FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA

DEPARTAMENTO DE LENGUA INGLESA

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RUNE-NAMES:
EVIDENCE FROM THE ANGLO-SAXON AND
NORDIC SOURCES

Tesis presentada para la colación del título de Doctora en
Filología por la Lda.

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Sevilla, septiembre de 2003
To my parents

Dedicado a mis padres
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Many thanks are also due to my family for their patience and support.
From the invention of letters the machinations of the human heart began to operate; litigation and prisons had their beginnings, as also specious and artful language, which causes so much confusion in the world. It was on these accounts that the shades of the departed wept at night. But, on the other hand, from the invention of letters all polite intercourse and music proceeded and reason and justice were made manifest; the relations of life were defined, and laws were fixed; governors had a lasting rule to refer to; scholars had authorities to venerate; the historian, the mathematician, the astronomer, can do nothing without letters. Were there not letters to give proof of passing events, the shades might weep at noonday as well as night and the heavens rain down blood, for tradition might affirm what she pleased, so that the letters have done much more good than evil; and as a token of good, heaven rained down ripe grain the day that they were first invented.

Henry Noel Humphreys,

*The Origin and Progress of the Art of Writing*, 1853
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Only the special abbreviations used in this study are listed here, or those which sometimes can cause confusion. The remainder are either standard or self-explanatory.

> became
< came from
* it precedes a form which is not recorded and which scholars reconstruct

AbcNord *Abecedarium Nordmannicum*
adj. adjective
AM Árni Magnússon
Ang Anglian
AS Anglo-Saxon
c. century
c.a. circa, about
cf. compare
CGmc Continental Germanic
dial. dialectal form
Du Dutch
ed. edited by
EGmc East Germanic
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0. INTRODUCTION
Runes are part of the English and Scandinavian cultural history. They are the first recorded specimens of the English and Nordic languages. At least in England, the earliest runic inscriptions can help set the chronology of some sound changes and provide information on dialectal variants in regions where texts are scanty. Through the deciphering of runic texts and their use it is possible to understand the culture of the Germanic peoples, gain insights into the early history of the various Germanic languages, and establish the history of runic writing itself.

The present research work is framed within the evolution of writing systems. The invention of writing and its use was so significant that the presence of man on the Earth is divided into two main periods marked by the appearance of writing: prehistory and history. In spite of the importance of writing for the development of civilisation, it was not until the end of the 19th c. that scholars began to make every endeavour to research the field. The earliest study is Karl Faulmann’s *Geschichte der Schrift* (1880), although the author of the first sound scientific and theoretical study of writing systems was I. J. Gelb (1952). The study of writing, often labelled ‘grammatology’, has now become a major issue.

There seem to have been at least three independent origins of writing in the ancient world. The earliest was probably the cuneiform writing; the second was the Chinese, adopted in areas such as Japan; and the third took place in Mesoamerica, resulting in the Maya script. At present, the alphabet (developed from cuneiform) is the most widespread writing system.

The alphabet has proved to be an efficient means of representing many spoken languages. It comprises a sequence of symbols, the letters. For centuries,
the problem of letter nomination and the origin of their shape have intrigued man. Where do the letter-names and their order in the alphabet come from? Why is the graph <a> used to represent [æ] and why is it called alpha in Greek, aleph in Semitic, etc.?

It is now known that before the Latin alphabet spread throughout Northern Europe and into the British Isles under the influence of Christianity, Germanic peoples were in possession of their own system of writing, the runes. This writing has been preserved on objects made of wood, bone, metal, and stone from the 2nd c. A.D. down to early modern times.

Runes often bring to mind a notion of mystery and tend to be regarded as magical. Believers in runic magic base their theory of the supposedly magical powers of the runes in passages referring to runic sorcery in Old Norse literature. In this way, accounts of runic usage found in literary texts have been considered to be facts, even though this material dates from a period long after the development of runic writing and well after the introduction of Christianity into the north of Europe. It is significant that not a single inscription from the oldest period invokes any of the pagan gods. In order to establish a trustworthy history of runic writing itself, one must proceed from the assumption that runic writing, like all alphabetic writing, was created as a means of communication, whether profane or sacred.

Each rune had its own name. The association of runes with pagan practices in Scandinavia and the British Isles has enticed scholars to analyse them as part of a cosmological system of natural and divine powers. However, attempts to explain
these names as elements of a secret or cultic system have been doomed to failure and most are unconvincing and fraught with difficulties. Interpretations such as those by Bugge (1905-13) and other adherents to runic magic are based on pure speculation about the meaning of rune-names. As Barnes (1994a: 15) has pointed out, this theory is the result of a need to fill the vacuum of ignorance of many scholars.

There are problems with the nomination of the runes. Some names are common words in the language, and may not require further comment, but some meanings are mere suppositions. Therefore, efforts should be made to make sense out of the accessible material, since a re-examination of each single item could give answers to this question.

The present work discusses the sources of the rune-names and how they have been transmitted. It tries to give an answer to the question of what the rune-names mean in the different traditions. Since there are two different runic traditions, this work has attempted to find out what rune-names signified in both the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic sources. This task has involved a comprehensive examination of runic data. This information stretches throughout a long span from the first records of rune-names in the 9th c. until the last more or less genuine records in the 18th c. Since the count of English runes is small and they are in addition scantily documented in England, this work is mainly based on Scandinavian material.

As a theoretical bases, chapter I comprises a brief outline of alphabet history. First of all, there is an overview of the periods of writing systems down to
alphabetical writing, their origin and the history of letter nomination. Second, the term alphabet and the characteristics which distinguish it from other forms of writing have been introduced. Then, a review of other writing systems which are non-alphabetical follows. This chapter does not present a full survey of writing systems, but rather those aspects of the evidence which are particularly informative for the purpose of this work. Finally, there is an introduction to runology, the evolution of the runes in the different runic periods and traditions, their reconstructed names and their etymology and presupposed meanings.

Chapters II and III begin with surveys of two rich bodies of material. The former, which is datable, tells on the transmission of the rune-names and their spelling variants, mainly in manuscripts. The latter handles the evidence supplied by the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian rune poems which define the rune-names by means of periphrases. One of the main aims of chapter III is to find out the right understanding of some rune-names, such as Æss and Ær, which apparently have different meanings in the various poems. I have concentrated on each separate rune poem, namely, the Old Norwegian, the Old Icelandic, the Old Swedish and the Old English. Since the previous editions of the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem* (cf. Kålund, 1884-5; Liestøl, 1948) are outdated, a new edition has been carried out. Although the other poems have been edited recently, new aspects of the rune-names are included in this work.

Chapter IV tackles the most copious and most difficult body of material, preserved in 17th and 18th c. manuscripts. These manuscripts embody the knowledge that people at that time had of runes and their names. This section
begins with an analysis of how rune-names are used and what they signify in the Icelandic *rimur* tradition. The discussion of later sources of rune-names concentrates on some texts which I believe are most likely to provide information on the meaning and significance of the rune-names. I focus on three main works on runology from the 1600’s and 1700’s, namely, Ole Worm’s book *Rerum seu Danica literatura antquissima* (1636, second revised edition 1651), Jón Ólafsson’s manuscript *Runologia* (1752) and Olaus Verelius’ *Manuductio compendiosa ad runographiam Scandicam antiquam recte intelligendam* (1675). These works contain a number of periphrases of the rune-names which can cast some light on the tradition of the rune poems in Scandinavia.

In the final section, chapter V, all the evidence is gathered in order to offer a classification of rune-names according to the information available on their meaning.

A bibliography closes the thesis.

Writing about runes is a difficult undertaking. Runic texts have often little orthographic consistency. Barnes (1994a) has already pointed out that when runologists write of characters, graphemes, sound and phonemes or transliteration, both terminological confusion and inconsistency are common. For my own part, I have used the computer font *Runlitt* used by most scholars for the transliteration of runic texts. However, when quoting from a secondary work, I have followed the same orthography as its author has. When Roman letters have been encountered in an inscription, they have been transcribed using capital letters.
Introduction

In manuscripts, runes and rune-names are often matched to a certain value, which can be either a sound value or a graphic value (as, for example, when it appears as equivalent to a Roman letter, cf. $\text{R} < r$). In the present work, these values appear in cursive.

For Old Norse characters the computer fonts employed have been \textit{Akureyri} and \textit{Reyjkjavik Times ISO}. Finally, the runic fonts that have been used in this work and which can be downloaded from internet are called \textit{Anglo-Saxon Runes}, \textit{Germanic Runes} and \textit{Gullskoen}. 
I. WRITING SYSTEMS, ALPHABETS AND LETTER-NAMES
1. Alphabetic Writing and Letter-Names

Writing is a means of communication used to represent the spoken language. Gelb (1963; cf. also e.g. Coulmas, 1989) distinguishes 'full writing' systems from their forerunners by having reached a firm relation between symbol and sound:

A primitive [picture/icon] writing can develop into a full system only if it succeeds in attaching to a sign a phonetic value independent of the meaning which the sign has as a word. This is phonetization, the most important single step in the history of writing. In modern usage this device is called 'rebus writing'\(^1\) (193-4).

The typology of writing systems is frequently disputed, given the fact that scripts can often be classified within various categories. A variety of typologies has been proposed, among them the division of writing systems into groups that reflect the relationship between the graphemes and the sounds of the language: linguistic (or phonetic) writing systems, where there is a direct relationship between the symbols and the sounds of the language, and non-linguistic (or non-phonological) systems where such a relation does not exist.

Linguistic systems include the syllabic and the alphabetic. Syllabic writing consists of a group of symbols used to transcribe or represent the syllables of a given language. Each grapheme corresponds to a syllable, usually a consonant-vowel pair. The alphabet is phonetic in nature, since the main principle of

\(^1\) A good English example of the rebus writing is provided by Hock and Joseph (1996: 75): a picture of a bee followed by the symbol 4, spelling out the word before.
alphabetic writing is to represent a language sound by means of a single letter. A syllabary is more complex and less functional than an alphabet, due to the fact that it has to resort to many more signs to represent the language. All the alphabetic scripts share the same origin and have common features such as the number of signs, which often ranges from twenty-four to thirty. One characteristic that distinguishes alphabetic from non-alphabetic scripts, then, is economy – they can represent language with relatively few signs. Alphabets can be divided into \textit{consonantal} (like the Hebrew and Arabic), or \textit{consonantal} and \textit{vocalic} (like the Greek or Latin).

Non-linguistic systems include \textit{logographic} and \textit{ideographic} scripts. In the former the written sign represents a single word, whereas in the latter the written character stands for certain ideas or concepts.

Scripts can also be classified according to the nature of the written forms employed, and so be divided into \textit{pictographic}, where a pictorial element is recognised as an image, such as a plant or an animal, or \textit{linear}, where the symbols are arbitrary.
The Significance of the Rune-Names: Evidence from the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowels</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>u</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>u</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>y</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ĵ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Old Persian syllabary (Hock and Joseph, 1996: 83)
At present, the alphabet is the most widespread writing system and it is used to write in all the Indo-European languages. For centuries there has been an interest in studying and understanding its origin.

The alphabet was probably invented between B.C. 1700 and 1500 by speakers of a Semitic language in the Sinai peninsula. It was then established as a writing system in Phoenicia ca. B.C. 1100. The Phoenicians were responsible for its spread to speakers of non-Semitic languages such as the Greeks, who borrowed it ca. B.C. 1000. The Etruscans took it over from the Greeks through contact with them ca. B.C. 800-700, while the Romans adopted the Greek writing system via the Etruscans and adapted it ca. B.C. 500. The rapid diffusion of the alphabet was probably due to commercial activity.

The superiority of the Greek alphabet lies in that it is the first phonetic writing system which represents both consonants and vowels by means of independent letters. Whereas in the Semitic alphabet there were no vowel signs, in the Greek alphabet, five Phoenician consonant letters, which were not necessary in Greek, were reinterpreted to stand for the five Greek vowels [a, e, i, o, u].

The letters of the alphabet do not only serve to represent language, but they also constitute a set of symbols. This letter symbolism has brought about speculation on the origin and symbolic value of the letters. In the history of the alphabet, letter forms have been considered as having a hidden value.

It is believed that the acrophonic principle played an important role in the making of alphabetic writing. According to it, letter-names served to identify the values for which they stood by means of their initial sounds. As an example, in
the Semitic alphabet, the names of the letters were words that started with the sound represented by the letter. Thus 'āleph (or 'ālaph according to other authors) 'ox' used to stand for the glottal stop ['a] and reš 'head' for [r], to name two examples.

One main question is where the names of the letters come from. Each alphabet has its own system of letter naming. Letter-names could be inherited from picture writing (as seems to be the case for the Phoenician). Accordingly, the letters could once have been hieroglyphics which originated in pictorial images (Calvet, 2001: 116). For example, the Semitic letter mem 'water' (see the table below) resembles the shape of waves or water, whereas the letter alf 'ox' (or 'cow') is similar to an ox-head. In this latter word, the principle of letter naming would have worked as follows:

1. First of all, there would have been a pictogram which represented an ox-head ('ox' in Semitic is 'āleph);
2. Then, that pictogram would have been used to transcribe the initial sound of the word 'āleph by means of the acrophonic principle, that is the glottal stop '/';
3. Finally, the transcription which used to represent the pictogram, would have begun to designate the letter 'āleph 'ox-head', later alif in Arabic and alpha in Greek.
But letter-names could also be borrowed like the Greek or complete innovations as apparently the runes. The order of the graphs is the same in most alphabets\(^2\).

Even though this concordance between the name of the letter, its shape and the acrophonic principle is shared by different alphabets, the assumption of having developed from pictograms, although tempting, has not been corroborated yet by any archaeological evidence, and it is unlikely that it will ever be.

The Greeks borrowed and adapted the Phoenician letters and letter-names, which were, however, meaningless in Greek. They do not even seem to have realised that the Semitic letter-names had a meaning in Semitic languages. The Etruscans and Romans, unlike the Greeks, did not keep the Phoenician names of the letters, but designated them in a way similar to what we do nowadays (a, be, ce, ...).\(^3\) Bragg (1999) maintains that the reason may have been that the Greek names had no great mnemonic value for them. This fact explains why the letters of the alphabet have monosyllabic, meaningless names in modern European languages.

Alphabets such as the runic and ogham\(^4\) could have reinvented the notion of meaningful names for the letters, assigning them everyday words in the case of the runes and names of trees in the case of the ogham.

---

\(^2\) One exception is the runic alphabet.

\(^3\) According to Ullman (1927: 373), three main principles to name the letters of the Latin alphabet can be distinguished: (1) the vowels are pronounced and written as such; (2) most of the consonants have names consisting of the letters representing their sounds followed by \(<e>\) (bc, cc, de, ...); (3) liquids and a few other letters are pronounced syllabically and have an \(<e>\) before their symbols (el, cm, en, ...).

\(^4\) The ogham is an alphabet of twenty-five characters used for stone and wood inscriptions in Celtic Ireland and Britain. The letters consist of one to five perpendicular or angled strokes meeting or crossing a centre line.
Recitation of letter-names was surely used so that learners could become familiar with the alphabet and memorise it. In all alphabets, most letter-names provided phonetic mnemonics for sign values.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Egyptian</th>
<th>Hieroglyphic</th>
<th>Hieratic</th>
<th>Semitic</th>
<th>Phenician</th>
<th>Later</th>
<th>Equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$a$</td>
<td>eagle</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\chi$</td>
<td>$\alpha$</td>
<td>Greek: $A$</td>
<td>Roman: $A$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$i$</td>
<td>crane</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\iota$</td>
<td>$\iota$</td>
<td>Greek: $I$</td>
<td>Roman: $I$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$k$</td>
<td>throne</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\kappa$</td>
<td>$\kappa$</td>
<td>Greek: $K$</td>
<td>Roman: $K$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>hand</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\tau$</td>
<td>$\tau$</td>
<td>Greek: $T$</td>
<td>Roman: $T$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$h$</td>
<td>meander</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\eta$</td>
<td>$\eta$</td>
<td>Greek: $E$</td>
<td>Roman: $E$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$f$</td>
<td>cerastes</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\phi$</td>
<td>$\phi$</td>
<td>Greek: $F$</td>
<td>Roman: $F$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$s$</td>
<td>duck</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\omicron$</td>
<td>$\omicron$</td>
<td>Greek: $O$</td>
<td>Roman: $O$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi$</td>
<td>sieve</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\chi$</td>
<td>$\chi$</td>
<td>Greek: $X$</td>
<td>Roman: $X$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\theta$</td>
<td>tongs</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\theta$</td>
<td>$\theta$</td>
<td>Greek: $Theta$</td>
<td>Roman: $Theta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$i$</td>
<td>parallels</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\iota$</td>
<td>$\iota$</td>
<td>Greek: $I$</td>
<td>Roman: $I$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$k$</td>
<td>bowl</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\kappa$</td>
<td>$\kappa$</td>
<td>Greek: $K$</td>
<td>Roman: $K$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$l$</td>
<td>lionesas</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\lambda$</td>
<td>$\lambda$</td>
<td>Greek: $L$</td>
<td>Roman: $L$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$m$</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\mu$</td>
<td>$\mu$</td>
<td>Greek: $M$</td>
<td>Roman: $M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>chairback</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\nu$</td>
<td>$\nu$</td>
<td>Greek: $N$</td>
<td>Roman: $N$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>shutter</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\pi$</td>
<td>$\pi$</td>
<td>Greek: $P$</td>
<td>Roman: $P$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>snake</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\tau$</td>
<td>$\tau$</td>
<td>Greek: $T$</td>
<td>Roman: $T$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$q$</td>
<td>angle</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\phi$</td>
<td>$\phi$</td>
<td>Greek: $F$</td>
<td>Roman: $F$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$r$</td>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\rho$</td>
<td>$\rho$</td>
<td>Greek: $R$</td>
<td>Roman: $R$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\delta$</td>
<td>inundated garden</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\delta$</td>
<td>$\delta$</td>
<td>Greek: $D$</td>
<td>Roman: $D$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>lasso</td>
<td>![Hieroglyphic Image]</td>
<td>![Hieratic Image]</td>
<td>$\tau$</td>
<td>$\tau$</td>
<td>Greek: $T$</td>
<td>Roman: $T$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Affiliation of Egyptian and Semitic alphabets (Taylor, 1883) in Drucker (1999: 33)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture-value</th>
<th>Hieroglyphic (1500-BC)</th>
<th>Hieratic (1500-BC)</th>
<th>Sinaic 346</th>
<th>Old Hebrew</th>
<th>Phoenician</th>
<th>Biblical Square-script</th>
<th>Old Semitic Letter-names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cow’s head</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'Aleph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Beth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>346</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gimel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Daleth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jubilation</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosette</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Waw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zayin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotus-flower</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>God Seth</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yodh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant (Cens of Arms of U. Egypt)</td>
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<td>Kaph</td>
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<td>Horizon</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>346</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sâmekh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>349</td>
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<td>Ayin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouth</td>
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<td>349</td>
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<td>Pe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face</td>
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<td>349</td>
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<td>Sâdê</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal’s belly</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kaph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Wood</td>
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<td></td>
<td>346</td>
<td></td>
<td>346</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shin</td>
</tr>
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<td>Life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>346</td>
<td></td>
<td>346</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. ‘Original’ hieroglyphic forms of letters (Mercer, 1959) in Drucker (1999: 297)
Table 4. Ogham script (Hock and Joseph, 1996: 92)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Phoenician</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Greek letter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ox</td>
<td>‘ālaph</td>
<td>alpha</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house</td>
<td>beth</td>
<td>beta</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>door</td>
<td>gīmel</td>
<td>gamma</td>
<td>Γ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>door</td>
<td>dāileth</td>
<td>delta</td>
<td>Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>door</td>
<td>hē</td>
<td>epsilon</td>
<td>Ε</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nail</td>
<td>wāw</td>
<td>vau (digamma)</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weapon</td>
<td>zayin</td>
<td>zeta</td>
<td>Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand</td>
<td>yōdh</td>
<td>iota</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palm</td>
<td>kaph</td>
<td>kappa</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>mēm</td>
<td>lambda</td>
<td>Λ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish</td>
<td>nūn</td>
<td>nu</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>pē</td>
<td>pi</td>
<td>Π</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>head</td>
<td>rēs</td>
<td>rho</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sign</td>
<td>tāw</td>
<td>tau</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye</td>
<td>‘ayin</td>
<td>omega</td>
<td>Ω</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Phoenician and Greek letter-names and their Semitic meanings
(Coulmas, 1996)
2. The Runic Alphabet and Rune-Names

Runes are the letters of the alphabetic writing system devised and employed by the Germanic tribes at the beginning of our era. The earliest datable inscriptions belong to the late 2nd and 3rd c. and are found in Northern Germanic areas, Norway, Denmark and Sweden. In England most runic inscriptions date from the 7th to the 9th c. Runes died out after the 9th c. in England, but survived longer in Scandinavia, where they continued to be used alongside Latin through the late Middle Ages (Knirk, 1993).

The oldest runic alphabet (Common Germanic) consisted of twenty-four graphs. It is called futhark after its first six runes (as our word alphabet comes from the first two letters of the Greek writing system).

The term rune was reintroduced into English from scholarly Scandinavian treatises of the late 16th and 17th c., such as those by the Danish scholar Worm and the Swede Bureus. Nowadays, the study of runes and runic inscriptions is known as runology.

The interest in runes began with humanistic scholars in the 1500’s and 1600’s. But it was not till the end of the 19th c., after comparative Germanic philology had been established, that runology became a scientific discipline due to the interest of scholars like Bugge and Wimmer. It was at this time when the first reliable corpus editions of runic material started to appear5. This development was

5 Liljegren’s Swedish corpus (1833) was a corpus edition, but not really scientifically reliable enough.
determined by different factors, among them the improvement of methods of interpretation, and the contact of runology with a number of related disciplines such as archaeology, palaeography, and linguistics. The foundations of runology as an independent discipline were laid mainly by the Danish runologist Wimmer in the 1870’s.

The etymology of the word *runa* is not clear. The term is first attested in 4th c. Gothic to translate the Greek *mysterion* (‘religious mystery’). In other Germanic languages it means ‘secret, private consultation’. But few runic inscriptions appear to have a cultic function (Knirk, 2002). In epigraphical inscriptions, the first time the term is recorded in singular is on the Einang stone (usually dated ca. A.D. 350-400):

|-dagastir runo valued

(Perhaps ‘[I, Gu]dæst painted the rune’) (Text and translation by Moltke, 1985: 78)

It is unknown whether the term meant ‘letter’ or ‘secret message’. In plural it appears in many Viking Age and late medieval inscriptions referring to the letters:

in sutir raist runar pasi aft trutin sin

(‘and Sote cut these runes in memory of his lord’) (Text and translation by Moltke, 1985: 106)

According to Fell (1991), the terms *run* and *geryne* were used in Old English to refer to Christian concepts such as Easter and Baptism, and not to denote pagan practices. The word *run* with the meaning ‘Christian mystery’
disappeared from the language when in the 16th c. the word mystery was borrowed from French misterie. As a consequence, runelroun was lost in the theological context, although it survives in Modern English as an archaic and dialectal form, with meanings such as ‘to whisper’\textsuperscript{6} and in the German word raunen ‘to murmur’ (cf. Lat rumor).

In several Old Norse and Old English literary sources such as Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar and Bede’s Ecclesiastical History, runes are presented as having a magical use. But, as Knirk (2002) points out, it is difficult to evaluate this literary testimony, since there is little epigraphical evidence to sustain it.

Germanic mythology attributes a divine origin to the genesis of the runes, as in the Old Norse poem Hávamál, where Óðinn says:

\begin{quote}
Veit ek, at ek hekk vindiga meiði á
nætr allar nio,
geiri undaðr ok gefinn Óðni,
siðfr siðfom mér,
á þeim meiði, er mangi veit,
hvers hann af rötom renn.
við klefi mik sælðo né við hornigi,
nýsta ek niðr;
nam ek upp rúnar, ændandi nam,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{6} The modern word rune appears in Hanks (1979) as 1. ‘any of the characters of an ancient Germanic alphabet, derived from the Roman alphabet, in use, especially in Scandinavia, from the 3rd century A.D. to the end of the Middle Ages. Each character was believed to have a magical significance’; 2. ‘any obscure piece of writing using mysterious symbols’. 

43
fell ek aptr þaðan.

('I know that I hung on the windswept tree for nine whole nights, pierced by the spear and given to Odin, myself given to myself, on that tree, whose roots no man can trace. They refreshed me neither with bread nor with drink from the horn; I peered down; I took up runes, howling I took them up; and then fell back') (Text and translation by Jón Helgason, 1971: 138)

There are three main scientific theories for the origin of the runes. Wimmer (1874) was the first author who sought to provide a scholarly explanation for the creation of the runes, and formed the basis for later theories. According to him, the runic alphabet was invented not earlier than the end of the 2nd c. A.D. taking the Latin alphabet as a model. The basis for this explanation was the correspondence between some Latin letters and a few runes, and the sounds represented by them (mainly the Latin letter F and the rune ᚪ). In other alphabets, such as the Greek, this letter had been used to represent the semi-vowel [w]. Other runes which have obvious correspondences with the Latin graphs are _seek_ {\text{N}}, _l_ {\text{L}}, _r_ {\text{R}} and _s_. Some others were created by slightly modifying the shape of the Latin letter: _f_ {\text{F}}, _v_ {\text{V}}, _t_ {\text{T}}, _m_ {\text{M}}, _n_ {\text{N}}, _l_ {\text{L}}, _k_ {\text{k}} and _p_. The rest were designed, according to Wimmer, by joining two runes, the so-called 'bind-runes', like for example _f_, made up of two k-runes. Wimmer’s date for the invention of runes should be revised, since new archaeological finds have been dated to the 2nd c. A.D. (A.D. 160) (Knirk, 2002).
Moltke (1985), who also supported the Latin theory, believed that runes must have been modelled after the Latin capitals of Imperial Rome, and that Denmark was the place where they were invented since a great number of earliest finds have been discovered in that area. Their origin was due to the contact between Roman and Germanic traders in the first century A.D. Runes were an independent creation based on Roman writing. For chronological reasons, the runes could not stem from the Phoenician alphabet and, for letter-shape reasons, they could not be derived from the Greek alphabet either.

Due to the fact that certain runes seem to be based on Greek letters rather than Latin ones, and that certain Germanic sounds correspond better to Greek, Bugge (1905-13) maintained that the Latin alphabet could not have been the model for all the runes. Instead, some may have been patterned after the Latin writing system and some others after the Greek one. He assumed that it was the Goths who gave the runes their names, but he speculated that there was an Armenian who taught them to the Goths and it was he who established the order and the division of the runes into families.

Von Friesen (1904, 1933) went further and proposed the Greek alphabet as the main source for the runes with the classical Greek cursive script as a model (runes for [ŋ, j, w, h, u, r, f]) plus a number of Latin letters (runes ԅ, ԡ, Ը and Ծ), since Greek lacked graphemes for some of the Germanic sounds. He believed that the Goths were the first to learn to write with runes, when they were serving in Roman legions. He placed the creation of the futhark in the Black Sea region in the 3rd century A.D. Von Friesen’s theory enjoys little support today and some of
his ideas, such as the chronology of the transmission, are considered questionable or wrong. Runes could not have been created in Southern Europe at a time when they were already in use in Scandinavia. Odenstedt (1990) points out another weakness as he considers that it is difficult to believe that a script which is epigraphic in character can have been based on a cursive script. The last theory – known as the Etruscan or North Italic – was initially proposed by Marstrander (1928). He thought his theory was supported by the resemblance between several runes and Etruscan letters. The Etruscan writing system was in use in the western Alpine region of Northern Italy from ca. B.C. 800. Celtic peoples moved into this area in the 4th c. B.C. The Romans arrived there in the 2nd c., and by the beginning of the Christian area, this alphabet had been more or less replaced by the Latin script. In A.D. 100, the Marcomanni established themselves in the proximity of this area and Marstrander thought they were responsible for the creation and transmission of the runes to the Goths and the North-Germanic tribes. According to this scholar, a number of similarities with the Celtic ogham supports the Celto-Latin origin of the runes. The Etruscan theory has also been adopted by scholars such as Hammarström (1929), who refined it. He defended that the runes could be derived from various other North Italic alphabets of the years B.C. 150 to 0. The Etruscan/North Italic theory was refuted by Askerberg (1944), who maintained that runes could not derive from a combination of alphabets. Besides, this theory lacks any epigraphical basis, since there is absence of inscriptions in Southern Germany older than the 6th c.
(Odenstedt, 1990). It should also be remembered that the Etruscan alphabet was inspired by the Greek.

After a study of Mediterranean (Greek and Latin) and runic epigraphy, Morris (1988) concluded that because of many similarities between the practices and the principles of writing in the Greek and runic alphabets (flexibility in the direction of writing, the Greek letters and the runes having meaningful names, among others), the runes seem to derive from some Greek tradition. But instead of proposing the classical Greek alphabet as a model, as his predecessors did, he claimed that the runes must have been created on the basis of a preclassical Greek alphabet several centuries B.C. The Germanic people could have learnt to write from the Greeks through amber trade between the Mediterranean region and Northern Europe. Nonetheless, Morris (1988) admits: "I will not be so bold, however, as to say that I have proven their origin in Greek. Such a proof would be nearly impossible because all the alphabets of Europe derive ultimately from Greek" (156).

A recent theory should also be presented here for the sake of completeness. Bang (1998 and following works) has put forward a new hypothesis. After a comparative study of the runes of the older futhark and the Semitic and Arabic scripts from the Bronze Age, this author has come to the conclusion that there is graphic, phonetic, semantic and pragmatic likeness with the runes which is not mere chance. He denies Moltke's theory and believes that the runes are independent from the Greek and Latin alphabets. The futhark developed possibly at the same time the Greek did, but in a place outside the
Phoenician, Greek and Roman Mediterranean trading areas. The similarities between the runes and the classical alphabets may reside in a common ancestor. But this theory does not count any supporters, and clearly lacks scholarly basis. There is no historical or archaeological evidence of contact between the runic and such ancient scripts.

The question of the origin of the runes is still highly controversial and there is no unanimity in it. It seems clear that both the Latin and the Greek alphabets played important roles in the creation of the runic alphabet. However, the Latin theory could have a main weakness taking into account the rune-names. If their creator(s) chose the Roman alphabet as a model, an important question would be where they borrowed the system of letter naming from. It must be stressed that the Latin letters do not have meaningful names. A possibility is that they could have known other alphabets which also employed this system. The same thing concerns the order of the futhark, which also has no model.

Regardless of the model on which the runes were created, it should be remembered that all alphabets share a common origin and eventually go back to the same alphabet.

Writing with runes predated the introduction of Latin and the Roman alphabet among these peoples, and in some areas the runic alphabet continued to be used alongside the Latin alphabet through the Late Middle Ages. Well over 6,000 inscriptions are known today. Some 3,000 are of Swedish provenance, most of them carved on memorial stones during the Viking Age. In Norway the amount of runic inscriptions numbers about 1,500. Slightly over 1300 are medieval.
almost 600 being finds from Bryggen (Bergen). The Danish inscriptions include around 850 (300 Viking Age stones) – not counting bracteates and runic coins\(^7\). In Iceland there are about 75, over 140 are found in Greenland, some 80 in England, and small numbers in the Faeroes, Shetlands, Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man. In addition there is a somehow larger number from the Orkneys (cf. Barnes, 1993, 1994a).

For the reconstruction of the Common Germanic futhark itself, runologists count on the first written records of Proto-Scandinavian (A.D. 150-750). These are the inscriptions on the Kylder stone (ca. A.D. 425) and Breza Halbsäule (A.D. 520.) stones, the Vadstene and Grumpan bracteates (ca. A.D. 550) and the Charnay brooch (A.D. 600). The runes follow the same order except in Kylder, where ᚦ p precedes ᚥ and ᚣ d precedes ᚠ o.

The shape of the runes – vertical and oblique strokes as a rule, avoiding horizontal and curved ones – seems to indicate that they may have been designed originally to be cut in wood, since the oblique strokes would help avoid confusion between horizontal strokes and the wood grain. Nevertheless, there are few early inscriptions in wood preserved to the present time, probably due to the perishable quality of this material. Most inscriptions are carved in metal, such as the famous gold horn from Gallehus found in Jutland and dating to ca. A.D. 400, or on stone.

The runic alphabet had a series of characteristics which accompanied it through most of its history. Derolez (1981) calls this lore the *runic system*. These

\(^7\)Bracteates were mass produced and, therefore, there are copies – sometimes several – of the same inscription. Consequently, it is extremely difficult to 'count' bracteate inscriptions in any sensible way.
features include the fixed order of the runes in the futhark, its division into three groups of runes, the ductus and style, the direction of writing and the acrophonic principle which governs the rune-names.

Each rune had a fixed place in the alphabet, which diverges from the order of the letters in the Latin or Greek ones. Some scholars have tried to find a reason for this set order. According to Antonsen (1989), it may be due to the way runes were taught and learnt, probably as a mnemonic technique to memorise them.

The older futhark used to be divided into three groups of eight runes each, which were termed ætt (plural ættir), an Old Norse word designating 'family' or 'group of eight'. These 'families' were useful for the codification and decodification of cryptic inscriptions in the Scandinavian futhark.

Writing direction was not fixed. Some inscriptions were written from right to left, some from left to right and others in boustrophedon, that is, alternating the direction from right to left and left to right.

Words were initially not separated, instead they were cut one after the other without leaving space in between. However, in inscriptions with the older runes punctuation marks are occasionally employed as word separators. As a rule, double runes were not written, not even when a word ended and the next began with the same sound.

As it happened with the letters of the Phoenician and Greek alphabets, each rune had a name and, as in the case of the Phoenician letter-names, and as far as the rune-names are understood, they were meaningful words in the language. The nomenclature of the older Germanic runes is not recorded. Indirect evidence
of those names is late and comes from manuscript sources, mainly rune lists in Continental, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian manuscripts, and the so-called rune poems. These names followed the acrophonic principle, with the exception of two runes representing sounds which never occurred in initial position in Germanic, namely, ◊ [ŋ] and ¥ [z]. In opposition to the Proto-Sinaitic, Phoenician, Greek and Latin alphabets, there is apparently no relationship between the runes shapes and their names (see the principle of letter naming in the Phoenician script above).

It seems that these names had a mnemonic function and helped the rune-carvers remember the sound each letter represented. These words underwent the general phonological changes, leaving in some cases lacunae which had to be filled in with new runes. Whenever the initial sound of the rune-name was affected by a phonetic change, the value of the rune was also altered.

Despite their late transmission, most authors believe that these names derive from a Common Germanic source, which Krause (1966: 4) tried to reconstruct. For the sake of understanding, Krause’s reconstructed rune-names are presented below:

f *fehu ‘cattle, goods’, u *üruz ‘aurochs’, b *purisaz ‘giant’, a *ansuz ‘As, i.e., one of the Aesir’, r *raidō ‘riding, journey’, k *kaunan (?) ‘sickness, ulcer’, g *gebō ‘gift’, w *wunjō (?) ‘delight’, h *haglaz m., *haglan n. ‘hail’, n *naudiz ‘need’, i *isaz m., *īsan n. ‘ice’, j *jēran ‘(good) year’, ų *īwaz ‘yew tree’, p *perpō(?), maybe borrowed from Celtic *perpō (?) ‘a fruit tree?’, z (R) *algiz ‘elk’, s *sōwilō ‘sun’, t *tīwaz ‘Tyr (leader of the heaven gods)’, b *berkanan
‘birch twig’, e *ehwaz ‘horse’, m *mannaz ‘human being’, l *laukaz ‘leek’, later
*laguz ‘water’
8, n *Ingwaz ‘fertility god’, d *dagaz ‘day’, o *ôbalan, *ôbalan
‘inherited property’.

Different attempts have been carried out to derive a Germanic
cosmological system from the rune-names and to explain them as elements of a
cultic system. According to Polomé (1991), rune-names fall into different
categories: (1) those related to the supernatural world such as *purisaz; (2) those
which belong to the world of nature like *isan; (3) and finally, those representing
the world of man, as *mannaz. The semantic field of these names depicts a society
of cattle and crop farmers worried about the weather conditions.

The futhark developed for some centuries. This time span is usually
divided into three runic periods, each with different variants of the futhark (Knirk,
1993). The older futhark (ca. A.D. 150-750) consisted of twenty-four runes which
could have somewhat different forms depending on the geographical distribution,
chronological development, the material on which the inscription was carved, or
even – according to Antonsen (1975) – the school the rune-master belonged to.
The idealised twenty-four runes and their transcription are:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Flæfer<} & \text{ Phılı şystemmaro:} \\
\text{f u b a r k g w h n i j p î z s t b e m l g d o}
\end{align*}
\]

8 Düwel (2001) and Knirk (2002) have abandoned *laukaz ‘leek’ as the original name and
favour *laguz ‘water’.
In 1966 Krause published a corpus of almost 200 inscriptions belonging to this period. Since then, new inscriptions have appeared and new interpretations have been given for some of the ones published by Krause. At present, about 250 inscriptions written in the older futhark are known. In addition, there are some 50 non-interpretable inscriptions on bracteates. They are short, often containing the name of the owner. These inscriptions are mainly written in Proto-Norse and reveal great linguistic homogeneity among the various Germanic peoples. Furthermore, they show few distinctive dialectal features over a large geographical area. They have a great linguistic value since they reflect a primitive language state basically not recorded in any other written source.

The second period covers the years A.D. 750-1050 and is called the Viking Age. The transition from Proto-Scandinavian to Old Norse, which encompassed important linguistic changes, was accomplished about the year 700. Some vowels were lost due to syncope and new phonemes were created, as the result of phonological processes such as i- and u-mutation. In Scandinavia most of the inscriptions from this period are carved on weapons, jewels, tools and memorial stones. The inscriptions reflect the phonetic changes that took place from Proto-Scandinavian (also called Proto-Norse) to Old Norse, such as syncope and the assumed, but frequently not obvious, i-mutation. These alterations had an important effect on the futhark, which had to be modified to represent the new

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9 Krause's corpus includes only interpretable bracteate inscriptions. More have been interpreted, and many are not interpretable.
Germanic sounds. Despite the expansion in the number of sounds, the futhark was reduced by one-third, from twenty-four to sixteen runes:

\[ f u h a r k : h n i a s : t b m l r \]

Due to this reform, some runes which used to represent just one sound, had started to be used to stand for more than one. The names of some graphs were also altered. For example, with the loss of initial [j] the name for the j-rune *jāra became *āra (ON ár) and this rune began to represent the sound [a(ː)]. The rune-name *ansuz developed into *āss, with loss of the nasal [n], compensatory vowel lengthening and nasalisation, and was used for [å]. According to Knirk (2002), other runes must have been affected by the phonological changes: \( w \) *wanju > *ynn-, \( e \) *ehwar > *jórun > jór and \( o \) *ōpila > *ōdūl, but these three runes were not kept in the sixteen-graph furhark. Two other runes were lost, \( g \) and \( d \) and the graphs representing vocalic sounds were reduced to four: \( u, ə, i, \) and \( ə \).

There were two variants of the sixteen-rune futhark, the 'short-twig runes' or 'Norwegian-Swedish runes' and the 'long-branch runes' or 'Danish runes'. Both futharks appear to be functional variants, the short-twig runes used as a cursive script for everyday communication and the long-branch forms more suited for epigraphic use on stone monuments (Knirk, 1993).
Table 6. Short-twig or ‘Norwegian-Swedish runes’ (Knirk, 1993: 547)

Table 7. Long-branch or ‘Danish runes’ (Knirk, 1993: 547)

From the 8th c. onwards, the Scandinavian peoples began their expansion towards the West, not only to plunder, but also to trade. Inhabitants of present-day Norway and Denmark usually travelled to England, Ireland, France and even to the Mediterranean, whereas inhabitants of present-day Sweden mainly crossed the Baltic Sea and reached the Black Sea. The stone memorials dating to this period are sometimes about Viking expeditions carved in memory of relatives who had died abroad. The oldest runic stone which tells about these Viking expeditions to the East is the Kälvesten stone (Ostergötland, Sweden), which dates from A.D. 800:

stikur karþi kUBL þau aft auInt suNU sin sa fial
austr mir aluisli uikka faþi aukrimulfr
('Stygg(?) made these monuments in memory of Öjvid, his son. He fell in the east with Eivisl. Viking cut and Grimulv') (Text and translation by Jansson, 1987a: 39)

The third period (ca. 1100-1400) extends through the High Middle Ages. Runic inscriptions from this time are found in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, and Greenland, among other countries. One of the largest medieval runic finds is located in Bryggen, Bergen (Norway). After a fire in that part of the town in the 50's, excavations brought to light almost 600 runic objects, most of them dating back to 1150-1350. Many inscriptions are of private character and carved on wooden sticks. Other longer inscriptions relate to trade transactions. Some have Latin texts or even Greek words:

*Omnia vincit amor, et nos cedamus amori*

('Love conquers all, let us yield to love') (Text and translation by Liestøl, 1966: 56)

Table 8. The medieval rune alphabet with the most common medieval extensions (Knirk, 1993: 547)

Once more, this alphabet shows changes in the values and shape of some runes. For instance, the ð-rune, which had become nasalised in the former period,
The Significance of the Rune-Names: Evidence from the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic Sources

termed *futhark*. New runes were created by adding dots to existing forms\(^{10}\). For instance, the dotted i- and k-runes began to represent the sounds [ɛ] and [g], respectively.

Latin and with it the Roman alphabet were introduced in Scandinavia during the late 10th c. and 11th c. and therefore, inscriptions belonging to the medieval period show influence from the Latin alphabet in the use of punctuation and gradually also of double consonants for geminates. Throughout this period both writing systems were used, runes for personal and business letters and short messages, and Latin for more permanent documents, such as historical and literary texts.

Runic writing eventually declined in the 15th c. In Scandinavia, post-reformational runic inscriptions are found, but they are basically learned reconstructions based on the older traditions (Knirk, 1993)\(^{11}\).

Scandinavians took their script with them to areas such as Turkey, Greece and the British Isles; similarly, the Angles, Saxons, Jutes and other Germanic tribes that migrated to the British Isles carried a version of the Germanic futhark with them. This had to be adapted to the linguistic and orthographic changes on the island. Contrary to what happened in Scandinavia, in England the number of epigraphical runes increased from twenty-four to twenty-eight (the *Thames Scramasax*) or even thirty-one in Northumbria (*Ruthwell Cross* runic inscription):

\(^{10}\) It has been assumed that the dotted runes were developed in Scandinavia. However, according to Page and Hagland (1998), they may have been created in Scandinavian communities of the British Isles, and exported from there to Scandinavia.

\(^{11}\) For a study of post-reformational runic inscriptions see Nordby (2001).
The first twenty-four letters correspond to the runes of the Common Germanic futhark, whereas the last seven are the new runes. A number of graphs presents some alteration, either in function or in form, with respect to the Common Germanic futhark. A few others are only recorded in manuscripts. All these variations will be considered below.

This increase in the Anglo-Saxon futhorc (so called due to the change in value of its fourth and sixth runes) was caused by the phonological changes that took place from Germanic to Old English. The form and value of some runes changed and new runes (Ｆ, Ｆ, Ｈ, Ｙ, Ｘ, Ｘ, Ｘ) had to be created. The runes Ｆ, Ｆ, and Ｆ reflect different transformations undergone by the phonetic system of the language. In Old English WInsme *[a] followed by [ŋ] plus voiceless spirant resulted in nasalisation of the vowel, loss of [ŋ], compensatory lengthening of the vowel and rounding. So WInsme *[an] became OE [o:], changing the rune-name from WInsme *ans- to OE ðs. Ｆ began then to represent this sound. In the other positions, *[a] was fronted and became an open front vowel represented in Old English manuscripts with the graphs <æ, ɛ, e> and in runic inscriptions with Ｆ. It
consequently received a new name æsc ‘ash tree’. The rune Fem (āc ‘oak’) was used to transcribe both the sound [a] in cases where neither rounding nor fronting had taken place, and also OE [a:] coming from WGmc *[ai].

I-mutation (ca. 600) also caused changes in the phonemic structure of Old English and consequently in the futhorc itself. Gmc *[o(ː)] became [œː(ː)] in Old English and the o-rune Ū, whose name was *ǭpalan, *ǭpilan\footnote{*ǭpalan explains the Scandinavian word, *ǭpilan the English.} in the Common Germanic futhark, began to stand for the sound [œː(ː)] and its name changed to OE æphil, later ēpel\footnote{[œː(ː)] merged with [eː(ː)] by the Alfredian period (cf. Lass, 1994: 66).}. I-mutation also accounts for the presence of another rune, namely ǣ which is used in the futhorc to represent [y(ː)] from Gmc *[u(ː)] when umlauted.

The h-rune, which had one single crossed bar in the Common Germanic futhark Ḧ, has two Ḧ in the Old English futhorc.

Distinction between palatal and velar articulation not generally seen in the Old English traditional orthography is shown in runic inscriptions. There are three symbols (ᚴ, ᚵ, ᚶ) corresponding to the usual <c> of the traditional spelling and two symbols (ᚷ, ᚸ) corresponding to <g>. In the Common Germanic futhark the runes Ʌ (with the variant Æ) and X used to denote all allophones of the voiceless stop /k/ and voiced spirant /g/, respectively. The rune cēn Ḧ is a modification of the original rune Ʌ, and represents the sound [tʃ] resulting from palatalization, like in Æc in the Ruthwell Cross or XFIRI gasric in the Frank Casket. The rune calc Ḥ stands for the voiced velar sound [k] when followed by a consonant as in
also in the Ruthwell Cross. Finally, the rune \( \text{X} \) denotes the velar sound when followed by a secondary front vowel resulting from i-mutation, as in \( \text{X} \text{N} \text{H} \text{N} \text{G} \text{N} \text{I} \text{N} \text{G} \text{C} \). This rune appears only in the Ruthwell Cross and its name is unknown. In the Ruthwell Cross two other new graphs are used \( \text{X} \) and \( \text{X} \), respectively. The first one, whose name is \text{gifu}, is an adaptation of the rune \( \text{X} \) (Gmc *gebō) in the futhark and is used to transcribe the Old English phoneme /j/ resulting from palatalization as in \( \text{X} \text{M} \text{R} \text{M} \text{H} \text{F} \text{G} \text{E} \text{R} \text{D} \text{A} \text{E} \) in the Ruthwell Cross. \( \text{X} \), whose name is \text{gōr}, is an innovation and represents the voiced velar fricative [ɣ] when followed by a back vowel as in \( \text{X} \text{F} \text{F} \text{X} \text{N} \text{G} \text{A} \text{L} \text{G} \text{U} \).

In this same inscription two other runes are used for the allophonic variations of /n/. First, \( \text{X} \) stands for the velar allophone [ŋ] when [n] precedes [k, y] as in \( \text{X} \text{X} \text{M} \text{T} \text{U} \text{N} \text{K} \text{E} \text{T} \). In the other contexts, \( \text{T} \) describes the alveolar allophone [n], as in \( \text{T} \text{O} \text{N} \). The rune \( \text{Y} \) is used for the diphthong <ea> [æa(:)] < PGmc *[au]. and sometimes it is substituted by the runes \( \text{M} \text{F} < \text{ea} > \). The name of the rune as it appears in the Old English Rune Poem denotes a long diphthong for metrical reasons (ear byb egle), in Ruthwell it is used, for example, to render \text{headfunaes}. But, in fact, this rune seems to be used as both a long and short diphthong.

The route by which runes were transmitted to England has not been established with certainty. There seems to be both North-Germanic (Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Schleswig) and West-Germanic (Frankish-Alemannic-Frisian territories) influence.
Only some eighty Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions have been found in England so far and few of them predate the introduction of Christianity and the Latin alphabet on the island.
2.1. The Etymology of Rune-Names

As it has already been explained, direct evidence of the rune-names of the Common Germanic futhark does not exist. These names have to be reconstructed from later data, mainly manuscript material, but when so doing, some main problems have to be faced. First of all, eight runes of the Common Germanic futhark are unrecorded in the shorter sixteen-graph runic alphabet. Second, due to the sound changes that the language experienced through time, a few sounds were lost and some new ones appeared. Accordingly, some rune-names underwent changes in Old Norse and Old English. For some English runes there is not a counterpart in the Scandinavian futharks, since the Anglo-Saxon futhorc exceeds the number of sixteen graphs.

In order to carry out a thorough study of the significance of the rune-names in the different sources, a presentation of the etymologies of the “standard” (or traditionally accepted) meanings ascribed to each of them seems necessary. In this section, the etymology of each of the Old Norse rune-names together with the extra Anglo-Saxon ones is presented\(^\text{14}\).

\(Fé\): ‘cattle, property’ has been the commonly accepted meaning for this rune-name. \(Fé\) derives from Gmc \(^{\text{*fehu}}\), thence Mnlc \(^{\text{fē}}\) (pronounced [fje:]), Fa \(^{\text{fæ}}\), MnNw \(^{\text{fe}}\), MnSw \(^{\text{fæ}}\), ODa \(^{\text{fæ}}\), Go \(^{\text{faifu}}\), OE \(^{\text{fethu}}\), OFr \(^{\text{fii}}\), OS \(^{\text{fehu}}\), feho, MLG

\(^{\text{14}}\) The information has been taken from de Vries (1962), Bosworth and Toller (1966) and Simpson and Weiner (1989).
vee, vie, OHG fihu, fiho, Lat pecu, pecus. In the various Scandinavian languages this name shows loss of intervocalic <-h-> (fē), which is a standard development from Proto-Scandinavian to Old Norse.

Ür: The Old Norse rune-name ūr means ‘humidity, drizzle’, as in MnIc ūr, MnNw, MnSw ur ‘snow weather’, MnNw dial. yr ‘drizzle’ > Ork ūr, Sh urek ‘water from the bottom of a boat’, Lat ūrīna ‘urine’. There is some doubt about the meaning ‘slag’ in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem.

Gmc *ūriz ‘aurochs’ is recorded in various Germanic languages. For example, OFr ox, OHG ohso, Go aūhsa, and ON uxi/oxi. But this word was not commonly employed in Old English to designate this animal. Gmc *uhsan- (OHG ohso) combines with OHG ūr (cf. ON ūrr, ‘aurochs’) to form OHG ārohso, G aurochs, whence MnE aurochs. The Latin term āurus is a Germanic loanword.

Purs: ON þurs has been reconstructed as Gmc *þurisaz (‘giant’), thence MnIc þurs, Fa tussi, MnNw tusse, dial. tusse ‘silly girl’, MnSw tusse ‘giant’, dial. tuss ‘silly person’, MnDa tosse ‘silly person’. The Old English name for the þ-rune was born ‘thorn’. In other Germanic dialects this term is recorded as OS thorn, OFr thorn, ON þorn, MnSw, MnDa torn, Go þarnus, OHG dorn, G Dorn, Du doorn, corresponding to MnE thorn. However, there existed a cognate of ON þurs, namely OE þyrs ‘giant’ (cf. þyrs sceal on fenne gewunnian ana innan lande, Max II A15; cf. Complete Corpus of Old English in Machine Readable Form).
Áss: The Germanic reconstructed form is *ansuz ‘god’ (PrScan *ansuR). This rune was preserved in Old Scandinavian to mark pre-nasal [a], resulting in ON áss (> ðss). The name was modified in Old English (ös). This term is recorded in some Germanic languages as, for example, OS ás, OHG ansi-, ans-. The Old English word òs meaning ‘(heathen) god’, does not occur elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon in its simple form, but it is frequently found as the first element in personal names (Oswald, Oswine, ...).

The ON term ðss means ‘river mouth’ < PrScan *òsaR, MnIc òs, MnNw, MnSw, MnDa, dial. os > Sh ossa-, Hb òss, OE òs ‘beginning, source, origin’, òra ‘end, border, (river) bank’, Lat òs, òra (cf. Lat òstium ‘river mouth’).

Reið: ‘riding, journey’. Gmc *raiðō, akin to OE rídan, OHG rītan and ON riða. MnIc and Fa reið, MnNw rei, OSw reðh, OE rād (ModE road, raid), OFr rēd ‘riding’, OS rēda, OHG reīta, reiti ‘vehicle’.

Kaun: Gmc *kaunan; ‘ulcer’, MnIc, MnNw kaun > Fa koyna, MnDa dial. kjönne. OE ðēn ‘torch?’ is a hapax, only known for its use in the Old English Rune Poem.

Hagall/hagl: Gmc *haglaz ‘hail’, OE hagol, hagal, hægel, hægl, OFr heyl, hegîl, MDu haghel, OHG hagal, MHG hagel, G Hagel, ON hagl, MnSw, MnDa hagel, ME hawel, hawl and hæwil, hayl, hail, MnIc hagl.
The Significance of the Rune-Names: Evidence from the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic Sources

Nauð: The name of the n-rune is reconstructed as Gmc *nauðiz ‘need, constraint’, OS nōd, Go nauþs, OFr nēd, nadh, OHG nōt, Go nauþs, ON nauðr, OE nīd, MnIon nauð, Fa neyð, MnNw nauð, MnSw nōd, MnDa nōd, MnE need.

Íss: The Old Norse term íss ‘ice’ comes from Gmc *iisaz, hence OE, OFr, OS, and MLG ēs, Go iiz, MnIon is, Fa isur, MnNw, MoSw and MnDa is.

Ár: The rune-name ár derives from Gmc *jēran ‘year’. Later on Gmc *[e(:)] became *[a(:)], and in Old Norse the initial semivowel [j] disappeared, hence ON ár. This rune-name is recorded as OE gēar (WS gēar, Ang gēr), OFr jār, jēr (iēr), OS jār, Go jēr, ON ár, OHG, MHG jār, MDu jaer, MnSw, MnNw ár, MnDa aar, MnIon, Fa ár, corresponding to Lat hora.

Sól: ‘sun’. The concept of ‘sun’ is expressed with two words, both Gmc *sōwilō and WGmc *sunnō (Go sauil/sunnō, ON sól/sunna (poetically), OE sunne/sigel, segel?, OFr sunne, sonne, OS sunna, OHG sunna, MHG sonne, MLG sunne, MDu zonne, G Sonne, and Lat sōl.

Týr: Gmc *tīwaz/teiwaz ‘the god Tiw’ < IE *diēus. The Old Norse term týr (pl. tivar) means ‘the god Týr/Týrr’.

The Old English noun tīr ‘glory, honour’ is cognate with ON írr ‘glory, renown’, related to OHG zeri, zīari, MHG ziere adj. ‘costly, splendid’, whence
OHG ziari, MHG zier, G Zier ‘splendour, beauty, adornment, glory, honour, majesty’.

Bjarkan: There seems to be different etymologies for the name of the b-rune. First, Gmc *berkanan means ‘birch tree’, hence ON bjǫrk/birki, OE birce, bierce, beorc, OHG birka, birihha, MHG birke, birche. Second, PrGmc *berkia-, hence ON birki ‘birch forest’, MnIc birki, Fa birki, MnNw birkje, MnSw björke ‘birch forest’ > ME birke, MnE dial. birken, OE bircen, beorcen, OHG birkin. Old English had two forms. The first one berc, beorc, (cf. ON bjǫrk, Sw björk, Da birk < Gmc *berka-); and the second, OE bierce, byrce, birce, (cf. OHG bir(t)cha, MHG, G Birke < Gmc *birkjon-, a derivative of *berka-. OE birce gave ME birche, MnE birch.

Mðrimannr: ‘man, human being’ < PrScan *munnR, MnIc and Fa maður, Go manna, OE, OS and OHG mann, OFr mann, monn, MnNw mann, MnSw man, MnDa mand. The Germanic reconstructed form is *mannah15 ‘human being’.

Logr: The Old Norse word logr derives from Gmc *laguz ‘water, lake’, Lat lacus, ODan low, lou, OE lagu, MnIc lögur, Fa légur, MnNn log and MnSw lag.

Krause (1947) put forward the thesis that the Germanic rune-name was *laukaz instead of *laguz, developing into ON laukr ‘leek, herb’.

15 However, Bammesberger (1999) has suggested that the name of the m-rune should not be reconstructed as *mannah, as it has traditionally been done, but as *mann-z or *mann-
uz or probably *mannön.
Ýr: ‘yew tree, twig (poetically)’. The reconstructed Germanic form is *īwaz/ēhwaz/īhwaz, hence *iuR, OE ēoh, ēow, īow, īw, OHG īga, īwa, OS īch, MHG īwe, ībe, MLG, MDu īwe, iewe, uwe, G Eibe and MnE yew, MnIc īre, MnSw yd, ydeträ, MLG īve.

Old English rune-names:

Gyfu: Gmc *gebō (‘gift’), Go giba, OE gyfu.

Wynn: Gmc *wunjō ‘joy, pleasure, delight’, OE wyn(n), OS wunnia, OHG wunnja, wunna, MHG wünne, wunne, G Wonne. The Old English Rune Poem apparently records a Kentish form wēn.

Ing: The Old English word Ing seems to be a god’s name. It is part of the word Ingwine, a name applied to the Danes in Beowulf ll. 1044, 1319 and generally equated with the Ingaevones mentioned by Tacitus in his Germania. As a proper name or as part of a proper name Ingi occurs in Icelandic, e.g. Ingi-björg, Ingveldr. A suffix derivative masculine with the sense of ‘one belonging to’ or ‘of the kind of’, hence ‘one possessed of the quality of’ (cf. æpeling, cyning), and also as a patronymic (‘one descended from, a son of’), as for instance, Æpelwulfing, ‘son of Æthelwulf’.
The meaning of the rune-name peorð is unknown. It is not recorded in Old English apart from the runic poem. Grimm (1821) suggested that this word was related to ON ped ‘pawn’ (in chess). Taking into account the line in the Old English Rune Poem ("peorp is always game and [...]"), Bugge (1905-13) thought of a Germanic word *perþrō meaning ‘dancing’. Dickins (1915) translated it doubtfully as ‘chessman’. Von Grienberger (1921) suggested ‘throat, gullet’, but he did not provide enough evidence for this meaning. Marstrander (1928) would derive it and the Go pertra from a Gaulish p-form corresponding to the Irish ogham name for Latin <q>, quert ‘apple-tree’. He also believed that the reference for the Germanic name was a Celtic deity called Pertā. Jungandreas (1935) maintained that the English word came from Gmc *pezda meaning ‘tendon’ becoming in OE peorp ‘vulva’, or ‘penis’.

Krause (1966) argued that this term may come from Lat petra ‘stone’. He based this hypothesis on the resemblance between the Gothic rune-name and the Latin word.

Dag: Gmc *dagaz ‘day’, OE day, ON dagr, OS dag, Go dags, OHG tag, MHG tac, and MnE day, G Tag, MnIc, Fa dagur, MnSw, MnNw, MnDa dag.

Āc: The Anglo-Saxon rune-name āc ‘oak’ derives from Gmc *aiks. Some cognates are OFr and OS ĕk, OHG eih, MHG eich and ON eik, ODu eik, G Eiche, MnNw eik, ek, MnSw ek, MnDa eg, MnIc, Fa eik.
Æsc: The Old English word æsc ‘ash tree’ (< Gmc *ask-oz) is cognate with ON askr, OHG asc, MHG asch, esche, G Esche.

Éarléor: The etymology of OE ǣr is unknown. The word appears only once, in the Old English Rune Poem. This rune is used in Old English runic inscriptions to represent the Old English diphthong [æa(:)] <ea> (< Gmc */au/): cf. beagnop, eadred, fearran. It also represents a diphthong resulting from breaking of OE /æ/ as in healdun, and from back mutation of OE /æ/ as in heafunes. The general accepted meaning in the Old English Rune Poem is ‘earth, ground’ and some scholars think it to be somehow related to OEc aurr ‘humus’, MnIc aur, Fa eyrur, NNorw aur, aure, MnSw ör. However, the Old English cognate is not ēar, ēor, but ðora.

Eolh: Gmc *algiz/alhiz? (‘elk’?) (ON elgr, OE eolh, OHG elaho, MnIc elgur, MnSw alg, MnDa elg, Lat alces). Its value was originally Gmc */z/ (< PIE */s/ under Verner’s Law). It was preserved in Gothic, and was rhotacized in the other Germanic languages. Ꞓ is transliterated as r by Scandinavians (cf. erilan), but there is still a discussion as to the phonemic value. The runic graphs ᚰ and ᚷ are kept separate in Swedish and Danish runic inscriptions until ca. 1050 and in Norwegian inscriptions till around 900.

The name of this rune has been taken by all commentators as the first element of a compound noun eolhxseg which appears in the Old English Rune
Poem denoting some kind of water-reed. But this assumption is difficult to prove. Besides no rune-name has resulted in a compound.

Wimmer (1887), suggests that the word eolhx had no meaning of its own, and that it was merely an abstraction from the full form of the compound eolhxsecg. Bugge (1905-13) believed the Old English name was a loanword from a Gothic nominative form *ilx/ilhs. According to Guinn (1959), if the word eolhx cannot be considered a legitimate rune-name, then its value can be thought to precede the name which was made up to work the value. This graph may have been functionless, since it is not often found in inscriptions.

Eh: Gmc *exuaz/ehwarR ('horse'). OS ehu-, OIc jór, Go aiha, Lat equus.

Épel: Gmc *øhilan/*øhalan ('homeland'). OS óðil, OHG uodal, OE æbel > épel, OIc óðal.

Iar: The etymology of OE iar is unknown. The word is only recorded in the Old English Rune Poem. Editors have suggested 'river-fish', maybe 'eel' as the meaning of this rune-name.

