

Loki as a Terrible Stranger and a Sacred Visitor

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1. The Methodology to Disclose the Enigmatic Figures of Loki

Loki still remains one of the enigmatic figures in the Norse pantheon, although many scholars have endeavoured to explain Loki's complicated character from various points of view. I believe that the total figure of Loki could be gradually disclosed, when we would direct our notice to a certain specific action pattern of Loki. That is to say, Loki comes, by nature, from the other world or 'their' world and intrudes into the divine world, or into 'our' world in a semeiological sense. In other words, Loki can be defined as a traveling deity, who is invested with preeminent divine powers, especially when making a completion of a difficult journey, and Loki thus appears to be a sacred visitor, sometimes, or to be a terrible stranger, at other times.

It can be readily acknowledged that Loki (or *Lóðurr*), when regarded as a traveling deity, forms a triad together with Othin and Hœnir. In some mythological accounts, on the other hand, Loki shows the close relationship with Thor, accompanying him on a journey or enticing him into giants' land. Thus, as Axel Olrik has pointed out, Loki myths can be largely classified into two different types, Othin-Loki and Thor-Loki stories. Olrik has supposed, through a folkloric approach, that these two types mainly result from the regional difference: Othin-Loki type belongs to a western group, presumably connected with the Faroe Islands, while Thor-Loki type does to a more eastern group, in some relation with the Estonian folkloric conception of the thundergod's servant (de Vries 1933: 142-43). Olrik concludes, with some wishful thinking, that the double character of Loki could be explained from Olrik's perspective of the two different origins of Loki's mythological traditions. Jan de Vries, however, casts doubt on the validity of Olrik's theory, giving a rather harsh criticism that Olrik "strangely" over-estimated the later distorted and unreliable popular traditions with his own aim of reconstructing the original types of Loki myths (de Vries 1933: 143-44). In spite of such critical comments, it undeniably remains a simple fact that Loki is in a close relationship with Othin as well as with Thor.

Making a total survey of Loki myths, Jens Peter Schjødt enumerated the eighteen myth-motifs (abbreviated to S in my past paper: Mizuno 1987a). His scheme of Loki motifs would be more useful and productive, if we could categorize and rearrange the myths in question as follows, in accordance with three mythological types of Othin-Loki,

Thor-Loki and Othin-Loki-Thor or the compound (Mizuno 1987a : 193-97).

- (1) Othin-Loki type : S1, S2, S3, S7, S9, S10, S14, S15
- (2) Thor-Loki type : S5, S6, S8, S11, S12, S13
- (3) the compound type : S4, S16, S17, S18

I have demonstrated that this rearranged diagram could be a basic stragedy to disentangle the real character of Loki as a terrible stranger and a sacred visitor, from an apparently odd assemblage of Loki myths (Mizuno 1987a ; 1987b). To draw an example of the Baldr myth (S14 in the above diagram), Loki indubitably reveals his character of a terrible stranger by inducing Höör to shoot at Baldr with the mistletoe as a fatal weapon. Resultantly, however, all the more for his apparently brutality against Baldr, a representative of magical invulnerability, Loki turns out to recover the cosmological and indispensable principle of life and death. Thus, against the dominant view that Loki is to bring about some chaotic situation and so he must be embodiment of evilness, I have argued that the victim Baldr who wins invulnerability owing to Frigg's sorcery can be assimilated to the giant Thjazi who temporarily succeeded in winning Iðunn, the goddess of eternal youth (S9 above). In light of the situation in which the Æsir gods are put, Baldr's invulnerability means super-abundance of life in a central part of their world Ásgarðr, and contrariwise, the possibly long absence of Iðunn who has been abducted by Thjazi is nothing but a serious decline of life and youthfulness. In either crisis, Loki is the only deity who could exert himself to retrieve the proper order (Mizuno 1987d : 40). Furthermore, in both stories, it is obviously after completing his journey alone that Loki accomplishes his charged mission with craftiness. Thus it seems as if going through a journey enabled Loki to actualize and enhance his divine power.

2. Female Disguise of Loki

In relation to these preliminary remarks, we must not overlook the recurring motif of the female disguise, which is commonly noticed in the above two myths : Loki disguise himself as a supernatural woman when setting out on a journey to see Frigg and gain the mistletoe, or he is clothed in Freyja's or Frigg's *hamr* 'feather garment' (or *valshamr* 'falcon-feather garment' : Skm 3 ; Skm 26, or *fiaðrhamr* : þrk 9). In other words, Loki habitually makes a journey, sometimes in the disguise of a woman. Probably, by dint of such a specific disguise could Loki become invested with extraordinarily mystical power. In this respect, we may count, as a variant of the female disguise, the story that Loki transfigures himself into a mare to interrupt the work of the mountain giant who has nearly completed the fortification of Miðgarðr with the aid of his magical stallion named Svaðilfœri (Gylf 42).

Loki is reported to have stayed in the underground for eight years, serving as a

milkmaid (Ls 23). Othin is also portrayed disguising himself as a woman to exercise magic. In the often-cited strophe (Ls 24). Loki, while being taunted with keeping on the "womanish shape" (*args aðal*) as a magical disguise, retorts an accusation against Othin for having exercised the same magic: "You (Othin) have chanted a spell like a prophetess (*völva*), and wandered about through the human world in a witch's shape." The female disguise seem to have become the target of accusation as flagrantly 'unmanly' misconduct in the light of the morality of warrior-centered society, aside from its original significance.

Recently, Preben M. Sørensen explicated the concept of the highly disparaging words such as *níðr*, *argr* and *ergi*, and the social context, when the insult occurs. According to the delineation of Sørensen, *argr* and other related words have basically sexual meaning: "The man who is *argr* is willing or inclined to play or interested in playing the female part in sexual relations" (Sørensen: 18). And as heathen witchcraft was suppressed and forbidden in the Christian Middle Ages, the traditional sorcery of men disguising themselves as women was stigmatized as a detestably unmanly practice, nearly identified with "perversity in sexual matters." Derived from the basic sexual meaning, Sørensen interprets, the abusive words *argr* and *ragr* as having the sense of "cowardly, unmanly, effeminate" with regard to morals and character (Sørensen: 20). He also explains that such a linkage and fusion between "sexual unmanliness" and "unmanliness in a moral sense" could be made, mainly because "the antithesis between masculine and feminine" was set up in an actual state of affairs: "the duties of a man were directed outwards, consisted in part of work away from home, sheepgathering, fishing, trade and transport; [while] a woman's work was housekeeping, care of children, other jobs within the home, such as those to do with milk and wool" (Sørensen: 20). It might be true, more or less, that the social part of women lay "indoors" in a marked contrast with that of men whose duties and interests were largely directed towards the outer world, making journeys and wars besides their proper occupations, as far as many descriptions and scenes of the Medieval Saga are concerned.

