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# ÞÓRR'S TRAVEL COMPANION IN *HYMISKVIÐA*

1

THIS study reconsiders current ideas about Pórr's travel companion in Hymiskviða, a mythological poem of 39 stanzas preserved in two Icelandic manuscripts, the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda* from c. 1270, and AM 748 Ia 4to from c. 1300. Hymiskviða evidently contains elements from oral recollection and pagan thought (such as the central episode of Pórr hooking the world serpent Miðgarðsormr), but problems of narrative detail and diction have led to suspicion that the poem is a conflation or reworking of earlier sources, perhaps written as well as oral, and it is presently a common (though not universal) view that *Hymiskviða* is a post-pagan composition of the eleventh, twelfth or thirteenth century. A notable crux appears in stanza 37 near the end of the poem, where the miscreant Loki cripples one of the goats that draw Pórr's chariot; since Loki has not, or so it is thought, figured previously in the poem, this mischief of his presents a mystery. Loki's involvement is also bound up with questions about the identity of Pórr's travel companion in Hymiskviða. Þórr's companion in the poem is usually assumed to be a onehanded god named Týr, but this identification seems on closer scrutiny insecurely based and probably wrong, as I shall presently explain.

2

The narrative framework of *Hymiskviða* is the journey of Þórr to the giant Hymir in order to obtain an ale-cauldron for a feast the sea-giant Ægir is to hold for the gods. On his journey, Þórr is accompanied by Hymir's son, who

For further discussion on difficulties of dating and composition and the general estimation of critics (along with an extensive bibliography) see von See et al. 1997:253-77. Problems of interpretation have recently been studied in Dronke 2003:47-60.

is usually identified as a god by the name of Týr, a relatively minor figure of the extant mythology who is known mainly from two Old Icelandic texts: the eddic poem *Lokasenna*, which describes Ægir's feast and immediately follows *Hymiskviða* in the Codex Regius, and *Snorra Edda*, an early thirteenth-century treatise on the art of poetry ascribed to the Icelander Snorri Sturluson (1178/9-1241). Both sources relate that the wolf Fenrir tore Týr's right hand off. This is the main myth of Týr, and his lack of one hand is his primary distinction.

In *Gylfaginning* 25 of his *Edda*, Snorri describes Týr as an exceptionally brave god who rules victory in battle, and Týr is defined as a *víga guð* 'battlegod' in *Skáldskaparmál* 9 of *Snorra Edda*.<sup>2</sup> Pórr's companion in *Hymiskviða* shows no martial qualities, however, though there is a battle between Pórr and the giants near the end of the poem, and the notion that Pórr's companion is one-handed seems highly doubtful in view of stanzas 33-34 (see below). Furthermore: aside from his (supposed) role in *Hymiskviða* as the son of Hymir and Pórr's travel companion, the one-handed Týr appears nowhere as Pórr's special friend or companion, and neither is he elsewhere associated with Hymir or the giants. In fact, *sonr Óðins* 'son of Óðinn' is listed as a kenning for Týr in *Skáldskaparmál* 9. The kenning may be spurious, but the contradiction needs noting, and all the more so since Pórr's dealings with Hymir are described at some length in *Snorra Edda* (see below).

The notion that Týr was the son of a giant seems also suspect on account of his name, which is essentially *divine*. The Old Norse common noun *týr* means 'god' like many of its Indo-European cognates, including the Latin *deus*,<sup>3</sup> and in its primal sense 'god' the common noun could evidently be applied to any male god, such as Óðinn, Pórr or Loki, though its use is mainly poetic and *týr* may be regarded as a poetic noun or *heiti*. For example, *týr* denotes Loki in *Haustlong* 8,<sup>4</sup> and Þórr is defined as *karms týr* 'god of the chariot' in *Pórsdrápa* 19,<sup>5</sup> but the term is far more often applied to Óðinn.<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The present study follows the chapter numbers of *Skáldskaparmál* in Faulkes I 1998.

