

# **THE MAGIC OF YGGDRASILL**



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*The Poetry of Old Norse Unconscious*

**YVES KODRATOFF**



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*The Magic of Yggdrasill: The Poetry of Old Norse Unconscious*

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# Foreword

This book started with the author's realization that what Old Norse calls 'magic' can be understood as 'unconscious', stated as being a mild obviousness by C. G. Jung. Here is Jung's (2014—first ed. 1960) citation p. 374, § 725: the ancients ones instituted "highly important rites between childhood and adulthood ... for the quite unmistakable purpose of effecting the separation from the parents by magical means. This institution would be entirely superfluous if the relation to parents were not felt to be equally magical..." Immediately after follows the statement:

**“But “magical” means everything where unconscious influences are at work.”**

Since Old Norse poetry, we have used here, evokes 'magic' instead of 'unconsciousness', we will keep this way of speech throughout the book. Chapter 4 will provide examples where 'unconscious Norse archetypes' are analyzed with a more modern vocabulary, including Jung himself when he analyses goddess Frigg's behavior.

This study will lead us to unveil another aspect of our half unconscious-half conscious psyche, the one of the plural 'sköþ' sent by magicians. These modern *sköþ* amount to a so claimed conscious advertisement and propaganda under their multiple forms.



# The Magic of Yggdrasill in the Poetic Edda: *A Poetry of Old Norse Unconscious*

**The present book aims at three logically connected targets:**

- spotting stanzas using a vocabulary clearly calling upon magic for improving our knowledge of ancient Norse magic,
- checking that no convincing proof of ‘Christian influences’ on Poetic Edda had been provided by the academic community,
- spotting a few images of Old Norse unconscious archetypes leading to unexpected finds of natural instances of the Eddaic meter Galdralag (§ IV-1 and 2) and the concluding ‘good luck’ Galdralag

Our first aim is highlighting some aspects of Norse magic that exist in the Poetic Edda, though most translations are not really able to reveal them because they must use a modern vocabulary in which the religious aspects of life took the better over the magic ones, the last being most often ridiculed. In particular, in chapter II, we shall see how the role of tree Yggdrasill in Norse Magic is strongly evoked in most translations of a famous Eddaic Poem, *Völuspá*, relating its progressive destruction while Ragnarök takes place. This explains the title, “the Magic of Yggdrasill,” of this book.

The first two chapters of the book are dedicated to this goal. Chapter I describes several types of Norse magic and it explains the links among different magic behaviors. Chapter II provides the basic necessary documentation, that is, the Eddaic poetic stanzas the vocabulary of which alludes to magic. We give their Old Norse (ON) version, a possible

translation into English and the explications necessary to bring out their magic content. In many cases, each word loaded with a magic content can be understood by its context in the stanza. In some cases, the context of the stanza needs to be replaced into the larger context of the whole poem or even in the global one of Eddaic Poetry. This literary study will enable us to detail (in § II conclusions) the meaning of the *sköþ* used in this poetry, up to the point to observe their modern counterpart that we will call ‘advertisement-propaganda’ in our conclusion on *sköþ*.

That we rely so heavily on Eddaic poetry leads us to question its reliability as being a proper image of the various pre-Christian civilizations that cohabited in pagan Scandinavia. This will be debated in Chapter III. This third chapter, while it refutes the huge amount of literature dedicated to spotting non-Norse influences, mainly Christian ones, on Eddaic poetry, tries also to give a few insights of the vitally important role of magic in the Old Norse world. Some of our arguments may however look somewhat low level when it happens that the arguments to refute were very superficial ones which, unfortunately, seems to make them all the more convincing. As opposed to the presently widespread opinion, this chapter will show that poetic Edda stands quite firm in front of the suspicions of ‘Christian influences’ as soon as the suspicious minds have to prove their claims instead of juggling with ‘obvious’, ‘obviously’ and the behavior of supposedly ‘devout 13<sup>rd</sup> century Christians’.

It is quite clear that the bulk of this poetry relies on pagan beliefs and behaviors. To cite only one such flabbergasting ‘pagan’ detail, we will see in chapter II-9 (about *Fáfnismál*) that Sigurðr drinks the blood of both Reginn and Fáfnir after he killed them: *drakk blóð þeira beggja, Regins ok Fáfnis* (word for word: ‘drank blood their both, of Reginn and of Fáfnir’).

Two poems, namely *Hávamál* and *Völuspá*, have been put under heavy suspicions of Christian influences. We shall explain why this assertion is ludicrous for *Hávamál* and far from as obvious as it is usually claimed for *Völuspá*.