However, even if such a social demarcation of gender had existed in those days, it would be almost unbelievable that an organic system of society were so much static as to leave such a discrepancy undone. It seems that any society spontaneously tries to make up some kind of mechanism in order to interconnect the socially differentiated polarity all the more because the conspicuous antithesis of masculinity and femininity is actually perceived. At the mythological level, at least, Loki is such a fine type of deity who could behave himself as an intermediate agent to bridge the possible discrepancy of the masculine and feminine aspects. In this sense, the chief god Othin also takes his share of the same responsibility by venturing to transfigure himself into a woman, risking public censure. Grammaticus Saxo gives an account, for instance, that Othinus (the euhemerized deity Othin) was expelled from his throne on the charge of having desecrated the

religious sanctity by “ludicrously” practicing the female disguise (*Gesta Danorum* III. 3–11).

Applying Masao Yamaguchi's epistemological theory here would be an effective strategem to explicate the above problem of female disguise. In Yamaguchi's terms, it is generally acknowledged that the people are inclined to hold a frame of mind to discriminate ‘our world’ from ‘their world,’ and that our world, in an epistemological sense, keeps on occupying ‘the center’ of the universe, casting their world into the ‘peripheral areas.’ According to Yamaguchi, such a world view is a product of inner state of our consciousness, and so the people have to forge the fictitious world of ‘theirs’ in the region of peripheries, even if ‘they’ were not to be recognized, so that ‘we’ may reinforce ‘our’ solidarity and to maintain ‘our’ identity. Obviously, the Norse cosmogony exemplifies such an ideology of the world, giving an account that the gods are to occupy Ásgarðr as the center of the universe, human beings are to settle in Miðgarðr, and the race of giants, their antagonists, are forced in a contrastive way to dwell in Útgarðr (the outer world). It would not be wrong to suppose that such a distinctly demarcated world-view reflects, more or less, that of the Norse people in those days. As far as ‘we’ hold such a predisposition, the strangers, who are driven out habitually to stay in a certain outlying fringe, would readily make an appearance at the boundary between our world and theirs, and sometimes seize the opportunity to intrude into ‘our central’ world. Upon ‘his’ arrival or intrusion, however, the stranger can be held to be “a revelatory being who might cast light on the vulnerability of our community ”(Yamaguchi 1975 : 85). Thus ‘he’ turns out to exert benevolent or malevolent influences upon the inner congruities of our central domain. Indubitably, Loki reveals himself as such a typical figure of strangers who are indispensable for ‘our world’ to be activated. Accordingly, Loki either as a sacred visitor or as a terrible stranger makes an appearance before ‘us’ to bridge the gap between the different regions and activate the universe, or to throw some established order into confusion and eventually retrieve it totally or create a new order.

When Loki is sent out alone on some divine mission to the outer world, he exposes himself to the hostility and any other possible malevalence of ‘their’ world. Thus, in order to countervail against such evil influences and to perform his imperative and sometimes compelling duty, Loki has to be charged with the magically stupendous *Power of Feminine* (“Imo no Chikara” in Japanese folklore mentioned below) which intrinsically represents ‘our inner’ world. Quite strangely, Freyja and Frigg do not use their own feather-garments, which have been originally indispensable instruments of their epiphany, as Lotte Motz (1980) has noticed. Instead, only Loki is allowed to be attired in the mysterious garment of these goddesses, especially of Freyja, as if the real figures and extraordinary powers of them were embodied in Loki himself as an outgoer. Thus it might also be said that this traveling deity, by being clothed in a high goddess’ garment, is magically sheltered from any possible disaster during his journey. Semeiologically, the

feminine disguise of a proper man can be interpreted as the cosmological union between the masculine and feminine principle, or between the outer and inner world.

Loki, for instance, with the use of Freyja's *valshamr* 'falcon-coat,' successfully wins back the abducted goddess Iðunn, narrowly escaping from the pursuit of a giant Thjazi. In some contrast with this story, when Loki went flying with Frigg's *valshamr* to the abode of Geirroð, he was taken captive by the giant's servant and suffered the dire starvation until Loki made an oath that he would entice Thor to come to Geirroð's abode without the divine instruments of his Mjöllnir hammer and his mighty girdle. Putting both myths together in comparison, each *hamr* causes the almost opposite effect: Freyja's *hamr* eventually brings Loki's success and Iðunn's release from the giant, while borrowing Frigg's *hamr* leads to Loki's blunder and Thor's crisis of being nearly captured by Geirroð, even though Thor actually tides over his crisis by borrowing three kinds of fighting and magical gear from the giantess Gríð, such as a mighty girdle, iron mitten, and her rod. At any rate, we suppose the common belief that borrowing certain possessions from a supernatural woman would enable the male god to enhance his own power. In parenthesis, in the field of Japanese folklore, this kind of singular and miraculous motif has been referred to as the *Imo-no-Chikara* 'Magical Power of Feminine' since Yanagita Kunio offered his theory in 1925. It would now be admitted that Loki has a close relationship with Freyja rather than with Frigg, as is typified also by "the Masterbuilder Tale" (Joseph Harris 1976), in which Loki rescues Freyja who belongs to the Vanir, in common with Njörðr and Freyr, who were taken hostage to dwell with the Æsir. In other word, Freyja herself represents the outer world as well as the inner world, bearing the ambivalent character of a stranger deity, just as Loki does.

3. The Divine Twins and the Warriors Invested with Female Powers

We may suppose that, in the older period when the cult of mother-goddesses (*Matronae*) was far dominant, female disguise or magical transvestism was, possibly with the more positive significance, a part of some initiation process for warriors, based upon Tacitus' account that "the priest clad like a woman" (*sacerdos muliebri ornatu: Germania* 43) presided over the ancient tree worship among the people Naharvali. In light of Greco-Roman traditions of divine twins (*Dioscuroi*), the deities whom the disguised priest attends in adoration are assimilated to Castor and Pollux. As Georges Dumézil (1973: 115-16) succinctly noticed, Tacitus' description in this passage would enable us to infer the original significance of "effeminate gestures" (*effeminatos corporum motus*) which the stage-mimes played at the time of sacrifices in Uppsala, even though the scene appeared reportedly very disgusting to the eyes of wandering hero Starkaðr, according to the account of Saxo (*Gesta Danorum* VI. 10).