Éoh: see ON yǫr above.
II. EARLY SOURCES OF THE RUNE-NAMES
1. Introduction

It is generally accepted that runes were invented to be used epigraphically. Nonetheless, they were also employed in manuscripts both in England and Scandinavia. Denmark, for instance, possesses a Codex Runicus, a manuscript written in the early 1300's entirely in runes, which is presently part of the Arnamagnæan Collection at the University of Copenhagen (there is also a small fragment from the same monastery containing a religious text, a "Lament of Mary"). It is a legal and historical manuscript which was written in Skåne, now a Swedish province, but part of Denmark in the Middle Ages. As Page (1999a) states, "it was part of an attempt, which failed, to develop runes as a script to be written as well as carved" (186).

In England, however, there is no manuscript resembling the Codex Runicus, since the Anglo-Saxons, in contrast to the Scandinavians, preferred to employ the Roman script. Nonetheless, runes do appear in English manuscripts. For example, scribes used them instead of the Latin alphabet when they wanted to make individual letters stand out from the text they were embedded in, as in the Poetical Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn. Besides, they are an important part of some well-known Anglo-Saxon literary works as, for instance, The Husband's Message and the Old English Rune Poem.
Runes used in manuscripts have been generally termed runica manusciptia, an expression coined by Derolez (1954)\(^1\).

Despite this double use of runes both epigraphically in inscriptions and in manuscripts, runological research has been mainly focused on the epigraphical practice due to the fact that, for some runologists, manuscript runes constitute a mere antiquarian pursuit. There has been a general reluctance to admit their importance for runic studies. For example, Page (1973a) advised his readers not to trust the runica manusciptia because “[they] are the work, not of rune-masters, but of runic antiquaries, of men fascinated by this declining script, of scholars more at home with the Roman alphabet” (42). He maintains his position in the second revised edition of his Introduction (1999a):

The compilers of these pages seem to have thought of English runes as just another curious script, perhaps a secret one and certainly an uncommon one. Such an attitude, though it may be near that of the carvers of some of the later, bi-alphabetical inscriptions in England, is obviously distant from that of the rune-masters who cut the early Anglo-Saxon runes. Consequently, the evidence of the runica manusciptia is suspect, to be used only with caution (62).

\(^1\) In 1954 Derolez published his Runica Manuscriptia. The English Tradition, where he collected and examined the Anglo-Saxon runic material preserved till then. Before this book was issued, there were no tools runologists could resort to for the study of manuscript runes. Even a general catalogue of manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon did not exist. Ker’s catalogue was published in 1957. Only Bischoff (1966 and later works) had systematically recorded runica manusciptia. Since 1954, Derolez has updated his work twice (1965, 1991).
However, nowadays there is some acknowledgement of and insistence on the importance of the runica manuscripta within the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian runic tradition. From the study of the manuscript sources of the rune-names in the present work it will be evident that this part of runic studies is heavily indebted to the manuscript material.

An important controversy lies in whether manuscript and epigraphical runes should be considered as representing one tradition or two different ones. In his Introduction (1999a), Page concluded: “Many runologists [...] have distorted the picture of Anglo-Saxon runes by trying to combine manuscript and epigraphical materials where they are not supplementary but alternative” (62). However, Page has also come to the conclusion that, even though both traditions are different, they are mutually helpful. In this sense, he points out “Yet they [manuscript and epigraphical traditions] should not be confused. And the conclusion drawn is that manuscript dating alone might mislead if applied without due care to epigraphical material” (Page and Hagland, 1998: 57).

On certain occasions, as for example the present study, manuscript runes are of great value since they constitute an important secondary source for understanding the runic system. They supply information which in most cases is not provided by epigraphical inscriptions, such as on the rune-names and their acrophonic use. The English runica manuscripta together with Scandinavian manuscript and epigraphical runic material are the only source of the rune-names and their meanings.
As stated above, general data on runic nomenclature is late and comes mainly from manuscript material. The Anglo-Saxon rune-names do not appear in manuscripts before the end of 8th c. or beginning of 9th. From the last part of the 8th c. to the early 15th they are recorded in runic lists, often with their Latin equivalents and names.

The Norse futhark is found in a few Anglo-Saxon manuscripts from the 9th c. onwards. The sources (Codex Leiden, St. Gallen 78, Book of Ballymore, Cotton Galba A 11 and St. John’s College 17) date back to the 9th and 10th c. and come both from the Continent and the British Isles. The earliest surviving Scandinavian manuscripts are post-1100 and the Scandinavian runica manuscipta equivalent to the Anglo-Saxon belong to 12th-18th c.

In England, some runes were used to represent their names. These are the so-called Begriffsrulen or ‘concept runes’. The runes ἐ, Ἓ and ἂ were systematically employed taking the place of their names daeg, mann, òpel (ëpel) respectively. ἐ is used instead of its name (mann) in the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Ritual of Durham. It is employed once in the preface to the Rushworth Gospels in the word Far(< for ‘Farman’), which hides a proper name, probably the signature of the scribe. It is also found in The Vercelli Book fol. 99 (gefean ἐ meahte) and in MS B of the Poetical Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn in the word Salo(< (abbreviated form of ‘Solomon’). In Beowulf, Waldere and in Alfred’s translation of Orosius’s Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII, ἂ substitutes the word òpel. In The Ritual of Durham and Lindisfarne Gospels, ἐ stands for the rune-name daeg. The same rune is recorded in Ruin (Exeter Book
fol. 124'). In *Fates of the Apostles* パイ appears instead of *feoh* and in *The Junius Psalter*, Psalm 99 the word *wynn* is replaced by the rune パイ. This latter graph is also employed twice in *Elene* (foll. 128v and 131v) and once in *Riddle 91* (*Exeter Book* fol. 129v).

There are other Old English runic passages where runes stand for their names, which means that the audience had to be familiar with them in order to understand and decipher the texts. These are the *Exeter Book*’s runic riddles (numbers 19, 24, 64, and 75 according to Williamson (1977)), where runes are part of the verse form and carry alliteration. Moreover, runes are used to give clues to the solution of the riddles, which leads to the assumption of a learned audience familiar with the runic alphabet. In most cases, editors take the graphs to be read logographically, since they are marked with dots, and with their Anglo-Saxon names.

Runes are seldom used for their names in English inscriptions. Excavations at *Lundenwic*, an Anglo-Saxon settlement north of the Thames, revealed various objects, among them the vertebra of a sheep with two runic inscriptions. The second one reads ‘dric’. Page (1999b) takes the ド-rune in this text to represent the rune-name *daeg*, so that the whole gives a personal name, namely *Dægric*. Another English epigraphical example may be the inscription in the coin legend *wBERHT*, taken as the proper name *Wynberht*.

There are also some instances of ‘concept runes’ in epigraphical inscriptions on the Continent and in Scandinavia. In the inscription *gutaniowhailag* carved on a gold ring found at Pietroassa, Rumania, the オ-rune
seems to stand for *ǭpal- (OE ēpel) and, therefore, it has been interpreted as:
Gutani oð(pal) wið(h) hailag (‘hereditary treasure of the Goths, holy and
cacrosanct’). Also on two Swedish stones from Blekinge (old Danish territory:
Gummarp and Stentoften), the j- and f-runes probably stand for their names
(Krause, 1966: 208, 211; Bragg, 1999: 36)².

Runes were also employed in the rune poems. These include an Anglo-
Saxon, a Norwegian, an Icelandic, and a Swedish poem, and the *Abecedarium
*Nordmannicum, which cannot be called a runic poem proper. In these texts the
rune-names are described generally by means of circumlocutions.

Contrary to what some authors believe, even though rune-names are
recorded in a good number of manuscripts, the sources are relatively scarce. The
different orthographical variants of each single rune-name are recorded mainly in
rune lists and they can be cross-checked and compared in order to reconstruct the
Germanic terms using comparative Indo-European and Germanic linguistics. In
the case of their significance, however, the earliest available accounts are the rune
poems, and for some Scandinavian graphs a few epigraphical inscriptions.

Scholars also rely on later material, but realise that it has detached itself
from the tradition and, consequently, consider it to have more an antiquarian
purpose. Furthermore, the manuscript material in general is very late and detached
from the period in which runes were still used, becoming less reliable. It cannot be
presupposed then that the meanings the rune-names have in the different poems

² The f-rune is used on Gummarp and the j-rune on Stentoften.
are the same they may have had from their genesis. As Page (1999a) rightly points out:

[...], we cannot assume that all [rune-forms] go back to the earliest runic times in this country, nor can we expect the *Runic Poem* verses to be safe guides to the meanings of the English rune-names at all dates (68).

The main aim of the present work is, therefore, to examine the different sources of the rune-names, both early and late, in order to obtain some information on the use of rune-names, what sort of material they represent, whether they are reliable or not, and if so, how they can be used. The interest is both in the rune-names themselves and in the specific connotations attached to them in the various sources.
2. The Gothic Letter-Names

The Vienna codex, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. 795 (end of 9th or beginning of 10th c.) contains a number of works by the eighth-century Northumbrian scholar Alcuin (among them a collection of letters) and writings of Augustine and other churchmen. The codex, still known as the ‘Salzburg Alcuin manuscript’, was part of the Cathedral Library in Salzburg until the beginning of the 19th c. when it was moved to Vienna. It consists of 205 folios copied by different hands and is quite diverse in terms of content. The main body (foll. 21-191) was apparently copied in S. Amand, France, in the late 8th or early 9th c. Other parts are constituted by foll. 1-4 and foll. 5-20. Foll. 5'-18' contain Alcuin’s Orthographia. Foll. 19 and 20 were originally left blank and filled probably in the 10th c. with a collection of different alphabets: on fol. 19' the Formae litterarum secundum Graecos (a Greek alphabet); on fol. 19' a Greek syllabary and Roman numerals; fol. 20' contains an English futhorc, an incomplete Gothic alphabet and a cryptogram in the lower margin; fol. 20' has a few Gothic alphabets. Among the Gothic material, which comes from collectors of scripts in France, there is an alphabet with the names of the letters written in early Carolingian minuscule, and arranged alphabetically: <a b g d e f j h i k l m n u p q r s t w o x z h p>. Bishoff (1980) identifies the writer of the Gothic alphabet and runes as Master Baldo. The letter-names are the following:
Older researchers have often predicated their supposition on the assumption that the Goths were the creators of the runes, something which is no longer accepted since runes were invented before the Goths came into contact with ancient Mediterranean cultures. However, the Goths could have known runes and used the runic names as their own letter-names.

The assumption that the letter-names in the Vienna codex were Gothic forms of the rune-names was doubted by scholars such as Blomfield (1942) who maintained that, in spite of the fact that these words where somehow related to the names of the runes, they had to be taken as different traditions. Besides, Blomfield (1942) highlighted that it was significant that the names followed the Latin letter

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{a} & \text{n} \\
\text{b} & \text{u} \\
\text{g} & \text{p} \\
\text{d} & \text{r} \\
\text{e} & \text{q} \\
\text{f} & \text{s} \\
\text{g} & \text{t} \\
\text{h} & \text{y} \\
\text{i} & \text{u} \\
\text{k} & \text{v} \\
\text{l} & \text{w} \\
\text{m} & \text{x} \\
\text{n} & \text{z} \\
\end{array}
\]
order and not the traditional Gothic: "the mere fact that the names are attached to letters arranged after the Latin alphabet, suggests that it is a fragmentary recast tradition" (211). She held that the Gothic letter-names as found in Salzburg did not represent runic nomenclature current among the Goths in the 4th c\textsuperscript{3}.

From a linguistic point of view, it is clear that these names resemble the rune-names, and that they do not reflect Gothic words. Several authors have tried to reconstruct the original Gothic forms (cf. Zacher, 1855, Jungandreas, 1935). The scribe was most likely familiar with both the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon runic traditions. He even employs the rune-name quetra (OE cweord) which is an Anglo-Saxon manuscript rune for q, and gar which is a new epigraphical rune in the North of England. The scribe may have attempted to convert the rune-names to the Gothic language. Besides, they are arranged in Latin order, which is a clear reworking. These names are probably a construction from the 800's (or later) based on antiquarian knowledge of the runic letter names. Therefore, they are of little value, since they do not represent an early source of the rune-names. This means then that the first testimony of rune-names has to be put much later, at least in the 9th c., the date at which the Abecedarium Nordmannicum was written.

\textsuperscript{3} A more recent sceptical study towards calling these names genuine Gothic letter-names has been carried out by Rotsaert (1983a, b).
Fig. 3. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 795, fol. 20v (moitié supérieure).

Table 11. Vienna codex, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. 795, fol. 20v
(Rotsaert, 1983a: 148)
3. The *Abecedarium Nordmannicum*

3.1. Introduction

The *Abecedarium Nordmannicum* (AbcNord) is considered to be the first example of mnemonic verse on the rune-names and also, once the Gothic letter-names have been refuted as not necessarily being old or runic, their first attestation. Moreover, this text, together with runic data in Codex Leiden, is the oldest testified record of the rune-names of the shorter Norse futhark.

The AbcNord is often analysed together with the rune poems and considered to be one of them. However, it is doubtful whether it should be called a poem or not, since the only poetic feature employed in the text is sporadic rhyme. Furthermore, the text lacks all the characteristics ascribed to a rune poem and it only supplies information on the knowledge of rune-names and not on their meaning. For these reasons, the AbcNord is analysed in the present work in a section separate from that of the rune poems.

The AbcNord (9th c.) is preserved in St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, MS. 878, although it seems not to have been copied in the St. Gall scriptorium. In the year 1457 it belonged to the Dombibliothek in Chur (Switzerland). Bischoff (1950) identified the scribe of most of the manuscript with Walahfrid Strabo⁴, pupil of Hrabanus Maurus⁵. The manuscript could even be a compendium of texts

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⁴ Strabo was born in 808/809 (?). As a young boy, he entered the Abbey of Reichenau. He studied in Fulda from 827 to 829 under Hrabanus Maurus. In 829 he became preceptor to prince Charles the Bald; in 838 he became Abbot of Reichenau.

⁵ Hrabanus Maurus was Archbishop of Fulda in the 9th c. He composed *De inventione linguarum* (*On the Invention of Languages*), one of the first known compendia of alphabets. He recorded only five of them. First, he discussed the Hebrew writing system
collected by this scribe over a long period of time. Among other material, the manuscript contains Bede's *De arte metrica*, some grammatical extracts, excerpts from Isidore's *Etymologiae*, a Hebrew alphabet, a Greek alphabet, and an Anglo-Saxon futhorc entitled *Anguliscum*. Grammar seems to take an important part in this collection. Derolez (1959a) suggests that the runic material has some connections with the grammatical material of the preceding pages.

For some time page 321, where the AbcNord is included, was the last one in the manuscript. As a consequence, it became faded by the 19th c. and it is now almost illegible. Between 1821 and 1828 the keeper of St. Gall manuscripts, Ildefons von Arx, treated the page with a reagent in an attempt to make the letters legible, but eventually the chemicals caused the page to become darker and more stained. The same difficulties von Arx encountered caused and still cause problems for those interested in rendering the text.

The first person who edited the text was Grimm in his *Über deutsche Runen* (1821) followed by Hattemer (1844-9). Derolez (1959a) made a more thorough account of the fragment including a number of English runes added between the lines.
3.2. The Text

(Pfeu forman | Ñ ur after | Ò thris th[r]itten | $ os ist imo | Ò rat end
PRTT
stabu oboro os uuritan
(P feu forman | Ñ ur after | Ò thris thrieten | $ os ist he [mo] | Ò rae en
PRTT
stabu oboro osuuritan
(P cha thanne | * hagal | $ nau[t] hab& | $ is $ ar $ endi so[l]|
1 [...] B brita ? endi man | Ò lago [t]he leohto | $ yr albihabet
midi

(Grimm, 1828: 27)

(P feu forman | Ñ ur after | Ò thris thrieten | $ os ist he [mo] | Ò rae en
PRTT
stabu oboro osuuritan
(P cha thanne | * hagal | $ nau[t] hab& | $ is $ ar $ endi so[l]|
1 [...] B brita ? endi man | Ò lago [t]he leohto | $ yr albihabet
midi

(Hattemer, 1844-9: table 1)
The Significance of the Rune-Names: Evidence from the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic Sources

\[
\begin{align*}
\forall & \text{ feu forman} \\
\text{[?]} & \text{ PR} \\
\text{Nur after} & \text{ thuris thritten} \\
\text{Fos is themo} & \text{ R rat end} \\
\text{stabu} & \text{ oboro os uuritan} \\
\text{H} & \text{ chaon thanne} \\
\text{hagal} & \text{ haut habet} \\
\text{is} & \text{ far } \text{ Nendi } \text{ sol cliuot} \\
\text{tju} & \text{ brica } \text{ Nendi man} \\
\text{lago the lehohto} & \text{kyr al bihabet(1)} \\
\text{midi} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Derolez, 1954: 78)

The AbcNord contains the entire runic inventory of the shorter Norse futhark. It is written in a mixture of Old Norse and Continental Germanic. The runes and their names are written mainly in Old Norse, whereas the text contains both Old Low German and Old High German words or features. The rune-names alliterate with some other words in the text.

There are runic variants for three other runes, which are probably also meant as Old English equivalents h, a, and \( \text{γ} \) (\( \text{N F} \text{ H} \)), but they are not unambiguously Old English (cf. \( \text{γ} \text{ M} \)), and could represent Old Norse or Primitive Scandinavian graphs. It is unknown whether these alternative runes were included by the same scribe or were added by a later hand. This is the only text in which English runes are compared to the Norse graphs.

The text is simple in form. It is made up of the runes and their names, and several individual words, i.a. five verbs: \text{ist/is}, \text{uuritan}, \text{cliuot} (\text{diuot} according to Grimm, 1828) and twice the verb ‘to have’ \text{habet/bihabet}. The rune-name variants
recorded in the text and accordingly mainly to Derolez are: feu, ur, thuris, os, rat, chaon, hagal, naut, is, ar, sol, tiu, brica, man, lagu, and yr. The scribe may have tried to render the Old Norse rune-names, but as will be evident in the analysis of each name, there is influence from his own language like, for instance, in changing the voiced for the voiceless consonants ([d] > [t]) in naut and rat and the occlusive for the spirant in chaon (ON kaun) ([k] > [kχ]).

In the case of the f-rune, the recorded name is the Old High German variant feu (ON fé, OE feoh). The word that follows is forman, an adjective meaning 'in first place, first' (e.g. se forman dæg 'the first day'). It is in nominative singular and declined as a weak adjective (cf. Campbell, 1959: 286). The name of the u-rune is ur (úr, as in all the other sources), but its meaning cannot be elicited from the context. The adverb after (OE æfter, ON apr) is Old High German. The noun thuris (ON purs) for the ð-rune shows spelling alternation of <þ> and <th>. This rune-name is followed by the words thritten and stabu. The former is an Old High German and Old Saxon adjective in dative singular masculine meaning 'third'. The latter is an Old Saxon/Old High German masculine noun declined as instrumental/dative singular meaning 'letter, stave'.

The a-rune has been termed os in the AbcNord. There are two possible explanations for this fact. On the one hand, taking into account that this text dates to the 9th c., os could derive from the Anglo-Saxon futhorc (OE òs) instead of from the Scandinavian futhark, since at that time the change from nasalised [á] to [ó] (áss > óss) had not taken place in Scandinavia (see the medieval futhork). On
the other hand, this form could be Scandinavian from the 9th c., with ðs representing ðss.

The whole phrase reads as os is themo aboro. The first word after the rune-name is the verb ‘to be’ (ist/is, infinitive wesan). The following term is read by Grimm (1828) as himo and by Hattemer (1844-9) and Derolez (1954) as themo. If the first reading is taken to be correct, then it must be a variant of the personal pronoun third person singular masculine (‘him’). If, on the contrary, themo is believed to be the right word, it would be a demonstrative pronoun third person dative singular masculine (‘this’) (OE pām, þām). Obōro is an Old High German adverb (cf. OE yfera, ON yfir) in the comparative form meaning ‘upper, higher, over’ (cf. oba ‘above’, obaro/obōro (comparative form), obarōsto (superlative form); Ellis, 1953: 43).

The r-rune is termed rat (*<reid) (Gmc *[ai] > OE/OFr [ã]) (OE rād). The graph <r> is a mark of Germanisation of the word by the scribe. It is discernible that this term is closer to OE rād than to ON reið. Endos(t) is an Old Saxon temporal adverb meaning ‘finally’, whereas uritan is the past participle of the verb ‘to write’.

The name of the k-rune chaon is a Germanised form of the Old Norse rune-name kaun (Gmc *[au] > OHG [ao]). Then comes a word which most scholars render as cliuot and explain as the third person singular present indicative of the Old Franconian verb klivōn ‘cling to, stick to’ (cf. OE clīstan/cleofian, OHG klēvon/klīvon). However, Grimm (1828) reads it as diuot/diuot and explains it as the third person singular present indicative of the Old High German verb
dionöni/dienöni 'to serve as', which seems at least plausible, since the scribe may have mistaken <u> in diuét/diuot for <n> (dinet/dinot).

Of the next three rune-names, hagal, naut and is, only the n-rune needs comment. Its name naut derives from ON nauð with change of the consonant <ð> to <t> to conform to Old High German phonology. The form habet after naut is the third person singular present indicative of the Old High German verb habēn 'to have'.

The AbcNord records the Old Norse form ar for the a-rune, which shows loss of the semivowel [j]. The word endi after this rune is the conjunction 'and'. The name of the s-rune is sol. The name of the t-rune has to be read either as tir or Tiu. The second variant (where the ON [y:] appears as the graph <iu>) is recorded in different manuscripts as e.g. Codex Leiden: TINR tiur. The rune-name brica shows metathesis of <r> (birca), maybe due to an error by the scribe. The noun is related to ON birki (n.), birkinn (adj.) (biarkan in the rune poems) rather than to OE beorc/berc. The word endi joins this rune with the following, that is, the m-rune man. Man is an Old Saxon/Old High German form (cf. OE mann, ON maðr). It is followed by the word midi, which is an adjective meaning 'mid, middle' (OE midde, OS middi).

The l-rune is called lagu which is an Old English and Old Saxon form related to ON lōgr. The adjective leocht (OHG lioht, OE léoh) means 'light'. The ending in <o> indicates the nominative singular masculine in Old High German and Old Saxon. Finally, it is unknown whether the scribe took the rune-name yr from the Scandinavian tradition or from the Anglo-Saxon, where it was a new
rune resulting from i-mutation of [u:]. Finally, the form *bihabet* is in the present indicative third person singular of *(bi)haben* ‘to have’ and is an Old High German and Old Saxon form.

The runes below the first line of the text have been transliterated variously as *wreat, wraw, preal, preat*. However, taking into account the content of the text, the most probable reading is the first. *Wreat* has been interpreted as a form of the verb *wrītan* ‘to write’. Derolez (1954) holds that one more rune may have preceded the first graph in the word, but if so, it is not possible to know which.

Taking into consideration all the possible variants, the translation of the text, could be:

‘Fé is the first letter, then comes úr, *thuris* is the third stave, ós over it/this, *rat* is written at the end. Then *chaon* clings (to it?)/serves?, *hagal* stays before *naud, is, ár, and sól. *Tiu, birca, and man* in the middle, *lagu* the luminous, *yr* closes up’.

There have been many attempts to solve the problem of the identification of the scribe. Baesecke (1941) put forward the thesis that the collector of the material could be Hrabanus Maurus. Taking into consideration the language of the text, Derolez (1954) believes that the AbcNord points to a region where Low and High German met. According to Düwel (2001), the text came to Fulda from Denmark through the Low German Region, as demonstrated by the words from different languages used in the text. Grimm (1821) believed that the original text of the AbcNord was Anglo-Saxon and the copyist a High German speaker. This theory is based on the fact that some rune-name variants, such as *rat*, are closer to the Old English term. However, none of the solutions seem to be completely
satisfactory, taking into consideration the fact that in the text there are eight Old High German/Old Saxon words, seven Old Norse terms and six coming from Old English. Therefore, none of the languages employed in the AbcNord outweighs the rest.

For some time authors like von der Leyen (1938) related this text to Germanic magic. However, some years later in a study of the text, Baesecke (1941) maintained that the AbcNord had nothing to do with magic. Since that time the relationship between runes and magic has not played a role in the discussion of the AbcNord.

There is little agreement on the significance of this text. But the AbcNord resembles some fragments of the Third Grammatical Treatise (see section 5.2. of this chapter). There the Old Norse alphabet is described but runes are not presented in the futhark order, but divided into vowels, semivowels and consonants. This likeness leads to the hypothesis that the AbcNord served the purpose of teaching or remembering rune-names, a Merkverse (mnemonic poem).

This text does not provide information on the meaning of the rune-names, only on their spelling in one of three Germanic languages. It is difficult to discern to what extent the scribe was acquainted with runes, since he may have just copied from an exemplar. What is important, however, is the fact that rune-names were known on the Continent in the 9th c.
4. Sources of the Anglo-Saxon Rune-Names

The Old English futhorc reached its full development in the 9th c. at the latest, and it is believed to have become antiquated by the end of that century. All manuscript sources that have come down to us belong to the 8th or 9th c. or derive from originals of that period.

English runes were imported onto the Continent presumably as the result of learned and religious links between England and the Continent. It is worth noting that manuscripts containing Old English runes are earlier and more numerous on the Continent than in England. The first English manuscripts with futhorcs date from the 11th c., while those on the Continent (as St. Gall) are from the 9th and 10th c. Parsons (1994) is right in his appreciation that the chronology of the Continental runic material then supports the existence of a “manuscript world” in the 8th and 9th c. in England, which would have lived alongside epigraphical practice. However, the problem with the Continental material is that none of the runic lore recorded in those manuscripts is written by an Anglo-Saxon hand, but by local copyists who were probably illiterate in terms of runic knowledge and could, as a consequence, distort the evidence.

There are four runic manuscripts known to have been written in England containing the total of six futhorcs. Four of them record the names of the runes, and these are: Cotton MS. Domitian A 9; *Cotton MS. Otho B 10; *Cotton MS. Galba A 2; Oxford MS. St. John's College 17. In addition, there are nine

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6 An asterisk indicates that the manuscript is now lost.
manuscripts with English futhorecs written on the Continent. Six of them give the names of the runes and their values. These are Vienna MS. 795; Brussels MS. 9311-9319; Brussels MS. 9565-9566; St. Gall MS. 270; Trier MS. R. III. 13 and Vatican MS. Urbin. 290. Runic alphabets are recorded in Berne, Stadt- und Hochschulbibliothek, MS. 207; Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, MS. 751; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. MS. 1941; Phillipps MS. 3715; Vatican Library MS. Reginensis Lat. 338 and Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. MS. 14436. Further material appears in the various copies of De inventione, a short treatise on the history of the alphabet. An analysis of the data contained in these manuscripts follows.7

- Cotton MS. Domitian A 9

Fol. 11v in Cotton MS. Domitian A 9 contains an Anglo-Saxon futhorc and the sound values of the runes. The same scribe (scribe A), who is often dated to the end of the 10th c. or early 11th, also wrote the names of the last five runes. A second 12th c. hand (scribe B) copied the names of the other graphs, and an even later person corrected some rune values.

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7 The manuscripts with references to the rune-names have been taken from Deroylez (1954) for, as it has already been mentioned, it represents the only available catalogue of Anglo-Saxon runica manuscripta.
The immediate conclusion that can be drawn from a glance at the runes-
names is that scribe B had only a vague knowledge of the runic nomenclature.
Many names are indeed correctly matched to their graphs: feoh, ur, dorn, os, rad,
cen, gifu, wen, hegel (Kentish variant of WS hægel), nead (variant of nied/nýd),
gear, peord, tir, berc (Kentish variant of WS beorc), lagu, ac, æsc, yr, but he
assigned the wrong name to several runes. For instance, he termed the i-rune inc
instead of ḥs, even though that name was later given for ing, the g-rune. Similarly,
the eo-rune was misinterpreted and taken for the s-graph. The former rune was
consequently called sigel, whereas the latter was termed sig. It is unknown
whether the second syllable of this word was illegible or whether the scribe
simply did not know the complete name (cf. sigel). Following the acrophonc
principle, scribe B called the e-rune ðbel, which is the name of the ðe-rune. In Old
English the standard name of the e-rune was eoh/eh. He also mixed up the runes d
and m, changing thus their names: the m-rune is called deg and the d-rune mann.

For the next rune he rendered inc instead of ing. He also gave an unknown name to the æ-rune, and confused the ea-rune with the t-rune designating it as tir. He rendered the unknown names orent and cur for the added runes. The k-rune was called calc by scribe A. However, scribe B “corrected” it by writing dots under the word and used iolx instead. The rune stān, which is rarely found in inscriptions, is given the correct name but the value se by scribe A and the name z but the value st by scribe B. Finally, the rune gar is termed et by scribe B, which is a hapax. Interestingly, the letter <g> as written by scribe A resembles the et-abbreviation (“tironian note”), whereas scribe B has a different <g> as in geur. There is then good reason to believe that scribe B misunderstood the value g as et.

Scribe B is difficult to locate given the fact that he shows a mixture of linguistic features: the name geur (later corrected to gear) is written in West Saxon, in opposition to the non-West Saxon variants deg, hegel and the Kentish variant wen (WS daeg, hægl, wyn).

This folio also contains a futhorc with rune-names glossed by a 16th c. hand, which illustrates a scholar’s knowledge of Old English at that time. For that reason, the information on runic nomenclature rendered by the glosses cannot be completely reliable, as demonstrated by the errors made in the text. However, they are still important, given the fact that the meaning of the rune-names are rendered through glosses:

f. feoh id est pecunia; g. gifu id est gratia; h. hegel id est grando; e. ethel id est patria; d. deg id est dies; th. thorn espina; m. man id est homo; a. ar id est
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reuerentia; æ. æsc id est fraxinus; ea. gear id est annus vel ear; st. stan id est lapis; r. rad id est consilium; b. berc id est cortex; s. sigel id est velum; u. ur id est noster (Derolez, 1954: 7).

It can be observed that the glosses on the e- and æ-runes show confusion in the futhorc itself. The Old English words are correctly translated, but the e-rune is called ethel instead of eoh (once more applying the acrophonic principle), and ar is not the name of an Old English runic letter, but an error for ãc. Besides, the glossator mixes up two runes (gear and ear) and in the four remaining cases he has not translated the rune-names but homonyms or similar words. Instead of rād ‘riding’, he renders rād ‘consilium’; in place of beorc ‘birch’, he writes berk ‘bark’, rather than sigel ‘sun’ he has segel ‘velum’ and ur ‘noster’ in preference to ūr ‘bison’.

- Cotton MS. Otho B 10

The manuscript Cotton MS. Otho B 10 was completely destroyed by a fire in 1731, but fortunately Smith (1696) and Wanley (1705) gave detailed analyses of the contents before it was destroyed. The main text for runic studies is the Old English Rune Poem, which is dealt with in chapter III.

8 The meaning of this rune-name is, according to the Old English Rune Poem ‘aurochs’. This substitution of ūr ‘aurochs’ by its homonym ur(e) can also be found in Cynewulf’s runic passages.
• Oxford MS. St. John's College 17

The manuscript Oxford MS. St. John's College, which was written before 1111, is probably the most important English document in terms of runic knowledge, since it contains material both Old English and Old Norse. On fol. 5\textsuperscript{v} runes are found in the neighbourhood of esoteric, cryptic alphabets and so regarded as a strange writing system. This folio contains a sixteen-letter futhark with values and rune-names (see section 5.1); a fictitious alphabet; three cryptic alphabets; a forty-three rune futhorc with rune-names; a long branch futhark of twenty-three graphs; Nemnivus' alphabet with values; a futhorc of forty runes with values; a runic alphabet of thirty-seven graphs; another fictitious alphabet of twenty-one graphs and values; and finally the alphabet of Aethicus Ister with names. The recorded futhorc consists of forty-three runic variants, all with their names.

Table 13. Anglo-Saxon futhorc in Oxford MS. St. John's College 17 (Derolez, 1954: 39)
The same scribe may have rendered the variants cen and gyfu (uel cen and uel gyfu) for coen and geoful and may have also corrected hægel to hægil by using a dot. It is noticeable that three variant runic graphs are rendered for the names geoful, sigel, peord, quar and two each for ech, hægel, daeg, æpel, yr and ing. The order of the runes is somewhat altered with respect to the standard futhorc order.

Some points concerning the rune-names must be mentioned. Derolez (1954) maintains that, because of its spelling, the name of the ð-rune (tyr) in this manuscript may have been influenced by the Scandinavian name of the same rune (ON tjyr). However, it could also be maintained that the scribe may have thought of the variant tui recorded in some manuscripts. It has to be remembered that OE <ui> was the earliest spelling of <y> (Campbell, 1959: 28). Secondly, the scribe made a mistake writing mech instead of ech, the name of the e-rune; thirdly, the correction from logu to lagu may have been made by a 17th c. hand who added the values of some runes. Derolez (1954) also claims that the spelling of the names feh and ech may display some Scandinavian features. However, there is no need to resort to the Old Norse names to explain these spelling variants. It could be argued that feh simply shows Anglian smoothing (WS feoh) and that ech could be an error for eoh.
Cotton MS. Galba A 2 (11th or 12th c.) was consumed by a fire\(^9\). However, scholars base their studies on Wanley’s account (1705) and Hickes’ facsimile (1705). The manuscript contains among other things a Norse futhark of seventeen graphs with values and only two names; a futhorc of thirty-five runes with their denomination; a long-branch futhark with twenty-two runic letters, the first sixteen having names; a futhorc of forty runes; another runic alphabet with forty runes\(^10\); Nemnivus’ alphabet with values; and another one with twenty-five Norse runes and their values. The Old English futhorc in Hickes’s facsimile is:

![Image of Norse runes]

Table 14. Old English futhorc in Hicke’s facsimile (Derolez, 1954: 46)

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\(^{9}\) According to Derolez (1954: 34), the runic material may have been added at a later date.

\(^{10}\) Page and Haglund (1998) maintain that their values may have been added by a modern hand.
The scribe seems to have copied the rune-names without making as many mistakes as the manuscripts already presented. In relation to the runic nomenclature, several of the individual rune-names reveal variant spellings in relation to the standard West Saxon spellings. Whereas the spellings in some cases may be scribal errors, they may also show dialectal features deriving from the original version or from other stages in the textual tradition. It is observable that most names have been rightly rendered with respect to the traditionally accepted Old English names of the runes: *feoh* (West-Saxon form), *ur*, *porn*, *os*, *rad*, *cen*, *gyfū*, *wyn*, *hegil*, *ned*, *is*, among others. *Hegil* shows raising of [æ] to [e] (OE *hägil*, *hegl*).

The word *nēd* is an Anglian variant of WS *nēdl/nēd* (< OE *nēad* by i-umlaut of Gmc *nauōiz*). The name *eth* must be a mistake for *ech* or *eoh* with confusion of <i> for <e>/<o>. Various scribal variants of <i> and <e> are so similar that a copyist can make a scribal error. Moreover, the name *mg* is probably a scribal mistake for *ing*. It is unknown where the <i> in *peoih* comes from, but it could be an error for <r>. The name *querō* for Roman <q> is most likely an innovation modeled on the name for <p> *peorō*. The final rune resembles a Latin <ź>, but no name whatsoever is supplied. In relation to the runic graphs, it should be pointed out that the second graph provided for *ēdel* is identical with the one in the Thames Scramasax *futhorc*.

From the information provided by the rune-names (as breaking in *feoh*, *eoh*, *beorc*), this *futhorc* may be located in the South of England. Nonetheless, there are other forms which show smoothing as, for example, *querō*, *ned* and *hegil* (WS
queorð, nēod, hægl, respectively). Derolez (1954) maintains that the original version could have been written in A.D. 800 or even earlier.

- **Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. 795**

The manuscript Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. 795 is well known for its collection of Alcuin's letters and some important Gothic material (see section 2. of this chapter). Among others items, it contains an English futhorc of twenty-eight runes and their names:

![Runes and names](image)

**Table 15. Old English futhorc in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. 795 (Derolez, 1954: 59)**

The ſ-rune has two names, *fe* and *fech*. As for the first form, Derolez (1954: 59) explains that it is identical with the name of the Gothic <ſ> in fol. 20', but as Derolez also points out, it could be again a scribal error for *feoh*. The latter could be an Anglian variant, since it apparently shows smoothing, but it most
likely represents an error by the scribe. However, the fact that the same error appears in several manuscripts is difficult to account for. The digraph <ch> is not found in Old English to represent the velar spirant sound. The use of <th> and <ch> to represent voiceless spirants, respectively dental and velar (or palatal) appears, however, to have been suggested by Old Irish spelling (Campbell, 1959: 23). The graph <h> is the usual symbol for [χ], while <ch> is used finally in the *Moore Bede* for this sound. In *Liber Vitae Dunelmensis* <ch> reappears extensively, both finally and as the final symbol of first elements (*Alchfrith, Valchstod*). Later the survival of <ch> is very sporadic (Campbell, 1959: 24).

A later hand added <c> above <a> and <a> after <d> in *rad*, probably inspired by the form *reda* in the Gothic alphabet (Derolez, 1954). *Naed* could be either a mistake for *nēad* or a variant of *nēd*, whereas *berc* could be interpreted linguistically as an Anglian form since it does not show breaking (*WS beorc*).

**Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS. 9311-9319**

The origin of the manuscript Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS. 9311-9319 is unknown. It probably dates to the 9th c. and may have been written in Germany. It was part of the library of the Jesuit community in Antwerp during the 17th and 18th c. It contains, among other things, a futhorc with names and values (fol. 3v). Since the runic material is difficult to read, most attempts to give a precise reading have been unsuccessful.
Again, it seems that one scribe wrote the rune-names while another copied the values. Most Old English names are well attested as, for instance, os, rad, ken, inc, sigil, ti, lago and ac. As in the manuscript above, fech is probably an error for seoh. The name given to the w-rune (uung) is unknown. It is assumed that the first letter in hagal is erased. Below the iar rune, another rune-name (ger, which shows smoothing, cf. WS gēar) is provided in place of its value. Pert also shows smoothing (WS peorð), as does berc (WS beorc). The graph <h-> in hec and hinc is difficult to account for, but in the first case hec it could be an error for eoh with <c> for <o> and transposition of letters. The letter <h> is often not written before initial vowels in Old Norse and medieval Latin texts. <H> was a very weak consonant and scribes could be unsure as to spelling and drop it where it belonged (cf. [h]agal with erasure) and introduce it where it did not belong (called a “spurious h”). The last four runes do not have names.

Table 16. Old English futhorc in Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS. 9311-9319 (Derolez, 1954: 68)

Van Langenhove (1923) claims that the names copied in this manuscript are of English origin, but that they are the outcome of a Continental scribe's
attempt to render the English names dictated to him. Along the same line, Derolez (73) believes the names result from a conscious effort to substitute Continental forms for the English rune-names. From their spelling it seems clear that the scribe was a German speaker who attempted to Germanise the Old English forms. It should nevertheless be noted that not so many Continental forms stand out in the futhorc.

- Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS. 9565-9566; St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, MS. 270; Trier, Priesterseminar, MS. R. III. 13; Vatican Library, Codex Urbinas Latinus 290

There is clearly one single version of the Old English futhorc which is represented with slight variations in the manuscripts Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS. 9565-9566; St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, MS. 270; Trier, Priesterseminar, MS. R. III. 13; Vatican Library, Codex Urbinas Latinus 290 and which has been reconstructed by Derolez (1954) from the evidence provided by all of them.

To begin with, feh shows smoothing (WS feoh). The name of the þ-rune dorn presents a <d> instead of <þ>, which more likely is an indication of an early date of composition (the letter <d> is used instead of <þ> in early Old English manuscripts). The quantity of vowels is sometimes shown by doubling the letters like in oos, huun, iis, which is another characteristic of early Old English manuscripts. The spelling of rat for OE râd is again the result of the adaptation to Continental phonology.
It is unknown where the <b> in gebo comes from, but it could again reflect Germanisation and derive from the Old High German word gibe (OE gieifu, gifu).

Huun is an unknown name (OE wyn). The <h> is probably again a "spurious h". In the case of hagal, Derolez (126) believes that it shows adaptation to Continental Germanic (OE hægl, hegel, hægil, hægel, hegil, heil, hagol). But it could also show retraction of [æ] to [a] before [l], which is a typical Anglian feature: hægal > hagal. Smoothing appears in eh, ger, ih, perd, berg (perhaps mistaken for German ‘mountain’). The name of the s-rune lacks final <l> (sigi).

Tag (for OE ðæg) is a clear example of Germanisation of the word. The last rune is erroneously called aer instead of ǣar, and given the value z. Derolez (131) believes that the scribe’s knowledge of Old English was very limited, and in a number of cases he was led by the sound rather than by the meaning (rat, sigi,
berg). The linguistic evidence provided by the rune-names is a clear sign of the illiteracy concerning runic nomenclature on the part of the scribe.

Runes also appear in English manuscripts arranged following the order of the letters in the Latin alphabet instead of keeping their original position in the futhorc, in most cases in an attempt on the part of the alphabetiser to provide the Latin equivalents of the runes. These are, therefore, called runic alphabets and many of them not only record the runic graphs, but also their names, as the following manuscripts show.

- Berne, Stadt- und Hochschulbibliothek, MS. 207

Manuscript Berne-, Stadt- und Hochschulbibliothek, MS. 207 (8th or 9th c.) contains a list of rune-names (fol. 264, ll. 30-1) probably taken from a runic alphabet copied in the same manuscript:

ach. berc. chen. dei. egch. fegc. gobo. hagil. ish. kalod. logo. man. net. os. per. quello. ret. sigil. ti. u[r] [..]uch. uir. ear.

Table 18. Rune-names in Berne, Stadt- und Hochschulbibliothek, MS. 207 (Derolez, 1954: 184)
The arrangement of the runes is: ach for <a>, berc for <b>, chen for <c>, etc. There are rune-names equivalent to Roman <a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, x, y, z>. Even though the rune-names are Old English forms, some exhibit features which seem to be Continental. For example, ach (final digraph), chen (<ch> for <c>), net and ret (<t> for <d>). The variant berc could be explained linguistically as showing Anglian smoothing (WS beorc). But it could instead be a Continental/German spelling, where <co> did not occur (cf. Berg ‘mountain’). The variant uir instead of yr may be an archaic spelling, whereas logo is probably an error for lagu. Again the ea-rune is given the value z and thus placed in last position. Hagil and sigil present final <i>, while <ge> stand for [X] in the word egch. The rune with the value x is partly illegible, probably eluch for ilux. Other spelling mistakes are ish instead of iss and quello in place of OE cweord. This latter word spelt either queord or cweord (<qu-> and <cw-> are scribal variants representing the same sound), was created as name for the letter <q> following the acrophonic principle. The rest of the word, <-ello> in quello, is unexplainable. Finally, dei (WS dæg) could be an Anglian variant (deg) which has undergone vocalisation of [g] > dei.

Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, MS. 751

The manuscript Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, MS. 751 dates to the middle of the 9th c. The rune-names appear on fol. 39v:
asc. berc. can. donr. ehu. feli. gip. hall/gal. is. ker. lagu.


zar

Table 19. Rune-names in Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, MS. 751 (Derolez, 1954: 203)

Some mistakes can be highlighted in this list of rune-names, as for example donr instead of dorn (metathesis) and feli instead of feh (probably a scribal error: <li> = <h>). It should also be pointed out that most rune-names keep an Old English form. Some exceptions are asc and hagal, whose spellings may show adjustment to Continental graphology (cf. <œ> > <æ>). Some other rune-names present an Old High German form, such as gip (gip/gib) (OE gifu) which some authors believe to go back to the second person singular imperative of the verb giban. This idea, however, is too far-fetched, because none of the rune-names are verbs. The dentals in dorn, pert, not, rat, tac are Old High German characteristics. Derolez (1954) explains the <n> in ian as simply an error for <r>. The last rune-name should be called gar instead of zar. This error may once more have been caused by the application of the acrophonic principle, since this rune is normally equated to Roman <z>. Finally, in ehu there must be transposition of letters (OE eoh), and the name of the q-rune quirun is otherwise unknown.
• Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. MS. 19410

The manuscript Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. MS. 19410 (9th c.) contains a runic alphabet with names:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\text{a}, \text{g}, \text{c}, \text{r}, \text{b}, \text{e}, \text{r}, \text{i}, \text{c}, \text{c}, \text{e}, \text{n}, \text{d}, \text{a}, \text{i}, \text{e}, \text{h}, \text{f}, \text{e}, \text{h}, \text{u}, \text{o}, \text{h}, \text{e}, \text{i}, \text{h}, \text{i}, \text{s}, \text{k}, \text{e}, \text{r}, \text{l}, \text{a}, \text{g}, \\
\text{N}, \text{B}, \text{H}, \text{M}, \text{M}, \text{Y}, \text{X}, \text{N}, \text{I}, \text{ϕ}, \text{Γ} \\
\text{m}, \text{a}, \text{n}, \text{r}, \text{a}, \text{s}, \text{p}, \text{e}, \text{r}, \text{d}, \text{c}, \text{e}, \text{n}, \text{r}, \text{a}, \text{t}, \text{s}, \text{l}, \text{t}, \text{i}, \text{r}, \text{u}, \text{r}, \text{e}, \text{l}, \text{c}, \text{d}, \text{u}, \text{r}, \\
\text{N}, \text{F}, \text{E}, \text{N}, \text{H}, \text{R}, \text{N}, \text{I}, \text{T}, \text{N}, \text{X}, \text{A}, \text{I} \\
\end{array}
\]

Table 20. Runic alphabet in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. MS. 19410 (Derolez, 1954: 208)

The scribe has inserted \textit{car} (OE gär) (corrected with the superscript <\textbf{a}> to \textit{caar} in order to mark the quantity of the vowel) in between the \texta- and \textb-runes. The name of the first graph \textit{ag} (OE \textit{ac}) shows confusion of voiced and voiceless guttural stops. Besides, \textit{dai} presents palatalisation of [g] to [j] and \textit{eh, feh, perd} exhibit smoothing. This time the name of the \textg-rune is not spelt with <\textbf{b}> but with <\textbf{u}> (the intended sound is a fricative in middle position). Some errors are discernible, as the name \textit{heih} for the \texth-rune and the designation \textit{ker} for OE gär. Derolez (1954: 211) defends that OHG \textit{ger}, may have been confused with the OHG word \textit{Ker} 'spear'.

\textbf{It is worth commenting on the abbreviated form of \textit{net} (n&) used by this scribe. The rune equivalent to Roman <\textbf{q}> is given the name \textit{cen}, whereas \textit{sil} is}
incomplete. *Elcd* is a strange name for *iold* and the y-rune is called *uyr*. The rune-name corresponding to Latin <z> is not recorded. Again conformation to German phonology can be perceived in words such as *net* and *rat*. Derolez (1954) maintains that from a linguistic analysis of the alphabet, it seems then that it was written in the High German area and that the underlying futhorc may have come from Anglia. This hypothesis seems to be perfectly possible.

- **Phillipps MS. 3715**

The manuscript Phillipps MS. 3715 was named after its owner Sir Thomas Phillipps, who edited it in 1846 before it was sold. Its present location is unknown. Phillipps’ edition contains a facsimile of the two runic alphabets included in the codex:

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ph</th>
<th>Ex</th>
<th>Vit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ag ber ch cen der hu eq feu genue he</td>
<td>cer la ty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B h M Y X N I Y T</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N B M Y X N I Y T</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A B C D E F G H I K L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some remarks on the names are necessary. First, according to Derolez (1954: 231), the spelling of the b-rune's designation (*berch with smoothing for WS *beorc) indicates that it was probably written by a High German scribe. Second, *derhu has nothing to do with the standard name of the d-rune *daeg.

Derolez (1954) believes it may derive from *born (< *dhorn as found in other manuscripts). But this explanation seems a bit weak, and it is safer to consider the name unexplained. Third, *feu (OE fēo) may be a Norse form (PrScan *fēhu > *fėu (with loss of intervocalic <h>) > ON fe). It could also derive from Old Low German or again be an error for fēo. Fourth, the words for the h- (he.) and l-runes (la) are incomplete, which may indicate that the scribe did not know them or they were already incomplete in the original. The name of the i-rune is unrecorded, probably because it was illegible in the original. Net shows Old High German phonology. Eg is a variant spelling for OE eoh/eh. Genue is an unrecorded name for the g-rune. The k-rune is called cer. Cur is an unknown name and at least not the name of the cœ-rune. The rune equivalent to the Roman <x> has been given the name xen. The spelling uiir for yr is recorded, but the rune assigned to this name is not š. This rune is placed in the last position without name. The graph here assigned to yr normally corresponds to the value z.
Vatican Library, MS. Reginensis Lat. 338

The manuscript Vatican Library, MS. Reginensis Lat. 338, which dates from the 10th c., contains a runic alphabet entitled RUNAS with runes and names, most of which are purely Old English forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F_a</th>
<th>B_b</th>
<th>h_c</th>
<th>A_d</th>
<th>M_e</th>
<th>V_f</th>
<th>X_g</th>
<th>N_h</th>
<th>I_r</th>
<th>H_k</th>
<th>I_i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aac berc cen daeg eeh feh geos hegil iis calc iago</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m+n N_o N_p o q R_r I_s I_t N_u X_y X_z</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moun need oos pear yymoth raad sigil tu ur ilih ir gaar</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22. Runic alphabet in Vatican Library, MS. Reginensis Lat. 338 (Derolez, 1954: 242)

Anglian features can be perceived in some cases. For instance, the names of some runes such as b and f (berc and feh respectively for WS beorc and feoh) show smoothing. There are some mistakes in the transmission of a few names: geos instead of OE gär (gaar) and moun, which is probably an error for monn. Pear is also erroneous and tu must be a mistake for tii through transmission. Finally, ir may show unrounding of [y] to [i]. Once again gar is used as equivalent of Roman <z>.
All these errors reveal that the scribe knew very little about runes. The quantity of vowels is marked by means of double letters: aac, eeh, iis, need, oos, raad, gaar.

- Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. MS. 14436

The manuscript Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. MS. 14436 belongs to the 9th c. Fol. 1r contains seven alphabets. One of them, although runic, is called ‘Syriac’ (siriace).

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{ac · berg · cen · dom · ear · feu · gebo · hagal · is · calc · ker · ki}
\end{array}\]
\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{\textit{KBHPEKHNI\rightarrowDF}}
\end{array}\]
\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{a · b · c · d · e · f · g · h · i · k · k}
\end{array}\]
\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{lago · man · nod · odil · perd · qur · rat · sigo · tac · uur · elux · inc}
\end{array}\]
\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{\textit{MNXFRBEHNTxy}}
\end{array}\]

Table 23. The ‘Syriac’ alphabet in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. MS. 14436 (Derolez, 1954: 254)

This futhark has been presented as an alphabet. Instead of using the e-rune \( M \), the scribe chooses the Anglo-Saxon ea-rune \( Y \) whose name is rendered as ear. The i-rune is given a second variant graph called calc, probably the name of the k-rune. The p- and q-runes have been interchanged such that the name qur with the value \( q \) has been assigned to the p-rune, whereas the name \( perd \) and the
value \( p \) has been given to the q-rune. Besides, it seems that the original copy may have had sigi for the s-rune, but this name did not make sense for the scribe, who changed it to sigo (OHG 'victory') (Derolez, 1954: 256). The name of the t-rune tac is probably a mixture of Germanising forms (\( dae \)g > tag > tac), reflecting the pronunciation of a word that was actually written <tag>. The n-rune has been given the value of the x-rune, whereas the o value has been attached to the c-rune ü. Smoothing occurs in berg (WS beorc), perd (WS peord) and odil (WS ðhel).

Feu could reflect PrScan *feu or be a mistake for OE féo with loss of final <h>.

The k-rune is called ker, whereas the q-rune is termed qur, following the acrophonic principle. Finally, the rune equivalent to Roman <z> is not provided.

Another runic alphabet preserved in this manuscript is entitled Ara[bum]

‘Arabic’:

Table 24. ‘Arabic’ runic alphabet in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. MS. 14436 (Derolez, 1954: 257)
This runic alphabet has two runes with the a value. But the second rune actually has the form of the palatal g-rune and has been called caar (OE gār), which is the term assigned to the Ġ-rune. This rune shows the same position in other manuscripts between the a- and b-runes. The b-graph also appears with two names and shapes. The second word could be a variant of beric, a form recorded in other manuscripts. Caon could be a Germanisation of ON kaun. The d-rune is called doro, but this must be an error for dorn, the denomination of the p-rune. The i-rune is defined as ios, which may go back to OE ior/iar which is the name of the Anglo-Saxon rune †. The designation of keir for the k-rune is also enigmatic. According to Derolez (1954: 259), this form could only be explained by assuming that it was influenced by geirr, the Old Norse equivalent of OE gēr, gēar, OHG ger meaning 'spear'. Other strange names are the ones given to the runes l-, p-, t- (namely, lin, pern, tau). Finally, the m-graph is called menn, which could be the plural form of the standard name (OE mann), but with all the other strange forms, it is most likely some sort of mistake. The s-rune (OE sigel) is called sol (ON sól). The two variants for the n-rune are interesting: the first runic graph and its name have been taken from Old Norse (ON nautr), whereas the second one belongs to the Anglo-Saxon tradition. For the value r, the scribe has chosen a graph similar to the Roman <r> and designated it as tir, which is actually the name of the t-rune. At the same time this latter rune has been strangely called tau. The x-rune is called elx, probably an Anglian form (without breaking) of WS eolhs or simply a small mistake.
- *De inventione*

The Anglo-Saxon rune-names are also recorded in a short treatise on the history of the alphabet now known as *De inventione linguarum ab Hebraea usque ad Theodiscam, et notis antiquis*. It has commonly been attributed to Hrabanus Maurus, even though some scholars consider it to be the work of both Hrabanus Maurus and Alcuin. This tract is copied in a good number of manuscripts. A table with the rune-names as they appear in fifteen versions of *De inventione* is rendered below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1609</th>
<th>1761</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>1010</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>254</th>
<th>176</th>
<th>Ba</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>T</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>asc</td>
<td>asch</td>
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Table 25. The rune-names as preserved in the different versions\(^{11}\) of De inventione
(Derolez, 1954: 361)

\(^{11}\) The manuscripts are: Vienna MS. 1609; Vienna MS. 1761; M. Goldast's edition; Heidelberg MS. Salem 9-39; Nürnberg MS. 1966; Vienna MS. 1010; Munich, MS. A. Weinmüller; Vatican MS. Regin 294; Vatican MS. Urbin 290; Karlsruhe MS. Ang. 254; Karlsruhe MS. Ang. 176; Bamberg MS. Msc. Patr. 130/2; Paris MS. 5239; Strasbourg MS. 326; Cotton MS. Titus D 18 (Derolez, 1954).
The rune-name asc is recorded variously as asc, asch, ase, aso. All of them show retraction of [æ] to [a], or perhaps adjustment to Continental graphemes. The final vowels in ase and aso must be an error for <c>. The name of the b-rune appears as birith, biric, berith, bira (OE beorc). These forms could derive from the archaic Old English form biric\textsuperscript{12}. The final <th> must be a confusion of <c> and <t> with later replacement of <t> with <th>. The next rune-name stands for the c-rune, which is variously called chen, chon, cheri (scribal error: <n> = <ni>), ché, cen (OE cēn). According to Derolez (362), the name may have been understood as OHG chen/chien ‘torch’. Thorn (OE þorn/thorn) shows metathesis in thron, and spellings such as dhron and the strange drom (with the <d> graph) may be the result of an attempt to conform to the acrophonic principle. OE eoh/eh is rendered as ech, eho, ehc, ehe, eth. The first word could be an error for eoh, and the others variants based on this later form. Likewise, OE feoh is recorded as fech, fehc, fec. OE geful/geoful/gieful/gifu is almost unanimously rendered as gibu (also gibul), which surely goes back to OHG gibu (Germanisation of the word). The name of the h-rune is transmitted as hagale, hagalc (confusion of <e> with <c>), haga, agalc, hegl. In relation to the i-rune rendered as his, the letter <h> is another example of ‘spurious h’\textsuperscript{13}. Different names are rendered for the k-rune: gilch, gilc, glic, kalc, kol, gile, kilc, kalc. Von

\textsuperscript{12} See, for example, the gloss populus birce (CorpGl2 (Hessels) D4.2), Complete Corpus of Old English in Machine Readable Form.

\textsuperscript{13} As it has already been explained, ‘spurious h’ occurs in Old Norse and Latin manuscripts before initial vowels. Phonetically [h] is a weak sound of air rushing through a constrained throat; vowels begin often with a rush of air after an initially closed throat.
Grienberger (1896) connects *gilχ* with MHG *kil(i)ch* 'chalice'. Well-retained forms are those for OE *lagu* and *mann*: *lagu*, *laga*, *lago*, *lac* and *mann*, *man*, respectively. The variants for the *n*-rune, namely *not*, *noth* (OE *nēad*, *nēd*, *nēd*) seem to be akin to OHG *not*. The name of the *œ*-rune is well preserved as shown by the names *othil*, *otil*, *othel*. OE *peorð/perð* is rendered as *perc*, *perch*, *pert*, with no breaking. *Perð* was probably Germanised to *pert*. Then the scribe surely confused the final <-t> with <-c> (*perc*), which was later Germanised to <-ch> (*perch*). The *k*-rune is in most cases designated as *chon* (also *chan*, and once *qhon*). It is unknown whether this form could be connected to ON *kaun* rather than to the OE *cēn*. In the case of the *r*-rune, its name variants (*rehit*, *rehith*, *reh*) are closer to ON *reið* than to OE *rād*. There is not unanimity in the spelling of the *s*-rune: *suhil*, *sugil*, *siugil*, *sigil* for OE *sigel*. As an equivalent for the Roman <-t>, the name of the *d*-rune has been chosen and Germanised to OHG *tac* (OE *daeg*). The variant *hur* for OE *ūr* shows once more the 'spurious h'. With respect to the value *x*, the variants differ greatly from OE *iolx*: *helahc*, *halach*, *helach*, *helac*, *heluch*, *xelach*. As for *yr*, it shows 'spurious h' in most cases: *huynr*, *hurn*, *huuni*, *huury*, *huiry*, *hu*, *hyri*, *yri*. Finally, the name assigned for the value *z* is *ziul/zia*, which according to Derolez (1954) is an Old High German word equivalent of OE *tir* (ON *týr*), but adapted to the acrophonic principle (<-t> <-z>).

The immediate conclusion that can be drawn is that even though most of the rune-names are of English origin, some Norse and Germanising features are observed. Since the adaptation to Old High German phonology does not seem to be uniform in the different versions, Derolez (1954: 372) comments that the
author of *De inventione* wanted to treat the Norse runes in his work. In an attempt to compare them to the Roman letters, he needed some extra runes and that is why he created an alphabet with the material he had at his disposal. This seems unlikely. It could more likely be argued that the runes he wanted to collect were Old English rather than Scandinavian, but apparently the author also knew some Old Norse.

*De inventione* is the clearest example of the process of collecting and transmitting the rune-names through the centuries. Most rune-names eventually differ a lot from their original spelling. It also shows the illiteracy on part of the scribes in terms of runic knowledge and their attempt to equate the rune-names to words that signified something in their mother tongue.
4.1. Conclusions

This section has sought to examine the references to Anglo-Saxon rune-names in both English and Continental manuscripts. Rune-names were primarily of interest as a foreign writing system and, therefore, grouped together with other alphabets or with works on cryptography or tracts as the *Isruna tract*.

A large amount of Anglo-Saxon runic lore survives in Continental documents. This material was copied and re-copied over a long time-span. Although there is a great amount of information contained in Continental as opposed to English manuscripts, they have their drawbacks. The main one is that this codified runic lore represents the work of local copyists who in most cases were ignorant of runes and of the English language and who, therefore, all too often confused or distorted the evidence. Furthermore, rune-names were subjected to extensive changes and adaptations to German phonology (Germanisation). Besides, in most cases the rune-names are not written in one single dialect or belong to the same period.

Most rune-names recorded in these manuscripts are Old English, even though on some occasions they have undergone changes. Anglian features are more numerous than West Saxon, as is perceived in Vatican Library, MS. Reginensis Lat. 338 or in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. 795. A number of Kentish features are also recorded in Cotton MS. Galba A 2.
A few variants display Scandinavian elements, like the ones in Oxford St. John's College MS. 17. But this fact cannot be surprising, taking into account that this manuscript contains two Old Norse futharks (see section 5.1).

English and Continental scribes mistook runes, assigning the wrong name to various graphs, as in Cotton MS. Domitian A 9 or Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. MS. 14436. Sometimes, due to their lack of understanding of the runic nomenclature, they created new names by deriving them from other runes' denomination, as is illustrated in Phillipps MS. 3715.

The Latin glosses in Cotton Dominian A 9 show that the 16th c. copyists were ignorant of some rune-names signification, such as sigel, rād and ūr. St Gall MS. 270 agrees with Cotton Domitian in glossing the rune-name rat as 'consilium'. In both manuscripts OE rād has been Germanised to rat. Then the scribe has provided a German translation of a Germanised spelling (Rat = Rat(haus) = rād(hus) = 'consilium'). It is worth noting that at least sigel and ūr also cause problems of interpretation in most Old English runic passages, especially in the Old English Rune Poem.

In Munich MS. 14436, the sound value p and its acrophonic name pert/perð come before q, but the graph is that of the q-rune. These runes are easily mistaken and unrecognised, especially the former, since it is a manuscript rune introduced in the English futhorc as an equivalent to the Roman <q>.

The presentation of the standard 24 (?) Anglo-Saxon runes appears to be based on and reflect a good, old, Anglo-Saxon tradition, whereas the added
manuscript runes could be based on a tradition, or could be new creations, for example to fill out the alphabet in alphabetic order (on the Continent).
4.2. Old English Literary Texts

Apart from the manuscript runic lists, rune-names also appear in two Old English literary texts, namely the *Exeter Book* riddles 42 and 58. These two riddles also point to a knowledge of rune-names at least among learned people.

