

Sonatorrek (Loss of Sons), by Egil Skallagrímsson. c. 960

<p>1. Mjök erum tregt tungu at hræra með loptvætt ljóðpundara; esa nú vænt of Viðurs þýfi, né hógdrægt ór hugar fylgsni.</p>	<p>1. I can hardly move my tongue or lift up the steelyard of song; now there is little hope of Viðurs theft, nor is it easy to draw it out of the hiding place of the mind.</p>	<p>“steelyard of song” = tongue “Viður” = poetic name for Óðinn “Viðurs theft” = poetry; reference to myth of Óðinn stealing mead of poetry</p>
<p>2. Era auðþeystr, því at ekki veldr hǫfugligr, ór hyggju stað fagnafundr Friggjar niðja ár borinn ór jǫtunheimum.</p>	<p>2. It is not easy, because of my heavy sobbing, to let flow from the mind's place the joyful find of the kinsmen of Frigg, which in times of yore was carried away from the lands of giants.</p>	<p>“kinsmen of Frigg” = the Aesir; “joyful find of the kinsmen of Frigg” = poetry; another reference to the stealing of the mead of poetry from the giants</p>
<p>3. Lastalaus, er lifnaði á nokkvers nokkva bragi; jǫtuns háls undir þjóta Náins niðr fyrir naustdyrum.</p>	<p>3. [Without faults, has come to life at [name of dwarf?] ship of Bragi]; [From] wounds on a giant's neck [blood] flows down in front of Nain's house doorway.</p>	<p>This section is garbled or as Einarsson says “Lines 1-4 have not been satisfactorily explicated.” “Blood from giant's neck” = sea “Nain” is a dwarf name; his doorway = rocks. Einarsson glosses this verse as “The sea is roaring down in front of rocks.”</p>
<p>4. Því at ætt mín á enda stendr, hræbarnir sem hlynir marka, era karskr maðr sá er kǫgla berr frænda hrørs af fletjum niðr.</p>	<p>4. Because my lineage has come to an end, ike weather-beaten trees of the forest, it is not a glad man who carries a dead body of a relative [down from the benches.]</p>	<p>“flet” = the built-in benches along the side of the hall that people sat and slept on. Einarsson glosses this phrase as “from the house.”</p>
<p>5. Þó mun ek mitt ok móður hrør fǫður fall fyrst um telja; þat ber ek út ór orðhofi mærdar timbr máli laufgat.</p>	<p>5. [Yet I must of my mother's death and fall of my father first speak;] I carry out of the temple of words the timber of praise, leaved with words.</p>	<p>“temple of words” = mouth “timber of praise” = poem</p>
<p>6. Grimmt vǫrum hlið, þat er hrǫnn um braut fǫður míns á frændgarði;</p>	<p>6. Cruel to me was the gap which the sea broke in [my father's fence of kinsmen]; I see the empty and open place</p>	<p>“fence of kinsmen” = lineage, family</p>

veit ek ófullt ok opit standa sonar skarð, es mér sjár um vann.	[stands] [the gap of my son], which the sea has caused me.	
7. Mjök hefir Rán ryskt um mik, em ek ofsnauðr at ástvinum; sleit marr bõnd minnar ættar, <snaran> þõtt af sjõlfum mér.	7. Rán has given me rough treatment; I have too few dear friends; the sea broke the strings of my kin, a hard-spun strand of myself.	Rán is the wife of the god of the sea; in Snorri's <i>Edda</i> she is described as “having a net in which she caught everyone that went to sea” (95).
8. Veiztu um þá sõk sverði of rækak, var ǫlsmið<r> allra tíma; hroða vágs bræðr ef vega mættak, foera ek andvígr Ægis mani.	8. You know, if for that offense I took revenge with the sword, the ale-smith's life would be over; If I could kill them, I would fight Ægir's wife [and brother of the wind].	Einarsson says “the whole stanza is linguistically and metrically corrupt, and the suggested conjectures are unsatisfactory.” “ale-smith” = Ægir, who is the brewer for the gods. “brother of the wind” = the sea
9. En ek ekki eiga þõttumk sakar afl við sonar bana, því at alþjóð fyr augum verðr gamals þegns gengileysi.	9. But I thought I had not the strength to contend with my son's slayer, because [in front of everyone's eyes it becomes known, the lack of support of an old thane.]	
10. Mik hefr marr miklu ræntan; grimmt er fall frænda at telja, síðan er minn á munvega ættarskjõldr aflífi hvarf.	10. The sea has deprived me of a great deal; it is painful to enumerate the deaths of kinsmen, since [my shield of the family] died and [went on the paths of joy.]	“shield of the family” = defender of the family; referring to Egil's son. “paths of joy”: Einarsson notes that this expression is not found anywhere else in the ON corpus
11. Veit ek þat sjalfr, at í syni mínum vara ills þegns efni vaxit, ef sá randviðr rõskvask næði, unz her-Gauts hendr of tæki.	11. I know myself that in my son the stuff of a bad man would never have grown if this [shield- tree] could have matured until he got a soldier's arms.	“shield-tree” = warrior, man “her-Gautr” = probably Óðinn, perhaps warrior; an alternative translation could be “if this shield-tree could have matured until the hand of Óðinn, took him”
12. Æ lét flest þat er faðir mælti,	12. Nearly always he complied with his father's words, though	Einarsson says “lines 5-6 are inexplicable and metrically