Snorri's reference that Othin assigned Njörðr and Freyr the duty of *blót-goði* 'priest

of sacrifice' (*Yngliga saga* 4) would suggest that the cult of a divine couple Njörðr and Freyr, or of a father-son couple in this case, outlived persistently under suppression in those days, involving the old practice and traditions of the 'womanlike' disguise of the priests of the gods. In this respect, it would be explained, with some proper reason, that Njörðr and Freyr have their feminine counterparts Nerthus and Freyja respectively. Following Dumézil's theory that *ergi* 'effemination' (and other derogatory words mentioned above) could be connected with the worship of the "Naharvali Heavenly Twins" (Dumézil 1973: 116), it would not be so inappropriate to consider that the 'effeminate' disguise of Othin and Loki as sworn brethrinn (Ls 9) can be traced back to the Indo-European cultural tradition of the divine twins.

I will add nothing special here about the argument over the much closer relationship between Loki and Othin, with the name *Lópts vinr*, in olden times, possibly more than Folke Ström has supposed, calling the Loki-figure "eine Art Doppelgänger Odins" (Ström 1956: 80). Nor can I deviate from the main subject by getting deeply into this fascinating problem of divine twins, on which Donald Ward (1968) and many other scholars have offered their views. Nevertheless, it would be necessary to touch upon this problem to such an extent as to suggest the seriously religious background behind the female disguise of Loki. My prospect is that the double aspect of a terrible stranger and a sacred visitor which Loki takes upon himself might be more properly explained, when put into connection with his hermaphrodite character, or especially with the dominant theme that Loki impersonates Freyja, a goddess of death and fertility.

According to Tacitus, the deities of Naharvali divine twins are named the Alcis, with the dative plural. And so, scholars have made the heated discussion about the proper name of the gods in question and its original meanings. There is not space in this article for entering into a long discussion, but let me introduce the one theory offered by Rudolf Much and earlier by Karl Müllenhoff. Rudolf Much (1967) argues that the name of the Germanic twins must have been *Alci* as the nominative plural, which could be related to Old Germanic words such as Got *alhs*, OS *alah*, and OE *ealh* 'temple : a sheltering place' and further to Gr *ἀλαχῆ* 'prowess in defence ; showing of fight ; resistance,' or *ἀλέξω* 'to protect ; to ward or keep off.' Thus, according to Much, we may reasonably suppose that the name of the gods of the Naharvali Dioscuri derives from the basic idea "protection or defense ; protective power or strength." Much's view would prove to be very insightful, in accord with my arguments as follows. In addition, the dominant view that Got *alhs* 'temple' and other Germanic related words have the original meaning of 'heiliger Wald ; abgeschlossener heiliger Hain' is congruent indeed with Tacitus' account of "the holy grove revered since ancient times" (*antiqua religionis lucus*), which the Naharvali priest in female dress would preside over (*Germania* 43). Strange as it may sound, I have put forward my theory that Loki should be regarded as a tree deity (Mizuno 1987b), and my arguments proceed to draw a conclusion that Loki as an embodiment of masculine and

feminine originally had a close relationship with the Vanir.

Probably it may be wrong to conceive that all the allusions to female disguise may be authentically related to the cult of divine twins. We could preferably suppose, with scrupulous reading, that the band of young warriors, primarily with a unit of 'two associated youths' (*fratres* ; *iuvēnes*), was involved in some mystic practice of female disguise at a certain stage of their ascetic training process or at some initiation ceremony. Furthermore, this cultic practice may have something to do with 'protecting their community,' or, more magically, with 'keeping off evil and pernicious influences of their enemy,' reviewed from the original meaning of *Alci*. Noticeably, Loki takes a very active part in protecting the Æsir world, delivering them from some chaotic situations and the otherwise possible downfall until the coming Ragnarök, while sometimes himself throwing the order of the divine world into confusion. To anticipate a part of my conclusion, it was because of being invested with the divine potency of Freyja or the other Vanir gods that Loki could display his original character of a *Nothelfer* or "the saivior who should be urgently expected to come at critical situations." In this respect, Loki could be defined intrinsically as an arche-Christ. Thus, we can fully understand the heavily dramatic irony that, in the myths written under the Christian influence, Loki serves honorably as a Christian agent who intrudes into the pagan world and annihilates those old divinities.

Compared to the feminine disguise mentioned above, we could find an aptly contrastive example of the masculine disguise in the *Histories* of Herodotus, telling that the well-armed maidens of the Auses (or the Auseans), a Libian tribe, would be divided into two groups to participate in ritual combat at the yearly festival in honor of Athena, their local war-goddess.

The Auses and the Machlyes, divided by the river Triton, dwell on the shores of the Tritonian lake. The Machlyes wear the hair of their heads long behind, the Auses in front. They make a yearly festival to Athene, whereat their maidens are parted into two bands and fight each other with stones and starves, thus (as they say) honouring after the manner of their ancestors that native goddess whom we call Athene. Maidens that die of their wounds are called false virgins. Before the girls are set fighting, the whole people choose ever the fairest maiden, and equip her with a Corinthian helmet and Greek panoply, to be then mounted on a chariot and drawn all along the lake shore (*Histories* IV. 180 : trans. A. D. Godley).

As Helen Damico argues, some Germanic words, such as ON *dís* (OE *ides* ; OHG *idisi*) and OE *hōs* (Goth *hansa* ; OE *mægpa hōse* 'troop of maidens' : *Beowulf* 924), and the context of them would lead us assuredly to believe that there existed an organized band

of “female warriors” and divine ladies with “martial association,” or female guardians of the hero-kings (Damico 1984 : 70–71). Accordingly, to take another step, it cannot be so far from the truth to suppose that Germanic warrior society would observe the “cross-sexual rituals of puberty and initiation,” to apply the terms of Greek scholarship (Page duBois 1982 : 69), in which men took on female attributes and women on male attributes, as has been discerned more clearly in Greek sources. This supposition, as it were, provides a sample of cultural parallelism, compared to Greek transvestism which duBois delineated on the myths of Amazons and Centaurs. As for the Amazons, duBois explains : “the Amazons represent a preadolescent female/male being, where the transvestism and male attributes of the women complement their worship of the huntress Artemis and the war god Ares” (duBois : 69). To transfer her statement on the Amazons to our Germanic context, almost the same might be said of Loki, Othin and Thor, all of whom reveal their own transvestite character in respective myths. Thus we could suppose that the stories of Thor-Loki type were made up primarily from the basic idea that the potential femininity of Loki would be indispensably correlated with the salient masculinity of the fighting god Thor, just as the *dísir* were believed to work as female guardians to protect their favorite heroes from behind.