- **Riddle 42:**

  Ic seah wyhte wætlcæ twa
  Undearnunga ute plegan
  Hæmedlæces; hæwitloc anfæng
  Wlanc under wæðum, gif þæs weorces speow,
  Fæmne fyllo. Ic on fletæ mæg
  Purh runstæfas rincum secgæn,
  þæm þe bec witan, begæ ætsæmæn
  Naman þara wihta. þær sceal Nyd wesan
  twega ðæper ond se torhtæ Æsc
  an an linan, Acas twegen
  Hægelæs swa some [...].

  (Williamson, 1977: 95\(^{14}\))

('I saw two strange creatures openly enjoy sexual intercourse outdoors; the proud fair-haired woman received seed under her clothing, if the work succeeds. I can

\(^{14}\) In Williamson's edition (1977), this riddle is number 40.
tell in the hall to men who know books through rune-staves the names of both those creatures together. There must be Need twice over, and the bright Æsc, one only in the line; two Oaks, Hail the same number’) (Translation by Dewa, 1995: 27)

The riddle describes two creatures coupling. Its solution is based upon the rune-names given in lines 8-11: there must be two Nyd (n-rune), one Æsc (æ-rune), two Ac (a-rune) and two Hægl (h-runes), which transliterated to the Latin alphabet and, once rearranged, give hana and hæn, ‘cock’ and ‘hen’ respectively. Dietrich (1859) was the first scholar to propose this solution.

- **Riddle 58:**

  Ic wat anfete  ellen dreogan
  Wiht on wonge. [...].
  Hafað hefigne steort,  heafod lytel,
  tungan lange,  toð næmigne,
  isernes dæl;  eorðgræf pæpeð. [...]
  [...] þry sind in naman
  ryhte runstafas;  þara is rad foran.
  (Tupper, 1910: 101-2)

(‘I know a thing with a single foot doing deeds of might [...]. It has a heavy tail and a small head and a long tongue. It has no tooth; part is of iron. It goes through
a hollow [...]. In its name there are three real runes. Rād is the first’) (Translation by Baum, 1963: 29-30)

Most scholars have proposed ‘well’ as the solution to the riddle. However, this very enigmatic text seems to describe not a well, but rather some engine for lifting water. Authors such as Blakeley (1958) and Williamson (1977) favour ‘well sweep’ as the solution to the riddle. According to Williamson (1977), rād could be a part of the compound noun radrod, referring to the pole of the well.

A few other critics think that rād is meant to indicate the r-rune, and that the name of the creature mentioned in the text begins with <r>. Holthausen (1894), for example, believes the word to be OE rōd.
5. Sources of the Scandinavian Rune-Names

5.1. The Scandinavian *Runica Manuscripta*

The English tradition of *runica manuscripta* is rich and early when compared to the Scandinavian. Manuscript writing arrived in Northern Europe around the 12th c. after a great change in the runic system, and therefore manuscripts cannot be expected to reflect the earliest stages in runic writing.\(^{15}\)

Runes are known to have been employed as a system of abbreviations (*Begriffsrunen*) which scribes had adopted from England. This use is found in AM 325 VII 4\(^{o}\) (ca. 1250-1300) with a kings' saga text, AM 249 I fol. (ca. 1190), which contains a *calendarium* with Icelandic glosses, and AM 673 a 4\(^{o}\) (ca. 1200), which includes fragments of Physiologus. The runic graphs more often employed were \(\Psi\) for *maðr* and \(\Psi\) for *fé*. In Norway, runes were made use of as abbreviations in manuscripts during a short period: they no longer appear in manuscripts after 1300.

To obtain earlier information on Norse runes, their names and values from manuscripts it is necessary to search outside Scandinavia, namely, England and the Continent where there are various manuscripts where runes and their names are recorded. The first manuscript evidence of Scandinavian runic usage comes from Fleury (*Leiden, University Library, MS. Vossiani Latini Q 83*) and *St. Gall*

\(^{15}\) An illustrative example is the fact that the Norwegian language was not recorded in written sources until around 1050. None of the preserved Scandinavian manuscripts are older than 1150. AM 655 IX 4 is believed to be the oldest recorded manuscript written in Norwegian. The study of *runica manuscripta Scandinavica* is a hard task, because there is not a general catalogue, such as that of Derolez's for the Anglo-Saxon. Some works of more limited scope are those by Bæksted (1942), Derolez (1965) and Heizmann (1998).
MS. 878 (the AbcNord). Other non-Scandinavian manuscripts containing Norse rune-names are The Book of Ballymote, Oxford St. John’s College MS. 17, Cotton MS. Galba A 2, and Munich Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS. Clm. 276.

- MS. Vossiani Latini Q 83, University Library, Leiden

MS. Vossiani Latini Q 83 dates from the 9th c., and it is significant not only on account of its runic material, but also for containing Plautus’ comedy Aulularia in its twenty-three folios. The runic data proper appears on the last page (fol. 24v). Some sections are difficult to read due to fading. Part of the content is a futhark with sound values or Latin equivalents. It is arranged with the third aett place at the beginning (the original order would be fuparkhniastbmlk). In l. 19-21 the names of the runes are given both in Latin minuscules and in runic characters, which is very uncommon.

\[ \text{t tiur } \text{b biærkan m manr l laukr r ir f fiu u unr d phurs a aus} \]
\[ \text{r ræipu c kaun h hakal n naup i is e or s sulu} \]

The amount of errors in the transmission of the rune-names indicates that the person who copied the runes had little runological knowledge. The name of the t-rune is spelt tiur instead of týr; biærkan is related to biarkan, name of the b-rune as recorded in the Scandinavian rune poems (ON birki). The name fiu is more akin to OHG fihu than to ON fé. Likewise, the name of the þ-rune is
transcribed \textit{phurs} with the graph \textit{<ph->} and interpreted as the Latin \textit{<d>}. The \textit{a}-rune is termed \textit{aus}, maybe a mistake for \textit{aas}, \textit{ræipu} is applied to the \textit{r}-rune (ON \textit{reid}), and \textit{hakal} to \textit{hagal}. ON \textit{år} is given the value \textit{e}. Finally, the \textit{s}-rune is called \textit{sulu}, instead of ON \textit{sól}.

- **St. Gall MS. 878**

St. Gall MS. 878 contains the \textit{Abecedarium Nordmannicum} which has already been discussed (see section 3. in this chapter).

- **The Book of Ballymote**

The \textit{Book of Ballymote} dates to the end of the 14th c. It is now preserved at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, and contains among other things, a treatise on the Irish language (\textit{Auraisept Na n-Écos}) and material on the ogham script. Moreover, there are two alphabets under the names \textit{ogam lochlannach ann so} (‘here the Scandinavian ogham’) and \textit{galgam} (‘foreign ogham’), both with the runes of the younger futhark.

The first of these futharks only shows the runes: \texttt{fatorchniasdbmle}. It can be perceived that the value \textit{e} is employed for the last rune \texttt{a}. The value \textit{e} for the \textit{r}-rune occurs in Viking Age inscriptions (cf. Nielsen, 1994 and Larsson, 2002). Since the age of the text in \textit{Ballymote} is unknown (only of the manuscript itself), it may be from that period (ca. 1000). The use for vocal is based on the fact
that <-R> only came at the end of a word and, therefore, the acrophonic principle can not function here. The Old Norse word yr could in Old East Nordic have the form *iR/*éR/*eR, due to widespread but not consistent unrounding. This fact could explain the use of the value e.

The second futhark includes their names: fea, f. ar a. durs, t. os, o. raid, r. caun, c. hagal, h. naun, n. isar, i, a. sol, s. diur, d, ðgān, b. man, m. lāgor, l. eir, e.

The graph <a> in fea is difficult to account for; the second graph should be the u-rune instead of the a-rune, thus the mistake ar for úr; naun is an error for nauð, and isar must correspond to two names, namely, iss and ár. The t-rune is given the value d and the corresponding name diur, and <-iur> could represent <-yr>. The words bgān lāgor correspond to bjarkan and lōgr, respectively. The last name (eir) could go back to ON yr with unrounding of the Old East Nordic form as mentioned above.

- Oxford St. John's College MS. 17

The date of composition of Oxford St. John's College MS. 17 has been widely discussed. The content is known to be a text derived from a book compiled by Byrhtferth of Ramsey. But there is also later material. Page and Hagland (1998) reckon a general date at least for fol. 5, namely 11th c., 1113 at the latest. Fol. 5 contains some Norse runic material, namely, a sixteen-letter futhark with rune-names and a long-branch futhark with additional dotted variants encompassing in total twenty-three graphs, the first sixteen with their rune-names.
Poor knowledge of the Scandinavian runes is displayed in the first futhark. First, the ã-rune appears with the value e and also with the name e, but there is no e-rune in the younger futhark. This graph exists in the other futharks, but this rune has no name in Scandinavia; *coun* is rendered in place of *kaun*, *nau* instead of *naud*, *tiur* for *tyr*; and *bercon* for *bjarkan*. In addition, the runes’ position in the futhark has been changed: i t b s a instead of i a s t b. The r-rune placed at the end is called *reider*. The sounds represented by the r and r-runes fell together during the 900’s and 1000’s, with the result written <-r>. That made the r-form vacant, and it could be used for example for y. The manuscript Oxford St. John’s College MS. 17 could then record the coalescence of these sounds in Scandinavia after the year 1000. The scribe must have known that where one used to write <-R> one now writes <-r>, and then used the same name for both runes.

The next futhark provides the names of the first sixteen runes, but only the values of seven additional runes of the dotted type. The variant *beor* is closer to OE *beorc* than to *bjarkan* (Scandinavian rune poems) or ON *birki*, which may indicate that the scribe was influenced by or at least knew the Anglo-Saxon tradition, or it may simply have been taken from the futhorc that precedes. Most of the rune-names are Old Norse forms. Some as *naud*, *reð*, *kon* show East-Scandinavian monophthongisation of Gmc */au*, */ai/ (/>e, o/ respectively) (West-Scandinavian *naud*, *reid*, *kaun*) (Page and Hagland, 1998).
Table 26. Sixteen-rune fuþark with names and sound values in St. John’s College MS. 17 (Page and Hagland, 1998: 65)

Table 27. Sixteen-rune fuþark with names and seven additions in St. John’s College MS. 17 (Page and Hagland, 1998: 65)

- Cotton MS. Galba A 2

Besides the Anglo-Saxon runic material (see earlier section) contained in this manuscript, there is a Norse fuþark of sixteen runes plus an additional dotted graph, with values, but only the name of the first two runes. Furthermore, there is another fuþark of twenty-two runes, which gives the names of the first sixteen and
the values of six more. This is almost identical to the second fuþark in St. John’s manuscript. However, it no longer survives. It was destroyed in a fire, and scholars are dependent on engravings by Hickes (1705).

In the first fuþark the two only recorded names are fer (with a final <r>) and ur. The other runic alphabet contains the variants reð, con, nod which are EScan monophthongised forms for the West-Norse terms reið, kaun and nauð. Besides, the noun mander (rather than maðr) is East-Scandinavian, perhaps Old Swedish or Danish (Page and Hagland, 1998: 67).


• Munich Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS. Clm. 276

The manuscript Munich Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS. Clm. 276 contains a few scientific works. In one of them entitled *Geomantia est vaticinatio terrenorum* there is a page (fol. 96v) with various alphabets, among them a runic, a Hebrew, a Latin and a Greek. The runic material is composed of a futhark with sound values and runic names. Four additional runes have been added lacking both names and values. There is a second runic alphabet with three additional characters (Derolez, 1965).

Some rune-names like *as/os, ur, sol*, have been transmitted correctly in relation to the standard forms. Others, however, have not. One example is constituted by the terms *fhe, ihs, thur* whose *<h>* has been inserted without any obvious explanation. There is also a spirant in *biarchi* and *chon*. Furthermore, the *b*-rune is given the value *z*, and the *k*-rune the value *q* instead of *k* or *c*. It is unknown what the last rune-name *solhengethe* stands for. In *chon* (ON *kaun*) and *nodher* (ON *naupr*) there is monophthongization of *[au]* to *[o]*.

In Iceland\(^\text{16}\), a great amount of manuscripts with rune-names has been preserved. Bæksted (1942) edited the Icelandic manuscript material, which is very late compared to the English (none is older than ca. 1300, and some date as late as the 16th and 17th ce.). Some other attempts to complete Bæksted’s work have

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\(^{16}\) For a detail account of the Icelandic manuscripts, see Heizmann (1998).
followed, as Heizmann's (1998). The latter author divides the Icelandic runic manuscripts into two categories: on the one hand, those which contain the rune-names but not the runic graphs; on the other hand, those where the runes are also recorded. Whenever the rune-names appear on their own, they follow the order of the Latin alphabet and not that of the younger futhark of sixteen runes.

Heizmann (1998: 524-25) records several manuscripts with rune-names. Since they are very late (none earlier than the 16th c.), they are only included for the sake of completeness:

- **AM 136 4to, Skinnastaðabók** dates from ca. 1500 and contains different law texts. On fol. 144v the names of the runes are arranged in alphabetical order:

  \[ ar, biarkan, cnesol, stungan tyr, stungan js, fie, stungan kaun, hagall, js, \]
  \[ kaun, logur, [mad]ur, naud, os, plastur, reid, sol, tur, [ur], [pu]ss. \]

  This Icelandic manuscript contains a word unrecorded in the other sources, namely *plastur*, probably the name assigned to the p-rune. However, this rune was not part of the futhark. Its occurrence may be influenced by the Anglo-Saxon futhorc, where this rune does exist, even though with a different name (*peord*). As for the other names, most of them are well attested. The names of some dotted (*stunginn*) runes are also recorded.

- **AM 193 IV 8vo** is from ca. 1600-1650. At the end of fol. 5v there is a list of runic alphabets with the Icelandic rune-names:
ar, Biarkan, Kniesol, stungenntýr, stunginnýs, fe, stunginn kaun, hagall, Ys, Kaun, laugur, madur, naud, os, plastur, Reid, sol, tur, vr, yr, Þuss.

Again the rune-name plastur appears.

- AM 247 8vo (ca. 1800). On fol. 34" the younger futhark with rune-names divided in three ættir appears: f Fje u Úr þ puss o ós r Reid ý ýr : k Kaun h Hagall n Naud i Ís ø Ar s Sól : t Týr b bjarkan m Maðr l Lögur.

The names and values are the traditionally accepted ones.

- EdiabUL 21.6.7 (1750-1753). This manuscript has three parts; in the first there is a futhark with rune-names, divided into ættir with a variant given for the third ætt: a fe u ur þ puss o ós r reid k kaun : h Hagall n naud i js ø ar s Sol : t Týr b biarkan m madur l lögur ý ýr / t Týr e Stungenn ýs m madur b biarkan l lögur.

The only point that deserves to be commented is the error in the value (a instead of f) for the first rune fe, surely because one expected the alphabet to begin with <a>.

- Lbs 2294 4to (1879-1887). a Ár b Bjarkan c Knésól d Düss e Stungin-ýs f Fé g Stungin Kaun h Hagl i Ís k Kaun l Lögur m Madur n Naud o Os þ Stungin brá q Kaun r Reid s Sól t Týr u Úr v Stungin fé x - ý Stungin ýr þ Stungin Düss.
In the Scandinavian futhark, there are two s-variants, namely ı (sól) and ɿ (knésól). The first one is used for the sound value s and the second for the value c or rather the Latin letter <c>, as shown in this list. The p-rune also causes problems in this manuscript due to the fact that it was not part of the Norse futhark. This time it has been termed stúngin brá (i.e. "dotted brá") which is unrecorded in other sources (brá is strange, it should be bjarkan: b = B = p). It might indicate that the b-rune could be called brá besides bjarkan (otherwise there would be no reason to call the p-rune with the name stúngen brá). Likewise, the name kaun has also been assigned to the q-rune (it was given to the k-rune too), which is another rune not part of the futhark and not part of the Old Norse alphabet. Every word beginning with <kv-> could be written <qu-/qv-> (eg. kvedjal/queðja). The d-rune has been called dúss, the name of the p-rune. The latter has been termed stúngin dúss as though it was a dotted graph. For the Latin <v> an infrequently occurring dotted rune (stúngin fé; ℹ = v) has been chosen. No name whatsoever is provided for the Latin <x>.

- Thott 477 8vo (ca. 1700-1800). Fol. 10 presents a runic alphabet: a b c d e f g h i k l m n o p r s t u æ ņ and their names: aar, biarkan, kniesól, Stungen týr, Stungen jís, Fe, Stungen kaun, hagall, ys, Kaun, lögur, maður, nauð, os, plastur, Reið, Sól, týr, úr, æser, þúss.

This futhark also shows names for the dotted runes. For instance, the d-graph has been called stúngen týr (₁ = d), and the g-rune is called stúngen
kaun ($l' = g$). The i-rune is given the more modern spelling ys (cf. iss)$^{17}$. 

Plastur is again the name assigned to the p-rune. Finally, two letters $<æ>$ and $<þ>$ have been placed at the end. The first is called æser. Áss ($< *ansuz$) was the name of the α-rune (later o). Æsir is the plural and employed here by the scribe using the acrophonetic principle. The p-rune has been given the name þóss, showing assimilation of [rs] > [ss] (purs).

Another piece of Icelandic runica manuscipta not mentioned by Heizmann (1998) is found in Diplomatarium Islandicum (DI) VII (text from 1495, but copied in 1750-1800) Adv 21 7 14. It contains a Skriptamál or ‘Confession’ by Solveig Björnsdóttir. In the text, the rune-names Biarkan. is. ar. naud. stunginn is appear as a cipher for the name Bia(r)ne$^{18}$.

From Italy comes a manuscript which deserves to be commented: MS. Sloane 3854 at the British Library. It contains an Arabic Hermetic treatise concerning astral magic. The text is a Latin translation of part of the kitāb al-İstamāfīs, a source of a medieval compendium for magic, the Ghayat al-Hakīn (Burnett, 1983). The heading on fol. 105$^v$ goes as follows:

Iste liber est spiritualium operum Aristotilis et est liber Antimaquis
qui est liber secretorum Hermetis. Opera mira possunt operari per
hunc librum et est liber antiquus septem panetarum. Liber
Antimaquis.

$^{17}$ In Iceland $<γ>$ and $<i>$ fall together already in the Middle Ages, so $γs = is$.

$^{18}$ This use of runes to conceal names is representative of the rimur tradition (see chapter IV).
(
'This book belongs to the spiritual works of Aristotle, and it is the book *Antimaquis*, which is the book of the secrets of Hermes. Wonderful works can be effected through this book and it is the ancient book of the seven planets. The book *Antimaquis*) (Text and translation by Burnett, 1983: 419).

At a certain point, the Italian scribe exhibits some knowledge of runic lore. He explains how to write the names of the planets' spiritual forces in a cryptic alphabet which he calls *runae*. The presence of Scandinavian runes in a fourteenth-century Italian manuscript is very puzzling. In this line, Burnett (1983) comments:

Even if the runic alphabet in Sloane 3854 represents a kind commonly occurring in Scandinavian epigraphic sources in the later Middle Ages, its presence in an Italian manuscript of the fourteenth century is still a puzzle. Presumably it was well known that runes were the letters used by the Nordic people (the *Normanni* or *Dani*), but it must have been a rare person who could combine a knowledge of the runic alphabet with the oriental secrets of Hermes (424).

The names and runes in the manuscript are very corrupt, but still prove to be of Scandinavian origin. They have been set as equivalents to the Roman script. Some names are genuine runic as *Kon, Hagel, Rether, Sol, Tyr*. The designation of the e- (*Ystingen < ON iss stunginn*) and p-runes (*Bierbe stuncken < ON bjarkan*
*stunginn* refer to 'stung' (or dotted) runes of the medieval futhark. In relation to the runic graphs, some resemble Latin letters rather than runes. That is the case of the b-, l- and r-graphs. Some others (t, u) are very curious and differ from the original runic letters and are probably the result of a mixture of different figures. The rune-names in MS. Sloane 3854 prove that at least some notions of Scandinavian runic nomenclature were known by the scribe. Nonetheless, since there is no other recorded Italian manuscript with Scandinavian runes, it is impossible to tell to what extend rune-names were known in Italy at the time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin letter</th>
<th>Constellation name (first occurrence)</th>
<th>Sign of zodiac</th>
<th>name (second and third occurrence)</th>
<th>Rune name</th>
<th>Rune figure</th>
<th>Rune nature*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Salmadys</td>
<td>☹</td>
<td>Salmadys</td>
<td>Ay</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Lachlym</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td>Lachlim</td>
<td>Bietke</td>
<td>☚</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Gelech</td>
<td>☻</td>
<td>Sceclech</td>
<td>Kon</td>
<td>☔</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Rohos</td>
<td>☾</td>
<td>Rops</td>
<td>Forpa</td>
<td>☘</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Ayheyl</td>
<td>☜</td>
<td>Eyleyl</td>
<td>Lis (liss)</td>
<td>☘</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Alpos</td>
<td>☠</td>
<td>Lyale</td>
<td>Barke</td>
<td>☚</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>Affoguil</td>
<td>☢</td>
<td>Affoguil</td>
<td>Noeth</td>
<td>☛</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>Kalcharie</td>
<td>☣</td>
<td>Alcharie</td>
<td>Bierbe stunken</td>
<td>☜</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Harapel</td>
<td>☤</td>
<td>Hanape</td>
<td>Rether</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>Hahoel</td>
<td>☥</td>
<td>Allioes</td>
<td>Sol</td>
<td>☖</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>Gariosfel</td>
<td>☦</td>
<td>Fariopel</td>
<td>Tyr</td>
<td>☧</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>Nimbel</td>
<td>☧</td>
<td>Rymbel/Kicubel</td>
<td>Ue</td>
<td>☞</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30. Cryptic alphabet in MS. Sloane 3854 (Burnett, 1983: 426)
5.1.1. Conclusions

Manuscripts containing rune-names are very numerous in Scandinavia, extending almost to the 20th c. However, this material is more difficult to disentangle and study than the Anglo-Saxon mainly because no general catalogue has been published for this extensive material, and also because the manuscripts are normally very late. Contrary to what happens in England, runes were used for centuries alongside the Roman letters.

From the manuscripts presented in this section, it is clear that Continental and Anglo-Saxon scribes not only made errors in the transmission of the Anglo-Saxon rune-names, but also in the Scandinavian. Some unknown terms are recorded in, for example, MS. Clm. 276. Sound values are also interchanged, like in Oxford St. John’s College.

An interesting detail is that a good number of rune-names present some East-Scandinavian features, even though Norse runica manuscipta come often from West-Scandinavian areas, such as Norway.

In relation to the Icelandic manuscripts, it is worth mentioning that rune-names could be based on book-learning, i.e. contaminated, and not on runic oral tradition.

All this material, but especially the Icelandic, makes clear that the main interest of scribes was to supply runes or rather rune-names equivalent to the Roman letters. They seem to begin by rendering the Latin graphs, and then the runes. However, the task must have been harder than when dealing with the Old
English futhorc. There were sixteen Norse names, but when the alphabet had about twenty-four letters, they had to employ more names. And the results are diverse. The most recurrent solution seems to be the use of ‘new’ dotted runes, non-existent in the original futhark. Problems also arose when attempting to assign runic values or names to Roman letters for which there were no equivalent runes.
5.2. The *Third Grammatical Treatise*

The grammatical and rhetorical treatise known as the *Third Grammatical Treatise* (ThGT) was written by the Icelander Ólafr Pórðarson, Snorri Sturluson’s nephew, ca. 1250, and it is preserved in Codex Wormianus\(^{19}\). It is the only case in all the medieval Germanic literature where a description of the sixteen-graph futhorc and the Latin alphabet is made.

In chapters three and four, the author describes the Old Norse alphabet (unnormalised nórent stafrýsf) or rather the Scandinavian futhorc in its Danish variety. Part of this section is based on Þóroðr Runemaster, while another part deals with the runic characters he learnt in Denmark\(^{20}\). In his work Ólafr explains that the Old Norse alphabet consists of five vowels (*ljóðstafrír*): *I norev stafrøf ærv v. liððstafrír sva kallaðír:* vr \(\text{á} \), oss \(\text{ä} \), iss \(\text{l} \), ar \(\text{a} \), yr \(\text{y} \) [.....] (‘In the Old Norse alphabet there are five vowels, which are called: vr \(\text{á} \), oss \(\text{ä} \), iss \(\text{l} \), ar \(\text{a} \), yr \(\text{y} \) [.....]’)

(Text and translation by Krömmelbein, 1998: 60). These are:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{\textbackslash} & \text{úr} & \text{(u)}
\end{array}
\]

\(^{19}\) Codex Wormianus contains among other things the *Snorra Edda* and the four grammatical treatises (foll. 36-54). Even though it seems to have been written after the middle of the 14th c., most of the texts belong to an earlier period.

\(^{20}\) The *First Grammatical Treatise* will not be dealt with in this work since the only rune-name which is mentioned in it is the *þorn*: *Staf þann er flestir menn kalla þorn. Þann kalla ek af því hallrar the at þa er þat aðkvæði hans i hveriv mali sem eptir lifir náfninsins er yr er sekinu raddar stafr or nafni hans sem alla he- [.....] ‘The letter that most men call þorn I prefer to call the for (the reason) that then its pronunciation in each (piece of) discourse is what is left of its name when the vowel is removed from its name [.....]’*) (Text and translation by Hreinn Benediktsson, 1972: 242-3).
Ólafur also comments that there are eleven consonants in the runic alphabet (i rénamálí). Five out of these are called "semivowels" (actually liquids and sibilants)\(^{21}\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ᵃ</th>
<th>ōss</th>
<th>(o)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ᵁ</td>
<td>iss</td>
<td>(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᶇ</td>
<td>ár</td>
<td>(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⠅</td>
<td>ýr</td>
<td>(y)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contrary to what Ólafur has done with the vowels, he only records the names of two "semivowels": reið and sól. Raschellà (1994) may be right in his appreciation that the terms assigned to the other semivowels could have been there in the original version of the treatise, mainly because the preserved names are well attested:

È assai probabile, comunque, che nella versione originale del Trattato tutti i nomi delle rune consonantiche fossero presenti, poiché il capitolo in questione tratta proprio del nome delle lettere,

\(^{21}\) We usually call only [j] and [v] semivowels.
overo del loro primo 'attributo'. Inoltre, nemmeno qui vengono fornite immediatamente le corrispondeze con l'alfabeto latino (682).

Ólafr then presents five letters which he calls mute (dumba stafi). These are:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Þ} & \quad \text{(f)} \\
\text{Þ} & \quad \text{(b)} \\
\text{Þ} & \quad \text{(k)} \\
\text{Þ} & \quad \text{(t)} \\
\text{Þ} & \quad \text{(b)}
\end{align*}
\]

It can be noticed that the names for these letters are not given, probably because the author did not know them, or as in the case of the semivowels, because they were lost in the process of the manuscript transmission.

Chapter four of this treatise deals with the accidentia, that is, the form, and the potestas, or value of the letters. Ólafr comments that the s-rune has different shapes and names: *Her ær sol ('fyrst skipat ok bæði sætt fyrir s latinv staf ok z girzkan staf ok kollvum ver þat knæsól, æf hon ær sva gær: ʰi (Text by Krömmelbein, 1998: 66) ('Here is sól first arranged and set for the Latin letter s and the Greek letter z, and we call it knêsól, if it is thus made: ʰi') (My translation).
The author of the treatise also provides the name of the b-rune: *Par næst stændr K, ok ær biarkan a þa leið ritat, [....]* ("Then is k, and this hjarkan rune is written so that [....]") (Text and translation by Krömmelbein, 1998: 66).

Ólafr skips one letter, namely the rune * corresponding to the Latin <h>. This may be due to the fact that in the classical grammar the <h> is considered to be a *nota aspirationis*.

From this work it appears that at least some of the rune-names of the sixteen-graph futhark were known in Iceland in the 1200’s (the Icelandic *runica manuscripta* are of a much later date), and that the Latin letters equivalent to the runes were probably called by these names. All the variants recorded in this treatise are Old Norse. Ólafr had a good command over the futhark and the rune-names.
5.3. Epigraphical Sources of the Scandinavian Rune-Names

Some of the names of the Old Norse runes are also recorded in a few medieval epigraphical inscriptions of various types. In Scandinavia from medieval and later times (even as late as the 16th c.) runes lived alongside the Latin alphabet and were often found on Christian sites, such as in churches and on gravestones. In this sense and in relation to the Swedish runes, Jansson (1987) explains:

The position of runes as a popular script was clearly well maintained, and indeed a study of these latterday inscriptions gives the impression that in some parts of Sweden the ordinary people found the Roman alphabet quite foreign throughout the middle ages (173)

Evidence that runes continued to be used for a long time can be drawn from the so-called prime-staves or calendar sticks (primstaver). The term primstav comes originally from Latin primatio lunae. Therefore it must originally have been the term for a calendar with the moon cycle, but in the last centuries and to this day it is used in Norway for all kinds of calendars made up of signs or symbols carved in a wooden object to keep track of the days and feasts. On some of these prime-staves runes are used for signs, especially in Sweden but also in Norway. Runes can then be used for two types of signs. On the one hand, the first seven runes in the futhark repeated through all the day-marks of the year could be used to indicate the weekdays (if the first Sunday of the year fell on an f-rune then
all the ᚫ-runes were Sundays). On the other hand, the whole futhark plus three additional signs (ᚦ, ᚪ, ᚩ) could be employed for the nineteen golden numbers (gyllentall or numerus aureus), distributed according to a complex system over the day-marks of the year to identify the new moon every month. Every year had one rune or additional sign (two in leap-years) indicating the lighting of the moon every month. In that way one could keep track of all the Christian feasts that were set according to the moon (e.g. Easter)²².

These almanacs came into use in Scandinavia in the second half of the 12th c. and they have often been found carved in wooden pieces. About a thousand prime-staves are preserved in Scandinavia, most of them dating to the 1500’s and 1600’s.

An example of a prime-stave is shown below. The first row indicates the golden numbers. The second row contains the first seven runes of the futhark (ᚩ, ᚪ, ᚫ, ᚬ, ᚭ, ᚮ, ᚯ) known as soltall ‘sun numbers’, equivalent to the Latin characters <A, B, C, D, E, F, G>. These runes stand for the days of the week. The graphs in the last line mark the festivities. The following inscriptions contain prime-staves and some rune-names.

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²² I would like to thank Jonas Nordby at the Runic Archives in Oslo for his explanation of the use of these calendars.
Table 31. Runic calendar (Hallquist, 1994: 183)

![Table 31. Runic calendar](image)

Table 32. Illustration from Olaus Magnus ca. 1560 (Hallquist, 1994: 178)

![Table 32. Illustration from Olaus Magnus](image)
• G 158 M

The inscription G 158 M, which dates to ca. 1305-1325, was found on a crypt in Gotland, Sweden (Jansson et al., 1978). The recorded rune-names are purs and laugr.

Hér h[v]ili[sk] Geirhvatr ... ... Geirhvatr ... hann kvam fyrir konung ok erkibiskup ok várn biskup ... Svá vildi Guð honum [ve]l(?). Svá langu var stankar(?) sem purs24 var sunnud[a]gr ok laugr pr[ma]ði....

(Here rests Geirhvatr ... ... Geirhvatr ... he came before the king and the archbishop and our bishop ... Thus God wished him well. The years of misery were so long, when Giant25 was the Sunday [-stave] and Water the prime-stave....).

• G 55 M

The inscription G 55 M from 1459 was discovered on a grave in a church in Hemse, Gotland, Sweden. The names provided in this case are hagal and maðr.


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23 These inscriptions have been taken from the Samnordisk Runtextdatabas. Each inscription appears under its signature which is composed of a letter, which marks the geographical area or country the inscription comes from (G for Gotland, Sweden, N for Norway, etc.), its number and a final M to indicate that it is a medieval inscription. The normalised text is followed by the English translation provided by the database. On a few occasions the information has been taken from the Runic Archives catalogues in Oslo.

24 Bold type has been added to give emphasis to the rune-names.

25 The translation of the rune-names as provided by the database are presupposed.
skrifað, þá var hagal sunnudagr, undir[m]aðr p[r]imstafr í tolfti raðu taflu.

(Bót-... Auðgeirsarfa/Ocksarve (?) he/she had this stone cut over Bótheiðr (?) of Hagebýr and (owner of) Auðgeirsarfa/Ocksarve. When I was written, then Hail was the Sunday (-stave); Under-Man the Prime-stave in the twelfth row of the table. Pétar of Auðgeirsarfa/Ocksarve, he wrote me. Amen.)

* G 182 M

The inscription G 182 M dates back to 1324 and is on a grave in Sanda, Gotland, Sweden. The text contains the rune-names hagal and laugr.

Bótheiðr í Bellingabo/Bällings lét þenna stein gera yfir Ólaf sinn h[usbónda] (?). I þvi ári þá var hagal sunnudagr h ok laugr l primstafr í sjundu raðu í [t]aflunni. Biðð fyrir Ólafrs sál í Bellingabo/Bällings. Guð gefi sálu þinn[í] ...
með qllu[m] kr[i]stnum sállum.

(Bótheiðr in Bellingabo/Bällings had this stone made over Ólafr, her husbandsman (?). In that year H, Hail, was the Sunday[-stave] and L, Water, the prime-stave in the seventh row in the table. Pray for Ólafr in Bellingabo/Bälling’s soul. May God give your soul ... with all Christian souls).
• G 308 M

The inscription G 308 M was discovered in Hangvars, Gotland, Sweden and dates from 1445. Úr and þurs are the rune-names employed as calendar numbers in this inscription.


(Sigreifr in Flenavik/Flenvike, he had me made over his father Jakob. May God be gracious to his soul. Then Aurochs was the prime-stave and Giant the Sunday[-stave] when he died).

Besides the runic calendars, there are other types of inscriptions recording rune-names. These are the following:

• N A24 M

N A24 M is a probably late medieval inscription found on the farm Brœrs (Namdalseid, Nord-Trøndelag, Norway) at the beginning of the 60’s. The text reads as follows:

... nam ek þetta þvi: fe fu fa fœ <fuþork> ... ... ...

(I learned this therefore: fe fu fa fœ [...]).

This inscription seems to be a syllabary. Syllable combinations have been used to learn and write alphabets since the beginning of their history. In the case of the Roman script, once it was learnt, practising with syllables followed. It
seems that people trained first with two-letter syllables, and then with three- and four-letter syllables following either the futhark (fu, fo, fi, fa, fy, thu, etc.) or the Latin letter order (ba, be, bi, bo, bu, ca, etc.) (Knirk, 1994b). According to Knirk (1994b) "The use of syllabaries in learning to write with runes would seem to constitute the clearest example of the transference of techniques for learning Latin letters to learning runes" (192-3).

In the database fe is not taken as the name of the f-rune. However, this is arguable, considering the fact that this rune-name appears in first position, as it also does in the futhark. The carver may have thought of the original rune’s place and carved the name of the first rune, changing then the vowel to make different syllable combinations. Syllabaries often follow either the futhark or the Latin letter order.

- N A232

N A232, dating perhaps to the 1000's, was found in Esøya, Vevelstad, Helgeland, Norway in 1979. The inscription was carved on the side of a mountain ca. 160 cm. above the sea level. According to the database the inscription should be transliterated and translated as:

Úr's/ýr's yfir's yr hóggvinn. Ýr í esju bjúgu.

(u (wild ox) / y (yew-tree) is cut over y (yew-tree), y (yew-tree) in the curved soapstone (?)).
Due to the wind and bad weather conditions, some runes are difficult to read, but it seems that the text is in verse form. Hagland (1984: 108) transcribes it as follows:

\[ \text{ursibirsuraukuin. ur iisubiuku} \]

This author (1984: 108) maintains that the inscription could be normalised as either

\[ \text{úr's yfir's} \quad \text{or} \quad \text{yr's yfir's} \]
\[ \text{ýr hóggvinn} \quad \text{ýr hóggvinn} \]
\[ \text{ýr i es(i)u biúgu} \quad \text{ýr i es(i)u biúgu} \]

The interpretation of the text, according to Hagland, would then depend on the meaning of the word \text{ur} the first time it occurs. Due to the ambiguity of spelling with the 16-rune futhark, these runes could represent either \text{úr} or \text{yr}, thus giving the two normalisations he suggests.

Hagland (1984) concludes that the most probable interpretation is the second \text{det er yr over, ein boge er høggen. Ein boge i det bjuge esjeberget} (Hagland, 1984: 110) ('Light rain is over, a bow is cut; a bow in the curved...')
soapstone’) (my translation). However, the entire reading – and in addition this particular solution – has been question by scholars such as Knirk (personal communication). In the Samnordisk Runetextdatabas, and even with some reservation, only the first possibility is rendered.

What is open to question is if it indeed is the rune-name that was carved here (as interpreted in the database) or rather the common words which coincide with the rune-name (as Hagland contends). If it is the rune-name, that would indicate that the carver knew at least this/these name(s).

- **N B585 M**

The inscription N B585 M was unearthed in Bryggen, Bergen (Norway) in an excavation after the big fire in the 50’s. The word carved once on each of the two sides seems to be nauð, the name of the n-rune. The inscription is medieval, but the precise date of the carving is around 1300 (Knirk, personal communication).

\[
\text{nauð} \quad \text{nauð}
\]

\[
(nauð \ n-auð)
\]

\[
(\text{need} \quad \text{need})
\]

- **N B604 M**

N B604 M is an inscription carved on a stick which was also excavated in Bergen and which has no archaeological dating. The stick contains runes carved on two sides. On the one side one finds:
arsolmaþr urnauþtyr ræþp (transcription in the Runic Archives), divided into words in the database as:

\[
\text{ar sol maþr ur naþp tyr ræþth}
\]

(år sól maðr úr nauð Týr reið)

(year, sun, man, aurochs, need, Týr, riding)

The database has for the normalisation úrr, whereas the Runic Archives has úr.

If the 'reversed acrophonic principle' is employed, then the proper name Ósmundr is formed. This system of concealing names is typical of the Icelandic rimur poets (see chapter IV).

- N B562 M

Another stick from Bergen, N B562 M, also contains a few runes and it is dated archaeologically to about 1200 (Knirk, personal communication). The transcription of the final part of the a side provided by the database goes as follows:

\[
\text{ar(i)(s)o(s)arnauþ}
\]

The text has been normalised in the Runic Archives as: "á (?) Jóan" ("Jóan owns?") It is unknown whether the first part is the verb of possession. The rune-names Íss óss ár nauð, would stand for the proper name Jóan (Johan).
• **N T3 M (N A110 M)**

The medieval inscription N T3 M, carved on a bone, was found in Søndre Gate 10 in Trondheim, Norway in 1971. During the excavations in that town from 1971 to 1985 about one hundred inscriptions were unearthed.

According to the Runic Archives the text reads: **ísurar:ra,ep** (cypher/cryptic runes: ) r a i s. The database provides the following text:

\[
\text{iss, úr, ár, reið ( = iuar = Ívarr) reis[1]}
\]

\[
(\text{iss, úrr}^{26}, \text{ár, reið ( = Ívarr) carved })
\]

Again, the rune-names stand for their graphs turning out to be a proper name (Ívarr), as he himself states, the carver of the inscription.

• **Bø’s Inscription**

When the old church in Bø, Telemark, Norway was restored in 1960s, some runic inscriptions came to light. It is believed that they belong, as the church does, to the end of the 12th c. or beginning of the 13th c. All of them were carved in the two repositories inside the church. The find was notified to Liestøl, head of the Runic Archives in Oslo at the time. It was easy to see that the longest inscription was a one-stanza poem consisting of eight half-lines, linked two by two by means of alliteration. Besides, at least one kenning was recognised: **fjalls íbúi** (‘settler of the mountains’) for ‘giant’. Knirk (1986) asked some colleagues to study the text in order to decipher it. Eventually, professor Louis-Jensen (**The**

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26 It is unknown whether the second rune-name is úr ‘rain, slag’ or úrr ‘aurochs’, so both are provided.
Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen) (1994) was able to decipher the inscription. She discovered that it was composed in a riddle-like way similar to the principle employed in the so-called rimur (chapter IV). The key was in the rune-names’ circumlocutions made use of in the Old Icelandic Rune Poem. The transliteration in the Runic Archives is the following:

suæfnbanarmer : soterbna
fionsfinkata : fialsibui
hectærfaðe : øukhuhishui
ti : þrulsansæla : þtskuluraþa

*Svefn bannar mér,* (It/She) prevents me from sleeping;
sótt er barna, (it) is children’s sickdom
*fjón svinkanda,* workers’ hate
*fjalls íbúi,* mountain’s settler
*hests erfaði,* horse’s effort
*ok heys viti,* also hay’s destruction
*þræls vansæla,* servant’s unhappiness
*þat skulu ráða.* They/one should decipher it

(Louis-Jensen, 1994: 36) (my translation)

All these lines, except for the first and the last are in circumlocution. Once each rune-name has been decoded, they spell out the female proper name Guðrún,
who is the person the poet is probably in love with. He may be suffering from unrequited love, and that is why he cannot fall asleep.

As Louis-Jensen (1994) rightly maintains, from the study of rune-names' use, references to them can be given at three different levels. In level I, the rune-name is used directly (úr meaning 'drizzle'); in level II, the rune-name is not used directly. Instead, a synonym is employed: úði (a synonym of úr) for 'drizzle', svell ('ice in the water') for Ís, etc.; finally, in level III paraphrases are used and the possibilities for variation are limitless, as is patent in, for example, the rimur.

The periphrases in Bó's inscription are all level III and have counterparts in the Old Icelandic Rune Poem (not so in the Old Norwegian runic text, in spite of the fact that the inscription was found in Norway). According to Louis-Jensen, it is not probable that the author of the inscription had known the Icelandic poem. He may have known a living tradition of mnemonic character, which the rune poems add to. The most important conclusion she arrives at is that there must have existed semantic prototypes which are not represented in the rune poem, which were already known in Norway in the 12th c.
5.3.1. Conclusions

The Scandinavian runic inscriptions number to several thousands (around 6,000). However, only ten out of them contain rune-names. It is necessary to point out, nonetheless, that some others could hold them, but many inscriptions are difficult to read or interpret due to their poor state of preservation.\(^{27}\)

The inscriptions studied above come from either Gotland, Sweden, or Norway (Bergen and Trondheim). As opposed to the manuscript material which is normally the product of the *scriptoria*, none of the Norwegian inscriptions belong to the ecclesiastical world (although the Bø inscription was carved into part of a church). The ones from Bergen were carved on wood; many of the Bergen and Trondheim inscriptions deal with mercantile transactions or are ownership tags. The inscriptions often represent occasional notes or even graffitti.

In Sweden there are about 800 medieval runic inscriptions, the majority of which comes from three provinces: Västergötland, Småland, and Gotland. On Gotland, carvings in medieval churches dominate. Inscriptions G 158 M, G 55 M, G 182 M and G 308 M all belong to a religious context, since they represent burial legends.

Carving N A24 M probably represents a person’s attempt to learn the futhark. It is difficult to know what the intended message was in N B585 M, even though the word carved is clearly *naud*. The inscription is probably incomplete.

\(^{27}\) Still, the number is small and would probably not be increased that much ever if one could read clearly all preserved inscriptions.
The more problematic text is N A232 M since the transliteration and translation carried out by Hagland (1984) is neither definitive nor generally accepted.

As for the names of the runes, the use of runic word values to make up a proper name seems to have been a common practice. They were also often employed as prime-staves to mark the days of the year. Inscriptions N B585 M and N A24 M may also indicate that rune-names were used to learn the futhark as late as in the Middle Ages.

All these instances of the use of rune-names in epigraphical inscriptions support the idea that runic nomenclature was still well known in Scandinavia in medieval times, mainly because all rune-names' spellings are well attested.
III. SOURCES OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RUNE-NAMES: THE RUNE POEMS
The main sources of the significance of the rune-names are the rune poems, which represent the most detailed account. These texts, of various provenance and date, provide invaluable data on the meanings of the rune-names. They also supply an assessment of runic knowledge in different geographical areas, since one of them comes from England (*Old English Rune Poem*), and the other three (Old Norwegian, Old Icelandic and Old Swedish) come from different parts of Scandinavia\(^1\).

This chapter sets out to make a careful comparison of the description of each rune-name in the various poems. In order to fulfil this objective, a new edition of the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem* is undertaken followed by an analysis of the Old Icelandic, the Old Swedish and the Old English rune poems.

\(^1\) Many scholars have suggested a common original Germanic ur-poem for the four extant runic compositions. However, the purpose of this chapter is not the establishment of that common oral poem.
1. The *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*

1.1. Introduction

The earliest scholarly editions of the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem* (ONRP) were the ones produced by Kålund (1884-91b) and Wimmer (1887), which were followed by Lindroth’s (1913), Finnur Jónsson’s (1915) and Dickins’ (1915). This latter author used Wimmer’s edition, except for some minor changes. Various other scholars took up the study of different aspects of the poem, among them Bugge (1884-91), Olsen (1948), and Liestøl (1949). However, these works relied exclusively on the editions already available. In her revision of the *Old English Rune Poem*, Halsall (1981) also resorted to Wimmer and Dickins for the Scandinavian texts. This means that discussion on rune-names as they are presented in the ONRP has always been dependent on these standard editions. To this respect, Page (2003) in what is the most recent publication on some aspects of the ONRP states:

> It is commonly this Wimmer-Dickins-Halsall version that students, perhaps in particular students whose mother tongue is English, follow when they pronounce generally upon runes. Their understanding of this poem is based on, at least influenced by, work done over a century ago [...].

In effect, the most commonly cited versions of the Norwegian Rune-poem originate in decisions made by Wimmer, and to a less extent
by Kålund and one or two of their contemporaries, on grounds that we should now suspect to be inadequate (554).

Indeed, in many cases, these editions are unsatisfactory and inadequate, as is the case of Kålund’s. Even though his edition can still be considered the best one, it does not reflect a meticulous and thorough analysis, especially in terms of manuscript spellings, where some significant mistakes are recognisable². All these facts make a new and updated edition of the ONRP necessary.

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² As an illustrative example, in stanza 7, he renders ‘fora’, whereas in Jón Eggertsson’s text ‘fora’ is found, abbreviated form of ‘forma’.
1.2. Early Manuscript Activity in Scandinavia

In Old Norse philology, the 17th c. was the great period of manuscript collection. The greatest gatherings were located in Denmark at *Det kongelige Bibliotek* (Royal Library) and *Universitetetsbibliotek* (the University Library). An important collection was brought directly to Sweden from Iceland with the help of Jón Eggertsson⁢³ in the 1680’s. Árni Magnússon also had a private collection in Copenhagen. These collections in Denmark and Sweden made possible the beginning of manuscript research and the edition of texts in these countries.

At the end of the century there were two main centres for the study of manuscripts in Scandinavia, namely, the University of Copenhagen and the Swedish *Antikvitetskollegiet* (College of Antiquities), first in Uppsala and later in Stockholm, where manuscripts were constantly copied.

A distinction between researchers and assistants was often made. The former were responsible for the organisation in the process of manuscript reproduction and earned admiration when the text finally appeared. The latter, the so-called *amanuenser*, were the people in charge of the copying of texts and making translations, among other things. All the assistants were Icelanders, some gathered among the students in Copenhagen (Jørgensen, 1998). In this period the Swedes also obtained the help of Icelanders, the most outstanding of whom was the already mentioned Jón Eggertsson.

³ He was one of the most representative Icelanders who worked for the Swedish government during the 17th c. copying and preserving Icelandic manuscripts. He travelled through the whole of Iceland in order to purchase manuscripts for the Swedes.
Work on the sources developed into a new view of the texts. As opposed to medieval scribes who might expand the texts, edit or adapt them, modern copyists considered the texts as finite objects which were not to be modified during the process of copying (Jørgensen, 1998). Mistakes, nevertheless, did occur.

During this time (late 1600's and early 1700's), a number of important manuscripts were lost mainly in fires, a fate that befell the ONRP. Many of the 17th c. copies have, therefore, become primary sources, as is the case of the extant transcriptions of the ONRP.
1.3. The Three Earliest Copies of the \textit{Old Norwegian Rune Poem}

The original manuscript of the ONRP was lost in the great fire of 1728, which consumed a large part of the city of Copenhagen, including the University Library. Fortunately, the poem had been copied before the original manuscript was destroyed in the fire.

The poem survives in three late copies. The earliest version of the ONRP appeared in chapter XIX ("De literarum Danicum uso poetico") of Worm's \textit{RNHR seu Danica literatura antiquissima} (first edition in 1636, second edition in 1651)\textsuperscript{4}. Worm found the rune poem on a fly-leaf of a Norse Law Codex and had it copied\textsuperscript{5}. In his book, he states that, besides their common use, runes were employed when something was to be said in a hidden and riddle-like way, and he gives as an example the ONRP.

Another copy is found in MS. Bartholin D (Donatione Variorum 1, fol.), 31.3 x 20 cm, 426 f. The poem was copied by Árni Magnússon\textsuperscript{6} probably ca.

\textsuperscript{4} Worm (1588-1654) was a Danish scholar and doctor. He studied philology, philosophy, theology and medicine in Germany. He was professor of medicine at the University of Copenhagen for more than thirty years. During part of his life, he was interested in the old Scandinavian languages and runes. He wrote several works on runes and Germanic literature. Among them are a booklet on the golden horn of Gallehus (1641) and \textit{Danicorum monumentorum libri VI} (1643).

\textsuperscript{5} In the lines previous to the poem, Worm (1936) wrote:

\textit{Unicum saltum exemplum ex antiquo legum Volumine, in archivis Bibliothecae Academiae regiae quae Hafniae est extante, depromptum produxisse suffecerit. Ex quo & de figuris & de ordine, & de appellacionibus & de numero, & de hoc literarum usu documenta desumere licet indubitata} (105).

\textsuperscript{6} Árni Magnússon (1663-1730), was an Icelandic scholar and antiquarian. At the age of twenty he travelled to Denmark, where he studied at the University of Copenhagen, later became secretary to the royal antiquarian, professor Thomas Bartholin, and after Bartholin's death, secretary of the Royal Archives. During his life, he copied and collected a great amount of manuscripts. When he died, he bequeathed his collection to
1686-89, since at that time he was living in Copenhagen. The manuscript is now preserved at the University Library, Copenhagen. The poem is found on pp. 818-9. He copied the text with his own well-known handwriting, without imitating the forms of the letters such as they appeared in the original. Only twice did he place dots under words to show that letters were difficult or impossible to read in the original. Apart from that, there is nothing in his copy to indicate that the original was difficult to read.

The last copy appears in MS. papp. fol. 64, 33 x 21 cm, 370 f., from the 2nd half of the 17th c. preserved at the Royal Library, Stockholm. MS 64 fol. was copied by three different hands: Jón Eggertsson, Helgi Ólafsson, and an unknown scribe. The manuscript contents are Old Icelandic literary texts from different sources. The poem is found on page 74. It is now agreed that the copy was likely made after 1680, the year in which Jón Eggertsson went to Copenhagen to work for the Swedish government. He calls the poem Gømul Runa Liod, and it is headed ex ēadem membr. ("from the same vellum"). The word membr. also appears at the end of the poem. At the bottom of the page, Jón Eggertsson wrote a rhyme on the arduousness of interpretation of the younger runes due to their antiquity. According to Kålund (1884-91b), this section must have been written by Jón Eggertsson himself, because the language and the content are very modern. His text concerning runes and its translation\(^7\) into English are presented below:

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the University of Copenhagen, and it became part of the University Library (the Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling). He was well known for his precise copies.

\(^7\) With the kind assistance of Prof. James E. Knirk.
Allmargar minder stafanna gjöra vill- ingar ritsins.

Ritsins villingar gora hulid malfæri.
malfæri hulid gorast þui list at læra ritit.

Ritsins lærdomar ero þung erfviðer.

Erfviðe þungs lærdoms gorer langsama listing.

Listing langsöm gorer lett erfviðe ok nytsamt
nytsamt erfviðe gorir epter langan listanna
listan(n)a eptir langan vinnur half verk
halfverk ma þo kallazst þott kunnatta synist

The many forms of the letters lead to confusion of the script.

Confusion of the script makes the language concealed.

Concealed language leads therefore to a desire to know the script.

Knowledge of the script is hard-earned.

The toil of hard learning leads to long-lasting desire.

Long-lasting desire makes the toil easy and useful.

Useful toil leads to a longing of desires.

A longing of desires does half of the work.

It may though be called half-work, even though ability is shown.
It has been generally accepted that the three extant texts were copied from the same vellum which could be dated to the 13th c., and that they are independent from one another. Kálund (1884-91b) maintains that the corruptions found in Jón Eggertsson’s and Árni Magnússon’s copies of the text must have been in the original from which they transcribed the poem, and that that original may have been a reproduction of an older text. Taking into account the language and the spelling, Kálund holds that the poem dates back to the first half of the 13th c.

After a detailed analysis of these three copies, it is safe to say that Árni Magnússon’s and Jón Eggertsson’s reproductions are faithful to the original, whereas Worm’s is not, since he – or rather his scribe – took liberties when copying. This may have been due to the fact that Worm did not understand much of what stood in the poem since he did not know Old Norse. Another possibility is that he may have been helped by an amanuensis, probably an Icelander, at the time he was working on the ONRP. Worm was the first scholar to discover how much benefit could be taken from having an Icelandic assistant. Worm did not only reproduced what he found in the manuscript. He (with the help of his amanuensis) edited the text, which was als printed.

\[8\] However, as Page (2003) rightly points out, once Worm’s edition is contrasted with the texts of Árni Magnússon and Jón Eggertsson, it is difficult to come to a decision about his source.
Sy sum meni.

P. valdr frenda roga.
   søde k vaf var i skoghe
N. er af ichi sørre.
   aft lígeper vata a horne.
P. valdr kvarna 1.
   haer varde for af ichi.
A. er laid fëfta ferdad.
   en pladper er ferdad.
K. kvade rorve nufra.
   ragnin... sverdet harfi.
I. er bagda banna.
   bol godvur naan solvun.
F. er koldafer hurna.
   hvirfer plom godmen hurna.
H. gevur nappa hafta.
   noldan hálfr í fróta.
I. hollon bra braida.
   bindan harfi at laida.
A. er gufra gafa.
   get et ut ovr var frode.
I. er laida hina.
   hliði ek helginn dune.
J. er ainadur af.
   opt vótr sriddur at blafa.
Table 34. Árni Magnússon’s copy of the Old Norwegian Rune Poem in MS. Bartholin
Table 35. Jón Eggertsson’s copy of the Old Norwegian Rune Poem in MS. Stockholm

Papp. fol. 64
The Significance of the Rune-Names: Evidence from the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic Sources

P. HIRAR PRAMA RA. Fe veldur frenda

FAMHA HIRAR I

HYAPL

H. IR AF HAMU RN: Ur er af ella jarri

AB1 NYJNR RAN A

SYAIR

F. HIRAR YNAM YNH-

MN:

YA1R HIRAR PAAR

AF EEN;

I. IR FANARA PIREI:

IR NYAIRNR IR

UNIR:

R. YNAM RAINY NI-

NAI:

RAYIR UNIRIA

BRAN44

Carmen litera-

rum nomina &

postfates in-

culdens.

O

Y. IR
LITERATURÁ

Kaunderbegr renta
Bólgirer near
folvärna.

Hagl er kaldastur.
korna.

Krustur skóp bein
min forna.

Naud giorer nappa
kof.

Naktann kialer i
frosti.

Is köllum bru breida
Blindan trafat
leida.

Aærgumna goodi
Get eg adfor var
Frodi.

Sol er lenda lomi
Lutig ad helgum
domi.

Tyr er einbendar Aða
Optwordursmiður
at blasa.

Biarkanar laufgrenst
lima.
Loki bar brørdar
ir.
Table 36. Worm's printed version of the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem* (1636)
Kålund (1884-91b) preferred to rely on Jón Eggertsson’s and Árni Magnússon’s copies, finding too many irregularities in Worm’s text. Concerning this Kålund (1884-91b: 2) highlights: “Hovedvanskeligheden har vært at man ikke havde noget middel til at kontrolere O. Worms tekst, efter at originalen er forsvunden – gået til grunde ved Københavns universitets biblioteks brand 1728”.

Even though Árni Magnússon was the greatest collector of Icelandic manuscripts and professor of Icelandic in Copenhagen, and has a reputation as a very precise copyist, some mistakes can be perceived in his copy. This may have been caused by the fact that he made a first draft which he did not correct. Sometimes he corrects mistakes, other times he does not. Besides, some of the errors may indicate that he did not really understand the meaning of the lines. Due to the fact that he was not so skilled or knowledgeable, Jón Eggertsson probably tried to make a facsimile copy of the text, so his copy can give the reader a better idea of what the original may have looked like. Therefore, the present edition will be based on Jón Eggertsson’s copy.
1.4. Palaeographical Description

As has already been mentioned, Jón Eggertsson’s (JE) reproduction seems to reveal more of the features of the original text. JE apparently tried to copy exactly what appeared in the manuscript, whereas Árni Magnússon (AM) used his own handwriting, without trying to imitate the letters shape as found in the original. AM was not interested in particular graphs, the punctuation, or even the capitals. Thus, JE kept the insular <ɭ> of the original, which was used up to 1300, the r-rotunda and tall <s>. He also kept abbreviated forms. He may have kept <u> and <v> when he found these graphs in the manuscript. On the contrary, AM shows the standard use of <u> as a vowel and <v> as a consonant. However, he sometimes seems to have forgotten this normalisation practice.

Table 37. Jón Eggertsson’s spelling features: r-rotunda in or, insular <ɭ> in frenda, tall <s> in flestra and <u> instead of <v> in værda
Table 38. Árni Magnússon’s orthography: the r-rotunda is not employed, as shown by the spelling in or, whereas the distinction between <u> for a vowel and <v> for a consonant appears to be introduced in værdr (compare with Jón Eggertsson’s uærda)

AM apparently keeps some Norwegian spellings where standard Old Norse /i/ has been rounded to /y/, as in mikill (JE)/mykill (AM). Here JE has normalised to the standard spelling.

In this edition, the standard <f>, <r> and <s> will be used instead of the insular <f>, the r-rotunda and the tall <s>. The graph <œ> will appear instead of <œ>, whereas <œ> will be used for <o>. A hyphen will be employed instead of JE’s equal sign (=), which he sometimes places between elements of compound words. On some occasions, difficulties were encountered when transcribing the texts, mainly, whether <d> or <ð> was to be read, whether there was word separation, and in the case of punctuation and diacritical marks, whether a point, an accent, or none of them stood in the text.⁹

Both <d> and <ð> will be kept as they appear in JE’s copy. It will not be mentioned when JE and AM differ in these graphemes, since there will be no difference in meaning.

⁹ In some cases the transcript was taken from a photograph and, therefore, some details may have been difficult to perceive.
Worm’s (W) edition is a modernised representation of the text and it differs greatly from JE’s and AM’s in spelling, content and arrangement of the text. His version is printed, which gives extra problems concerning type fonts, printer’s errors, etc. JE’s and AM’s copies show medieval Norwegian spelling like in <skalper, rossom, endr>, whereas W’s text presents the more or less normalised Icelandic of his time as in <skalpur, rossum, hendr>. He put accents to mark long vowels, used capital letters in those words which he thought were proper names and added the rune-names. Worm also included Icelandic svarabhakti vowels\textsuperscript{10}. Some other modernisations are <e> instead of <æ>, <j> instead of <i>, <i> for <e>, and <oft> for <opt>. He also uses <th> instead of <p>. This indicates that he just followed the spelling tradition used for Icelandic in Denmark at that time. As an illustrative example, it can be mentioned that Icelanders whose names started with <p> changed the letter to <th> when they moved to Denmark during that time.

As mentioned above, W is not a copyist but an editor, and he apparently inserts the rune-names in the poem. He most probably used the same manuscript as AM and JE copied – and it lacked the names. W’s version also differs in layout from the other two copies: the poem is set in columns, first the rune-name, then a runic version of the text, and finally to the right, one in Roman letters. W also apparently changes the order of runes 14 and 15, probably following the Roman alphabet.

\textsuperscript{10} The <e> in skalper would be a Norwegian svarabhakti vowel whereas the <u> in skalpur would be Icelandic.
W's variants will be provided only when they differ markedly from JE's or AM's, or when the text presents important changes with respect to the other two copies.
1.5. The Poem

The ONRP consists of sixteen stanzas of a common pattern, each of them containing two lines. The first one always describes by circumlocution the name of a rune of the Norse futhark, whereas the second has a statement which does not seem to be related to the first line. The first alliterates internally, whereas the second is linked to the first by means of both alliteration and end-rhyme.

\[\text{I.} \quad \text{vældr frenda roge,} \]

\[\text{fædezt ulfuer i skoghe,} \quad (2)\]

\[\text{II.} \quad \text{er af illu iarne,} \]

\[\text{oft løyper ræin a hiarme,} \quad (4)\]

\[\text{III.} \quad \text{uelldr kuenna k.} \]

\[\text{kater uærda faar af illu} \quad (6)\]

\[(2) \text{fædezt} \text{ AM <fædezt> (K. corr. <fædezt>) (3) illu] W eilu. (4) løyper]}\]

\[\text{W <sleipur> ræin ] W <Rani> (5) uældr] (K. incorr. <uældr>) k.]}\]

\[\text{AM <k.....>, W <kvillu> (6) uærda} \text{ AM vædr illu] W <ellu>}\]
1. er leid flestra færda.
en skalper sværda. (8)

Ř. kuænda rossom uæsta
reghin s. suerdet badzsta. (10)

ɏ. er bæggia Barna.
bol gørver naan folfuan. (12)

‡. er kalldazster korna
Kristen skop hæimen forna. (14)

†. gærir næppa koste.
nøktan kølr i froste. (16)

(7) leid] AM under-dotted, W not found
(8) en skalper sværda] AM <en skalper er sværda>, W <en skalpur er sverda>
(10) reghin] W <Raghn>
s.]] (K. incorr. <s.>), AM <s...>, W not found
badzsta] (K. incorr. <bæzsta>),
AM <badzsta> (K. incorr. <badzta>), W <bradesta>
(12) naan] W <near>
folfuan] W <folvarna> (14) skop] AM <skom>
forna] (K. incorr. <fora>)
1. kollum bræ bræida,
blindan þarf at lœida. (18)

4. er gufnœ gode,
get ek at orr var froðe. (20)

5. er landa liome.
luti ek helgum dome. (22)

1. er ein-endr asa.
opt værdr smiðr at blasa (24)

8. er lauf grænzstr lima,
loki bar flædar tima (26)

Þ. er molidar auki,
mikil er græip a hauki. (28)

†. er þat er fællr or fialli,
foss, enn gull ero nosser (30)

‡. er ueter grønster uiða
uaut er þar er brennr (32)
at suiða.

