both texts, Forefather’s² will be given first and the relevant part of the translated poem second.

Smashed By Fate begins similarly to the poem with a view over the ruins, the first two lines being nearly identical to the poem’s first two lines. Compare

Falling towers of stone, smashed by fate
The giants’ craft declines, undermined by age

and

Wondrous is this stone-wall, wrecked by fate;
The city-buildings crumble, the works of the giants decay.

The only differences are the replacement of the wall by towers and the absence of the feeling of wonder. The second part of line two from the song comes from the sixth line of the translation. Since the song is probably based on a translation instead of on the original Old English text, it is natural that the song’s wording will be more liberal.

Next, the song skips ahead to the second part of the poem where the ruins are imagined in their haydays when still populated. Line three of the song, “Once shining and strong with celebration of men”, is a summary of lines 17-19 in the translation:

¹ Crossley-Holland, Kevin, *The Anglo-Saxon World. An Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p 59-60

² Forefather, *Ours Is The Kingdom*, audio recording, Seven Kingdoms, 2004

*Bright were the city halls, many the bath houses,
Lofty all the gables, great the martial clamour,
Many a mead-hall was full of delights*

The next line, the last of the first stanza, is nearly identical to the first part of line 20 in the translation, but with a curious change.

Untill the mighty one swept them away.

Vs

untill fate the mighty altered it. [...]

Where the poem clearly contains the word *wyrd* (“fate” in the translation), Forefather’s lyrics instead have the unclear “the mighty one”. This is curious, *wyrd* is a relatively well-known and very typically Germanic concept. As such, one would expect a band focusing on their Anglo-Saxon past to focus on something like this. Moreover, the indefinite expression can call up quite different associations in those readers or listeners not familiar with the poem, e.g. with the Christian god. Also, the second half of the line is voiced much more directly as “swept them away” instead of the more neutral “altered it”, turning fate (or “the mighty one”) into a destructive force.

The next two stanzas, lines 5 to 12, of the lyrics function as an extended (or divided) refrain, and are repeated once at the end of the song. The fifth line of the song text continues the poem, corresponding to lines 20b and 21 of the translation, but with a less impersonal tone. In Forefather’s words:

Their warriors destroyed with war, the times of affliction came

In the poem:

*Slaughtered men
Fell far and wide, the plague-days came*

Line six takes up the “shining” attribute mentioned earlier again, where the poem only has “the ramparts” and then continues very closely following lines 23b and 24a of the poem.

Their shining realms in ruin, deserted and decayed

Vs

*Their ramparts became abandoned places,
The city decayed;*

While the poem contains another description of the ruins at this point, that description is left out of the lyrics. Five and a half lines of the poem (lines 28b to 33) are summarized into one as the seventh line of Smashed By Fate, “[w]here bold, proud-hearted men looked on riches bright”:

*, where once many a man
Joyous and gold-bright, dressed in splendour,
Proud an flushed with wine, gelamed in his armour;
He gazed on his treasure – silver, precious stones,
Jewellery and wealth, all that he owned –
And on this bright city int he broad kingdom.*

The last line of the second strophe is an addition by Forefather, directed at the listener and probably intended to convey a more powerful feeling to their song. Interestingly, the power fate is pointed out explicitly to the listener as the subject of the song.

The second part of the refrain begins with a line that reaches back to lines 6b-7 of the poem, but instead of the earth holding the builders of the ruins, the object of the sentence has been left out, suggesting that the ruins are being held by the earth even though they obviously still have not (fully) disappeared into the soil. Compare:

The earth’s grip holds as eras pass

and

*The earth’s embrace,
Its fierce grip, holds the mighty craftsmen;*

The next line in the song is again an addition by Forefather, voiced in the third person plural and strongly contrasting to the poem an the rest of the song, where the narrator is completely left out. Presumably, the line, “We took what we wanted and claimed it as ours”, meant to the Anglo-Saxons claiming the old Roman remains for their own purposes, but that is just speculation.

In lines 11-12 of Smashed By Fate,

*Many a storm these shadow kingdoms have seen
Grey with lichen, stained with blood and misery*

the description of a part of the ruins (the wall) from lines 9b-10 of the poem,

*This wall, grey with lichen
And red of hue, outlives kingdom after kingdom,*

is extended to the whole. "Shadow kingdoms" likely refers to the decayed kingdoms of the past, i.e. the ruins. The first characteristic of the wall is copied directly from the poem, but the potential origins of the red hue are narrowed down to Forefather's interpretation as stemming from blood stains. Further in the poem, in line 26, a redstone arch is named, suggesting the possibility that red is the natural colour of the stone instead.

The song's last strophe first returns to the aforementioned riches possessed by the inhabitants of the ruins, with a summary of poem lines 32-33: "Once they looked on riches, possessions, precious stones". The next three lines are own additions by Forefather for which no direct parallels, except for fate sweeping away works of the past, were found in the translated poem.

In conclusion it can be said that through their own additions, Forefather take a more direct approach than the simple descriptions and musings offered by the poem. In *Smashed By Fate*, we see the poem through the interpretation of the two brothers, necessarily a narrower view than what is afforded by the original text. Still, the parts of the song based on (a translation of) the Old English poem have remained very close to the source. Though the song's lyrics are an example of relatively well-preserved Old Germanic heritage in metal, regarding the song as a whole as such is somewhat troublesome. Namely because Forefather does not indicate the sources for any of their songs, except for quoted fragments and sometimes in interviews. Since I have not found an interview that mentions the source of this song (and was unable to examine the cd booklets) – the comparison above only became possible after obtaining a list with sources for songs by contacting the band – , it seems that anyone who does not know the poem beforehand would not be able to tell it apart from the

band's completely self-invented lyrics and thus would not know it to be Old English in origin.

Vikings In Eastern Europe

In 2007, the Finnish 'battle metal' band Turisas released a concept album¹ titled "The Varangian Way". The album was named after the medieval river trading route between the Baltic and Byzantium, known to the northerners as Miklagard. On the website made to accompany the CD, Turisas frontman Mathias Nygård explains² that the album forms a fictional story set in 11th century Eastern Europe. Through the songs, which are situated on a map in the artwork of the CD and website, the story is told of a group of Northerners of unknown origin undertaking an expedition "to Holmgaard and beyond"³. The Journey is both physical and personal, because the leader of the group is on a quest to search for his roots.

When played (or read) in the normal order of the track list, every song (except for Cursed Be Iron) corresponds to a part of the journey from north to south with the first song being the set-out and the last one the arrival at Miklagard. All the place and personal names in the lyrics are given in their Old Norse form: Holmgaard for Novgorod, Jarisleif for Yaroslav I the Wise, the historical 11th century king of Kiev, and Miklagard instead of Byzantium.

Though not directly inspired by any historical texts, the album was still considered interesting for the present study because of its lesser-known setting, the distinctly geographical presentation by means of names in the lyrics and maps in the album's artwork and because it nevertheless contains some historical references. The Vikings

¹ The term 'concept album' refers to a music album of which all content revolves around one specific theme or concept. Many concept albums feature lyrics that tell a single story spanning the entire album. This is also the case here.

² Turisas, *The Varangian Way* (website), "Start Here" video fragment 1, <<http://thevarangianway.com/main.html>>, viewed 11 July 2010

³ Turisas, *The Varangian Way*, audio recording, Century Media, 2007

are known best for their exploits in the Atlantic: the raids all along the eastern coast of Europe, the colonisation of Iceland and Greenland and the discovery of North America. Their exploits in Southern Europe are much less known, but still impressive.

[T]hey pushed down the Dnieper to Byzantium, where the Christian emperor valued their physical prowess sufficiently to enrol them in his special Varangian guard. They refused to be intimidated by ghosts of the past or the proud civilisation of the south, but had the effrontery to cut runic inscriptions on [...] classical monuments like the marble lion of the Piraeus.¹

By making an album of which this route is the main element and situating the songs on a map – the relation between each song and its geographical location is made explicit in the explanatory videos on the Varangian Way website – Turisas can be said to help preserve a piece of Germanic history even if the story told on the album is purely fictional.

The Varangians and the route also make an appearance in two songs of the Swedish band “Amon Amarth”. First in *Runes To My Memory* on the 2006 album *With Oden On Our Side*, and again in *Variags Of Miklagaard* off of the *Twilight Of The Thunder God* recording from 2008. The first song never mentions the name Varangian or Variag (a synonym), but the first two lines clearly indicate that the location of the described events is somewhere along the river route through Eastern Europe:

*We rode the rivers of the Eastern trail,
Deep in the land of the Rus'.²*

Later in the song, the expedition is defeated in an attack in which the narrating character is mortally wounded. Whereas the attitude in Turisas’ lyrics is that of explorers marveling at all the discoveries they make and generally quite positive, the attitude of the Vikings in this song is clearly negative:

*No shelter in this hostile land
Constantly on guard*

¹ Ellis Davidson, H.R., *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, Harmondsworth :Penguin Books Ltd, 1976

² Amon Amarth, *With Oden On Our Side*, audio recording, Metal Blade Records, 2006

*Ready to fight and defend
Our ship 'til the bitter end¹*

The second song of Amon Amarth about the Varangian Vikings is one about the Varangian Guard set in Byzantium. A first person plural perspective is used throughout. The first two verses identify the narrator as speaking for a group of Vikings who swore oaths of fealty and joined the Varangian Guard in service of the Byzantine Emperor. Here too, the Scandinavian name for Byzantium, Miklagaard, is used:

*Miklagaard has been our home
For twenty years or more
We've lent our axes, spears and swords
In service of the emperor*

*We are loyal warriors
That's the oath we gave
To protect the emperor
Even to a violent grave²*

In the second verse we also get an accurate portrayal of the importance of loyalty in Germanic society. Once a warrior had sworn loyalty to a lord, he was to protect that lord whenever needed, even at the cost of the warrior's own life. This warrior code plays an important role in the Old English epic *Beowulf* and the story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard written down in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle and was one of the base principles of the Germanic feudal system. The four lines in this song are one of the clearest references in all the lyrics discussed in the present study.

Dutch History

The Revolt Of The Batavi

In the first century, the southern part of what is now the Dutch province Gelderland belonged to the tribe of the Batavians, who were subjugated by the Romans in those days. The tribe revolted against Roman rule along with several other tribes in 69-70

¹ Amon Amarth, *With Oden On Our Side*, audio recording, Metal Blade Records, 2006

² Amon Amarth, *Twilight Of The Thunder God*, audio recording, Metal Blade Records, 2008

CE, which was recorded by the Roman historian Tacitus in book IV of his *Historiae*. During the revolt, they managed to destroy two Roman legions, inflicting humiliating defeats. Their enemies retaliated in 70, leading to the return of the Batavi to Roman rule under humiliating conditions¹. This revolt of a tribe that once lived in their home region against their formidable enemy prompted Heidevolk to write a song about the events in which they identify themselves with what they on stage call their 'ancestors'². Only the revolt and the Batavian successes are referred to in the song, however. There is no sign of the retaliation and the second subjugation, which puts the events in an entirely different light. The lyrics are an imagined account of the events as seen through the eyes of the Batavi and seem to be a fairly accurate portrayal of the successful revolt before the retaliation. In the first strophe, the growing dissent with the Roman rule by the year 69 is referenced to as the cause for the revolt that year. A direct comparison of the song text with the accounts of the events is difficult. I will therefore limit my discussion to the above. The full text of the song can be found in appendix.

King Radbod

Radbod (Radboud in Dutch) was a heathen Frisian king or duke who lived in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. His reign lasted from 680 to his death from disease in 719³. The Dutch band Heidevolk wrote a song about him titled *Koning Radboud* ('king Radbod') that was recorded on their second full-length album *Walhalla Wacht*. It is mainly a hymn glorifying the heathen king for refusing to become Christian and supposedly keeping the Franks at bay. As often happens in the treatment of historical events in songs, only the facets that agree with the composer's ideas are included. While no blatant errors may be present, the resulting picture can give a very different impression due to the leaving out of nuancing information.

¹ Wikipedia, Revolt of the Batavi, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolt_of_the_Batavi>, 12/04/2010, (06/08/2010)

² Witnessed personally at a live performance in Ghent in 2007 or 2008.

³ Wikipedia, *Radboud (koning)*, <[http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radboud_\(koning\)](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radboud_(koning))>, 30/07/2010, (05/08/2010)

In the first verse, Radboud character as king is described as follows:

*Radbod king of the free Frisian land
Was the scourge of the North and the terror of every Frank
He tore their churches down to the Frisian ground
To Cologne and the Schelde his mighty kingdom once stretched
[own translation]¹*

The king is presented here as very mighty and near untouchable. This does not conform completely to the historical picture of him. It is said that in the early years he was defeated several times by the Franks and had to give up territories to them. Later, a civil war among his enemies enabled him to take back what he had lost. Near the end of his reign he had plans to invade the kingdom of the Franks, but his plans were foiled by disease.² The historical picture thus corresponds partly to what Heidevolk would have us believe, but it takes away the exaggerated power of the king.

The second strophe of the song, which tells of Wulfram's attempt to convert the heathen king, seems to accurate when compared to the sources, even down to the last minute timing of Radbod's refusal because his ancestors would not be in heaven.³

*Wulfram the Christian that wanted to convert him
Promised him heaven if he would be baptised
Yet with one foot in the font the Friesian king quickly changed his mind
True to his kin he would rather go to hell
[own translation]⁴*

In the penultimate strophe, he is honoured again as the king who remained heathen and kept the Franks and Christendom at bay until his death. This is followed by a strophe that is not connected to the story, instructing the listener to stay true to their kin, their father and the gods, by which undoubtedly the heathen gods are meant. By

¹ Heidevolk, *Walhalla Wacht*, audio recording, Heidevolk, 2008

² Wikipedia, *Radboud (koning)*, <[http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radboud_\(koning\)](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radboud_(koning))>, 30/07/2010, (05/08/2010)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Heidevolk, *Walhalla Wacht*, audio recording, Heidevolk, 2008

doing this, Heidevolk reveal their strong bias against Christianity that has coloured the preceding verses as well.

