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Loki's chains, Agni's yoke, *Prometheus Bound*, and the Old English *Boethius*

Indo-European myths of the "Binding/Yoking of Fire-Gods" in the light of Comparative Poetics and Cognitive Linguistics

Abstract: This study has a twofold aim. The first is to make the case for the reconstruction of an Indo-European myth of the "Fire-God's Binding" with well-preserved reflexes in Old Norse and Sanskrit texts, but also partial reflexes in Ancient Greek and Old English texts. The second, methodological aim is to advocate for Cognitive Oral Poetics and Cognitive Linguistics in general as an ideal framework for the synchronic analysis of the linguistic material currently studied in comparative and diachronic perspective within the field of Comparative IE Poetics. After a methodological introduction explaining the theoretical framework, and in particular the notions of "thematic frame" (combining those of "theme" in Comparative IE Poetics and of "frame" in Cognitive Linguistics) and of "phraseological construction" (combining those of "phraseological collocation" in Comparative IE poetics and of "construction" in Cognitive Linguistics), a set of five such items is identified in the texts of both the Norse myth of "Loki's Binding" and the Indic myth of "Agni's Yoking", allowing for the reconstruction of an IE myth of the "Fire-God's Binding/Yoking", with partial correspondences in the Ancient Greek tradition of "Prometheus's Binding/Yoking" and in various Old English texts structured by a peculiar poetics of "Fire's Binding".

Keywords: binding, yoking, fire, Old Norse, Sanskrit, Greek, Old English, Indo-European, comparative poetics, Cognitive Linguistics

1 Introduction

1.1 A Norse myth in comparative Indo-European perspective

The Norse myth of "Loki's Binding" is a well-known traditional narrative from pre-Christian Scandinavia recorded in several medieval Old Norse (ON) texts.[1] It tells of

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1 The translations are adapted from Baum 1963 (*Exeter Riddles*), van Buitenen 1975 (*Mahābhārata*), Cavell 2016: 186 (Old English *Boethius*), Edwards 1917 (Caesar), Eggeling 1885 (*Śatapathabrāh-*

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how the gods captured and punished the mischievous god Loki by binding him to three stones underground and hanging over him a monstrous snake whose venom drips onto his face, causing unbearable pain to the god and violent earthquakes to us mortals (to this day). Loki's wife Sigyn tries to alleviate his torture by collecting the venom in a basin, but the drops still reach the god whenever she leaves his side to pour away the liquid.

As has long been noted, this myth's narrative motifs and structure have a number of parallels not only in the Greek myth of the binding and torture of the Titan Prometheus, as attested (inter alia) in Hesiod's epic poem *Theogony* and in Aeschylus' tragedy *Prometheus Bound*, but also in several similar Caucasian legends recorded in modern times. These thematic parallels were discussed as early as 1902 by Axel Olrik and, more recently (among others), by Hansen (2007), both of whom regarded them as reflexes of a wandering oral tradition that spread from its original source in the Caucasus to Greece and Scandinavia.[2]

This interpretation is certainly plausible in respect to some specific thematic parallels discussed by Olrik and Hansen from the typological perspective of Folktale Studies. The first aim of the present investigation, however, is to argue for the identification within the texts of the Norse myth of Loki of a further set of features, which, on the one hand, may be identified and analyzed by means of a linguistic methodology, and which, on the other hand, have close correspondences not only in the already-mentioned Ancient Greek tradition of "Prometheus' Binding", but also in the texts of another Germanic tradition from the Early Middle Ages, namely the Old English one (including, inter alia, the Old English *Boethius*), as well as in another, very distant ancient Indo-European (IE) tradition. More precisely, the most exact parallels with Loki's story will be shown to occur in some of the earliest texts of ancient India, namely the Vedic and Classical Sanskrit texts about "Agni's Yoking", whose great similarity to the Norse narrative points to the inheritance of IE poetic and mythological culture as the most likely source of the correspondences.

Before getting to the actual analysis of all these texts, the next two subsections (1.2 and 1.3) are devoted to the explanation of the approach followed in the study.

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maṇa), Faulkes 1987 (*Prose Edda*), Gade 2009 (*Hákonarkviða*), Henderson 2000 (Aristophanes), JB (*Ṛgveda*), Kemble 1848 (*Solomon and Saturn*); Larrington 2014 (*Poetic Edda*); Larson 1917 (*Konungs skuggsjá*), Most 2018 (Hesiod), and Sommerstein 2009 (Aeschylus). Eddic poems are quoted on the basis of Neckel & Kuhn's (1962) edition; passages from Snorri's *Edda* are quoted on the basis of Faulkes's (2005; 2007) normalized editions.

