Several years ago, while working on a publication of the Latin, Irish and Slavonic versions of the *Adam Octipartite/Septipartite* traditions, I noted briefly the similarity of the content of those traditions to the story of the creation of the world from Ymir’s body in the Eddas, particularly the version of that account found in the Prose Edda.¹ I have always intended to return to the observation, to explore it in more depth, and I can think of no better context for such a study than a volume in honor of Professor Stone, whose career has contributed so much to our knowledge of the Adam traditions and their relationships with other texts, through the centuries and across the boundaries of language. In what follows, then, I will examine these fascinating texts with a view to noting some of the points of correspondence and divergence and to considering how these may be explained. Professor Stone’s own work has always been marked by sensitivity to the complex relationships between religious and linguistic traditions, showing an appropriate caution in all attempts to construct stemmata or to trace routes of influence. My own study will reflect similar restraint: primarily, I simply want to probe in a little more detail the extent of correspondence and divergence. At the same time, I want to suggest an explanation for this that will stand over against the view that the correspondences reflect an Indo-European ur-myth from which the details of the local texts have evolved. Such a view, I will suggest, pays inadequate attention to the detail of the traditions, their witnesses and the contexts of transmission.

My counter proposal takes seriously the fact that the witnesses to the story of Ymir are late: a brief version of it is found in *Grímnismál* (“The Sayings of Grímnir”), one of the works collected in the *Poetic Edda*, and a longer version is found in *Gylfaginning* (“The Tricking of Gylfi”), one of the texts incorporated

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into the *Prose Edda*. Of the two collections, *The Poetic Edda* is generally held to be the one least obviously shaped by redactional activity, but it is important to recognize that even this work *qua* text is a late product of Christian scribal activity. The manuscript in which the Ymir story is found is generally considered to have been the work of a monk in the late thirteenth century,² seeking to preserve Scandinavian folk traditions as an endeavor of cultural preservation. The *Prose Edda*, meanwhile, is a work of well-established provenance: it was redacted by Snorri Sturluson in the thirteenth century and provides an interesting window into the development and preservation of Scandinavian traditions under Christian influence.

The point of these observations is simply that the manuscripts of both the *Poetic Edda* and the *Prose Edda* are late, meaning that the material they contain could have been affected by the interference of other texts and traditions, either at the point of redaction, or at the point of the oral tradition behind this. Several centuries of Viking activity and subsequent cultural development could have provided contexts in which local Scandinavian traditions were brought into contact with other European ones, both textually and orally.³

If, then, there are points where the texts contain parallels to material known to have circulated in northern European monastic traditions (in numerous languages and dialects, including Latin, Slavonic and Old Irish), then it is worth exploring whether those parallels suggest some kind of direct influence of one upon the other, or can be traced back to some common ancestor, or if a more complicated relationship must be considered. While, as we will see, the material contains some significant divergences, most obviously in the direction of relationship between the elements of the cosmos and the protoplastic figure, it also contains some striking correspondences. These include correspondences of both content and form: the text known as *Gylfaginning* is essentially a “conversation” text, in which questions are asked by Gylfi, a king of Sweden, and answered by the figures who have captured him. *Grímnismál*, by contrast, involves a lengthy monologue delivered by Grímnir (Odin), albeit in the context of an introductory narrative and conversation. As such, formally the *Gylfaginning* account resembles the contexts in which the Adam Octipartite/Septipartite material is typically found in medieval manuscripts, more so than does *Grímnismál*.

² Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, GKS 2365 4° [the “Regius Codex”].