*The Franks and Christendom had this man stayed
His last breath he gave in a heathen Frisia
According to Christians doomed, but that was not the case
For Radbod and his friends are feasting in Wodans's hall*

*Rather dead than slave – honour your forefathers
Rather dead than slave – stay loyal to your brothers
Rather dead than slave – honour your fatherland
Rather dead than slave – stay loyal to the gods
[own translation]^f*

Chapter IV: Old Germanic Languages

One of the typical characteristics of the three intertwined metal sub-genres Folk Metal, Viking Metal and Pagan Metal mentioned in the introductory chapter is the tendency for bands to write lyrics in their native language (of the band or any foreign songs that are covered) instead of English, the traditional language of metal.

Sometimes native language lyrics occur alongside English ones as in the recordings of Týr, sometimes only the native language is used, e.g. by Svartsot and Heidevolk.

A number of bands² extends this use to include (fragments of) historical texts, and some even go as far as to compose lyrics in a historical language. Forefather, for example, has composed a small piece of Old English lyrics, which will be discussed below. The Swiss band Eluveitie (apparently Gaulish for “the helvetian”), who focuses on the celtic past of their country and continental Europe, have even gone as far as to use lyrics in a reconstructed form of ancient Gaulish, a lost language. With regard to the present study, three of the selected bands, namely Forefather and

¹ Ibid.

² To the extent of my knowledge, the exact number is unknown, since the number of metal bands in general and of the various sub-genres in specific is unknown. A database attempt exists in the form of the Metal Archives website (<<http://www.metal-archives.com/>>), though it is incomplete. Furthermore, no completely correct database of songtexts exists (largely due to the number of bands being unknown), making even estimations very difficult.

Menhir, have songs with lyrics in or containing Old Germanic languages. The languages are Old English and Old High German, respectively. First Menhir's songs will be discussed, followed by Forefather's use of Old English.

Of the two bands with which this chapter is concerned, the effort made by Menhir appears to be the most impressive. Their latest album, dating from 2007 already, was named after the Old High German alliterative epic *Das Hildebrandslied* recorded in the abbey of Fulda in the early ninth century. On the cd, two tracks can be found titled *Hildebrandslied Teil I* and *Hildebrandslied Teil II*. In these tracks, the band has attempted to put the medieval text to music, the two parts corresponding to the two pages of the manuscript. The recording, however, makes clear that the attempt was not completely successful. The sung version of the lyrics reveal a frequent loss of syllables and even whole words or word clusters being left out. For example: "fohem uuortum, hwer sin fater wari" is reduced to "hwer sin fater wari" in the recording. Moreover, the pronunciation fluctuates between the pronunciation norms for Old High that I have been taught in my classes Old High German and something closer to a modern German pronunciation of the written text. I have attempted to contact the band through the contact email address listed on their official website, but never received any answer. I have therefore been unable to gain an explanation for my observations from the band. Therefore I can only conclude that Menhir may not have been knowledgeable enough on the subject of reconstructed Old High German pronunciation to render a faithfully sung version of the text.

Compared to Menhir, the efforts of Forefather to incorporate Old English into their songwriting are a little more modest. Thus far, the two brothers have not tried to put a complete Old English text to music yet, limiting themselves to fragments. Four of Forefather's songs include Old English parts and three of those have a title in that language. In chronological order of publication, the fragments appear in the lyrics of *Engla Tocyme* ("the coming of the English"¹;2002), *Fifeldor* (2002), *The Shield-Wall*

¹ Translation given by Forefather in an interview with *Metalmessgae Online Magazine*, <<http://www.metalmessgae.de/Interviews/forefather-engl.htm>>, viewed 30 July 2010.

(2004) and Brunanburh (2008). The first two and the last will be discussed first. The third song text will be discussed last because that one does not contain a fragment from an existing text, but a newly written Old English part. None of the historical fragments are sung; instead they are recited. This was probably done for two reasons: to be able to correctly pronounce the words and to create a contrast in the track between the two (parts of the) texts. Neither the text fragments used, nor the newly composed Old English verses contain any markings for vowel length in the version provided by Forefather on their official website. In the new verses, the vowel length markings were obviously left out by choice. Whether this is also true for the text fragments or whether they are also absent in the text editions used as sources during the writing of the lyrics, I cannot say. Both the ash and thorn symbols can be found in all four texts.

The title track of Forefather's 2002 album *Engla Tocyme* ends with a fragment from the Old English version of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. The preceding modern English part of the song, which was discussed in the previous chapter, is about the coming of the Anglo-Saxon tribes and their conquest of what later became England. The fragment from Bede's text is a description of how the Germanic invaders murdered and burned down everything during their conquest of the British lands. It is spoken in the background of the song with a harsh voice fitting for the content and amplifying its effect, while the sound of lapping waves is added in the music in a similar fashion as the track's intro part. Perhaps this slaying is what the lines from the refrain ending in "I shall bring down my blade"¹ refer to. Perhaps it is meant to show the superior power of the invaders.

Fifeldor, from the same album, contains a fragment of the poem *Widsith*, preserved in the Exeter Book. This poem contains a list of peoples with the name of their king and the important feats of some of those kings. The song is about Offa, a legendary king of the Angles from the period when the tribe occupied a part of what is now northern Germany. The fragment from *Widsith* used by Forefather tells of a duel

¹ Forefather, *Engla Tocyme*, 2002

fought by him against somebody from the tribe of the Myrcings on an island in the river Eider (Fiveldore, 'monster-gate', in the poem) to secure the border of his kingdom. Presumably, the fragment was taken from an edition of the poem. After the Old English fragment, here too a modern English translation is provided. The translation appears to be correct as far as I can judge, with only one peculiarity: the name Fifeldor (or Fiveldore) has also been translated to its modern equivalent "Monster-Gate".

The third historical Old English fragment can be found in the track Brunanburh (an Old English place name) on Forefather's latest full-CD Steadfast from 2008. As with the previous fragments, it is recited at the end of the song after the band's own lyrics. It is a fragment from the poem about the battle of Brunanburh recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as the entry for the year 938. The selected part of the poem runs from the second half of line sixty-five to the end of the poem (line seventy-three). Curiously, the official lyrics on the band website do not include a translation into modern English, making the fragment inaccessible to anyone without knowledge of Old English. Even finding out which part of the poem was used in order to look up a translation might be difficult for the general public. The reason why this was done eludes me completely. I will therefore include the relevant part of the translation by Kevin Crossley-Holland¹ here.

*Never, before this,
were more men in this island slain
by the sword's edge – as books and aged sages
confirm – since Angles and Saxons sailed here
from the east, sought the Britons over the wide seas,
since those warsmiths hammered the Welsh,
and earls, eager for glory, overran the land.*

Although the contrast with the rest of Brunanburh's lyrics is marked, these ending lines from the poem fit the song content-wise. Both the lyrics and the text fragment place an emphasis on the bloody aspect of the battle. The completeness of the victories of the Anglo-Saxons over the British and the Anglo-Saxons over the alliance

¹ Crossley-Holland, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, p 21

of Scots and Norsemen, respectively, is also emphasised (cf. discussion of the song higher for examples of both). The victories of the Anglo-Saxons are important here considering the brothers of Forefather present themselves as closely linked to their Anglo-Saxon origins.

The final fragment of Old English that will be discussed here can be found in the lyrics of The Shield-Wall, published by Forefather in 2004. Unlike the previous fragments, it was not taken from a historical Old English text, but instead written by Wulfstan along with the rest of the song. According to Athelstan¹, it was made to resemble the style of the Anglo-Saxon riddles. An official translation is not provided by the band. Therefore I have attempted to make a literal translation of the lines myself. My translation is put alongside the lines from the song text.

<i>Flanas gesecaþ me</i>	<i>Arrows have sought me</i>
<i>Ecga beataþ me</i>	<i>Edges struck me</i>
<i>Beornas wieldaþ me</i>	<i>Men wielded me</i>
<i>Cyningas sind genered þurh me</i>	<i>Kings are saved by me</i>
<i>Iren gewundaþ me</i>	<i>Iron has wounded me</i>
<i>Wæpen deriaþ me</i>	<i>Weapons injured me</i>
<i>Cempa teoraþ me</i>	<i>Soldiers wearied/failed me</i>
<i>Cynedom is gewered þurh me</i>	<i>The kingdom is defended by me</i>

Indeed the style can be said to be similar to that of the Old English riddles, where something, e.g. an object, describes things it habitually does or that happen to it in order to be identified by the reader. The “what am I”-question is usually absent in the riddles, as it is here. I believe the answer to Forefather’s riddle would be the title of the song, i.e. The Shield-Wall, since a wall of shields is supposed to offer protection against weapons striking at it and to keep enemies at bay. The wall of the guards’ shields protects the king in battle and an army can serve as the shield wall of a kingdom.

¹ Personal communication via email.

Conclusions

Now that we have looked at lyrics by metal bands belonging to the Viking Metal, Folk Metal and Pagan Metal scenes, it is time to draw conclusions from the analyses. First of all, it is safe to conclude that there is a considerable amount of literary Old Germanic heritage in the lyrics that have been examined. When all the bands in the present study are taken together, a great variety of sources can be discerned in the song texts written by them. We have lyrics based on a variety of stories found in both of the Scandinavian *Eddas*, lyrics that are based on folkloric traditions dating back to ancient times such as the Wild Hunt, lyrics based on historical accounts from the early Middle Ages and then there also are lyrics that contain a mix of one of these elements and fantastic stories invented by the bands themselves, set in a semi-historical past, e.g. the concept album by Turisas about the Varangian Way.

When looking only at the mythologically inspired lyrics, the first thing one notices is a tendency for bands to stick primarily to the best known stories. I believe that this may be caused by a combination of factors. First, since those stories are most famous, these will also be the stories that the lyricists will be most familiar with, making them easier to base song texts on. Second, a band that performs live must also take into account its audience. Again the fame of the stories is the deciding factor here: it is easier for a band to excite the audience when there is a familiar element in the performance that can overcome the initial reluctance. Moreover, lyrics about a well known theme may spark the curiosity of those listeners that are already familiar with some of the stories to see what a band has done with a story they know.

This observation is also true for the historically inspired lyrics: the greater part is focused on relatively well known events, in this case of Anglo-Saxon history, such as the Germanic invasion in Britain in the fifth century and the famous Battle of Hastings fought in 1066. There are also some examples, e.g. the songs about Æthelred the Ill-Advised and about Alfred the Great's daughter Ethelfleda, where the bands have shown a little more daring and picked characters and events that are not part of the common knowledge. The concept album about the Varangian Way by the Finnish

band Turisas also belongs in this category, though the Finns have found a very efficient way of making an album about something relatively unknown still quite accessible. They have done this by creating a story of fantasy that is nevertheless set in a real historical context and by giving their album a sound that is reminiscent of adventure movie soundtracks at times. However, the bands do not always stay on completely safe ground. By writing lyrics in the band's own language, the authenticity is increased (at least to the ear), but the bar of accessibility is also raised, as listeners must be prepared to accept that they will not understand some or even all of the lyrics sung by a band.

Though I consider my findings to be very interesting, and have been surprised by how closely lyrics are often based on the source texts, it must not be forgotten that the present study only reveals a small fragment of a much larger world. I believe that it would be therefore interesting to make a much more extensive study of the song writing with a textual basis in Viking and Pagan Metal. Perhaps such a larger study might be divided in smaller partitions, focussing on one particular theme as I have suggested in the section on lyrics about Ragnarok.

Appendix: Full Texts Of The Discussed Songs

Amon Amarth

Sorrow Throughout The Nine Worlds (1996)

Sorrow Throughout The Nine Worlds

(Balder) Nightmares

Demons haunt my taunted mind

I'm scared

My death's forseen ungloryful

Plase Father

Make my demons disappear

Please Mother

Death is everywhere

(Odin) My son I've seen your fear

I have felt your pain

No harm will come to you

An oath has been sworn

(Balder) The evil forces around us

Still wants to destroy me

Who is the evil slayer

I cannot see

Loke the deceitful God

Discover the arrow of death

Pointed for the Hoder the blind

by the jealous Loke

The arrow cut through the skin

And into the heart of the bright one

Silence spread throughout the hall Aesir
As the God of Light fell to his knees dying!

Sorrow throughout the nine worlds
The bright God is gone
Sent to Nifelheim by the deceitful...

The Arrival Of The Fimbul Winter

The bleak fimbul winter arrived
Raging across the world
With a fury that defied the memory of man
Terrible wars were fought,
The like had never been seen
Men slew without a thought
The ties of kinship were no more

Skoll and Hati, the ravenous wolves
Arose and devoured the sun and the moon
Darkness descended upon the earth
And the stars fell from the skies
Loud blows heimdall the horn's in the air
Odin quests the head of Mim
Now shakes the holy ash where it stands
The ancient tree moans, Fenris breaks free

How are the Aesir?
How are the Alves?
Loud sounds Joutunheim
Aesir comprise
By the stonedoors dwarfs are moaning
The mountains wise men
Know you now or not?