Our third target is to use this ‘confirmed first hand pagan information’ in order to deepen our knowledge of Old Norse civilization. Chapter IV is an illustration of the type of information on this civilization that can be made available when we look through (modern) pagan spectacles at some hardly understandable Poetic Edda stanzas. We will discuss of a few archetypes carried by *Völuspá* that provide an unexpected light on this confus-

ing poem. This may also help to receive the messages sent to us by a few Norse scholars and antiquarians in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (were they so ‘obviously’ Christianized? Official conversion is important, though it does not necessarily imply individual Christianization!). These messages, once enriched by some other puzzling Northern mythologic details, will provide glimpses into the Norse collective unconscious that may explain the very peculiar worldview of this civilization. We will treat *Völuspá* in a way similar to the one of a psychoanalyst drawing knowledge about his/her patients by analyzing, say, a collection of their successive mandalas. We have no aim to “reveal their unconscious” (i.e. making conscious their unconscious ... in this case a posturing oxymoron) but to bring to light a few of the structures that shaped their worldview, called ‘collective unconscious’ by C. G. Jung.



# General Introduction

This book attempts to analyze the concepts of *örlög* and *sköþ* (both plural) as we find them implicitly defined in ON texts that use them. At once, a doubt could be thrown on using these texts. This doubt can be stated as did a US forum called ‘Heathen Discussion’ on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> 2018. “The question is: Being transcribed hundreds of years later during Christian times by devout Christians is it transcribed truly and unchanged?” The very way the question is stated by heathen people themselves implies a ‘reasonable’ negative answer. This topic will be treated in depth in the third chapter of this book in order to justify a more complex and positive answer. Until then, let us try to observe what *örlög* and *sköþ* may mean.

This analysis asks for a quite large amount of information. We could not yet complete it on the saga corpus, which thus remains a task to come. It used the whole Eddaic corpus, and for the sagas, 96 sagas including all the traditional ones. The number of available documents is large enough to lead to some clear conclusions. The translations are mine, but they have been compared with existing translations that tend to forget the importance of magic in Old Norse worldview.

The quotations of the words *örlög* and *sköþ* are always given in context, with a few lines of the poem that make it possible to understand their meaning or meanings.

For these translations, we used de Vries’ etymological dictionary (published in German only—in short: ‘deVries’), Cleasby-Vigfusson’ Icelandic-English dictionary (CV) and also very often, Lexicon Poëticum antiquæ linguæ septentrionalis of Sveinbjörn Egilsson (We used the original version in Latin language and not Finnur Jonsson’s Danish edition—in short LexPoet). This last provides the meaning of a greater number of words than CV, associated to a wealth of quotations illustrating the use of the words, mainly in poetry.

Here is the order of the poems some stanzas of which will be used in the following:

Völuspá, Hávamál, Vafþrúðnismál, Grímnismál, Lokasenna, Alvíssmál, Helgakviða hundingsbana hin fyrri, Völundarkviða, Grípisspá, Fáfnismál, Sigrdrífumál, Reginsmál, Sigurdarkviða in skamma, Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta, Guðrúnarkviða in forna, Oddrúnarkviða (Oddrúnargrátr), Atlakviða (Dauði Atla), Atlamál in grænlenzku, Grógaldur, Fjölsvinnsmál, Hrafnagaldur Óðins.

An unexpected consequence of this magic orientated skimming through poetic Edda is bringing forth an original view of it, one less warlike than the usual ones, though terribly impressive as Chapter II will hopefully illustrate.

We will analyze the meaning of a little more than 60 stanzas belonging to the poetic Edda. This leads to a dispersion of attention that tends to concentrate on the current stanza, and somewhat forgets the other ones. In order to avoid this dispersion, the following introduction plays the role of a kind of guide to our journey among these stanzas by providing us some advance information that will be rediscovered and detailed during this journey. We will need to reach our conclusion of chapters I and II in order to completely justify this guide. It will then become a detailed and argued chart of the main actors of magic in Poetic Edda and a valuable approximation of the magical sides of ON civilization.

Poetic Edda is our principal source of knowledge on **örlög**<sup>[1]</sup> but it also quite often uses two other words: **sköp**, also met in the sagas, and **rök**. Less often, fate is named **mjötuðr** or **urðr**. This last word is also Norn Urðr's name: we will meet several examples of this use.