(28) mikil] AM <mykil>       (30) foss,[ AM, W no punctuation mark after
1.6. Notes on the Text

It is evident at a glance that JE and AM, except for a few mistakes, usually agree. W, on the other hand, sometimes departs radically from the other two, whereas he agrees in the main. Some of the lines do not cause much difficulty. However, there are others which need detailed study.

f-stanza

JE  vœldr frenda roge, | fœdezt ulfuer i skoghe,
AM  vœldr frenda roge. | fœdezt ulfver i skoghe
W   Fe veldur frænda  Rógi | Fædist ulfur i Skógi.

The content of this stanza does not cause any trouble. W renders the f-rune-name as fe (normalised form fé), which is described by the poet as a cause of discord among kinsmen. This stanza is most likely related to the legend of the Nibelungen hoard, which tells of the strife of the Niflungar and murder within the family. Snorri in his Edda explains that the brothers Fáfnir and Reginn killed their father to gain the gold. Fáfnir then turned into a serpent, lay down upon his treasure and was killed by Sigurðr. The gold was then deposited in the Rhine, where it has never been found. Then the solution to the riddle of the rune-name is apparently ‘wealth’ or perhaps specifically ‘gold’. But the name of the rune is probably fé, the general word for ‘goods’, because the word has to begin with <f->
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since this name participates in the alliteration scheme. This stanza could be translated then as:

(Wealth) causes strife between kinsmen,
the wolf is nurtured in the forest.

u-stanza

JE  ᛊ. cr af illu iarne, | oft læyper ræin a hiarnē
AM  ᛊ. cr af illu iarne. | oft læyper ræin a hiarnē.
W   Ur cr af ellu jarni | Opt sleipur Rani a | hiarni.

In this stanza some problems arise. For the first line, JE and AM have the reading <illu> ‘of bad quality’, against W’s <ellu>, probably for eldu ‘hot’. So whatever the word úr meant in the ONRP, the line should be read as either ‘(u) comes from bad iron’ or ‘(u) comes from hot iron’. Kålund (1884-91) maintains that, since both AM and JE have ‘illu’, the latter must be what stood in the original. But at this point it seems necessary to consider the actual significance of úr in the text.

It has been traditionally claimed that úr means ‘slag’ in the ONRP (‘slag comes from hot/bad iron’). Nonetheless, the references found in dictionaries allude to úr as ‘rain’ and when the meaning ‘slag’ is given, it is with respect to the ONRP. In Fritsner (1886), for instance, úr is described as:
1. “fint regn, taageregn, Ginnungagap - fyllist med þunga ok höfügleik iss hríms, ok inn i frá úr ok gustr SE. I, 42 11, þat var einn morgin, at - er þá lett fra allri sunnanþokunni ok úrinn Hrafnk - 6 27, Stj. 531 15”.

2. “Runen som betegner u. SE II, 72”.

In Sveinbjörn Egilsson (1913-6), úr appears as:

1. “úr- n. slakker (små jærnsplinter der falder af det ophedede jærn, jfr. sindr), úr er af illu járne, Rún 3”.

2. “úr- n. fugtighed, ruskregn, vand, þul IV oo 1, úri þölór, valket af havet, om midgârdsormen, Rdr. 14”.

In Heggstad et al. (1975) two different words are provided:

I. 1. “ýr, fint regn”; 2. (Isl.) “namn på rune-bokstaven for u”.

II. “sinder, slagg av smelta jern (brukt sum namn på runebokstaven for u), Rûnk”.

Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon (1989) also has two entries for úr. The first one is indicated as neuter and has the meaning ‘sindur, gjall’, that is, ‘slag’, and says it might originally be the same word as the second entry which means ‘rain’. This can either be feminine, masculine or neuter. The name of the rune is not mentioned in this etymological dictionary, due to the fact that he is not interested in names, but only or mainly in etymologies.

In Íslensk Orðabók (2000) there are several entries for úr:

1. “suddi, úðí”, (related to rain, wet weather).

2. “Sindur (af glóandi smiðjármi)”, (related to iron-work).

3. “Run sem samsvarar u/þ”, that is, the name of the rune.
In this dictionary, all the meanings are considered mainly neuter.

The Old Norse word for ‘slag’ is *sindr*: “n. de glødende skæl, der falder af det hamrede jærn, guld, E. Gils 3, 12” (Sveinbjörn Egilsson, 1913–6).

It has to be mentioned, however, that the adjective *úrr* is listed in Fritzner (1896) in relation to iron as ‘slaggfullt’, followed by the quotation “úrt járn, kvað kerling, ok átti kníf deigan” (“impure iron, said the (old) woman, and had a dull knife”). Heggestad *et al.* (1975) also provides this meaning and the quotation for *úrr*. The adjective is also listed in the Old Norse dictionary in Copenhagen, with this single quotation. This is a saying, or rather a Wellerism, i.e., a three-part saying consisting of a direct quotation, an identification of the speaker, and a description of the circumstances that really makes it stand out. Another example is “this is only a temporary transition’, said the fox, he was being skinned!”", or from *Sverris saga*: “that was close’ said the seal, he had been shot in the eye!”

This quotation appears in *Gull-Ásu-Pórðar þáttr* in *Austfirdinga sogr* (Jón Jóhannesson, 1950: 348), which is taken from AM 518 4to (1600-1700). This saying is not found in the kings’ saga version in *Morkinskinna* (text dating probably to ca. 1200, preserved copy from ca. 1275) nor in the compilation *Hulda-Hrokkskinna* (from the 1300’s), so this was apparently not a part of the text in the 1300’s. In his edition, Jón Jóhannesson has to define *úrt járn* and compares it with *illu járni* in the ONRP. The adjective *úrr* has thus made its way into Old Norse dictionaries in order to explain this one saying. It is not present in the version of the story in medieval manuscripts, but appears in a modernised and expanded independent manuscript version of the *þáttr* from the 1600’s which
includes some newer Icelandic words. It could, therefore, perhaps have been influenced by Worm or other authors.

In Modern Icelandic, úr meaning ‘drizzle’ is not a common word, but it is rather used with an archaic and poetic sense. The normal word for rain is rigning or regn. A related verb ýra is, however, sometimes heard in the construction það ýrir úr lofti, meaning that there is a very fine and light rain falling. In the dictionary, úr is defined as ‘sprinkle, light (rain)fall’. There is not any secondary meaning such as ‘spark’ or ‘slag’ (Zoega).

However, according to Kálund (1884-91: 7-8) “Ur er af illu jární’ kunde give mening, hvis man turde tage ‘ur’ i betydningen ‘slagger’ i henhold til hvad JO lejlighedsvis ytrer i sin Runologia (Add. 8, fol. S. 141)”, that is, “Sunnlendingar kalla smidiu wr, þat Nordlingar smidiu giall’ (“people in the South of Iceland call smithy úr what the Northerners call smithy slag”). It is important that the word smidiu ‘smithy’ is included in this “definition”, since one could easily understand ‘smithy light-rain’ as a shower of sparks. It should also be pointed out that, even though Worm himself must have had the assistance of an Icelander, he does not mention the possibility of úr meaning ‘slag’ in the South of Iceland. It appears that úr as ‘slag’ occurs only in the ONRP, and perhaps as a dialectal word in Iceland (South Iceland). The dictionary definitions seem all to be based on the interpretation of the ONRP.

The archaeologist Arne Emil Christensen (University of Oslo), has explained (personal communication) what happens when iron is heated. He has also
answered the question of whether the result of this process could be likened to rain or not:

When you forge iron, the heating process has the extra effect of forming a surface layer of iron oxide on the piece as it reaches the red-hot forging temperature. When hammering, this oxide loosens and may well be likened to a spray of rain from the anvil. In large forging operations, quite an amount is formed due to the numerous reheatings necessary. The usual shape of the oxide is flat flakes. If you hammer-weld two pieces of iron together, a flux is needed to get the oxide away from the surfaces to be joined. The old flux was sand, and the oxide-slag mixture may then take the shape of small drops. The modern Norwegian name is “hammerslagg”, the modern English is ‘scale’ or ‘hammer scale’.

It seems then that in the poem ùr (‘fine rain’) could be a metaphor for ‘sparks’ seen as a spray of rain-like sparks, and that there is a misunderstanding of a metaphorical presentation. I believe it to be an admissible possibility. Worm (1636: 93) pointed out this prospect in his book when in one of his descriptions of the u-rune he wrote:

Aquarium impetu delabentium rivos indicat: ut & nimbum guttis densioribus cum impetu delabentem: inde quoq; per metaphoram ad alia; quandam cum hisce similitudinem habentia accommodatur, ut ad scintillas ex ferro ignito pulsatione exilientes.
From the information examined above, some conclusions can be drawn:

1. If it is true that there was a dialectal word *ūr* meaning ‘slag’ in the South of Iceland, then the author of the poem chose to describe this homonym and not the one meaning ‘rain’.

2. There is another possibility. As mentioned by Arne Emil Christensen, (also pointed out by Worm) answering the question of whether or not what happens to hot iron when hammered resembles drizzle, or rain, *ūr* ‘rain’ could be a metaphor for ‘scale’ or ‘spark’.

What seems possible then, though, is that the ONRP kept the meaning ‘drizzle’ for the u-rune but concealed in a metaphor. In this case, both *eldu* (spelt ‘ellu’ by W), and *illu* could be possible: sparks come from the impurities in hot iron. Therefore, *illu* would imply ‘impurities’ and *eldu* ‘heated’. The translation would be either ‘sparks come from the impurities of iron’, or ‘sparks come from hot iron’.

Another problem within this verse is l. 2, where W differs significantly from JE and AM. These latter copyists render *oft laýper ræin a hiarnæ*, whereas W records *Opt sleipur Rani a hiarni*. In relation to the second word, the right term is probably the one rendered by JE and AM (*laýper*), going back to the verb *hlaupa* ‘to run’. The masculine noun *ræin* (normalised form *hreinn*) means ‘reindeer’. Nonetheless, W (1636) defines *Rani* as *ski*: “*Rani* instrumentum ligncum oblongum est & planum quo pedibus alligato, incredibili celeritae hyeme, montium juga, nivibus rigida, cursu superare solent Boreales. Skier jam vacant” (108). What may have happened is that W did not know that initial <h-> in the
combinations [hl-, hn-, hr] is lost in Norwegian, and he confused the word rain with rani, which means 'pole, tall and narrow tree'. Page (2003) holds that there could be an Icelandic variant of l. 2, due to the fact that the reindeer is not a common beast in that country. Page bases his hypothesis on the work of later authors, who admittedly took their information from W. However, W's Latin explanation of the poem's lines cannot be completely trusted, since the Latin translation sometimes differs from what actually stands in the Old Norse text, and because of his faulty knowledge of this language. What seems clear is that he had an Icelandic informer, who helped him elucidate the meaning of the poem’s content and, more important, who might not have had previous knowledge of the poem.

Taking into account the problems analysed above, this stanza could be translated as:

(Rain of sparks) come from bad/hot iron;
the reindeer often runs on the hard frozen snow.

\[\text{\textit{p}-stanza}\]

JE \[\text{þ. vælldr kvenna k. | kater værda faar af illu}\]

AM \[\text{þ. vælldr kvenna k. | kater værdr faar af illu.}\]

W \[Duss weldur kvenna kvillu | Katur werdur faar | af illu.\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\text{However, the fact that Rani is written with capital letters is a problem, since W used capitals to signify what he believed to be a proper name.}\]
There are two main problems in these two lines. First, neither JE nor AM provide the last word in line one, only <k>. W renders this last term as *kvillu (kvilla, feminine noun, meaning ‘sickness, ailment’), which in Old Norse is only employed in the ONRP, although it is a common Modern Icelandic word. W included this term probably led by the end-rhyme with *illu in the second line. However, W renders (maybe mistakenly) *af illu instead of JE’s and AM’s *af illu. If W’s *ellu is written for *illu in this line, then W’s *ellu in stanza 2 could also well stand for *illu. According to Page (2003), W’s *af *ellu could make perfect sense if we were to postulate a noun *ella instead of *elli, and in that case, the line would render ‘no man rejoices at old age’. However, his full-rhyme demands *illu, and his Latin translation (*in adversis nemo lætatur) (109) confirms this.

The meaning ‘giant’ (ON þurs) is not clearly defined in these lines, although giants are often depicted as trouble for women. The translation would vary from one copy to the other:

(Giant?)\(^{12}\) is women’s ...... (JE, AM)

is women’s sickness (W).

Few become cheerful with evil things.

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\(^{12}\) Wimmer (1887) rejects this meaning: ‘.... ich im gegensatze zu Bugge þurs nicht als ‘riese’, sondern als bezeichnung für den magischen runenstab auffasse’ (275).
W Oys er flestra ferda | En skalpur er | sverda.

The word leid (normalised nominative leið, feminine noun whose meaning is ‘a way, road’) does not appear in W’s version, which points possibly to a mistake in his copy (since it is not corrected in W2). AM and W have er between skalper and sværdæ, whereas this word does not appear in JE. This later copyist may have skipped the word without realizing it, perhaps due to the final two letters (<-er>) in the previous word.

The second line is irregular in metrical form, since – although it shows end-rhyme – lacks alliteration with line one. Besides, the second line is too short, with four syllables according to JE and five to the other two copyists (not counting the svarabhakti <-er/-ur>). A word may have been missed in between er and sværdæ.

The semantic content of these lines can be related to ship sailing through a river (ON óss, W: oys) leading to the sea. Thus, the stanza would read:

(River mouth) is the way of most journeys.

A sheath is (the way) of swords.

r-stanza

JE R. kvæda rossom uæsta | reghin s.. suerdet badzsta.

AM R. kvæda rossom uæsta. | reghin s... sverdet badzsta.

W Ridhr kvæda rossum vesta | Raghn er sverdit | bradesta.
AM’s and JE’s text differ with respect to W’s in stanza 5. The main problem appears in the second line. JE and AM render *rēgin* as the first word, and lack a verb beginning with <s->. Kålund (1884-91a) believes that the missing word could be *smiðar* (‘forges’). Bugge (1884-1891), however, suggests *sló*, preterite form of the verb *slá* ‘to hammer’. Any of the two words would make sense with *Reginn*, the mythological smith who made a sword for Sigurðr. W renders *Ragn* instead of *rēgin*, and adds the verb <er>. W (1636) translates this verse into Latin (“Inter gladios præstantissimus est Ragn” [...] “ut igitur inter omnes gladios Ragn primatum potinebat & possessori fuit gratissimus” (110)), and takes Ragn as the name of the sword.

The meaning of the rune, which W renders as *ridhr*, is clearly ‘riding’ (ON *reidr*), explained as something negative for horses, probably due to their exhaustion after a long journey. The translation, therefore, could be:

(Riding) is said (to be) the worst for horses,

Reginn (hammered) the best sword (JE, AM)

Raghn is the best sword (W).

### k-stanza

JE  ὁ. er bæggia Barna. | bol gæver naan folfuan.

AM  ὁ. er bæggia barna. | bol gævir naan folfvan

W  Kaun er beggia barna | Ból giór naer | folvarna.
W's version of verse 6 defers markedly with EJ's and AM's text. First of all, JE and AM show bæggia in line one, whereas W has beggia, which may simply point to a spelling variant of the same word. According to Bugge (1884-1891: 108-9), bol in the second line belongs to the first one. He suggested the punctuation kaun er bæggia barna bol; gørver ná (or nán) fólvan. He believed that beggia is actually the adjective bæggja meaning 'both'. This word together with barna would mean 'children of both sexes'. Dickins (1915: 25) also includes bol in the first line and translates the stanza as 'an ulcer is fatal to children of both sexes; it makes a corpse pale'. Olsen (in Kålund, 1884-91a: 101), however, considers bol to be an integral part of the second line and does not construe it as functioning in the first line; instead he emends the two lines to read: kaun er barna bólvan; bol gørver mann fólvan ("kaun is children's curse; misfortune makes a man pale"). He assumes that the scribe could have skipped from bólvan to bol, and that a later scribe could have added beggia as an attempt to correct the corrupt text. Both possibilities (Bugge/Dickens and Ólsen) seem plausible, although Ólsen's entails some emendations. The most important emendation is quite understandable since a scribe could have skipped from one word to the next word when both began with the same three letters; his emendation also reestablished the end-rhyme otherwise lacking in these lines: bólvan ... fólvan.

The word naan is a masculine noun (náinn) in accusative singular (pl. nánir), based on an adjective meaning 'near to'. However, W writes naer, apparently a typographical error for naar (nár 'corpse'). Later on in his book,
when explaining the names of the runes, he uses *naar* and translates it as Lat *cadaver* ('corpse').

The translation of this stanza would vary depending on the meaning of *beggia* and the position of *böl*:

A (ulcer) is children’s sickness, B (ulcer) is sickness to children of both sexes
misfortune makes a corpse pale. (it) makes a corpse pale.

**h-stanza**

JE  *
kalldazster korna | Krister skop hæimen forna.

AM  *
kalldazster korna. | krister skom hæimen forna.

W  Hagl er kadastur korna | Kristur skóp hei- | min forna.

In this stanza, AM writes the rather meaningless *skom* for JE’s and W’s *skop*. There are two possible explanations for this. On the one hand, AM’s version could be correct for what stood in the original, whereas JE and W could have corrected *skom* for *skop*. On the other hand, AM could have made a mistake. This rune-name is depicted as a cold grain, referring to hail (ON *hagl/hagall*). (Hail) is the coldest of grains.

Christ made the world of old.

**n-stanza**

JE  †. gerir næppa koste. | næktan kælr i froste.

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AM  b. gerð næppa koste. | nœktan kælr i froste

W  Naud góér nappa kosti | Naktaun kæler i | frosti.

The three copies show some differences in this stanza. In line 1 both JE and AM render næppa (ON neppr ‘little, short, small’), whereas W writes nappa (perhaps ON hnappr with loss of initial <h-> before <n> meaning ‘cup, button’). Since both JE and AM agree, it could be concluded that W’s variant is a mistake in his copy. In the second line, W renders naktaun instead of naktvan (metathesis of <-au>/<-ua->) which could be a printing mistake. The normalized nominative form of this word is noktr and the accusative masculine form nöktvan.

W provides the alliterative rune-name naud (ON naud). This stanza describes the name of the n-rune in relation to the lack of opportunity for poor people.

The reading of the lines is:

(Need/constraint) gives little choice.

The naked man freezes in the frost.

l-stanza

JE  l. kollum bræ bræida. | blindan þarf at leida.

AM  l. kollum bræ bræida. | blindan þarf at leida.

W  lis köllum bru breida | Blindan traf (W2 tarf) at | leida.
In this verse two main differences are to be pointed out between AM’s and JE’s copies on the one hand, and W’s on the other. First, bræ against W’s bru, (ON bru ‘bridge’). According to Bauer (2003a), bræ is the Old Norse word for Old Icelandic breði ‘a glacier’. But bræ is not an Old Norse term, but rather a Modern Norwegian word now spelt bre (bræ a hundred years ago) (cf. Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957). The word did probably exist and it would give bræ/bre in Modern Norwegian, but the question is how it would have given bræ at the time of the manuscript of the ONRP. Both ‘glacier’ and ‘bridge’ would make sense in the line: ‘ice is called the broad glacier/bridge’, referring to a wide extension of frozen water.

AM and JE write parf (verb parfa), whose meaning is ‘to need, to want’, whereas W gives traf, which he in his second edition corrects to tarf (~ parf). The description of ice (ON iss) in this stanza may be related to a frozen water functioning as a bridge between two sides of a river, or to a large frozen area. (Ice) is called the broadest glacier/bridge.

The blind man must be led.

α-stanza

JE 4. er gufna gode, | get ek at or r var froðe.

AM 4. er gufna gode. | get ek at or r var froðe.

W  Aar er gumna goodi | Get eg adt or var | Frodi.
In W’s version, the word *gumna* (JE and AM *gufna*) is the genitive plural form of *gumi* ‘man’. In Old Norse the combination [mn] could be pronounced [vn] and written <vn> or <fn>. *Froðe* must refer to the mythological *Fróði*, the peace-king of Danish legend.

The description of *år* is very general and the intended meaning is probably ‘good year’. The poem does not make reference to any specific season. Accordingly then:

(good year) is good to men.

I say that Fróði was generous.

*s-stanza*

JE дол. er landa liome. luti ek helgum dome.

AM дол. er landa liome luti ek helgum dome

W Sol er landa liomi | Luti eg ad helgum | domi.

This stanza does not posit any significant problem. The only interesting thing to be pointed out is the shape of the *s*-rune in the different copies. JE and AM render Ʌ, whereas W reproduces Ʌ, the so-called *kné-sól*, though he calls it simply *sól*. W made this change in his own copy probably because he writes mainly about older runes and Viking Age runestones from Denmark – and Ʌ is the standard form throughout his work for the *s*-rune. He most likely substituted his standard (cf. W’s substitution of regular long-branch Ʌ; cf. JE/AM Ʌ, which is the regular short-twig rune).
It is significant that the second line is very alike to a stanza of the Sólarljóð, where a story is told by a dead father to his son in a vision. At a certain point the father explains that he is bowing to the sun for the last time in his life:

*Sól ek sá; svá pótti mer
Sem ek sæja gofgan God:
Henni ek laut hinzta sinni
Alda-heimi í

('I saw the Sun, I felt as if I were looking on the glory of God. I bowed to him [the Sun] for the last time in this world of mortals'). (Text and translation by Vigfusson and York Powell, 1883: 205).

The sun (ON sól) here is presented as the light of the whole world, most surely as a source of life:

(Sun) is the light of the lands (i.e. world).
I bow down to the relics\(^\text{13}\).

\textbf{t-stanza}

JE 1. er ein-endr asa. | opt værdr smiður at blasa
AM 1. æinend i-u-\(^\text{14}\) rasa | opt værdr smidur at blasa

\(^{13}\) ON dómr denotes, among other things, 'state, condition, age' as in Kristin-dómr 'the heathen, Christian age, faith’. But helgi dómar is usually translated as ‘relics’ (cf. Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957: 101).

\(^{14}\) These two signs mark that the letter was crossed out.
Týr is one of the gods in Germanic mythology. He was termed one-handed because he offered his right hand in order to guarantee a pledge that enabled the gods to fetter the wolf Fenrisúlf r.

(Týr) is the one-handed god.

Often has the smith to blow.

b-stanza

JE    B. er lauf grønzstr lima | loki bar flærdar tima
AM    B. er lauf grønzster lima | loke bar flærdartima
W     Biarkan er lauf grenst | lima | Loki bar flerdar | tima

According to W, the b-rune has the name biarkan, and provides the meaning ‘birch tree’ (cf. ‘betulam foliorum aquarum ex montis cacumine delabentem’ (95)). The word biarkan is recorded in Old Norse, but only as a rune-name, not as an appellative. But it seems to be etymologically related to ON bjørk ‘birch tree’ and birki ‘birch forest’.

As for the word lim in line 1, it exists as both a feminine and a neuter noun. Lim as feminine can be used in singular or plural (pl. limar) meaning ‘branch, limb’, whereas lim as neuter is a collective noun for a mass ‘foliage, crown of a tree’ (cf. Bjorvand, 1994).
Dickins (1915: 25) translated the second line as 'Loki was fortunate in his deceit', because he thought the poem alluded to Loki's murder of the god Baldr. He held that the description of the b-rune-name as 'the greenest leaf tree' was meant to remind the audience of the ever-green mistletoe, from which Loki made the arrow that caused Baldr's death. But this assumption, which is based on a kind of stream-of-consciousness association, lacks any linguistic basis. The name of the rune must begin with <b->, even if it does not participate in the alliterative scheme, since it is the name of the b-rune. Bjarkan is one of the terms that are made as primary or secondary derivatives from other words with the help of the Germanic suffix <-ana> (cf. Torp, 1974). It is then a derivative of the word for birch-tree, but it is unknown what the specific meaning is, although it is most likely something like birch-twig.

The description of the name for the b-rune is very general and it could suit many different types of trees. Only W's translation into Latin supports bjarkan as 'birch-tree':

(Birch twig?) is the greenest leaf tree.

Loki was lucky in his falsehood.

m-stanza

JE ьер moldar auki, | mikil er græip a hauki.

AM ьер moldar auki | mykil er græip a hauki

W  Madr er moldur auki: | Mikil er greip a | hauki.
This stanza does not pose any major problem. But it is worth noting W’s variant moldur auki (cf. JE, AM molldar auki). The Old Norse word is moldarauki (moldar being in genitive form) or moldauki, not moldur auki or moldr auki (apparently for ON *moldr auki, with svarabhakti vowel). The word mold is feminine and has no <-t/-ur> in the nominative, so this form moldr/moldur does not exist and there must be a mistake in W.

Man (ON maðr) is depicted in relation to his mortality. The translation, then, is:

(Man) is the earth’s dust,
big is the claw of the hawk.

I-stanza

JE  | f. er þat er fællr or fialli. | foss, enn gull ero nosser
AM  | f. er þat er fællr or fialle | foss en gull ero nosser
W   | Laugur er thad er fellur ur fialli: | Fost en gul eru nal- | li.

This stanza shows a different pattern with respect to the others. Line 1 has alliteration and internal half-rhyme (fællr/fjalli). But the final word (fjalli) does not rhyme with that of the second in JE and AM (nossir). The term nalli as it appears in W’s copy is unknown in Old Norse. It seems that W either misunderstood the word or more likely changed it on purpose to make the term rhyme with the first line; this would then be similar to his reconstruction of e.g. kvillu. He may have thought that the two tall <ss> stood or should have stood for <ll>. However, it is
interesting to note that in the Latin translation of the text, he includes the meaning of nosse. Maybe his Icelandic assistant helped him figure out the meaning of this word, but later he forgot it when transcribing, or thought it had to be changed. His Latin translation supports JE’s and AM’s transcription of the word against his own.

Wimmer (1887: 280) tries to amend the first line and writes a semi-colon after foss ("Wasser ist das, wo [wenn] ein wasserfall vom berge stürzt; aber gold sind kleinode"). Page (2003) adds a dot instead.

JE renders enn, whereas AM and W write en. The word en could be a disjunctive conjunction, meaning ‘but’, a temporal adverb ‘yet, still’, better spelt enn, or used with a comparative, as in enn síðar (‘still later’). In this text, en seems to have the first meaning. This conjunction was spelt either en or enn in manuscripts. But in Norwegian manuscripts it is often written with double <n>. The original may have had enn as shown by JE, which would point to its Norwegian origin. AM may have changed the spelling to suit the Icelandic form.

The rune-name is not only described as simply water, but also as a fall:
(Water) is what falls from the mountain –
waterfall. But gold is ornaments.

\textit{y-stanza}

JE \ \h. er ueter grønster uiða | uant er þar er brennr | at suiða.

AM \ \h. er ueter grønster viða. | vant er þær er’ 16 brenr at sviða.

\textsuperscript{15} This author translates the first line as: "[water] is what falls from the fell – a torrent".
W  Yr er urtur grönst vida. | Vant er thar er | brennr at svida.

The name given to the y-rune by W is yr whose meaning he interprets as ‘bow’ (cf. Arcus tam hyeme quam aestate flexilis (113)). To this respect, Lindroth (1913: 273) explains:


In Old Norse the term could mean either ‘yew-tree’ or ‘bow’. In Iceland, however, yr was often used with the meaning ‘bow’, since the tree itself was unknown there. Then, if it is true that the meaning ‘yew-tree’ was familiar in Norway and not in Iceland, the fact that W renders ‘bow’ is an indication that his Icelandic copying assistant(s) gave him this possibility. But in the ONRP the word is clearly related to a tree. The yew-tree is widely distributed in the North, having elastic wood and dense dark-green foliage. Also the wood of this tree; sometimes applied to some flowering plants, or a bow made of the wood of the yew.

16 Written above the line.
ON vetrgrænn (JE/AM ueter grænster; W urtur(?) grónst) is a compound word meaning 'green in winter (tree)'. JE renders <brennr> from the verb brenna ('to burn'). The use of a single <n> by AM may reflect the spelling in the manuscript (perhaps breñr) or be a minor inaccuracy. The translation must be as follows:

(yew-tree) is the winter-greene of trees.

It is usual to steak\(^\text{17}\) where it burns.

In this stanza both lines may be somehow related since yew-trees could be used in order to make fires.

\(^{17}\) The verb *svíða* means 'to steak hard, burn food'.
1.6.1. Conclusions

After examining the whole poem, some questions must be highlighted. First of all, it is clear that AM’s and JE’s copies resemble the original, whereas W’s copy is a reinterpretation and, in many cases, a misinterpretation of the text. He had the text copied and then wrote the Latin translation and explanation – or vice versa – without giving a trustworthy rendering. Many things differ in both the poem and the description. It can be safely assumed that his assistant(s) helped him understand the poem and restore those parts which were not in the original or were difficult to read or otherwise corrupt. It seems that the Icelander did not know the poem beforehand (at least the second lines of each verse) since most of the mistakes made by W, or his assistant(s), appear in the second lines. These are difficult and anomalous in the tradition.

Second, the rune-names were not part of the original, but they sometimes participate in alliteration. They function only when the reader knows the names or solves the riddles. W introduced them after realising that the poem described them. That is the reason why in this work they have been presented in the translation within parenthesis.

Third, the order of the rune-names as they appear in AM and JE is surely the correct one.

Fourth, the information presented about ʻur shows that this word does not mean ‘slag’ in the ONRP as has generally been stated, but ‘spark’, eventually
‘rain’ concealed in a metaphor. The rune-name of the b-graph is described in general terms as a tree. But Worm’s Latin translations point to the birch-tree.
1.7. The Second Lines

Several scholars have attempted to solve the riddle behind the second lines in the ONRP. Some authors have based their solutions on mythical or magical assumptions providing far-fetched explanations difficult to believe. Others have tried to give an answer without even having a philological background and a knowledge of the history of the rune poems in general. The aim of the present work is not to solve the question, since the second lines do not disturb the meaning of the first lines, or more important, the rune-names, although they could perhaps contribute to the understanding of the first lines. Nonetheless, since there has been academic discussion on this matter, the main views on the subject are presented in this section.

For some time it was widely agreed that the second line of each stanza was chosen at random and that they did not have anything to do with the rest of the poem. However, Liestøl (1949) demonstrated that in some cases this was not so. He concurred that the ONRP was written to help memorise or remember the names of the runes. But he also thought: “Men det ligg nær å tenke seg at i cit læredikt som dette ville diktaren gjeva opplysing ikke berre om runenamnet, men også om runeforma” (67). Liestøl was able to apply this principle in some lines. He holds that in the m-rune verse, there is a link between the shape of this rune (_modus) and the hawk’s claws. Likewise he explains that the h-rune used to have a connection with Christ, as it is evident in inscriptions in Maeshowe, in Urnes church, etc. This rune * = h could be combined with a <p> above it to represent
the Christ symbol ṵp (actually χρ "chi rho"). Besides, the sól stanza also shows Christian beliefs, since the sun is a symbol for God. The poet may have remembered the other form of the rune, the kné-sól, and used the image of kneeling before Christ.

But there are some weaknesses in this principle. In spite of the fact that it seems to work successfully with some of the lines, it does not appear to work with the others. The kné-sól rune is not the one that appears in the extant copies of the poem. It was more standard at least on stones in the Viking Age (maybe when the poem was composed), whereas is the standard medieval form (at the time of the manuscript ca. 1300).

Neuner (forthcoming) follows up Liestøl's hypothesis, but some of his solutions are extremely tenuous. He maintains that the second line for the t-rune reminds of a stick which is used to lead the blind. The shape of the h-rune, *, is also the abbreviated form of Jesus Christus. In the t-rune stanza, 'the smith has to blow often' refers to the creation of Thor's hammer Mjölnir. He advises the reader to compare the shape of the rune with the modern Thor's pendants.

It has already been said that the Reginn mentioned in the r-stanza may be the mythological character. According to Neuner, even though in the Scandinavian literature Sigurðr kills the dragon Fáfnir with the weapon forged by Reginn, this is not the reason why it is called "the best sword" in the poem. And he goes on: "Before Sigurðr sets out to face the dragon, he tests the quality of his sword: with one mighty blow he cleaves Reginn's anvil in two". The reader has to think of an anvil (or rather, half an anvil) which would remind them of the shape
of the r-rune R. The author would then have to presuppose the knowledge of the
readers. Besides, it is not possible to know the shape the anvils used to have at
that time. It is difficult to figure out whether the translation of the second line
should be either ‘R. forged the best sword’ or ‘R. was the best sword’.

There are two shapes for the t-rune. W uses ⚤ (standard Viking Age t-rune
used in most Viking Age inscriptions on stone presented by and known to W),
whereas JE and AM use ɇ. According to the conclusions after studying the three
copies, JE’s and AM’s must have what stood in the original, which means that the
t-rune should be the one with just one arm. Besides, it is not plausible to compare
a modern pendant with what in literature is Thor’s hammer. I believe this
explanation to lack a philological and scientific ground. Again, the manuscripts
written ca. 1300 would have had ɇ which was the standard medieval Norwegian
form, but if the poem is older, ⚤ could have been the original form (Viking Age).

In relation to ⚤, Neuner contends that the rune was meant to depict a tree,
and then be a metonym for the woods mentioned in the previous line. ⚤ may refer
to the thorn as a symbol of sin in Christian iconography.

As Liestøl (1949) himself pointed out, there is not enough knowledge
about the milieu in which the runes were created to explain the choice of the
second line in some stanzas.

Earlier scholars also tried to give a humanistic explanation to the second
lines, which is probably the only thing that can be done. A good example appears
in Jón Ólafsson’s Runologia (1752):
In Runologia præclarissimi Doctoris Olavi Wormu Alphabetum Runicum occurrit, ubi qualibet Litera bifariam per Periphrasin videtur circum scribi. Prior semper Analogia est nuda, atque multo apertior; Posterior autem obscurior, atque longe petita. Eiusdem tamen resolutionis deprehendi poterit si ænigmatiæ interpretata fuerit. In cuius enodatione sequentibus pagellis operam ponere lubet [...](142-3).

Some of his explanations for the second lines are the following:

In relation to fé, Jón explains: “pabulum vero eius propie est pecus. Pecus et pecora appellantur, fje og frenaður” (142). Acording to him, the wolf eats mainly cattle, term designated in Old Norse by fé.

Jón Ólafsson seems to prefer a more philological solution for the second lines, giving the possibility of polisemy of words, or play on words with homonyms, etc. However, none of these principles seems to work in the ONRP, even though some ideas for the second lines could be pointed out: Fé (‘wealth’, ‘property’, and especially with the meaning ‘cattle’), could be easily linked to a wolf chasing other animals, representing cattle. The second line of the úr-stanza may make some reference to the track reindeers leave behind when running in snow. And in the hagal-stanza, there could be a confusion or a play on words with ‘holy’ (OE hālig, ON heilagr).

As was mentioned above, the fact that the second lines seem to be the more problematic in the three extant copies may indicate that they were simply made up
and joined to the first lines of the ONRP after the poem was composed. The Norwegian second lines are not supported in any of the other variants of the poem, so a reconstruction of the ur-text would definitely have to leave them out.

The first lines of the poem give a circumlocution of the rune-names whereas the second lines provide further information, which could in one case be the shape¹⁸, but could in another case be something else. Therefore, it may not be

¹⁸ There are some classical texts, such as the one found in Ausonius (1919), where the alphabet letters (either Latin or Greek) are explained on the basis of their shapes:

**DE LITTERIS MONOSYLLABIS GRAECIS AC LATINIS**

Dux elementorum studiis viget in Latiss A
et suprema notis adscribitur Argolicis Ω.
Hta quod Aeolidum, quodque ε valet, hoc Latiare E.
praesto quod e Latium semper breve Dorica vox C.
hoc tereti argutoque sono negat Attica gens O.
Ω quod, et O, Graecum compensat Romula voxx O.
littera sum, Iota similis vox plena, iubens I.
Cecropis ignota notis, ferale sonans V.
Pythagorae bivium, ramis pateo ambiguis Y.
vocibus in Grais numquam ultima conspicior M.
Zeta iacens, si surget, erit nota, quae legitur N.
Maenandrum flexusque vagos imitata vagor Z
dividuum betae monosyllabon Italicum B.
non formam, at vocem Deltae gero Romuleum D.
hostilis quae forma iugi est, hanc efficiet Π.

**ON MONOSYLLABIC LETTERS GREEK AND LATIN**

Leader of letters in the Roman alphabet proud stands Α, and last in the list of Argive characters is entered Ω. That value which the “Eta” of the Aeolian race and that which ε have, that has Latin E. The sound of short Latin E I always render – the Dorian letter C. The smooth, clear sound wherewith the Attic race denies, is O. To the Greek Ω and O, equivalent is the Roman letter O. I am a letter like Iota and a complete word of command, I. A stranger to the Cecropian alphabet is ominous-sounding V. I stretch forth arms alternative – the Two Ways of Pythagoras – and I am Y. I am a letter Never seen at the end of a Greek word, M. If Zeta lying on its side gets up, it will be the character which is read N. Copying Maenandrum and its straggling curves, here straggles Z. Half Neta’s length has the Italian monosyllable B. Though not her form, I have Delta’s sound, and I am Roman D. The shape of the “hostile yoke” will be given you by Π.

A comparative study of these sources seems necessary and desirable in an attempt to find a possible common source.
necessary to find something that fits for all the poem. This would allow to keep Liestøl's solution while rejecting Neuner's attempt to press the poem to fit his model uniformly.
2. The *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*

2.1. Introduction

The *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* (OICRP) has not enjoyed as much scholarly interest as the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*. There are nonetheless several editions of the text, namely the ones by Kålund (1884-91b), Wimmer (1887), Lindroth (1913) and Dickins (1915). None of them has, however, given a detailed account of the text, nor defined the layout of the poem, and it seems that at least Dickins may not have seen the manuscript. A new edition has recently appeared published by Page (1998), with full details of the manuscript state.

The OICRP consists of sixteen stanzas of a common pattern each having as subject a rune of the sixteen-letter futhark. In contrast to the Old Norwegian poem, each stanza is composed of three groups of periphrases or kennings alluding to the rune-name, henceforth the term *prideír* (Mnle *prideílur*) to refer to this pattern.

The text of the OICRP is preserved in two early manuscripts: AM 687d 4to and AM 461 12mo. The poem is also recorded in later manuscripts and in printed books from the 17th c. based on the two earliest copies.

The manuscript AM 687d 4to (text A) dates from ca. 1500 and is kept in *Stofnum Árna Magnússonar*, Reykjavík. It is a bifolium whose fol. 1r contains a Latin prayer to Mary, fol. 1v the rune poem, foll. 1v-2r cryptic alphabets, fol. 2r the rune-names with Latin glosses, and fol. 2v Latin exorcisms and prayers.
The rune-names with Latin glosses were transcribed by Wimmer (1887: 287) thus:


('Aurum [is] gold, gold is wealth, wealth (fé) is a rune. Ymber [is] rain shower, rain shower is drizzle, drizzle (úr) is a rune. Fantasma [is] monster, monster is a giant, giant (þuss) is a rune. Flumen [is] a stream, a stream is estuary, estuary (óss) is a rune. Iter [is] path, path [is] journey, journey (reið) is riding, riding is a rune. Wulnus [is] wound, wound is ulcer, ulcer (kaun) is a rune. Nives is snow, snow is hail, hail (hagall) is a rune. Flagella is trouble, trouble is constraint, constraint (nauð) is a rune. Frigus is frost, frost is ice, ice (íss) is a rune. Estas is summer, summer is good year, good
year (ár) is a rune. Ignis is fire, fire is sun, sun (sól) is a rune. Jupiter is Þórr, Þórr is a god, a god is Týr, Týr is a rune. Flos is flower, flower is bushes, bushes is birch, birch (hjarkan) is a rune. Palus is mud, mud is sea, sea (lögur) is water, water is a rune. Arcus is bow, bow is bow (ýr), bow (ýr) is a rune’) (my translation).

The scribe chose a Latin word related in meaning to the rune-name, which was then translated into Old Norse and then equated to it. And so, wealth is a synonym of gold, ulcer of wound, sun of fire, etc. Special attention must be paid to the names ûr (here rendered as ‘rain’), óss (‘estuary’ or ‘river mouth’), bjarkan (which goes back to ‘birch tree’) and ýr (probably meaning ‘bow’). The m-rune is missing.

In the poem, each rune is defined in a line made up of a runic letter and three kennings. The rune-names are not included. At the end of each verse two words have been added: the first is a Latin equivalent of the rune-name, the second, a heiti for king, starting with the same letter as the rune-name. The order of the runes is somehow altered since the graphs l and t are switched, surely due to confusion based on form: † (l-rune), ‡ (t-rune). Editors usually emend this arrangement to conform to the standard.

The manuscript AM 461 12mo (text B) is also kept in Reykjavik and dates to ca. 1534-58. It contains a miscellanea of names, formulae, legal and religious texts. The rune poem appears on foll. 15v-16r. Its layout is completely different from the one in AM 687d 4to, since it is not set up with any indication of stanzas.
but simply occupies twenty-one lines in the manuscript. In this version the rune-names appear at the beginning of each verse: fe, vr, bus, os, reid, kaun, hagall, naud, is, ar, sol, tyr, biarka, madr, laugr. The name of the γ-rune is, however, missing.

This version of the poem does not contain the final Latin gloss of the rune-names nor the heiti. However, the poem itself shows the same structure, regardless of the layout. As in the other manuscript, each stanza contains three periphrases of which the first two share alliteration, while the third has internal alliteration.

Page (1998) believes that a comparison of the A and B texts of the rune poem shows they cannot be traced directly to a common original since there are too many essential differences. Therefore, no definite text can be established. This is contrary to the case of the Old Norwegian Rune Poem, where there are different copies probably going back to the same original, and where minor variations are clearly due to the copyists’ errors whereas greater variations are most likely due to editorial revisions. In establishing the poem, Page (1998) takes into consideration not only the A and B versions, but also related texts from the 17th c. in an attempt to fill in the gaps in the two copies of the poem. These include examples of collections of periphrases of the rune-names common in the 1600’s and 1700’s and often headed Málrúnar ok prideilur, usually following the ABC order instead of the futhark order.

In the following analysis of the description of each of the rune-names special emphasis is placed on the specific significance and particular connotation
of the names. The versions (texts A and B) are presented separately in order to give more insight into the similarities and differences between the two.
2.2. The Text

f-stanza

A  fer frænda rog ok flædar viti ok g[ra]fseids gata  Aurum fy<l>ker
B  Fe cr frænda rog og fyrda gaman og grafpueings gata

The first periphrasis is identical to that found in the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*, the difference being in the verb. Whereas in the OICRP the poet uses a copula (*er*), in the Old Norwegian text the verb *vældr* ‘causes’ is employed instead: *vældr frenda roge*.

The last periphrasis is related to the Nibelungen hoard: *grafseios* is a kenning for ‘serpent’, and the serpent’s path is gold\(^{19}\). *Flædar viti* (‘sign of falsehood’) in text A is probably another reference to the same legend, whereas *fyrda gaman* (‘men’s delight’) underscores the positive value of wealth. The Latin gloss is *aurum*, that is, ‘gold’.

The second periphrases in text B reflects the general sense of ‘wealth’ (ON *fé*), whereas the first and last one there, as well as all three in text A, point to a more concrete meaning, namely, ‘gold’ (as in the Old Norwegian poem). Gold or wealth is seen as causer of distress among members of the same family.

The translation of these kennings into Modern English would go as follows:

A  *fé* is family strife and sign of falsehood and serpent’s path

\(^{19}\) For an account of the *Nibelungen hoard* legend, see the f-stanza in the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*. 
B Wealth is family strife and men’s delight and serpent’s path

_u-stanza_

A  u er skygja gratur ok skæra þuer[rir ok] hirdis hatr    Vmbre
B  Vr er skya gratr og skarar þotir og hirdis hatr

In the OIrP the u-rune signifies ‘rain’. No parallel to the kennings used in this poem can be found in the Old Norwegian poem since, in the latter úr is described metaphorically as ‘rain of sparks’.

The first element in the second kenning (skæral/skarar) in both versions has been treated in different ways. Wimmer (1887: 282) believed it to be skara (genitive plural of skør ‘edge of the ice’) and translated it as ‘Auflöser der Eisränder’ (‘melter of the ice-rim’). Lindroth (1913) emended the phrase to skaði þerris and translated this structure as ‘enemy of drought’ (literally it means ‘destruction of dryness’). However, according to Dickins (1915: 28) and Page (1998: 27), due to metrical reasons, the word has to be taken as skára (nominative skári) whose meaning is ‘swathe, the sweep of a sythe in mowing’ (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957: 542). In his edition, Dickins (1915: 29) translates the periphrasis as ‘ruin of the hay-harvest’, whereas Page (1998) renders it as ‘hay’s destroyer’.

The word þverrir (text A) means ‘diminisher’ (cf. the verb þverra ‘to make to decrease’). The variant þorir in text B is unrecorded in Old Norse and, therefore,

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20 Vmbre must be a mistake for ymbre (cf. the glosses to the rune-names in manuscript A: ymber skur, skur er úr, úr er runastafir).
it is most likely a mistake. The three kennings in this stanza serve to describe 'rain'. One emphasises the neutral aspects of rain (clouds’ crying), whereas the other two concentrate on the negative consequences on crops.

The Latin gloss of the rune-name is *ymber* ‘rain’ (ON *úr* ‘drizzle, rain’). The translation of the text should then read:

A u (úr) is crying of the clouds, diminisher/destroyer of mown hay and shepherd’s hate.

B Drizzle is crying of the clouds, diminisher of mown hay and shepherd’s hate.

**þ-stanza**

A þ er kuenna kuöl ok kletta ibuí ok [...].runar ver. Sat[ur]nus þeingill

B þus er kuenna kuaul og kletta Jbui og sidfaurull seggr

The name of the þ-rune is described as ‘giant’ as it is also in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem. The first periphrasis is almost identical with the description of the rune-name given in this same text: *kvenna kvillu* (‘women’s sickness’); *kvöl* ‘distress’. *Kletta ibúi* is a common kenning for giant. *Klettr* is a noun meaning ‘rocky hill, crag’, and *kletta* is the genitive plural form, whereas *ibúi* means ‘dweller’.

The first word in the last circumlocution in the A version is partly illegible. Page (1998) edits it as *Valrúinar*, but this is an unknown Old Norse word, even though there are similar recorded terms such as *Varðrún* for the name of a
giantess or Valtýr, a heiti for Óðinn. Valrún then could be another giantess’ designation. Page skips the B version where sidsaurull (sidsforull ‘late?/widely? travelling’) appears. The last word in both versions, namely, ver ‘man, husband’ and seggr ‘man’ are synonyms.

The three kennings in the A version clearly point to ‘giant’ (ON purs). In text B, only the first two kennings refer to a giant. The last phrase, which lacks the kenning structure, is not an otherwise known general description of ‘giant’.

A    þ (purs) is women’s distress, dweller in rocky hills and Valrún’s mate.
B    Giant is women’s distress, dweller in rocky hills and late-travelling man.

α-stanza

A    α er alldingautr ok asg[ar]dz iof[ur ok v]alhallar visi Jupi[ter] Oddviti
B    Os er alldengaur og asgarz iufur og ualhallar wiser

The name of the fourth rune in Germanic, namely Þ [a], has been reconstructed as *ansur meaning ‘heathen god’. During the Viking Age and as the result (among other changes) of loss of [n] and compensatory lengthening of the preceding nasal vowel [ã], this word became ǻsur. Then u-umlaut was involved in various forms in the paradigm and the word became ǿsr/ǿs, but since the sound change did not work homogenously throughout the paradigm, variation sometimes occurred (ǻs-/ǿs-). Eventually, after the linguistic and subsequent runological transitions about 1020-1100, this vowel became further rounded and closed to [ḅ:]
(> óss) and the runic graph became ɬ. In time this rune lost its value of [äː]. From the late Viking Age onwards it seems no longer used to represent any kind of a nasal sound, but instead it denotes rounded vowels and occasionally the glide /w/ (Liestøl, 1981b: 252). In the rune poem, the spelling óss is recorded.

But there is another Old Norse word óss which derives from Gmc *ōsa-, Lat õs, with the meaning ‘river mouth’. So in this language there existed two homonym words with different meanings and etymologies at least after the 11th c. And so ‘god’ could be written <óss/åss>, whereas ‘river mouth’ could only be written <óss>. Gradually the form åss won out for the meaning ‘god’, but this could not be used for the rune, since it was the graph for the sound [oː:]. Hence the Icelandic choice to construe the name as ‘river-mouth’ rather than ‘god’, which was in the late Middle Ages and in Modern Icelandic spelt áss. Here may be the clue to the difference in meaning in both poems. Two hypothesis could apply. On the one hand, the author of the Old Norwegian Rune Poem could have changed the meaning of the rune on purpose. He may have decided to take ‘mouth’, playing with the fact that the two words had become homonyms. He may have also decided to wipe out any heathen meaning of the word due to Christian influence. If this hypothesis were to be correct, it would be strange, though, that the author of the Norwegian poem and not the Icelandic one would avoid any heathen nuance. Icelanders were used to doing that as it is evident from, for example, the names of the days of the week\textsuperscript{21}. On the other hand, the author may

\textsuperscript{21} Modern Icelandic retains only two of the planetary names, sunnudagur and mánudagur, and has two numerical names, fríðjudagur for Tuesday (ON tysdagr) and fimmudagur (ON þórdsdagr) for Thursday. Wednesday is miðvikudagur (ON óðinsdagr) like German Mittwoch, Saturday is langardagur ‘washday’ (ON laug ‘bath’) as in the other Scandinavian languages, and Friday is fóstudagur (ON fríðadagr) ‘fastday’ (Buck, 1988).
not have been conscious of this fact and simply mistook óss (‘god’) for òss
(‘mouth’).

The expression *alldingaur* (*aldin-Gautr = old-Gautr*) is a common epithet
for Óðinn, and Ásgarðr is the place where the gods live in the Scandinavian
mythology, situated above *Míðgarðr*, the place designated to human beings.

*Jofurr* (*iofur* in the A text and *iufur* in the B text) means ‘prince, leader’. The
periphrasis *Valhallar visi* (A-version) or *visir* (B-version) also appears in an
epigraphical post-reformation inscription on a runestone in Stora Lundby, Sweden
(Brate and Wessén, 1924-36: 98 f. 3): *valhallar visir*. (see table below). This
circumlocution was probably taken from Jón Ólafsson’s *Runologia* (1752).

The three kennings in both versions are Óðinn kennings. Therfore, the rune-
name òss means specifically ‘Óðinn’ instead of the standard ‘god’. Thus, the
OLCRP departs from the Norwegian text where òss designates an estuary.

The translation of the lines is:

A  ò is ancient Gautr and Ásgarðr’s prince and Valhall’s ruler.

B  Heathen god/Óðinn is ancient Gautur and Ásgarðr’s prince and Valhall’s
    ruler.
Table 39. Runic stone with the inscription *valhallar.visir*. (Dybeck, 1855: 47)
**r-stanza**

A  
\text{r er sitiand\textsc{i} sela } ok \text{ snudig ferd } \text{ok iors erfidi} \quad \text{Ite}<r>\text{ R\ae}sir

B  
\text{Reid er sitiandi s\ae}la \text{ og snudulig ferd } \text{og iors cruidi}

The contents of the line show the meaning ‘riding’ for \textit{reið}. The first two kennings describe riding as a means of transportation for men (cf. \textit{sitjandi} makes reference to men sitting on a horse’s back). The negative aspect of riding as a tiring activity for horses, similar in the \textit{Old Norwegian Rune Poem}, is indicated in the last kenning.

In this case, both the A and B texts coincide:

A  
\text{r is bliss of the seated and swift journey and horse’s toil.}

B  
\text{Riding is bliss of the seated and swift journey and horse’s toil.}

**k-stanza**

A  
\text{k er barna baul } ok \text{ bardagi } ok \text{ h[o]ldfualus} \quad \text{Flag[...]} \text{[k]ongur}

B  
\text{Kaun er barna baul } \text{og bardæi } \text{og hws holld fua}

There are similarities between the description given to the k-rune in this poem (\textit{barna baul (bol) ‘children’s misfortune’}) and the one rendered in the \textit{Old Norwegian Rune Poem (bæggia barnalbol ‘children’s misfortune’}). The circumlocution is related to children (\textit{barna}, genitive plural) in both the Old Icelandic and the Old Norwegian text. Either with construing \textit{bol} of the second line in the \textit{Old Norwegian Rune Poem} as functioning in the first line (\textit{barnal bol})
or emending the first line to [barna bolvan (children's curse')], one arrives at a
text identical or similar to barnabaul > barna baul 'children's misfortune'.

Both versions agree in the periphrases. Bardagi (bardæi in text B) means
'calamity, scourge' and hold-füi (hfo/Idsua, holld fua) 'rotten flesh' (literally
'flesh-rot'). The first kenning has to do with children's sickness and the last two
descriptions point to a tumor or boil.

The translation of the two texts in then:

A k is children's misfortune and calamity and house of rotten flesh.
B Tumor/boil is children's misfortune and calamity and house of rotten flesh.

h-stanza

A h er kallda [k]orn ok knap[a dri]fa ok snaka sott G[ran]do Hilldingr
B Hagall er kallda korn og knapa drifa og snaka sott

Hagal (Lat grando) as a cold grain has its parallel in the Old Norwegian
poem, but in the latter the adjective is used in its superlative form: kalldaster
korna 'the coldest of grains'. The term knapa in both versions could be a scribal
mistake for krupa, which together with drija makes a compound word meaning 'a
shower of sleet' (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957). It must be highlighted that the last
expression snaka soft 'sickness of snakes' is a kenning for winter and not of hail,
since it refers to the hibernation of snakes.

The translation goes then as follows:

A h is the cold grain and a shower of sleet and sickness of snakes.
Hail is cold grain and a shower of sleet and sickness of snakes.

n-stanza

A  

n er þyiar þra [ok .......] kost[r] ok v[ø]ssamlig verk  Opera  Niflung

B  

Nauð er þyar þra og þuera erfidi og enn þyngri koster

Both versions differ in the layout of the periphrases and in the circumlocutions themselves. Olc þý (f. gen. sg. þyiar, þyar) means ‘a female serf, bondswoman’ and þrá ‘hard struggle’. The second periphrasis in A is almost illegible. Kostr is ‘condition’ and one may think of an adjective meaning ‘hard’ preceding it; in order to function in the alliterative scheme, the word must begin with <þ->. This periphrasis is last in the second version, where the first word is rendered as þyngri, an adjective (þungr) in comparative form meaning ‘harder, heavier’. A natural completion of the lacuna in the periphrasis in A would be þungr or perhaps þyngri. The third circumlocution in A reads vossamlig going back to vás-samr, an adjective meaning ‘toilsome’. The second kenning in B is þuera erfidi. Þverr (nom./acc. neut. þvera) is an adjective meaning “cross, contrary”. Erfidi (normalised erfidi) is ‘work, toil, labour’.

The meaning of the name of the n-rune in this line coincides partially with the traditionally accepted ‘need’ (ON naut), but apparently also has the more specific connotation ‘work’ (Lat opera ‘work’). The description presented in this text is different from the one in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem where it is explained as ‘constraint gives little choice’.
A  n is servant’s sorrow, and (hard?) condition and toilsome work.
B  Need is servant’s sorrow, (contrary) labour and even harder condition.

i-stanza

A  I er ar bau[k]r [ok un]nar h[e]kia ok feigra manna far  Gl[a]cies jofur
B  Is er ar borkr og unnar þak og feiks manz farad

Ár borkr ‘river’s bark’ is a kenning consisting of the genitive ár (nominative á ‘river’), and borkr ‘bark’. The image of ice as a thatched roof (þak or þekja) or bridge across water also appears in the reconstructed line in the Old Norwegian poem: is kollum brú braide ‘the ice we call the broadest bridge’.

In relation to the last kenning in the A text, Page (1998: 28) takes the vowel in far as long (fár ‘danger, harm’), but admits that far with short vowel (‘path, track’) would be also possible. The word farad in text B is not recorded in Old Norse and could perhaps be a mistake for far.

A  i is river’s bark and wave’s thatched roof and doomed men’s way/danger.
B  Ice is river’s bark and wave’s thatched roof and doomed man’s ?way/?danger.

a-stanza

A  æ er gumna g[.]d[.........] ok d[a]ladreyri  Annus Allvalldr
B  Ar er gumna glede og [go]tt sumar og vel flest þat er vill

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In text A, the second word in the first periphrasis is partly illegible. Page (1998) believes it to be *gumna gaði* ‘men’s benefit’. If it were so, then this line would have a counterpart in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem: *gufna gode* (*gumna godi*) ‘good to men’. Nonetheless, text B shows *glede* (*gleðe/gleði*) ‘men’s gladness’. The word in text A could be emended to *gleði* instead of *gaði* as Page suggests, since *<le>* takes as much room as *<æ>* , and also since this is the word in text B.

The other two descriptions of ár posit some problems. In text A, the second kenning is illegible, whereas there is no agreement between the two versions with respect to the last kenning. In text A the last word could be a compound of *dalr* ‘dale’ and *dreyri* ‘drop, fall’, also metaphorically ‘blood’. This word is employed in poetry in phrases such as *dals dreyri* ‘the blood of valleys’ and *jarðar dreyri*, ‘the blood of the earth’ respectively (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957: 106). Both are kennings meaning ‘river, lake’. One possible explanation for this may be the fact that ON á ‘river’ has ár as nominative/accusative plural. The writer of the A text may have confused this latter form with ON ár ‘year’.

Ár as ‘year’ is clearly described positively and probably means specifically ‘good year’ (cf. the Latin gloss *annus*). The reading of the kennings based on both versions could be:

A  a is men’s ?gladness/?benefit and [.....] and blood of the valley.

B  Good year is men’s gladness and good summer and all that one wishes most.
s-stanza

A  s er s[k]yja skiolldr [ok sk]inandi raudull ok isa alldrtrregi  Rota Siklin<gr>
B  Sol e[r] skya skiolldr og skinandi raudull og jsa alldrtregi

In this stanza, both versions coincide. The kenning *skyja skiolldr* (normalised form *skýja skj ldr*) ‘clouds’ shield’ is often found in the Scandinavian literature. The periphrasis for the s-rune in the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem* (‘light of the lands’) is probably better related to the second kenning in this text *skinandi raudull* ‘shining halo’. Page (1998) translates *alldr tregi* as ‘destroyer’ with certain doubt. The word *aldr-tregi* is a compound noun meaning ‘deathly sorrow’ (i.e. ‘destruction, destroyer’) (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957), ‘eternal sorrow’ (Heggstad et al., 1975). No Christian allusion to the sun-Christ motif is found in this text. The text could be translated as:

A  s is the clouds’ shield and shining halo and ice’s destroyer.
B  Sól is the clouds’ shield and shining halo and ice’s destroyer.

t-stanza

A  t er [ein]hendr [a]s ok vlfœ leifar ok hofa hilmir  Mars Tiggí
B  Tyr er einhendr as og ulfs leifr og friggjar fadir

Týr is described in both the Old Norwegian and the Old Icelandic poems as the one-handed god. The second kenning in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* (‘the wolf’s left-overs’ (plural) in the A-version), ‘the wolf’s left-over’ (singular) in the
B-version) makes further reference to Týr’s legend and shares some similarities with a passage in the Second Lay of Guðrún: Guðrún went to the woods to take back what was left of Sigurðr’s body after the wolves had fed themselves on it:

Hvarf ec ein þadan, annspili frá
Á við, lesa varga leifar;

(‘I went alone from there, from the talking, to the wood, to pick up the leavings of the wolves’) (Text and translation by Clunies Ross, 1990: 38)

The A and B texts do not share the third kenning. Hofa hilmir in the former means ‘king/ruler of temples’ and could fit any of the gods. Friggjar fadir ‘Frigg’s father’ in the latter is an unrecorded kenning apparently for Týr, or for any of the gods, because Frigg’s father was surely a god. Friggjar is the genitive form of the proper name Frigg, the heathen goddess married to Óðinn (Cleasby-Vigfusson 1957: 174). Page (1998) leaves this latter description untranslated. In spite of the fact that the last periphrasis in both texts are general descriptions of a god, the name of the t-rune has to be a word beginning with <t->, and being one of the gods, the solution seems to be Tyr.

A t (týr) is one-handed god and wolf’s left-overs, and a king of temples.

B Týr is one-handed god and wolf’s left-over, and Frigg’s father.