With his shield at hand
Hrym travels from the east
The serpant is turning, enormous in rage

The serpant breaks the waves
The eagle screams
Nidhoggs tearing corpses
Free comes Nagelfar

Loke leads the legions of the dead
In holy war
Against the justice made by Aesir

Burning Creation

Surtur comes from the south
With red hot fire wargods swords
shines like the sun
Mountains breaks, men on hel-road
The heaven crumbles, Ragnarok is at hand

Then to Hlin appears
Another grief when Odin goes to fight
The evil Fenris
And the brave and glory Frey
goes against Surtur
Then will Friggs beloved one die
Vidar,Odin's mighty son,
he will come to slay the wolf
The sword runs into the
heart of Hverdrungs son
So he avenges his father

So comes Hlodyn's noble son
Thor he goes to fight the snake
In anger he slays the guardian of Midgaard
Nine steps dying walks Odin's son
Away from the snake who misdeeds not fear
Dying from it venom

When all are gone
Only Surtur remained
Passing his hand of fire
across the whole world
Consuming all of creation

The Mighty Doors Of The Speargod's Hall

A battle on a distant shore
Seawolves' wrath sweeps the land
Down from the sky Valkyries ride
And walk the field, hallowed by Tyr

The fight is hard, axes swung
Swords bite sharp, men are slain
The ground turns red, blood-soaked field
Dead man's last bed and Oden sees

Vikings fall, in blood they lie
The web of Horns
They've met their fate
With shield and sword
They're brought in pride
To mighty doors of the Speargod's hall

The gates open and into the hall of braves
They silently walk
The one-eyed sits in glory might
Raises his cup and says:

"Pl vida faltet
Harman svingat
Det blankat swardet
Oeh banen mott
Till den hoges sal
De i ara forts
Oeh vid mjodet hor

Oden kvada"

Dawn breaks. The Einherjer goes to
Relive their last fight
With passion, swords held high
As they ride in the morning mist

The sun warms the air
War cries sound
"Tor Hjelpe!"
The battle begins

Charging horses with fire in breath
Rush to battle - in glory die!

Swords sing in joy
Again they cut
With shining edges
Blood-stained steel

Axes shine, again they're swung
Ripping flesh - death be done

The cold night comes
With charging darkness
To Oden's hall
The Einherjer return

A feast awaits until the next day

When warriors' eyes again shall burn

The Avenger (2000)

The Last With Pagan Blood

We storm ahead with swords and shields

For victory we ride

We fight the world on these battlefields

To re-erect the pagan pride

We draw the blood of those in our way

It's 'victory or die

With pounding, raging fury we slay

The Christian hounds will pay

Charge ahead, no retreat

No mercy, none shall live

To us there is no defeat

No remorse to give

A wind of power blows from the north

The enemy shivers to the core

We slay with strength, pushing forth

Silence before the storm

The gates of Valhalla open up

The ground beneath us shakes

As Odin leads the Gods to war

The Rainbow Bridge cracks

Nothing can stop this final attack
We carve up all in our path
Now there is no turning back
Final battle is here at last

A feast awaits us when we return
Awaiting all that fought in wrath
By the long fires we sit in glory
And beer will cool our soar throats

We are few but strong in will
The last with pagan blood
We fought the world with burning steel
Now we sit in Hall of Gods

Pride and glory in our hearts
Pride and glory in our hearts

Metalwrath

Wrath, hate, pain and death
The code we live by
It's in our souls
Metal is the way

We fight the world
With glowing metal
Now the falses will pay

Our fight has just begun
We're sent from hall of gold
Messengers of death

We're coming after you
You can't escape us
We'll take away your breath

See us ride for vengeance
Friends of the sun cross
We are born of steel

See us ride down
The Amon Amarth
The last sight you'll ever see

So as you stand there
Under gray-clouded skies
Abandoned by your god
You know you're gonna die

You feel a sorrow
Surrounding you
As of the nine worlds
Screaming pain you feel
Your soul vaporizes
As your hearts burst

We charge without fear
Your time has come
Your Fimbul winter's arrived

A chilling wind of ice
Whirls through your heart
Pierces your bones and spine

We are all
Gazing to the skies
We'll make the false hammer fall
And we'll make Thor arise

Our quest is done
Your creation burns
Now we return to Odin's hall

Our dragon's fly
Across the waves
As twilight begins to fall

In victory we ride
We enter the mighty doors
Of the spear-god's hall

As Ygg salutes us
We raise our beers
And drink in honor of our cause

We are all
Greeted by the Gods
We made the false hammer fall
And Thor arose in blood

The Crusher (2001)
A Fury Divine

Death is drawing near
I know it's true but I have no fear
I know I can't escape my:

FATE! Turns it's deadly wheel
Judgement day is closing in but still I cannot feel:

REMORSE! Is for the weak
I stand silent while they speak, their accusations are all:

LIES! Spread by preaching men
I'm on trial for being who I am
And praising the Gods of my native land

I will stand firm, I refuse to kneel
The fury in me is divine
My dark grave awaits, my fate is revealed
But I'm not afraid to die

Death! The day to die is here
The sun rides high on the northern sphere

And the executioner sharpens his:

Axe! Shines in the sun

I smile when they tie me down

And hear the sound of the falling blade

Death! Sweet death, relieve me from this world

Death! Sweet death, relieve me, relieve:

So death finally came to him

The pagan man could not be turned

He faced death with a grin

Now his head rests in the dust

The proud man stood firm, he refused to kneel

Then fury in him was divine

Now he is dead, his fate has been sealed

He's brought to Golden Hall up high

Releasing Surtur's Fire

He's riding down 'cross a field familiar but nothing is the same

This place he knew as Hammerfest

When the old Gods reigned

The army of demons rides

By his side with weapons drawn

Today is the day

When Ragnarok will be spawned

There lies the mountain where the temple once stood
Where eons ago he arose to spill their christian blood

Stuck in the rock is a golden ring
That yet no one's dared to touch
The legend has it it's where the Crusher once struck

He pulls the hammer from the mountain's grip
The sign for demons to attack
He's been called upon to arise and he won't spare a single life
No, Thor (won't) spare a single soul, nor let them get away alive
They strike down on the world with overwhelming force
All resistance is brutally crushed, crushed without remorse
Dark angels descend to join the bloodfight
The slaughter brings them on, see Odin's Valkyries ride

The battle of Midgard is almost won
And the thousand years of tyranny will be forever gone
Soon a new world will be born rising from the Sea
Where Asagods again shall reign and humans will be free

He rides once more upon the black mountain of doom
Holding firm the Crusher of giants' bones
He lets the hammer strike, now everything will burn
As Surtur's fire is released upon the world

Versus The World (2002)

Death In Fire

The wait is soon at end
Always charge never bend
Morning is here, make your stand
Live for honor, glory, death in fire!

Total war is here
Face it without fear
Age of sword, age of spear
Fight for honor, glory, death in fire!

See the fire rise
Flames are raging high
Soon all will burn and die
Burn for honor, glory, death in fire!

Storm of lethal flames
Only death remains
Ragnarok is closing in
Die for honor, glory, death in fire!

Forces of chaos is on the move
Everyone, choose your side
And know the end is coming soon
The day for all to die

The day is here when Bifrost breaks

Nor sun or moon will rise
When the dead rise from their graves
and Surtur spreads his fire

All you know will wither away
And sink into the sea
A new world will be born one day
Where everyone is free

Total war is here, face it without fear
Age of sword, age of spear
Fight for honor, glory, death in fire!

Storm of lethal flames
Only death remains - Ragnarok is our fate
Die for honor, die for glory
Die, death in fire!

For The Stabwounds In Our Backs

Silently we bide our time
Soon we'll pay you back
For all the wrongs you've done our kind
For the stabwounds in our backs

You think you're safe. Well, live your lie
There's no way you'll escape
The day that all things living die

The day we rise again

Then Fenris' father will summon us

And we will rise from the death

One million warriors with foaming mouths

To challenge life itself

A horrid ship of dead men's nails

Will bring our ranks ashore

The eastern wind will fill our sails

And your son will hold the oar

You think you're safe. Well, live your lie

There's no way you'll escape

The day that all things living die

The day we rise again

Our rusty swords will never rest

So send the best you've got

Into our grinning jaws of death

We'll make their suffering short

So sit there on your golden throne

Soon we will arise

Time for vengeance is coming soon

The time for all to die!

Where Silent Gods Stand Guard

The last head falls to the ground
No one is left alive
They thought that they could take me down
But it's not my time to die

I wipe the blood from my sword
And slide it in my belt
This is the sweetest of rewards
The best rush I have felt

Ten men are dead by my feet
I smell their streaming blood
And I smile, cause it makes me...
...makes me feel so good

They were crawling on their knees
Begging for their pathetic lives
Now their souls belong to me
As well as their eyes

Each man has something that I crave
I eat their steaming eyes
And drink their blood to make them my slaves
At Oden's feat in afterlife

I bring the skulls to my shrine
Where silent Gods stand guard
Soak them in blood and in wine - A sacrificial ritual

One thousand heads are on display
Collected through years of thirst
Macabre trophies from my prey
Picked clean of flesh by Oden's birds

I am - I am - A wolf in human shape
I am - I am - A predator with flaming rage

I'm a wolf in human shape - Every man is prey
A predator with flaming rage - Blood is in my trace

I will die with sword in hand
And then my seat's secured
When Oden calls from golden hall
He will greet me at the door

Across The Rainbow Bridge

My days are numbered: soon I have to leave
The Norns have stretched my living thread
The notion of my demise won't leave me be
Why cannot death just set me free!

I've lived a life of prosperity
But I'm not as young as I used to be
Down the road waits misery
Why cannot death just set me free!

Countless armies have I attacked
Not once have I backed down
And though I've spilled a lot of blood
I never once received a mortal wound

I've raided shores in many lands
I cannot count the men I've killed
So many friends died with sword in hand
But the warrior's death was never granted me

I dress myself in battle clothes
Alone I make the final ride
My sight is blurred, by whipping snow
I seek to end my life

I want to walk across the Rainbow Bridge
And see my fathers in the golden hall
They beckon me to join their feast
In my dreams I hear their call

Down The Slopes Of Death

Down the slopes of death he rides
The eight hooves pound like drums
Darkness reigns the crumbling sky
Invasion has begun

Fields of flames greets his eye
He smells the fear and pain
Of dying men in agony
It can drive a man insane

All enemies flee his spear
No bow nor axe do harm
Allfather rides out on fields of fear
When Heimdal sounds the alarm

But on the field waits his fate
Foretold in ancient times
A beast with sharp yellow teeth
And hateful burning yes

Today he'll draw his final breath
The wisest God of all
His son will avenge his death
Iormundr's brother will fall

He knows now what is to come
No use to try and run
What is to be, let it be done!
What is to be, let it be done!

Today he'll draw his final breath
The wisest God of all
His son will avenge his death
Iormundr's brother will fall

Down the slopes of death he rides
The eight hooves pound like drums
Darkness reigns the crumbling sky
Invasion has begun

Down the slopes of death he rides
The eight hooves pound like drums
Darkness reigns the crumbling sky
No more is the sun

Thousand Years Of Oppression

He hung on the windswept world tree
Whose roots no one knows
For nine whole days he hung there pierced
By Gugnir, his spear

Swimming in pain he peered into the depths
And cried out in agony
Reaching out he grasped the runes
Before falling back from the abyss

He gave himself unto himself
In a world of sheering pain
So that we all may live our lives
By the wisdom that he gained

You doubted him, and spread their lies

Across the world, with sword in hand
You raped our souls, and stole our right
All for the words of mild-mannered man

You listened to mild-mannered god
And put your faith in deceitful words
Your powertrip was paid by blood
In kindness' name you spilled our blood

I refuse to submit
To the god you say is kind
I know what's right, and it is time
It's time to fight, and free our minds

Let me die without fear!
As I have lived without it
So shut your mouth and spare my ears
I'm fed up with all your bullshit

After a thousand years of oppression
Let the berserks rise again
Let the world hear these words once more:
"Save us, oh lord, from the wrath of the Norseman"

Our spritis were forged in snow and ice
To bend like steel forged over fire
We were not made to bend like reed
Or turn the other cheek

He grasped the runes, they're ours to use

...And Soon The World Will Cease To Be

The Northern wind brings snow and ice

Humans starve and freeze

The Fimbul winter has arrived

And soon the world will cease to be

Brother will be brother's bane

No one shall be spared

All will die. None remain

That is mankind's share

The southern sphere is set ablaze

Muspel's fire is set free

The sun is on its final chase

And soon the world will cease to be

Across the western sky he runs

A wolf so grim and mean

Devours the eternal sun

And soon the world will cease to be

The North Star falls from the sky

Into the deep cold sea

The first of all to fall and die

And soon the world will cease to be

Muspel's flames lick the sky
Hidhægg eats the dead
The Aesir meet in hall up high
And Oden 'quests Mimer's head

Land is swallowed by the waves
Rocks and mountains break
Dead men on the path to Hell
And Yggdrasil quakes

[Lead Mikkonnen]

From the East comes a ship
Loke holds the oar
A demon army with swords that rip
Will join the final war

The army of the dead arrives
Heimdall blows his horn
Calling Gods out to die
Before the world can be reborn

**With Oden On Our Side (2006)
Valhall Awaits Me**

Blood gushes from the wound
The cut is wide and deep
And before I turn around
He falls to his knees

A clear song rings in the blade
When steel meets hardened steel.
I hear the sound of wood that breaks,
A sword cuts through my shield.

I drop the shield and grab my axe,
A weapon in each fist.
The first blow makes the helmet crack,
The axe cut to the teeth.

I rip the axe from the head,
covered in blood and brains.
Leave the body lying dead,
Ready to strike again.

My sword cuts through clothes and skin,
Like a hot knife cuts through snow.
I smile as the bastard screams,
when I twist my sword.