2 See Hansen 2007 for an overview and critical discussion of the scholarship on this matter.

1.2 Comparative IE Poetics and Cognitive Oral Poetics

In contrast to the parallels already noted by scholars like Olrik and Hansen, all the correspondences discussed in the present contribution will be identified by applying an essentially linguistic methodology to a series of texts of (usually oral-)traditional and poetic-literary character, composed in several languages of the IE family. More precisely, all texts shall be investigated by combining two complementary approaches rooted in the study of both ancient languages and oral traditions: Comparative IE Poetics and Cognitive Oral Poetics.

The well-established discipline of Comparative IE Poetics applies the method of Historical-Comparative Linguistics to the study of "IE phraseology", i.e., the totality of traditional formulaic phrases and other fixed combinations of words ("lexical collocations") and meanings ("semantic collocations") that are attested in multiple IE traditions and thus allow for the reconstruction of inherited phraseological units, so-called "reconstructed/inherited IE formulas/phrases/collocations".[3] A prominent example of such a unit is the inherited formula "HERO SLAY (*$g^{u̯h}en$-) SERPENT (*$h_3eg^{u̯h}i$-)",[4] famously reconstructed by Watkins (1995: 365 and *passim*) by comparing an impressive number of IE texts in which a mythological dragon-slaying event is expressed by means of a collocation of reflexes of the reconstructed verbal root *$g^{u̯h}en$- 'slay'[5] and of the reconstructed noun *$h_3eg^{u̯h}i$- 'serpent'. As repeatedly stressed by Watkins himself (as well as other scholars, cf., e.g., García Ramón 2010), the lexical elements of an inherited formula are often subject to variation for a number of reasons, including (inter alia) language change, synonymy, and metrical form. The most stable and persistent component of a formula must thus be identified with its underlying semantic structure, which will be represented here with English word order and according to the system (slightly different from Watkins's one) laid out in a number of publications by José Luis García Ramón (e.g., 2009; 2010), namely [SEMANTIC.ELEMENT (*corresponding.lexemes*) – semantic/syntactic.relationship SEMANTIC.ELEMENT (*corresponding.lexemes*)], thus, e.g., [HERO – SLAY (*$g^{u̯h}en$-) – SERPENT (*$h_3eg^{u̯h}i$-) – with WEAPON]; semantic elements and conceptual material in general will be notated in small capitals according to a widespread convention. A very important point stressed by Watkins (1995: 10) in his discussion of the IE dragon-slaying collocation is that this inherited formula "is the vehicle for the central theme of a proto-text, a central part of the

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3 These terms are actually not synonymous, but they are often used with little semantic distinction within the field of Comparative IE Poetics.

4 I prefer to reconstruct the word for 'serpent' as *$h_3eg^{u̯h}i$-, following Beekes (EDG: 1134f.); Watkins (1995: 365 and *passim*) reconstructs it as *$og^{u̯h}i$-.

5 LIV²: 218f.; the root originally meant 'hit repeatedly', see García Ramón 1998.

symbolic culture of the speakers of Proto-Indo-European itself". Within Watkins's framework, all IE reconstructed formulaic collocations must always be understood as the surface realization of IE "semantic themes", which "are collectively the verbal expression of the culture of the Indo-Europeans" (Watkins 1995: 28). As is well known, Watkins's definitions of "IE formula" and "IE theme" were strongly influenced by—but also differed in many respects from—the definitions of "formula" and "theme" by Parry (1971) and Lord (1960), the two scholars who first demonstrated the oral-formulaic character of Homeric poetry and initiated the scientific study of oral-traditional poetics.