þótt öll þjóð annat segði, ok mér upp helt um verbergi ok mitt afl mest of studdi.	everybody else objected ... and most supported my efforts	wrong.”
13. Opt kemr mér mána bjarnar í byrvind bræðraleysi; hyggjumk um, er hildr þróask, nýsumk hins ok hygg at því:	13. The loss of brothers often comes to me in the [favorable wind of the enemy of the moon]; I consider (what to do) when the battle rages, I rack my brain about it and reflect about this:	“enemy of the moon” = giant “favorable wind of the enemy of the moon” = mind
14. Hverr mér hugaðr á hlið standi annarr þegn við óðræði; þarf ek þess opt við þvergrum; verð ek varfleygr, er vinir þverra.	14. What other courageous person will support me against sudden danger? I am often in need of it against obstinate men. I become wary (?) when friends depart.	
15. Mjök er torfyndr, sá er trúa knegum, of alþjóð Elgjar galga, þvi at niðgóðr niðja steypir bróður hrør við baugum selr.	15. It is hard to find anyone trustworthy among all the people[of Óðinn's gallows], because an evil traitor to his relations takes rings for the killing of a brother.	“Elgjar” = Óðinn “Óðinn's gallows” = world-tree “all the people of Óðinn's gallows” = everyone in the world (even giants and gods) refers to accepting compensation instead of revenge: both are legal options
16. Finn ek þat opt es fjár beiðir - - -	16. I often feel, when asking for money . . .	Einarsson says “a doubtful attempt to translate an unfinished sentence.”
17. Þat er ok mælt at engi getr sonar iðgjöld nema sjalfr ali, enn þann nið er qðrum sé borinn maðr í bróður stað.	17. The saying is also that no man gets compensation for a son unless he himself rears another son, one who is born instead in order to take the place of a brother.	
18. Erumka þekkt þjóða sinni, þótt sérhverr sátt um haldi;	18. I do not like the company of men, even though they are in agreement; My son, the son of my wife, has arrived [at the	

burr er Bileygs í bæ kominn, kvánar sonr, kynnis leita.	home of Óðinn], to pay a visit.	“Bileyg” = Óðinn “home of Óðinn” = world of the gods
19. En mér fens í fǫstum þokk hrosta hilmir á hendi stendr; máka ek upp jǫrðu grímu rýnnis reið réttri halda,	19. But [the chieftain of the fen of the beer-mash] weighs me down with firm mind; I cannot hold [the ground of the mask], [knowledge's carriage], upright,	“fen of the beer-mash” = beer “chieftain of beer” = Ægir “ground of the mask” = head “knowledge's carriage” = head
20. síz son minn sóttar brími heiptugligr ór heimi nam, þanns ek veit at varnaði vamma varr við vámaeli.	20. since cruel fever removed my son from the world, the one – himself without blemish – who I know kept clear of slander.	
21. Þat man ek enn, es upp um hóf í goðheim Gauta spjalli ættar ask, þann er óx af mér, ok kynvið kvánar minnar.	21. I still remember when [the friend of the Gautar] raised up to the world of the gods the ash-tree of my race which sprouted from me and the family branch of my wife.	“friend of the Gautar” = Óðinn
22. Átta ek gott við geirs dróttin, gerðumk tryggr at trúa honum, áðr vinátt vagna rúni sigrhǫfundr um sleit við mik.	22. I had good relations with [the lord of the spear], I had confidence in him, until [the friend of carriages], [lord of victory], broke off friendship with me.	“lord of the spear” = Óðinn “friend of carriages” = Óðinn “lord of victory” = Óðinn
23. Blætka því bróður Vílis, goðjaðar, at gjarn séak; þó hefr Míms vinr mér of fengnar bǫlva bætr, es et betra telk.	23. I do not [sacrifice] [to the brother of Vili,] the protector of the gods, because I am keen to; nevertheless, [Mimir's friend] has, if I consider the better side of it granted me recompense for my ills.	“brother of Vili” = Óðinn “Mimir's friend” = Óðinn
24. Gáfumk íþrótt ulfs of bági	24. [The enemy of the wolf], the experienced fighter, gave me	“enemy of the wolf” = Óðinn

vígi vanr vammi firrða ok þat geð, er ek gjörða mér vísa fjandr af vélöndum.	a faultless art, and the mind which enabled me to make shifty cowards of obvious enemies.	
25. Nú er méf torvelt, Tveggja bága njörvanipt á nesi stendr, skal ek þó glaðr með góðan vilja ok óhryggr heljar bíða.	25. Now I am in trouble, [sister of the enemy to two] stands on the headland; nevertheless I shall, glad and unconcerned and with good-will await death.	“enemy to two” = Fenrir the wolf, who bit the hand off of Týr and will defeat Óðinn at Ragnarök “sister of enemy to two” = Hel, goddess of death
Old Norse text edited by Bjarni Einarsson, from <i>Egils saga</i> , London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2003, pp. 146-154.	English prose translation and glosses by Bjarni Einarsson, from <i>Egils saga</i> , London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2003, pp. 146-154. My emendations are in brackets	This poem is preserved in <i>Egils saga skallagrímsson</i> . “The text of the poem is the result of a long series of copies and is in some places corrupt beyond correction.” (Einarsson, 146).