Sword in my hand,
Axe on my side.
Valhall awaits me,
Soon I will die.
Bear skin on my back,
Wolf jaw on my head.
Valhall awaits me
when I'm dead.

I raise my axe above my head,
My eyes stare in furious rage.
Yet more blood will be shed,
This is a victorious day!

Blood gushes from the wound,
The cut is wide and deep.
As I turn around,
I fall to my knees.

Sword in my hand,
Axe on my side.
Valhall awaits me,
Soon I will die.
Bear skin on my back,
Wolf jaw on my head.
Valhall awaits me
when I'm dead.

Runes To My Memory

We rode the rivers of the Eastern trail,
Deep in the land of the Rus'.
Following the wind in our sails,
And the rhythm of the oars.
No shelter in this hostile land,
Constantly on guard.
Ready to fight and defend

Our ship 'til the bitter end.

We came under attack,
I received a deadly wound.
A spear was forced into my back
Still I fought on.

When I am dead,
Lay me in a mound.
Raise a stone for all to see
Runes carved to my memory

Now here I lay on the river bank
A long, long way from home
Life is pouring out of me
Soon I will be gone.

I tilt my head to the side
And think of those back home
I see the river rushing by
Like blood runs from my wound.

Here I lie on wet sand,
I will not make it home.
I clinch my sword in my hand,
Say farewell to those I love.

When I am dead,
Lay me in a mound.

Place my weapons by my side
For the journey to Hall up high
When I am dead,
Lay me in a mound.
Raise a stone for all to see
Runes carved to my memory

Asator

Thunder rolls across the plains,
Thor rides in pouring rain.
He rides to Jotumheim to fight
Lightning strikes when Mjölner bites.

Fire! Burning in his eyes
Fire! His hate is pure, see the lightning strike
Fire! Burning in his eyes
Fire! His hate is pure, see the lightning strike

Lightning cracks the blackened sky,
Hear the thunder chariot ride
All brave men with hearts of war
Ride the path of mighty Thor

Son of thunder!
Lightning strikes
Son of thunder!
Son of thunder!

Thor Arise!
Son of thunder!

Son Of Oden
Thundergod
Master of War
Asator!

Fire! Burning in his eyes
Fire! His hate is pure, see the lightning strike
Fire! Burning in his eyes
Fire! His hate is pure, see the lightning strike

Hermod's Ride To Hel - Lokes Treachery Part 1

[Hermod:]
Ride Sleipner
Ride for all you're worth
Faster then lightning,
To the dark realms of the world

Through valleys of darkness
On our way to Nifelheim
To the halls of Hel
Where my brother waits

Wailing voices on the wind
Urging me to turn

Distant tortured screams
Cold blue fires burn

I hear the sound of river Gjoll
Running cold and deep
It's a golden bridge shines in the dark
The bridge that Modgud keeps

Over the bridge, on through the night
Hel is getting near
There are the gates, towering high
Afflicting me with fear

In her hall, at the honor seat
My brother sits in pain
Pale and tortured Balder greets
Bound by invisible frozen chains

[Hermod:]

I have come, to bring him back with me
The whole world mourns his death!
Please set Balder free
Give him back his breath!

[Hel:]

If it's true, what you say to me
That the whole world mourns his death.
If the whole world will weep I'll give him back his breath!

Prediction Of Warfare

Ships were prepared

Weapons and shields

Sails were raised

We headed out to sea!

Norway disappeared in the east

Our journey had begun

Helpful winds gave us our speed

Under a warming sun

Heading to the emerald land

A fleet of 50 ships

An army of two thousand men lead by the king

On the horizon dark clouds arose

Thor rode across the black clouds

As the night rolled in over us

We felt the wrath of the storm

That night I was haunted by dreams

An omen, of what was to come

The serpent arose from the sea

Ready to strike

With hammer in hand

The serpent in pain,

twisting in furious rage!
Fought for its life
The serpent escaped
Thor was in rage
My dreams began to fade

Woke from dreams
Sword in my hand
The break of dawn
We were closing in on Irish land
Time to attack
Grabbed our shields
We came ashore
And saw the waiting horde

The fight was short and deadly intense
The Irish fought us well
But as we gained the upperhand
Their fighting spirit quelled

Ready to strike
With swords in our hands
They struggle with heart
The Irish fell to our wrath
Fought for his life
Their king escaped
With fury divine
King Olaf threw his sword

Twilight Of The Thunder God (2008)

Twilight Of The Thunder God

There comes Fenris' twin
His jaws are open wide
The serpent rises from the waves

Jormungandr twists and turns
Mighty in his wrath
The eyes are full of primal hate

Thor! Odin's son
Protector of mankind
Ride to meet your fate
Your destiny awaits
Thor! Hlödyn's son
Protector of mankind
Ride to meet your fate
Ragnarök awaits

Vingtor rise to face
The snake with hammer high
At the edge of the world

Bolts of lightning fills the air
as Mjöltnir does it's work
the dreadfull serpent roars in pain

Thor! Odin's son

Protector of mankind
Ride to meet your fate
Your destiny awaits
Thor! Hlödyn's son
Protector of mankind
Ride to meet your fate
Ragnarök awaits

Mighty Thor grips the snake
Firmly by its tongue
Lifts his hammer high to strike
Soon his work is done
Vingtor sends the giant snake
Bleeding to the depth

Twilight of the thundergod
Ragnarök awaits
Twilight of the thunder god
Twilight of the thunder god
Twilight of the thunder god
Twilight of the thunder god

Thor! Odin's son
Protector of mankind
Ride to meet your fate
Your destiny awaits
Thor! Hlödyn's son
Protector of mankind
Ride to meet your fate

Ragnarök awaits

Varyags Of Miklagaard

Miklagaard has been our home
For twenty years or more
We've lent our axes, spears and swords
In service of the emperor

We are loyal warriors
That's the oath we gave
To protect the emperor
Even to a violent grave

Our loyalty was always firm
We kept our given word
On these southern battlefields
Our northern war cries roared

Battles have been fought
Many gave their lives
But all who died by axe and sword
Were called to hall up high

Our time here
Is now at end
Can't help but reminisce
A cold spring day
So long ago

When we set out to sea

We!

Set out from Svitjod's

Shores!

With dreams of fame and

Gold!

And!

The work of weaving

Norn's!

Was for us unknown

We were loyal warriors

That's the oath we gave

To protect the emperor

Even to the grave

It's time to take farewell

We have been resolved

From the sacred oath we gave

It's time to go back home

Out time here

Is now at end

Our memories will stay

Of Miklagaard

Our southern home

Until the end of days

We!
Set out for Svitjod's
Shores!
With honor and
Rewards!
We return back
Home!
We return back
Home!
With honor and
Rewards!
We return back
Home!

Tattered Banners And Bloody Flags

There comes Lopt, the treacherous
Lusting for revenge
He leads the legions of the dead
Towards the Aesir's realm

They march in full battle dress
With faces grim and pale
Tattered banners and bloody flags
Rusty spears and blades

Cries ring out, loud and harsh
From cracked and broken horns

Long forgotten battle cries
In strange and foreign tongues

Spear and sword clash rhythmically
Against the broken shields they beat
They bring their hate and anarchy
Onto Vigrid's battlefield

There comes Lopt, the treacherous
He stands against the gods
His army grim and ravenous
Lusting for their blood

Nowhere is longer safe
The earth moves under our feet
The great world tree Yggorasil
Trembles to its roots

Sons of muspel gird the field
Behind them Midgaard burns
Hrym's horde march from Nifelheim
And the Fenris wolf returns

Heimdal grips the Giallarhorn
He sounds that dreaded note
Oden rides to quest the Norns
But their web is torn
The Aesir rides out to war
With armor shining bright

Followed by the Einherjer
See valkyries ride

Nowhere is longer safe
The earth moves under our feet
The great world tree Yggorasil
Trembles to its roots

Sons of muspel gird the field
Behind them Midgaard burns
Hrym's horde march from Nifelheim
And the Fenris wolf returns

Forefather

The Fighting Man (2000)

The Fighting Man

-Music & Lyrics Athelstan-

The flag held high, a call to the warrior's pride
North they had won, weary in body not mind
Standing alone, the few who would see him to live
For their brother to stay, allegiance to him they must give

Under the banner of The Fighting Man

Through dense forest and dark of night
Always the flag is alight
From northern lands to shores of south
Always the flag is the light

Not the chosen son of throne
But they did hail him as their own
The Fighting Man in two was torn
A new flag flies but soon we'll see the new dawn

Under The Fighting Man

The Last Battle

-Music & Lyrics Wulfstan-

The chaos has reigned, the battle has been won
No time to rest, we must re-group and march
The final hurdle lies upon the horizon
One more push, our will shall see us through

Weary we are but fight on we must
Away from the carnage we ride
Bloodied and battered but spirit unbroken
Toward the last battle we go
The blood of the fallen flows through our veins
It gives us the strength to fight on
Weakened by number, stronger in will
Toward the last battle we go

Weapons have clashed, the chosen ones lay behind
Back to our feet, ready to war once more
Our destiny shall open its arms before us
A passion-filled cry, our will shall see us through

We struck our blows ferociously
We warred with passion as one
We spilled their blood without fear
From the last battle our honour lives on

When Our England Died

-Music Traditional-

-Lyrics Wulfstan-

Wearily to the last battle they strode
Onward through day and through night
To death they did go but they let them know the power of Angelisc might

Together they walked and together they'd fall
Under the Autumn sky
With victory song behind shield-wall strong
They slashed and they battered with pride

Over river and stream and through forest and field
They marched with fire in their eyes
Wiping the sweat from their brows
For miles they had fared and no effort was spared
On the day when our England died

Over river and stream and through forest and field
We'll march with fire in our eyes
Like the forefathers of old
For miles we shall fare and no effort we'll spare

Till the day when our England's revived

Engla Tocyme (2002)

Engla Tocyme

(The Coming of the English)

-Music & Lyrics Wulfstan-

Men of the sea, on the waves they did ride

Drifting toward their new dawn

Sailing forth with the wind as their guide

Fathers of a kingdom to be born

Their blood flows in me

Through their eyes I see

With their spirit I shall bring down my blade

I speak with their words

Their callings I have heard

For their honour I shall bring down my blade

Offa's sons, by the waters they fared

Gliding beyond Angeln's plains

Swiftly on to their fortunes ahead

Masters of a land to be claimed

Old English: Hruon and feollon cynelicu getimbru somod and anlipie, and gehwær sacerdas and mæssepreostas betwuh wibedum wæron slægene and cwielmde; biscopas mid folcum buton ænigre are sceawunge ætgædre mid iserne and lige fornumene wæron.

Translation: Kingly buildings tumbled and fell, together and singularly, and everywhere priests and clergymen were slain and killed among their alters; bishops with their folk without regard to any mercy were destroyed with iron and fire together.

Fifeldor

-Music Wulfstan/ Athelstan-

-Lyrics Wulfstan-

In times of old beyond the sea
When Wærmund ruled the Angelcynn
To him was born a worthy son
That would in time a hero become
Raiders from the borderlands
English blood on Myrging hands
The time would come for swords to shine
The time would come to draw the line

Fifeldor! Where Myrging blood was poured
Fifeldor! Where Angeln was secured
Fifeldor! Where Offa made his stand
Fifeldor! To hold the English land

Dishonour plagued his youthful mind
A shameful act by his own kind
And spoke he not a single word
But still with time he would be heard
Across the Eider Myrgings came
Demanding that tribute be paid (to their Swabian overlord)

The time had come for swords to shine
The time had come to draw the line

At Monster-Gate the duellists met
A kingdom's fate in Offa's hands
With Stedefæst prepared to strike
Steel would soon shine bloody wet
Around the Eider saw the crowds
A nation saved - a hero made
Knelt Offa at the Eider's flow
And cleansed the blood from on his blade

Old English: Ane sweorde merce gemærde wið Myrgingum bi Fifeldore; heolden
forð siþþan Engle ond Swæfe swa hit Offa geslog

Translation: With his lone sword he fixed the border against the Myrgings at
Monster-Gate; ever since, the English and the Swabians have kept it as Offa won it.

Ours Is The Kingdom (2004)

The Shield-Wall

-Music & Lyrics Wulfstan-

When the fiends have come there is nowhere to hide
I must swing my axe, my brothers at my side
Feeding on our own fear, passions running high
Fleeing not a choice, better to fight and die

In the shield-wall we stand to defend our land
Holding on till the end

Brace the storm and keep the shining blades at bay
Fight to let our kingdom live another day
Heed the old ones' cries, we mustn't let them down
We will slaughter them to keep them from the crown

In the shield-wall we stand to defend our land
Holding on till the end

Flanas gesecaþ me
Ecga beataþ me
Beornas wieldaþ me
Cyningas sind genered þurh me

Iren gewundaþ me
Wæpen deriaþ me
Cempa teoraþ me
Cynedom is gewered þurh me

In the shield-wall we stand to defend our land
Holding on till the end .