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22 For an account of Týr’s legend, see section 1.6.
b-stanza

A \( \text{b er [............]} \) ok litit \text{tre} ok u[.]gsamligr uidr \quad \text{Abies} \quad \text{Budlungr} \\
B \quad \text{Biarka er blomgat tre og litel hrisla og j ast sæmligs uidar} \\

The transmission of this stanza is problematic. Text A is partly illegible, and at least text B lacks necessary alliteration. The A version could have lost something alliterating with \(<l->\) in the lacuna, and the B version could construe \(<B->... b->\) as the first alliteration, but there is no \(<b->\) in \text{litel hrisla}. Also, \text{vegsamligr} \text{ viðr} alliterates internally, whereas \text{j astsæmligs uidar} does not alliterate.

Whereas in this version \text{bjarkan} is depicted as a tree (\text{litid tre}), in text B it is described as both a tree (\text{blomgat tre}) and a bush (\text{hrisla}). In the other rune poems, \text{bjarkan} is undoubtedly seen as a tree, although on some occasions it is not clear which tree the description refers to. In contrast to the Old Norwegian text, the quality of \text{bjarkan} as the greenest of trees is not shown in the OlcRP.

The last kenning in both versions is difficult to disentangle. In text A the word is partially illegible. Jón Ólafsson (1752) renders it as \text{vaxandi viðr} ‘growing wood’. But Bugge (1884-91: 112) reads the last kenning in the A text as \text{vegsamligr} ‘glorious’. Due to all the difficulties in the texts, Page (1998: 37) does not render a final version nor does he translate it. The problem is a grammatical one. The letter \(<j->\) could represent \(i\), either as a preposition (which takes an object in the dative or accusative, never in the genitive) or a prefix meaning ‘somewhat’, although the use of the prefix appears to be very limited. The grammatical
problem makes the text unacceptable. 

Astsæmligs means ‘loving’, and uidar is the genitive singular of viðr (pl. viðir).

Keeping in mind the problems presented by this description, text A and B could be read respectively as:

A  b is [...] and little tree and glorious wood.
B  Birch tree is the blooming tree and little bush and ?loving wood.

m-stanza

A  m er manns g[a]man ok molldar auki ok skipa skreytir  Homo Milldingr
B  Madr er mannz gaman og molldar auki og skipa skreytir

The first kenning manns gaman ‘man’s delight’ is a quotation from Eddic poetry madr er manns gaman, Hávamál v. 47. Molldar auki is a compound word (ON moldar-auki ‘earth’s dust’, literally ‘augmentation of earth’) also recorded in the Old Norwegian text. All these kennings describe man in different situations, in relation to other men, to death and to ships, respectively.

A  m is man’s delight, and earth’s dust and ornament of ships.
B  Maðr is man’s delight, and earth’s dust and ornament of ships.

l-stanza

A  ler vellanda va[..] ok [..]dr ket[i]ll ok glaummnunga grandi  lacus Lofd<ungr>
B  Laugr er uellandi uimr og uidr ketill og glaummnunga gnaud

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Text A contains some words which are partly illegible. _Vaf..._ in the first description may be the first letters in _vatn_ ‘water’. The expression _vellanda vatn_ ‘bubbling water’ could well be a kenning for _foss_ ‘waterfall’, referring to the foam and bubbles made by the falling water. This being so, the stanza would be related to the one in the _Old Norwegian Rune Poem_, where ‘water is what falls from the mountain – fall’.

The first word in the second kenning in text A could be _vidr_, as in text B. The two versions differ in the last kenning. _Gnaud_ (ON _gnaud_) may be a mistake for _grund_ made in the process of copying, or perhaps rather for _grandi_ ‘sand bank’, where _<n>_ and _<u>_ have been confused as the first step in the corruption. _Glaumminga/glumminga_ may be related to _glömmungr_ which is the name of a fish in the _Edda_ (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957: 206), also found in the _pulur_. Jón Ólafsson (1752) chooses _grunnunga_ ‘groundling’ instead, which is also the name of a fish.

_A_  
Water is bubbling river, great cauldron and fishes’ sand bank.

_B_  
Water is bubbling water (?), great (?) cauldron and fishes’ sand bank.

**γ-stanza**

_A_  
_y er ben[..............]otgiart jarn Arcus ynglingr_  

_B_  
[.................................]^{24}

---

^{23} Affixed to the main manuscripts of the _Edda_ of Snorri there are collections of words both in prose and verse, which represent a fund of wording for poets. When these lists are in verse they are known as _pulur_. The content of the _pulur_ includes, among others, mythical and poetical persons, war objects, rivers and plants.

^{24} This version omits the rune-name and its periphrases.
This stanza is problematic. Text A lacks part of the first kenning and most of the last one. These are the only two remnants. Later sources record bendur/bendtur (‘bent’) for the former, which might be what stood originally in the line. In the latter, the only discernible word is jarn (‘iron’?). This second kenning does not seem to be related to ýr ‘bow’ or ‘yew’, but to ur ‘slag’ as found in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem. However, the Latin gloss for the rune-name is arcus ‘bow’, which may indicate that it was the definition intended. Dickins (1915) translates the A text as ‘bent bow and brittle iron’. The only two possible words resembling -otgjarnt recorded in Old Norse are mótgjarn which means ‘tending/disposed to be in opposition to someone/something’ (used in a religious context about someone who does not do God’s will), and óbrotgjarn, which means ‘not tending to break, strong, solid’, used by Egill Skalla-Grímsson in a poem. Therefore, Dickin’s translation ‘brittle’ would represent *brotgjarn.

Text B omits the whole stanza. It is then difficult to know whether the intended meaning for ýr was ‘yew-tree’ or ‘bow’. Since in Iceland there were no yew-trees, Icelanders may have given the meaning ‘bow’ to ýr. The factual explanation is that synecdoche is used here to describe the tree, since bows were made of yew-wood. In the Old Norwegian poem ýr was defined as a tree. Only a partial translation can be provided for the A version.

A y is ..... ?brittle iron.
As regards the rune-names’ significance, the immediate inference is that, beyond the similitudes or differences in structure and kennings between the Old Norwegian Rune Poem and the Old Icelandic text, most names mean the same in both texts. But with respect to the solutions for úr and óss, scholars have overlooked the causes for the change in meaning in both poems. The present study has demonstrated that both texts can share the same meaning for úr, even though in the earlier text it is hidden in a metaphor. With respect to óss, its meaning in the Icelandic tradition may have been the same as in the Norwegian. It could be conjectured that the change in meaning reflects an error by the author of the text, who mistook the two homonyms. In relation to bjarkan, the text does not describe the tree in enough detail that it has to be the birch. However, the name has to begin with <b->, and there are a few tree names that begin with this letter, e.g. birch and beech (ON bók). And for yfr, the fact that the text is almost obliterated, makes it impossible to determine whether yfr is intended to mean ‘bow’ or ‘yew-tree’. This uncertainty about the meanings of these two names will lead to unclear periphrases in later manuscripts.

Finally, the choice of some periphrases in this poem reveals interesting data. Fé is described as both ‘wealth’ and contextually as the more concrete ‘gold’. As for ár traditionally taken as ‘year’, two kennings related to river have been used, probably due to a mistake on the part of the poet with ár (inflected forms of á ‘river’). The kennings for hagl are all related to hail, except for the last, which is rather a winter kenning. Finally, the rune-name týr is primarily described as the god Týr, but some of the kennings employed indicate a more general sense of
'god', whereas the periphrases for óss are clearly Óðinn kennings rather than general god kennings. In skaldic poetry a kenning for any one of the gods could apparently usually be used for any one of the other gods. Thus something meaning simply 'god' in general could be used of a specific god, like Týr, whereas kennings for Óðinn could be construed simply to mean 'one of the heathen gods'.
3. The Old Swedish Rune Poem

3.1. Introduction

The youngest rune poem has its origin in the Swedish speaking area. In the 1600's, the Swedish student Nicolaus Andreæ Granius\(^\text{25}\) sent a letter to the Dutch professor Bonaventura Vulcanius\(^\text{26}\) (‘ad Clarissimun Virum D. BonaVenturam Vulcanium Grecæ Linguæ professorem in Academia Lugdunensi Batavorum, officiose’). This letter, now at the University Library in Leiden with the signature Vulp. 106, was published in 1908 by Molhuysen and contained among other things a rune poem of the younger futhark which had similarities with the Old Norwegian and Old Icelandic runic poems. Runologists have not shown much interest in this text, but in 1987 Quak made a modern edition of it, in which he stressed its importance and significance:

Trotz der späten Überlieferung kann das altschwedische Runengedicht
also doch einen kleinen Beitrag zum Verständnis der Runennamen und
deren Überlieferung bringen. Seine größte Bedeutung aber liegt in dem
Nachweis, dass man am Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts in Schweden

\(^{25}\) Granius was born in Sweden in 1569. He studied in Rostock and Helmstedt. There he was professor of subjects such as mathematics and physics. Due to political reasons he left his country and began a long trip around Europe. He died in 1631.

\(^{26}\) Professor Bonaventura Vulcanius was born in Brügge in 1538. He became assistant to the Spanish Bishop Francisco de Mendoza y Bobadilla in Burgos (Spain). There he received a humanistic education. Back in his country, he became rector of the public school in Antwerpen. Later, in 1578, he obtained a position as professor of Greek at the University of Leiden. He died in 1614.
It is unclear where Granius took the material from. He explains that he learnt the poem from old country people (*senibus rusticis*). He may have written down the poem after learning it from oral tradition, or he could have also received this information from his friend, the Swedish scholar and runologist Johann Thomas Burcus, with whom he studied in Stockholm.

The letter consists of two pages. At the end of the first one and beginning of the second, Granius presents the rune-names of the younger futhark with some variants:


The first variant for the f-rune, the Old Swedish word *fyr*, means ‘fire’ in some compounds, and it is a spelling for ‘fire’ in modern (including early modern) Swedish. The word *fā* (*fāa*, *fear*, *feär*, *fea*) is the cognate of Old Icelandic *fé*, meaning ‘goods, money, properties’. *Ur* in Old Swedish meant ‘bad weather’. *Tors* as the name of the p-rune was not recorded in Old Swedish. *Ridher* could be the present indicative of the Old Swedish verb *ripa* ‘to ride’. Granius presents three variants for the k-rune, namely, *kön, kārast* and *kaugven*. Neither *hagel* nor *hagaller* are recorded Old Swedish words, but instead, *hagl, haghel, hagell, hagāål* and *haghil* all meaning ‘hail’. *Nōdh* is the Old Swedish word for ‘need, constraint’. *Is* (*iis, ijs, ys*) is the Old Swedish term for ‘ice’. *Tyr* should be ‘oxe’ as
spelt OSw biur, tywr. Þýf is most surely OSw þýf, a spelling for OSw þiþer ‘thief’. År (ar, aær) means ‘year’. The specific spelling birka is unrecorded. The word for ‘birch’ is OSw biork (byork, byrk, börk) or biärka in place names. Býrbal can be a compound with býr (OSw biur ‘beaver’), and bal could perhaps be OSw balder, definite form ballen, plural ballar ‘testicle’. Various beaver excretions were used medicinally. Sol (sool, soll) is ‘sun’, lagh (lach) means ‘law’ or the past tense of ‘to lie’, namely ‘lay’. Madher is a variant for ‘man’ (cf. maþar, mader, madhir). Finally, Granius renders övermagi as the last rune-name, which is unrecorded in the other sources. It could be assumed to be the name intended for the y-rune.
3.2. Bureus' Runic Calendar and Other Secondary Sources

Besides Granius text, there is another possible source of the OSwRP. The text is edited for the first time in Bureus' copper plate Runakänslanäs läräspän. This is known as Bureus' Runetavla. The rune poem appears within a calendar context in a section entitled Observationes in kalendarium runicum. Aurei numeri (1599). To the left the rune-names are set under the heading nomina, then some runes (notae), and finally to the right circumlocutions or explanations of the rune-names under the heading significatio. Bureus includes more than one name or variant for the f, k, n, i, a, t and b-runes. The three last names, actually the names of three innovations as golden number calendar runes, lack circumlocutions, and only their names are provided.

It is difficult to transliterate and translate the text. Bureus writes 1600-century Swedish and uses his own runic orthography in order to render the language. For example, he makes up new ways of binding runes, he invents a rune for the value v, he uses dotted b for Ø, uses the h-rune for h, ch, gh, etc.

As a runic calendar, the text contains sixteen rune-names plus the names of three constructed calendar runes for the golden numbers 17, 18 and 19. Rune number 17 was †. Its name arlauq (arlahr in Bureus) is a mixture of the name of the a-rune, namely dr, and of the name laug ‘bath(water)’. The latter seems to be a variant name of the l-rune (logr ‘water, lake’). Both are words for water, one with a long tradition in the rune poems (logr, AbcNord lagu), and one with an

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27 For an explanation of runic calendars and gyldental, see chapter II, section 5.3.
apparently shorter tradition (*laug*). Number 18, namely 梯队, was called *tvimalr* ('double man'), and the last one, 梯队 belgibor/belgor ‘bellows-thorn/bellows giant’ due to its form like two 梯队-runes put together.

The transliteration of Burec's calendar follows28. The sign 梯队 joining two letters indicates that the two are written together in a runic ligature known as a bind-rune. Enclosed letters () indicate that the reading is uncertain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOMINA</th>
<th>SIGNIFIC(ATIO)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fā . fyr . fryh</td>
<td>fāglā frāndā ro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ur</td>
<td>uR i västān vädr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þors</td>
<td>þors kvinnā-kvāl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oðās</td>
<td>lēkr os i viði(ā)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repr</td>
<td>riddaR i hästā-sprāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kön . kahn</td>
<td>kön i kōtā värsta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hahāl</td>
<td>hārval i bo bästa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nōð . nōð . nōðr</td>
<td>nōð endā kāst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is . i̞r . ir</td>
<td>is bro brĕpast</td>
</tr>
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<td>ār . ārs</td>
<td>arā blāp</td>
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<tr>
<td>sol</td>
<td>sol knābōh</td>
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<td>tiōr . tyr.</td>
<td>tiōr vitrum . leðast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birka(ī) . biörk</td>
<td>biörkā-brumr . frĕpast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 I am grateful to Prof. James E. Knirk and Prof. Per Stille for their help with the transliteration of the text.
lahr lah lands ära
mahr mahr mulakr
stupämahr oRmahr tings ökr
ârlahr âfl ahäp
tvistungän m tve mahr
bålhl-pors þors bålhbundan

There are two secondary derivative texts deriving from that of Bureus, namely one by Stiernhielm and another by Verelius. Stiernhielm (1598-1672) was a Swedish humanistic scholar. He was appointed antiquarius regni in 1648. He was then in charge of collecting all the Old Norse and Old Swedish literary and cultural knowledge, including, therefore, also runic texts both in inscriptions and manuscripts. He stated that he had found these runes in a calendar volume preserved at the archives, probably Bureus' Runetavla. Stiernhielm showed the text with Latin letters in the treatise De Hyperboreis (pp. 155-157). It was published posthumously in 1685 together with another treatise under the title Antichuverius sive scriptum breve Johannis Cluverio Dantisco-Borusso oppositum gentis Gothicae originem et antiquissimam Scandia vel Scandinavia sedem vindicans et eiusdem de Hyperboreis dissertatio brevis. This text does not only consist of the rune-names and the periphrasis, as in Bureus, but also of additional circumlocutions or explanations. It seems that he encountered difficulties in the transliteration of Bureus' text and made up parts of the text. Therefore, it is more
of an interpretation rather than a source of the OSwRP and, thus, secondary\(^9\). Verelius was another Swedish scholar. In 1675 he wrote *Manuductio compendiosa ad runographiam Scandicam antiquam recte intelligendam*. Although this work has relevance to the OSwRP, it will be treated in chapter four, since it also introduces other materials that are not simply his interpretation of Bureus.

In the analysis of the main text, namely that by Granius, Bureus will be included only when it can contribute to the understanding of the poem.

\(^9\) For a transliteration of the text, see Bauer (2003a: 216-8).
Table 40. Bureus' runic calendar (1599)
3.3. The Poem

The *Old Swedish Rune Poem* (OSwRP) is introduced by the words *Sentintiis itidem et carminibus idem cantillando exposuere sic* (i.e. 'they have been delivered/performed either as a mnemonic verse or sung as songs') (my translation). This means that the tradition of runic poems and the circumlocutions for the rune-names were known in Sweden as late as the 1600’s.

1. få frande ro.
2. urväder värst.
3. tors quinne/qual.
4. ös i hvario å.
5. ridher hästespräng.
6. Kön i köte värst.
7. hagaller i bo bäst.
8. nödh är enda kust.
9. āsbro bredast.
10. týr i vatum ledast (et aliter, týva vätten ledast).
11. är i bladhe vidast.
12. biörkahult grönast.
13. söl i himbla högast.
14. lagh är andsens ära.

(Quak, 1987, with quite normalised spelling here)
3.4. The Text

The OSwRP is composed of the rune-names and their description. However, the runic graphs are missing. The order of the runes in the poem (fúþorkhìnitabsl) does not correspond to the one in the other texts (fúþorkhìniastbmly (or lmb, or mistakenly lhmty)). The stanzacic line structure (name of the rune plus a periphrasis) is the same throughout the text and simpler than the layout of the other runic poems. This may be the original form of the poem, but it could have been more complex in a former stage, becoming simpler in the process of transmission. It is also imaginable that Granius himself may have not known its whole structure. For at least lines 2, 9 and 12, the name of the rune plus the first word in the circumlocution seem to have been understood as one word. The Old Swedish word urvädher (urväder, yrväder) is a common term for storm.

A comparison between the meanings of the rune-names in the Old Swedish and the other Scandinavian poems reveals a relatively close relationship.

f-rune

fá frande ro

From a comparison of the three Scandinavian poems, it follows that the term frande in the OSwRP must be a variant spelling of fraende, OSw frända ‘relative’. Quak (1987) wonders whether by the time the text was written down the term ró(g) ‘quarrel’ was still understood as such (compare with the Old Icelandic Rune Poem’s kenning: fraenda róg) or was mistaken for the OSw noun
ro ‘silence, quiet’. If the right word were ro ‘silence’, then the OSwRP would differ in content, although not in meaning, from the other two Scandinavian poems. In the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* and the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem* the name fé is described as both delight and distress for men, whereas in the OSwRP only the positive side of wealth would be presented. No Christian motif whatsoever is used in this text.

Bureus in his runic calendar renders fäglä frändä ro. But fäglä (fugle?) may not have been intended as part of the circumlocution, but as another rune-name variant for the f-rune. He may have run out of space in the section nomina, and continued in the place used for the periphrases. It should be pointed out that the first rune-name supplied by Bureus was fā (ON fé). In this sense, the line would be in agreement with the other Scandinavian poems. Bureus employs the acrophonic principle when supplying a name: fā, fyr, fryh, fāglä.

The translation of the circumlocution is: ‘Fé [is] the relative’s peace/strife (?)³⁰.

u-rune

urväder várst

Granius renders the name of the u-rune as urväder (‘storm’); this being so, the translation would go as ‘a storm is the worst’. The meaning of this rune as ‘rain, bad weather’ would be a further support that its original meaning in the traditions of the three rune poems must have been ‘rain’.

³⁰ The translations of the lines are my own.
Bureus' text seems to include the rune-name as part of the periphrasis: \( uR \) \( v\ast an \) \( v\ddot{a}hr \). It is interesting to note that in this version, \( ur \) and \( v\ddot{a}hr \) are two separate words and do not form a compound noun. The sentence may be better understood as 'rain in the west wind/westerly weather'. In any case, both versions refer to \( ur \) as bad weather.

The translation of Granius' text would, therefore, be 'stormy/bad weather is the worst'. This text may be corrupt, based also on the fact that Bureus has \( ur \) as a separated word, and should perhaps be corrected to: \( ur \) \( v\ddot{a}der \) \( v\ddot{a}rst \) 'rain the worst weather'.

\( \beta \)-rune

tors quinne/qual

The term \( tors \) (< thors) is otherwise not recorded in Swedish of the 16th c. and it is, therefore, impossible to determine if \( Tors \) was still understood as coming from ON \( purs \) with the sense 'giant'. The circumlocution for the rune-name ('a giant is the woman's torment') corresponds to the ones found in the other Scandinavian poems: \( kvenna \) \( kv\ddot{o}l \), except for Worm's edition of the Old Norwegian Rune Poem where he renders \( kvenna \) \( kvilla \) 'women's sickness'. So the translation of this line in the OSwRP is then: 'tors is woman's torment'.

\( \alpha \)-rune

\( \ddot{o}s \) i hvario å
The rune-name seems to mean ‘river-mouth, estuary’, sharing then its meaning with the Old Norwegian Rune Poem, distancing itself from the Old Icelandic text where ðoss means ‘god’ (or more specifically ‘Óðinn’).

Bureus’ text departs somehow from Granius’: lekr os i vidi(ä) (“ðoss ðlies in a wide area?”). In any case, it points to a wide extension, probably referring to a river coming into open sea.

The line is translated as: ‘ðoss [is] in every river’.

r-rune

ridher hästespräng

Quak (1987) maintains that the Germanic name of the r-rune *raiðō and its meaning ‘cart’ was not understood anymore by the time the OSwRP was composed, since the meaning assigned to it is ‘ride, riding’. The word ridher was not recorded in Old Swedish, but it may correspond to ON reið ‘riding’, or rather have the copula er added at the end. This latter hypothesis could be supported by Bureus’ text where riddarR appears (the final <-ar> could go back to OSw är ‘is’), although this word could have also been understood as the noun riddar (standard form riddare) ‘knight’. The second word is a compound noun not recorded as such in Old Swedish. The first element is häst ‘horse’, and the second spräng (sprang/sprung ‘jump’, or the verb sprängja ‘to make jump, to exhaust, to wear out’). The runic calendar renders hästā-sprang, which also seems to be a compound word.
The text is related in context to the other Scandinavian poems, in that all relate reið to horse riding. The text reads: ‘reið [is] the horse’s exhaustion/bursting’.

k-rune
köń i köte værst

It is impossible to determine the actual meaning of the word köń in the poem. The immediate inference is that köń must go back to WN kaun which must have developed into kən in East Nordic. The latter may have been confused with OSw kyn, kön ‘sex, sexual instinct’, thus ‘sexual instinct in the flesh is the worst’, although an interpretation ‘ulcer in the body/flesh the worst’ could also be thought of where OSw kiōt could be understood as ‘body, flesh’ (Quak, 1987). This later interpretation would be closer in content to the other Scandinavian poems, even if kaun is not specified as a children’s sickness in this text. There is no apparent reason to rule out this latter interpretation, taking into consideration that the OSwRP shows traces of having been based at least on the Norwegian tradition of the poem.

h-rune
hagaller i bo bäst

As it has already been stated, the variant hagaller is not recorded in Swedish. It could be postulated that the first element of the word, namely hagall, is the Old Norse word for the h-rune. The second element could be the yerbal
form er (OSw är). The description of the rune-name is uncommon: ‘[with] hail [is] at home the best’ (if that is how it is to be read). The recurrent motif of hail as the coldest of grains is not employed in this poem. Bureus’ line includes the rune-name variant harval (harval i bo bästa), which may be related to hårvel (dialectical harvel) ‘yarn bobbin’. However, the first variant is hahal (OSw hagh(e)l ‘hail’).

n-rune

nödh är enda kust

The meaning of this sentence is not clear, but Quak (1987) notices that there is a parallel in the Swedish poem Konung Alexander where nöd är iw enga koster (‘need is no choice’), although in the rune poem the adjective enda (OSw ende) means ‘the only’: ‘need/necessity is the only choice’. This line shows another similarity with the Old Norwegian Rune Poem: gerir næppa koste, that is, ‘gives little choice’.

i-rune

īsbro bredast

In this line the rune-name and the first element in the circumlocution make a compound word, namely, īsbro ‘ice bridge’, hence, ‘ice bridge is the widest’. The circumlocution ‘the widest bridge’ corresponds to the one employed in the Icelandic poem. The fact that both poems coincide in employing the word ‘bridge’, may support the use of this word in the Old Norwegian text. As it was
previously mentioned, Árni Magnússon’s and Jón Eggertsson’s copies of the Old Norwegian Rune Poem render *kollum bræ bræida*. Finally, this line could be translated as either ‘the ice bridge [is] the widest’. Thus, the intended meaning for the i-rune would somewhat vary from the one provided in the two other Scandinavian poems.

In Bureus’ text *is* and *bro* are two independent words: *is bro brepast*, and, therefore, more alike to the other poems. Bureus’ text should perhaps be used to correct Granius’, since *isbro* could be a misunderstanding of two separate words.

t-rune

týr i vatum ledast (et aliter, týva vätten ledast)

In 16th c. Swedish the god name *Týr* (or the variant *Týva*) was unrecorded, but there must have been knowledge of the name. The word *Týr* might have been felt to be a kind of proper name.

Quak (1987) states that the noun *vatum* must be a mistake for *vät(t)um* ‘spirit’. Granius gave an alternative periphrasis *Týva vätten ledast*, which is problematic. *Vätten* could be a scribal error for *vätter* (‘angry creatures, spirits’). On the other hand, some authors have seen in *Týva* the Old Norse plural noun *tivar* (sg. *tívi*, used only in the plural, identical in root to Lat *divus* (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957: 634)). There seem to be Christian elements in this interpretation, since under Christian belief, the Aesir were transformed into angry creatures. The text reads: ‘*Týr [is] among the spirits the most unpleasant/odious’.
The Significance of the Rune-Names: Evidence from the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic Sources

a-rune
år i bladhe Vidast

The solution to this line is not clear. In Old Swedish the noun år means 'year'. Vidast is the superlative form for OSw vijper 'wide'. As happens in other lines of the poem, this one ends with a word in superlative form. Bladhe belongs to OSw blap 'leaf (of a vegetable)'. Professor Per Stille (cf. Bauer, 2003a: 227) suggests a word arleblad meaning 'early leaf'. The line could be translated as: 'år [is] the widest leaves/great abundance in leaves', relating then the rune-name to 'good, fruitful year', as it happens in the other poems. Bureus' line is fairly short: arā blap. The variants ar, ars are presented under the section nomina. The word arā is difficult to account for.

b-rune
biörkahult grönast

As in lines 1 and 9, the first word in the sentence is made up of the rune-name biörka and the first term in the periphrasis, biörkahult 'birch-grove'. The other poems render bjarkan 'birch ?twig'. In Old Swedish the noun björka is not recorded. Quak (1987) maintains that since hult means 'small forest', björka may be identified with OSw biörke 'birch forest': 'A birch wood [is] the greenest'.

Bureus supplies two variants for the b-rune, namely, birka(l), biörk, plus a latter word biörkä, which seems to form a compound word with the second element brumr. This latter word means 'branch, blossom' only in this word (otherwise it is a rumbling sound like a bear makes); but this is an Old
Scandinavian word (ON brum), so it probably did exist. Separated by a dot comes the word frópast, ‘luxuriant, lush’.

The translation of the line would be: ‘birch [is] the greenest grove’.

s-rune

söl i himbla hö gast

The name of the s-rune is OSw söl ‘sun’. In the OSwRP there is a new interpretation of sun as the highest thing in the sky: ‘Söl [is] the highest in the sky’.

The word knäböh (‘knee-bend’) in the runic calendar is not a recorded Swedish word. It probably refers to the rune knesöl ᛋ so called because it looks like someone bending their knee.

l-rune

lagh är Landsens ära

The name of the l-rune as recorded in the Oswrp is lagh. In Swedish this word means ‘law’. There is apparently no equivalent of ON logr ‘lake’ recorded in Old Swedish, and therefore the original name could have been incomprehensible and associated with a homophone (after the loss of nominative <-r>), OSw lagh ‘law’. The line could be translated as ‘Law [is] the honour of the land’.

The runic calendar provides two variants for this rune, namely lahr and lah ‘law’; the first may perhaps be associate with ON logr.
The Old Swedish text lacks the periphrases for the rune-names for m and y. It is not clear whether the poem should have contained sixteen lines or not, taking into account Granius' *etc.* However, Bureus's text includes a line for the m-rune, namely, *mahr mulakr.* The first word is possibly a mistake for *mahr* or more likely *maðr* (with dotted 𐌣), whereas the second word could be a mistake or a misunderstanding for ON *moldar-auki.*

The most interesting data yielded by the study of the text is the fact that the author of the Old Swedish text reinterpreted those rune-names which by his time had been lost in the language or whose original meanings were already unfamiliar to the native speakers. Such are the cases of *logr,* and probably of *kaun* and *Týr.*
4. The Old English Rune Poem

4.1. Introduction

No medieval copy of the Old English Rune Poem (OERP) survives. The text was on a single leaf bound into Otho B X, whose content consisted mainly of a volume of Old English saints’ lives, a few homilies, some confessional and penitential texts and the leaf (fol. 165) containing the rune poem. At the end of the manuscript, a life of St. Margaret was added. That manuscript was badly damaged in the Cotton fire of 1731, and the leaf with the poem was completely destroyed. However, in 1705 George Hickes had printed an edition of the poem in the first section of his Thesaurus (1705-1707) (Linguarum veterum septentrionalium thesaurus grammatico-criticus et archaeologicus).

The first descriptions of Otho B X appeared in two different catalogues. The first was Thomas Smith’s Catalogus librorum manuscriptorum bibliothecae Cottonianae (1696). In relation to fol. 165 he noted: “Characters Alphabeti peregrini, numero tantum decem. Aliqui ex his videntur esse literis Runicus similes” (71), (that is, ‘strange alphabet characters, in number as many as ten. Some of these seem to be like runic letters’) (my translation). Wanley in his catalogue (1705) described the folio as:

Folium quod olim ad alium quendam librum pertinuit, nunc hujus pars, in quo continentur Alphabetum Runicum cum explicatione Poetica, Saxonice, quod non ita pridem descripsi rogatu CL. D. Hickesii, qui in

('A leaf that once belonged to some other volume, now part of this, wherein is contained a Runic Alphabet with a verse explanation in Old English, which not very long ago I copied at the request of the most renowned Dr. Hickes, who published it in print in his Anglo-Saxon Grammar, in chapter 22, 'On the Norse-Saxon Dialect', p. 135) (my translation).

Therefore, Wanley believed that the leaf containing the OERP belonged to another manuscript. If it were so, then the folio in which the OERP appears could not be dated by analogy with the other material preserved in Otho B X. It is also unknown where the text was taken from. According to Ker (1957), during the 1500's the manuscript was the property of the collector John Joscelyn, who might have inserted fol. 165.

Wanley seems to have been a skilled palaeographer and thus, the text Hickes received (now lost) was with certainty a careful copy of the original. It is, however, a matter of dispute among scholars how faithfully the leaf of MS. Otho B X was reproduced. The edition includes the main body of the text consisting of the poem itself, the variant rune graphs from \( \Upsilon \) to \( \lambda \) to the left, their phonological values in Anglo-Saxon minuscule script, and the rune-names also in minuscule, arranged so that each rune corresponds to a stanza in the poem. For five runes
(wen, hægl, nyd, eoh, and Ing) additional alternative graphs are provided. At the
bottom two more runes have been added, namely cweord and an unnamed graph
for which there are no stanzas in the poem. Beneath the text, the runes stān and
gār with names and values are copied from a different copper plate. They are
followed by a text: “Hos characteres F m p l y f x ad alia sestinans
studio lectori interpretanda relinquo” (Derozez, 1954: plate II) (‘these
characters o l d w n x f o g, hastening on to other matters, I leave for the studious
reader to interpret’) (my translation).

Table 41. Text in Hickes (1705-7) (Derozez, 1954: plate II)

Hempl (1903-4) convincingly demonstrated that the runic apparatus added to the
rune poem by Hickes was not part of the original content of the leaf. The
phonological values, the variant runes and the extra runes in fact derived from a
futhorc list in MS. Domitian A IX 4to, whereas the rune-names came from an
unidentified source. Hickes was interested in collecting as much runic material as
possible, and so requested Wanley to copy all the runes he might encounter when
cataloguing the manuscripts. Hickes included the poem in the chapter entitled ‘De
dialecto Normano-Saxonica sive Anglo-Normannica; & de dialecto Normanno-
Saxonica’. To it he added the other material probably in an attempt to present
another example of Danish influence on Anglo-Saxon culture (Halsall, 1981: 26).
Hempl (1903-4) believed that Hickes himself was responsible for incorporating
this material into his edition. Halsall (1981), however, suggests that neither Hickes nor Wanley were responsible for adding the rune-names to the text, but that some earlier reader, perhaps an Anglo-Saxon, knew an Old English futhorc and used it to gloss the runes in Otho B X fol. That would mean that the OERP would have been similar in arrangement to the other extant rune poems.

Since Hickes' edition (1705), the poem has been reproduced several times. Among these editions are the ones by Wimmer (1887), Dickins (1915), Dobbie (1942), and Halsall (1981). The poem consists of ninety-four lines divided into twenty-nine stanzas, each describing a rune of the Anglo-Saxon futhorc.
Table 42. Hickes’ reproduction of the runes and rune-names in the Old English Rune Poem (Derolez, 1954: plate II)
4.2. The Poem

Hickes (1705-7) made no editorial emendations to the poem itself, as far as one can see, and set out the poem in twenty-nine paragraphs. The dialect in which the rune-names were written is West-Saxon, except for some forms, such as the unusual *wen* (WS *wyn(n)*)\(^{31}\), which may be a Kentish variant. Texts written in this dialect seem to indicate that [y(ː)] had been unrounded and lowered to [e(ː)] by the 10th c. (cf. Campbell, 1959: 122). The spelling of the word *iær* (corrected to *ior*) could be, according to Halsall (1981: 28), a Kentish spelling, since from late Kentish documents it is evident that [e(ː)o] and [i(ː)o] fell together in [i(ː)o] (spelt either *<io>* or *<ia>*). The rest are West-Saxon forms, some showing breaking: *feoh, eoh, eolh, beorc* (as opposed to *fēh, eh, elhx, berc* found in some manuscript lists). There is West-Saxon monophthongization of [ie] to [y] in *gyfu* and *nyd*; late West-Saxon smoothing is shown in *ger* (instead of *gēar*).

Late West-Saxon is the language of the poem. This fact is indicated, among others, by the falling of unstressed vowels to *schwa*, which caused confusion of spelling, as in *frōfur* for *frōfor*, or *oftust* for earlier *oftast*. Other late West-Saxon characteristics displayed here are the use of *<-n>* in final unstressed position instead of *<-m>* mainly in nouns declined as dative plural (*miclun, *

\(^{31}\) In relation to the form *wen*, however, Hempl (1903-4) believes that the scribe wrote *wen* instead of *wyn* under the influence of the preceding *cen*. 

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ungemetun, wyrtrumun, gehwylcum), the use of <y> instead of <i> before <h, c, g> (drihtne), and <i> after a labial consonant and <r> (byþ).

Some exceptions are three possible Kentish forms. Two of them, semannum and beþ, show raising of [æ(:)] to [e(:)] and one, namely brēned, presents unrounding and lowering of [ɣ(:)] to [e(:)] (Campbell, 1959: 288).

For some time, scholars such as Dobbie (1942) believed that the poem should be dated fairly early, in the 8th or 9th c. However, linguistic evidence as mentioned above places the text at least in the latter half of the 10th c.

The OERP shows a stanzaic structure. Each stanza of the poem exhibits a circumlocution of a rune-name running from two to five lines per stanza. The rune-name occurs as the first word in each stanza and functions as its subject, with the exception of stanza number twenty-two (wenne is in the genitive, case governed by the verb bruceþ). Each first half-line exhibits the same pattern, namely: (rune-name) byþ (description of the rune-name). The description is usually formed with a noun or adjective. In this way, the Scandinavian rune poems are similar in structure to the Old English one. In the Old Norwegian Rune Poem the prevailing pattern is: (rune-name) er. In the Old Icelandic text, the same structure is found all the way through: (rune-name) er (kenning) ok (kenning) ok (kenning).^32

In the OERP all stanzas use the copula byþ in the present tense, except for three. One is the Ingb-stanza, where all the verbs are in the past form (waes, gewat,

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^32 Since the Latin gloss and the king-word are only found in one version, they are surely secondary.
ran, nemdun), probably due to the fact that it describes a figure of the past. Other verbs employed in the first line are has (haft, stanza 15) and enjoys (brucep, stanza 8).

Some of the second half-lines in the poem also reveal a pattern consisting of a word for ‘man’ plus either the word gehwylcum or gehwam:

\[ \text{fira gehwylcum (‘to each of men’)} \]
\[ \text{degna gehwylcum (‘to each of thanes’)} \]
\[ \text{and eorla gewam (‘of every noble’)} \]
\[ \text{and wreccna gehwam (‘for all the dispossessed’)} \]

The OERP seems to be a miscellaneous compilation from different kinds of sources in the tradition of riddles and proverbs common in Germanic literature. The use of byp recalls Old English wisdom poetry as the maxims and byp-gnomes recorded in the Exeter Book\(^3\). The poem also shares a lot with vernacular verse riddles.

The poem presents an alliterative pattern marked by the initial sound of the rune-name. It also has three alliterative stresses, one on the rune-name, another in

\(^3\) A division is often made between the byp-maxims and the sceal-maxims, which can be observed in Maxims II (Dobie, 1942: 55-6):

1. 5 wyrd byð swidost. Winter byp cealdost

(‘a fateful event is most swiftly. Winter is the coldest’.)

1. 27 [...]. Fisc sceal on watere
cynren connan. Cyning sceal on healle
beagas dælan.

(‘a fish must bring forth progeny in the water. A king must distribute rings in the hall’.)
the first half-line and the last one on the second half-line as can be seen in the first stanza: *F*eoḥ b*ē*þ *f*rofūr *fīr*a *gēhwylcūm*

This principle does not apply in several stanzas, but in most cases these exceptions to the rule have an explanation. Sometimes this is so because there is a heavier alliteration in the line, or because the primary stress has fallen on the thematically significant verb *sceal* ('must'). Other exceptions are ll. 9, 22, 38 and 39.

Some of the rune-names found in the poem are hapax legomena. Therefore, their meanings are to be elicited from the poem. Besides, the text shows eight runes from the Common Germanic futhark that are unrecorded in the younger sixteen-rune futharks. Their meanings are also to be deduced from the context.

The OERP poet repeatedly uses antithesis to describe various objects. *Hægl*, for example, is a grain when it falls down, but then it is turned into water; *nýl* is oppressive to the heart, but it can help man too. Different aspects of the things represented by the rune-names are also described, as for the yew-tree, which is first seen as a tree, then as firewood; the oak which is food for pigs, and then wood for ships. This is also characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon riddles.

The stanzas of the rune poem resemble riddles. The subjects are often drawn from the world of nature and the poet uses word-play, antithesis, and ambiguity. The rune poem's style and themes are basically Christian.

Intensifiers are located in alliterating position. They are used either to provide alliteration or to fill out a line. Some words functioning as intensifiers are
the prefix *ofer-*, the adverbs *swib- and swybe* (‘very’), *fela* (‘very’), *dearle* (‘grievously’), *miclun* (‘much’):

l. 29 (is) byþ *oferceald*, ungemetum slidor

l. 71 (eþel) byþ *oferleof* æghwylcum men

l. 81 (æsc) byþ *oferheah*, eldum dyre
4.3. The Text

f-stanza

V (feoh) byþ frōfur fira gehwylcum;
sceal ðēah manna gehwylc miclun hyt dālan,
gyf hē wile for Drihtne dōmes hlēotan\textsuperscript{34}.

Wealth is a benefit to all men;
yet every man must share it freely,
if he wishes to gain glory before the Lord.

As in most first lines, the main verb is the copula byþ (third person singular present of beon). Sceal (third person singular present indicative of sculan ('must, have to') is a typical feature of the sceal-gnomes.

The Christian context is highlighted by the use of the terms Drihtne ‘the Lord’, and of dōmes, genitive singular of dōm, a word which has the meaning ‘glory, honour (of a hero)’ in a secular context and ‘doom, judgement (of god), justice’ (as in Dōmesdæg ‘Judgement Day’) in a religious sense. The Christian character of the text makes the meaning ‘(good) justice’ preferable against Halsall’s ‘glory’: “if he wishes to obtain (good) justice before/from the Lord”.

\textsuperscript{34} The text and the English translation of the OERP are taken from Halsall’s edition (1981).
Throughout the poem there are many similarities with the Scandinavian rune poems. The first connection is established in the first line of this stanza: ‘wealth is a benefit to all men’ is similar to a kenning in the Old Icelandic text: *fyrða gaman* ‘(fē is) man’s joy/delight’. Dickins (1915) translates OE *frōfur* as ‘comfort’, whereas Halsall (1981) chooses ‘benefit’. Nonetheless, taking into consideration the similitude with the Old Icelandic poem, it could perhaps be more appropriate to translate that term as ‘joy/delight’.

Although the meaning usually attributed to OE *feoh* is ‘cattle’, at least in the OERP the more suitable meaning appears to be ‘wealth’. Whereas the Old Norwegian and Old Icelandic rune poems depict *fé* (‘gold, wealth’) as a cause of discord and distress among kinsmen, the OERP concentrates on the Christian idea of distributing wealth among men. Earthly wealth, according to the text, has to be viewed as worthless. Although the *Old Swedish Rune Poem* does not provide any Christian allusion in this same stanza, it resembles the text of the OERP in viewing wealth from a positive perspective.

### u-stanza

\[ (ūr) byþ ammōd \] and oserhyrned,

felafrēcne dēor — feohtēp mid hornum —
māre mōrstapa; þæt is mōdīg wuht!

The aurochs is courageous and has huge horns,

a very fierce beast – it fights with its horns –
a notorious moor-stalker; that is a brave creature!

The name of the u-rune in the poem is ār. This word is a *hapax legomenon* in Old English and thus, it is not to be found outside the rune poem. The meaning seems to be ‘aurochs’. The reconstruction of the Germanic name is based on this stanza. In the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* the name ār means ‘rain’, in the Old Norwegian metaphorically ‘rain (of sparks)’, and in the Old Swedish text ‘bad weather’ (which should perhaps rather be emended to ‘rain’).

The compound *oferhynned* is not attested in Old English. Hickes (1705-7) rendered it as two separate words *ofer hyrned*. Most editors translate the term as ‘having horns above’ (Clark Hall, 1960). Halsall (1981: 106), however, following Dickins (1915), takes *ofer* as an intensifier and translates it as ‘has/having huge horns’. The word *mörstapa* ‘traverser of moors’ (Clark Hall, 1960) is also unrecorded in Old English outside this text. It probably refers to the way aurochs lived in the forest.

**Þ-stanza**

Þ (þorn) byþ þearle scearp, þegna gehwylcum
anfengys yfyl, ungemetun rēpe
manna gehwylcum ðe him mid restēð.

The thorn is extremely sharp, painful
for any warrior to grasp, immeasurably fierce
to any man who rests among them.

Hickes renders the rune-name ðorn (OE þorn ‘thorn’). In the Scandinavian poems, the name of the þ-rune is þurs ‘giant’. There is scholarly acceptance that the Scandinavian tradition is more original and that the Old English name has been modified. The change in the OERP is believed to have been due to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity and pursuant attempts to take away references to Germanic paganism. Both thorns and giants are seen as negative elements for men, causing human pain.

As for the morphology, the word anfengys poses some problems. Hickes (1705-7) renders it as anfen-gys. Most editors read it as two separate words (anfeng ‘receiving, taking’ and is ‘is’) and translate them as ‘taking is’. However, Halsall (1981: 108) interprets it as a single word in the genitive singular anfengys.

o-stanza

F (ōs) byþ ordfruma ælcre spræce,

wísdomes wraþu and witenæ frófur

and corla gehwām ādnych and tōhiht.

The mouth is the source of every utterance,

the support of wisdom and a comfort to wise men

and the joy and delight of every noble.
The meaning provided in the Icelandic poem is 'god', since it clearly refers to the god Óðinn. In the Norwegian text as in the Swedish one, however, the sense is 'river mouth' (a homonym). The meaning of the Old English rune-name is uncertain. Several scholars have maintained that òs as found in the OERP retains its original Germanic reference to Woden as a source of speech. But many others (among them Dickins (1915), Kemble (1840) and Halsall (1981)), share the view that òs should be translated as 'mouth'. They suggest that the introduction of Christianity in England had affected its meaning by eliminating any pagan nuance of this word. And so, the author of the Anglo-Saxon runic poem would have replaced the Germanic word òs meaning 'god' by the homonym Latin word òs meaning 'mouth'.

There is no apparent reason to justify the transfer of meaning between two unrelated languages (i.e. Latin and Old English). It would be more reasonable to think that the OE òs was influenced by the Old Norse homonym óss, which means 'mouth', although more specifically, 'river mouth'. In this sense, the author of the OERP would need to have been acquainted with the Old Norwegian runic tradition. This would support a thesis that the Anglo-Saxon poem sometimes is dependent on the Scandinavian tradition of the rune poems.

r-stanza

R (råd) byþ on recyde rinca gehwylecum
sēfte, and swþhwæt ðâm ðe sitteþ onufan
mēare mægenheardum ofer mǐlpaþas.
Riding is easy for warriors sitting in the hall,
and very strenuous for one who bestrides
a powerful horse travelling the long roads.

Hickes adds the rune-name rād, which in Old English means ‘riding’, and thus coincides with the meaning of the r-rune in the Scandinavian poems. In this stanza, the otherwise unrecorded milpāpas (Hickes’ mil pāpas) appears to mean ‘mile-paths’ referring probably to long riding journeys. Some scholars have stressed the antithesis between the adjectives sefte and swiðhwæt describing ‘riding’. It has to be stressed, however, that line 1 does not seem to conform to the riding context. There may have been some confusion here with OE rād/rād ‘deliberation, advice, counsel’: “deliberation/counsel is easy for warriors sitting in the hall”.

c-stanza

\( (\text{en}) \) byð cwicera gehwām cūþ on fyre,
blāc and beorhtfīc; byrneþ oftust
ðær hī æpelingas inne restaþ.

The torch is known to all the living by its flame,
shining and bright; most often it burns
inside where princes sit at ease.
The poet uses the ᚶ rune and does not make a distinction between velar and affricate allophones represented by the epigraphical runes ᚴ and ᚶ respectively.

The name cēn as included by Hickes is not otherwise recorded in Old English. Most editors, taking into consideration the context of the stanza, give it the meaning ‘torch’ corroborated by OHG chien, chen, ken perhaps meaning ‘torch of pine-wood’, glossing Lat facula (Page, 1999a). In this stanza, the Old English poems differs with respect to the Scandinavian poems (ON kaun ‘ulcer’). However, it is obvious that there is some resemblance between both descriptions, at least in terms of their burning.

g-stanza

ᚶ (gyfu) gumena byþ       gleng and herenys
wræþu and wyrþscype;       and wræcna gehwām
ār and ætwist,        ðe byþ ọþra léeas

Generosity is a grace in men of position and deserving of praise,
a prop to their honour; and for all the dispossessed
it is a help and a means of survival, when they have no other.

The rune-name attached to the g-stanza is gyfu, which probably means ‘generosity’ in terms of giving and receiving rather than simply ‘gift, giving’. Again the poet makes no distinction between the velar spirant allophone of /g/
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represented by the epigraphical rune \( \text{ᚠ} \) and the palatal spirant \( \text{ᚢ} \). The \( \text{ᚠ} \)-rune was lost in Scandinavia during the transition to the sixteen-rune futhark, so there is nothing corresponding to this stanza in the Scandinavian poems.

\[ \text{w-stanza} \]

\[ (\text{wen})^{35} \ne \text{brüceþ} \quad \text{ðe can wēana lýt,} \]
\[ \text{sāres and sorge,} \quad \text{and him sylfa hæþ} \]
\[ \text{blæd and blysse} \quad \text{and ēac byrga geniht.} \]

Joy he experiences who knows little of woes,
of pain or sorrow, and has for his own
prosperity and happiness and also the contentment belonging to fortified communities.

Halsall (1981) believes that the word \( \text{ne} \) is a suffix to be added to the rune \( \text{Þne} \) in order to make up the genitive form \( \text{wenne} \) (the rune-name attached to this line is \( \text{wen} \), perhaps for WS \( \text{wyn} \) ‘joy, pleasure, delight’). This could be possible, mainly because the use of concept runes was fairly common in Old English manuscripts (cf. chapter II).

\[ ^{35} \text{Halsall (1981: 116) renders} \text{ wyn instead of} \text{ wen as it appears in the poem because, according to her, the latter spelling may lead to confusion with the near-homonym} \text{ wēn} \text{ ‘hope’.} \]
Halsall (1981: 118) corrects (probably rightly) Hickes' forge (demanded by the alliteration in the line) to sorge. This stanza has no counterpart in the Scandinavian poems, since this rune did not appear in the sixteen-rune futhark.

**h-stanza**

\[\text{N (hægl) byþ hwïtust cornæ;}\quad \text{hwyrf hit of heofones lyfte,}\]

\[\text{wealcaþ hit windes scïra;}\quad \text{weorþþ hit tõ wætere syðdan.}\]

Hail is the whitest of grains; it whirls down from heaven's height, and gusts of wind toss it about; then it is transformed to water.

This is one of the stanzas with hypermetric lines diverging from the structure characteristic of most of the poem.

The name of the h-rune is hægl 'hail', as in the Scandinavian poems (ON hagl). The OERP deviates from the others in that, despite the fact that hail is related to grain, in this case it is 'the whitest' (hwïtust cornæ), whereas in the other two Scandinavian poems it is 'the coldest' (kaldæstr kornæ). The metrical form has probably had an influence in the choice of the word, since hwïtust takes part in the alliteration of the line in the OERP, and kaldæstr takes part in the alliteration of the line in the Scandinavian poems. The analogy between hail and grain occurs not only in the rune poems, but also in the Seafarer, ll. 32, 33:

\[\ldots; \text{hægl feol on eorþan} \]

\[\text{corna caldast}\]
(‘[...] ; hail fell on the earth, the coldest of grains’) (my translation)

The word hwrft for hwyrfeb shows syncopation and assimilation. A late
West-Saxon feature is the monophthongization of <y> for earlier <ie>.

n-stanza

† (nýd) byþ nearu on brœostan;  weorþep hī ðēah oft niþa bearum
  tō helpe and tō hæle gehwæþre,  gif hī his hlystæþ ðæor.

Hardship oppresses the heart; yet nonetheless often it is transformed for the
sons of men
to a source of help and salvation, if only they heed it in time.

The name assigned to the n-rune in this stanza is nýd ‘need, hardship,
constraint’. There is agreement then with the other rune poems (ON nauð ‘need’).
The Christian element introduced in this stanza is not present in the Scandinavian
texts.

l-stanza

l (îs) byþ oferceald,  ungemetum slidor;
  glisnæþ glæshlūttur  gimmum gelīcust;
  flōr forste geworht,  fæger ansýne.

Ice is extremely cold and immeasurably slippery;
it glitters clear as glass, very like jewels;
it is a floor wrought by the frost, fair to behold.

The rune-name Ís ('ice') is also employed in the other poems (ON Íss),
even though in the OERP the bridge image has not been employed, although the
last line ('floor wrought by the frost') resembles the line in the Scandinavian
poems in viewing ice as a wide frozen area. The poet stresses the beauty and
coldness of ice.

j-stanza

† (gēr) byþ gumena hiht, ðon God lætep,
hālig heofones cyning, hrūsan syllan
beorhte blēda beornum and ðearfum.

Harvest is a joy to men, when God,
the holy king of heaven, makes the earth bring forth
bright fruits for rich and poor alike.

The name of the j-rune (OE gēr) refers to the fruitful months of the year,
probably to the harvest season and not to the entire year in both the Old English
and the Scandinavian poems. A parallel appears in Maxims I: hærfest
hresadegost, hæluðum bringed | geres wæs mas, þa þe him god sendeð (Shippey,
1976: 76), that is, ‘the harvest is the happiest time, when fruits are brought to men, given to them by God’ (my translation).

The expression beornum and dearfum (‘for rich and poor’) refers to the Christian thought of the omnipotence and omnipresence of God.

**eo-stanza**

.assertNotNull(\n(êoh) byþ útan unsmêþe trêow,

heard hrûsan fæst, hyrde fîres,

wytrumun underwreþyd, wynan on êþle.

The yew is a tree with rough bark,

hard and firm in the earth, a keeper of flame,

well-supported by its roots, a pleasure to have on one’s land.

The name of this rune is êoh and it is described as a tree (probably a yew-tree) in this poem. In the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* the cognate word yîr means ‘bow’, whereas in the Old Norwegian poem it apparently designates ‘yew-tree’.

It is difficult to know whether wynan (wynan on êþle) stands for two words, namely, wyn and on, or as von Grienberger (1921: 211) states, wynan, an adverbial in the dative plural (*wynnum*) meaning ‘pleasant’.

**p-stanza**

 assertNotNull(\n(pearð) byþ symble plega and hlehter
wlancum ......  ðær wigan sittan
on bèorsele     blīpe ætsomne.

A table-game is always a source of recreation and amusement
to proud ......, where warriors sit
happily together in the mead-hall.

The form of the p-rune given by Hickes (1705-7) is uncommon and differs
from the more familiar L, found in some riddles, in Solomon and Saturn, and also
in the other Anglo-Saxon runic alphabets as, for example, the one in MS.
Domitian A 9 and in the Vienna manuscript.

This word is a hapax legomenon with unknown meaning. The context of
the stanza does not allow for a convincing postulation for the word. However,
different interpretations have been proposed: a game, a dance, etc. Whatever the
solution of this stanza may be, it is clear that it is something that produces
amusement. Halsall’s solution as ‘table game’ cannot be confirmed. This rune and
its name are absent from the Scandinavian futhark.

From a metrical point of view, this stanza is defective. According to
Halsall (1981: 128), this fact may indicate that the author did not understand the
rune-name.

Wlancum [...] is an incomplete line. Some authors supply a noun (von
Grienberger, 1921: 211) werum ‘men’, Dobbie (1942: 156) and wīsum ‘and the
Halsall (1981: 129) does not make any emendation and leaves it as rendered by Hickes (1705-7).

**x-stanza**

\[\gamma (eohlx) secg eard hæsf \quad \text{oftust on fenne,} \]
\[wexed on nature; \quad \text{wundægrimme,} \]
\[blöde bréneð \quad \text{beorna gehwylcne} \]
\[ðæ him ænigne \quad \text{onfeng gedēð.} \]

Elk-sedge usually dwells in a marsh,
growing in the water; it gives grievous wounds,
staining with blood every man

who lays a hand on it.

This is one of the four-line stanzas in the poem. The name given by Hickes to this rune is *eolhx*. The Old Norse name for the \(\zeta\) (\(\text{r}\)) rune is \(yr\) ‘yew-tree, bow’, which is related etymologically to Anglo-Saxon *éoh*, but not to *eolhx*. Many different meanings for the rune-name have been put forward, but none of them are convincing. The word *eolhx* is taken by all commentators as the first element of a compound noun *eolhxsecg*, which appears in some Old English glosses as Latin *papiluus* (‘papyrus’ or ‘water-reed’). Halsall (1981: 130) emends Hickes’ *eolhx seccard hæsf* to *eolhssecg eard hæsf* ‘elk-sedge has its dwelling’. Page (1999a: 71) suggests that the rune-name may have been originally *eolh*, to which was added
<x>, value assigned to this rune in the manuscripts. If this theory were true, it would demonstrate that the poet was unfamiliar with this graph’s name. ‘Elksedge’ is so far the most convincing solution taking into consideration the meaning of the first line, and the first part in the second line. However, the rest of the poem seems to fit better the þ-stanza. The last lines could be misplaced þorn-lines: “a thorn gives grievous wounds staining with blood every man who lays a hand on it”.

**s-stanza**

\[ ð (sigel) sēmannum symble biþ on hihte, ðoðn hī hine feriaþ ofer fisces beþ, oþ hī brimhengest bringeþ tō lande. \]

The sun is always a source of hope to seafarers,
when they row the sea-steed over the fish’s bath,
until it brings them to land.

Hickes calls this s-rune *sigel* (OE ‘sun’), which is also the name adscribed to this rune in the Scandinavian poems (ON sól). However, the common word for ‘sun’ in Old English is not *sigel* but *sunne*. The fact that the rune-name is described in a seafaring context and that there is a similar word in Old English (*segl* meaning ‘sail’) has led some authors (cf. Nicolson, 1982) to believe that the intended word was ‘sail’ instead of ‘sun’. This thesis seems entirely possible,
specially taking into consideration that the rune-name is a later addition by Hickes based on antiquarian runic knowledge. The key to the solution of the riddle must be found within the poem, and ‘sail’ seems to work well (contrasted then with the hard task of rowing).

It could also be maintained that *sigel* does not mean ‘sun’ in this poem, because then it would be expected to be described in a Christian context. The association of Christ and the sun is a recurrent theme in the Old English literature.

One example is the sun-riddle of the *Exeter Book*:

*Mec gesette soð sigora waldend,*
*Crist to compe. Oft ic cwice bærne
Unrimu cyn eorþan getenge,*
*Næte mid niþe, swa ic him no hrine,*
*Donne mec min frea feohtan hateþ.*
*Hwílum ic monigra mod arete;*
*Hwílum ic frefre þa ic ær winne on
Feorræn swipe – hi þæs felad þeah
Swylce þæs oþres, þonnes ic eft hyra*
*Ofer deop gedreag drohtaþ bete.*

(Williamson, 1977: 71)

(‘Christ, the commander, the true lord of victories, ordained me for conflict. I burnt the living, Unnumbered mortals, over all the earth.”)
I afflict them with pain, yet never I touch them,
whenever my lord bids me to battle.
Sometimes I gladden the minds of many;
sometimes I comfort those I make war on,
even from afar. They feel it, nonetheless,
the hurt and the healing, when now and again,
over deep tribulation, I better their fortunes’

(Baum, 1963: 19)

The sun is often assigned a two-fold quality: it is both comfort and scourge to mankind. In the Exeter Book riddle, the sun is personified as a warrior under the Lord’s command. The correspondence between Christ and the sun seems to derive from the Bible (Malachi iv: 2): “for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings”.

t-stanza
† (Tîr) bîp tācna sum; healdeð trŷwa wel
wiþ æþelingas; ā bîp on faerylde
ofer nihta genipu; næfre swîcep.

Tîr is one of the guiding signs; it keeps faith well
with princes; always it holds its course
above the night-clouds; it never fails.
The name of the t-rune in the OERP is Tīr. In the Scandinavian poems the name is however Týr ‘the god Týr’. In Norse mythology this god became a war-god, son of Ódinn, and it is in this way the name is employed in the Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian poems. This name has also been identified with the Latin god Mars due mainly to the rune’s shape and the association of both names with a war-god (cf. Roman dies Martis for Old English Tiwesdæg). The Old English name equivalent to ON Týr is, however, not tir (which is a common noun in Old English meaning ‘glory, honour’), but OE Tiw. If the intended solution to the stanza is Tiw, then Hickes was perhaps mislead by manuscripts were the rune-name is recorded probably erroneously as tir, ti.

In her edition, Halsall (1981) maintains that the meaning assigned to the rune-name seems to be that of a guiding planet or star rather than the name of a Germanic god as found in the Scandinavian poems. She translates bip tācna sum as “one of the guiding signs”, but she actually adds the word “guiding” in her translation (it literally reads “one of the signs”). In this same line, Osborn (2003) claims that Tīr in the OERP refers to the planet Mars, but to Mars as a navigational planet only, not a god, a reference which has no specific occult significance: “the Tir stanza [...] provides one more example of the way that this Anglo-Saxon poet, like others, “decontaminates” his cultural artefact, [...], by systematically erasing references to pagan belief (9).”

If Halsall’s translation of the first half-line is emended, then “one of the signs” could refer to the runic graph itself, as a way of introducing the rest of the stanza. From the content of the next two half-lines (“it keeps faith well with
princess”) it seems that Tīr provides battle-aid to the warriors and so could be related to the war god. And if in the final lines the rune-name points to the planet Mars, which is traditionally equated to Tyr/Týw, then it is probable that the intended rune-name was Tīw and not tīr.

**b-stanza**

 bọn blēda lēas; berep efne swā ðēah

tānas būtan tūdder; bip on telgum wlitig,

hēah on helme, hrysted fægere;

geloden lēafum, lyfte getenge.

The birch has no fruit; nonetheless it bears shoots without seed; it is beautiful in its branches, high of crown, fairly adorned; tall and leafy, it reaches up to touch the sky.

The name of the b-rune is beorc ‘birch-tree’. The rune-name (ON bjarkan) is described in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem as the greenest of trees, in the Old Icelandic text as a leafy bough, and in the OERP it is simply depicted as a tree with no fruits.

Halsall (1981: 139) emends Hickes’ peah (‘though’) to hēah (‘high’), which seems to fit better in the description of the tree. The expression geloden lēafum ‘grow tall and leafy’ has been translated in different ways with emendation
of *geloden* (past participle of *lēodan* ‘to grow, to spring up’) to *gehloðen* (past participle of *hλadn* ‘to load’). Nonetheless, there seems to be no apparent reason for this emendation.

**e-stanza**

M (eh) byð for eorlum æþelinga wyn,

hors hōfum wlanc, ðār him hæcþas ymb,

welege on wicgum, wrixlaþ spræce;

and bǐþ unstyllum æfre frōfur.

The steed is the joy of princes in noble company,

the charger proud in its hoofs, when warriors,

prosperous ones on horseback, discuss its points;

and to the restless it always proves a remedy.

This rune-name is not part of the Scandinavian futharks and is, therefore, absent in the other poems. In the OERP it is called *eh* (showing Anglian smoothing). Its meaning is ‘horse’. The use of synonyms for ‘horse’ (*eh, hors, wicg*) in the stanza is to be highlighted.

**m-stanza**

M (man) byþ on myrgþe his māgan lēof;

secal þēah ānra gehwylc òðrum swīcan,
for ðām Dryhten wyle  dōme sīne
þæt earme flæsc  eorþan beþæcan.