For discussion of the etymology and semantics see Seebold 1991:29-45 and Hopkins 1932.

See North 1997:4-5. Loki is here called fr'odugr t'yr 'wise god', and the referent is entirely clear from the context. The poem is ascribed to a Norwegian and dated to c. 900.

Finnur Jónsson 1908 I A:151; B:143. The poem is ascribed to an Icelander and dated to ca. 1000.

Examples of the common noun in the singular are encountered throughout the medieval period and also in early modern Icelandic poetry. Most examples occur in appellations or kennings for Óðinn, such as Hertýr, Sigtýr or Valtýr, and Óðinn is also simply called or

plural form, *tívar*, was a generic term for the gods in Old Norse poetry, and the *Poetic Edda* contains many examples: *Voluspá* 44 (= 49 and 58), 52 and 62; *Hávamál* 159; *Vafþrúðnismál* 38 and 42; *Grímnismál* 5 and 45; *Hymiskviða* 1 and 4; *Lokasenna* 1 and 2; *Prymskviða* 14; and *Baldurs draumar* 1. For two skaldic examples, one might cite *Haustlong* 1 and 3,<sup>7</sup> a poem that thus exemplifies use of the plural *tívar* alongside the singular (common noun) *týr*.

Hymiskviða contains at least two instances of the common noun týr. The plural form occurs twice near the beginning of the poem, in stanzas 1 (valtívar 'gods of the slain (or of the battle-field)') and 4 (mærir tívar 'glorious gods'). The singular form occurs also twice, in stanzas 4 and 33, but commentators have usually assumed that it refers in both instances to the one-handed týr named Týr. Editors have in both cases accordingly replaced the lower case 't' in the manuscripts with a capital 'T' (names are in fact not normally capitalized in the manuscripts), and readers are also led to take týr as a proper noun in the (occasional) editorial interpolation Týr kvað 'Týr said', which identifies the speaker in lines 3-4 of stanza 6 (see below). This interpretation is not supported by the image of the one-handed Týr in other sources (see above), and further doubt is raised when one considers that essential alliteration falls on týr in both cases, for essential alliteration can, of course, determine diction.

3

Hymiskviða begins with the gods demanding a feast from the sea-giant Ægir, who in turn requires a massive ale-cauldron, which the gods do not have. The gods are at a loss until Týr, or (a certain) týr, reveals to his friend Þórr that his father the giant Hymir owns a vast cauldron that they can obtain if they resort to velar, that is 'cunning', 'tricks' or 'guile':

entitled  $t\acute{y}r/T\acute{y}r$ . The notion of a one-handed  $t\acute{y}r$  named Týr has led to confusion already in the days of Snorri as his misunderstanding of  $t\acute{y}r$  as a proper noun in divine kennings or appellations like Sigt\acute{y}r, Hangat\acute{y}r or Farmat\acute{y}r = Óðinn demonstrates. See *Skáldskaparmál* 1 in Faulkes I 1998:5. On the construction of such divine kennings see Düwel 1978:332-345, in particular 335-336.

In st. 3, a variant reading gives sing. dat. *tívi* instead of pl. dat. *tívum*, in which case Óðinn is the most obvious referent, and this reading seems equally apposite if not preferable.

[4]
Né þat mátto
mærir tívar
oc ginregin
of geta hvergi,
unz af trygðom
Týr Hlórriða
ástráð mikit
einom sagði:

[5]
'Býr fyr austan
Élivága
hundvíss Hymir,
at himins enda;
á minn faðir,
móðugr, ketil,
rúmbrugðinn hver,
rastar diúpan.'