Smashed By Fate

-Music Wulfstan-

-Lyrics Wulfstan/ Athelstan-

Falling towers of stone, smashed by fate
The giants' craft declines, undermined by age
Once shining and strong with celebration of men

Until the mighty one swept them away

Their warriors destroyed with war, the times of affliction came

Their shining realms in ruin, deserted and decayed

Where bold, proud-hearted men looked on riches bright

Behold the power of fate at this crumbling site

The earth's grip holds as eras pass

We took what we wanted and claimed it as ours

Many a storm these shadow kingdoms have seen

Grey with lichen, stained with blood and misery

Once they looked on riches, possessions, precious stones

Everything must die, all that's left is echoes

Legends fading day by day, cracks are gaping wide

Till mighty fate will sweep away their ancient work and pride

Their warriors destroyed with war, the times of affliction came

Their shining realms in ruin, deserted and decayed

Where bold, proud-hearted men looked on riches bright

Behold the power of fate at this crumbling site

The earth's grip holds as eras pass

We took what we wanted and claimed it as ours

Many a storm these shadow kingdoms have seen

Grey with lichen, stained with blood and misery

The Sea-Kings

-Music & Lyrics Athelstan-

"Across the flood to eastern shore
Riding the wind, steady with oar
Forty strong, fifteen score
They come upon the eastern shore"

To The Mountains They Fled

-Music & Lyrics Wulfstan-

From beyond we sailed the sea
Seeking new prosperity
We came for the victory
On the fields we cut them down
Stole their pride and burned their towns
These lands held our destiny

Routed and shamed to the mountains they fled
Soundly defeated they sadly abandoned their homes
A new force had arrived to remain
Covered with glory we conquered and settled our land - Engalund

From foreign soil they saw us come
They new the fight could not be won
We offered them no mercy
Ruthlessly they felt our might
In fear they ran into the night
We shattered their dignity

Routed and shamed to the mountains they fled

Soundly defeated they sadly abandoned their homes
A new force had arrived to remain
Covered with glory we conquered and settled our land - Englalund

Steadfast (2008)

Brunanburh

-Music & Lyrics Wulfstan-

Our lord of warriors eternal glory won
By the sword's edge at Brunanburh
Smashed the shield-wall and drove them from the land
The enemy doomed they fell and the field was dark with blood

Shot with spears, the crushed assailants fled
In revenge we rode them down and the vanquished took to sea
Edward's sons victorious in war
Made mountains of the slain and the wolves and crows did feast

Great slaughter made and the fields of Britain tamed
Lord of the fyrd, he fared north and he held his sway
Mastery claimed and the hearts of the beaten shamed
Engla Cyning - Rex Totius Britanniae!
Legend made at Brunanburh

Mighty victory has no name
In the shadow of Senlac's fame
Words that glorify on a withered page
Lost in the myth of a dark age

Ne wearð wæl mare
on þis eiglande æfre gieta
folces gefylled beforan þissum
sweordes ecgum, þæs þe us secgaþ bec,
ealde uðwitan, siþþan eastan hider
Engle and Seaxe up becoman,
ofer brad brimu Brytene sohtan,
wlance wigsmiþas, Wealas ofercoman,
eorlas arhwate eard begeatan.

(Old English recital from Battle of Brunanburh poem)

Cween Of The Mark

-Music Athelstan-

-Lyrics Wulfstan-

Warrior maiden, blood of the kings
Our brave and glorious cween
Lead us into victorious times
When we will reign supreme
For far too long they've soiled our land
But now the tides have changed
We will have our just revenge
When by our steel they're slain

As we prepare for the battle
The lady's our beacon of light
Their bodies will break on our blades
With the Cween of the Mark at our side

Golden hair frames her solemn face
High up on her steed
Beneath the banner of the mark
Fluttering in the breeze
For far too long they've soiled our land
But now the tides have changed
We will have our just revenge
When by our steel they're slain

Three Great Ships

-Music & Lyrics Wulfstan-

Across the sea they heard the call
Blood to spill and gold in hand
Charged to flash their deadly steel
And defend this fruitful land
Straightaway they waged their war
And swiftly came the victory
And all of those that were left behind
Beheld the messengers' sign
And the ships filled the shoreline

Bound for fame
With three great ships they came
Riding the waves
To the fray
They soared across the spray
Leading the way

Souls aflame
They made their masters slaves
Destined to reign
Foes forlorn
A sacred myth was born
Wrought a new age

With gathering strength and growing will
They turned to bite the hand that feeds
The worthless hosts harried and slain
From the east to western seas
Altars razed by iron and fire
The pious slaughtered ruthlessly
The survivors fled to cower in the woods
For a life of ignominy
Or sadly crossed the sea

Heidevolk

De Strijdlust Is Geboren (2005)

Hengist en Horsa, het broederpaar
Leidden de Saksische legerschare
Met woede in het hart en saks in de hand
Over Aegir's rijk naar het Brittenland

Angelen en Saksen hieven het zwaard
Kelten en Picten werden niet gespaard
Vriend en vijand toonde moed
En eerde goden met vergoten bloed

Vele schepen met krijgers bemand
Kwamen aan uit ons vaderland
Zoveel strijd nog nooit vertoond
Het land werd van de laffen verschoond

Horsa viel tegen Vortigerns zoon
Maar Hengist won en besteeg de troon
De overwinning was behaald
En nieuwe grond met bloed betaald

Walhalla Wacht (2006)

Koning Radboud

Radboud de koning van 't vrije Friese land
Was de gesel van het noorden en de schrik van elke Frank
Hij maakte hun kerken met de Friese grond gelijk
Tot Keulen en de Schelde strekte eens zijn machtig rijk

Wulfram de christen die hem bekeren wou
Beloofde hem de hemel als hij hem dopen zou
Doch met een been in de vont bedacht de Friese vorst zich snel
Trouw aan zijn verwanten ging hij liever naar de hel

Trek uw zwaard
Blaas de hoorn
Thans ontwaakt
Radbouds toorn

Volk van het noorden, de eenheid maakt ons sterk
Ingwaz zonen knielen niet voor Franken of de kerk

Nog altijd verhaalt men van zijn verworven faam
Verweeuwigd door zijn heldenmoed is Koning Radbouds naam

De Franken en het christendom had deze man gestuit
Zijn laatste adem blies hij in een heidens Friesland uit
Volgens christenen verdoemd, maar dat was niet het geval
Want Radboud en de zijnen vieren feest in Wodan's hal

Liever dood dan slaaf - eer uw voorvaders
Liever dood dan slaaf - blijf uw broeders trouw
Liever dood dan slaaf - eer uw vaderland
Liever dood dan slaaf - blijf de goden trouw

Wodan Heerst

Wodan wist waar hij zou gaan, reisde door weer en wind
Langs reuzenberg en schaduwrijke dalen
Naar Mimirs bron, gelegen aan de voet van Yggdrasil
Waar Wodan kwam om de eeuwige wijsheid te halen
Geen enkel man zou drinken uit de bron zo was het lot
Slechts ene prijs zou de man belonen
Wodan bood Mimir zijn oog doch zou hij beter zien
Hetgeen dat is, en ons nog toe zal komen

Oneindig uw woede, uw wijsheid is groot
Schenk ons de zege, de vijand de dood
Geen angst om te sterven, uw volk onbevreesd
De wereld zal weten dat Wodan heerst
Oneindig uw woede uw wijsheid is groot

Schenk mij uw kennis van leven en dood

Open mijn ogen, ontketen mijn geest

En ik zal dan weten dat Wodan heerst

Wodan hing in de boom, zichzelf verwond met een speer

Een offer om de runenwijsheid te krijgen

Geteisterd door zijn honger en dorst voor negen nachten lang

Zo maakte hij zichzelf de runen eigen

Het runenschrift, het magisch schrift schonk hij aan 't Midgaardvolk

Een gift aan ons die met zijn zegen strijden

Nu kerven wij de runen in ons zwaard voor winst in 't gevecht

Walkuren zien wij door de hemelen rijden

Uit de hemelen staren twee raven

Zij turen over ons donkere vlakke land

En zij zien hoe Wodans volk ontwaakt

Met Wodans zegen gaan wij ten strijde

We grijpen naar het zwaard, de speer en de saks

De vijand hoort hoe ons volk een strijdkreet slaakt

Uit onze kelen klinken de lied'ren

Zij zingen van Alvaders wijsheid en macht

En wij zien hoe de oude god ontwaakt

De laffe vijand die vreest onze toorn

Wij vechten voor de winst en anders de dood

En wij zien hoe Wodan in ons leeft

Walhalla Wacht

Kom, Saksenbroeders, hef uw zwaard ten hemel
Trek nu ten strijde voor de goden en het land Dood aan de Franken en hun god
Jehova Vernietig hun kruizen, steek hun kerken in de brand

Rijs, Saksenbroeders, toont uw trouw aan
Wodan Hoor hoe zijn raven krijsen in de nacht
Grijp naar de wapens, zweer de eed op Gungnir Vrees toch uw dood niet, want
Walhalla wacht
Zij die de Irminzuil voor "God" onteerden
Zullen de prijs betalen met hun hoofd
Zij die Aasgetrouwen bruut vermoordden
Kleuren de grond nu met hun bloed dieprood

Rijs, Saksenbroeders, toont uw trouw aan Donar Hoor hoe zijn bokken rijden in de
nacht
Grijp naar de wapens, zweer de eed op Mjölfnir
Vrees toch uw dood niet, want Walhalla wacht

Nooit zal de christengod hier vrede vinden
Jezus zal nimmer leven in ons hart
Vergeefs is hun strijd om onze ziel te winnen Gruwelijk zijn dood, die de Saksen tart

Rijs, Saksenbroeders, toont uw trouw aan Saxnot Hoor hoe de vrouwen huilen in de
nacht
Grijp naar de wapens, zweer de eed op de doden Vrees toch uw dood niet, want
Walhalla wacht

Opstand Der Bataven

het Romeinse juk onsteekt de haat in de Bataaf
In 't land dat Rome heeft bezet groeit een storm van verzet
De roep om vrijheid zwelt weer aan, Rome zullen wij verslaan
Verlos het eiland in de Rijn van Romeinse heerschappij

Krijgers keer het tij, bevrijd zijn wij van slavernij
Het volk door Rome ooit geknecht slaat nu terug en haalt haar recht
Van de schande is bevrijd hij die met walkuren rijdt
Broeders vechten zijn aan zij, Wodan, Donar, sta ons bij

Heldendaden der Bataven
Eeuwig leeft hun geest in ons
Het land bevrijd van vreemde heersers
Nageslacht vervuld van trots

Het Bataafse volk herwint haar eer en vrijheid weer
Van ons land zijn wij beroofd, maar 't vuur in 't hart is niet gedoofd
Helden vecht en trap in 't slijk de vaandels van 't Romeinse rijk
De Bataafse razernij breekt de ketens, maakt ons vrij

Het Wilde Heer

Sterker woedt de storm
Met het korten van de dagen
Tussen 't leven en de dood
Zal de grens vervagen
Joeltijd breekt weer aan
En de hemelen gaan kolken
In de koude wintermaand
Trekken ruiters langs de wolken

Wodans leger rijdt door de nacht
Als dood en leven bijeen zijn gebracht
Woedend raast het Wilde Heer
Voorvaders, door ons vereerd
Twaalf nachten storm door de lucht
Het Wilde Heer met luid gerucht
Wodans leger rijdt door de nacht
Als dood en leven bijeen zijn gebracht
Woedend raast het Wilde Heer
Voorvaders, door ons vereerd

Aan de einder sterft de zon
En de duisternis zal vallen
Het dodenheer keert weer
Uit de hoge hallen
Het rad wordt dan verbrand
En brengt licht in donkere tijden
In de langste nacht
Zullen doden rijden
Aan de einder sterft de zon
En de duisternis zal vallen
Het dodenheer keert weer
Uit de hoge hallen

Hoor en aanschouw
't Wilde Heer
In de winterkou
Lang duurt de nacht

't Wilde Heer

Gaat aan 't zwerk op jacht

Helden van weleer

Dalen woest op Midgard neer

Als het duister valt

En de hoorn weerschalt

Twaalfde nacht, het leven lonkt

Als huiswaarts trekt het Heer

Uit het zuiden keert de zon

Naar het noorden weer

Naar De Hal Der Gevallenen

Zij die voorzagen, hun doel na hun dagen

Bereiken de poorten van Alvaders hal

Schelden en speren, vlees, bier en mede

Zij vallen ten deel aan wie Wodan verkoor

Naar de hal der gevallen streven de sterken

Wier dadenroem dood en vergetelheid tart

Eeervol geleefd en als helden gestorven

In lied'ren en heldendicht leven zij voort

De hoorn van Heimdal verkondigt de oorlog

De mensen en goden omarmen hun lot

Aan godenzijde te sterven in 't strijden

Laat het oude vergaan en het nieuwe ontstaat

De orde en aarde, zij zullen herrijzen
En Balder en Hodur verzoenen zich dan
Ontstaan na het noodlot van mensen en goden
Leven en Levensdrang keren dan weer

Zwaarden Geheven

Een koude wind blies over Asgaard
Een teken dat het onheil wacht
Zoals immer bevochten Asen
De dreiging van de reuzenmacht

Goudroes kwam in 't rijk der Asen
Schijnend met haar gouden pracht
Tweespalt zaaide zij in Midgaard
Tweedracht heeft de reus gebracht

Ik spreek tot - onze goden
Ik vraag om - hun heilig zegen
Ik put kracht - uit hun verhalen
Ik loop trots - op hun wegen

Wouden waren alle Asen
Om wat Goudroes had aangedaan
Driemaal is de reus verbrand
Maar toch heeft zij het vuur doorstaan
Het kwam de Wanen snel ter ore

De eerste oorlog is toen ontstaan
Ook hier is tweedracht weer geboren
Een oorlog tussen Aas en Waan

Vanuit de lucht
Kwamen de Wanen
Vanuit de lucht
Trokken zij ten strijd
Tot sterven bereid

Vanuit de lucht
Zwaarden geheven
Vanuit de lucht
Met al hun krachten tesaam
Stormden zij aan

Uit Oude Grond (2010)

Nehalennia

De dag is voorbij
De mist trekt op
De haven verdwijnt uit het zicht
Wij varen naar oorden
Voorheen ongezien
De reis en ons lot onbekend
Op zoek naar de strijd
Vrouwen en bier
Op zoek naar de eeuwige roem
Eer aan de vrouwe

Van leven en dood
Bescherm ons op volle zee

VOORWAARTS

Over de zeeën

VOORWAARTS

Nehalennia

De zeilen staan bol
In zuid wester wind
De horizon is ons doel
Geen stroming te sterk
Of golven te hoog
Trotserend, de grootste storm
Een offer gebracht
Op 't Zeeuwse strand
Bij 't altaar van de godin
Brenghster van welvaart
Handel en licht
wees ons goed gezind

Ver van land,
Over zee,
In de rode avondgloed
De noorderster
Wijst de weg,
Ons lot tegemoet

Voorwaarts voorwaarts, over de zeeën!