Man rejoicing in life is cherished by his kinsmen;
yet everyone must betray his fellow,
because the Lord purposes by his decree
to commit the wretched human body to the earth.

The name and meaning of the Old English m-rune man (‘man, human being’) corresponds to the one offered in the other rune poems (ON maðr). The stanza also connects man with death (cf. Old Norse and Old Icelandic texts: moldar-auki [or moldarauki] ‘earth’s dust’). A Christian reference to God is also provided.

l-stanza
Γ (lagu) byþ leðum  langsum gebuht,
  gif hī sculun nēþun  on nacan tealtum,
  and hī sāþpa  swýþe brēgap,
  amd se brimhengest  brīþles ne gýmeþ.

Water seems interminable to men,
if they are obliged to venture out in a tossing vessel,
and the sea-billows terrify them exceedingly,
and the sea-steed will not respond to the bridle.

Hickes provides *lagu* ‘water, sea’ as the name of the l-rune. The content of the line makes the meaning ‘sea’ preferable, since it is related to seamen. In the Scandinavian poems, the more general meaning ‘water’ (ON *logr*) seems to be used.

Halsall (1981: 145) emends Hickes’ *sæ ypha* to *sæypha* and *brim hengest* to *brimhengest* ‘sea-horse’, that is, ‘ship’.

The *r*-stanz

\[ (Ing) \text{wæs ærest } \text{mid East-Denum} \]

\[ \text{gesewen secgon, } \text{ðæ } \text{hē siðdan ēst} \]

\[ \text{ofer wæg gewāt; wæn æfter ran;} \]

\[ ðus heardingas ðone hæle nemdun. \]

Ing among the East-Danes was first

beheld by men, until that later time when to the east

he made his departure over the wave, followed by his chariot;

that was the name those stern warriors gave to the hero.

The name of the *r*-rune in the OERP is *Ing*. The rune-name *Ing* seems to be related to the pre-Christian hero of the same name. The only other appearance
of this word in Old English is as part of the compound *Ingwine* (‘friends of Ing’), an epithet for the Danes in *Beowulf* (Halsall, 1981: 146).

The noun *heardingas* appears in the text as a common noun meaning ‘warriors, heroes’. This rune was not used in the Scandinavian futharks.

**œ-stanza**

🔗 *(ēpel) byþ oferlēof* æghwylcum men,

*gif he mōt ūr rihtes* and gerysena on

brūcan on bolde blēadum oflast.

The family land is very dear to every man,

provided that there in his own house he may enjoy
everything that is right and proper in constant prosperity.

The œ-rune is a new creation in the Anglo-Saxon futhorc and it is, therefore, not part of the Scandinavian poems. Hickes provides the rune-name *ēpel*, which is a common Old English noun meaning ‘inherited estate’ or ‘homeland’. It is often found as a concept rune in Old English texts, as for example *Beowulf* (cf. Senra Silva, 1998).

Hickes’ (1705-7) *ofer lēof* (‘very dear’) is usually emended to *oferlēof*. *Rihter and gerysena* is also changed to *rihtes and gerysena* (‘what is right and proper’).
d-stanza

H (dæg) byþ Drihtnes sond, dēore mannum,

mære Metodes lēoh,          myrgþ and tōhiht

ēadgum and earnum,           eallum brīce.

Day is sent by the Lord, beloved by mankind,

the glorious light of the Creator, a source of joy and hope

to the haves and have-nots, of benefit to everyone.

This is another rune not part of the Scandinavian futharks. In the OERP, the d-rune is called dæg ‘day’.

This stanza is connected to Christian beliefs. Some words for God are used: Drihtnes ‘the Lord’s’, Metodes, an epithet of God as creator. Ėadgum and earnum (‘to the haves and the have-nots’) is another Christian phrase parallel to the previous gumena and wraecnæa (g-stanza) and beornum and dearfum (j-stanza).

a-stanza

F (āc) byþ on eorpan      elda bearnum

flæsces fōdor;           fērēp gelōme

ōfer ganotes bæþ;        – garsecg fandēþ

hwēþer āc hæbbe            ðæpel trēowe
The oak nourishes meat on the land
for the children of men; often it travels
over the gannet’s bath – the stormy sea tests
whether the oak keeps faith nobly.

 Aç (‘oak-tree’) is a distinctive Old English name. The rune is a new creation in Old English and is therefore not part of the Scandinavian futharks, and thus not to be found in the other rune poems. The oak is described according to its usefulness as food for animals and wood for ships. There are versions of the oak-riddle both in Latin and in other European languages. This stanza in the rune poem demonstrates that the oak-riddle was clearly known in England at the time the poem was written down.

Another kenning for ‘sea’ is found in this stanza: ganotes bæp ‘gannet’s bath’.

æ-stanza

F (æsc) biþ oferhēah, eldum dýre,
stīþ on stāpule; stede rihte hylt,
dēþah him feohtan on fīras monige.

The ash is extremely tall, precious to mankind,
strong on its base; it holds its ground as it should,

36 For a study of these versions, see Sorrell (1990).
although many men attack it.

The name of the æ-rune is æsc ‘ash-tree’. This stanza shares some similarities with the previous one in that it also describes a tree. But here the poet also uses metonymy to picture the ash-tree as wood to make weapons. The last line makes reference to attacking other people armed with weapons (spears) with ash shafts.

γ-stanza

\( \lambda (\gamma) \) byþ æþelinga and eorla gehwæs

wyn and wyrþmynd; byþ on wiege fæger,

fæstlic on færelde, fyrdgeatwa sum.

The bow is a pleasure and brings honour
to all princes and nobles; it looks fine on a steed,
is reliable on a journey, a kind of army-gear.

The name given to this rune is γr. This word is a hapax in Old English and its meaning is uncertain, perhaps ‘bow’.

37 The bow is described in the Exeter Book Riddle 24:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Agof is min noma} & \quad \text{eft onhwyrfed.} \\
\text{Ic eom wrætlíc wiht} & \quad \text{on gewin sceapan.} \\
\text{pronne ic onhüge} & \quad \text{ond mē of bösume fareð} \\
\text{aēren onga,} & \quad \text{ic bēom eallgearo,} \\
\text{Uuob is my name} & \quad \text{read in reverse.} \\
\text{I'm a beautiful thing, shaped for fighting.} & \quad \text{Whenever I am bent and there flies from my bosom} \\
\text{the poisonous dart} & \quad \text{I am eager.}
\end{align*} \]
rune did not have a name initially in Old English since it was a new creation in the 
futhorc. Due to its resemblance to the Old Norse rune yr with the meaning ‘yew-
bow’ in the Old Icelandic Rune Poem (‘yew-tree’ in the Old Norwegian 
counterpart), this meaning could have been transmitted to Old English.

io-stanza

† ( iar) by þ ēafixa; and ðēah ē brūceþ

föders on foldan; hafþ fægerne eard,

wætre beworpen, ðār hē wynnum leofþ.

The ccl belongs to the river-fish; and yet it always takes

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{þæt ic mē} & \quad \text{þæt feorhbealo} \quad \text{fær āswepe.} \\
\text{Sīþan mē sē waldend, sē mē þæt wite gescōp,} \\
\text{leopō forlēteō, ic bēo lengre ēonne ēr,} \\
\text{ophþæt ic spēēe, spilde geblonden,} \\
\text{Ealfelo āttor} & \quad \text{þæt ic ēr[or] gēap.} \\
\text{Ne tōgongeō þæs} & \quad \text{gumena hwylcum} \\
\text{āēnigum ēape} & \quad \text{þæt ic þēr ymb sprice,} \\
\text{gif hine hrīned} & \quad \text{þæt mē of hrīfe flēgeō,} \\
\text{þæt þone māndrinc} & \quad \text{maigne gecēapaþ} \\
\text{fuller fæste} & \quad \text{feøre sine.} \\
\text{Nelle ic unbunden} & \quad \text{āēnigum hyrān} \\
\text{nymþe searosēled.} & \quad \text{Saga hwæt ic hātte.}
\end{align*}
\]

to drive afar off the deadly bale. 
Whenever my master who shaped me that pain 
loosens my limb I am longer than before, 
till I spit forth again the death-blended bane, 
that very fell poison which erst I sawollowed. 
this that I speak of leaves no man easily 
if that which flies from me should ever touch him, 
so that perforce he purchases surely with his life 
that fatal drink, a full atonement. 
Unstrung I obey no man, but only 
when skilfully tied. Tell me my name.

(Tupper, 1910: 18)

The first word agof is the clue to the riddle. If the letters are inverted, the Old English term foga (≥ boga) ‘bow’ turns up.
its food on land; it has a beautiful dwelling-place,
surrounded by water, where it lives in delight.

The io-rune has an uncertain meaning and origin. It has nothing to do with
the transitional Old Norse rune ᛖ transliterated A\textsuperscript{38}. Keller (1936: 148) explains
the name īar/īor as a modification of ON ār (< *jár). Hickes (1705-7) renders the
name iar with io written above it, either as to correct the name or to indicate two
variant forms of the rune-name, īar and īor. This word is a *hapax legomenon in
Old English. According to the context, the meaning required here could be a sort
of fish, maybe an eel.

von Grienberger (1921: 220) emends Hickes' ēa fx (‘river fish’) to ēafixa
and translates it as ‘of or belonging to the river-fish’. Dobbie (1942: 160),
however, prefers to emend it to the nominative singular ēafix (‘riverfish’). The
emendation does not seem to be necessary, because regardless of the phrase, the
line clearly points to a river fish.

Osborn and Longland (1980) argue that the rune-name īar is a Celtic
intruder in the rune poem. According to these authors, īar is a common Celtic
word meaning ‘small brown animal’, and is usually employed to refer to a rodent.
The rune poem states that īar is a river-fish and not a rodent, but interestingly
enough the Church designated the beaver as a fish and so edible during Lent.

\textsuperscript{38} Scandinavian transitional runes are those belonging to ca. 500-700/800 A.D. As it has
already been explained, during this time span a good number of phonetic changes took
place in the language. For example, with the loss of initial /j/ the *jāra-rune became the
*āra-rune (ON ār) and several forms of the ā-rune could be used to represent /a(:)/ (cf.
Knirk, 2002).
Osborn and Longland (1980) suggest then that the animal described in this stanza is a beaver. But this solution lacks a philological basis in Old English.

**ea-stanza**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Y (ēar) byþ egle} & \quad \text{corla gehwylcun}, \\
\text{ðonn fæstlice} & \quad \text{flæsc onginneþ} \\
\text{hræw cōlian,} & \quad \text{hrūsan cēosan} \\
\text{blāc tō gebeddan; blēda gedrēosaþ,} & \\
\text{wynna gewītaþ,} & \quad \text{phere geswīcaþ.}
\end{align*}
\]

Earth is loathsome to every man,
when irresistibly the flesh,
the dead body begins to grow cold,
the livid one to choose earth as its bedfellow;
fruits fail, joys vanish, man-made covenants are broken.

There is no agreement on the significance of the ea-rune whose name appears in the OERP as ēar, transliterated as <ea>. It is an innovation in the Old English futhorc and cannot, therefore, be found in the other poems. Thus the meaning of this rune-name has to be elicited from the context of the Old English stanza. Most editors explain the etymology of the word as a cognate with ON aurr ‘clay, loam’. Then ēar in the present context would mean ‘ground, earth’ with
special reference to a grave. The meaning of the Old English word ēar 'sea or ocean' does not fit in this context.

The OERP causes difficulties of interpretation. As has already been stated, it is now known that the rune-names as added by Hickes were not part of the original text, and may reflect "modern" antiquarian knowledge of runic nomenclature (which, it has to be remembered, often appears to be distorted and confused). Hickes' direct source may have been a futhorc in MS. Domitian A 9 4to. Most editors forget this fact and have tried to solve the riddles by using the rune-name as a key to the solution (as for ðs). They sometimes also rely on the name in the Scandinavian poems, and this is sometimes erroneous, as may perhaps be the case concerning sigel.

There are signs that may indicate that the change in the meaning of some rune-names, as for example the name of the ð-rune, with respect to the other rune poems could have been performed consciously in an attempt to make it the product of a Christian world.

Some rune-names present special difficulties, mainly because they are unknown words in Old English. Unfortunately, there is lack of either earlier or later sources which could confirm or dismiss possible meanings. The material at hand is too scarce or even non-existent. There is no problem with names which are common Old English words and whose names are well attested. It is the case of, for example, feoh, hægel or daeg. Others can be hapax legomena (cf. peorð, eolx) and the meaning of the stanza is then elusive.
The study of the rune-names shows that sometimes there are thematic connections with the Scandinavian poems. The rune-name \textit{feoh} ‘wealth’ shows agreement both in the word and the meaning with the other poems. This is not the case of the rune-name \textit{ūr}, which in the OERP apparently means ‘aurochs’, whereas in the Scandinavian poems it means ‘rain’. As for the \textit{þ}-rune, it is a different word in the OERP. Whereas in this poem the recorded word is \textit{born} ‘thorn’, in the Scandinavian poems it is \textit{burs} ‘giant’. Scholars have often supported the idea that the change in meaning was deliberate. It has also been traditionally accepted that the rune-name \textit{ōs} could have been equated to the Latin word with the same meaning and spelling. But another possibility is that the name may have kept the meaning of the same rune in the Old Norwegian poem, but more restricted to simply ‘mouth’. In the \textit{r}-stanza, the two Old English words, namely \textit{rād} as ‘riding’ and \textit{rād/rād} as ‘deliberation’, seem to have been employed. \textit{Cēn} is an otherwise unknown word in Old English. It is thus impossible to determine its meaning with certainty, although a meaning ‘torch’ could be deduced from the context. \textit{Gyfu} is an Old English word meaning ‘gift’, but in the poem it may refer more specifically to ‘generosity’. \textit{Wynn} means ‘joy’. The rune-names \textit{hægl}, \textit{nýd}, and \textit{ōs} with the meanings ‘hail’, ‘constraint’ and ‘ice’ respectively are supported by the Scandinavian \textit{hagal}, \textit{naud} and \textit{iss}. \textit{Gēr} has identical meaning to the Old Norse cognate \textit{ár}, namely, ‘good year’ in relation to abundance of crops and fertility. As for \textit{ēoh}, although not found in the Scandinavian poems, has an Old Norse cognate \textit{yr}, which corresponds to the meaning ‘yew-tree’. The definition of the rune-name \textit{peord} is not clear at all. This
together with the fact that it is a *hapax* in Old English makes it impossible to know its meaning. The same pertains to *eolhx*. Editors have often translated *sigel* as ‘sun’, probably based on the meaning of this rune-name in the Scandinavian poems. However, taking into consideration the content of the stanza, the reading ‘sail’ (OE *segel*) seems also possible. The study of the *ē*-stanza reveals that *Tīr* in the OERP most likely means ‘the god Tīw’ (< ON *Týr* ‘the god Týr’). The word *Tīr* as rendered by Hickes is quite possibly a mistake for *Tīw*. Halsall (1981) makes a free translation of the first half-line ‘one of the guiding planets’ when the actual reading is ‘one of the signs’, which could refer to the runic graph itself. The following line seems to describe the rune-name as the war-god. According to Osborn (2003), the last lines describe Mars as the planet. But since Mars is often equated to *Tīw/Týr*, then the underlying meaning is presumable the name of the god. *Beorc* is described as a tree which could well be a birch. The meanings of the rune-names *eh*, *man* and *lagu* are unproblematic, since the content of the stanzas coincide with the meaning of these words in Old English. *Ing* is apparently the name of a hero. *Deeg* and *ēpel* are well-known words in the language. As for *āc* and *æsc* they clearly describe different types of trees. Taking into consideration the sound-values, the solutions seem to be justified. *Ŷr* has an elusive meaning, but it probably means ‘bow’ being linked to the Old Norse *ýr* ‘bow’ in the Old Norwegian text. Finally the meanings of *ēar* and *ēar* are problematic and unknown.
IV. LATE SOURCES OF THE RUNE-NAMES
Late records of the rune-names have to be sought exclusively in Scandinavia since the runic tradition lasted longer in the North. Works with obvious knowledge of genuine runic tradition were written in the 1600's and 1700's or even later. But these post-reformation works have not been subjected to deep study. For instance, Jón Ólafsson's *Runologia*, which will be analysed in this chapter, has not been edited yet.

In his edition of the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*, and in an attempt to reconstruct the text, Page (1998: 24) took data from these later works and observed that by the 18th c. there had developed a fund of runic lore which incorporated the kennings that served to build up this Icelandic text. He is right in his appreciation of the doubtful acceptability of assuming that these later readings may be of great importance in the tradition. However, it seems clear that at least the meanings of the rune-names as found in these documents as a rule do not diverge from earlier sources. What their authors may have done is to make innovative combinations in order to obtain a larger number of periphrases which could be used in poetry. That may be the reason why sometimes these lists contain uncommon or unexpected circumlocutions.

This chapter intends to answer the question to what extent the significance of the rune-names was known in Scandinavia in these later centuries, and to which sources authors resorted when rendering them. This data can bear witness to the importance of runic usage in Scandinavia in the 17th and 18th c. The intention is

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1 In England the tradition of including runes in manuscripts decreased gradually until it eventually disappeared after the Norman Conquest. By that time, runic use had become an antiquarian practice. The only runic graphs inherited by Norman scribes were *Þorn* and *Wynn* which were adapted to the Roman cursive script.
not then to carry out an edition of the sources, but only to present some revealing
data on the rune-names. All these works must be considered as the result of efforts
to record the hoard of runic nomenclature within the Scandinavian tradition.
1. The Rímur Poets Tradition

In the 14th c. a new form of narrative poetry came into being in Iceland: it was called ríma, in the plural rímur. This term is a loanword from OF rime, which was taken over in Germanic languages with the meaning 'rhymed verse'. The word is known in all the Scandinavian languages, but it is only in Icelandic where it is employed to denote a special poetical composition. Icelandic rímur treat both mythological and heroic topics, and they are stanzaic in form. The structure is believed to be a modified descendant of the earlier Eddic poems.

The rímur are poems with special alliterative stanzas (rímnahættir). The most common meter is the so-called ferskeytt (ferskeyttir háttar), a four-line stanza rhyming abab, the first and third lines have seven syllables, the second and fourth lines six syllables. The following is a good illustrative example:\(^2\):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nú mun ráð at fara á fætr,} \\
\text{Frýr þú hugarsins draugi;} \\
\text{dagrinn lîður drjúgt til nætr,} \\
\text{dimma tekr i haugi (Griplur III 29)}
\end{align*}
\]

(Ólafur Halldórsson, 1961: 320)

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\(^2\) When a syllable consists of a short vowel plus a single consonant, it functions with the following unstressed syllable as one syllable; thus: fara is counted as one syllable in line 1, and hugar is counted as one syllable in line 2.
The origin of the *rímur* is obscure. The oldest preserved *rímur* is probably *Ólafs ríma Haraldssonar*, by Einarr Gilsson a man of law, or legal official (*þögmaðr*) in the North and West of Iceland. The poem is preserved in *Flateyjarbók* (1390s). Therefore, it is believed that the oldest *rímur* were not written before 1350.

The *rímur* became the most popular branch of narrative literature in Iceland for nearly five and a half centuries. A great number of them have been composed since the middle of the 14th c. About 1050 *rímur* and *rímur* cycles have survived into the 20th c. of which only 78 date from before 1600. Some 480 *rímur* poets are known by name, most of them men, farmers and fishermen, together with a few educated laymen and some clergymen.

In Iceland the *rímur* became a well-established literary tradition. Its importance over the years is highlighted by Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson (1975):

The importance of rémurr poetry to the Icelandic nation in past centuries can hardly be overestimated. Rímur were a source of information on history, foreign as well as Icelandic. The historical knowledge that they provided was fragmentary and sometimes untrustworthy; it nevertheless gave people some understanding of the past (150).

The *rímur* were chanted (ON *kveðit*) and served to entertain people in the evenings, but usually only in the winter months while people gathered in the *baðstofa* (‘living room’) involved in such activities as working wool.
The *rímur* poets usually employed a highly poetic diction. As in scaldic poetry, they made use of *heiti*, kennings and play on words. The *rímur* poet asserts his presence by speaking in his own person at the beginning and end of each *ríma* and frequently referring to himself (Kuhn, 1993). Apart from references to the author or his work, there can also be allusions to the source of the story or to the author's opinion.

Most of the *rímur* belonging to the Late Middle Ages are anonymous. However, mainly after 1500, the poet names himself in his poems. Nonetheless, he does not always give his name in ordinary form, but sometimes indicates it in some way which has to be converted into letters (Craige, 1952: 289). This practice is known as Mnlc *fölgin nöfn*, that is, 'concealed names'. It is found in some earlier *rímur*, but it becomes more frequent in later centuries. The importance of this *fölgin nöfn* for the present work lies in that, on some occasions (mainly after 1600), the poet makes his name known to the reader and indicates it with the help of the rune-names, replacing these by synonyms, kennings and even homonyms (Craige, 1952: 289). For example, the rune-name *fé* 'wealth' could be replaced by words such as *gull* 'gold', *mundr* 'sum (of money)'; *rinarljómi* 'shining/brilliance of the Rhein'. *Purs* 'giant', the name of the 𐐷-rune, is termed *jótnn* 'giant', *hár raumr* 'high titan/giant', *ýmir* 'Ýmir', *Hrungr* 'Hrungr'.

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3 For a good understanding of the word *mundr*, see Cleasby-Vigfusson (1957).

4 The name of a giant in Northern mythology.

5 The name of a famous giant from the Edda.
The rimur poets knew the broad lexical significance of the rune-names and used them extensively.

An example of this technique can be observed in two stanzas from Ormur's Vilmundar rimur, XVI: 64-65 (c. 1530). This poet dedicated his rimur to his half-sister Sofia:

Veraldar prýði og veglegt ár,  S  A
vimra mótt vid græði,          O
auðurinn nógu og ísinn blár,  F  I
eignast mátu kvæði.

(The ornament of the world and the noble year,
the meeting place of the river with the sea,
sufficient wealth and the bright ice,
may have this poem.)

(Text and translation by Hughes, 1988: 404).

In this stanza the poet makes use of circumlocutions for the names of the s-, a-, ò-, f-, i-runes. For the three first rune-names he employs kennings. In the case of the s-rune, whose meaning in all the sources appears as 'sun', its name sól has been replaced by veraldar prýði 'the ornament of the world' (compare the Old Norwegian Rune Poem's periphrasis 'sun is the light of the lands' or the Old Icelandic Rune Poem's 'sun is cloud's shield and shining halo'). In the expression veglegt ár 'the noble year', the name of the a-rune
(ár ‘year’) has been employed, and it is similar to the ones it in the Old Norwegian and Old Icelandic texts where ár appears as ‘good to men’ and ‘men’s benefit and good summer’, respectively. Next comes a periphrasis of the o-rune, described as vimra\(^6\) móti við græði ‘the meeting place of the rivers with the sea’. It is worth paying attention to the meaning assigned to the rune-name in this *rima*. According to the poet, óss means ‘estuary’, and not ‘Óðinn’ or ‘god’. In the Old Norwegian poem the óss stanza depicts it as the way of most journeys, whereas in the *Old Icelandic Runic Poem* it is described as ‘ancient Gautr and Ásgarðr’s warrior king and Vallhall’s ruler’. The fact that this *rima* supports the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem* instead of the Old Icelandic text is interesting. It may indicate that this *rima* is based on the Old Norwegian tradition of rune-names rather than the Icelandic. For the f-rune the poet has chosen a synonym *aðurinn nógrur* ‘sufficient wealth’. It then assigns this term the same meaning it has in all the rune poems, not only the Scandinavian. Finally, the name of the i-rune is rendered but modified by the adjective blár ‘blue’ (*isinn* blár ‘the blue ice’). Its meaning has not changed with respect to the earlier sources.

The concealed name is *Sofia*, the person for whom the poem is intended: ‘you (Sofia) may have this poem’.

Another stanza by this poet goes as follows:

\[
\textit{Vegleg hvíld og vatna móti,} \quad \text{R} \quad \text{O}
\]

\(^6\) *Vimur* is a river heiti.
virða gamanið bliða,

grátur skýja og ferdin fljót,

ferju Hárs nam smiða.

(Noble repose and the meeting place of the waters,
the pleasant delight of men,
the weeping of the clouds and the rapid journey,
made the boat of Hár.\(^7\))

(text and translation by Hughes, 1988: 404)

In order to render the rune-names, in this fragment different devices have been employed. First of all, the poet has turned to kennings or synonyms. For example, reið ‘riding’, which is the name of the r-rune, has been described as vegleg hvild ‘noble repose’. In this respect, it is close to one of the periphrasis employed in the Old Icelandic Rune Poem, namely ‘bliss for the seated’. Vatna möt ‘the meeting place of the waters’ is a kenning that serves to describe the rune-name òss ‘estuary’. A man kenning is used for the m-rune: virða gamanið bliða ‘the pleasant delight of men’.\(^8\) Once again, this circumlocution resembles the Old Icelandic text where the rune-name maðr is seen as ‘man’s delight’. The only description of this word in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem is ‘the earth’s dust’. Úr ‘drizzle’ is exemplified as grátur skýja ‘the weeping of the clouds’. ‘Rain’ is the meaning assigned to ûr also in the Old Icelandic text, but not so in the Old

\(^7\)The ‘boat of Hár’ is a kenning for ‘poem’.

\(^8\)Hughes (1988: 404) notices that a similar sentence is found in Hávamál, 47: maðr er manns gaman, ‘man is the delight of man’.
Norwegian, where it seems to mean ‘rain (of sparks)’. Second, the poet chooses a synonym to represent reið ‘journey’ (ferðin fljót ‘the rapid journey’) in its second appearance in this ríma.

Once the rune-names are deciphered and the letters placed in the right sequence, the name of the poet Órmur gives meaning to the last line: ‘Órmur made the boat of Hár (Óðinn)’, that is, the poem.

Not much scholarly effort has been dedicated to the compilation and study of the use of rune-names in the rímar. The only known study of this practice of concealed names is that by the Icelandic scholar Páll Eggert Ólason (1915), who collected a number of preserved rímar in which the rune-names were employed. Some other authors have introduced the theme of hidden names in their works by providing the reader with a few examples. Some of these rímar can be found, for example, in Craigie’s Sýnisbók. Íslenzkra Ríma (1952). All but two appear in Páll Eggert Ólason’s article. No English work has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of this rune-name application.

In order to find out more about the employment of rune-names in the 17th and 18th c. and the meanings attached to them, it is necessary to offer a detailed account of their use in these rímar. In this section the poems recorded in Páll Eggert Ólason’s article together with the two extra ones in Craigie are analysed.

First, each *rima* is translated into English\(^{10}\). The next step is to carry out a survey of the devices used in order to render the rune-names. Finally, the meaning assigned to each rune-name is commented on and compared to the ones found in the other sources, mainly the rune poems. The analysis of the rune-names in the *rimur* may open new perspectives towards their understanding or simply reinforce the evidence already provided by the early sources.

The first *rima* included in Páll Eggert Ölason’s work is by a poet called Árni Böðvarsson (1713-1777) á Ökrum:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Fiólns blóma } & \text{ fegrð sé} \quad \text{A} & \text{Eikin blómgud aldin regn} \quad \text{B A U} \\
\text{fysir } & \text{ þangað ríða} \quad \text{R} & \text{Óðins burinn hreldur} \quad \text{D} \\
\text{Sumir } & \text{ maðast sorginna} \quad \text{N} & \text{úði sumar marsins megn} \quad \text{U A R} \\
\text{svellið } & \text{ springur viða.} \quad \text{I} & \text{maðir Hýrnis eldur} \quad \text{S} \\
\text{Uppheims funi álpta grund} & \quad \text{S O} & \\
\text{ærinn harmur hjóða.} & \quad \text{N} & \\
\text{Marga girnir styttta stund} & \\
\text{starfi meður ljóða.} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Páll Eggert Ölason, 1915: 123-4)

(I see the beauty of violets \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) \(\) The blooming oak fruits rain

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\(^{10}\) Páll Eggert Ölason’s article (1915) is written in Modern Icelandic. The *rimur* have been translated (or rather transliterated) into Modern English with the kind assistance of Ásta Svaarasdóttir (Institute of Lexicography, University of Iceland). It has to be pointed out that, on some occasions the sense of the text is lost and becomes incomprehensible due to the flourishes used by the poets to make the poem as beautiful as possible.
and long to ride thither
many are troubled by the sorrow
the ice bursts in many places.

Óðinn’s harmed son
drizzle summer the horse’s strength
troubles the fire of heaven.

Heavens flame the ground of swans
substantial grief of people/nations
many like to spend time
with poetry.)

Rune-names have been employed to code the poet’s name. And so, fióls
blóma fegurð ‘the beauty of the violets’ makes indirect reference to ár ‘good
year’, the name of the α-rune; in the expression fysir pangad ríða ‘long to ride
thither’, the poet has preferred to use the verb ‘to ride’ instead of the noun ‘riding’
which gives name to the r-rune; in sumir mæðast sorginne ‘many are troubled by
the sorrow’, naud has been substituted by a synonym sorg ‘sorrow’. This is also
its meaning in the rune poems. Another synonym (svellíð) has been employed to
denote ‘ice’, meaning of the i-rune-name: svellíð springur víða ‘the ice bursts in
many places’.

The poet’s surname is rendered in the other two stanzas. The term eik
‘oak’ in eikin blómgud ‘the blooming oak’ must refer to or be equivalent to
björk/bjarkan ‘birch tree’, name of the b-rune, both being trees and, from that
perspective, parallel. This corresponds well to principles concerning kennings and
other devices used in the concealing of a name in the rímur. It may have as a
referent the first kenning in the b-rune stanza in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*: *blomgat tre* ‘blooming tree’. The description of *bjarkan* as the greenest of trees “as found in the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*” is not present in this *rima*.

Ár is positively described as *aldin* ‘fruit’; úr is replaced by its synonym *regn* ‘rain’; *Óðins burinn* ‘the son of Óðinn’ is Týr, name of the t-rune. Týr lost his hand in the Fenris-wolf’s mouth, so he is Óðinn’s harmed (*hreldur*) son. But the graph needed to make out the poet’s surname *Bóðvarsson* is not the t-rune but the dotted one with the value *ð*\(^1\). According to Páll Eggert Ólason (1915: 124), the poet may have hoped that *hreldur* would give associations to *stunginn* to indicate that the needed graph was a dotted rune. *Stunginn* is the past participle of the Old Norse verb *stinga* ‘to sting, stick, stab’, thus the ‘dotted’ rune.

In the last stanza, a synonym is made use of for both úr and ár, úði ‘drizzle’ and *sumar* ‘summer’, respectively. *Reið* is depicted in relation to the horse: *marsins megn* ‘the horse’s strength’; sól ‘the sun’ is viewed as ‘the fire of heaven’ (*Hýrnis eldur*) and ‘heaven’s flame’ (*uppheims funi*). Once again, the meaning assigned to the o-rune is ‘estuary’ (*álpta grund* ‘ground of swans’), and *nauð* is perceived as *ærinn harmur* ‘great grief’.

The same poet conceals his name using circumlocutions of the rune-names in *Brávallarimur* (1760):

\[Eik luð drafnar óðar söng\]

\[A\]  \hspace{1cm} (A worn-out oar a poem

\(^1\) Dotted *t* is *ð*, but <d> was usually used to represent /ð/ at that time.
orti og hrafnar maði R composed and the horses’ tiredness
mynni hafnar móðu lóng N the mouth of a harbour the long
meðast jafnan klæði. I clothes of a river always break.)

(Páll Eggert Ólason, 1915: 124)

A new modus operandi brought into play in this poem is the employment of a rune’s homonym in the phrase eik dræfnar ‘a worn-out oar’. In Icelandic, ár ‘oar’ (feminine noun) is a homonym of ár ‘year’ (neuter noun). Hrafnar’ maði ‘what makes the horses tired’ is riding (reið). In the phrase mynni hafnar ‘the mouth of the harbour’ there is a play on words. According to Páll Eggert Ólason (1915: 124): “Þjóðr, en fjöðr heitir og angur (sbr. Harðangur), en angur er nauð” (‘fiord, and fiord is also called angur (e.g. Hardanger [in Norway]), and angur ‘harm’ is nauð’). That is, first a fjord heiti is used, and then a synonym of it, namely, angur, is at the same time a homonym of angur ‘harm’ which is also a synonym of nauð ‘need, constraint’. The hidden value is then n.

Finally, móðu lóng meðast jafnan klæðit ‘the long clothes of a river always break’ describes ice as the sea’s or river’s thatch. Móða means á ‘river’ and móðu klæði is ‘the clothes of the river’, namely iss ‘ice’.

Gunnar Ólafsson frá Gufuskállum composed the following in 1773 (Búa rimur Andriðarsonar):

Úrserð stingur ár reið nauð U G A R N (Rain stitch year riding need

12 Hrafn is literally a ‘raven’.
eymdin þung með sanni N truly heavy misery
kvaðin syngur sóma snauð sings the poems that are hardly
sér og þér að ganni satisfactory for his and your
pleasure.)

(Páll Eggert Ólason, 1915: 125)

To begin with, urferð ‘rain’ is a synonym of úr ‘drizzle’; stingur ‘stab of pain’ is a synonym of kaun and may refer to the stunginn kaun with the value g. Three rune-names follow: ár ‘year’, reið ‘riding’, and nauð ‘need’, which is later described as eymdin þung ‘the heavy misery’. The letters make ugarnn. But if they are set in the right order, the proper name Gunnar turns up.

Hjörleifur Þórðarson á Valþjófsstað († 1786) wrote this in Æjar-Jóns rimur:

Saman kvaði sögunni úr
saman tvinna réði
drösuls mæda daggar skúr
dapuri skýið léði.

Rikidæmi ránarþak F I
reyndar voðir dikja E
vatns samkvæmi essa ómak LR
útrás vatna sikja O

Hlemmur hjaldurs himna salt I H
hraður náði þylja
hrotta baldurs heitið alt
hægi mun veita að skilja.
(Páll Eggert Ólason, 1915: 125-6)

(Composed a poem from the story
a horse’s trouble, a shower of dew
the sad cloud lent.

Wealth, the sea’s thatch
worn clothes of dykes
meeting place of the waters, trouble
of a horse,
outlet of water canals.

Din’s/battle’s cover, heaven’s salt
fast managed to rattle off
the warrior’s whole name
it will be easy to understand.)

In the same line with the other poems, reið ‘riding’ is explained as drösuls
mæða ‘a horse’s trouble’ and, in this respect, it is closer to the third kenning in the
Old Icelandic Rune Poem: ‘horse’s toil’. The meaning ‘drizzle’ (daggar skúr ‘a
shower of dew’) is attached to úr, and fê is substituted by a synonym: rikidaði
‘wealth’. Íss ‘ice’ is seen as either a roof ránarðak ‘the roof of the sea’ or clothes
reyndar voðir dikja ‘the worn clothes of dykes’. This resembles the Old Icelandic
poem, where it is depicted as unnar þekja, i.e., ‘wave’s thatch’. In the latter, and
according to Páll Eggert Ólason (1915: 126), the word reyndur (reyndar) ‘worn’
refers to the stunginn Íss, rendering the value e.

In the next stanza, the expression vatns samkvæmi ‘the coming together of
water’ goes back to the I-rune lœgr which means ‘water’. Riding (reið) is seen as
horses' trouble (essa ómak). Óss appears to have the meaning ‘estuary’: útrás vatna sikja ‘outlet of water canals’, and ice continues to be a thatch or cover: Hlemmur hjaldurs ‘the cover of din’. Finally, hagall ‘hail’, name of the h-rune is described as ‘heaven’s salt’ himna salt. If the letters are read in reverse order, the man’s name Hjörleifur materialises.

Guðmundur Erlandsson á Felli († 1670) concealed his name in Æsopus-rimur:

Sturlað kaunið steypiregn G U Aðhnigandi úr sem reið U R
stunginn týr og maður D M eg þess naffnið játa
elkers-baun og eymdin megn U N Golnis sandinn geðs af leið
ásinn þrábenjaður. D er greiddi um ræðu máta.

(Páll Eggert Ölason, 1915: 126-7)

(The disturbed ulcer, pouring rain
stabbed god (týr) and man
heaven’s bean and the great misery
severely wounded god (áss).

The coming drizzle as riding
I admit its name
Óðinn’s sand from the mind
that untangled the speech.)

The poet begins by using the name of the k-rune, that is, kaun ‘ulcer’, but the value intended is g. Therefore, he uses the expression sturlað kaunið ‘disturbed ulcer’ to refer to the dotted rune. The meaning found in the Scandinavian rune poems is preserved here. However, no reference to children or women is made. Steypiregn ‘pouring rain’ is a “poetic synonym” of úr ‘drizzle’,

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and *stunginn týr* alludes to the dotted rune with the value *d* (here standing for o). The rune-name *maðr* ‘man’ is also employed together with an *úr* kenning: *elkers-baun*. *Elker* is a ‘tub of hail’, and thus refers indirectly to *himinn* ‘the heaven’. A bean of/from heaven would be then rain. In *eymdin megn* ‘great misery’, *eymdin* is used as a synonym of *naud*; the *ás* referred to in *ásinn prábenjaður* ‘severely wounded god’ is Týr, name of the t-rune. But a ‘heavily wounded/stabbed As’ indicates a *stunginn týr*, giving the value *d*. To finish up, two rune-names are introduced: *úr* ‘drizzle’ and *reid* ‘riding’.

The next stanza is from *rimur af Sveini Múkssyni* by Kolbeinn Grímsson (17th c.):

\[
\text{Snúðig fôr á isî er} \quad R \quad I
\]
\[
\text{ánauð lands hjá blóma} \quad N \quad B
\]
\[
\text{lögur ós kaun eg lýsi hér} \quad L \quad O \quad K
\]
\[
\text{með limuðum vatna dróma.} \quad E
\]

(Páll Eggert Ólason, 1915: 127)

(The passage on the ice is quick
bondage of the land’s blossoming
river, estuary/god, ulcer, I here declare
with cemented/fastened waters’ chain.)

---

13 It is unknown whether *óss* means ‘estuary’ or ‘god’ in this poem, since no periphrasis is employed to describe its meaning.
The concealed name in this poem is Kolbeinn. In order to hide this word, the poet has made use of the runes r-, i-, n-, b-, l-, o-, k-, e.

In this stanza, riding has not been linked to the horse’s toil, instead it has been explained as *snúðig för* ‘quick passage’. *Íss* ‘ice’ is rendered in the dative *ísi* as it has a function in the sentence as prepositional object. Ánaud ‘bondage’ refers to *naud*; *lands (hjá)* *blóma* is ‘land’s blossoming’, what is to say, *hjörk/hjarkan* ‘birch tree’. It is interesting to point out the fact that this tree is usually modified by the adjective ‘blossoming’ (*blóma*) in the *rimur*. These are followed by the rune-names *lögor, ös*, and *kaun*. *Vatna drómi* are the waters’ chain, that is, ice. However, *limaður* (‘cemented/fastened) *vatna drómi* refers to the dotted i-rune, giving the value *e*.

If the letters are put together in the right order, a man’s name turns up, namely Kolbeirn (Kolbeinn)\(^{14}\).

Magnús í Magnússkógum (1763-1840) wrote *Rimur af Bernótusi Borneyjarkappa* where he concealed his name thus:

\[ \begin{array}{llll}
\text{Álfur geira ekra frið} & \text{M} & \text{A} & \text{(An elf of weapons, a beautiful field)} \\
\text{opnað meinið sára} & \text{G} & & \text{the sore wound opened} \\
\text{sullur úði sunna blið} & \text{N} & \text{U} & \text{S} & \text{cyst, drizzle, mild sun} \\
\text{samdi gnodir jára.} & & & \text{made the ships of dwarfs}^{15}\end{array} \]

\(^{14}\) From the 16th to the 19th c., \(<rn>\) is frequently written instead of \(<nm>\).

\(^{15}\) ‘Ships of dwarfs’ is a kenning for the poem, in this case, the *rima*. 

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(Páll Eggert Ólason, 1915: 128)

Álfur geira ‘elf of weapons’ is a man kenning; ekra frið ‘a beautiful field’ again depicts ár as something fruitful and positive. Kaun is a sore wound (meinið sára), but the term opnað ‘opened’ refers to the dotted k-rune, with the value g. The word sullur ‘cyst, boil’ is used as a synonym for naud, but this description would perhaps better fit the k-rune. Úði is another term for ‘drizzle’. Finally, the word sunna (‘sun’) is employed instead of sól. The former term is only used in poetry. The decoded name then is Magnús.

Sveinn Dóðarson wrote Rimur af Reinaldi og Rósu (1820). His and his father’s name are hidden in the following stanzas:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sólin, dögg og sjávarpak} & \quad \text{SU} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{U} \quad \text{I} \\
\text{særing jafnan skerði,} & \quad \text{D} \\
\text{reðin snögg og rauna blak,} & \quad \text{R} \quad \text{N} \\
\text{ráðið naðrið verði.} & \quad \text{U} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(The sun, dew, and the roof of the sea
wounding always diminish,

---

16 Sullur is a boil, but in Modern Icelandic it is used especially for a boil in the liver, lungs or intestines (Cleasby-Vígusson, 1957: 603).

17 See the etymology of the word in chapter I.

18 Cleasby-Vígusson (1957: 605) chooses a quotation to exemplify this use: sól heitir með mónnum, en sunna með góðum ‘it is called ‘sól’ among men, ‘sun’ among the gods’.
quick riding and the blow of grief,

the name can be solved.

The nickname of giants, estuary/god and riding,

Óðinn’s wounded son,
dew over the field drizzled from the sky,
when wood nourished the lands.)

The poet begins by using the rune-name sólin ‘sun’. This is followed by a synonym of úr ‘drizzle’, namely dögg ‘dew’. Nonetheless, the value intended is not u but v\textsuperscript{19}. Ice is again described as being a roof: sjávarpæk ‘the roof of the sea’. Riding is modified by the adjective ‘quick’ (snögg); and nauð is referred to as rauna blak ‘the blow of grief’. Þorn is ‘the nickname of giants’ (auknafn tröll). Then the names of the \(\alpha\)- and \(r\)- runes follow. In relation to the latter, it is not possible to know whether the meaning intended for Óss is ‘estuary’ (as in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem) or ‘god’ (as in the Old Icelandic Rune Poem), since no description whatsoever is provided for this name. Finally, Óðins særði níður ‘Ódin’s wounded son’ refers to Týr, more specifically stunginn Týr, rendering the value \(d\).

According to Pall Ólafur Ólason (1915), Jón sheriff Þorláksson seems to have been a great lover of rimur. He translated The Saga of the Trojans (after

\textsuperscript{19} The graph \(<v>\) is often termed ‘consonantal \(<u>\)’, and \(<u>\) was written for \(<v>\) in Iceland at that time.
Homer’s Iliad?) and asked Jón poet Jónsson from Vattarnes to compose rimur from it for his sister, Elin. There Jón thus binds his name:

\[
\text{Græðis reifar, grundin svans} \quad J \quad O
\]

\[
gerði söguna þylja,
\]

\[
niður straums er nafnið hans. \quad N
\]

\[
Nú mun hægt að skilja.
\]

(Páll Eggert Ólason, 1915: 128)

(The swaddling-clothes of the sea, the land of swan,

did chant the story

the purling of stream is his name.

Now it will be possible to understand.)

The poet makes use of the name for the i-rune describing it by means of a kenning: græðis reifar ‘swaddling-clothes of the sea’, i.e. ‘ice’. Óss is portrayed as grundin svans ‘the land of swan’, i.e. ‘estuary’. In relation to nauð, needed to complete the name Jón, Páll Eggert Ólason (1915) explains: “Nafnið er auðræðið. Þó er niður straums nokkuð langt sött til þess að þyða nauð (= n) enda er og í þess stað í sumum handritum nauðin þræla, og fer þá alt vel” (‘It is easy to decipher the name. However, niður straums [the purling of stream] is rather far fetched to

\footnote{Its date of composition is not mentioned by Páll Eggert Ólason, but Jón Þorláksson lived 1643-1712, so this is presumably from the latter part of the 17th c.}
translate naud [i.e. trouble] (= n) and instead of that some manuscripts have nauðin præla [i.e. the trouble of slaves] and then everything fits’). It could be presupposed that if niður straums is the correct reading, then the idea must be that the purling is caused by some kind of a narrowness that troubles the water.

Hallgrímur Pétursson wrote Króka-Refs-rimur, rimur af Lykla-Petri og Magellónu and rimur af Flóres og Leo. In Króka-Refs-rimur he conceals his name as follows:

Hrið méð gróða, karfa kör,     H A L
kaunið sært af undrum.      G
ferð um is og hauga bör  R I M
ringsbragina færði stundum.

(Páll Eggert Ólason, 1915: 129)

(Snowstorm with growth, ships’ sickbed,
the wound injured by wonders,
journey across ice and tree of rings
the poems sometimes brought.)

In the first line, three rune-names are presented. First of all, hrið means ‘snowstorm’ and refers to hagall (‘hail’). In the second phrase, gróða ‘growth’ is related to the fruitfulness of ár ‘good year’. Finally, karfa kör ‘ship’s sickbed’ is a water kenning, going back then to logr. The poet employs the expression kaunið
sært af undrum ‘the wound injured by wonders’ to allude to kaun. Once again, it is possible to discern the use of a synonym for the term stinginn to point to a dotted rune. In this case, the word sært ‘injured’ makes reference to the stinginn or dotted k-rune with the value g. In the following line, ferð um is ‘journey across the ice’, two other runes are used. First reið, viewed as a journey (ferð), and ice is. Finally, bauga bör21 ‘tree of rings’ is a man kenning.

The rimur af Marsiliusi og Rósamundu are by an unknown poet22 by the name of Jón who composed the rimur for some Ingibjörg and dedicated them to her. This can be perceived in the following stanzas:

Heiðurs kæra heitir sú     Hann, sem þuldi hróðrar kver,
hrufur tvær og svellin þrýþ G G I I
eik sem grær við álfta búa B O
essið slær hið breyzka hjú. R N

(The respectful one is called
two scrapes and three lumps of ice23
oak that grows by the home of swans

He, who chanted the praising poem,

is called cold and oasis of duck,
a demanded debt, which doesn’t exist,

21 Borr is a kind of tree in the Edda.

22 The date of composition is not given by Páll Eggert Ólason.

23 ON svell means ‘swollen ice, a lump of ice’ (cf. Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957).
the frail servant hits the horse. I didn’t conceal the name here.)

In the first stanza, *hruflur twær* ‘two scrapes’ [i.e. *kaun* ‘scrape, sore’] refers to two *k*-runes with the value *g*. *Svellin prjú* ‘three ices’ indicates that three *i*-runes are needed. In *eik sem grær við álsta bū* ‘oak that grows by the home of swans’, two rune-names are presented. First, once more *eik* ‘oak’ is a substitute for *bjarkan*, name of the *b*-rune. *Álsta bū* ‘the home of swans’ makes reference to *óss* ‘estuary’.

In the last line the two values intended must have been *r* and *n*. The indirect word order of the sentence must be taken into consideration. *Essið* is ‘the horse’ (the horse hits, i.e. the horse is hit by [...] equals *reið* ‘ride’ = *r*), and a horse is hit when riding; so it is the first part of the line that refers to the ride. The frail servant must go back to *naud* ‘trouble’ rendering the value *n*. The adjective *breyskur* ‘frail, troubled’ (or the whole noun phrase *hið breyska hjú*) must be equivalent to *naud* to indicate the correct deciphering.

In the second stanza, ice is qualified as ‘cold’ *kuldi* (here with *<i>* as a spelling for *<j>*)) and *óss* is depicted as *andar ver* ‘oasis of duck’, a kenning for ‘estuary’. *Heimtuð skuld, sem ei til er* ‘a demanded debt, which doesn’t exist’, points to *naud* ‘need, trouble’. The trouble is then poverty or not being able to pay one’s debts.

Guðmundur Bergþórsson (1655-1705) hides his name in *Jarlmanns rimur og Hermanns*:
Sárið, skúrar þverir þrír, G U U U (The wound, three strong drizzles, M
þegn af dignar striði, M a thane weakens from war,
ferðir harðar²⁴ tvær á þýr, R R T two hard journeys on the hero
tjáði kvaða smiði. expressed the composition of

(Páll Eggert Ólason, 1915: 130) the poem.)

Sárið 'the wound' is a synonym of kaun, the name of the k-rune, which is used to render the value g. The expression skúrar þverir þrír 'three strong drizzles' makes three u-runes. In þegn af dignar striði 'a thane weakens from war', the word þegn must refer to maður 'man'. A problem arises in ferðir harðar tvær á þýr 'two hard/difficult journeys on/for the hero [þýr 'god']'. Tvær harðar ferðir (direct word order) must be the two r's needed to complete the name intended by the poet, and þýr must be the d (or more correctly ð). However, the numeral tvær seems to double the value of þýr (to get the ð and the ð) instead of

²⁴ In Rímnatal I, (Finnur Sigmundsson, 1966) the version of the last stanza is slightly different from the one in Páll Eggert Ólason's article:

Sárið, skúrar þverir þrír,
þegn af dignar striði,
ferðir PURDAR tvær á Tyr
þjáði kvaða smiði.

The author's name is not deciphered there. But the word purðar here could quite easily refer to N (nauð) as it means 'lack'. According to Ásta Svavársdottir (personal communication), Icelanders have, for example, the expression ganga til þurðar, which means that something is eaten up or completely spent up.
ferðir, as would be expected from the grammatical surroundings (it agrees in

Then only nauð is lacking. It is arguable whether it is the adjective harður

'hard, difficult' in the third line or even strið 'war' in the second line that are

supposed to indicate that rune-name.

Þormóður Eiríksson í Gvendareyjum wrote Guðbrandsríma where he

concealed his name:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Jötnunn hár við jarða móti, P O} & \quad \text{(The high giant by the boundary of estates,} \\
\text{með jálka hvíldar banni, R} & \quad \text{with the ban of horses’ rest,} \\
\text{Ásgarðs jöfur, afskept spjót, O D?} & \quad \text{the king of Ásgarðr, shaftless spears,} \\
\text{úði á reisumanni. U M} & \quad \text{drizzle on a travelling man.)}
\end{align*}
\]

(Páll Eggert Ólason, 1915: 130)

The expression jötnunn hár við jarða móti 'the high giant by the boundary of

the estates' goes back both to hurs (jötnunn) and óss (jarða móti). In the

Scandinavian rune poems, its name is giant. But instead of using the name hurs,

the poet has preferred a synonym jötnunn. Með jálka hvíldar banni 'with the ban of

horses’ rest' is reið 'journey, riding'. Ásgarðs jöfur 'the king of Ásgarðr' is

Óðinn, who gives the name to the o-rune óss. The text then appears to be closer to

the Old Icelandic Rune Poem, where the meaning of óss is 'god'. Úði á

reisumanni 'rain on a travelling man' describes both the u- and the m-runes (úr

and maðr). The only problematic periphrasis is afskept spjót 'shaftless spears'.

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Since the only missing graph to complete the poet’s name is d, the intended rune-name must have been týr. The periphrasis may refer to the shape of the rune: 1 ↑.

And finally, Niels skáldi Jónsson (1783-1857) concealed his name in the following ríma:

Sitt þvi nafn hver naud til dró. N (Each misery got its name,
Norðra knör så fermdí, he loaded the ship of North,
Rjáfur drafnar heilt á hjó, I E hewed the unbroken roof of the sea,
Hlé þar rödull vermdí. L S there the sun warmed the sea.)

(Páll Eggert Ólason, 1915: 131)

First of all, in order to make out the proper name Niels, the poet uses the n-rune (naud) described as ‘misery’. The device employed in the third line is somehow complicated. With the aim of providing the i value, the poet describes iss ‘ice’ as rjáfur drafnar heilt ‘unbroken roof of the sea’. But then he needs an e value. He solves this by adding the verb hjöggva (hjó) which means ‘to hew, to strike or smite’ which would make indirect reference to the stunginn or dotted iss with the e value. In hlé þar rödull vermdí ‘where the sun warmed the sea’, both the s- and the l-runes are presented. Rödull is the sun. The word hlé probably represents the masculine noun hlér ‘sea’.

Craigie (1952) mentions a ríma by Jón Þorkelsson (17th c.), although he does not provide the date of composition:
Viðís heimur og vatna móti, J O
virðar megi það kenna,
skatna sorg, með skjalleg hót N
skrifð hefur diktinn þenna.
(Craigie, 1952, xxvii)

(The world of the sea and meeting of the waters,
may men know it,
men’s sorrow, with clear actions
has written this poem.)

(my translation)

Viðís heimur ‘the world of the sea’ has been used this time to describe the
i-rune, with the value j. The poet has thus deviated from the more general
circumlocutions where ice is viewed as cold or water’s roof. The rune-name óss is
once more described as vatna móti ‘meeting of the waters’. To finish up, skatna
sorg ‘men’s sorrow’ is considered to be nauð.

Craigie (1952: xxviii) comments the fact that in older rimur the name of a
woman used to be concealed instead of the author’s name. However, either
because he was too cunning or because he did not want to let the name be evident
to everyone, the poet in these instances succeeded in concealing it so thoroughly
that it becomes difficult or impossible to decipher with certainty. That is the case of a *ríma* in *Hjálmpérsrimur* x, 5-6 which Craige renders as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ýtum verða óssins glóð} & \quad \text{O} \quad \text{Nú hef eg bundið hjartri ey} \\
\text{oft med reiði að stríða;} & \quad \text{R} \quad \text{brenda orma láða}^{26} \\
\text{vekr oss nauðir vefgrund rjóð,} & \quad \text{N} \quad \text{þar megu rekkar (á) Rógnis mey} \\
\text{ve(r)st er úr að smiða.} & \quad \text{U} \quad \text{rétt af nafnið ráða.}
\end{align*}
\]

(To men becomes the gold

often with anger to fight;

duces us trouble the rosy-cheeked girl,

it is worst to compose there of her name.

Now I have bound a bright island

of the burnt gold (i.e. woman)

there men can from the lady of Óðinn

(correctly solve the name.)

(Craige, 1952: xxix)

According to Craige (1952: xxix), it seems that the concealed name is *orný* (*Oddný*)\(^{27}\). But the rune-name employed to render the last letter in *Oddný* is *úr* (value *u*) instead of *ýr* (value *y*) (*Oddnú*). This may indicate that the poet was not familiar with the meaning of this latter rune-name. However, the poet had

\(^{25}\) Fjörður Jónsson (1926-8) presents this kenning *óssins glóð* and translates it as 'gold', but he adds "samhængen er íøvrigt ikkje helt klar", i.e. that the context is, however, not quite clear.

\(^{26}\) Ey *hörma láða* is a kenning for woman. Ey means 'island', *hörma láð* 'land of the worm', i.e. 'gold'.

\(^{27}\) According to Ásta Svarva-ddóttir (personal communication), this seems clear enough because [t̥n] is a frequent pronunciation both of *<r*n*> and *<rn>*. For example, the noun *barn* 'child' is pronounced as [barn] or [batn] (but only dialectally and very rarely as [barn]), and *himm* 'knob' as [hu:t̥n]. However, the pronunciation of *<nn>* depends of the quality of the preceding vowel.
enough linguistic knowledge to use the preposition úr (homonym of the rune-name úr) which used to have various spellings, namely, ór, úr, yr. Ór or or used to be written with <o> in older vellums and now and then with <y>, in later manuscripts with <u>, which in Modern Icelandic is sounded long, úr (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957: 472).

The use of rune-names in this poem is somehow peculiar. First of all, óssins may mean ‘estuary’. Nonetheless, its meaning has to be understood together with glóð. Second, perhaps playing with the fact that they are homonyms, instead of reið ‘riding’, the author has used reiði ‘anger, wrath’. Another possibility is that he did not know the rune-names at all. Finally, and again because of being homonyms, the poet has chosen the spelling úr of this preposition to resemble the rune-name, whose meaning is ‘rain’.
1.1. Conclusions.

In this chapter some individual rimur have been studied. All of them apparently date to the 17th c. The immediate conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the rune-names and their meanings were still well known in Iceland at this late date. This profound knowledge indicates that the runic usage and nomenclature were highly preserved in that country through the Middle Ages, in opposition to, for example, England, where the runic tradition did not survive after the Norman Conquest. There is a wide range of kennings possible for each of the rune-names (which are themselves words and some with multiple meaning such as ár meaning ‘year’ and ‘oar’), so that there is scarcely any restraint on the poet’s ingenuity.

This study has provided revealing data about the meaning of the rune-names. The ones used in these rimur belong to the runic graphs of the sixteen-letter futhark. However, not all of them had the chance to be employed. The ones which have been made use of seem to have caused no trouble to the poets. The rune-name fé has always been given the meaning ‘wealth’, and has sometimes been modified by an adjective like ‘sufficient’. The rimur agree with all the sources in assigning fé the meaning ‘wealth’.

The name of the u-rune has been used in several occasions. It has been described variously as the weeping of the clouds, rain, drizzle, a shower of dew and pouring rain, keeping thus the meaning in both the Old Icelandic and Old
Norwegian poems. *Purs* is used only once as the nickname of giants, keeping thus the meaning assigned to it in the Scandinavian poems.

The rune-name *öss* has been described as ‘estuary’ in some *rimur*: the meeting place of the river with the sea, the meeting place of the waters, the grounds of swans, outlet of water canals, estuary, the home of swans. However, in a few occasions it has received the meaning ‘god, Óðinn’: the king of Åsgarðr. Even though the specific Old Icelandic rune poem only presented *öss* as ‘god/Óðinn’, the rest of the Icelandic tradition shows that there was ambiguity there. Both names were in Icelandic.

*Reið* ‘riding’, the name of the r-rune, has in almost all instances been related to horses: noble repose, the rapid journey, long to ride thither, the horse’s strength, what makes the horse tired, riding, a horse’s trouble, passage, brief riding, journey. *Hagal* has been used on a few occasions, but always keeping the meaning that appears in the rune poems: heaven’s salt, tub of hail from heaven, snowstorm. *Ár* is presented as something good, positive and related probably to good year or even spring: the noble year, the beauty of the flowers; fruits, summer, year, the land’s blossoming, beautiful field, growth. *Bjarkan* is used in few instances, but it has been described with reference to an oak: blooming oak. This may indicate that its meaning was not well established, but is probably to be explained as the poet simply making a parallelism with another tree. In the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* the b-stanza causes some trouble. In text A, the text is incomplete: [?...fgad l...], *litid tre, u[.]gsamligr* (‘bjarkan is [...] and little tree and ?loving wood’ (my translation). Text B reads *blomgat tre, litel hrislia, j ast*
saemiligs uidar (Page, 1998) (‘bjarkan is the blooming tree and little bush and loving wood’ (my translation), and that is the reason why Page (1998) does not render a final translation of the line. The b-line in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem is completely different: bjarkan er lauf grenst (‘bjarkan is the greenest of trees’).

Logr is depicted as river and sea (‘ships’ sickbed’) keeping, in any case, the general meaning ‘water’. The rune-name maðr is doubtless used with the meaning ‘man’: the pleasant delight of men, man, elf of weapons (a man kenning), the tree of rings (another man kenning). Nauð is one of the most recurrent names used in these rimur (although by chance): sorrow; great grief, need, heavy misery, great misery, bondage, cyst/lump, the blow of grief, frail servant, misery, sorrow. Íss ‘ice’ is one of the most frequently used names: the bright ice, the long clothes of a river; the sea’s thatch; clothes of dykes; din’s cover; ice; waters’ chain; the roof of the sea. Kaun is employed with the meaning ‘ulcer’: stitch (stab of pain), ulcer, sore wound, wound. Týr, found as dotted t, i.e. d (with the value d), is mainly depicted as Óðinn’s wounded son. Finally, sól is described as the ornament of the world, the fire of heaven, heavens’ flame, mild sun or simply the sun.

There is a rune-name which has not been used, namely, yr, probably due to the uncertainty about its meaning. In the rimur in Hjálmpérsrimur studied above, this rune should have occurred in the name Orný (Oddný). However, the poet has avoided its use and substituted it for úr, offering then a periphrasis related to ‘drizzle’. This is perhaps a sign of the difficulties encountered by poets when rendering this rune-name.
The 'art' of hiding one's name in runes is also, of course, found in Old English in the so-called 'signed' poems of Cynewulf (*Fates of the Apostles, Elene, Christ II, and Juliana*). However, the interpretation of individual sections of these 'signatures' is much debated.
2. Early Scholarly Sources

There survive, though from a late period, collections of circumlocutions of the rune-names of the sixteen-letter futhark. They are called mætrúnar ok prideilur and are often set in ABC order (Page, 1998: 21). As it has already been pointed out, the pioneer scholarly work on runica manuscripta was carried out by Scandinavian runologists. The best and most thorough surveys are Worm’s RNHfl seu Danica literatura antiquissima (1636, revised edition 1651) and Jón Ólafsson’s Runologia (copied in 1752, unpublished). The former is a good survey of the material collected down to 1636. The latter contains an immense fund of periphrases of the rune-names and fragments collected from older sources. Derolez (1954: 165) is not alone in pointing out the importance of this work for solving problems in the study of runic material. That is why both are of great importance for the study of Scandinavian runica manuscripta. Another printed collection of this type of material is Olaus Verelius’ Manuductio compendiosa ad runograhiam Scandicam antiquam (1675). All three works will be considered below. Due to their influence on later works, Worm’s and Jón Ólafsson’s text

28 Bauer (2003b) has termed this the “younger version” (“die jüngere Fassung”) of the Old Icelandic Rune Poem, which I believe to be incorrect, since this is not a poem, although it incorporates the lines from the Old Icelandic Rune Poem. It is a catalogue of synonyms and kennings, arranged in alphabetical order.