Similarly, the masculine and feminine aspects of Skaði, the goddess of hunting and fertility, complement the femininity and masculinity of Loki respectively. In the sequel to the Iðunn myth, Skaði who has been so furious at the murder of her father Thjazi, pays a surprise visit to the Æsir, equipping herself with all kinds of weapon ([Skaði] *tók hjálm ok brynju ok öll hervápn* : Skm 3). Undoubtedly, this goddess of hunting, with the meaning of ‘Schaden ; Verlust,’ reveals her own aspect of death goddess by intruding there to aim at some of the attendant gods, as if a possible victim should become a sort of her hunting game. Loki as another stranger deity alone could effect a reconciliation between the Æsir and Skaði. In the presence of this wrathful goddess, Loki plays at a burlesque tug of war with a she-goat as a representative of ‘female lasciviousness (Hdl 46–47),’ showing his virile parts. This burlesque play made Skaði break into cathartic laughter and took effect to console the mourning goddess. In other words, it was by means of displaying his masculinity that Loki made a success in recovering the original femininity of Skaði. Thus it might be said that the gods and the people could properly expect Skaði to bring fertility, not death, owing to Loki’s witty device.

4. The *Dís* as a Magical Protectress of a Warrior

Tacitus, while admiring Germanic warriors for the orderly campaign and their courage in fighting, locates the source of their dauntless courage in the attendance of their women, who would serve the combatants in a battlefield, supplying them with

provisions and taking care of wounded warriors (*Germania* 7). And it was their custom, for some warriors, or more precisely for certain priests or priestess (*sacerdos*), to carry with them into battle the divine figures (*effigies*) and certain emblems (*signa*), which were fetched from their sacred grove (*lucus*). Besides, referring to Veleda, a famous prophetess and war-leader, Tacitus takes notice of the high reverence which the Germanic people commonly hold upon noble-women with prophetic powers: "they believe that in woman should lie certain sanctity and prophetic potency; and so they neither despise their exhortations nor neglect their prophetic words" (*Germania* 8).

With some reliance on these accounts, which might suggest the prevalence of the mother or woman cult in those days, we are encouraged to suppose that woman should have taken on an indispensable and magical aspect of war, serving as a prophetess or a magical guardian of the heroes and war-leaders, even if actual war had been the affair of man. Helen Damico takes notice of the term *dís* or *dísir*, which, with the sense of 'noblewoman' (*dís sciöldunga* 'princess': Br 14), signify the martial aspect of "a company of helmeted maidens" who worked as guardians of the hero-kings. Sigrún, Sváva and Brynhildr are counted among those figures who, in terms of Helen Damico, "possess the authority of half-goddesses, and act as intermediaries between the supreme beings and the hero" (Damico 1984: 71). The *dís* named Sigrún, for instance, is told to ride with the valkyries through the sky and over the sea to seek out Helgi, her dearest warrior (HH II, in the prose put before strophe 14). The tradition that Loki, with his nickname *Loptr* 'sky-traveler,' has magical shoes with which he could run across the sky and sea (Skm 43), would encourage us to suppose the common character between Loki, the transvestite deity, and the *dísir*. Besides, seen from the story that the young hero Helgi disguises himself as a bondmaid and narrowly escapes from the pursuit of warriors sent by King Hundringr, we could regard Helgi as a sort of Loki-figure. Helgi, who belongs to the noble pedigree of the Völsungar or the Ylfingar, is closely connected with the Vanic religion, with priority given to the worship of Freyr called 'Yngvi-Freyr.' Similarly, we could detect in Loki the Vanic nature, as is discussed below. Helgi is described to reveal the aspect of a ferocious and vengeful hero, as is typically shown in his names *varga vinr* 'wolf's friend' and *Hundings-bani* 'Hundringr's murderer,' which also reminds us of the brutal aspect of Loki, who has his monstrous offspring Fenrisúlfr and is given the famous nickname *ráðbani* 'killer with contrivance' because of his involvement in the killing of Baldr. If we were allowed to say that such vindictiveness or the warlike character of Helgi could be partly transferred from that of Sigrún, one of the mystical battle-maidens, then the complicated figure of Loki might as well be a sort of reflex of the *dísir*-nature.

Incidentally, Helgi is killed by Dagr, a new vengeful hero. It seems to be a tragic and ironical death, because Helgi's act of killing Högni had kindled and blazed up the vengeful spirits of Dagr, Sigrún's brother, who could propitiously invoke the divine aid of Othin by offering sacrifice to this god (HH II, in the prose put before strophe 30).

Apparently, such a plot of this story shares some common characteristics with the prophetic narrative of the Ragnarök, which gives vent to the latent struggle between Othin and Loki. Just as the murder of Högni, Sigrún's father, eventually led to Helgi's death, so did Loki's involvement in killing Baldr invite the breakup of the brethrinn-partnership between Othin and Loki, and brought about their deaths. Thus it would be readily acknowledged that there are at least two types of pagan heroes: while one is magically protected by the *dísir* or the female battle-deities and wins great affection from one of them, the other enjoys the divine protection of Othin, the genuinely male war-god with the reverential appellation *Alföðr* 'All-father.' Undeniably, Helgi is the former type of hero as a reflex of Loki-figure, and Dagr, being suggestive of Othin's raven (cf. *Dæg-hrefn*: Beowulf 2501), belongs to the latter as an Othinic hero.

5. The Double Aspect of Dís and Loki

It has been noticed that *dísir* have a double aspect of goodness and evilness: the *dísir* are usually good-natured enough to protect their favorite heroes and families from misfortune, while sometimes they may direct hostility to bring injury and abrupt death upon others (Lotte Motz 1980: 175). We could reasonably suspect that such a double character of the *dísir* functionally corresponds with that of Loki. To make an interesting contrast, Loki impersonates Freyja called *Vanadís* by 'borrowing' her *hamr* (feather-garment), while it was by displaying his 'own' genitals (*um hreðjar sér* 'around his scrota': Skm 3) that Loki successfully ingratiates himself with Skaði named *ödurðís*, at that burlesque performance. Needless to say, these goddesses called with the name *dís*, equally assume the ambivalent character of fertility and death. Just as Skaði the huntress shows her aspect of "Terrible Mother" in terms of Erich Neumann (1963: 149-70), when intruding herself upon the *Æsir* who are responsible for Thjazi's death, so Freyja has an aspect of death goddess, as is exemplified by the account that Freyja, living in Fólkvangr, chooses every day to receive a share of the slain by half, while the other half is allotted to Othin (Grm 14). At any rate, the ambivalence in the behaviors and characters of Loki must be derived basically from the double aspect readily noticed in the *dísir*.