With this premise in mind, the linguistic material currently studied in diachronic perspective within Comparative IE Poetics has been synchronically interpreted here through the lens of the recently established field of Cognitive Oral Poetics (Antović & Pagán Cánovas 2016; Pagán Cánovas & Antović 2016), which seeks to apply the findings of Cognitive Linguistics to the research on oral traditions initiated by Parry and Lord. Within this approach, the two main categories of oral-traditional poetics, formulas and themes, are reinterpreted by means of the cognitive-linguistic notions of "constructions" and "semantic frames". Constructions are broadly defined as "form and meaning pairings" (Goldberg 2006: 3), while semantic frames are "script-like conceptual structure[s] that describ[e] a particular type of situation, object, or event along with its participants and props" (Ruppenhofer et al. 2016: 7): e.g., the simple English transitive construction [X – *slay* – Y] instantiated by the sentence *Calvert slays the dragon* is a form-meaning pairing in which the verb *slay* (the so-called "target" word) "evokes" (i.e., gives access to) a complex "semantic frame" KILLING (frame 590 in the Berkeley English FrameNet 1.7)[6] involving several so-called "frame elements" (e.g., KILLER, VICTIM, INSTRUMENT, MANNER, TIME), two of which are here overtly expressed by the subject X and the object Y (KILLER and VICTIM of the KILLING event, respectively). Pagán Cánovas & Antović (2016: 71) argue that the way "oral formulaic theory does not consider formulas in isolation, but views them as verbal patterns reused within thematic units (trip, departure, arrival, prayer, threat, assembly, battle, messenger, etc.)" closely matches how, within Cognitive Linguistics, "constructions are generally interpreted within frames": in other words, since poetic language is a register of language, formulas may be interpreted as a subtype of constructions, and themes as a subtype of frames. This straightforward equation prompts us to use the tools of contemporary cognitive-linguistic theory to further develop

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6 The Berkeley FrameNet is a database that documents more than 1000 hierarchically related semantic frames occurring within the British National Corpus. See https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/; Ruppenhofer et al. 2016.

Watkins's (1995: 9) historical-comparative notion of IE formulas as "set phrases which are the vehicles of" IE themes, which is clearly very compatible with the above argument. Further stimulus towards this comparative endeavor comes from the fact that innovative construction-based approaches to single ancient oral-poetic traditions have been attempted with very promising results, e.g., by Bozzone (2014) with respect to Homeric formulas and by Frog (2014) with respect to ON kennings.

Building on this insight, I propose to refer to any formulaic expression or phraseological pattern analyzed or reconstructed in the present study as a "formulaic" or "phraseological construction", i.e., a phraseological form-meaning pairing that has been fixed and learned by repetition within an oral tradition, and to understand it synchronically as a linguistic structure that has the function to evoke a specific "thematic frame", i.e., a semantic frame that has been passed on as a culturally prominent item (being repeatedly "thematized") within a given oral tradition (thus corresponding to Watkins's notion of "traditional theme"). Within this framework, e.g., the IE collocation [HERO – SLAY ($*g^{uh}en$-) – SERPENT ($*h_3eg^{uh}i$-)] is interpreted as a phraseological construction evoking a (culturally very prominent) IE thematic frame DRAGON-SLAYING with several frame elements (e.g., HERO, SERPENT, WEAPON, MANNER, TIME), but overtly expressing only two of them, namely the generic HERO (the mythological KILLER) and the SERPENT (the specific VICTIM of this mythological event), the latter element being in turn evoked by the lexeme $*h_3eg^{uh}i$- (as form-meaning pairings, lexemes and names are a sub-type of constructions as well).[7]

The second, methodological aim of this contribution is thus to advocate for Cognitive Oral Poetics—and Cognitive Linguistics in general (cf. Ginevra 2019; Ginevra 2021a; Ginevra 2021b)—as an ideal framework for the synchronic analysis of the linguistic material currently studied in comparative and diachronic perspective within the field of Comparative IE Poetics.

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7 The more specific thematic frame DRAGON-SLAYING and the more general semantic frame KILLING are bound by an "is-a" relation of "inheritance" (on which see Ruppenhofer et al. 2016: 9), meaning that the child frame DRAGON-SLAYING is a subtype of the parent frame KILLING: a DRAGON-SLAYING "is a" KILLING, but a KILLING is not always a DRAGON-SLAYING. Correspondingly, the respective frame-evoking constructions may also be "linked by inheritance relations which motivate many of [their] properties" (Goldberg 1995: 67): e.g., the DRAGON-SLAYING-evoking construction [HERO – SLAY ($*g^{uh}en$-) – SERPENT ($*h_3eg^{uh}i$-)] clearly inherits many of its properties from the more general argument-structure construction of the PIE verbal root $*g^{uh}en$- in its sense 'slay', namely the phraseological pattern [X – SLAY ($*g^{uh}en$-) – Y] evoking the semantic frame KILLING by means of the verbal root $*g^{uh}en$-and overtly expressing the KILLER X and the VICTIM Y.