29 Sometimes the dotted runes and other variants are also provided with periphrases, as it is the case of the cne-sól, stunginn yís, and stunginn kaun.

30 Other manuscripts, all preserved at the Arnamagnæan Collection, are: AM 723a 4° (1600s), with a runahblur: a rune alphabet with periphrases after each graph; AM 166 fol. (1600s), with some marginalia by Jón Ólafsson. On fol. 104-5v there is a section entitled Mætrúnir þeirra Nóttí og Kiernungar.
will be studied first. The main drawbacks of this material is that, for the most part, the information provided by these documents is not original, since they have been copied from earlier works. It may have also happened that their authors copied down information circulating orally. In this respect, Page (1998: 23) concludes that Jón Ólafsson took much of his work from earlier sources. He maintains that part 3 in chapter 3 is almost identical with the text in *Landsbókasafn Ísland MS JS 43 4°* which dates to ca. 1660-80. Besides, Page (1998: 24) believes that Jón did not recognise the lists of kennings as a poem, since he misplaced their order, loosing, then, the rhyme. Furthermore, their spelling is highly contaminated by scribes unfamiliar with them. Their importance lies, however, in the fact that they all bear witness to the state of affairs in runic usage in the 17th and 18th c. and provide precious information on the significance of the rune-names.
2.1. Ole Worm's *RNHR seu Danica Literatura Antiquissima*

Worm's *RNHR seu Danica literatura antiquissima* (1636, 1651) contains a survey of the runic material collected down till 1636\(^1\). Its value lies in its content, i.e. a copy of the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*, runic nomenclature, glosses to the rune-names, *prideitur*, etc. From this work it can be inferred that Worm was very interested not only in the significance of the rune-names, but also in the different dialectal and regional variants which he presents under the heading *Nomina literarum runicarum* (1636: 90): \(\mathcal{P}\) Fe, Fie, Fir, Feyer, \(\mathbb{H}\) Ur, Wei, \(\mathbb{B}\) Duss, Dors, Thors, Dorks, Stungen Thyr, \(\mathcal{A}\) Oys, Os, Oahs, Or, \(\mathcal{R}\) Reidr, Reid, Reidar, Ridhur, \(\mathcal{P}\) Kaun, Kan, Kyn, Kon, \(\mathcal{H}\) Haghl, Hagal, Hagil, Haghal, \(\mathbb{H}\) Naud, Nand, Nyd, Non, Nahd, \(\mathbb{I}\) Is, Jes, Is, idher, \(\mathbb{A}\) Aar, Ar, Ager, \(\mathcal{S}\) Sol, Sun, \(\mathcal{U}\)

\(^1\) The book is divided into twenty-nine chapters: I. Quo nomine literas suas antiquitus appellanturit Dani. II. An Rurcar Vox sit originis Hebrææ. III. Quo modis vox Rurcar usurpae convexit. IV. Cur literæ Runicæ a quibusdam Gothice & Getice vocentur. V. Quot extiterint literarum Runicarum genera. VI. Figuræ literarum Danicarum habentem divulgàte exhibentur. VII. Figuræ literarum Danicarum ex variis Manuscriptis petiæ, & ab amicis communicatae. VIII. Literarum Danicarum figuræ ex variis monumentis crucæ. IX. Cur cædem literæ Danicæ, tam diversis figuris exarentur. X. Literarum Danicarum figuræ rariores & minus trites. XI. Literarum Danicarum numeros investigatur. XII. An \(\mathcal{B}\) decima Sexta fuerit veterum litera. XIII. De literarum Danicarum potestatibus. XIV. De ordine literarum Danicarum. XV. De nomenclaturis literarum Danicarum. XVI. Nominum & figurarum in literis Danicis harmonia. XVII. De literarum Danicarum divisionibus. XVIII. Literarum Danicarum potestas & valor in numeris. XIX. De literarum Danicarum usu Poëtico. XX. De literarum Danicarum inventoribus. XXI. De origine literarum Danicarum. XXII. Danicarum cum Graecis & Latinis literis harmonia. XXIII. De literarum Danicarum jugationibus, abbreviaturis dictis. XXIV. De Diphtongis literaruræ Danicæ. XXV. De modo scribendi veterum Danorum. XXVI. De materia cui literas suas mandare solet Dan. XXVII. Qua lingua consignata sint monumenta quæ in Dania visuntur. XXVIII. Observanda in nominibus propriis & literarum figuris. XXIX. Observationes particulares circa literarum potestates. Appendix literarum Runicarum usum in Poesi uberiorius declarant.
Tyr, Tir, Tidhr, Æ Biarkan, Biarkn, Birk, Birkaldr, Byrghal, Æ Laugr, Laugur, Lager, Lagh, Æ Madr, Madur, Madher, Man, ̀ Yr.

Worm seems to have taken some of these names from Bureus' calendar (cf. Fir, Feyer, idher, Tidhr, Byrghal, Lagh). The variants laugr/laugur could perhaps reflect the word laug which is the name of the calendar rune number 17 arlaug, and which could be a variant name for the I-rune.

It is worth pointing out the fact that Worm does not only show the name of the runes in the sixteen-graph futhark, but also the names of the 'dotted' runes, which are circumlocutions based on the names of the sixteen original graphs: ̀ Knésol, hengende Sol, Æ Stingende Is (i.e. dotted i), Æ Stingende Kaun (i.e. dotted k), Æ Stingende Biarkan (i.e. dotted b), Æ Stingende Fe (i.e. dotted f).

Worm takes a step further and in chapter XVI headed Nominum & figurarum in literis Danicis harmonia (1636: 92-7), discusses the fact that the Hebrew and Greek letters do not signify anything ("Nomina literarum Hebraica & Græca nihil significant" (92)) as compared, for example, to the 'Danish' graphs ("Nomina literarum Danicorum omnia rem aliquam notant" (93)). Finally, he renders the meaning of all the names followed by an explanation of their significance (93-5). In some occasions, he adds his own view of the relationship between the name and the shape of the runic graph. His intention seems to be to infer the name's meaning from the graph's shape, perhaps similar to the second lines in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem:
\[ \text{quod } \text{Fee vocant, armentum, peculium } \& \text{ divitias } [... ] \text{ dixerunt; representat n. animal cornutum, aut taurum cornubus superbientem } [...]. \]

(that which is called \textit{fee}, herd, goods, wealth [...]; it represents a horned animal, or a bull proud of its horns [...])\textsuperscript{32}.

It is not striking to find a commonplace allusion to \textit{fé} as ‘wealth’, which at that time meant not only money, but also cattle. The description of \textit{fé} in these lines is the expected according to the earlier sources.

\[ \text{Ur. Aquarium impetu delabentium rivos indicat: ut } \& \text{ nimbum guttis densioribus cum impetu delabentem: inde quoque per metaphoram ad alia, quandam cum hisce similitudinem habentia accommodatur, ut ad scintillas ex ferro ignito pulsatione exilientes [...].} \]

(\textit{Ur} indicates river-waters flowing with their force: flowing with force by means of their very full drops: then also by a metaphor of other things, due to its similitude it is adapted to the sparks coming from the hot iron by hitting [...].)

According to Worm, \textit{úr} means ‘river-water’ rather than ‘rain’. It is striking how he tries to clarify the meaning ‘slag’. He explains that it signifies ‘sparks’ only metaphorically, so he does not overlook the double significance of \textit{úr} in the Old Icelandic and the Old Norwegian rune poems. This idea reinforces my hypothesis about the intended meaning of \textit{úr} in this latter poem.

\textsuperscript{32} The English translation of the Latin text is my own. The texts have been translated word by word in most cases, and sometimes freely.
**Duss.** Spectrum montium incolam, quod forma pumilionis aut gigantis antiquitus comparere, ac fæminis puerisquem terriculamenta objicere solebat. Linea enim recta spectrum, curva montem seu collem representabit.

(*Duss. Spectrum inhabitant of the mountains which in old times used to appear with a dwarf or giant shape and used to frighten women and children. The straight line, then, is the ghost, the curve, represents the mountain or the hill.*)

Worm mentions characteristics which are typical of giants both in mythology and folklore. On the one hand, he refers to them as spectra inhabitants of the mountains. On the other hand, he alludes to the dramatic effect of giants on women and children, which is the most widely employed feature in the rune poems.

**Oys.** Sinus maris promontoriis acutioribus excurrentibus, nautis infestis: vel etiam ostium maris portum navibus præbens; a quo nec abludit pictura.

(*Oys. The sea’s bosom with some very pointed promontories coming out of it, hostile for sailors or even the mouth of the sea which offers port to the ships, of which the drawing does not disappoint.*)

Worm favours the reading ‘estuary’ instead of ‘Ōðinn/god’. He understands its meaning as a reflection of the runic graph. The rune’s shape supports the meaning.

**Ridhr.** Equitationem seu currulem vestionem notat: equitem divaricatis cruribus equitationi se accingentem depingit.
(Ridhr. It indicates riding, or cart transport: it represents a horseman with separated legs for riding, who is tightening or arming himself.)

Worm does not only propose ‘riding’ as the meaning of ridhr (ON reið) but also the cart transport itself. This specification has no counterpart at least in the earlier sources.

† Kaun. Kón pronunciant: [...]. Ulcus seu pruriginem denotat; quod & brachio ad scalpendum extenso indicat.

(Kaun pronounced kón: [...] It denotes an ulcer or itch which is also indicated by the arm extending to scratch oneself.)

For Worm, kaun is an unproblematic rune in terms of its significance, and its meaning is kept as ‘ulcer’. In an attempt to relate this meaning to the rune’s shape, Worm maintains it depicts a man scratching himself, which is quite far-fetched.

* Hagl. Angulosæ grandinis; floccorumque nivis faciem ostendit.

(Hagal shows the figure of the angled hail and the snowflakes.)

On the basis of the rune’s shape, Worm has offered a two-fold solution for hagl. Therefore, it is not only described as ‘hail’, but also as ‘snowflakes’.

† Naud quod iam Nóð effertur, necessitatis naturam quæ fulcro quo sustentur indiget.
(Naud which is now pronounced nóð expresses the nature of need, which requires a support to sustain itself.)

All the sources agree in assigning nauð the meaning ‘need’.

\(\text{\textit{l Iis. Glaciei planitiem; seu stiriam frigore concretam, recta linea conspicuam.}}\)

(Iis denotes a plain of ice or a frozen icicle, as it is visible thanks to the straight line.)

Worm agrees with other sources in viewing iss as ‘ice’.

\(\text{\textit{l Aar. Ubertatem agrorum & annonæ bonitatem notat, hinc vomeris pingitur figura. Nam bene exaratis & elaboratis agris, illa provenire solet.}}\)

(Aar. It denotes the exuberance of the fields and the harvest prosperity, hence it is represented with the shape of the plough. Since it usually comes from the well-ploughed and worked fields.)

\(\text{\textit{Ar is associated with nature’s fruitfulness in general.}}\)

\(\text{\textit{h Sol. Radios solares hinc inde dispersos. Ex eodem quoque; fundamento & altera eius emersit figura \& quæ corpus solare uno radio insigne exhibet.}}\)

(Sol. It denotes the sun rays, so from there they are dispersed. In the same way, also another of its figures \& emerges, which exhibits the solar body with a notable ray.)

Sól means ‘sun’ and it is regarded neither as a positive or a negative thing.

Worm seems to be familiar with at least two different graphs for the s-rune and
renders both. It is worth noticing that he does not explain the *kné-sól* in relation to kneeling as in the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*, but as rays coming out. Besides, Worm does not make any reference to a solar Christian motif, as in some of the runic texts.

† *Tyr*. Taurum cornubus terram fodicantem. Quandoque vero & unico cornu, sinistro nempe, conspicuum cernitur hoc pacto: ₁, tum allusio fit ad Idolum Tyr antiquitus dictum, quod a lupo quodam altera manu privatum fuisse fabulantur in Edda. Unde postea unimanus dictus hic Deus Asiaticus. Figura non abhorret ab homine altera manu spoliato.

(*Tyr*. It denotes a bull which punches the earth with its horns. But when it [appears], with only one horn, the left one in a distinguished manner that can be seen in this way: ₁, then it is said to refer to the idol Týr in old times, about which the Edda says that it was deprived of a hand by a wolf. From which then, this god is called one-handed. The figure cannot be denied to represent a mutilated man.)

Worm equals *Týr* to *Taurus*, i.e. ‘bull’ (cf. MnDa/MnNw tyr, MnSw tjur for Lat *taurus* ‘bull’). However, he also indicates a second meaning, namely, ‘the god Týr’, which is the one recorded in the other sources. He makes a distinction between the runic graphs ₁ and †.

*B* *Biarkan*, Betulam foliorum læta amplitudine & viriditate se diffundentem.

(*Biarkan*, birch’s leaves of happy width and greenness spread.)
Worm has glossed *bjarkan* as Lat *betula* ‘birch-tree’.

† *Laugr.* Liquorem aut rivum aquarum ex montis cacumine delabentem.

(*Laugr.* Liquid or river water which flows from the top of the mountain.)

Worm offers ‘river-water’ as the meaning of the rune-name *logr*.

♀ *Madur.* Virum extensis ad cœlum bracchiis astrorum miracula contempantem.

(*Madur.* To the man who contemplates the wonders of the stars with his arms extending towards the sky.)

The novelty in Worm’s description of *maðr* is that he resorts to the graph’s shape to explain its meaning, namely, the image of a man extending his hands.

✓ *Yr.* Intensum arcum sagitta præditum (a bow provided with an arrow). (Here he mentions a *prideilur* in runes which he translates as *Yr est arcus intensus, militiae commoditas, teli delator* (*Yr* is tightening bow, army’s advantage, arrow’s carrier)).

This description portrays *ỵr* as specifically ‘bow’ rather than ‘yew-tree’.

In chapter XXIX called *De observationes particulares circa literarum potestates. Appendix literarum runicarum usum in poesi uberior declarant*, Worm (1636) again directs attention to the fact that the Greek and Latin letters are not meaningful words in the language, and explains how the poets – he must be referring to the *rimur* poets – made use of the lexical significance of the rune-
names. The runes are set in alphabetical order: first appears the Latin letter equivalent, then the rune, its name in Old Norse, its translation into Latin and finally a periphrasis of the rune-name in Latin. The last three pieces of information are important for the present work. Therefore, they will be rendered below followed by my translation into English (182-83):

<p>| A | Aar | Annonæ bonitas | Præcipuum mortalib(um) bonum |
| B | Biarkan | Betula | Arbor viridissima |
| F | Fee | Pecunia | Causa discordiæ |
| H | Hagel | Grando | Granum frigidissimum |
| I | Iis | Glacies | Latissimus Pons |
| K | Kaun | Ulcus | Infantum infestatio |
| L | Lógor | Liquor | Amnis ex præruptis fluens |
| M | Madur | Homo | Pulveris augmentum |
| N | Naud | Egestas | Res conditiones angustas pariens |
| S | Sol | Sol | Terrarum illuminatio |
| T | Tyr | Mars | Deus Asiaticus unimanus |
| U | Ur | Scintilla | Ex ferri massa exsiliens |
| D | Duss | Gigas | Terror fœminarum |
| O | Ois | Ostium fluminis | Locus itionibus tritus |
| R | Reid | Equitatio | Vox equis infesta |
| S | Yr | Arcus | Semper flexilis |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rune</th>
<th>Meaning 1</th>
<th>Meaning 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aar</td>
<td>Good crops</td>
<td>Special goodness for mortals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biarkan</td>
<td>Birch</td>
<td>Very green tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>Cause of strife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagel</td>
<td>Hail</td>
<td>Very cold grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iis</td>
<td>Ice</td>
<td>Very wide bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaun</td>
<td>Ulcer</td>
<td>Child’s sickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lógor</td>
<td>Liquid</td>
<td>River that flows from the precipitous mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madur</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Augmentation of dust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naud</td>
<td>Need</td>
<td>Things which give birth to difficult conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sol</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Earth’s light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyr</td>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Asian (i.e. one of the Aesir) one-handed god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ur</td>
<td>Sparks</td>
<td>Substance that comes from iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duss</td>
<td>Giant</td>
<td>Women’s terror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ois</td>
<td>River’s mouth</td>
<td>A very much trotted place in the journeys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reid</td>
<td>Riding</td>
<td>Fiend voice for the horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr</td>
<td>Bow</td>
<td>Always flexible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Worm clearly illustrates how each rune has a meaningful name which at the same time can be explained by means of circumlocutions. Nonetheless, he has presented two different interpretations of some rune-names. Whereas in some parts of his work he argues in favour of one meaning, in some others he chooses another or modifies the meaning. That is the case of the runes b, t and u. A comparison of the different texts reveals that *bjarkan* is interpreted as *betula*.
‘birch tree’ in opposition to ‘birch’s leaf’. Whereas in other sections ðyr is referred to as the god Tyr, here it is equated to the Latin Mars since both of them are war gods. Besides, instead of alluding to ùr as ‘rain’, he assigns it the meaning ‘spark’ (scintilla). Here he has interpreted it metaphorically as it happens in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem.

Finally, it is worth commenting on Worm’s clarification of the practice of using rune-names in poetry. He shows the reader how to hide one’s name in a poem using periphrases in a way similar to what is done in the rimur:

Hóll laxa, Flod Fialla  O   L   The salmon’s dune, the mountains’ flood
Fold kæt, skya gratur  A   U   The field gladness, the weeping of the clouds
Ymers lios, Ur koma  S   U   The giant Ymer’s light, drizzle arrival
Agiæt svanna sæti.  O   Noble swans’ seat.
Og jors, og dupts auke.  R   M   Horse’s yoke, and augmentation of dust.

(Worm, 1636: 183) (my translation)

Worm (1636) glosses hóll laxa as aula salmonum and explains that it designates ‘estuary’ (meaning of the o-rune) metaphorically. Òss is used to spell out the first letter in the proper name Olaus. Flod fialla (fluor montium) is a circumlocution of logr, whose first letter makes the L in Olaus. Worm employs the phrase fold kæt to stand for the a-rune, relating ðr to good year and fertility. Skyg gratur (Nubium fletu) is a common kenning for ùr ‘drizzle’ which Worm
chooses to stand with the value u. *Ymers lios* ‘Ymeri\(^{33}\) lumen’ ‘world’s or earth’s light’ refers to the sun, name of the s-rune. Worm needs a second u value to complete his name. This time he describes *ür* as *res gutatim cadens* (‘thing falling drop by drop’) (185). From this description it is difficult to discern the intended meaning, either ‘drizzle’ or ‘rain of sparks’. *Agiaet svanna sæti*, which he translates as ‘dilecta oloribus sedes’ (‘place appreciated for its smells’), refers to *óss* as an estuary. The last two letters are concealed under *og jors* ‘horse’s yoke’ and *dups auke* ‘augmentation of dust’, which he translates as *jugum equi* and *pulvers augmentum*. The first description corresponds to the rune-name *reið* ‘journey’, whereas the second is linked to *maðr* ‘man’: “hominem denotat, qui ex pulvere est, & in pulverem revertetur” (185). The concealed name is then *Olaus Worm*.

\(^{33}\) *Ymir* is a giant out of whose body the entire world was created, according to Old Norse mythology.
2.2. Jón Ólafsson’s Runologia

*Runologia* is without any doubt the most important 18th c. manuscript recording material on rune-names. Its author is Jón Ólafsson of Grunnvík (1705-79). This manuscript is catalogued as AM 413 fol. at the Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen. It was first written in 1732, but this copy has not survived. The only preserved copy dates to 1752.

*Runologia* contains an immense reservoir of periphrases of the rune-names. For example, chapter one in part three entitled *De parafrasi runica, um dylgiurnar* (foll. 130-5), holds lists of circumlocutions of the rune-names arranged in ABC order which constitute a thematic repetition. This compilation can offer interesting data for the study of the significance of the rune-names. Some of these lists include the kennings or periphrases that conform the Old Icelandic and the Old Norwegian runic poems, sometimes even following the same order. In this same chapter, it is worth considering that just the enumeration of periphrases for the a- and b-runes are preceded by their runic graph. The other runes have been copied outside the frame of the text as a kind of marginal note. This may prove that they were written by another hand and not by Jón Ólafsson. Some graphs are provided with more kennings than others, reaching sometimes the number of twenty. All of the periphrases have been read carefully, and a number of them, which are thought to be the most revealing ones, have been chosen to illustrate the

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34 See Jón Helgason (1929).
35 The manuscript is divided into three parts: part one contains seven chapters, part two five, and part three eight.
meaning of the rune-names. The text has been normalized. Capital letters will be
written small, except when the noun is a proper name, double vowels to indicate
length (cf. <aa>, <oo>) will be written single and with accent mark, the graphs
<i>j> will appear as <i> and <ø> as <ø>.

a-rune

| Ár er gumna giaði, gott-sumar, og al-gróinn akur [...], jarðar gróði, vallna
| gróði, aukr-gróði og allr gróði.            |

(Ár is men’s riches, good summer, and fruitful field [...], earth’s prosperity,
ground’s prosperity, field-prosperity and all prosperity\(^\text{36}\).)

Whereas the two first periphrases are identical with the ones in the Old
Icelandic Rune Poem, only the first one is employed in the Old Norwegian text.
The use of the noun gróði ‘prosperity’ has to be pointed out. It refers to one of the
main features that characterizes this rune-name in the sources. Ár as ‘good year’
(i.e. ‘good harvest’) is the main idea in these periphrases.

b-rune

| Bjarkan er litið lim, laufgaðr viðr, og lundr fagr. Laufgat tré […] friósamt tré
| [...] vaksandi viðr.              |

(Bjarkan is little branch, leafy wood, and lovely grove. Leafy tree […], fertile tree
[...], growing wood.)

\(^{36}\) The English translations of all the chosen periphrases are my own.
Text B of the Old Icelandic poem agrees in general with the characteristics applied to bjarkan in Jón’s text: ‘blooming tree and little bush and ?loving wood’. However, none of these kennings equates this rune-name with specifically ‘birch-tree’. They are rather general descriptions of trees.

f-rune


(Fe (pronounced fje) is: family strife, Fáfnir’s death and warriors’ quarrel, Fáfnir’s field. Coalfish’s path, large money purse [...], men’s delight.)

The three circumlocutions in the Old Icelandic Rune Poem are also introduced in Jón’s text: Frænda rógr, fyrða gaman, grafseiðs gata. The first of these kennings also appears in the Old Norwegian text. On many occasions, Jón uses Scandinavian mythology in order to explain the meaning of the rune-names, since poetical circumlocutions in skaldic and rimur poetry are as a rule based on mythological stories: Hreiðmarr, king of the dwarf folk, had three sons, the eldest of which was Fáfnir. To please his ambitious father, the youngest son Reginn fashioned a house with gold and gems which was guarded by Fáfnir. Eventually, the latter slew his father and seized the whole of the treasure (Guerber, 1994: 270). All these periphrases point to fé as ‘wealth, money’, rather than ‘cattle’.
h-rune

_Hagall er kalda korn. Krappa drifá, og skýja skot, eða sylfr. Himna eða hlýrnís, eða skýja mallt eðr sallt [...], snáka sótt._

(_Hagall_ is cold grain. Driving snow, clouds’ shot, or silver. Heavens’ or skies\(^{37}\), or clouds’ malt or salt [...], snakes’ sickness.)

Jón does not present particularly complicated kennings for _hagall_. Kaldakorn, _knappa drifá_ and _snáka sótt_ are the descriptions employed in the Old Icelandic Rune Poem. A variant of _kalda korn_ ‘cold grain’ is also used in the Old Norwegian one where _hagall_ is depicted as ‘the coldest of grains’.

i-rune

_Is er ár-bókr, unnar þekja, og feigs fár. Strauma fjölf [...] , felldr vatna [...] , sæng vatna [...] , stört fall._

(_Is_ is river-bark, wave’s thatch and trouble for the doomed. Streams’ board [...], the waters’ cloak [...], the waters’ bed [...], big fall.)

_Ar-bókr (árbokr), unnar þekja and a variant of feigs fár (feigra manna fár)_

are recorded in the Old Icelandic poem. The image of _iss_ as the broadest bridge as found in the Old Norwegian poem is not depicted in these particular circumlocutions. Nonetheless, it will be a common theme in later sections of Jón’s work (see below).

\(^{37}\) _Hlírnís_ is a poetical word to designate ‘heavens’ or ‘sky’.
k-rune

Kaun er barna bol, bar-dagi og holldfúa hús […], sulla bæli […], kvilli þiðða […], Hildur hógnadóttir.

(Kaun is children’s sickness, struggle and house of rotten flesh […], residence of boils […], peoples’ sickness […], Hildur daughter of Hógni.)

Once more the three kennings employed in the Old Icelandic poem are set in first position: barna bol, bardagi, holldfúa hús. And again Jón turns to Scandinavian mythology to explain the rune-name’s meaning: Hildr was the daughter of the mythical king Hógni and the bride of Heðinn, whose life is recorded in the tale of Hjaðninga-killing. Hildr is also the name of one of the Valkyries. Hence war is called Hildar-leikr, i.e., the game of Hildr and it designates ‘battle’ poetically (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957: 261). So Jón is making reference to the wounds caused by war. A variant of barna bol, is used in the Old Norwegian runic text: beggia barnalbol.

l-rune

Lógr, er vellandi vimr, vidur ketill, og vatn heitt […], grunnunga grund, humra tjorn, frón eda lón, eðr látur.

(Lógr is bubbling Vimur38, great cauldron and hot water […], a fish’s ground, lobster’s pond, land or sea-loch, or (seal) lair39.)

38 Vimur is the name of a mythological river.

39 Láir means ‘the place where animals, especially seals, lay their young’ (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957: 378).
The same structure is repeated here. It seems as though Jón had been copying, maybe orally, from the Old Icelandic Rune Poem: the kennings vellandi vimur, vidur ketill are identical with the two first ones in this poem, whereas grunnúnga grínd is a variant of glommunga grund also in the runic text. In Jón's lists it is clear that the more specific meaning intended is 'water', or rather 'sea-water'.

**m-rune**

Maðr er manns gaman, molldar auki og skipa skreytir [...], randa eyðirs ynde [...], maðr er sorgar sök [...], þegn.

(Maðr is man's delight, earth's dust and ships' ornament and, shields' destroyer's delightman's delight [...], man is cause of sorrow [...], a thane.)

Manns gaman, moldar auki and skipa skreytir also appear in the Old Icelandic poem. Moldar auki is also recorded in the Old Norwegian text.

**n-rune**

Nauð, er þyra þrá, þungr kostr, og votsamlig verk [...], harmr liða. Sveita sorg [...], þreyngdr kostr.

(Nauð is female servants' grief, rough condition, and tiring toil [...], affliction of the masses. Country's sorrow [...], pressed condition.)

Þyra þrá, þungr kostr and votsamlig verk are once again the kennings of the Old Icelandic poem. The intended meaning for nauð is 'constraint'.
The Significance of the Rune-Names: Evidence from the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic Sources

o-rune

Os er alldinn-gautr, ás-garðs jofurr og Val-hallar visir [...], vatna mát, vatns auki [...], svana grund, svana sæti.

(Os is ancient Gautr, Ásgarðr’s warrior-king and Valhall’s ruler [...], meeting of the waters, water’s increase [...], swans’ seat.)

Óss is one of the controversial rune-names in the sources owed to the duality of its meaning. It has to be remembered that in the Old Icelandic text óss means ‘god’, whereas in the Old Norwegian poem the meaning is ‘estuary’, and so it is described by the periphrasis ‘óss is the way of most journeys’. The relevance of the kennings in this list lies in the fact that they describe óss as both ‘estuary’ and ‘god/Óðinn’. This implies that Jón apparently knew both traditions. The three first kennings are dependent on the Old Icelandic text: alldingautr, ásgarðs jofurr, Valhallar visi, whereas the others correspond with the Old Norwegian poem.

r-rune

Reið er sitjandi sæla, snúdig fór, og jór er fídi. Hesta spreingr [...], raun hesta [...], hesta þrum [...], gaman manns. Gaman gotna.

(Reið is bliss of the seated, swift journey, and horse’s toil. Exhaustion of horses [...], horses’ testing [...], horses’ thunder [...], man’s pleasure. Men’s pleasure.)

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40 Gautr is an epithet of Óðinn.

41 Ásgarðr in the Scandinavian mythology was the home of gods.

42 Valhall was the hall of the chosen slain.
Sitjandi sæla, snudig for (ferð) and jórsv erfdi correspont to the periphrases in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*. In the Old Norwegian text, reið is depicted as the worst thing for horses, which resembles the meaning intended by jórsv erfdi in this list. The relation to a seated man is also indicated: ‘bliss of the seated’.

**s-rune**

*Sól er skýja skjóldr, skinandi rødull, og hverfandin hvel [...]*, jardar ljómi, mornga ljós.

(*Sól* is clouds’ shield, shining halo and turning wheel [...], the earth’s light, mornings’ light.)

*Skyja skjóldr, skinandi rødull* are the circumlocutions employed in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*.

**t-rune**

*Týr er så ein-hendi ás. Úlfs leifar og Baldurs bróðir. Óðins arfi [...]*, fæda fenris úlfs.

(*Týr* is one-handed god. Wolf’s left-overs and Baldur’s brother. Óðinn’s inheriter [...], food of the wolf Fenris.)

*Einhendr áss* ‘one-handed god’ is the common kenning in the earlier sources as is also *úlfs leifar* ‘wolf’s left-overs’.

**u-rune**

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43 For the relation of this periphrasis to Týr’s legend, see the sections on the Scandinavian poems.
Ur er skýja grátr. Skaði þerris og hirðis hatr [...], hrid. Himinn-svite [...], undir-rót svella.

(Ur is cloud’s tears. Hay’s destroyer and herdsman’s hate [...], rough weather. Heaven’s sweat [...], swell’s underroot.)

The periphrases skýja grátr and hirðis hatr also appear in the Old Icelandic Rune Poem. A variant of skaði þverrir, namely skara þverrir, is also employed in the poem. In spite of the fact that Jón seems elsewhere to mix the Norwegian and Old Icelandic traditions when rendering the meaning of the rune-names, he does not with ûr. In this list the rune-name signifies ‘rain’. Therefore, the meaning ‘rain (of sparks)’ apparently put forward in the Old Norwegian poem ('rain of sparks comes from hot iron’) is unrecorded in this catalogue. This fact may reinforce my hypothesis that ûr was only used metaphorically to depict ‘rain of sparks’ in this latter text.

y-rune

Yr er bendr bogje. Fifu fleystir [...], tvi-bendtr bogje [...], bar-daga gagn [...], fûr fugla.

(Yr is bent bow. Arrow thrower [...], double-bent bow [...], battle’s victory/advantage [...], birds’ danger.)

This stanza is omitted in text B of the Old Icelandic Rune Poem. Text A is only partly legible, which prevents the reader from knowing the meaning intended by the poet, either ‘yew-tree’ or ‘bow’. In the Old Norwegian text, however, the yr line describes this rune-name as ‘the greenest winter tree’. Jón’s
circumlocutions refer to ýr as ‘bow’. This author must be resorting to his native knowledge of Icelandic where ýr signified ‘bow’ in opposition to Old Norwegian where it meant ‘yew-tree’.

P-rune

Þurs er kvenna kvöl, kleta bút og Vard-rúnar ver [...]., kletta konúnr. Hár Raumr.

(Purs is women’s torment, crag dweller and Varðrún’s mate44 [...]. King of the mountains. High giant.)

The first three periphrases are also found in the Old Icelandic poem. In the Old Norwegian text þurs is depicted as ‘women sickness’, a variant of kvenna kvöl. The Northern people imagined that the giants were the first creatures who came to life among the icebergs which filled the abyss of Ginnunga-Gap. These giants were the opponents and rivals of the gods. While the latter were the personification of all that is good, the former represented all that was ugly and evil. When Ymir, the first giant was slain by the gods, his progeny were drowned in his blood. One couple only, Bergelmir and his wife, escaped to Jötunheimr where they settled and became the parents of all the giant race. In the Scandinavian mythology, the giants personified the mountains (Guerber, 1994: 4-5).

44 Varðrún must be a giantess’ name (cf. the giantess’s name Valrún).
In chapter 2 of the third part of Jón’s work entitled Nokkrar fylkingar af dylgium, (135-9) further descriptions of the meanings of the rune-names are recorded. Jón Ólafsson took care in presenting the material not only in Old Norse but also in Latin ("Hjer ad auki vil eg enn til setja nokkrar fylkingar af dylgium [...].") However, the Latin translation does not always agree with the Old Norse counterpart. After an analysis of all the circumlocutions, some of the most revealing periphrases are rendered below. Both the Latin and Old Norse versions will be contrasted only in those cases in which the Latin translation departs greatly from the Old Norse text.

 Fé er frænda rógr  Pecunia proximorum calumniatrix  Fé is relatives’ slanderer
 hyggja manns  hominis affectatio  man’s aspiration
 penninga sjóðr  nummorum thesaurus  money treasure
 aura tala  aureorum numeratio  enumeration of gold coins
 met-ord manna  dignitatum auctrix  creator of merits

The Latin and Old Norse texts coincide in the main. However, the last periphrasis differs somehow: The Old Norse line refers to fé as met-ord manna ‘man’s esteem/rank’, whereas in Latin it is explained as ‘creator of merits’. In general, Jón decided to describe fé as a positive rather than a negative concept.

45 The English translation of the Latin texts is my own.
The only kenning with a negative nuance is the one taken from the rune poems: 'fé' is relatives' slanderer'. The traditional idea of wealth as cause of distress among people is then still present.

Úr er himna harmr  Ætheris Lachryma  Heavens' tear
lýsa ýmis tára  scintilla Lachrymarum Ymeri  spark from Ymir's tears
end-vegi bif-rastar  curia Iridis  rainbow's assembly
grasa Gjá-life  herbarum voluptas  plants' pleasure
gjôf ñyck-vidris  munus nubili aeris  load of the clouded sky

There is a variation of the first circumlocution in both versions: in the Old Norse text, úr is depicted as the heavens' sorrow, harm (harmr) rather than tears (lachryma). The meaning of the last periphrasis is different in the Latin text: Gjôf ñyck-vidris is literally 'gift of thick weather', rather than 'load of the clouded sky' as found in the Latin phrase. Jón has described úr as 'drizzle', although he has used the Latin term scintilla 'spark' in one of the explanations, which may connect it to Worm's text.

Pûrs er þrauta smiôr  Gigas est molestiæ machinator  giant is discomfort's

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46 As it has already been explained, Ymir was the first giant.
inventor

Odd-rúnar hóna
Odd-rúnæ vir
man of Oddrún

flagōa faðir
Furiarum parens
Furies' father

föstre grídar
Erynnis alumnus
Erinna's pupil

hárr tyrr
procerus\textsuperscript{48} Dæmon
elongated demon

A reading of both the Latin and Old Norse texts show that there is lack of agreement in most of the periphrases, mainly due to the use of Greek and Latin mythologies in the Latin texts. For example, the first circumlocution \textit{praūta smiðr} ‘smith/craftsman of struggles’ differs from ‘inventor of discomfort’. Besides, in the third phrase Jón refers to the Furies, the personification of wickedness in Latin mythology. The Old Norse text renders \textit{flagōa faðir}, that is, ‘father of giantesses’. In the fourth periphrasis, this time a Greek mythological figure is introduced, namely Erinna, one of the Furies. The Old Norse text has \textit{föstre gridar} ‘foster son of Gríðr’, a giantess in the Scandinavian mythology. The last Old Norse description shows \textit{hárr tyrr} ‘tall warrior’. In all the phrases, \textit{húrs} is presented as a giant.

\textsuperscript{47} Oddrún is the name of a female giant.

\textsuperscript{48} Both ON hárr and Lat \textit{procerus} are most probably connected with the shape of the rune.
Protoplastor\textsuperscript{49}, Ómi\textsuperscript{50}, qu: miles [...]. Militiæ Mercurius in præliis exultans (‘the first who was created, Allfather, i.e. soldier [...]. Mercurius jumping in the militia’s battles’.)

This structure is not as coherent as the others. First of all, the rune-name does not appear at the beginning of each stanza. Second, the description of òss is not set in columns. The immediate inference could be that Jón had problems in setting a single meaning for this rune. This time, the descriptions chosen by Jón are related exclusively to Óðinn.

Reid cr ás, og ross undir, \quad Quasi centaurus sit. \quad As though it was a centaurus.
hljóm r landa \quad sonus soli \quad Ground’s sound
hórk u hóst för \quad præceps profection \quad march towards the abyss
ó-mak fáka \quad molestia equorum \quad horses’ annoyance
[...] 
kyr-seta, \quad tranquilla sedes, \quad calm seat/throne,
og kemr frammi sínu \quad sed cito properans \quad but coming forward

Both the Old Norse and Latin periphrasis agree in the main, except for the first. Jón has chosen a periphrasis instead of synonyms or kennings as in the Old Norse text. Whereas the former text reads ‘reid is god, and horse under’, the latter

\textsuperscript{49} Protoplastor is a Christian term.

\textsuperscript{50} Ómi is one of the names of Óðinn, a personification of the wind as the voice of god (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957: 472).
has 'as though it was a centaurus'. All the periphrases seem to relate to horse riding.

\[\text{Kaun er hildar hogg} \quad \text{Hildur, qv: Bellona, eius verber} \quad \text{Hildr or Bellona, her whip} \]

\[\text{bar-dage} \quad \text{id est conflictus, prælium turbæ} \quad \text{that is fight, the crowd's battle} \]

\[\text{fölks fä-kjæti} \quad \text{turbæ tristitia} \quad \text{crowd's sadness} \]

\[\text{skot-heidar skaði} \quad \text{dammum sagittarum} \quad \text{damage of the arrows} \]

\[\text{handar mein} \quad \text{qui antrax, ignis facer} \quad \text{an ulcer, fire makes} \]

As for the first periphrasis, both versions share the figure of *Hildr* (cf. ON *hildar hogg* 'Hildr's blow'). *Hildr* is the name of one of the valkyries in the Scandinavian mythology. The valkyries were Óðinn's special attendants. They were in charge of choosing heroes to go to Valhall among the slain in battle. However, the Latin text goes farther and equates *Hildr* with *Bellona*, Mars' sister and the personification of war in the Latin mythology. In the following line, *kaun* is only seen as 'battle', whereas it is more extensively explained in the Latin text.

The last circumlocution differs in both versions. *Handar mein* means 'a sore in the hand', which has nothing to do with the Latin explanation 'an ulcer, fire makes'. *Kaun*’s description is circumscribed to wounds resulting from battle fights and the use of weapons in general. Contrary to what appears in the rune poems, no reference whatsoever is made to children.
Hagall er himna dú'n  Ætheris pluma,  

himna grjót,  ætheris salebræ  

hrim-bruma  pruinæ tonitru  

dunu draf  tonitru murmur, vel susurrus  

hlyrmis, mjöll eða sallt,  aeris farina, vel sal.  

Sky’s plumage  

sky’s roughness  

thunder’s embers  

thunder’s murmur, or  

whisper  

sky’s flour, or salt.

The Old Norse word dú'n in the first periphrasis refers to feather beds or pillows51. The Latin gloss is pluma ‘plumage/feathers’. In the second description, the more precise Old Norse term grjót ‘gravel’ corresponds to the Latin word salebræ ‘roughness’. The third phrase in the Old Norse text differs somewhat from the Latin one. The former shows hrim-bruma, literally ‘rime thunder’, whereas the latter has pruinæ tonitru ‘thunder’s embers’. Hagall is sometimes described in terms of its roughness (‘pebbles’), some others of its whiteness (and so compared to flour or salt).

Nauð er hall-æri  Fames, annonæ charitas, inedia  

hunger, shortage of  

crops, abstinence  

hernaðar fregn  belli rumores  

rumours of war  

mein-hætt gånga i fjalli  periculosa montium peragratio  

dangerous route  

in the mountains  

unnit verk, ógiört  operam perditam habere  

to lose the job  

---

51 Olc dúinn, MnE down, is the second element in the Icelandic compound word eider-down. Fr édre-don, G eder-don or eider-duam. This word is of Icelandic origin.
sjó-volk á sundi  naufragi periculum  danger of the
shipwrecked

The first circumlocution is much simpler in the Old Norse version than in the Latin. The former only renders hall-ær grant, that is, ‘famine/bad season’, whereas the latter adds ‘shortage of crops, abstinence’. There is a different nuance in the second kenning: the Old Norse text has ‘news of plundering’, whereas the Latin line has ‘rumours of war’. In the fourth description, nauð is viewed as unnt verk, ógiорт ‘performed work, undone’ for the simpler Latin expression ‘to lose the job’. Finally, the last Old Norse phrase means ‘sea-difficulty in the straits’, whereas the Latin renders ‘danger of the shipwrecked’. As in the other sources, the image of nauð as ‘constraint’ is also hinted in this list.

Ís er straum-fójl  Torrentis tabula  torrent’s board
vatna dún  undarum pluma  waves’ plumage
felldr vatna  indumentum\(^{52}\)  aquarium  water’s clothes

 [...]  
item: Snáka sótt  vermium dolor  snake’s sickness
bylgju hverfa  fluctuum sedatio  the waves’ calmness

This list shows few variations between the two versions. They make allusion to íss as a frozen board, image which is also introduced in the Old

\(^{52}\) The word *indumentum* is also used in an ecclesiastical context.
Icelandic Rune Poem. It must make reference to icy lakes and waters which can be crossed over only if they are frozen. It is also depicted as water’s clothing.

\[ \text{Ár er himna skeinking} \quad \text{Ætherum donum} \quad \text{Sky as a present} \]
\[ \text{gródi vallar,} \quad \text{flores campi} \quad \text{field’s flowers} \]
\[ \text{siglu fákr á ferð} \quad \text{navis proficiscens} \quad \text{ship leaving/sailing} \]
\[ \text{gleði þjóða} \quad \text{gaudium populorum} \quad \text{peoples’ happiness} \]
\[ \text{flugu fagnaðr} \quad \text{muscarum delicium} \quad \text{flies’ delight} \]

The second periphrasis varies in the two versions. Whereas in the former it is rendered as ‘field’s growth’ (\textit{gródi vallar}), in the latter it is described as ‘field’s flowers’ (\textit{flores campi}). \textit{Ár} is also depicted as good weather for ships. Jón explains this rune-name not only in relation to men, happy when there is a good year, and therefore also fruits, good crops, etc., but also in connection with insects and flowers.
Table 41. A folio in Jón Ólafsson’s Runologia (1752 : 138)
Sól er: Sunna, fagra hvel, Sol, Phoebus, splendidus globus sun, Phoebus, splendid globe

álf-roðull dægra præclarus radius dierum very brilliant circle of the days

Suðra Leika pumilionis amica. Suðri est a dwarf’s friend.

Gigas sustentas meridiem Suðri is a giant holding the south

syster mána soror Phæbes Phoebes’ sister

Jón once more makes use of Latin mythology and introduces the figure of Phoebus, the sun god. The phrase álf-roðull (‘elfin beam/light) in the second circumlocution is a poetical name assigned to the sun. The following Old Norse periphrasis Suðra leika ‘Suðri’s plaything’ is very short and simple if compared to the Latin. It is worth mentioning that Jón does not explain the meaning of Suðra in the Old Norse text. He probably expected the Scandinavian readers to know its meaning. However, he does clarify this term in the Latin version (“Suðri is a giant holding the south”), probably intended for those unfamiliar with the Scandinavian mythology. During the creation of the Earth, the gods set the dwarfs Norðri, Suðri, Austri and Vestri at its four corners, bidding them sustain it upon their shoulders and from them the four points of the compass received their present

\[\text{\textsuperscript{53} Probably an error for sustentans.}\]
names of North, South, East and West (Guerber, 1994: 6). The last line is also
different in both versions: the Old Norse phrase reads 'moon’s sister' and the
Latin 'Phoebe’s sister'. Here Phoebe is identified with the moon, corroborated by
the Old Norse expression *syster mána*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Týr heitir hinn hugaði ás</th>
<th>Quasi animosum numen</th>
<th>As if it was a numen$^{54}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fenris Bani</td>
<td>Fenrici Lupi percussor</td>
<td>murderer of the wolf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fenris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bróðir Þórs</td>
<td>germanus Thori,</td>
<td>Thorn’s brother,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>divi Asiatici</td>
<td>Asian god$^{55}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mundar-turn, og kjærleiki</td>
<td>manus turris et amoris, et coetera,</td>
<td>guardianship’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>de quibus vide Eddam, ut:</td>
<td>and love’s tower, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for which see the Edda.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jón begins by describing *þýr* differently in the two versions: the Old Norse
text reads ‘þýr is called the stout-hearted god’, whereas in the Latin text he simply
writes ‘as if it was a numen’. What Jón does here is to refer back to different
stories mostly taken from the Edda. The legends behind these circumlocutions
must have been well known for Icelanders of the time as well as for educated
people in other Scandinavian countries.

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$^{54}$ Or divine spirit.

$^{55}$ That is, one of the Aesir.
Bjarkan er frjófgat trje Frondidæ arbores Leafy trees
ljómandi lim fulgidi rami bright branches
manns ávõxtur humanus fructus man’s fruit
lin-klæði Akranna og Viðarins linteum agri et arborum fields’ and trees’ linen
breina Efling vor-mánadår ramorum productio vernalis spring products of branches
ita æquivalentia the branches, and thus equivalent (things)

The last periphrasis differs somewhat in the Old Norse and the Latin texts. The Old Norse term vor-mánadår means ‘spring-month’, whereas the Latin equivalent is vernalis ‘spring’. Jón employs periphrases which could describe any leefy and very green tree.

Logr er landa bellti Regionum baltheus Regions’ belt
eya lindi insularum cingulum island’s belt
silúnga hús pisciculorum domicilium fish’s house
blód jarðar sanguis telluris earth’s blood
dreyri jarðar vallium cruor valleys’ blood

The Old Norse and Latin texts agree in the most part. It is only worth commenting the fact that Jón uses the more particular term silúnga ‘(of) young
salmon or trout’ for the more general *pisciculum* ‘(of) fish’. It is interesting to note how in these periphrases Jón makes use of some words (as belt or blood) at least twice. *Logr* is explained mainly as ‘river water’ which surrounds, like a belt does, islands and regions.

Maðr er myrkr veralldar Homo, Tenebræ mundi Man, the world’s darkness
hláturs efni fomentum risus fomentation of laugh
[...]
aðnu and-spaði fortunae objectum object of fortune
ó-vínr andans hostis spiritus enemy’s ghost
aura á-hyggja numorum nutricius treasure’s food

Jón seems to have known a large amount of periphrases to describe *maðr* ‘man’. They coincide in both versions, with only a small variant in the last circumlocution. Here *aura á-hyggja* ‘money concern’ has been translated in Latin as *numorum nutricius* ‘treasure’s food’. Man is depicted in both a positive and a negative way.

Ýr er hvít-mylinga breitir Sed de hac litera alias nil habeo, Eius loco, stunginn ys apponitur.

Of this letter I have nothing, in its place *stunginn ys* is set.
vök silúnga  Pisciculorum fores, vel foramen  fish entrance, or opening
fiska upp-dráattr  anguillarum extractio  extraction of eels
brotið borð vatna  fracta tecta aquæ  broken water roofs
þíl lamað ósa  compunctus asser fluminum  pierced rivers’ timber
stormr á svelli  turbo glaciei  ice whirlwind

It is clear from the analysis of the earlier sources that the meaning of ýr was not easy to account for. Text A of the Old Icelandic Rune Poem was almost completely illegible, but its name was glossed in Latin as arcus ‘bow’. Text B, however, was completely erased. According to the reading of this same line in the Old Norwegian poem, ýr meant ‘yew-tree’. Finally, the Old Swedish text lacks the periphrasis for this rune. From this data it could be reasonable to think that the authors of later sources had problems in providing descriptions of this rune-name. In the case of Runologia, and more precisely in this section, Jón provides the reader with a completely new periphrasis hvít-mylinga hreitir ‘thrower of arrows’. This description could perfectly relate ýr to the meaning ‘bow’. But what it is striking is the fact that Jón does not provide the Latin counterpart. Instead, he explains that he cannot resort to any information about this rune. And that is why he provides periphrases for the stunginn ys. It is unknown where he may have taken the data from. The descriptions given for the stunginn ys have nothing to do with either yew-tree or bow, but rather with water or ice.

56 Hvit-melingar is used poetically to designate ‘arrows’ (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957: 303).
In the third part, section 2 called *De figura et interpretatio ænigmatica, horumque epithetica constructione Latina* (pp. 140-1), an initial note records that this chapter was not written by Jón. He names Magnús Ólafsson í Laufási (c. 1573-1636) or Sveinn Jónsson á Barði (1603-87) as possible authors (Page, 1998: 22). The text is a version of the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* both in Old Norse and Latin. Sometimes the author does not make a direct translation of the Old Norse text. Instead, he adds some nuance or makes a comment to make the meaning of the line clearer to the reader. Besides, he also translates the rune-names into Latin:

\[ \textit{Fé er frænda rágr, oc firða gaman, graf-seiðis gata.} \]

(*Fé* is family strife, and man’s delight, coalfish’s path\(^{57}\).)

\[ \textit{Fe, id est: pecunia est cognatorum jurgium, divitum deliciæ, viperæ via.} \]

(*Fé*, that is: money is family strife, abundance’s delight and coalfish’s path\(^{58}\).)

The second periphrasis in the Old Norse version is identical with the one in text B of the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*. The writer records a closely similar Latin line, with only one variant for the second circumlocution: instead of ‘men’s delight’ he glosses ‘abundance’s delight’. The direct Latin translation of *fé* is *pecunia* ‘money’. These periphrases are a commonplace allusion to *fé* ‘wealth’ as men’s enemy preventing them from achieving happiness.

\[ \textit{Úr er skýja grátr, skara þerrir, ok hirðís hatr.} \]

(*Úr* is clouds’ tears, hay’s destroyer, and herdsman’s hate.)

\(^{57}\) The translations into modern English are my own.

\(^{58}\) My translation.
id est: imber est nubium luctus, nubium exsiccatio, pastorum odium.

(that is: rain is clouds’ weeping, clouds’ drying, herdsman’s hate.)

On this occasion, skara ferrar ‘hay’s destroyer’ is glossed as nubium exsiccatio ‘clouds’ drying’, more in the line of the previous periphrasis. Úr is translated into Latin as imber ‘rain’.

Þurs er qvenna qvol, kletta bue, Varð-rúnar ver.

(Þurs is women’s torment, inhabitant of the mountains, and Varðrún’s mate.)

Þurs, Rupicola, mulierum formido, Saxorum incola, Varð-rúnae maritus. Varðruna proprium nomen fæminis gigantum.

(Þurs, rocks settler, women’s fear, stones inhabitants and Varðrúna’s mate. Varðrúnna is the proper name of the giants’ mates.)

This is one of the lines in which the author goes beyond the kennings to explain parts of it. He translates Þurs, not as Latin gigas ‘giant’, but as rupicola ‘rocks settler’, which is a characteristic given to giants in the Scandinavian mythology. In this way he uses kennings instead of direct translations. Probably intended for people not acquainted with it, he explains the term Varðrúna which is also recorded in the B text of the Old Icelandic Rune Poem, although with a small variant: Valrinar. This word is partly illegible in text A. Page (1998: 27) suggests it to be a name Valrún with a first element from valr ‘the dead’. According Jón Ólafsson, it is the proper name of the giants’ mates.

Ós er alldin-gauatr, Val-hallar visir, Ás-gardr jofur.

(Ós is ancient Gauatr, Valhall’s ruler, Ásgardr’s king.)

(Ós. Öðinn prince of the Goths. Chief of the rooms of hell. Ásgarðr’s king.)

*Alldingaur* ‘ancient Gautr’ is glossed as ‘prince of the Goths’. In Old Icelandic *Gautr* is a byname for Öðinn. Besides, ós is glossed in Latin as ‘Öðinn’.

*Valhallar*, which is a term from the Scandinavian mythology, is translated by means of a circumlocution in Latin: *aulae inferorum* ‘rooms of hell’. The two last periphrases have been shifted with respect to their position in the line of the Old Icelandic poem.

*Reið er sitjandi sæla, snúðig fór, ok jórs erfiði.*

(*Reið is bliss of the seated, swift journey, and horse’s toil.*)

*Reið, equitatio: sedentis delectatio, iter præceps, veredi labor.*

(*Reið, riding: bliss of the seated, swift journey, horse’s toil.*)

The meaning of both lines is the same. The only added information in the Latin text is the gloss of reið, namely, *equitatio* ‘riding’. These kennings have suffered no change with respect to the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* and are conventional descriptions of horse riding.

*Kaun er Barna ból, ok Bar-daga fór, holld-fiua hús.*

(*Kaun is children’s scourge, and battle’s path, home to putrefaction.*)

*Kaun: Hulcus: puer<orum> molestatio; prælii vestigia, saniei theca.*

(*Kaun: Ulcer: children’s scourge, combat’s traces, bag of pus.*)

Jón has a variant here. Instead of simply *bardagi* as in the Old Icelandic poem, he uses *bar-daga fór* glossed as ‘combat’s traces’. Besides, *holld-fiua hús* ‘home to putrefaction’ as translated by Page (1998), is glossed in Latin as ‘bag of pus’. *Saniei* is the genitive of *sanies*, a Latin word meaning ‘rotten blood, blood-
mixed material', which could perhaps be translated as 'a bag of pus', probably to indicate a boil full of pus. The second kenning in both the Old Norse and Latin lines may refer to ulcers being produced as the result of fighting. The direct Latin translation of kaun is hulcus, that is, 'ulcer'.

Hagall er kalda korn, knappa drífa, snáka sótt.

(Hagall is cold corn, driving sleet, snakes’ sickness.)

Hagall: grando. Algida seges, globorum pluvia, Vermium morbus.

(Hagall: hail. Cold crops, earth’s rain, snakes’ sickness.)

There are also some variants in this text. The Old Norse kalda korn ‘cold corn’ is rendered as Latin algida seges ‘cold crops’. Instead of ‘driving sleet’, Jón glosses knappa drífa as ‘earth’s rain’.

Nauð er þýa þrá, þúngri kastr, vósamlig verk.

(Nauð is servant’s grief, rough conditions, tiring toil.)

Nauð, calamitas. Mancipii opella, adversa sors, periculosus labor.

(Nauð, calamity. Servant’s work, opposing luck, dangerous toil.)

The Latin term calamitas ‘calamity’ embraces all the nuances of nauð ‘need/constraint’. The author changes ‘servant’s grief’ in the Old Norse text for ‘servant’s work’ in the Latin, and ‘rough conditions’ for ‘opposing luck’.

Ís er Árbókr, unnar þak, feigs forráð.

(Ís is river-bark, wave’s thatch, betrayal for the doomed/fated to die.)

Ís, id est glacies, est cortex fluvii, amni operculum, mortali ruina.

(Ís, that is, ice, is river-bark, river’s work, mortals’ ruin.)
The only difference with respect to the Old Icelandic poem is the last periphrasis, which is somehow altered. Text A of the former text shows *feigra manna far*, whereas text B has *feiks manz farad*. The Old Norse version differs from the Latin text. For instance, unnar pak ‘wave’s thatch’ is glossed as *amni operculum* ‘river’s work’, and *feigs forrad* ‘betrayal for the doomed’ is rendered as *mortali ruina* ‘mortals’ ruin’. The word *forrad* means ‘might, power, guardianship’, but the verb *forrad* means ‘to betray’. Taking into consideration the content of the phrase, it seems then best to translate the noun as coming from the verb, namely, ‘betrayal’. *Forrad* may also be the underlying word in the Old Icelandic Rune Poem, version B, spelt *farad*. This latter kenning is difficult to explain in relation to ice. Finally, *iss* is translated as Lat *glacies* ‘ice’.

**Ár er gumna góði, gladt sumar, al-gróinn akur.**

(Ár is men’s benefit, happy summer, thriving field.)

*Annum commune bonum, æstas exhilarans, ager maturus.*

(Common good year, year that brings happiness, thriving field.)

Gott sumar ‘good year’ in the Old Icelandic poem has been changed to gladt sumar ‘happy summer’. Besides, the Latin text has skipped the first periphrasis. Instead, an explanation for ár has been provided: *annus commune bonum* ‘common good year’.

*Söl er skipa (rectius puto skýja) skjólldr, skinandi ródoll, hverfandi hvel.*

(Sól is ships’ shield, shining halo, turning wheel.)

*Sol est ornementum navibus (corr. cipeus nubium), resplendens radius, volubilis rota.*
(Sól is ships’ adornment (corr. clouds’ shield), shining halo, changing wheel.)

The last periphrasis *hverfandi hvel* ‘turning wheel’ does not appear in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*. In the latter the circumlocution is *isa alldrträgi*. Besides, the first periphrasis is altered in the Latin version. Instead of ‘cloud’s shield’, it renders ‘ships’ adornment’. This time no direct translation has been provided, probably because sól is also the Latin word for ‘sun’ and could be correctly understood as such.

*Týr er Balldurs bróðir, ein-hendr ás, úlfs leifur.*

(*Tyr* is Baldr’s brother, one-handed god, wolf’s left-over.)

*Týr, Mavors; Balderi germanus, mancum numen, a Lupo mutilatus.*

(*Tyr*, Mars; Baldr’s brother, one-handed god, mutilated by a wolf.)

Text A of the Old Icelandic poem has *hofa hilmir* as the first periphrasis for *týr*. Text B renders *friggjar fadir*. Jón has chosen another description, namely, *Balldurs broðir* ‘Baldr’s brother’, which has been kept in the Latin version. Following other sources, this author also equals Týr to Mars. Besides, *úlfs leifur* ‘wolf’s left-over’ is glossed by means of another periphrasis: *a Lupo mutilatus* ‘mutilated by a wolf’.

*Bjarkan er litið lim, og lausgat trjé, vaxandi viðr.*

(*Bjarkan* is little branch, and leafy tree, growing wood.)

*Bjarkan, Betula: viridæ frondes, arbor germinans, lignum succrescens.*

(*Bjarkan*, birch: green foliage, germinating tree, sprouting/growing wood.)

This line can not be directly compared to the one in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*, since both the A and B texts are partly illegible. Here the alliteration that
was lacking in the Old Icelandic text appears. The main difference between the Old Norse and the Latin versions is the first periphrasis. Whereas the former has ‘little branch’, the latter reads as ‘green foliage’. The author of this section alludes to *bjarkan* as the Old Norse term for Lat *betula*, that is, birch-tree.

*Lôgr er vellandi vimr, vidr ketill, grunînga grund.*

(*Lôgr* is bubbling river, great cauldron, fishes’ ground.)

*Lôgr, Liquor fluctuansfretum, Laxus lebes, solearum solum.*

(*Lôgr*, water running through the strait, wide cauldron, groundlings’ ground.)

The order of appearance of the l- and m-runes in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* does not coincide with the one in this text. Here the l-rune precedes the m, as in the alphabet. This line is identical with the one in the Old Icelandic poem except for the last circumlocution, where *glaummunga* (text A)/*glummunga* (text B) has been changed to *grunînga*. A Latin gloss for the rune-name has not been supplied. *Vellandi vimr* ‘bubbling Vimur’ has not been directly translated into Latin either. Instead, the periphrasis *liquor fluctuans fretum* ‘water running through the strait’ has been employed.

*Maðr er manns gaman, molldar auke, skipa skreytir.*

(*Maðr* is man’s delight, earth’s dust, ships’ ornament.)

*Maðr, homo, hominem oblectat, pulveris additamentum, puppium pigmentarius.*

(*Maðr*, man, amuses man, dust’s increase, ships’ ornament.)

These periphrases are identical to the ones employed in the Old Icelandic poem. In this manuscript, *manns gaman* ‘man’s delight’ has been translated as *hominem oblectat* ‘(man) amuses man’. The Latin equivalent of *skipa skreytir*
'ships' ornamenta', a person who embellishes/ornaments ships', is *puppium pigmentarius* which should be better translated as 'paint trader'. *Maðr* is glossed as Lat *homo* 'man'.

Ýr er tví-bendur Bogi, og Bardarga gagn, fifu\(^{59}\) farbauti\(^{60}\).

(Ýr is double-bent bow, and battle's advantage/victory, destroyer of arrows.)

Ýr, Arcus, expansa tendicula, prælìi propugnaculum, jaculi excussor.

(Ýr, bow, extended rope, battle's defence, dart shooter.)

This is one of the most problematic lines not only in the Old Icelandic poem, but also in the other sources. It is not recorded in text A of this poem, and is partly erased in text B. That is why no satisfying translation has been provided so far. The Latin translation of the line does not correspond exactly with the Old Norse text. First, *tví-bendur* 'two-bent bow' is translated as *exansa tendicula* 'extended rope'. Second, *bardaga gagn* 'battle's advantage/victory' appears as *prælìi propugnaculum* 'battle's defence'. Finally, instead of *fifu farbauti* 'destroyer of arrows', Jón has chosen *jaculi excussor* 'dart shooter'. But from the different descriptions, and the Latin gloss *arcus*, it is clear that the intended meaning is 'bow'.

After a close view to these lists, some main conclusions can be drawn. First of all, except in those cases in which both the Old Icelandic and the Old Norwegian rune poems have almost identical kennings, *Runologia* does not usually record the periphrases as found in the latter poem, but those in the former.

\(^{59}\) Fifa means 'cotton grass', but it designates an arrow metaphorically (Cleasby-Vigfusson, 1957: 155).

\(^{60}\) *Farbauti* literarily means 'ship-beater'.
It seems as though these lists were rooted in the Old Icelandic text and that this hoard of kennings had been used widely in Iceland but not in Norway. The Old Norwegian poem was surely not so well known for an Icelander like Jón.