## On örlög

The traditional spelling of this word is **orlog**. The one provided by CV, **örlög** (it will be used in this book) simplifies, with no confusion, the correct spelling. Note nevertheless that the first editors (before Finnur Jónsson) had

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<sup>[1]</sup>(örlög, plural of *orlag*—*lag* is a layer), i.e. a structure defining a vertical order when stacking up several layers.

no fixed rule. For example, Rask (1818) spells it as ‘*avrlavǵ*’, and Möbius (1860) and Egilsson (1860) as ‘*orlög*’.

The neutral substantive *orlag* (spelled here as *örlag*) means ‘closing, ending’ and its plural, *orlog* (*örlög*) means ‘destiny, death, combat’.

## On *sköp*

The neutral substantive *skap* indicates the state or the mood of a person. But it is also associated to verb *skapa* meaning ‘to shape’. This is why its plural, *sköp* took the meaning of ‘shapings’, i.e. of everything that shapes our life, our fate. In the following, we will keep the Norse word *örlög* which is well-known or it will be translated, if necessary, by ‘destiny’ or ‘fate’. The word *sköp*, conversely, is quasi unknown and it will be systematically translated by “shapings” in order to avoid confusing it with destiny, with the modern meaning of this word.

Our life takes its course along such shapings. They are carried out, with more or less softness, by our parents, our friends, our passions. When our mother softly explains that “you should not behave in this way...” she gently shapes us. When a wizard casts a spell, when someone is tortured, both wizard and torturer carry out brutish shapings. When an advertisement catches your eye, it exerts so-called ‘sub-liminal’ shapings on your future customer behavior.

In the following, we will slowly access these principles of Heathen spirituality and will look further into the difference between *örlög* and *sköp*.

It is also necessary to add a few words about *sköpuð*, past participle of verb *skapa*, and on its preterit *skóp* (he/she shaped). We will meet below nine occurrences of *sköpuð* and 4 of *skóp* which always take place in a context either of explicit magic of destiny shapings, or in the majestic context of the world creation. The only occurrence which can be seen as a material shaping is found in *Völuspá* stanza 7 saying that the gods “*tangir skópu* (they shaped tongs),” though the materiality of such tongs could be disputed...

## On *rök*

This word became famous because of *ragna-rök*, the gods’ *rök* that Snorri Sturluson (and more recently, Wagner) understood as being the word *rökkr* or *rökr*: darkness, twilight. Other sources (among which Poetic Edda) led the

experts to understand it as *rök* (it is then a plural without singular) meaning: causes, signs, explanations, the course of things, fate. The multiplicity of these meanings does not enable to learn a clear lesson on the nature of *rök* in the ancient Germanic world. We will clear up this problem after having studied 4 characteristic examples of them.

We will meet two more words possibly translated as ‘fate’:

***Mjötuðr***, is the ‘measure-supplier’ or ‘master of the good measure’. We meet this word five times in poetic Edda. We will not be able to fully explain the use of this word before commenting on *Sigurðarkviða* in *skamma* § II-12. Since the Norse poetic language tends to avoid repeating the same word, a necessary repetition is often done by using a metaphorical form called *heiti*, a metaphor related to a single word, or a *kenning*: a metaphor using several words. This is particularly striking for *mjötuðr*: we will insist on the difference between an occurrence of ‘word’ *mjötuðr* and an occurrence of a *heiti* or a *kenning* for it. We shall call the last an occurrence of the ‘idea’ of *mjötuðr* that tells the reader that the concept of *mjötuðr* is provided through a *heiti* or a *kenning*.

***Auðna***, ‘luck’, met in stanza 98 of *Atlamál* in *grænlensku*. This word evokes ‘chance’ with the modern meaning of ‘fortunate coincidence’.

**Note on the references:** in the following, when we refer to translations of *Hávamál*, *Völuspá* or *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, unless explicitly stated, we point at our web-available translations indicated in the references section by ‘*Hávamál*’ or ‘*Völuspá*’ or ‘*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’.