Very significantly, *Gefn* 'Provider' is another name for Freyja who makes a long journey to seek out her lost husband Óðr in vain (Gylf 35). As Lotte Motz noted, we might be allowed to perceive the basically similar meaning between Freyja's grief for Óðr and Frigg's lamentation for her murdered son Baldr: both of these myths describe the grievous sadness of the goddesses separated from or bereft of their beloved, and this theme of mournful goddess has been found commonly in the myths of Egyptian Isis and Greek Demeter (Motz 1980: 170). However, as I mentioned above, Freyja should be regarded much more authentically as a wandering goddess who searches for her beloved being, compared to Frigg who dispatches Hermóðr on behalf of herself on a mission to

Hel, the goddess of the underworld. Besides, we should not overlook a hidden but primary theme, as is inferred from her epithetic name *Gefn*, that the sorrowful wandering of Freyja was to give birth to the proliferation of wealth 'among the strangers' (*með ókunnnum þjóðum* : Gylf 35) at many places where she visited. Based upon the tradition of the precious treasure called *Brísinga men*, and from the names of her two daughters Hnoss and Gersemi with the meaning of 'jewel,' we may unmistakably guess that Freyja would be adored as a distributor of wealth in her wanderings.

By the command of Othin, Loki cheats Freyja out of the Brising jewel (*Sörla þáttr*), or over the possession of *Brísinga men* does Loki fight with Heimdallr (*Skm* 15). At any rate, the myth of plundering superfluous riches might reflect the covetous mind of people in those days who were inclined to regard Freyja as something of an exclusive possessor of riches, with distorted comprehension of her original figure as a "Provider." Thus, it might be said that Freyja originally makes it a typical form of epiphany to appear as a sacredly visiting goddess who would be expected to bring fortune, affluent riches and fertility into some community. We could define Freyja with such a specific aspect as a *Marebito*, in the effectual terms of Japanese folklore. *Marebito* is defined as a sacred deity who regularly visits human habitations to bring fortune or happiness for those people (Orikuchi 1929 ; rpt. 1975 : 5). It comes as no surprise that Loki also plays the *Marebito* or the bringer of wealth and happiness from the other world, as is revealed in the Sif myth, since he proved to be an impersonator of Freyja.

6. Loki as a Provider of Divine Gifts

To direct our attention to the Sif myth, Loki who has to recompense his wrongdoing of having cut down all of Sif's hair does make a tour of three otherworldly domains to visit the mysterious beings, such as black-elves, dwarfs called Ívaldi's sons, and the brotherly dwarf-smiths named Brokkr and Sindri. Only through these three steps of the journey does Loki seem to enhance his divine power as a stranger deity. At first, Loki must have gone to see certain black-elves under the command of Thor, who forced Loki to gain Sif's hair made of gold there. But Snorri leaves out this first journey from his narrative, which might possibly make a start to rouse Loki's potency. Instead, we are told that Loki went to Ívaldi's sons and had them make Sif's new hair, the magical ship *Skíðblaðnir* and the mystical spear *Gungnir*. Thereafter, with these splendid treasures, Loki shrewdly proposes a contest of these three gifts to Brokkr and Sindri, staking his life, so that they are induced to forge out another three treasures such as a golden boar *Gullinbursti*, the magical ring *Draupnir* and the *Mjöllnir* hammer.

Thus, as his crafty strategem works out well, Loki returns together with his competitor Brokkr to the *Æsir*'s world. In other words, Loki makes an appearance indubitably as a bountiful donator before gods, especially for the donee-gods such as

Othin, Thor and Freyr. Strangely, however, Loki suffers a dishonorable defeat on account of the divine judgement which favors the three gifts of dwarf-brothers with praise over Loki's three, especially giving a high estimate of the Mjöllnir hammer, in spite of the apparent defect that this forged weapon has too short a handle (Skm 43). According to Skáldskaparmál, it was because the hammer was estimated to become the most effective defense (*mest vörn*) against frost-giants, or against the possible onslaught of terrible strangers, that this weapon won the highest praise among other treasures.

Strangely enough, at the Ragnarök or the doomsday of pagan gods, we could not find any trace in its description that Thor brandished the Mjöllnir hammer in fighting against his raiding enemies, even though Móði and Magni, Thor's sons, are told to carry this weapon after the Ragnarök or the destruction of the older world (Gylf 53). Then, we might adequately imagine the scene that at such a critical moment, the appraisingly greatest defensive weapon was of no use, just as the sword named Hrunting which Beowulf borrowed from his once opponent Unferð would turn out useless in actual fighting with Grendel's dam (*Beowulf* 1522-28). Of other treasures which the dwarf-smiths forged, the magical ring Draupnir as a symbol of multiplication of riches must be an apparently marvelous gift to Othin, but at the death of Baldr, Othin put this golden ring on the pyre. Besides, the donee Baldr tries strangely to give it back to Othin through the hands of Hermóðr who comes to recover Baldr from the death world (Gylf 49). We might be allowed to suspect that a fatal curse was laid upon this ring by the forgers Brokkr and Sindri, just like the cursedly fatal ring Andvaranautr (Rm. 5-6). In this respect, the name Sindri, one of the dwarf-smiths, is meaningful enough with the sense of 'slag ; the waste from melted ore.' This brings to mind the description on the poisonous rivers named Élivágar in the mythologically primordial times.

The rivers, which are called Élivágar, when they had got so far from their source that the poisonous flow that accompanied them began to go hard like the clinker (*sindr*) that comes from a furnace, it turned to ice ; and when this ice came to a halt and stopped flowing, the vapour that was rising from the poison froze on the top in the same direction and turned to rime, and this rime increased layer upon layer right across Ginnungagap (Gylf. 5 : trans. Anthony Faulkes).

In this paragraph, it is noticeable, first of all, that the slag called "sindr" takes on the significant image of primordial creation from chaos, contrary to our expectations of the destructive image upon this word. But the narrative proceeds to tell us about the multiplied frost (*hrím*) produced in this way finally dripped and dripped, fanned by hot winds, to form the first human-like figure, i.e. Ymir, the great ancestor of frost-giants (*hrímpursar*). In other words, poisonous flow at the earliest stage, which is compared to the gradually hardened slag, creates the primogenitor of antagonists-to-be, or of a troop

of terrible strangers for gods, at the final stage.

Turning to the dwarf-smiths in question, they undoubtedly represent the encroaching forces of frost-giants, as is embodied by the word image of Sindri, and the dwarf-smiths' apparently marvelous gifts. With a penetrating irony, as a final recompense of the murder of the primogenial giant Ymir, who was killed by the three brothers called Othin, Vili and Vé, such terrible gifts are offered to three sovereign gods such as Othin, Thor and Freyr, who have been interpreted to stand for tripartite functions of Indo-European ideology in terms of Georges Dumézil. Thus, the apparently fortunate stranger Brokkr turns out the terrible creature who would presumably come as a special envoy of Sindri to stir up upheaval and violent conflicts in the divine world. By way of parenthesis, the name Brokkr can be etymologically connected with OE *broc* 'affliction; trouble; malady' more properly than, following the past views, with OE *brock* 'badger' (R. Cleasby & G. Vigfusson 1957) or OHG *broccho* 'broken piece' (Jan de Vries 1977).