[6]
'Veiztu, ef þiggiom
þann lǫgvelli?'
'Ef, vinr, vélar
við gorvom til.'<sup>8</sup>

The two then set off east to giant-land until they come to a certain Egill, who takes into keeping the goats that draw Pórr's chariot (st. 7). Pórr and his friend then proceed to the hall of Hymir, where Hymir's wife welcomes them and refers to Pórr's companion as *sonr* 'son' and *áttniðr jotna* 'kinsmen of giants'. Pórr is so voracious that Hymir wants them to go fishing the following day. They do so, but apparently without Pórr's companion, and it is then that Pórr famously catches the world serpent Miðgarðsormr, which forms the central

Neckel and Kuhn 1983 I:88-89. 'Nor could/ the glorious gods,/ the mighty powers,/ acquire it [i.e. a sufficiently big cauldron] anywhere,/ until out of good faith/ Týr gave Hlórriði [= Pórr] alone/ great friendly advice: [5] ,,To the east/ of Élivágar/ lives the very wise Hymir,/ at the end of heaven./ My fierce father/ owns a cauldron,/ a vast kettle,/ a mile deep." [6] ,,Do you know if we can get/ that ale-brewer?"/,,If, my friend,/ we resort to cunning."

episode of the poem (sts. 16-27). Upon their return, Hymir tests Pórr's strength by having him try to break his goblet. Pórr fails, but Hymir's wife then advises him to break the goblet on Hymir's head. This works, and the giant relinquishes the cauldron (sts. 28-34). Pórr manages to lift the cauldron, and he then heads home with it, but Hymir and a horde of giants pursue him, upon which Pórr wields his hammer and slays them all (sts. 35-6). We are then told that one of Pórr's goats is lame, and its lameness is imputed to the *lævísi* 'mischievous' Loki (st. 37), but Pórr nevertheless returns home with the cauldron for Ægir's feast (st. 39).

### 4

Traditions about Pórr's visit to Hymir did obviously vary. Immediately following Pórr's humiliating visit to Útgarða-Loki in *Snorra Edda* (*Gylfaginning* 48), Snorri recounts Pórr's catching the world serpent on a fishing expedition with Hymir. According to Snorri, Pórr explicitly travels *alone* to Hymir and *without* his chariot and goats: 'Pórr leiðrétti þessa ferðina er nú var frá sagt, ok dvalðisk ekki lengi heima áðr hann bjósk svá skyndiliga til ferðarinnar at hann hafði eigi reið ok eigi hafrana ok ekki fǫruneyti. Gekk hann út of Miðgarð svá sem ungr drengr, ok kom einn aptan at kveldi til jǫtuns nokkurs; sá er Hymir nefndr.'9 No cauldron appears in Snorri's account, and Hymir is indeed dispatched out at sea.

 $Hymiskvi\delta a$  provides a variant tradition in which Pórr had a travel companion on his journey to Hymir, and it would be understandable had Loki assumed this function since he accompanies Pórr on other adventures in giantland (see below). It has in fact been suggested that Loki was originally Pórr's travel companion in  $Hymiskvi\delta a$ , but why the one-handed Týr should have replaced Loki in a role that was conventionally Loki's is not easy to perceive; some commentators have noted here the possible involvement of the common noun  $t\acute{y}r$ , but this interpretation has not been argued in any detail. <sup>10</sup>

- Faulkes 1988:44. 'Þórr got redress for this journey that has just been related and did not stay at home long before setting out on a journey in such haste that he had with him no chariot and no goats and no company. He went out of Miðgarðr in the guise of a young boy, and arrived one evening at nightfall at a certain giant's; he is named Hymir.'
- See the secondary literature mentioned in von See et al. 1997:284. One might add comments in Ólafur Briem I 1985:211; Larrington 1996:78, 273 and 275; and Gísli Sigurðsson 1998: 109.