1.3 Structure of the study and preliminary considerations

The present study will be structured as follows. Firstly, a set of five thematic frames (a–e) and corresponding phraseological constructions occurring in the texts of both the Norse myth of "Loki's Binding" (Section 2) and the Indic myth of "Agni's Yoking" (Section 3) will be identified (inductively, bottom-up) and analyzed, unveiling a number of non-trivial parallels that allow for the reconstruction of an IE myth of the "Fire-God's Binding" (Section 4). Then, partial correspondences will be identified (deductively, top-down)[8] in the thematic frames and phraseological constructions attested within the Ancient Greek tradition of "Prometheus' Binding/Yoking" (Section 5), as well as within various Old English texts structured by a peculiar poetics of "Fire's Binding" (Section 6), and both will be interpreted as partial reflexes of the same inherited tradition reconstructed on the basis of the Norse and Indic evidence. Finally, the results of the research will be summarized and some further conclusions will be drawn (Section 7).

The most important correspondence between all these mythological and poetic traditions lies in the attestation, as the central event in a narrative-logical sequence (and also in a ritual sequence in Indic), of a thematic frame (c) BINDING/YOKING, whose core elements are always evoked by a reflex of the inherited (clearly formulaic) phraseological construction (c.1) [GOD(S) – BIND/YOKE – FIRE-GOD]. Further parallels will be shown to occur between the characterizations of (a) the BOUND/YOKED PROTAGONIST, as well as between the portions of the narratives that take place (b) before the BINDING/YOKING, (d) after the BINDING/YOKING, and even (e) at the RELEASE from the BONDS/YOKE. The relevant features of each thematic frame will be discussed in several numbered points that do not exactly correspond to frame elements: e.g., the relevant features of the thematic frame (c) BINDING/YOKING mentioned above are analyzed in three points (c.1–3) that do not exactly correspond to three frame elements: the first discussion point (c.1) always focuses on the whole construction [GODS – BIND/YOKE – FIRE-GOD], which expresses at least two frame elements (AGENT and PATIENT) of the BINDING/YOKING event; in contrast, each of the two other points (c.2–3) discusses a specific frame element of the BINDING/YOKING event (INSTRUMENT and LOCATION, respectively).

Given that a huge—hardly measurable—number of frames and constructions occurs at the same time within each of the texts quoted in this study, a complete

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8 I have chosen to inductively infer the reconstruction on the basis of the two traditions where the myth is attested in the most coherent form (Norse and Indic) and then deductively verify this reconstruction by taking into account two traditions where only traces of this myth occur (Ancient Greek and Old English).

analysis of which would greatly exceed the scope of this contribution, the following limitations shall be applied:

– the present analysis shall exclusively involve frames and constructions that have both narrative-logical connections with the central BINDING/YOKING thematic frame AND correspondences in at least one of the other three IE traditions;
– therefore, even though all the thematic frames and frame elements mentioned here must always be assumed to be verbally evoked in the texts by some specific words and constructions, only the words and phraseological constructions that are relevant for our comparative analysis—i.e., the ones that have formal parallels in the other IE traditions—shall be identified and discussed here;
– correspondingly, if no comparable words and phraseological constructions can be identified between texts that clearly attest the same frames and frame elements, parallels will exclusively be discussed as involving semantic-conceptual material with no formal correspondences.

In contrast with other comparative approaches to mythology that do not seek to apply a methodology based on linguistic data, within this investigation parallels that exclusively involve semantic-conceptual material, such as thematic frames and frame elements (and not their corresponding constructions), will be drawn on only if such items have some narrative-logical connection—a so-called "syntagmatic" or "contiguity" relation—to the securely-reconstructable central thematic frame BINDING/YOKING, which, as argued below, is always expressed in the texts by means of linguistic material that reflects an inherited phraseological construction [GOD(S) – BIND/YOKE – FIRE-GOD]. This limitation will allow us to reconstruct an inherited sequence of thematic frames and phraseological constructions—i.e., an oral-traditional mythological narrative—closely revolving around our central thematic frame and phraseological construction, "with enough arbitrary linkage (contiguity relations) for us to be unsatisfied with the explanation of mere fortuitous resemblance" (Watkins 1995: 468, with respect to the dragon-slaying mythological sequence).