Voorwaarts voorwaarts, Nehalennia!
Voorwaarts voorwaarts, over de zeeën!
Voorwaarts voorwaarts, Nehalennia!

Ostara

In het veld gehuld, in mist en kou
Schijnt een glinstering, in de dauw
Als de hemel kleurt van zwart naar blauw

Ostara

In het oosten waar de nacht begon
Ontwaakt het licht der morgenzon
Haar ochtend zegent onze bron

Ostara

In de vroege, als de dag begint
En de zon het sterrenveld verblindt
Als de lente winter overwint

Ostara

Bij de dageraad, door ons aanschouwd
Baant zonlicht zich een pad von goud
Door de kille nevels in het woud

Ostara

Nacht en dag bereiken evenwicht
Langverwachte terugkeer van het licht
Als de zon herrijst en kou verdwijnt
En het levenslicht het land beschijnt
Voel de warmte in de morgenstond

Weelderig groen ontspruit uit koude grond
Als het Saksisch volk de zon begroet
Op de heuvels badend in haar gloed

Dondergod (God Of Thunder)

Donder voorspelt ons een slag die ons wacht
Schichten verscheuren de duistere nacht
Striemende hagel en een ijzige wind
Razende reuzen, de veldslag begint

DONDERGOD

Sterkste der Azen, kom toon ons uw macht
Ontketen uw hamers verwoestende kracht
Bliksems bestrijken de hemel, zo zwart
Machtige donder, dreun door in ons hart

DONDERGOD

DONAR zoon der aarde
DONAR botvier uw haat
DONAR hef uw hamer
DONAR god die de reuzen verslaat

Dreigende hemel, een oorlog ontbrandt
Weerlicht en donder ontwaken het land
Eeuwige vijand van het reuzengebied

Laat hen bezwijken en baden in bloed

DONDERGOD

De hamer der goden, bij reuzen berucht
Brengt vlamme aders, gesmeed in de lucht
Het wolkendek dendert, de dondergod rijdt
Het hemelvuur brandt als de dondergod strijdt

DONDERGOD

DONAR zoon der aarde
DONAR botvier uw haat
DONAR hef uw hamer
DONAR god die de reuzen verslaat

Zegen en dood
De hamer daalt neer
De hemel ontlaadt
De dondergod zegeviert weer

Reuzenmacht (Giants' Might)

Hoort u mij toe
Als ik u verhaal
Van oude sagen
Van reuzentijd

Vertel ons de sagen

Van oeroude machten
In 't Gelderse land
Wat weet u nog meer?

Ik spreek over woesten
Groot als de bergen
Als vurige vlammen
Of ijzige rijp

De goden behoeden
Ons tegen de krachten
Nimmer kere
Dit onheil ooit weer

Voor goden ogen verscholen
Diep in bergen en holen
Waar donk're wezens wachten
Huizen oeroude krachten
Huiver Bergerlmirs zonen
Die in duisternis wonen
Kwaad dat men nooit verwacht
Vrees den reuzenmacht

Een volk uit chaos geboren
Laat zijn lachen luid horen
Zij die de orde bestrijden
Komend uit al oeroude tijden
Huiver Bergerlmirs zonen
Die in duisternis wonen

Kwaad dat men nooit verwacht
Vrees den reuzenmacht

Kent u de bergen
Bij Elten gelegen
En zand'rige heuvels
In't Veluwse land

Gij spreekt over gronden
Bewerkt door de reuzen
De aarde bewerkt
Met krachtige hand
Ik zag rotsen barsten
Ik zag heide branden
Ik zag bomen splijten
Met ontmeet'lijke kracht

Eeuwige woede
Eeuwige honger
Oneindige haat
Bij 't Utgaardgeslacht

"Mij heugen de reuzen
In oertijd geboren
Die lang geleden
Het leven mij schonken
Negen werelden
Negen ruimten
De oude maatboom

Onder de grond"

Als donkere wolken

Zich samepakken

Donder en bliksem

Een reus wordt geveld

Machtige stormen

Razen in 't Midgaard

Buld'rende slagen

Van bruto geweld

Levenslot (Fate Of Life)

Eindeloze winter, de aarde zo koud

Onvree en oorlog zullen het einde baren

Broeders keren zich tegen elkaar

Geen mens zal de ander sparen

Hati verslind de zon en Skalli de maan

Een diepe duisternis omsluit de werelden

De wolf breekt zijn ketenen en brult luidt

Zijn godenvader en het nagelschip naderen

"De zon wordt zwart

In zee zinkt de aarde

Uit de hemel vallen

Heldere sterren

Damp en vuur

Dringen dooreen
Hoog tot de hemel
Stijgt een hete vlam"

Heimdalls hoorn luidt voor Goden en mensen
Met brandende haat zullen Reuzen naderen
Wodan rijdt uit met het leger der gevallenen
Het kwaad wordt bestreden door zonen en vadersen

De eindstrijd nabij, wolftijd, zwaardtijd
de aarde brand de maatboom schudt
Dag van duister, dag van bloed
Dag van leven en heldenmoed

"De zon wordt zwart
In zee zinkt de aarde
Uit de hemel vallen
De heldere sterren

Damp en vuur
Dringen dooreen
Hoog tot de hemel
Stijgt een hete vlam"

Levenslot, portret van einde
Eenzaamheid en razernij
Ondergang der Goden
De aarde brand

Einde en het Begin
Een nieuwe zon verreist
Goden herleven
De aard bloeit weder

Helheim

Jormungand (1995)

Jormundgand

I havets svarte dyp, under den farefulle sjø
Havet rundt alle land, der ferdes ingen mann
Kom søsken av Jormundgand, bli med i den siste strid
Kom i deres fars navn, Loke venter dere i krig

Bølgene reiser seg som fjell
de vil drepe hver konge hver træll
Der de drukner i vannet
som siger innover landet
Maktenes mørke har inntatt jorden
Ondskap siger i floden av Jormundgands bølgebrus
som er lik hundre vindere sus

Nå ser man intet grønt
alt ligger i et askehav
Og alt det som var skjønt
ligger nå i undergang
Jorden er et åpent sår
som sakte synker bort
Ingen flere leveår
alt er bare sort

Drept av Tors hammer
men drept blir Tor selv
Jormundgand, hersker over dypet
ondskapens mørke flod

Død er havets hersker
Død er ondskapens mørke flod

Død er Lokes sønn armen som omslynger Midgard
Død er amren som aldri slapp løs for tidenes strid
Død er Jormundgand som entret mørkets favn

[English translation:]

[Jormundgand]

In the black deeps of the ocean
under the perillous sea
The ocean encompassing all the land
there no man dares to sail
Come brethren of Jormundgand
join in the final battle
Come in the name of your father
Loke awaits you in the war

The waves are rising as mountains
they will murder each king and each trel
where they drown in the sea
that is flowing over the land
The twilight of the gods has conquered the earth
Evil is saging in the flood of Jormundgands gush of waves
and sounds like the sough of a hundred winds

Now, no green can be seen
everything lies in a sea of ashes
and all that once was beautiful
is now in ruins
The earth is an open wound
which slowly fades
No more years of life
everything is black

Slain by Thors hammer
but he himself is killed
Jormundgand, the lord of the deep
the black flood of evil

Dead is the lord of the sea
Dead is the dark flood of evil
Dead is Lokes son the serpent that surrounds Midgard

Dead is the serpent that never was released before the
final battle
Dead is Jormundgand he who enters the embracement of
darkness

Vigrids Vård

På vigrids slette en kjølig natt
hviler der en tåke tett
Føoles som et himmelsk kvel
der jeg står forlatt i tåkens hjerte

En sen Oktober fullmåne natt
Ensom på en hedensk mark
I Vigrids vård
I tåken av min skjebne

Jeg føler en kald bris fare lett forbi
Den streifer meg, tar meg langt avsted
Jeg svever gjennom luften som en ensom ravn
mens vigrids vård sakte lar meg dø

Dra meg med til ingensteds
slik at jeg kan dø
og Vigrids vård
kan fortsatt jakte
på de sterke menns sjeler

La Vigrids vård styrkes
slik at den kan dyrkes
og en lavere makt
kan bli ødelagt

[English translation:]

[The spirit of Vigrid]

On the field of Vigrid a cold night
a thick fog rests
Feels like a heavenly suffocation
There I stand in the heart of the fog

A late October fullmoon night
lonely on a pagan field
In the spirit of Vigrid
in the fog of my fate

I feel a cold breeze drifting lightly by
it touches me, takes me far away
I float through the air lonely as a raven
while the spirit of Vigrid slowly lets me die

Take me to nowhere
so that I can die
and let the spirit of Vigrid
still hunt for the souls of the strong men

Strengthen the spirit of Vigrid
so that it can be worshipped
and make a lesser might disappear

Svart Visdom

På norsk jord vi står
sønner av den norønne ætt
Stolte vi står med sverd og skjold i hånd
Vi husker den tid
en tid glemt
men snart tilbakevunnet
Da gudene hersket
og slag var som blodet i vår kropp

Da vi, vikinger av Norge hersket i det kalde nord
og skapte frykt med vårt sverd

Flammer lyste opp himmelen dengang, men ikke nå
Blod fløt i strie strømmer snart det vil igjen
Vår makt er ikke borte vi står ennå tilbake
med våre forfedres visdom
Svart som natten
Vis som kongen i Valhall

En ed ble sverget
Sverget til hevn
Hevn og hat

Vårt hat skal de få

Den hedenske gjenforeningen venter
Ta til sverd, ta til øks
Vinder blir til storm dager om til natt
Det er tid for hevn slakt de som engang slaktet
Vårt dødens korstog marsjerer

Tornekronen vil falle hardt til grunn
En ingens konge vil stige ned fra sin trone
Han skal bli borte borte for alltid
Vikinger vil entre med blodige sverd
for å knuse tronen og slippe fri våre forfedre
De hedenske gudene som i svart visdom
engang hersket og nå vil herske på ny

[English translation:]

[Black wisdom]

On Norwegian earth we stand
sons of the norse tribe
Proud we stand
with swords and shields in hand
We remember the time
a time forgotten but soon to be reconquered
When the gods ruled
and battles were like the blood in our veins

When we, vikings of Norway ruled the cold north
and spread fear with our swords

Flames lit the sky then, but not anymore
Blood floated in wild rivers
and soon the blood will float again
Our might is not gone
we still stand with our ancestors wisdom
Black as the night
Wise as the king of Valhalla

An oath was sworn
Sworn to revenge

Revenge and hate
Our hate we will give them

The pagan reunion awaits
Reach for your sword, reach for your axe
Winds become storms days turn to nights
The time for revenge has arrived
Slaughter them whom once slaughtered
Our crusade of death marches on

The crown of thorns will fall
hard to the ground
Once a nomans king
will descend from his throne
He shall vanish
vanish forever
Vikings will enter with swords in blood
to crush the throne
and release our ancestors
the pagan gods
who in black wisdom
once ruled
and now will rule again

Jotnevandring

Fra Heimen i nord kommer en horde stor
Etterlater seg dype jotunspor

En vandring mot dommedagens mark
Stien fører dem hen mot dødens trone
Kjødets lyst springer ut og gir makt, og slakter ned uten nåde

En vandring som fører dem
langt vekk fra Jotunheimen

[English translation:]

[Jotun wandering]

From heimen in the north a great horde is coming

leaving deep prints of jotun feet

A wandering towards the doomsday field
the path leads them towards the throne of death

Out bursts the lust of the flesh which gives might
and slaughters without mercy

A wandering that leads them
far away from Jotunheimen

Av Norrøn Ætt (1997)

Vinterdøden

Tiden er kommet som engang var fortalt
der menneskets verden i sorg skal bli lagt
Tre kalde vintre legger sin bleke arm
rundt Mannheims frostbetonte land

Et skall av skjebnens dystre tone
setter sprekker i dødens frosne krone
Sulten venter verden derunder
forbi porten og Hels ulvehunder
Fra en verden av evig fortapelse
til en annen med bøddelens fortatelse

En hyklersk strid blant levninger
fortapt i vinterdød
graver åpne på snøen så blodrød
Liv går tapt ved fiendens og ens egen hånd
spunnet blir nornenes skjebnesbånd
Lagt i frossen aske

Den fortviltes kamp- tårer bundet til evighet
Alle smerteskrig samles- til helvetes borgens profet
Så trist alt er- det sørgelig fortalt
Farvel- en tom evighet, alt er forfalt

Tid er ei tid her mer
Liv er ei liv noensted
Et øye kan ei som et øye se
Forsvunnet er alt folk og fe

Hører ei en vissen tone mer
Sanser intet, føler intet
Vinterdøden flere hundre dager lange
tok alt.. men vent..