The injury of Pórr's goat is especially problematic. After a brief description of how Pórr slew Hymir and the giants who pursued him, we are told of Loki crippling the draught goat, and the poem indicates that the episode is well known:

[37]
Fóroð lengi,
áðr liggia nam
hafr Hlórriða
hálfdauðr fyrir;
var scirr scoculs
scaccr á banni,
enn því inn lævísi
Loki um olli.<sup>11</sup>

[38]
Enn ér heyrt hafið
— hverr kann um þat
goðmálugra
gørr at scilia —,
hver af hraunbúa
hann laun um fecc,
er hann bæði galt
born sín fyrir.<sup>12</sup>

The last two lines are thought to refer to an event described in *Snorra Edda* (*Gylfaginning* 44) in connection with Þórr's journey east to the giant Útgarða-Loki. Loki accompanies Þórr on this adventure and they spend the night at a farm. Þórr slaughters and cooks his goats in the evening, and the farmer's son Þjálfi splits a thighbone to get at the marrow. When Þórr revives his goats the next day, he discovers that one of them is lame, and this upsets him. To make

- Neckel and Kuhn I:95. 'They had not gone far/ before the goat of Hlórriði [= Pórr]/ fell down/ half-dead in front of them./ The draught-beast/ was bent in its ?bone,/ and this the mischievous/ Loki had caused.' The precise meaning of lines 5-6 is highly problematic. See yon See et al. 1997:353-356.
- Neckel and Kuhn I:95. The translation in Larrington 1996:83 runs as follows: 'But you have heard this already anyone wiser about the gods/ may tell it more clearly –/ how he got recompense from the dweller of the lava,/ how he paid for it with both his children.'

amends, the farmer offers Þórr both his children, Þjálfi and Roskva, and Þórr leaves his goats for safekeeping with this unnamed farmer while he, Þjálfi, Roskva and Loki carry on eastwards to the hall of Útgarða-Loki. It seems certain that the last two lines of *Hymiskviða* 38 refer to the children offered to Þórr, and it is usually assumed that the *hraunbúi* 'rock-dweller' (= giant) of *Hymiskviða* 38 is the farmer and goat-keeper of *Gylfaginning* 44, who is accordingly identified with the goat-keeper Egill in *Hymiskviða* 7.<sup>13</sup>

Snorri imputes the goat's lameness to Pjálfi, not Loki, and Pórr and Loki are not traveling to or from Hymir in his account as they head east to Útgarða-Loki. And yet *Loki* is Pórr's companion when: 1) Pórr visits the goat-keeper; 2) the goat suffers an injury; 3) Pórr receives two children as reparation for the injury of the goat; and 4) Pórr is on one of his visits east to giant-land. It is conceivable that Pórr's goats did not figure originally in the cauldron-adventure of *Hymiskviða*, but it is at all events difficult to see how they could have entered the narrative and appear there as they do *without* Loki being Pórr's travel companion.

5

Now if the word *týr* in *Hymiskviða* 4 is originally intended as the common noun meaning 'god', then Loki seems an apposite referent for a number of reasons:

Firstly, one might recall that Loki is called *týr* in *Haustlong* 8, and Loki was certainly counted among the *tívar*.

Secondly, though he was usually counted among the gods, Loki was *the son of a giant*. His father is given the descriptive name Fárbauti 'Anger (or Evil)-striker' in a few sources, <sup>14</sup> but of him we know only that he was imagined to be a giant (as his name indicates) and the husband of the otherwise unknown Laufey or Nál, Loki's mother. Loki's father might of course have possessed more than one name like many other mythological figures, including

For further discussion see von See et al. 1997:290-291 and 359.

Loki is referred to as the son of Fárbauti, Fárbauta mogr, in Haustlong 5 and Húsdrápa 2. In Gylfaginning 33, Snorri calls Loki sonr Fárbauta jotuns, and he also calls him sonr Fárbauta in Skáldskaparmál 16. This may simply be based on the aforementioned stanzas in Haustlong and Húsdrápa, which are cited in Snorra Edda. Loki's father is named Fárbauti also in Sorla þáttr, which is preserved in the late 14th-century Flateyjarbók, where the gods are euhemerized and Fárbauti is called both a maðr and karl.