2 The Norse myth of "Loki's Binding"

The story of "Loki's Binding" is one of the most famous mythological narratives of pre-Christian Scandinavia, attested by various medieval texts in the Old Icelandic variety of ON. The most complete sources for this myth are the final prose of the

anonymous poem *Lokasenna* "Loki's Quarrel" (*Ls.*) and chapter 50 of the section *Gylfaginning* "Tricking of Gylfi" (*Gylf.*) of Snorri Sturluson's (1179–1241 CE) *Prose Edda*. The details of Loki's myth that are most relevant to this study are discussed in the following subsections (2.1–2.5) and summarized in the final subsection (2.6).[9]

2.1 Thematic frame (a), background knowledge about Loki: a male god with a connection to fire, killer of a light-god, and husband of a goddess associated with the pouring of a liquid

As anticipated above, from a cognitive-linguistic perspective, words are constructions too, i.e., frame-evoking pairings of form and meaning: "a word's meaning can be understood only with reference to a structured background of experience, beliefs, or practices, constituting a kind of conceptual prerequisite for understanding the meaning" (Fillmore & Atkins 1992: 76f.). The same is true for proper names and epithets as well: given the obviously traditional character of ON oral narratives with Loki as protagonist, the sole mention of the god's name *Loki* or of any other distinctive (non-generic)[10] epithet of his would have immediately evoked in the audience a thematic frame (a), a "structured background" of this character's several traditional features and associations, some of which (a.1–3) are most relevant to this comparative analysis.

Firstly (a.1), Loki is a MALE GOD with an original connection to the concept FIRE: within ON literature, Loki and FIRE share at least some associations (see, e.g., Ginevra 2018a and Ginevra 2018b), such as the fact that Loki's underground movements are believed to cause earthquakes (ex. 1), exactly matching the cosmological belief attested in the Old Norwegian *Konungs Skuggsjá* "King's Mirror" (ex. 2) that earthquakes are caused by FIRE's underground movements (cf. Ginevra 2018b: 67f.).

Secondly (a.2), as is well known, Loki is the mythological character who is ultimately responsible for the death of Baldr, a Norse god closely associated with LIGHT (ex. 3) who famously dies by being PIERCED with a mistletoe twig shot as a PROJECTILE WEAPON by the blind god Hǫðr, maneuvered like a puppet by Loki himself (ex. 4).

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9 For some (relatively recent) overviews of the scholarship on Loki and his mythology, cf. the literature in, e.g., Hultgård 2001; Liberman 2016: 142–196; Lindow 2001: 216–220.
10 On the distinction between generic and distinctive epithets, see Parry 1971: 64 and *passim*.

Thirdly (a.3), Loki has a WIFE called Sigyn, who is explicitly associated with the POURING of a LIQUID (ex. 5), namely the venom which drips onto Loki's face during his imprisonment; this association may even be attested by his wife's name itself, ON *Sígyn*, if it is a reflex of Proto-Germanic (PGmc) *$sīg$-un-$jō$- and PIE *$seik^u$-$én$-ih_2-/-$n̥$-$i̯éh_2$- 'she of the pouring' (root *$seik^u$- 'pour') and a cognate of Vedic °$séc$-an-$ī$- in *upa-sécanī*- 'pouring, pouring ladle' (Ginevra 2018b).

(a.1) Loki is a MALE GOD linked to the concept FIRE: e.g., both Loki's and FIRE's underground movements are regarded to be the origin of earthquakes.

(1) ***Þá kippisk hann svá hart við at jǫrð ǫll skelfr. Þat kallið þér landskjálpta**. Þar liggr hann í bǫndum til ragnarøkrs.*
  '**Then he jerks away so hard that the whole earth shakes. That is what you call an earthquake.** There he will lie in bonds until Ragnarok.' *Gylf.* 50

(2) *Enn þar sem þier rædit um at svo mikil gnott verdur elldsinz j grundvollum landsinz **at landskiaalftar verdi af umbroti elldsins***
  'You also said that the fires in the bowels of the land are so vast that **earthquakes arise out of fire's violent movements.**'
  Konungs skuggsjá 14 manuscript B, Brenner 1881: 32

(a.2) Loki causes the LIGHT-GOD Baldr to be PIERCED with a PROJECTILE WEAPON

(3) ***Hann er** svá fagr álitum ok **bjartr svá at lýsir af honum***
  '**He (Baldr) is** so fair in appearance and **so bright that light shines from him**' *Gylf.* 22

(4) *Hǫðr tók mistiltein ok **skaut at Baldri at tilvísun Loka. Flaug skotit í gǫgnum hann** ok fell hann dauðr til jarðar*
  'Hǫðr took the mistletoe and **shot at Baldr at Loki's direction. The missile flew through him** and he fell dead to the ground' *Gylf.* 49