## CHAPTER I

# Magic and Divine Beings and Heroes

This chapter deals with eight characters around which magic is gathered in the Poetic Edda:

- I-1. Norns as mistresses of *örlög*
- I-2. Yggdrasill [**name of the Northern world tree**] as a *mjötubr* ('measurer')
- I-3. Yggdrasill and the end of Æsir's magic [**the plural word 'æsir' is the name of a family of Northern gods such as Óðinn ('Odin'), Þórr ('Thor or Tor'), Freyja etc.**]
  - I-3.1. The six (or seven?) occurrences of the idea of *mjötubr* in *Völuspá*.
  - I-3.2. Consequence of the six first occurrences of the idea of *mjötubr* in *Völuspá*.
- I-4. Óðinn and his handling of the gender problem
- I-5. Yggdrasill seen as a provider of Óðinn's magic
- I-6. Humankind's two weaknesses: *Örlöglauss ok lítt megandi*
- I-7. A female heroic character: Brynhildr (formerly known as Sigdrífa)
- I-8. A male heroic character: Sigurðr as his father's avenger

### I-1. Norns as *örlög* rulers

At first, here are a few words on the relationship between Roman Parcae and Norse Norns.

Greek mythology calls Moirai the three goddesses who spin our destiny. The word *moira* means someone in charge of assigning the result of a draw, an ‘allotter’ and also ‘fate’. This recalls Norse *mjötunðr* who “allots the measure,” often translated as “measurer of destiny.”

The Moirai are Clotho (Spinner), Lachesis (Allotter) and Atropos (Unescapable one). The three corresponding Latin goddesses, Parcae (Fates), are called Nona (she spins our lives, ‘Spinner’), Decima (she measures the thread of our lives and credits us with a lifetime, ‘Measurer’) and Morta (she inexorably cuts the thread of our lives, ‘Unescapable’). The functions of the Parcae thus correspond directly to the Moirai’s from which they derive.

The role of the three Norns is (almost) universally compared to the Moirai’s and Parcae’s, for example in Wikipedia English version: “they roughly correspond to other controllers of humans’ destiny.” A disputed convention connects them to the triplet ‘past, present, future’ because of an academic traditional interpretation of their names.

First, notice that *mjötunðr* could indeed match Greek Lachesis and Latin Decima. It seems, however, that *mjötunðr* is a power aside from the Norns and the names of the three Norns are well-known and do not directly imply the notion of measure.

In the second part of this book, in § II-1.4, we will analyze the name of the Norns by commenting on *Völuspá* stanza 20. We will reach the following conclusions:

- Urðr’s name analysis suggests a person who, as a doctor or a financial controller provides a balance sheet. She is responsible for judging how gods, humankind, or individuals were, are and will be able to manage their existence.
- Verðandi is the “active authority” who decides how all actors of our universe have acted, act and will act in the light of Urðr’s assessments.
- Skuld’s name tells us that, with the help of Verðandi, she takes care that each of the past ‘debts’ will be repaid in the future.

The Latin influence nevertheless appeared as ‘obvious’ to a lot of people, and this explains the mass of drawings representing the Norns as spinners. This popular error should not too much impress us. Basically, the Romans, followed by the Christians, imagined their Fates as spinners and we are naturally under the influence of these two civilizations, much more than ON civilization has been before Christianization.

It seems that, all things considered, the main problem is that, when we think of destiny, we tend to actually think of our personal destiny, which is terribly insignificant: coarsely speaking, we are going to die one day, we know that we cannot do anything against it, and that's it.

Let us rather think of humankind's destiny, some features of which were revealed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as global warming and decline in biodiversity. We are more and more convinced that global warming (among others) is happening right now: in a sense it seems to be humankind's fate to undergo such a global warming. What can we do about it? Well, there are a thousand global reactions to oppose a catastrophic warming and a thousand other individual ones to live this warming, catastrophic or not, so as to suffer as little as possible.

Ancient Norse people believed that when the Norns had made a decision, nothing could oppose to it. Norns, however, did not decide of each small detail, they did leave some freedom to humankind to decide several aspects of its fate.

We may thus imagine that ON civilization, being unaware of the warming causes, would thus react in attempting to fill up the possible holes in örlög by shaping magic incantations called *sköþ* ('shapings'), available to their gods and to humankind. This behavior might obviously fail to be approved nowadays, though effectively 'cursing off human ones' who are causing global warming may be an efficient way to oppose to them.

On its part, our civilization, as completely aware of all the causes as it is, up to now tried to fight against this warming by organizing assemblies that are clearly more incantatory than decisive.

Which standpoint of the two is the best one? We should at first note that our political leaders' incantations address our conscious psyche while örlög and *sköþ* obviously address our unconscious one. It is also obvious that global warming is caused by our (conscious) behaviors driven by our unconscious urges. Thus, 'communicating' with our unconscious psyche, as psychiatry does, might be vastly more efficient than addressing the conscious one. In other words, we suggest that global warming is due to one of humankind's psychoses, namely the unconscious urge that tells us: "if you do not fit well with your environment, do change it!" Since this way of thinking is one of the typical parts of the acknowledged psychosis features, are we going to do better than what Norse *sköþ* would do?