Second, even though in some occasions Jón may have copied from earlier sources, he makes his own corrections. This fact may demonstrate that he had a good knowledge of the periphrases, helped by the fact that he was an Icelander. It seems that the kennings in the Old Icelandic runic text have not been placed at random and that the connection with this poem may have been close.

Third, as for the rune-names significance, since at least two or three kennings are taken from the Old Icelandic runic poem, the text is very close to it. And so, ár is depicted as good year and prosperity; bjarkan is seen as a leafy tree; fè is described as having negative consequences not only among kinsmen but also among warriors; hagall, iss, kaun, lógr keep their meaning as found in the rune poems, i.e. ‘hail’, ‘ice’, ‘ulcer’, ‘water’; man is interpreted not only as delight but also as causer of sorrow; nauð also means ‘constraint’. Interesting enough is the case of óss. In some sections, Jón Ólafsson provides kennings not only for the meaning ‘god’, but also for ‘estuary’, whereas in others he even has problems in rendering a periphrasis for this rune-name. The analysis of these lists proves that, in the case of óss, there was a double meaning. Reidr ‘riding’ is seen as horse’s toil, but also as man’s delight; sól and týr keep their meanings as ‘sun’ and the god ‘Týr’. Finally, yðr is described as ‘bow’ and not ‘yew-tree’ and þurs as ‘giant’.
2.3. Olaus Verelius’ *Manuductio Compendiosa ad Runographiam Scandicam Antiquam*

The Swedish scholar Olaus Verelius wrote in 1675 his *Manuductio compendiosa ad runographiam Scandicam antiquam recte intelligendam*. It comprises runic material similar to that found in Jón Ólafsson’s and Worm’s works.

Chapter seven (24-34) consists of the typical descriptions of the runenames of the sixteen-graph futhark, giving first the graph, then the name and some prídeilur, even though sometimes they are reduced to tuideilur. Some of these periphrases are identical or similar to the ones found in the *Old Swedish Rune Poem*. The rune poem is embedded in a text together with other material, and it clearly belongs to a calendar content, since Verelius also provides the names, although not the periphrases, of the three extra golden numbers: aurlaugr, twimadur, and belghor. He most likely took this material from Bureus.

Prima in ordine Runa est, nobis Frey, Islandis Fie dicta, h.e. opes, pecuniae cujus in prídeilum hoc symbolum est: Fie Frænda rogur, sfonis bedur, h.e. Pecunia litium & fallaciarum inter consanguineos materia. Item, draconum lectus: auro enim incubare dracones veteribus creditum.

(F is the first rune in the order, for us Frey, in Icelandic it is pronounced Fie, that is, work, wealth whose symbol in prídeilur is: Fie family strife, Fafni’s bed, i.e. money arguments, source of deceit among kinsmen. Also, dragons’ bed: old people believe that dragons lie on gold.)

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61 The translation is my own. Sometimes a literal translation has been modified in order to obtain a grammatically correct English.
Verelius glosses fé as Latin opes, pecuniae, that is, 'work', 'wealth'. It is interesting to note that his Latin translation is not faithful to the Old Norse text, but is rather an explanatory translation. Whereas in the latter he renders fofnis bedur 'Fafnis' bed' (also in Runologia), in the former he writes fallaciarum inter consanguineos materia 'source of deceit among kinsmen'. The apparent reason why he did not make a direct translation is that the Latin explanation was intended for those not acquainted with the Scandinavian mythology. Fofnis bedur is a variant of fofnis folld as found in Runologia (see former section).

\( \wedge \) Secunda est Runa, & Ur nominatur h. est, nivosa & horrida procella; cujus symbolum: Ur er vesta veder: i.e. pessima aeris tempestas est procella illa horrida.

(\( \wedge \) is the second rune, and is called ur, i.e., terrible snow storm; whose symbol [is]: Ur is the worst weather: i.e., a terrible storm is the worst tempest.)

The description of ur as nivosa & horrida procella is not taken from the rune poems. It is worth noticing that the words ur and veder are not treated as a compound word in this version (cf. Granius’ urvåder). It is an explanation of ur as 'worst weather', 'a storm', rather than 'rain'. The periphrasis vesta veder is most likely a variant of Bureus’ västan väpr 'westerly weather'.

\( \triangleright \) Tertia est Runa, Thor dicta, Islandis Thuss, cum symbolo Kletta ibui. h.e. gigas rupium incola.

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62 For an account of Fafnis' myth, see former section.
(Þ is the third rune, Thor pronounced, in Icelandic Thuss, with the symbol inhabitant of the mountains, i.e., giant settler of the rocks.)

The description of this rune is very straightforward. The periphrases preserve the same tradition as the Old Icelandic Rune Poem, since in the other Scandinavian poems þurs is described as women’s torment.

 vel Þ Quartum inter Runas obtinet locum, & dicitur aliis Os, h.e. Ostium fluminis; aliis Odin, h.e. Odinus Deus, prioris denominationis symbolum est, Lekr os i vidi, h.e. Fluminum ostia implacidam impetuosaamqne in mare transmittunt aquam [...] Aliud eiusdem Runæ symbolum est Os i huarie á: h.e. quodlibet flumen suum habet ostium.

(Þ has the fourth place among the runes, and it is called Os in some places, i.e., river mouth; in others Odin, i.e., the god Oðinn; the symbol of the previous denomination [is], os ?lies in a wide area?, i.e., estuaries carry turbulent and impetuous waters into the sea [...] Another symbol of the same rune is ðss [is] in every river: i.e. each river has its estuary.)

Even though this author presents the meanings ‘estuary’ and ‘Óðinn’, he does not provide any periphrases for the second, which could lead to think that Verelius was more acquainted with the meaning ‘estuary’. Os i huarie á is the recorded periphrasis in Granius’ version of the Old Swedish Rune Poem: ðs i hvario á, whereas lekr os i vidi appears in Bureus’ text.

R Quinta est Runa, & dicitur reid h.e. equitatio; & hoc in Trideilum exprimitur symbolo. Reid snudug for, iors erfidi, h.e. equitatio cuum iter, equi labor. Item in Tuideilum, reid hesta spreingur. i.e. equitatio equi pernicies vel diruptio.
(R is the fifth rune, and it is pronounced reid, i.e., riding; and in þrideilur this is explained with this symbol. Reid [is] quick journey, horse’s toil, i.e., quick way, horse’s toil. Also in tuideilur, reid [is] horse’s bursting, i.e., horse’s damage or fracture.)

Verelius glosses reid as equitatio ‘riding’. Snúðig ferð and jors erfiði are again identical to the periphrases in the Old Icelandic text. Hesta spreingu is also the variant in both versions of the Old Swedish Rune Poem: hástespräng.

♀ Sexta Runa, Kaun nominata, h.e. ulcus: eius symbolum König i köte werst, h.e. ulcus carnis pessimum.

♀ [is] the sixth rune, called kaun, i.e., ulcer: whose symbol [is] kön is the worst in the flesh, i.e., ulcer is the worst in the flesh.)

Kön i köte werst is identical to the description in the Old Swedish Rune Poem. Kaun does not posit any problem of interpretation, since it is glossed as ulcus ‘ulcer’.

* Priorem Runam in ordine proxime excipit, cui nomen Hagl h.e. grando, & symbolum in Trideilum, Kaldakorn, knappadriða, h.e. Frigoris granum, & rotundæ nivis descensus.

* it stands for the first rune in the following group, whose name [is] hagl, i.e. hail and the symbol in trideilur, cold grain, driving sleet, i.e. cold’s grain, and fall of the rounded snow.)

Again it seems as though Verelius preserves the Old Icelandic runic tradition. In the Old Norwegian one it is described as the coldest of grains, whereas in the Old Swedish it is i bo bást ‘at home the best’.
† Sequitur in ordine & naud vel nōd dicitur, h.e. necessitas. Eius symbolum habent Trideilur: Naud þungur kostur, vosamleg verk. h.e. necessitas dura conditio, opus arduum. Item Naud enda kostr. h.e. necessitas unam habet legem, eamque duram.

(†) follows in order and naud or nōd is said, i.e., need. It has a symbol in þrideilur: naud [is] rough conditions, tiring toil. i.e. need [is] hard condition, arduous work. Also naud [is] the only choice, i.e. need has one law and hard.)

Naud þungur kostur, vosamleg verk are variants of the Old Icelandic text: þungr kostr, vássamlig verk, whereas naud enda kostr is similar to the Old Swedish enda kust.

† Nona & omnium simplicissima est Runa, utpote unico simplici ductu constans, & Is dicta, h.e. glacies, cuius symbolum: Is bro bredast: h.e. glacies pons latissimus. In Trideiulum vero his epithetis effertur: Arborkur, unnar þeikia, oc feigs far h.e. cortex fluminum, maris tectum, & perituri vehiculum.

(† is the ninth and simplest rune, since it shows one and simple ductus, and it is called is, i.e., ice, whose symbol: Is [is] the widest bridge: i.e. ice [is] a very wide bridge. But in þrideilur it has another label: River-bark, wave’s thatch, and trouble for the doomed, i.e. rivers’ bark, sea’s roof and vehicle for the passer-by.)

Verelius treats is bro as two separate words and thus agrees with Bureus’ text against Granius’ isbro. The widest bridge is a common motif in both the Old Norwegian and the Old Swedish poems. Arborkr, unnar þeikja og feigrar manna far are the periphrases also employed in the Old Icelandic text. The
circumlocution feigs far ‘trouble for the doomed’ differs from the Latin counterpart perituri vehiculum ‘vehicle for the passer-by’.

1 Decimum occupat locum, Ār cognio minata h.e. anonna. In Trideilum: Ār gunna gamman (gunna giæde), allgroin akur (iardar grode), foldra fegurd. h.e. Ænnus vel anonna, hominum delectatio, ager indique virens & lætus, camporum decor.

(4 occupies the tenth position, it is called ār, i.e. good crops. In þrideilur: Ār [is] man’s pleasure (man’s benefit)63, thriving crops (earth’s growing/produce), field’s beauty. i.e. Year or good crop, men’s delight, field green and happy everywhere, fields’ adornment.)

Iardar grode and foldra fegurd do not appear in the Scandinavian poems. Verelius does not gloss ār as ‘summer’ or ‘good year’ as it is the case in the rune poems, but as the more specific ‘good crops’.

4 Undecima est Runa, Sun vel Sol dicta h.e. Sol, cum epitheto Knábogt h.e. genu incurvatum, quod figura sua representat. In trideilum, Sol skya skiolldur, skinandi rodull, huerfandi huel. h.e. Sol ætheris scutum, rota splendens, globus discedens dicitur.

(4 is the eleventh rune, sun or sól is called, i.e. sun, with the epithet knábogt i.e. bowed in the knee, which its figure represents. In þrideilur, sol [is] clouds’ shield, shining hallo, turning wheel, i.e. sun [is] sky’s shield, shining wheel64, moving away globe.)

63 Gunna has been misspelt as guna.

64 Rodull actually means ‘roll, parchment roll or scroll’.
The first two kennings are identical with the ones in the Old Icelandic text.

Verelius explains the word Knábogt as representing the kné-sól.

† Duodecimum tenere locum voluerunt, & Tyr nominarunt, h.e. Martem, cuius in Trideilum symbolum, einhendur As, h.e. As unimanus.

(They wanted † to have the twelfth position, and called it Tyr, i.e., Mars, whose symbol in prideilur, one-handed god, i.e., one-handed god.)

Týr as the one-handed god is the motif in all the Scandinavian poems. The parallelism between Týr and Mars is the result of an interpretatio christiana.

§ Hæc Runa Biark, Biörk, Birk dicitur, h.e. Betula, cuius symbolum, biarks brumur frodast, h.e. frondosi betulae rami lætissime crescent. Item, Biark lunda fegurd, h.e. betula lucorum decus.

(§ this rune is called biark, biörk, birk, i.e. birch, whose symbol, lushest birch-bud, i.e., the leafy branches of the birch growing happily). Also, biark beauty of the groves, i.e. birch [is] woods' ornament.)

For Verelius biark undoubtedly means birch, since he glosses it with the Latin term betula 'birch tree'. The circumlocution brumur frodast is found also in Bureus' text.

† Laugur hæc dicta fuit Runa, h.e. aqua, cuius in Deilis epitheton, laugur skipa fold, lania belte, h.e. aqua vel mare est navium campus, terrarum cingulum.

Item hamra forron h.e. scopulorum explorator.

(† laugur is called the rune, i.e. water, whose epithet in deilis, laugur skipa fold, lania belte, i.e., water or sea is the ships' field, lands' belt. Also hamra forron, i.e., rocks' explorer.)

65 Lania must be a mistake for landa.
These descriptions have no parallels in the rune poems. However, *logr* as belt does appear in *Runologia*. It is equated with both river water and sea water.

♀ Malrunarum penultima est, cui *madur*, h.e. *homo* nomen est. Adjungitur ipso symbolum in treidelum: *madur er molldar auke, mans gaman*, h.e. *homo, vel, unusquisque, est pulveris augmentum*. Item *homo hominis delectatio*.

(♀ of the *målfrun* is the next-to-the-last, that *madur*, i.e. man is the name. To it is added the symbol in *brideilur: madur is earth’s dust, man’s delight, i.e. man or whoever/anyone, is augmentation of dust*. Also man [is] man’s delight.)

*Molldar auki* is one of the descriptions of *maðr* in both the Old Icelandic and the Old Norwegian rune poems. Granius’ version of the Old Swedish Rune Poem does not provide a periphrasis for this rune. However, Boreus’ text includes *mulakr*, which could be a misunderstanding of ON *moldar-auki*.

♀ Decima sexta, malrunarum augem claudit. Cuius autem sit valoris non ita perspicuum est [...]. Adducto ex Deilis symbolo, *Yr er bendur bogie*, h.e. ♀ est arcus intensus.

(♀ the sixteenth rune closes the number of *målfrun*. However, its value is not clear [...]. The symbol is taken from the deilis, *Yr is tensed bow*, i.e. ♀ is tensed bow.)

Verelius clearly indicates that the meaning of this rune is not well known. He renders the periphrasis as found in the Old Icelandic text, where the meaning intended is ‘bow’.
The material presented by Verelius appears to be a miscellanea from different sources or traditions, mainly the Old Icelandic and Old Swedish. Verelius was a Swede, and that may be the reason that he sometimes included data from the *Old Swedish Rune Poem*. He clearly knew both Granius’ and Bureus’ texts.

In relation to the rune-names, the rune *fe* keeps the meaning ‘wealth’. The name of the *þ*-rune is equated to ‘giant’. *Reið* has a more specific meaning indicated but not stated in the other sources, that is, ‘riding’. Something similar happens to *kaun* ‘ulcer’, *maðr* ‘man’ and *logr* ‘water’, though its scope extends to all sorts of water. *Hagall* and *naud* also keep the meanings ‘hail’ and ‘need’ respectively. *Íss* is ‘ice’, *ár* ‘year’ and *sól* ‘sun’. *Týr* has been translated as ‘Mars’ and not as the god Týr. However, this is not strange since, as it has been explained earlier in this work, *Týr* was often equated with the Roman *Mars*. *Bjarkan* is defined as ‘birch-tree’.

The problematic runes are once more the same. *Úr* is not clearly described as ‘rain’, but rather as ‘storm’. Verelius’ text presents a dual meaning for *óss*, though that of ‘Ódinn’ seems to be less known to the author. Finally, the author of this text does not seem to be sure about the meaning of *ýr*, and chooses to render the Old Icelandic text periphrasis *bendur bogie* ‘bent bow’.
V. CONCLUSIONS
1. Conclusions

As stated in the introduction, the aim of this work has been to contribute to a better understanding of rune-names. The study started from the premise that more information on the names of the runes could be obtained from Anglo-Saxon and Nordic manuscript and epigraphical sources taking into consideration that, in general, the evidence had not been allowed its full weight in the determination of the meanings of the rune-names. As an example, the editions of the *Old English Rune Poem* (specially the latest and more 'scientific' edition by Halsall) have not done enough to establish the names. In this sense, Page's fairly trustworthy corpus of English epigraphical inscriptions, and Derolez's manuscript work can help make more progress.

In Scandinavia modern scholars have endeavoured to classify and interpret the numerous inscriptions, but they have overlooked rune-names. As a whole, the way some authors have regarded the names of the runes has inevitably influenced their judgement, first of all, due to the fact that the meaning of a few rune-names has been provided without a sound comparative study of the sources; second, because some scholars have turned to cosmology in an attempt to explain them. All these misapplications and misinterpretations of the runic tradition (the most recent example of which are New Age adherents) have affected one way or another the perception of Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon literary texts where rune-names (mainly in the form of concept runes) are employed.
Conclusions

The present study has been divided into four main chapters. The first has considered the history of writing systems, since a work on runes should be preceded by an introduction to especially alphabetic writing, as a background for the discussion of the runic writing system. In this chapter it has also been explained how full phonetic writing, mainly in the form of alphabets, first developed and how the alphabet turned out to be extremely useful for the writing of languages. One example of alphabetic writing is the runic alphabet where each rune in the epigraphic tradition stands for a sound. The history of writing systems suggests that the use of common words as names for alphabetic letters was fairly common and that these were created as mnemonic devices. Memorising a small number of letter-names in a fixed order made it possible to learn quickly how to write. Normally each letter was called something. The Germanic peoples also chose to name the letters. As peoples adopted the alphabet, they introduced further adjustments motivated by the structure of their own language, as it is the case of the runes.

The first chapter concludes with the question of whether or not the rune-names are as old as the runes themselves. It must be assumed that the futhark, as all other alphabets, had letter-names from the beginning, although it is impossible to know if the recorded rune-names are the original. It would be very awkward, however, to assume that earlier unknown names were replaced by 500 A.D. The Anglo-Saxon runic tradition broke off from the common Continental and Scandinavian tradition about that time, but the names are for the most part the same in both traditions; they must therefore have been the rune-names in the
common tradition prior to the separation. If the rune-names as we encounter them today are original, then they could be a problem for the Latin theory of the origin of the runes. The rune-names are common words in the language, whereas Latin had meaningless sound presentations, like a, be, ce, etc. However, this particular idea of the nomination of the letters could have been borrowed from some other language like Irish, North-Etruscan, etc. Although the alphabet itself came from the Latin, this would not complicate the derivation.

Chapter II has included an extensive analysis of the sources on rune-names, which provides a useful perspective of their employment through time. This material has been classified according to the nature of the sources, that is, whether manuscript or epigraphical material, and to the kind of information they supply, namely spelling variants or meaning. It has also been necessary to distinguish between the original runic tradition and later learned or playful elaborations based on these names and their meanings.

It was traditionally believed that the letter-names as found in the Vienna Codex were Gothic forms of the rune-names. But scholars have proved that they are probably a late construction from the 800's based on antiquarian knowledge of the rune-names. Therefore, the date of the first piece of evidence on rune-names has to be pushed to the 9th c., the period to which the Abecedarium Nordmannicum belongs. This text is the oldest attested document on Old Norse rune-names. It includes runes of the shorter futhark and was probably written as a mnemonic text to remember the sequence of the runes. Most scholars consider this text to be a sort of rune poem. However, in the present work it has not been
regarded as such since, although it provides the rune-names themselves, it does not provide further information on the actual meaning of the rune-names; it has therefore been studied separately. The _Abecedarium Nordmannicum_ seems to have been written by continental scribes who contaminated the rune-names with spellings from their own dialects.

The record of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian rune-names is very sparse until about the 9th and 10th c. respectively. As a result, the transitional phases in the development of the rune-names during this period must be largely presupposed, since evidence of inscriptions is insufficient. It is manifest that the epigraphical use of rune-names is restricted almost wholly to Scandinavia, with a few inscriptions dating mainly from medieval times. Texts on runic objects containing rune-names have demonstrated that these were rarely used in inscriptions, but were more often the product of the *scriptoria*. Hence, it has been necessary to turn to the manuscript tradition from a period of several centuries and to the comparative examination of English and Scandinavian rune poems in order to trace their development. The main source has been English and Scandinavian _rúnica manuscipta_ with additional information from runic objects from medieval Scandinavia.

The sources for the Anglo-Saxon rune-names are exclusively manuscript material from the 8th or 9th c. written in England and on the Continent, mainly comprising runic lists. Missionary activities during these centuries implied, among other things, the migration of English runic lore to the Continent. In England concept runes have been found in a few texts, as for example, the riddles
of the *Exeter Book*. Early accounts of rune-names survive in manuscripts of diverse character: scientific works, grammatical treatises, etc., where runes have been considered to be a curious foreign writing system. There are four Anglo-Saxon recorded manuscripts written in England, and nine on the Continent, most containing the rune-names. The study of the different rune-names variants and values has proved the unfamiliarity of runic nomenclature on part of the scribes. Many Old English rune-names hardly made any sense for Continental scholars, even when they had comprehended the system of sound-changes by which a word of the one language could be translated into the other. They mistook values and names, like in Cotton MS. Domitian A 9. Here the i-rune is called *inc* instead of *is*, the oo-rune is employed instead of the s-rune. There may have also been scribal slips in the transmission of *eth* for *ech/leoh*, or *mg* for *ing* in Cotton MS. Galba A 2. Sometimes, scribes mistakenly assigned names following the acrophonic principle, like in this same manuscript where the e-rune is termed *ēpel* instead of *eh*. *Ēpel* is indeed the name of the oo-rune. It shows unrounding of OE [œː] (cf. *āpel*). Following the acrophonic principle, *ēpel* could then be a "correct" and "traditional" rune-name of the e-rune with the value e.

There are attempts to Germanise these names: *dorn* with <d> instead of <þ> in Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS. 9311-9319, *gebo* maybe reflecting OHG *gibe*, *tag* for *daeg*, etc. In the presentation of runic alphabets the main aim is to find equivalents for the Latin letters, but the scribes often encounter problems. It should also be highlighted that *cwœord* is created as the name for <q> – an innovation among Anglo-Saxon runes – so it is not an original rune. And
sometimes, *cen* is employed in place of *cweord* like in Munich Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Lat. MS. 19410, or *xen* using the acrophonic principle like in Philipps MS. 3715. The x-rune is called *elx* in Munich Lat. MS. 14436. There are also problems when rendering a runic equivalent for Latin *<z>*, and the word *zar* is coined. In Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Lat. MS. 14436 the name *qur* with value *q* is assigned to the p-rune and *perd* and the value *p* to the q-rune. The confusion of *p* and *q* is a specific problem in one or several manuscripts, but it may also indicate general problems with the q-rune.

This illiteracy on rune-names and the attempt to Germanise or adapt them to the scribes’ language could explain the change in meaning in some runic terms such as *rād*, *sigel*, and *ūr* glossed in Cotton MS. Domitian A 9 as ‘concilium’, ‘velum’ and ‘noster’, respectively. Scribes seem to have impose their own interpretation upon an uncommon or unknown word in an almost accidental way.

As for the Scandinavian rune-names, the recorded material comprises both epigraphical inscriptions and manuscripts. The epigraphical sources are not so numerous. In some cases, rune-names occur as golden numbers or as Sunday designations in connection with the prime-staves, but it is difficult to know if the carvers were conscious of the fact that these were rune-names. Sometimes, like in the inscription N A24 M where the word *fé* appears, it is impossible to discern whether the word is intended to be a rune-name or not. The most compelling inscriptions are those where rune-names are used employing the acrophonic principle in order to form a proper name, as in N T 3M (N A110 M). Nonetheless,
The most appealing one is Bo inscription, since it supplies circumlocutions for some rune-names.

The earliest manuscripts containing Scandinavian rune-names are mainly written on the Continent and in England. Scandinavian manuscripts are post-1100. Few concept runes are employed in these latter documents, and they are limited almost entirely to madr and fē. The main interest of scribes is to provide the runes equivalent to the Latin letters, with subsequent mistakes in the adaptation. Non-Scandinavian manuscripts show a great amount of errors in the transmission of rune-names. As an example, in MS. Vossiani Latini, the r-rune is termed reipu and the s-rune sulu. In Oxford St. John’s College MS. 17, the q-rune is given the name and value e. In Munich Bayerische Staatsbibliothek MS. Clm 276 the p-rune has the value z and the k-rune the value q.

Many Icelandic runic manuscripts are preserved, but one of their main drawbacks is that they are very late in their transmission, since most of them date to 17th c. Here the use of names for dotted-runes has to be highlighted. Besides, the p-rune, not included in the Scandinavian futhark, is assigned a name, either stunginn brá or plástur. This latter word means ‘salve, ointment, bandage’.

Finally, one important document is the Third Grammatical Treatise with a description of the Old Norse runic alphabet. Some rune-names are recorded, namely, úr, óss, iss, ár, yr, reid, sól.

Chapter III has examined the rune poems, which are the main source of the meaning and significance of the rune-names. The main task has been a comprehensive comparison of the various poems in order to contrast the meanings
of the rune-names in the different texts. In the case of the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*, it was necessary to make a new edition first, since the existing ones were somewhat outdated or simply based on earlier works. Before editing the text, a review of the state of affairs in manuscript copying in Scandinavia during the 17th c. was presented. After an analysis of the different manuscripts, it was decided to base the new edition on Jón Eggertsson’s manuscript, among other reasons, because his was more of a facsimile copy.

The main problem in the interpretation of the rune-names in the Old Norwegian poem was *úr*, which editors have always translated as ‘slag’. After a thorough analysis of the other poems, dictionaries and later sources, it has been suggested that *úr* as ‘sparks’ is metaphor for drizzle seen as a spray of rain-like sparks.

The *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* shows a different and more complex structure than the Old Norwegian text. The order of the runes is once or twice altered with respect to the traditional sequence. It is difficult to establish the text, since the two surviving manuscripts show many substantial differences. In terms of their meaning, *óss* is the rune-name which differs most with respect to the other Scandinavian poems, since in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* this word means ‘heathen god’, ‘Óðinn’ and in the others ‘river mouth’, ‘estuary’. The paraphrases for *ýr* are almost illegible in text A and non-existent in text B.

The *Old Swedish Rune Poem* is of late transmission and very simple in structure, since it only includes the rune-names and a simple paraphrasing. The text appears in a letter by the Swede Granius in the 1600’s. Another source is
Bureus's *Runetavla*, where the rune poem is embedded in a calendar context. One problem with the Swedish poem is the use of Swedish-like terms, Old Norse words that have been adapted to Swedish spelling or pronunciation. By the time the poem was written, some Old Norse rune-names most likely could not be comprehended. For instance, it is unknown whether *Tors* was still understood as ON *þurs* 'giant', or if *kön* could still mean 'ulcer' or have been confused with other Swedish words, as it may have happened with OE *cēn*.

*The Old English Rune Poem* stands alone in the tradition of rune poems. It comprises twenty-nine stanzas and it distances itself from the group of Scandinavian poems. Eight runes from the Common Germanic futhark unrecorded in the younger sixteen-rune futhark are employed in this text. The Old English futhorc has several new inventions with respect to the twenty-four-rune Continental/Proto-Nordic futhark. A few rune-names are *hapax legomena* in the language, such as *peorð* and *eolhx*, so their meaning can only be elicited from the context of the poem. This is most definitely the result of the fact that the names are old Germanic material, whereas Old English itself has evolved and various names are only peripheral. Besides, the rune-names in the edition are a later addition by Hickes and, therefore, are probably based on antiquarian knowledge.

Chapter IV has dealt with late sources of the rune-names which are only found in Scandinavia, mainly in manuscripts dating to the 1600’s and 1700’s or copies from these centuries. One of the main sources mainly from the 17th c. are some *rimur* specifically those employing a signature technique known as *fölgin nöfn*. In these poems the names of the sixteen-graph futhark are employed. The
study of these *rimur* has shown that the rune-names and their meanings were still known in the 17th c. It is interesting to notice that *úr* is always described as ‘rain’, which may support the hypothesis of the metaphor in the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*. *Bjarkan* is periphrased with the help of the other tree-name ‘oak’, probably because they did not know what tree the rune-name was referring to. *Öss* is presented as both ‘river mouth’ and ‘god’. Finally, it is worth commenting that when the intended value was *y*, the rune-name *ýr* was substituted by the non-umlauted *úr*.

Three pieces of relevant early scholarly material have also been examined, the two latter unpublished: Ole Worm’s *RūHR seu Danica literatura antiquissima* (1636, 1651), Jón Ólafsson’s *Runologia* (1752), and Olaus Verelius’ *Manuductio compendiosa ad runographiam Scandicam antiquam recte intelligendam* (1675). Accounts of rune-names became more and more common in scholarly material about runes in the 17th and 18th c. The descriptions in these documents are very helpful in establishing readings of the rune-names at this late date and in supplying information about their meaning. Worm’s work shows the author’s interest in runes and how he tries to relate the shape with the meaning of the rune-names.

*Runologia* is the most important 18th c. runic manuscript due to the amount of material on rune-names it supplies. After an analysis of some of its periphrases it has been concluded that the meaning of *úr* is ‘rain’, *óss* is depicted both as ‘estuary’ and ‘god’, and *ýr* as ‘bow’. Jón usually records the periphrases as found in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*, which seems reasonable, since he was
an Icelander. The last manuscript has been Verelius', which shows a mixture of sources. For some rune-names he includes the lines in the *Old Swedish Rune Poem*. He clearly had knowledge of both Granius' and Burcus' versions.

An overall perception is that scribes may have imposed their own interpretation upon an uncommon word. The same may have also happened to the author of the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem* and the *Old English Rune Poem* with áss/óś. In relation to this latter text, its author may have taken the runic apparatus from manuscript lists where some distorted rune-names appear as, for example peorð. Thus, authors would have eventually decided what meanings to give to the different rune-names, above all to those which differ in the various traditions.
2. The "Development" of the Rune Poems

From the study of the sources it is manifest that there existed a tradition for remembering the rune-names which, in Scandinavia, extended to approximately the 1800's. These mnemonic devices were employed by people who already had knowledge of the runes and their names, but who had to be reminded of the name (rune poems), their sequence in the alphabet (*Abecedarium Nordmannicum*) or other aspects, such as their shape, as probably demonstrated in some of the second lines in the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*.

It has to be assumed that the original structure of the rune poems must have been a brief line in order to facilitate memorisation. Thus, the original structure would probably resemble that of the *Old Swedish Rune Poem*, since it is the simplest. It could then be expanded with additional information, as the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*, which is more developed than the Old Swedish, since it includes *rvidelur*. However, the most sophisticated poem is the Icelandic with *prideilur*. Then the text could also be expanded with synonyms, variants, etc. as the later prose descriptions (so-called "younger versions") or as used in the *rimur*.

The rune poems are riddles, the solution being a rune-name, which often fits into the alliterative metre of the stanza. Sometimes the rune-name is already written. Nonetheless, it is necessary to make sure that that name corresponds to the description in the stanza.
3. A Presentation of the Rune-Names

Some scholars (cf. Schneider, 1956; Elliott, 1989) have sought to make sense out of the rather late material on rune-names by attempting to obtain an elaborate Germanic cosmological system. One of the conclusions drawn at the end of this extensive examination of the names of the runes and the data at our disposal is that the efforts to build up this system should be abandoned. Instead, attempts should be aimed at setting categories of rune-names according to the certainty about their meanings.

The recorded English rune-names amount to about twenty-nine (feoh, ār, dorn, ās, rād, cēn, gifu, wen, hægl, nýd, īs, gēr, ēoh, peord, eohlx, sigel, Tīr, beorc, eoh, man, lagu, Ing, ēpel, dæg, āc, æsc, ēr, īar, ēar). In opposition, in the Scandinavian futhark the number of runes had been reduced from twenty-four to sixteen by the 9th c. (rune-names: fē, ūr, þurs, óss, reið, kaun, iss, hagl, nauð, ár, sól, Týr, bjarkan, maðr, lōgr, yr). Some runes like Gmc *gebu and *dagaR were eliminated from the futhark in the general course of its development, others were affected by the phonetic changes in the language, as Gmc *wunju, *ehwaR and *āpila. Only sixteen rune-names can be contrasted in the various traditions. It is sensible to assume that, when the Scandinavian name corroborates the English one, the two represent the common Germanic tradition.
Conclusions

There follows a description of each rune-name with variants in various manuscript sources\(^1\), their general meaning and the more specific significance according to the different texts.

_Fē_: Isruna _feh_, Brussels _fech_, ONRP _fé_, OIcRP _fé_, AbcNord _feu_, OSwRP _fâ_, OERP _feoh_.

The rune-name _fē_ (OE _feoh_) was extensively used in manuscript sources, and it was glossed in Cotton MS. Domitian A 9 as Lat _pecunia_. This rune-name appears in epigraphical inscriptions, like N A24 M, and it is also presented in circumlocutions in the _rímur_. An examination of the sources shows that the general sense of _fē_ is ‘wealth’. The content of the _f_-stanza in the _Old Norwegian Rune Poem_ depicts it as discord among kinsmen. The specific connotation of the rune-name in this poem is ‘gold’ related to the legend of the Nibelungen hoard. The _Old Icelandic_ text includes a periphrasis with the general description of the positive value of wealth. But the other two, as the _Old Norwegian_ text, point to gold as the more concrete meaning. The line in the _Old Swedish Rune Poem_ is somewhat problematic since the word _ro_ could be the OSw word ‘silence’ (which would constitute a break in the unanimous tradition) or go back to ON _róg_ ‘quarrel’ (which would represent continuity in the Scandinavian tradition, cf. ‘discord among kinsmen’). If this latter possibility is considered to be correct, then the poem agrees with the other two Scandinavian texts in assigning _fē_ the common meaning ‘wealth’. In the _Old English Rune Poem_ the rune-name _feoh_ is employed with the Christian ethic of distributing wealth among people in order to

\(^1\) Brussels stands for Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS. 9311-9319; Vienna for Vienna. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. 795; Isruna for _Isruna tract_.

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gain salvation, and is related to *dōm*: the result of one’s actions and decisions that may determine the opinion or judgement of others and good justice before God.

Úr: Isruna uur, Brussels ur, OSwRP ur, ThGT úr, OERP īr, ONRP úr, OIcRP īr.

The rune-name *úr* is also extensively used in manuscripts. It perhaps also appears as a circumlocution in epigraphial inscriptions such as N A232, although here it is difficult to discern whether the intended name is *úr* or *yr*. Besides, Hagland’s (1984) reading and the entire interpretation of the inscription have been questioned by some scholars. This rune-name also occurs as a “prime number” in calendar calculations with a prime-stave. In Bø inscription it clearly means ‘drizzle’ (cf. ‘workers’ hate’ and ‘hays destroyer’).

There is some controversy about the meaning of the u-rune in the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem*. Editors have traditionally translated *úr* in this poem as ‘slag’, relating it to the process of heating iron. The present work has suggested that *úr* means ‘sparks’ (rather than ‘slag’) metaphorically ‘(rain of) sparks’. The *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* describes it as ‘drizzle’, and concentrates on its negative consequences for crops. Granius’ text of the *Old Swedish Rune Poem* renders *urvåder* as a compound ‘storm’. Bureau’s edition reads *ur i västan väbr* ‘rain in the west wind/westerly weather’.

In the *Old English Rune Poem* the u-rune means ‘aurochs’. This word is a *hapax* in Old English. Scholars have used it to reconstruct the Germanic rune-name on the premise that this is the original meaning of the rune. One could think of a misinterpretation of ON *úrr* ‘aurochs’ (used in compounds and rarely) for *úr*
‘drizzle’ in the Scandinavian tradition. The two words developed into complete homonyms in modern Icelandic, and were perhaps already homonyms or almost homonyms in the medieval period.

**purs:** Isruna Ḇorn, Brussels thorn, AbcNord thuris, ONRP purs, OlcRP purs, OERP þorn, OSwRP tors.

ON purs/OE þorn is also extensively used in manuscript sources concerning runes. Whereas in the Scandinavian poems the rune-name means ‘giant’, in the Old English text it means ‘thorn’. The modification could have been probably a result of the conversion to Christianity, whereby the converts then have attempted to remove various heathen elements from their culture. This premise for this suggested development is the acceptance of the Scandinavian tradition as more original.

The rune-name is related to women’s torment in the Old Norwegian poem. The Old Icelandic text connects it to women’s sickness, but it also employs a common kenning for giant as rocks’ settler. The third periphrasis in text A names Valrún as probably a giantess. Text B uses the periphrasis late-travelling man, making reference to coming out at night.

**Óss/áss:** Isruna oos, Brussels os, AbcNord os, ThGT òss, ONRP óss, OlcRP òss, OERP ðs, OSwRP ðs.

The rune-name óss means ‘god’ in the Old Icelandic Rune Poem, whereas in the Old Norwegian and Old Swedish texts it signifies ‘river mouth’, ‘estuary’.
Both meanings are used in the rimur poems (cf. 'ground of swans', 'meeting place of the waters', 'god') and in Runologia. In an attempt to find a reason for this change in meaning in the Scandinavian poems, the development of the word from Germanic to Old Norse has been offered. It has been shown that two homonyms coexisted in Old Norse after the 11th c., one coming from Gmc *ansuR and the other from Gmc *ösa- (ON óss 'god'/óss 'mouth' respectively). And so 'god' could be written <óss/óss>, whereas 'river mouth' could only be written <óss>. The word óss 'god' could not be used for the o-rune, since it was the graph for the sound [o:]. That may be the reason for the Icelandic choice to construe the name as 'river-mouth' rather than 'god'.

It has traditionally been maintained that ós in the Old English Rune Poem means 'mouth' which could have been borrowed from Lat ós 'mouth' as a consequence of a Christian attempt to wipe out any heathen aspect. But OE ós as 'mouth' could have been influenced by ON óss 'river mouth'.

Reið: Isruna rat, Brussels rad, AbcNord rat, ONRP reið, OIcRP reið, OERP rād, OSwRP ridher.

The meaning of the r-rune in all the sources is 'riding'. The Old Norwegian Rune Poem describes it as exhaustion for horses. This connotation is also present in the Old Icelandic poem. In this latter text reið is also described as a means of transportation for men. In the Old English Rune Poem there is a line which does not seem to conform to the meaning 'riding': "riding is easy for
warriors sitting in the hall”. One possible explanation is that there could have been confusion between two Old English homonyms, namely rādrād.

**Kaun:** AbcNord chaon, OIcRP kaun, ONRP kaun, OERP cēn, OSwRP kön.

The different Anglo-Saxon manuscripts show various spellings (cf. *ken* in Brussels Koninklijke Bibliotheek MS. 9311-9319, *chen*, and a few other variants in *De inventione*). The tradition represented by the various runic poems diverges concerning the meaning of this rune-name. In the Nordic sources *kaun* signifies ‘ulcer’. In the Old English poem, *cēn* might mean ‘pine-wood’, but since it is a *hapax*, its meaning can only be deduced from the *Old English Rune Poem* and cognates in Old High German (OHG *chien*, *kinboem*, MHG *kienboem*, G *Kien*). The term *cēn* as it appears in the sources could be a scribal Germanisation based on the Old High German cognate, as in the case of *rād*. Kön is the variant in the *Old Swedish Rune Poem*. This could be a confusion with OSw *kyn/kön* ‘sexual instinct’, but “ulcer in the flesh the worst” could also be possible with OSw *kiōt* ‘flesh’, ‘body’. In the Old Norwegian poem there are problems with the punctuation of the line, namely whether *böl* should be part of the sentence in the first or the second line, and this has lead to diverse attempts at reconstructing the two lines. In the Old Icelandic text the first kenning has to do with children’s sickness and the last two point to a tumour or boil.

**Hagall:** Isruna *hagal*, Brussels *hagal*, AbcNord *hagal*, OERP *hagall*, OIcRP *hagall*, OSwRP *hagaller*. 

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The h-rune is described in all the sources as ‘hail’. It also appears in some manuscripts, like Cotton MS. Domitian A 9 where it is glossed as Lat *grando*. In the Norwegian poem, it is characterised as the coldest of grains; in the Old Icelandic text the first two periphrases point to hail, whereas the last is simply a winter kenning since it refers to the hibernation of snakes. The Old English poem explains *hagall* as the whitest grain, keeping then the analogy with grain. The metrical form of the line may have influenced the choice of the adjective (either ‘white’ or ‘cold’) (cf. *kalldazster* alliterates with *korna*, whereas *hwītust* alliterates with *hægl*). In Granius’ version of the *Old Swedish Rune Poem*, *hagaller* is likely a mistake for *hagall er*, i.e., ‘hail is’. In this latter text the description differs from the other Scandinavian poems: “(with) hail is at home the best”.

*Naud*: Isruna *nod*, Brussels *not*, AbcNord *naut*, OIrRP *naud*, ONRP *naud*, OSwRP *nōdh*, OE *nyd*.

The name of the n-rune is also often found in manuscripts discussing rune-names. The basic meaning of this common word is clearly ‘need’, but it can have different connotations. In the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem* it has to do with lack of opportunity for poor people. The second periphrasis in text A of the Old Icelandic is almost illegible. According to the different circumlocutions *naud* partially coincides with ‘need’ but it also has the specific connotation of ‘work’. In the Old Swedish poem *nōdh* is explained as the only choice, similar then to the Old Norwegian periphrasis. OE *nīed* is a common word meaning ‘need, constraint’ and it is thus presented in the poem.
Conclusions

Íss: Isruna íis, Brussels ís, AbcNord ís, Cotton MS. Domitian A 9 inc, ThGT íss, ONRP íss, OlcRP íss, OERP ís, OSwRP ís.

The different copies and first edition of the Old Norwegian Rune Poem have various readings: bræ/nbru. Íss is mainly seen as a wide extension of frozen ice functioning as a bridge. In the Old Icelandic poem the rune-name is described as a thatched roof or bridge over water. Granius' version of the Old Swedish poem has ísbró as a compound word, which could be a misunderstanding of ís bro (cf. Burse's ís bro 'ice bridge'). In the Old English poem the beauty and coldness of ice is the main topic.

Ár: Isruna ger, Brussels iar and ger, ThGT ár, AbcNord ar, ONRP ár, OlcRP ár, OERP ger, OSwRP ár.

The rune-name ár in the Old Norwegian Rune Poem has the general meaning 'good year'. The second periphrasis in text A in the Old Icelandic poem is illegible and the two versions disagree in the last. If the last kenning in text A is to be read dals dreymi 'the blood of the valleys', then it is a river kenning, which would point to a mistake of ár (< a form of á 'river') with ár 'good year'. The first two circumlocutions in A plus all the periphrases in B point to 'good year' as the general sense of the rune-name. In the Old Swedish Rune Poem the name clearly refers to a fruitful year or even spring. The Old English poem concentrates specifically in the fruitful months of the year, the harvest season. Ár is widely
used in late Scandinavian sources, where it is depicted as ‘fruits’ and ‘beauty of flowers’, among others.

Sól: Isruna sigi, Brussels sigil, AbcNord sól, ThGT sólknesól, ONRP sól, OICRP sól, OERP sigel.

ON sól means ‘sun’ in the Nordic sources. In the Old Norwegian poem it is described as light for the whole world. The Old Icelandic counterpart depicts sól as cloud’s shield, shining halo and ice’s destroyer. In the Swedish text it is the highest thing in the sky. In the Old English poem the meaning is somewhat problematic. Sigel could mean either ‘sun’ or ‘sail’ according to the seafaring context of the stanza and the fact that the rune-name has a similar spelling to OE segl ‘sail’. However, sun as good weather providing comfort for the seafarer is also possible.

Týr: Isruna ti, Brussels ti, AbcNord tiu, ONRP týr, OICRP týr, OERP týr and OSwrP týr.

ON Týr in the Old Norwegian poem clearly means ‘Týr’, that is, one of the gods in Scandinavian mythology, since it is provided with the epithet ‘one-handed’. The Old Icelandic text has reference to Týr’s legend. But the third periphrasis in both the A and B versions (‘king of temples’ and ‘Frigg’s father’, respectively) could fit any of the gods, since they are general descriptions of a god. It is unknown whether at the time the Old Swedish poem was composed the word Týr was understood as the name of a god or simply as a proper name. The t-
Conclusions

stanza in the *Old English Rune Poem* posit some problems. First of all, Hickes renders *tīr* as the name of the rune. But OE *tīr* is not cognate with ON *Týr*, but a common name meaning ‘glory’. The expected word would be *Tīw* as the name of the god. This leads to the possibility that Hickes made a mistake. As for the content of the stanza, it seems that the rune-name is employed as both the war-god and the planet Mars (and thus equivalent to the god *Tīw*).


The rune poems provide general tree descriptions for the *b*-rune. However, the fact that we need a word beginning with *<b>* makes ‘birch-tree’ the solution to the riddle. The word *bjarkan* is recorded in Old Norse, but only in the *Third Grammatical Treatise*; it is clearly etymologically related to *björk* ‘birch-tree’ and *birki* ‘birch forest’, but what nuance is represented in this derivation is not known (perhaps ‘birch-branch’, ‘birch-bud’?). In the *Old English Rune Poem* the name *beorc* ‘birch-tree’ is depicted as a tree with no fruits. The *b*-stanza in the Old Icelandic text is problematic, since text A is partially illegible and there are problems in the last periphrasis in B. Granius renders *biörkahult* ‘birch-grove’ as the name of the rune in the Old Swedish text, and Bureau has *biörkäbrumr*, probably ‘birch branch’. In some *rimur*, as in a *rima* by Árni Böðvarsson á Ökrum, it is periphrased with reference to ‘oak’.

The name of the m-rune is a common word in Old Norse and Old English and, therefore, an unproblematic rune-name. There are different connotations assigned to man in the various texts. For example, in the Old Norwegian poem it is related to man’s mortality. In the Old Icelandic poem it is linked to other men (men’s delight), man’s death (earth’ dust) and ships (ornamented of ships). The line on the m-rune is only recorded in Bureus’ version of the *Old Swedish Rune Poem*. The description as *mahr mulakr* is probably an error for *mafr moldar auki* (earth’s dust). The Old English poem shows a Christian allusion to death.

*Logr*: Isruna *lago*, Brussels *lago*, AbcNord *lagu*, ONRP *lōgr*, OICRP *lōgr*, OERP *lagu*, OSwRP *lagh*.

In the *Old Norwegian Rune Poem* the name of the l-rune is ON *lōgr* depicted not only as ‘water’, but more specifically as ‘water fall’. In the Old Icelandic poem *vellanda vatn* could be a kenning for a water fall in the A text. *Logr* is also described as a great cauldron in versions A and B, and fishes sand-bank (A) and ground?/sand-bank? in B. The rune-name *lagh* in the Old Swedish text has been clearly associated to the Old Swedish word meaning ‘law’. The content of the stanza in the Old English poem makes the specific meaning ‘sea’ preferable to the more general ‘water’.

*Ýr*: Isruna tract *yur* (misapplied to a different rune), Brussels missing, OERP *ýr*, ONRP *ýr*, OICRP *ýr*.
In the Old Norwegian poem ýr is explained as the winter-greenest tree. The stanza in the Old Icelandic poem is problematic since A lacks most of the line and can only be translated with doubt as 'brittle iron'. Text B omits the whole stanza. This line is not recorded in the Old Swedish poem. The word ýr exists in Old English only as a rune-name. Due to its resemblance with ON ýr and the content of the stanza, the rune-name could mean 'yew-tree' in the Old English poem.

The Old English rune-names can be divided into two groups:

a) Names of Old English runes which do not have Scandinavian equivalents and which correspond to and represent a continuation of Old Germanic runes. These Old English rune-names are then the major or only source for the corresponding Old Germanic rune-names:

_Gyfu_: Salzburg _geuua_, Isruna _gebo_, Oxford St. John's College 17 _geofu_, OERP _gyfu_.

The meaning of _gyfu_ in Old English is 'gift', but in the poem it is used with the more abstract sense of 'generosity, act of giving'.

_Wynn_: Isruna _huun_, Brussels _uung_, Cotton MS. Domitian A 9 _wen_, OERP _wen_.

The actual variant employed by Hickes in the Old English poem is the Kentish form _wen_. The rune-name means probably 'joy' in the Old English poem.

_Ing_: Isruna _inc_, Brussels _hinc_, OERP _ing_, Oxford St. John's College MS. 17 _ing_.

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*Ing* is not recorded in Old English outside the rune poem. It may refer to the god Ing. The poem clearly makes reference to a hero.

*Peord*: OERP *peord*, Isruna *perd*, Brussels *pert*, Vienna *peord*.

The content of the stanza does not allow for a convincing solution.

*Dæg*: Isruna *tag*, Brussels *dag*, Cotton MS. Domitian A 9 *deg*, OERP *dag*.

*Dæg* ‘day’ is a common word in Old English. In the Old English poem it is viewed from a Christian perspective.

*Ēpel*: Isruna *odil*, Brussels *odil*, Vienna *oedil*, Salzburg *utal*.

*Ēpel* is a common Old English word meaning ‘inherited land’, ‘homeland’.

The stanza in the poem points to the importance of the homeland for men.

*Eh*: Isruna *eh*, Brussels *hec*, OERP *eh*, Vienna *eh*.

This basic meaning of the common name *eh* is ‘horse’, which in the poem is described from a man’s point of view (cf. a prince’s delight).

b) Old English innovations:

*Āc*: Isruna *ac*, Brussels *ac*, Vienna *ac*, OERP *āc*.

The name of the *ā*-rune is a distinctive name in Old English meaning ‘oak-tree’. This stanza highlights the usefulness of the tree as food for animals and wood for ships.
Conclusions

Æsc: OERP æsc, Isruna asc, Brussels e.. (partially destroyed), Vienna æs.

Æsc is again a name for a tree in Old English ('ash-tree'). In the rune poem metonym is employed to describe the rune-name not only as a tree but also as weapons made of ash-tree.


There is lack of unanimity on the meaning of the rune-name ēar. According to the context of the poem, the meaning required could be that of a fish. Most editors believe it to mean 'earth', cognate with ON aurr 'clay'. But no conclusive explanation can be drawn from the study of the stanza.


The value and name of this rune is problematic. Besides, none of the solutions for this riddle seems convincing from a philological perspective.

Eolhx: Vienna ëlcs, Cotton MS. Galba A 2 colhx, OERP eolhx.

A hapax in Old English, editors have traditionally explained the rune-name as a compound eolhxsecg. But this solution is impossible to prove. Half of the stanza may be misplaced þorn-lines.

Éoh: Vienna ih, OERP ēoh.

The stanza describes a tree which has good burning wood.
In summary, one could categorise the rune-names according to the certainty with which they have been established. The following are entirely certain, since their meanings correspond exactly (or almost exactly): ON fōr ~ OE feoh, reið ~ rād, hagall ~ hægl, naut ~ nied, iss ~ ði, ār ~ gēar, bjarkan ~ beorc, maðr ~ mann, lōgr ~ lagu and yr ~ yṛ. Some others are not completely certain. There are actually different levels of uncertainty and reasons for uncertainty. One can be uncertain as to whether the Old Norse or the Old English name has been correctly deduced, or – when comparing them – certain about the Old Norse name but uncertain about the Old English name, or vice versa, or uncertain about both. Another question is that some names correspond only partially (cf. óss ~ ðós), and others do not correspond at all (cf. þurs ~ þorn). The uncertain names are: ON ðass/óss ~ OE ðós, úr ~ ūr, þurs ~ þorn, kaun ~ cēn, sól ~ sigel and Týr ~ tīw. Finally, there are some Old English rune-names for which there are no equivalents in the Scandinavian sources, since the rune was lost (reduction from twenty-four to sixteen runes in Old Norse), or because the rune is an innovation (increase in the number of Old English runes from twenty-four to twenty-nine): æc, æsc, gyfu, eoh, dæg, ēpel, ēar, Ing, pœrð, eolh, eh, wynn, iar.
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2. The Norwegian vowels æ, ø and å will be arranged as found in Norwegian dictionaries, at the end of the alphabet.


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ANF = Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi.

ANQ = A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews.


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*NlfR* = *Norges Innskrifter med de Yngre Runer*.


*Nor* = *Nytt om runer. Meldingsblad om runeforskning.*

*NOWELE* = *North-Western European Language Evolution.*


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El sistema de escritura rúnico forma parte de la historia cultural inglesa y escandinava. Las inscripciones rúnicas de carácter epigráfico representan el primer legado escrito de la lengua inglesa y las lenguas nórdicas. Al menos en lo que respecta a Inglaterra, las inscripciones rúnicas más tempranas pueden ayudar a fijar la cronología de algunos cambios fonéticos y, además, éstas proporcionan información de variedades dialectales de las que se conservan muy pocos textos. Por medio del uso e interpretación de textos rúnicos, en la actualidad se puede comprender mejor la cultura de los pueblos germanos, alcanzar un mayor entendimiento de la historia temprana de varias lenguas germánicas y establecer la historia de la propia escritura en caracteres rúnicos.

El presente trabajo de investigación se encuadra en la historia de los sistemas de escritura. La invención y uso de la escritura supuso un cambio tan sustancial que la presencia del hombre en la tierra se divide en dos periodos principales separados por la aparición de la escritura: prehistoria e historia. A pesar de la importancia de la escritura para el desarrollo de las civilizaciones, hasta finales del siglo XIX los eruditos no comenzaron a dirigir sus esfuerzos a investigar este vasto campo. El primer estudio a este respecto fue *Geschichte der Schrift* (1880) (Historia de la escritura) por Karl Faulmann, aunque el autor del primer estudio teórico-científico sobre los sistemas de escritura fue I. J. Gelb (1952). Desde entonces, el estudio de los sistemas de escritura, con frecuencia llamado gramatología, ha cobrado gran importancia en el ámbito de la lingüística y la historiografía.
Se aprecian al menos tres orígenes independientes de la escritura en el mundo antiguo. El primero fue probablemente el sistema de escritura cuneiforme; el segundo fue el sistema chino, adoptado en otros lugares del este asiático como Japón; y el tercero, localizado en Mesoamérica, dio como resultado el sistema de escritura Maya. Actualmente, el alfabeto, que se desarrolló a partir de la escritura cuneiforme, representa el sistema de escritura más difundido, y ha demostrado ser un medio eficaz para representar numerosas lenguas habladas. El alfabeto está compuesto por una secuencia de símbolos, las letras. Desde hace siglos, el problema de la denominación de las letras, así como el origen de sus formas, han interesado a los especialistas que se han preguntado cuestiones como de dónde proceden los nombres de las letras y su orden dentro del alfabeto, por qué se utiliza el grafema <a> en inglés para representar [ɛi], y por qué se llama alpha en griego, aleph en semítico.

Es consabido que con anterioridad a la expansión del alfabeto latino por toda Europa y las Islas Británicas bajo la influencia del cristianismo, los pueblos germanos ya disponían de su propio sistema de escritura, las runas. Esta forma de escritura se ha conservado en objetos de madera, hueso, metal y piedra desde el siglo I antes de Jesucristo.

Las runas con frecuencia se ven envueltas en un halo de misterio y se las llega a considerar mágicas. Los seguidores de esta idea fundamentan su creencia en pasajes literarios del antiguo nórdico donde las runas cobran poderes mágicos. De este modo, las explicaciones sobre el uso de las runas encontradas en textos literarios han llegado a considerarse hechos auténticos. Sin embargo, estas fuentes escritas datan de un
periodo muy posterior al desarrollo de la escritura rúnica y de la incursión del cristianismo en el norte de Europa. Resulta significativo que ninguna inscripción de los primeros periodos menciona a dios pagano alguno. Con el fin de establecer una historia fiable de la escritura rúnica se debe asumir que ésta, como cualquier otro alfabeto, se creó como un medio de comunicación, ya fuese de tipo profano o sagrado.

Cada runa tenía su propio nombre. La asociación de las runas con prácticas paganas en Escandinavia y las Islas Británicas ha contribuido a la visión de éstas como un sistema cosmológico de poderes naturales y divinos. Sin embargo, los intentos para encontrar una explicación de estos nombres como elementos de un sistema ocultista han estado avocadas al fracaso por estar poco fundamentadas y resultar poco convincentes. Interpretaciones como las de Bugge’s (1905-13) y otros adeptos al carácter mágico de las runas se basan en la mera suposición. Como ha señalado Barnes (1994a), esta teoría es el resultado de la necesidad de llenar el vacío que produce la ignorancia de muchos especialistas.

Se pueden encontrar numerosos problemas en la denominación de las runas. Algunos son nombres comunes en la lengua y, por tanto, su interpretación resulta inequívoca, pero otros no tienen una explicación aparente y son meras especulaciones. Por este motivo los esfuerzos deberían dirigirse a interpretar el material que se encuentra disponible, pues un nuevo análisis de cada runa y su nombre podría clarificar la cuestión.
En este trabajo se estudian las diferentes fuentes de los nombres de las runas y cómo se han transmitido a lo largo del tiempo. Se intenta proporcionar una respuesta a la cuestión del significado de los nombres de las runas en las diversas tradiciones rúnicas. Dado que se distinguen dos tradiciones rúnicas diferentes, este trabajo de investigación ha tratado de encontrar el significado de las runas tanto en las fuentes anglosajonas como en las fuentes nórdicas. Para llevar a cabo esta tarea ha sido necesario un completo y exhaustivo análisis de la información contenida tanto en manuscritos como en inscripciones. Los datos disponibles comprenden periodos muy amplios, desde los primeros testimonios de los nombres de las runas en el siglo IX hasta las últimas fuentes del siglo XVIII. El número de inscripciones rúnicas inglesas es escaso y poco documentado por lo que, inevitablemente, este trabajo se centra principalmente en material escandinavo.

El capítulo I incluye un resumen de la historia del alfabeto. En primer lugar, se proporciona una visión general de los periodos de la escritura hasta llegar al alfabeto. Se estudia el origen e historia de la denominación de las letras. En segundo lugar, se analiza el término “alfabeto” y las características que lo distinguen de otras formas de escritura. Seguidamente, se incluye una revisión de otros sistemas de escritura no alfabéticos. Este capítulo no pretende presentar una descripción exhaustiva de los sistemas de escritura, sino sólo aquellos otros aspectos que resultan especialmente interesantes desde el punto de vista de la creación y denominación de las letras. Finalmente, se hace una introducción a la runología, la evolución de las
runas en los diversos periodos y tradiciones, la reconstrucción de los nombres y su etimología, así como los supuestos significados.

Los capítulos II y III comienzan con el análisis de dos grandes corpora. El capítulo II trata la transmisión de los nombres de las runas y sus variantes ortográficas, principalmente en manuscritos. El capítulo III analiza la información proporcionada por el poema rúnico anglosajón y los poemas rúnicos escandinavos que definen los nombres de las runas por medio de perífrasis. Uno de los principales objetivos del capítulo III es encontrar el sentido correcto de algunos nombres, como ósso, prácticamente tienen significados diferentes en los distintos poemas. A continuación me centro en cada poema por separado, es decir, el poema en antiguo nórdico, el poema en antiguo islandés, el poema en antiguo sueco y el poema en antiguo inglés. Dado que las ediciones anteriores del poema rúnico en antiguo nórdico no están actualizadas, se ha realizado una nueva edición en este trabajo. Los otros poemas han sido editados recientemente, pero se incluyen algunos aspectos novedosos relacionados con los nombres de las runas.

El capítulo IV contiene la cantidad de material más abundante y difícil, preservado en manuscritos de los siglos XVII y XVIII. Estos reflejan el conocimiento que se tenía en la Edad Media de las runas y sus nombres. Esta sección comienza con un análisis del uso y significado del nombre de las runas en la tradición islandesa de los rimur. La discusión sobre las fuentes tardías de los nombres de las runas se centra en algunos textos que, desde mi punto de vista, son los que con mayor probabilidad proporcionan información relevante sobre el significado de los nombres de las runas.
Me centro fundamentalmente en tres trabajos principales sobre runas de los siglos XVII y XVIII: *Runologia* (1753) por Jón Ólafsson, *RNLIR seu Danica literatura antiquisima* (1636, segunda edición revisada en 1651) y *Manudctio compendiosa ad runographiam Scandicam antiquam recte intelligendam* (1675) por Olaus Verelius. Estos manuscritos contienen un gran número de perifrasis sobre los nombres de las runas, que pueden aportar datos importantes para entender mejor la tradición de los poemas rúnicos en Escandinavia.

En la última sección, en el capítulo V, se recogen las conclusiones del presente trabajo de investigación y se evalúan los datos obtenidos tras el análisis de las fuentes. Asimismo, se sugiere una clasificación de los nombres de las runas atendiendo a su significado.

Finalmente, se incluye la bibliografía.

Investigar y escribir sobre las runas es una tarea ardua y compleja pues, con frecuencia, los textos rúnicos muestran poca consistencia ortográfica. Barnes (1994a) ya señaló que cuando los runólogos escriben sobre caracteres, grafemas, sonidos y fonemas o su transliteración, se aprecian numerosos casos de confusión terminológica e inconsistencia. Conceptos como fonemas y alófonos, o la relación entre el sonido y los caracteres escritos, han causado repetidos problemas a los runólogos. Para la transcripción de los textos rúnicos, en este trabajo se han usado las fuentes tipográficas de *Runlitt* que hoy en día son las más usadas por los especialistas. Sin embargo, cuando se cita de una fuente secundaria, se ha seguido la ortografía empleada por el autor correspondiente. En los casos en que se utilizan caracteres
latinos en una inscripción, estos se han transcribo en mayúsculas. Con frecuencia las runas se unen a un valor en los manuscritos, lo que podría ser un sonido o un valor gráfico (si el escriba quería equiparar la runa a una letra del alfabeto romano). En estos casos, los especialistas normalmente escriben el valor correspondiente en cursiva, en vez de utilizar los corchetes, y así se ha hecho también en este trabajo. Asimismo, se han encontrado dificultades para proporcionar caracteres en antiguo nórdico y otros utilizados en manuscritos. Las principales fuentes usadas en estos casos han sido *Akureyri* y *Reykjavik Times ISO*. Finalmente, las fuentes rúnicas que aparecen en este trabajo, que pueden obtenerse en internet, se llaman *Anglo-Saxon Runes*, *Germanic Runes* y *Gullskoen*. 