Loki's mother and Loki himself (who was also named Loptr and apparently Hveðrungr as well), and the obscurity of Loki's father could have facilitated identification with Hymir (whose wife is notably unnamed). The possibility that  $t\acute{y}r$  refers to Loki in  $Hymiskvi\eth a$  4 might even help explain why Loki is said to injure the goat *after* Þórr has slain Hymir – Hymir is the father of Þórr's companion, and so the injury of the goat may have been construed as retributive.

Thirdly, since the *týr* or Týr of *Hymiskviða* 4 suggests to Þórr that they should resort to *vélar* 'cunning' or 'tricks' in order to obtain the cauldron, it may be significant that the *lævísi* 'mischievous' Loki is certainly a god notorious for his *vélar* and called *vélandi goðanna* 'tricker of the gods' in *Skáldskaparmál* 16. Loki's cunning or trickery is moreover central to his conventional role in obtaining objects of great value to the gods (such as Þórr's hammer Mjǫllnir).<sup>15</sup>

Fourthly, Loki is Þórr's travel companion on other visits to giant-land, namely to Útgarða-Loki (*Gylfaginning* 44-47), Geirrǫðr (*Skáldskaparmál* 18) and Prymr (*Prymskviða*), and so this was clearly a conventional role for Loki.

Fifthly, in addition to his role as Pórr's travel companion, Loki's friend-ship with Pórr is expressed in the Loki-kenning *Pórs of rúni* 'Pórr's confidant (or sharer of secrets)' in *Haustlong* 8, where Loki is also called *týr*, and so the *týr* or Týr of *Hymiskviða* 4 appears to have a similar relationship with Pórr: he reveals to his *vinr* or 'friend' Pórr – and to Pórr alone or *einom* – *af tryggðom* 'out of good faith (or fidelity)' *ástráð mikit* 'much loving (or kind or friendly) advice'.

Finally, Loki does in fact figure in *Hymiskviða*, and it is difficult to see why he appears there as he does in connection with Pórr's goats unless he was supposed to have accompanied Þórr to Hymir (as argued above). It may also be recalled in this connection that Hymir lives far from the gods *at himins enda* 'at the end of heaven' – for why should Loki be in the vicinity of Hymir's home at this juncture if he had not accompanied Þórr to Hymir?

It may also be noted that in his description of Loki's wily nature in Gylfaginning 33, Snorri employs the words vélar as well as vélræði 'trickery'.

6

Pórr's lifting of the cauldron in *Hymiskviða* 34 is evidently conceived as yet another test of his celebrated strength. It is only after Pórr has succeeded in breaking the goblet on Hymir's head that Hymir relinquishes his cauldron if the visitors are able to remove it from his hall:

[32]
'Morg veit ec mæti
mér gengin frá,
er ec kálki sé
ýr kniám hrundit.'
Karl orð um qvað:
'knácat ec segia
aptr ævagi,
þú ert, olðr, of heitt.

[33]
Pat er til kostar,
ef koma mættið
út ór óro
olkiól hofi.'
Týr leitaði
tysvar hræra,
stóð at hváro
hverr kyrr fyrir.

[34]
Faðir Móða
fecc á þremi,
oc í gegnom steig
gólf niðr í sal;
hóf sér á hǫfuð up
hver Sifiar verr,
enn á hælom
hringar scullo. 16

Neckel and Kuhn, ed., Edda I:94. [32] ',,Much treasure I know/ I have lost/ when I see the goblet/ broken on my lap."/ The old man added:/ ,,Never again/ can I say/ 'ale, you are

Since Týr's lack of one hand was his primary distinction, one is bound to question if the poet was thinking here of the *one-handed* Týr. Why should he — and not the mighty Pórr — try *first* to lift the cauldron? And why should he fail not once but *twice* to do so? It appears to accord better with narrative custom that the same protagonist make not one or two but *three* attempts at some great difficulty, and it seems in any case less common that someone (crippled or not), tries first and fails twice and is then replaced by another protagonist for the third attempt. (Or are we to postulate that Týr has not lost his hand at this point, but that he then (once Pórr has slain his father and captured the cauldron) attends Ægir's feast as described in *Lokasenna* and is by that time one-handed?) Perhaps one might here again think that the actual referent of *týr* is Loki, but then Hymir has throughout been testing the strength of Pórr and not his companion.