[English translation:]

[Winterdeath]

The time has come as once was told
where man's world will be lain in sorrow
Three cold winters puts their pale arm
around Mannheims frosty land

A shell of fate's sombre tone
cracks death's frozen crown
Hungry the world waits thereunder
Past the gate and Hel's wolves
From a world of eternal damnation
to another with the executioner's pardon

A hypocritical battle among remnants lost
in winterdeath
graves open in the bloodred snow
Lives are lost at the hand of the enemy and oneself
The norm's band of faith is being spun
Lain in frozen ashes

The battle of the despairing- tears bound to eternity
All cries of pain are gathered- to the hellcastels prophet
All is dismal- the tragic is told
Farewell- an empty eternity, all as decayed

Time is not time here anymore
Life is not life anywhere
An eye can not see like an eye
Gone are the people and beasts
Never hear are withered note again
Sense nothing, feel nothing
The winterdeath hundreds of days old
took everything.. but wait..

Mørk, Evig Vinter

I opphavs tider var ingenting, ikke sand, ikke sjø eller svale bølger;
jord og opphimmel fantes der ikke, bare Ginnunga-gap og gras ingen steder
Fra et urvesen av jotunslekt ble kuldeverden skapt
Frostjotner rår over kulde, mørke og den svarte makt
Lange dager og tunge år skal der engang komme, for menneskenes tid i Midgard er omme
De skal fare til det dunkle svarte, i flammene og kaoset de ikke vil makte
Frostjotner vil fryde seg i galskapens ekstase, de vil bli verdens nye mektigste rase
De skal vokte verdens bønder, plyndre, drepe og fardømme

I nord ligger slottet, til over tusner jotner
De skuer ut mot landet, der alt skal stå i brann

Tidenes strid
Mørk, evig vinter
Pines i Slid
mennesker der lider

For jotnenes kamp har begynt, mot det menneskene har forkynt
Her skal den mørke skjebne seire, for her skal Frostjotnene feire
Mørk, evig vinter

Det klinger i sverd, økser og store hammere
Skrik og hyl synger som i Nivlheim
Blodet fra jotner og menn flyter gjennom landet, og røyken fra brent skog stiger
i en sort eim
Frostjotner sloss som gale ulver, mens menn løper som redde sauer
Jotnenes makt har satt sitt spor på en engang grønn, flott jord
Ingen liv spares etter denne siste krig for her skal alle dø på verste vis
Kvinner og menn, alle skal lide, til Nivlheim gjennom Slid de pines
I opphavs tider var ingenting, ikke sand, ikke sjø eller svale bølger
Men nå finnes det mørke, kulde og evig vinter, for Frostjotnene har verden underlagt

I nord ligger slottet, til over tusen jotner
De skuer ut mot ødeland, der alt står i brann

For jotnenes kamp er vunnet, menneskene har forsvunnet
Her har den mørke skjebne seiret og Frostjotnene har feiret
Mørk, evig vinter
[første vers tatt fra Voluspå]

[English translation:]

[Dark, eternal winter]

In the time of origin there was nothing, not sand, not sea or cool waves
earth and heaven did not exist, just Ginnunga-gap, and grass nowhere
From a primitive creature of Giant- race, the cold world was made
Frost giants command the cold, the dark and black power
Long days and cruel years will someday arrive, for man's time in Midgard is at an
end
The shall wander into the gloomy darkness. Into the flames and chaos they can not
endure
Frost giants will rejoice at the ecstasy of madness. They will become the worlds new,
most powerful race
They will guard the peasants of the world pillage, kill and condemn

To the North lies the castle
of over a thousand giants
They look towards the land
Where everything will be lit afire

War of time
Dark, eternal winter
Tortured in Slid
people there suffer

For the giants battle has begun, against what man has proclaimed
Here, the dark fate will triumphant, for here the Frost giants will celebrate
Dark, eternal winter

Swords, axes and large hammers will sound. Screams and howls sing like in
Nivlheim
The blood of giants & men will flow through the land, and the smoke of burnt
forests'
rises in a black vapour
Frost giants fight like mad wolves while men flee like frightened sheep
The giants' power has left its mark. On a once green and beautiful land
No lives are spared after this last war, for here all will die in the worst possible way
Women and men, all shall suffer, to Nivlheim through Slid they're tortured
In the time of origin there was nothing, not sand, not sea or cool waves
But now there is darkness, cold and eternal winter, for the Frost giants have
conquered the world

To the North lies the castle, of over a thousand giants
They look towards the wastelands, where everything is lit afire

For the giants' battle has been won, man has disappeared
Here the dark fate has triumphed, and the Frost giants have celebrated
Dark, eternal winter
[first verse taken from Voluspå]

Terrorveldet (MCD, 1999)

Jernskogen

I et helheimsk brak tordnet Tor
Tre udyr fødes noen har drevet hor
Avguder ler godt i natt hyller jotun-mor Angerboda

Øye for øye tann for tann
Høst hva du sår hvis du sår din egen grav

Verg deg for nord
vokt deg for den urskog
Skapninger i ulvens ham
Fenris har blod på tann

[English translation:]

[Ironforest]

In a hellish crash Thor thundered
Three beasts were born
someone has committed adultery
Demigods laughs tonight
hailing the jotun-mother Angerboda

An eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth
Reap what you sow if you sow your own grave

Defend yourself against the north
guard yourself for the primeval forest
Creatures in the guise of the wolf
Fenris has blood on teeth

Blod & Ild (2000)

Evig

Dø ung, dø hard
Til Valhall vi drar

I et fandens ritt
menn støpt av granitt
Flere hundre krigers drikkelag
en evig fest med måltid og slag

Skjenk våre krus til randen
gi faen i morgenfanden
Drikk for våre brødre
og drikk for de av dem som døde

Drikk!...så mjøden din
Drikk!...da for Odin!!

Dø i ære Do uten frykt
Til gylne haller det bærer
i et fandens ritt

Dø ung, dø hard, dø i ære,
dø uten frykt

[English translation:]

[Eternal]

Die young, die hard
to Valhalla we travel

In a hellish ride
men moulded of granite
Several hundred warrior's symposium
an eternal feast with meal and bottle

Pour our mugs to the rim
don't give a damn about tomorrow's pain
Drink for our brothers

and drink for those who died
Drink!!...your mead
Drink!!...for Odin

Die honourfull Die without fear
To the golden halls In a hellish ride

Die young, die hard, die honourfull, die without fear

Åsgårdsreien

Når stormen setter til
og uvær river trær fra stammen
Da, sånn rundt nattetid er
det Odin hunder samles

Du kan høre oss når månen stikker
frem Men aldri om du ser oss før du
blir en kriger selv

Jegeren leder oss vi er født til å sloss
Over fjell og fjorder gjennom trolske skoger

Odins jakt Åsgårdsreien

Odins hunder Einherjen

[English translation:]

[Asgardsreien]

When the storm sets and tear trees apart
Then, around the darkest hours the dogs of Odin will gather

You can hear us when the moon appear above
But you will never see us
before you become a warrior yourself

The hunter leads us we are born to fight
Over mountains and fjords
through enchanted forests

Odins hunt Asgardsreien
Odins dogs Einherjen

Odins Møy

Gautaty sendte Gondul og Skogul for å kåre blant kongene,
hvem av Yngves ætt skulle gå til Odin og være i Valhall
[fra Håkonarmål]

Dra mine fagre møyer
dra og bring dem inn
Ta til hest fagre møyer
dra og bring mine menn inn

Gjennom luft og vann
for og finne mannefall
Som nord så vest
over himmelen på skjoldmøy-hest
Kom mine fagre møyer
og lytt til mine ord
Kom mine fagre møyer
med mjød og flesk til bord

Mine krigere til hest
mine tjenere til fest
Barn av de høyes haller
mine, Odins møyer

[English translation:]

[Odins maiden]

Gautaty sent Gondul and Skogul to choose among the kings,
whom of Yngves lineage should go to Odin and be in Valhalla
[from Haakonarmaal]

Ride my fair maidens, ride and bring them in
Take to horse fair maidens
Ride and bring my men in

Through air and water to find fallen men
As north then west

across the sky on shieldmaidens horse
Come my fair maidens and listen to my words
Come my fair maidens
with mead and flesh on the table

My warriors on the horse my servants to the feast
Children of the highest halls Mine, Odins maidens

Yersinia Pestis (2003)

God Of Slander

I am the god of slander
The one that leads you astray
I am born among the highest gods
But I never foresee myself
By their side
I take the forms of many
A beast my words for the hypocrisy

I am the reason of betrayal
I allure the purest to fall
These are not deeds of evil
But ways to own amusement

I am the god of slander
Mockery is my state of being
I give birth to the beasts
Who dwell in their chains

God of slander

I choose myself above all
Even though pain is my fortune
The poison that hits my body
Won't make me change my ways

In the end of day I'll lead my children by fire and ice
The world falls apart chaos among the gods
Death to us all

Týr

Eric The Red (2003)

Eric The Red

Why I take refuge here, my father was
outlawed from the old land in east
A story of bloodshed and I too was outlawed,
now I take refuge here

What brings you here my friend, what brings
you north to where hell is of ice
South from the sand dunes where hell is of
fire, why have you come so far
Anywhere, you don't care where you

Go as long as there are faithless you can
make believe need help
And that you have the cure, of your
intentions, I'm sure
I can't bring it all to reason you've
convinced these people that all
Their ancestors were wrong, disoriented they
do not know where they belong
Like a virus you'll go on, and when I'm dead and gone
Both sides waging war will be for one true divinity

Like a virus you'll go on, and when I'm dead and gone
Both sides waging war will be raging in the
name of one true divinity

This I don't understand, why this perverted
superhuman ideal
So we are born to nothing but torture and
torment, that, I don't understand

Clearly I see the end, I pray that the embers
will persist from my faith
Clearly I'm outnumbered, allegedly outdated,
since your arrival here.
Anywhere, you don't care where you

Go as long as there are faithless you can
make believe need help
And that you have the cure, of your
intentions, I'm sure
I can't bring it all to reason you've
convinced these people that all
Their ancestors were wrong, disoriented they
do not know where they belong

Like a virus you'll go on, and when I'm dead and gone
Both sides waging war will be for one true divinity
Just convert the whole wide world, into the
abyss we are hurled
Sentenced come end of the world, spare me
your selfrighteous word

Ragnarok (2006)

The Hammer of Thor

Mercy, spare me, I was but jesting
Didn't mean to cut all her hair off
Listen, I will make the sons of
Iwald forge her, you won't regret this
New hair, see here,
Dwarfs are fine craftsmen
Simple, you know, they may let me

Stand by, setting their souls on fire
My my, watch the world

Go through mischief
malice and the woes of war
Still some things are worth fighting for
Let death and destruction
stand your foes before
And Midgard is safer the more
Out of the fire of freedom
and out of the forge of dwarfs
To hold in your hand now
and for evermore
I give you the Hammer of Thor

Warfare somewhere
Forge now your finest weapons
Worthy of blood of battle
Metal, deadly for these days of
Wartime, war crime
Leave all you loved once safely
Sheltered from foes of freedom
Stardom fortune to the fools who

Stand by, setting our souls on fire
My my, watching the world

As it goes through mischief and
Malice and the woes of war
Still some things are worth fighting for
Let death and destruction
stand your foes before
And Midgard is safer the more

Out of the fire of freedom
and out of the forge of dwarfs
To hold in your hand now
and for evermore
I give you the Hammer of Thor

War marches up to your door
If you don't stand before the Giants of Chaos
Once thrown there's no way back
To the way things were before

Brother's Bane

Honour your brother's name, unarmed or blind
Let me aid you in your aim, don't stay behind let's
Maim immortality and death to a deity

There's no reason to defend, nothing can harm him
Let's say it's just pretend, extend your arm and
Bend now this fatal bow and mark with this mistletoe

Your brother's bane
My greed and gain
Your brother's bane
My greed and gain

Grieving, my teeth I grind, I see it now
You mischievous mastermind, for this I vow
You'll pay in a paragon of sorrow, you made my son

His brother's bane
Your greed and gain
His brother's bane
Your greed and gain

Somehow, by good or ill,
some have their will
And some care not if they kill
scorching their spirit
So tales are torn apart and cold
conscience close their heart

Can't save them now
Just kneel and bow
Can't save them now
All die somehow

Your brother's bane
My greed and gain
Your brother's bane
My greed and gain

Your brother's bane
My greed and gain
Your brother's bane
My greed and gain

Lord Of Lies

Shakes the ground in agony the Lord of Lies
Once for every drop of venom in his eyes
Anger festers in his heart and loud he cries
My revenge will be the end and you will

See me rise, out of fact and friction, Sacrifice
Raise your hands

Truth of prophecies is always sin your hands

When you heed her words and do as she commands
Seals your fate and your memorial it stands
All the world ablaze I'll set and you will

See me rise, out of fact and friction, Sacrifice
Raise your hands for my lore
And legend of these lands

Bound upon the ground until the
day the sun will go away
Three winters snow falls in a row;
your bonds will break from me

Skelvur jørðin øll og rapa björg og fjöll
Brýtur hav um lond og slitena so øll bond

So you stand before the breaking of the world
Gather all your strength in vain for you will

See me rise, out of fact and friction, Sacrifice
Raise your hands for my lore
And legend of these lands

End, it has begun, now I am free,
Your ending sails with me
My serpent son stirs up the sea;
The Ship of Nails breaks free.