If my reasoning were valid, the reverse of an outward appearance would be true of Loki. That is to say, in the Sif myth, at least, with all the appearances of the dishonorable loser and the niggardly donator in comparison with Brokkr, Loki should be regarded as a genuinely fortunate stranger for the donees, in the basic strata of the myth. The spear Gungnir, one of Loki's three gifts, becomes a favorite weapon for Othin called *geirs dróttin* 'lord of the spear' or *Gungnis váfaðr* 'Gungnir's brandisher,' and the spear is used as an indispensable instrument for Othin's ceremonials, such as his self-sacrifice (Háv 138) and the sacred signal of commencing actual battle (Vsp 24). To Thor did Loki give Sif's hair to make amends for his past injury, and this offering appears rather different in quality from others. And the ship Skíðblaðnir which "could be folded up like a cloth and put in one's bag" goes to the hands of Freyr the god of fertility. As E.O.G. Turville-Petre (1964: 173) drew attention, the hundreds of boat-graves and rock-engraving pictures would reveal the strong association of ships, with fertility and death. Especially about the ships often depicted in rock-engravings, Oscar Almgren (1926/27: 7-85) has expounded his view from a wide perspective, in relation with the sun cult, the tree worship and the ancient fertility cult, pointing out some analogy with foreign ideas such as the Greek ship-waggon for welcoming Dionysus, the Egyptian sun-boat or the boat of the dead, and so on.

Aside from the problem as to whether Skíðblaðnir were a vehicle to bring fertility or death, we could probably detect the original figure of Loki at a certain period of time in the supposed long tradition of the ship-cult. The episode of Skíðblaðnir does hint at the underlying theme or the older belief that Loki should come back over the ocean on a ship loaded with "splendid" treasures. In the conclusive account of the myth, however, Loki is held captive by Thor, one of the donees, and suffers the merciless persecution of having his mouth stiched with a thong. It would be understandable that Thor got into a rage and demonstrated such brutality towards Loki, if Sif's new hair was not actually made of

gold against Thor's demands, as is discussed below. At any rate, it might be admitted that this story ends in the persecution inflicted upon a *Marebito* 'fortunate stranger-deity.' If so, we could properly expect a sequel to this story which should tell us about some counter-attack by strangers. Our premonition seems to be almost realized when we face up to the narrative of the Ragnarök or the downfall of the old world.

As is mentioned above, Loki has a close relationship with Freyja and Skaði, who commonly bear the name *dís*, and we have also acknowledged that Loki, assuming a double character, is basically similar to the *dísir* who may protect their favorite men and families but at certain times bring ill-fortune to them. Thus, while showing blatant favoritism to the Æsir deities by dedicating himself very often to helping them at crises, Loki eventually discloses his terrible aspect at the Ragnarök by leading the monstrous beings of Muspell's sons from beyond the ocean, so that he may break up the past alliance with the gods and destroy all of them. Especially, the chief god Othin has been bound by the inviolable pledge of alliance or "guest-friendship" with Loki, in Greek scholarly terms of Gabriel Herman (1987), since both of them performed the rite of mixing their blood with each other (Ls 9). Therefore, as I have elaborated in my recent paper, some possible severe persecution upon Loki should immediately invite much dire punishment upon the assailants themselves. When Othin allowed the Æsir to capture Loki and bind him up ruthlessly with the intestines of Narfi, Loki's son, and to make Loki suffer the incessant agony of being bathed in the serpent's dropping venom, such a cruel torture inflicted upon the sacred stranger should be necessarily returned to the gods themselves as a host party, in the light of the golden rule of guest-friendship (Mizuno 1989 : 27). Making a striking contrast with Skíðblaðnir which enables all the well-armed Æsir to go aboard, the 'biggest' ship named Naglfari (Gylf 43) is told ominously to sail from the east, taking Múspell's troops with Loki at the helm (Vsp 51). Thence, to offer a paradoxical view, Naglfari which, being made of nails of the dead people, carries the troops of terrible strangers, can be defined as a final and fatal gift bestowed upon heathen gods, given by Loki. Nevertheless, we could draw an inference that, in the reverse side of this narrative as well, another and the truly original figure of Loki lies hidden : Loki should be urgently expected as a *Nothelfer* or a savior to come at critical situations and sometimes make an appearance as a bringer of fortune, coming from beyond the ocean. Needless to say, marvelous gifts which the stranger brought forward often become the seeds of discord and conflicts in the community. So, even the fortunate stranger is easy to be stigmatized as a demonic being. Loki is thus predestined to be regarded either as a fortunate stranger or as a terrible one in accordance with the criterion of the community.

7. The Dominant Theme of "Guest-Friendship" in Grímnismál

To corroborate the above arguments, the main plot of Grímnismál would be the most

appropriate example of demonstrating the basic similarity in nature between Loki and the *dís*. Scholars have interpreted this lay as a parallel with Othin's martyrdom of the self-sacrifice described in the strophes 138–41 of *Hávamál*, putting much stress on the element of shamanistic ordeal, even though Jens P. Schjødt offered criticism against the past views in 1988. It should deserve much more attention that the dominant theme of *Grímnismál* lies rightly in the divine punishment imposed upon a host king who grossly neglected to offer hospitality to the sacred visitor. According to the story, the king Geirroðr inflicted the fire torture upon the guest Othin who came in disguise under the name of *Grímnir* 'masker.' Even though he could not see through the guest's identity, Geirroðr should owe the proper obligation to Othin, because this god had saved Geirroðr from the miserable state of wreck in his boyhood and had brought him up as an adopted son. It follows that the host-king commits the violation of the old law of guest-friendship. In contrast, his son Agnarr who was named after his uncle shows proper hospitality to Othin by serving a drinking-horn before this tortured stranger-deity. Eventually, Geirroðr is told by Othin, who is about to reveal his identity, that he cannot win any 'favor' (*hylli*) from Othin and all the 'eminent warriors' (*einherjar*), and that "the *dísir* are not his patronizers any longer" (*úfar ro dísir* : Grm 53). In consequence, at the moment when the true identity of the visitor was revealed, Geirroðr accidentally stumbled forward and stabbed himself to death with his own unsheathed sword. Then, some time after Othin vanished away, Agnarr who might partake of his uncle Agnarr, a favorite man of goddess Frigg, succeeded to the throne to rule there for a long time.