## I-2. Yggdrasill as *Mjötuðr* ('Measurer')

The fact that Yggdrasill is a form of deity for the ancient Norse is quite 'obvious'. But on which texts to rely? What are its attributes and what is its place in the Nordic pantheon? We will try to answer at least partially these questions.

We will find, at the end of this section, the meanings provided for *mjötuðr* by the dictionaries and those adopted by some translators.

The word *mjötuðr* shows a multitude of meanings that revolve around 'who makes the decisions', especially with respect to people life and death. This explains the meaning adopted in modern translations: "fate," a word that has lost enough of its magic in our civilization to be accepted by everyone. Just as *sköp*, *sköpuð* and their derivatives, we can safely assume that the ancient Norse did not forget the magic associated to all these words. We must therefore reintroduce ancient times magic to understand 'from within' their exact meaning as they are used in the Poetic Edda.

We all know that Scandinavian mythology deals with four 'races', or rather families of deities: gods, giants, elves and dwarves. We must nevertheless add Norns who, although probably of giant's descent, manipulate a special magic imposing all its decrees, those of örlög. There is also a considerable crowd of somewhat immaterial beings named 'spirits' in whom our civilization no longer believes. These vaguely correspond to the *vettir* (one *vattr*, two *vettir*) and the *landvettir*. To complete this picture, it must be remembered that the dead ones' souls are often included among the *vettir*. The purpose of this section is to describe an additional divine 'family' that contains a single individual, Yggdrasill whose status is comparable to the Norns'.

We meet five occurrences of word *mjötuðr* in the poetic Edda, two in Völuspá, one in Sigurðarkviða in skamma stanza (s.) 71, Oddrúnarkviða s. 14 and Fjölsvinnsímál s. 18. In § I-3, 'Ragnarök and Yggdrasill', we will, following Völuspá way of speech, argue that *mjötuðr* is one of the 6 words by which the völva designates Yggdrasill. This shows us that *mjötuðr* is at least one facet of Yggdrasill's roles.

One saga only, among the 95 that were collected, contains the word *mjötuðr*, *Hervarar ok Heiðreks saga*<sup>[2]</sup> (available at 'Hervör's myth'). Just before

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<sup>[2]</sup>Carolynne Larrington included this poem in her presentation of the Poetic Edda (2014 version, pp. 268–273).

she leaves her ('dead') father Angantýr after getting from him his magic sword, he tells her:

<i>Þú skalt eiga</i>	You will own
<i>ok una lengi,</i>	and long time enjoy it,
<i>hafðu á huldu</i>	if you keep it secret (carefully)
<i>Hjálmars bana;</i>	Hjálmar's death (the sword that killed Hjálmar)
<i>takattu á eggjum,</i>	do not touch it by its edges,
<i>eitr er í báðum,</i>	both are poisoned,
<i>sá er manns</i>	it is of someone's <b><i>mjötuðr</i></b> (death, fate or
<b><i>mjötuðr</i></b>	measurer) Larrington: "a man's fate-measurer"
<i>meini verri.</i>	by malignant wound.
<i>Far vel, dóttir,</i>	Farewell, daughter (more or less implying 'dear
	daughter')
<i>fljótt gafak þér</i>	quite quickly I gave you
<i>tólf manna fjör,</i>	of twelve men's vitality,
<i>ef þú trúa mættir,</i>	if faith you meet (you keep, you live with);
<i>afl ok eljun,</i>	strength and energy,
<i>allt í góða,</i>	all that (was) good,
<i>þat er synir Arngríms</i>	(that) Arngrím's son (Arngrím is Angantýr's
	father)
<i>at sik leifðu.</i>	left as inheritance.

You see that here, too, the choice to translate *mjötuðr* by death or fate partially destroys the poetic value of these verses that attribute a magical role to this poison that remains, forever, mysteriously stuck to the blade of a magic sword. Larrington has probably been aware of it and did translate *mjötuðr* by 'fate-measurer' instead of a flat 'death'.

To conclude, let us say that even when facing the kind of destructive madness that seems to be taking hold of our current civilization, we may notice that the need to avoid eliminating trees (i.e. the need to reforest) seems to be one of the very first 'measure' on which humankind has agreed, quite before the still non-existent limitations to global warming: An unconscious '*mjötuðr*' effect?