Ragnarok

Tøgn, gomul søgn, forminnis mál
Hevnd og hatur nevnd øvundar bál
Á vígøllum vónin hon doyr
Hátt for heljar grind garmurin goyr

Vindöld, Vargöld er komin
Skeggöld, skølmöld brátt farin er

Ber fram herklæði merkt av mongun strið
Brynju og blankan brand og fram á vøllin ríð
Komi hvat koma má, lat so fara alt
Leingi eg henda dag í huga havi fjalt

Revenge returns to us, this returns to me
We are bound to battle for eternity
The wolf restrained in chains, draping in the deep I see
This war will throw us corpses in a heap

With heavy hearts we head, on towards the end
I've done all I can, never will I bend
Battle clad we ride, over barren land
Nothing matters on the battlefield we stand

And I heard my unborn children's Requiem
I saw carved upon a stone my epitaph
Sometimes it seems to me there is nothing left between
Me and eternity

Again

With heavy hearts we head on towards the end
I've done all I can, never will I bend
Battle clad we ride, for we have to try
Nothing matters on the battlefield we lie

All will rise again for a better day
Earth green with waterfalls where eagles hunt their prey

Gather our kin against reminiscing times
All seemed at peace all thought that evil died but then the

Dragon with fallen in it's
Feathers entered the world again

Valhalla

Faiths and fools will pretend they have the answers to all
In awe they'll defend fictional visions of mist

I never believed in their stories
I never saw sense in their speech
All they ever taught me was hatred

Trough the ages your desolate pages we're forced to learn
Bitter days and your logical maze in return
Through the stages of conscience in cages we bleed and burn
Just take me to Valhalla

Truth and tears of the past haunting my mind as I lay
Alone have at last made up my mind what you are

No learning or logical method
No reason or rhyme in your word
I have learned that nothing is sacred

Take your time, in the end time takes us all we grow
Old and ail, don't pretend you have the answers to all

Don't trouble me with all your worries
Don't tell me were born into sin
Physically and mentally naked

Existential dictatorship when shall we see the days
Come around when you burn to the ground in a blaze
Stay this madness and keep all your sadness inside your maze
Just take me to Valhalla

Svartsot

Mulmets Viser (2010)

Æthelred

Som Ælfthryth sønnen barsled',
Da såedes skæbnens sæd,
En halv snes år var han, da
Englands højsæde rømmet stod.
Dog kun den yngst' kongsemne,
Hans moder kunn' ej dy,
Hos rådmænd råd hun søgte,
Den ældst' mått' ryddes af vej.

Ædel-råd var det, han hed,
Af væsen ej helt sandt,
På hans skatte og hans arv,
Ville andre gøre krav.
Vikinger våged' agtsomt,
Havde set hans verden før,
Iagttog med ivrigt øje,
Indkaldt' mænd og sejled' did.

Ti tusinde pund rent sølver,
For at trække os fra hans kyst,
Næste gang vi rider bølgen,
Skal vi have tyve tusinde mere.

Ej på slagmark vandt han sejr,

Selv om han prøved' længe,
Hans bravest' og hans bedste,
Blev sorte ravnes rov.
Men riget reddes skulle,
Og gode råd var dyre,
Hans råd tilråded' gælden,
At dæmpe danskens rasen.

Og dansken kom til kongen,
Med fordringer til kamp,
(Men) med skibe fyldt med skatte,
Loved' de at sejle bort.
Ti tusinde pund han gav dem,
Af skærest' sølvertøj,
Da dansken atter landede',
Fik de tyve tusinde mere.

Ti tusinde...

"Indfries én gang gælden",
Sagde rådets mænd så tit,
"Indfries danegælden,
Bli'r vi aldrig dansken kvit".

Ti tusinde...

Jagten

Når vinden buldrer i vinternatten, men skoven er stille
Da er det bedst at holde sig inde bag lås og slå.

Var dig, var dig,
For den vilde jagt.

Når vinden hylér I nattemulmet på mørke heder,
Og julebluset I askedyngen på arnen ulmer,
Da kan man høre to hundes grøn, en fjern en næmer',
Så si'r de gamle "Nu rider følget, nu starter jagten"

Var dig ...

Når hestevrinsken og hovslag høres I nattens tomhed,
Sæt stål I døren og spjæld for gluggen, søg ly I halmen,
For da kan flokken dig ej forfølge og volde skader,
Men ve den vandrer, den ganger ene ensomt sted!

Stygge er jægersmændene, svare og sorte som døden
Grumme er de sorte hunde, grimme, store og bredøjed'.
Sorte er horsene de rider, sorte er bukkene de rider,
Gru de hvileløses ridt, gjaldene færdes de igen

Når vintervinden uventet vender, skal du være varsom
Og hører du hovslag og tæller otte på hersens ganger,
Da kan du vide at jagten kommer og kræver ofre,
For med den drages en tid med ufred, din død til følge!

Var dig...

Turisas

The Varangian Way (2007)

To Holmgard And Beyond

Far beyond the sea and distant lands

Came men with thirty ships
Had wanted to reach the Neva by night
But the weather was not on their side

And as the wind grew stronger and stronger
The rain ran down our cheeks
The bow was turned towards Gardar
The sail flew up again

Holmgard and beyond
That's where the winds will us guide
For fame and for gold
Set sail for those lands unknown

Osmo and Dalk, Kyy, Kokko and Ulf
Were glad to be off the oars
Turo had eaten too much again
Now hanging himself overboard

The Tostensson twins were excited as always
Adventure was their game
Myself, Hakon the Bastard
was out to find my name

Holmgard and beyond
That's where the winds will us guide
For fame and for gold
Set sail for those lands unknown

Who is "I" without a past?
A river without a source?
An event without a cause?

Threads of different lengths
Some longer, some shorter
So many of them spun together

The crones keep on weaving
The algorithm of our lives
Cause and effect, the fates of men

We know the way to Aldeigju
Upstream the river Alode
You take us to the portage
And further [South]

Long is the way to the unknown
Long are the rivers in the East
Far lies the land that Ingvar
And his men desire to reach

Many dangers lie ahead
Some of us may never return
Rather sold as a slave to the Saracens
Than chained to your bed, chained by your life!

Holmgard and beyond
That's where the winds will us guide
For fame and for gold
Set sail for those lands unknown

A Portage To The Unknown

We've sailed across the sea
Rowed for miles and miles upstream

Passed by Aldeigjuborg
Seen Lake Ilmen gleam
Ingvar took the lead
After Holmgard as agreed
What the end of Lovat meant
Was soon to be seen

Dripping with sweat a new day dawn on
The ropes cut flesh, as they've done in times foregone
I see my breath, my hands are going numb
Far from home we have come

An endless trail in front my eyes
A swift take off, had no time for goodbyes
What will we find and what was left behind
There's no return, get it off your mind

The water's changed to sand
Lakes and rivers turned to land
Plough up the rocky seas
Ride felled down trees
Foot by foot we edge
Once a ship, now a sledge

Six regular edges and six vertices
Six equilateral triangles
Six square faces in another direction
Plato's earth transparent

Give me all you have!
Pull as hard as you can
Plough up the rocky seas
Ride felled down trees

The water's changed to sand
Lakes and rivers turned to land

The rug has been pulled from under my feet
All my life made of lies and deceit
All I have left is a symbol on my chest
My only lead on my desperate quest

Branded at birth with the sign of Perun
East of the sun and West of the moon
The road now continues, Northwind be my guide
Wherever I'm going, the Gods are on my side

Cursed Be Iron

Curses on thee, cruel iron
Curses on the steel thou givest
Curses on thee, tongue of evil
Cursed be thy life forever!

Once thou wert of little value
Having neither form nor beauty
Neither strength nor great importance
When in form of milk thou rested
When for ages thou wert hidden
In the breasts of gods' three daughters
Hidden in their heaving bosoms
On the borders of the cloudlets
In the blue vault of the heavens

Thou wert once of little value
Having neither form nor beauty

Neither strength nor great importance
When like water thou wert resting
On the broad back of the marshes
On the steep declines of mountains
When thou wert but formless matter
Only dust of rusty color

Curses on thee, cruel iron
Curses on the steel thou givest
Curses on thee, tongue of evil
Cursed be thy life forever!

Surely thou wert void of greatness
Having neither strength nor beauty
When the moose was trampling on thee
When the roebuck trod upon thee
When the tracks of wolves were in thee
And the bear-paws scratched thy body

Surely thou hadst little value
When the skillful Ilmarinen
First of all the iron-workers
Brought thee from the blackened swamp-lands
Took thee to his ancient smithy
Placed thee in his fiery furnace

Truly thou hadst little vigor
Little strength, and little danger
When thou in the fire wert hissing
Rolling forth like seething water
From the furnace of the smithy
When thou gavest oath the strongest

By the furnace, by the anvil
By the tongs, and by the hammer
By the dwelling of the blacksmith
By the fire within the furnace

Curses on thee, cruel iron
Curses on the steel thou givest
Curses on thee, tongue of evil
Cursed be thy life forever!

Now forsooth thou hast grown mighty
Thou canst rage in wildest fury
Thou hast broken all thy pledges
All thy solemn vows hast broken
Like the dogs thou shamest honor
Shamest both thyself and kindred
Tainted all with breath and evil

Tell who drove thee to this mischief
Tell who taught thee of thy malice
Tell who gavest thee thine evil!
Tell me! Now tell me!

Did thy father, or thy mother
Did the eldest of thy brothers
Did the youngest of thy sisters
Did the worst of all thy kindred

Not thy father, nor thy mother
Not the eldest of thy brothers
Not the youngest of thy sisters
Not the worst of all thy kindred

But thyself hast done this mischief
Thou the cause of all our trouble
Come and view thine evil doings
And amend this flood of damage

Curses on thee, cruel iron
Curses on the steel thou givest
Curses on thee, tongue of evil
Cursed be thy life forever!

Fields Of Gold

Long is the way we have come
Still, nothing changes under the sun
The day we lay ahold
The wind rocks the fields of gold

Zer sum is the name of the game?
Gain or lose
My win
Is your loss
Have your cake and eat it too

Long is the way we have come
Still nothing changes under the sun
Few have found the stone
Searching for the fields of gold

The finest of craftsmen forged
For day and night
Deep down
Lost at sea

Their great feat now lies

Is a draw the only win?

Would a tie double the loss?

A fight

For existence

Life-death: 0-0

Long is the way we have come

Still nothing changes under the sun

Firmly we keep our course

Fighting for fields of gold

In The Court Of Jarisleif

Time to raise a toast to our generous host

Jarisleif!

Jarisleif!

Ruler of the Rus from coast to coast

Jarisleif!

Jarisleif!

May beer flow as long as we can stand on two

All the pretty girls, come, keep us warm!

Tonight we drink, no room for depressing thoughts

Fill your horns!

Five Hundred And One

New friends

Last night
An offer was made

Nordbrikt
Would leave
Five hundred strong

Long is the hour when lying awake
Sleeping his hard when so much is at stake
I've reached my goal, called the final door
Behind it- three doors more

Lying in my bed
Thinking of the things they said
Time is running out
What to do I moon about

Out in the open sea I've swum without a sight
A sight of an opposite shore, a sight of some light
Turning back, staying here, my strength is running out
Forward, or I drown

Rising from my bed
Thinking of the things they said
The moment draws nigh
One chance a year when the water is high

Corridors
I run
Heavy doors
Which one?

Where did I come from? Was I already here?

It all seems familiar, yet I have no idea

New friends

Last night

An offer was made

Nordbrikt

Would leave

Five hundred and one

"Joy and sorrow we have encountered

Always stood as one

Your heart will follow, and maybe tomorrow

You will find what you seek

Go now, and don't look back!

Bring my greetings to the Greek King!"

The wind flew the raven banner with pride

Eagles were soaring aloft

Filled with hope and excitement side by side

Five hundred and one cast off

So long is the way to the unknown

Long is the way we have come

At the head of the ships a horn was blown

We sailed off with the morning sun

Five hundred and one

The Dnieper Rapids

A terrible noise heard from far away

Drowning all other sounds
No cry of the birds nor voice of men
Just an awful groan

Silence fell over the men
As the river seemed to end
Then...

Clouds of spray, Pechenegs prey
The Insatiable One is hungry today
Avoid the rocks for all you're worth
Whirlpools gaze from the depths of earth

Like dominoes six locks will fall
One after another
The World Serpent will rise from the silt
And poison the sky

Clouds of spray, Pechenegs pray
The Insatiable One is hungry today
The violent current swept Karl away
One mistake- with your life you pay

Silence fell over the men
As the river seemed to...

A sight they had dreamed of
Now opened in front of them
Fraught with danger and travail
The river came to an end

Miklagard Overture

Long have I drifted without a course
A rudderless ship I have sailed
The Nile just keeps flowing without a source
Maybe all the seekers just failed?

To Holmgard and beyond
In search of a bond
Far from home I've come
But the road has just begun

Breathing history
Veiled in mystery
The sublime
The greatest of our time
Tsargrad!

"Come with us to the south
Write your name on our roll"
I was told;

Konstantinopolis
Sui generis
The saints and emperors
Of bygone centuries
The man-made birds in their trees
Out load their paeon rings
Immortality!

In astonishing colours the East meets the West
The hill-banks arise in their green
In wonder I sit on my empty chest

As we glide down the strait in between

To Holmgard and beyond

In search of a bond

Distant church bells toll

For their god they chant and troll

Breathing history

Veiled in mystery

The sublime

The greatest of our time

Tsargrad!

The Norwegian of rank

In the court of The Prince

I was convinced

Konstantinopolis

Ten gates to eternity

Seen all for centuries

Your unconquerable walls

Your temples and your halls

See all, hear all, know it all

My sun rose in the North and now sets in the South

The Golden Horn lives up to its name

From tower to tower a chain guards its mouth

Unbreakable, they claim

To Holmgard and beyond

In a search of a bond

Adventures lie ahead

Many knots lie unravelled on my thread

Breathing history
Veiled in mystery
The sublime
The greatest of our time
Tsargrad!

Konstantinopolis
Queen of the cities
Your welcoming smile
Made all worthwhile
The sweat and the pain

Bathing in gold
Endless rooftops unfold
The sun sets for a while just to rise again

Great halls
Great halls
Greatest of all, Miklagard

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