This story is a lesson of warning that the gross negligence of showing hospitality toward a sacred visitor should lead up to some tragedy of the host, implying that contrariwise the faithful observance of this principle would bring some favorable opportunity for the duty-performer. It must have been their belief that the *dís* as a protectress might bring either happiness or misfortune, depending on the behaviors or attitudes of a certain host. Probably in some similarity with the *nornir* 'fate divinities' who were believed to visit a man of noble family and allot him proper destiny (HH I, 2), the *dísir* would be held to be involved in the reversal of fortune for particular persons. Especially when some noble man violated the sacred bonds of guest-friendship, the offender concerned would be forsaken by the *dísir* and eventually lose all the favors of gods also. Such must be the belief in those days, as is grimly forewarned in *Hávamál* (strophes 132; 135). Thus, to defend Loki from too much accusations made in the past scholarly criticism, it is mainly because the gods themselves have offended against this golden rule of guest-friendship that Loki discloses his fiendish character to the utmost at the *gnarök*. In this respect, we should suspect that there might be some proper reason in Loki's conducts, even if this stranger deity appeared to act with spiteful or vindictive intentions, or to be responsible for the apparently accidental deaths of Otr, Thjazi and Baldr (Mizuno 1987a; 1987c).

8. Loki's Close Relationship with the Vanir

In the rock-engraving pictures of the Late Bronze Age, the people are seen to be involved in some orgiastic festivity by dancing, leaping and playing the lurs on boats. Besides the typical description that men actively raise or brandish their axes, clubs and hammers in boats, certain figures of ithyphallic men or deities are noticed. Very often, ships are depicted as cult-vehicles of the sun, which is described with a form of wheels or concentric circles. To think of the famous Trundholm chariot, we may suppose, following Peter G. & Hilda E. Davidson, that "the sun was believed to travel in a horse-drawn vehicle in the day-time, and to sail in a ship at night (Davidson 1969 : 49)." At any rate, it is not hard to draw an inference, at a certain period in the history of religion, that a ship was believed to be a sacred vehicle of some anthropomorphic god.

As for Norse mythology, Njörðr has a closer relationship with ships than Freyr, the donee of Skíðblaðnir, does, viewed from the accounts that Njörðr presides over the direction of wind and holds control over the sea and fire, living in the abode called Nóatún 'the sacred enclosure of ships.' Njörðr is told to have been worshiped by seafarers and fishermen. In comparison with such characteristics of Njörðr, it has puzzled many scholars that Tacitus defines Nerthus, the counterpart of the male god Njörðr, as Mother Earth (*terra mater* : *Germania* 40). I have offered my view on the formation of Njörðr cult in connection with "the Indo-European religious association between the sun and fire" (Johannes Maringer 1976 : 161-63), and with the Bronze Age prevalence of cremation which might foster the belief in the immortality of the soul (Mizuno 1982 : 43-51). To my mind, Njörðr is originally an ubiquitous deity who rules over the three ever-moving elements such as wind, the water (especially sea-waves) and fire (which were called *váfuðr*, *vágr* and *vagr* respectively, in *Alvíssmál* ; Mizuno 1982 : 48-52). So we are allowed to suppose the general belief in olden times that Njörðr would provide those people with happiness and fortune from his dominion regions, viewed from Snorri's account : "Njörðr is so rich and wealthy that he can bestow lands or property upon those who invoke him (Gylf 23)." Tacitus recounts that, 'in an island of the ocean' (*in insula Oceani*), there was a holy grove where a sacred chariot for the divinity was placed, covered with a cloth. And a sole priest could perceive the moment of the goddess' advent into the inmost shrine, and would follow the cows-drawn chariot with deep reverence. "With this occasion," Tacitus proceeds with his account, "the propitious and joyful day (*laeti dies*) comes, and the festivals are held in every place, which befits the goddess to visit and to receive hospitality (*festa loca, quaecumque adventu hospitioque dignatur*). "It was such a fortunate time, we are told, with no war and taking no arms, that the people would be profoundly conscious of peace and quietude (*pax et quies*) and cherish them deeply during that occasion, every weapon being kept away (*Germania* 40).

Needless to say, Tacitus comprehended as a strange deity who would visit her 'favorite' people to bring happiness and fortune. In Jutland and the neighboring islands were there seven tribes which had the habitual visitation of the goddess, according to Tacitus. Such a characterization of Nerthus which does not seem basically so different from that of Njörðr specified by Snorri, calls us to mind something of the *dísir* cult. Very significantly, to put some reliance on Tacitus' account, the chariot in the sacred grove, with the opportune advent of this goddess, should have been conveyed by nothing but a ship from a certain island (*insula Oceani*) to her first visitation land. For the common people, such an abrupt appearance from beyond the ocean must have been a form of epiphany of Nerthus or Njörðr, because the one and only priest (*sacerdos*) could mystically realize the opportune time of the divinity's advent. To make a rather penetrating remark, at least for the common people, the theophany would be visually experienced only through the wanderings and visitations of the *sacerdos*, toward whom the people should truly offer hospitality with due respect.

I cannot here deny the rising ideas that Loki, who was supposed to come back with a ship loaded with gifts, appears to partake of the wandering priest of Nerthus. To think of the myths that Loki impersonates Freyja in making a journey, it would not be unnatural, even if some similarity were discerned between Loki and Njörðr. In the well-known myth, the Æsir leave Skaði, who visits them furiously at the killing of Thjazi, to choose her husband-to-be among the gods by looking only at their feet. Contrary to her expectation that he must be Baldr, it was Njörðr of Nóatún that she chose in this way (Skm. 3). Very interestingly, this story tells about the camouflaged arrangement for marriage, but we would rather spot the simple fact behind the camouflage itself, that is, Njörðr here dispals his excellent ability of disguise, just as sometimes Loki does.

Although we are told that such a grand marriage between the sea god and the mountain goddess eventually ends in divorce, Snorri provides us with a very implicative story. That is, before their divorce, Njörðr desired to live in Nóatún by the sea, while Skaði preferred her father's home in a mountain. And so, they brought the matter to a temporary settlement by staying nine nights alternately in the partner's abode (Gylf 23). This story unerringly reveals the older belief that Njörðr would make it an epiphany to visit the fields and mountains, regularly coming from the sea, and that Skaði should pay a habitual visit in the opposite direction. To carry this correlative schema a step further, Skaði called *öndurdís*, an embodiment of favoritism, could be defined as a fortunate stranger-goddess who would be believed originally to bestow the hunted game as 'fortunes in mountains' (*Yama no Sachi* in Japanese) on her 'favorite' hunters, just as Njörðr was believed to confer the *lausafé* 'movable property' (originally 'fortunes in the sea'? If so, the idea may correspond to *Umi no Sachi* in Japanese) upon seafarers and fishermen. Tacitus' account that "the feasts are celebrated in every place which befits the goddess to visit and to receive hospitality" (*festa loca, quaecumque adventu hospitioque dignatur* :

Germania 40) also tells us about the goddess' favoritism shown towards some particular persons or group of people. In other words, the family or the people, who deserve to receive the visitation of the goddess and her *sacerdos*, would be held to win special favor of the deity, if they performed the proper hospitality to the sacred visitors.