### **Meanings of mjötuðr in some dictionaries**

CV (common usage): meaning 1: ‘master of the measure’—meaning 2: ‘doom’.

deVries (meaning related to etymology): ‘*Schicksalsbeherrscher* (master of destiny), *Schicksal* (fate), *Tod* (death)’.

LexPoet (use in poetry): ‘*sector* (chopper), *gladius* (sword), *mors* (death), *arbor Yggdrasill* (Yggdrasill tree), *omnium rerum principio* (everything principle)’.

### **Classical translations of mjötuðr**

(if unspecified, these translations are in the context of Sigurðarkviða in skamma s. 71 as described by § II-12)

Simrock (Die Edda) 1851: ‘*der Gott*’ (God); <http://www.thomasnesges.de/edda/>.

Thorpe (Elder Edda) 1866: ‘sword’ (the sword with which Brynhildr commits suicide).

Finnur Jónsson, (De Gamle Eddadigte), 1932, p. 182 (footnote): ‘døden’ (death).

Belows (Poetic Edda, 1936) Internet, Sacred Texts: (‘fate’).

Auden & Taylor (Norse poems, 1969): ‘ruler of fate’.

Boyer (Poetic Edda, 1992): ‘*destin*’.

Orchard (Elder Edda, 2011): ‘fate’.

Larrington (The Poetic Edda) 1994, revised 2014

- Völuspá s. 2 (*miötviðr*): Measuring-Tree.
- Völuspá s. 45 (*miötuðr*): Measuring-Tree.
- Sigurðarkviða in skamma: ‘fate’.
- Oddrúnarkviða: ‘fate’.
- Fjölsvinnsmál s. 22 (her numbering): ‘Measuring-Tree’.
- Waking of Angantýr p. 272, s. 29: ‘fate-measurer’.

### **I-3. Yggdrasill and the end of Æsir’s magic**

When we, users of internet groups devoted to Old Norse religions, talk about Ragnarök, the majority is willing to admit that some gods are killed during this disaster, but the same are often reluctant to admit Yggdrasill’s disappearance. It has been only when becoming aware of the magic content of Völuspá [**Seeress’ foreseeing – ON word for seeress is völva and ‘of a seeress’ is rendered by “völu”**] that it became obvious how

much we were mistaken. When analyzing the meaning of völvu's words and imparting to them a mystical value (and therefore a magic one in the ancient Norse civilization), it becomes possible to argue that the völvu speaks six times of Yggdrasill, in stanzas 2 (*miötvið mæran*: measure-tree famous), 19 (*Yggdrasill*), 27 (*undir helgom baðmi*: under the sacred tree), 46 (*miötuðr*: measure-ruler), 47 (*ascr Yggdrasils*: ash-tree (of) Yggdrasill), 57 (*við aldrnara*: along ancient nourisher). This succession describes how Yggdrasill is progressively destroyed by Surtr's fire.

As a side remark, let us note a possible though less certain seventh instance in s. 60, thus in the gods' residence after Ragnarök, Gimlé, as explained at the end of § I-3.2.

### ***I-3.1. The six first occurrences of the idea of mjötuðr in Völuspá***

As already noticed, an Eddaic poem should not repeat the word Yggdrasill 6 times: the repetitions are done by using metaphorical forms called *heiti*, metaphors of a single word, or *kenningar* (several words). If a translator neglects this mystical allusion and translates it by a mundane word, then the deep meaning of the stanza escapes the reader and any allusion to magic is hidden.

The most typical example is that of stanza 2 (s. 2) where the völvu uses the word *miötviðr* which means *miöt-viðr* = measure-tree, tree of the measure. Cleasby-Vigfusson declares that this form is undoubtedly due to a copyist error. Since this word appears with two slightly different but similar spellings in two famous manuscripts, Codex Regius and Hauksbók, that largely differ on some other verses, a copyist error seems to be out of the question. The existence of this word in the Norse language thus cannot be denied. Yggdrasill can be a "tree of measure" even if this way of speech appears twice only in skaldic poetry.

Let us then follow the variations of the vocabulary designating Yggdrasill during Ragnarök, as told by Völuspá.

s. 2, the völvu evokes ancient times. She says (literally):

<i>nío man ec heima,</i>	nine remember I countries
<i>nío íviði</i>	nine Giantesses (or ogresses)
<i>miötvið mæran</i>	the <u>measure-tree</u> famous
<i>fyr mold neðan</i>	toward the ground under.