Not only is it awkward to think here of the one-handed Týr struggling with Hymir's cauldron before (and in the presence of) his mighty friend Þórr, but the appellative sense is entirely fitting in the context. If  $t\acute{y}r =$  Pórr in stanza 33, then Þórr makes three attempts and finally succeeds – and the notion of two failed attempts is an obvious reason to use  $t\acute{y}r$  (= Pórr) to alliterate with tysvar 'twice'.<sup>17</sup> Þórr is, to be sure, a  $t\acute{y}r$  like Loki, and one recalls that essential alliteration falls also on  $t\acute{y}r$  in stanza 4: unz af  $trygðom/T\acute{y}r$   $Hl\acute{o}rriða$ ...

7

To conclude: *Hymiskviða* employs the common noun *týr* twice in the plural, in stanzas 1 (*valtívar*) and 4 (*mærir tívar*). The same word occurs *only twice* in the singular, in stanzas 4 and 33, where it is assumed to be a proper noun, but the word is primarily a poetic term meaning 'god' in Old Norse literature and considerations of alliteration might very well have determined its use in both stanzas. The appellative sense in both cases yields less nonsense and more

brewed'. [33] It's your choice/ if you can take/ the ale-ship/ from our home."/ Týr attempted/ twice to move it,/ but the cauldron nevertheless/ stood still. [34] Móði's father [= Pórr]/ grasped it by the rim/ and kicked it all the way down/ across the floor in the hall./ He heaved the cauldron up/ — husband of Sif [= Pórr] — on to his head/ and against his heels/ the chain-hoops clanked.' St. 34 is translated in light of Dronke 2003:58.

Given that there are three attempts made to lift the cauldron, it may seem tempting to posit that *premi* (dat. of *promr* 'rim' or 'edge') stems from the dat. *prim* or *primr* 'three' in some earlier form of the stanza or source on which the poet was building.

sense than the proper noun Týr, and I propose týr = Loki in stanza 4 and týr = Pórr (or Loki, perhaps) in stanza 33, which means that the one-handed Týr plays no part in Hymiskviða.<sup>18</sup>

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## **EFNISÁGRIP**

Grein þessi fjallar um hvernig skilja beri *týr* í Hymiskviðu 4 og 33. Orðið er þar álitið sérnafn, enda hefur lágstafaða t-i handritanna verið breytt í hástaf samkvæmt því í útgáfum. 'týr' sá sem kallar Hymi föður sinn í 4.-5. erindi og sem síðar gerist förunautur Þórs er því talinn vera hinn einhendi áss og bardagaguð er nefnist Týr í Snorra Eddu og Lokasennu og hið sama á við 'tý' þann sem reynir tvisvar að lyfta katli Hymis í 33. erindi áður en Þór tekst að gera svo. Í greininni er bent á ýmis vandkvæði á þessum skilningi orðsins 'týr' og leidd eru að því rök að 'týr' í hinni vanalegu og upphaflegu merkingu 'goð, áss' eigi miklu betur við í báðum erindum, en fleirtölumyndin *tívar* er raunar notuð um goðin eða æsi almennt í 1. og 4. erindi kviðunnar eins og víða í eddukvæðum. Niðurstaðan er sú að *týr* sé einungis notað sem samnafn í kviðunni og að eintölumyndin eigi við Loka í 4. erindi og Þór (eða Loka) í 33. erindi.

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