With some resemblance to Nerthus-Njörðr and Skaði, Freyja named Vanadís or Gefn has been found to assume the character of a divine wandering 'Provider' (*Gefn*) aside from her death aspect. Thus, Loki who has a close relationship with the *dísir* and with such Vanic deities such as Njörðr, Freyr and Freyja, would be entitled alone to appease Skaði, who felt much displeased with the result of the camouflaged arrangement of choosing her bridegroom. In a burlesque way, Loki played at the tug of war with a nanny goat, undeniably in order to curry favor with Skaði, who was about to disclose her terrible aspect of death goddess coming from the mountains. Consequently, Loki could appease her anger and successfully turned the possible game of death into that of fertility (as to other analogous stories, for instance, the Greek myth of Iambe [or Baubo] and Demeter, see Margaret Clunies Ross 1989 : 10-11). At any rate, such an ending of this story suggests that Loki succeeded in winning the special favor of Skaði as a huntress or an arrow-shooter (*með boga ok skýtr dýr* : Gylf 23). Loki, as it were, has entered into a contract-like relationship with Skaði, which ordains that he must perform some feat in behalf of her. I believe, that is the main reason why Loki is involved in killing Baldr, the target of love for Skaði.

In a few publications, I have developed my idea that Skaði must be seriously responsible for killing Baldr, in the light of Snorri's account that Skaði habitually wanders about with skis, and with her bow shoots game animals. The manner of the narrative, for instance, that the mistletoe as a fatal weapon was "shot" (*skjóta* : Gylf 49) at Baldr, as if it were a substitute for an arrow, would imply Skaði's indirect involvement in this murder. Besides, at such a tragic incident, Othin is told to have suffered more harmful "injury or damage" (*skaði* : Gylf 49) in his mind than any other of the *Æsir*. The word *skaði*, expressing the inner feelings of Othin here, also suggests that Othin tacitly recognized Skaði herself to be involved in this tragic murder (Mizuno 1986 : 108). Thus, in my view, Loki, who induces Höðr the blind, the embodiment of the 'death and darkness' aspect of Skaði, to shoot the mistletoe, could be held to play mimetically as a substitute for Skaði, who has desired to win Baldr. The myth of killing Baldr is essentially a drama of life and death in which Loki, by disguising himself again as a wandering supernatural woman, mimics the character of Skaði or *öndurdís* who causes the abrupt death. The ultimate result was rather humorous, contrary to Skaði's expectations, in the sense that Loki plays a sort of Cupid to offer Baldr to his own daughter Hel instead of yielding this possible love-target to Skaði. We could understand the main reason, from this respect, why Skaði caught a venomous serpent and fastened it above Loki's face to inflict atrocious torture upon him (Ls. the prose epilogue). At any rate, very noticeably,

Loki had a close relationship not only with Freyja called Vanadís, but also with Skaði named *öndurdís* who was believed to bring sudden death or terrible misfortunes.

9. Conclusive Comments

Through the above arguments, we demonstrated that Loki could be put in a much closer relationship with the Vanic religion than had been supposed. Loki as a bountiful provider seems to be overshadowed basically by Njörðr and partly by Freyja. In *Loka-senna*, Loki boasts of having made love to Skaði as well as the divine wives of Týr and Thor. In playing at the rope pulling contest with a goat to make Skaði laugh and appease her anger, Loki is known to show off his virile parts before her. Accordingly, Loki deserves to be called the god of virility, and so bears a notable resemblance to the phallic god Freyr, while at other times he can be called derogatorily to have *args aðal* 'womanish nature' (Ls 23) because of assuming a female disguise. It would be permissible to say that Loki with such a hermaphroditic character partakes of respective sexuality of Freyr and Freyja. This inference is not so unnatural, viewed from the account that the Æsir and even Othin learned the Vanic magic *seiðr* from Freyja (*Ynglinga saga* ch. 4 & 7). The myth tells us, as a measure to settle the longest struggle between the Æsir and Vanir, Njörðr and Freyr are sent as hostages to the Æsir. According to the *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 4), the Vanic people send to the Æsir another hostage named Kvasir, who wins the admiration "the wisest (*spakastr*) deity of their party." This epithet for Kvasir basically sounds like similar to the circumlocution for Loki's wisdom: "Loki excels all the others in wisdom (*speki*) which is called cunning (*slægð*)" (Gylf 33). As is often cited, the *Ynglinga saga* gives an account that Othin appointed Njörðr and Freyr as 'priests of sacrifice' (*blóðgoðar*), adding that they became the 'high divinities' (*díar*) of the Æsir. We may guess that even the Æsir as the ruling gods could not have neglected the stupendous potency of the Vanir. Nevertheless, the Vanir gods do not take conspicuously active parts in the mythological accounts. Thus, it would be quite reasonable to suppose that Loki, depending on his own situations, plays as a conspicuous substitute for some of the Vanic deities and for Skaði, each of whom intrinsically bears the ambivalent character of a terrible stranger and a sacred visitor in the ruling Æsir world.

Based upon my arguments proceeded above, we should appreciate the much deeper significance of one passage in the epilogue of *Gylfaginning*, in which Loki is assimilated with Odysseus (*Ulixes*) or the Greek hero who caused the fall of Troy with his craftiness and returned, after long wanderings, to the isle Ithaca, his own country, magically disguising himself as a beggar with the divine help of Athena, the goddess of sagacity and war (Odyssey XIII 430f). It goes without saying that Odysseus as a typical wanderer and a divine disguiser assumes the double character of a stranger-king (as to the theme of *The King in Disguise*, see Joseph Harris 1976/1979; Elizabeth Walsch 1975; Lotte Motz

1975). It could be readily acknowledged that this cunning hero Odysseus shares the common characters with Loki, the Nordic type of wandering deity. Loki also reveals himself as a divine disguiser or a crafty instigator of various confusions, and finally becomes a magical agent to destroy an impregnable fortress called Ásgarðr, which can be compared to Troy. The apparently complicated figures of Loki thus manifest the ambivalent aspect of strangers, whom those people have held in adoration and awe.

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