(a.3) Loki's WIFE is closely associated with the POURING of a LIQUID

(5) *En **Sigyn kona hans** stendr hjá honum ok heldr mundlaugu undir **eitrdropa**. En þá er full er mundlaugin þá gengr hon ok **slær út eitrinu***
  'But **his wife Sigyn** stands next to him holding a basin under the **drops of poison**. And when the basin is full she goes and **pours away the poison**'
  Gylf. 50

2.2 Thematic frame (b), before the binding: Loki's flight and hiding in water, an etiology involving fish, and his eventual capture by the gods

The actual narrative begins with Loki's unsuccessful attempt at avoiding capture by the gods, who want to punish him either for his involvement in Baldr's death (as per *Gylf.* 50) or for his inappropriate behavior during a banquet (*Ls.*). The thematic frame (b) that underlies this section of the myth is actually a complex frame involving two sub-frames FLIGHT/HIDING and CAPTURE (two semantically complementary subevents of a single complex event),[11] displaying several features (b.1–4) that are relevant to this investigation.

Firstly, the minimal phraseological units that evoke Loki's FLIGHT/HIDING (b.1) are the phraseological constructions [LOKI$_x$ – MOVE – AWAY$_y$] (*hljóp hann$_x$ á braut$_y$* "he$_x$ ran away$_y$" in ex. 6) and [LOKI$_x$ – HIDE] (*hann$_x$ fal sik* "he$_x$ hid himself" and *falz Loki$_x$* "Loki$_x$ hid himself" in examples (6–7)).

Secondly, a further relevant element is the GOAL/LOCATION of the FLIGHT/HIDING event (b.2). Out of all possible places, Loki decides to HIDE in a *fors* 'waterfall' and in an *á* 'river', i.e., in WATER: this element is expressed by the phraseological constructions [LOKI$_x$ – HIDE – in WATER$_y$] (*hann$_x$ falz í Fránangrsforsi$_y$* "he$_x$ hid himself in the waterfall of Franangr$_y$" in ex. 8; cf. also ex. 9) and [LOKI$_x$ – MOVE – into WATER$_y$] (*hann$_x$ hljóp í ána$_y$* "he$_x$ jumped/ran into the river$_y$" in ex. 9).

A third peculiar feature of this section is the incorporation of (b.3) an ETIOLOGY involving FISH: Loki's FLIGHT is the ultimate reason why the body of the 'salmon' (*lax*) has a tapered shape in the proximity of the tail (ex. 10).

Finally (b.4), Loki's FLIGHT/HIDING attempt cannot be kept apart from his eventual CAPTURE by the gods, an event expressed by the constructions [GODS$_x$ – CATCH/OBTAIN – LOKI$_y$] (*tóco æsir$_x$ hann$_y$* 'the gods$_x$ caught him$_y$' in ex. 11; passivized in ex. 12) and [GODS$_x$ – BRING – LOKI$_y$ – to LOCATION (away from WATER)$_z$] (*farit með hann$_y$ í helli nokkvorn$_z$* 'he$_y$ was taken [by the gods$_x$] to a certain cave [away from the waterfall and the river]$_z$" in ex. 12).[12]

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11 In a single word, the complex thematic frame involving Loki's FLIGHT/HIDING and CAPTURE may be referred to as PURSUIT, but this will not be used in this contribution because it would also involve other prominent subevents (e.g., SEARCH) that are not discussed here.

On subframes of complex frames conceptualizing subevents of complex events in Cognitive Linguistics, cf., e.g., Kövecses & Radden 1998: 51; Ruppenhofer et al. 2016: 83f. On their relevance to Comparative IE Poetics, cf., e.g., Ginevra 2021b: 175f.

12 More precisely, ON *farit með hann$_y$ í helli nokkvorn$_z$* literally means "(it was) dealt with him$_y$ into a certain cave$_z$", but *fara með* Y$_{ACCUSATIVE}$ 'to deal with Y' clearly means (and is usually translated as) 'to bring Y' in this construction, inheriting its caused-motion semantics from the more generic

(b.1) Loki's FLIGHT: constructions [LOKI – MOVE – AWAY] and [LOKI – HIDE]

(6) *Þá er guðin váru orðin honum svá reið sem ván var, **hljóp hann á braut** ok **fal sik***

'The gods having become as angry with him as one might expect, **he (Loki) ran away** and **hid**' *Gylf*. 50

(7) *Enn eptir þetta **falz Loki***

'And after that **Loki hid himself**' *Ls*. final prose

(b.2) WATER as GOAL/LOCATION: constructions [LOKI – HIDE – in WATER] and [LOKI – MOVE – into WATER]

(8) *Enn eptir þetta **falz Loki í Fránangrsforsi***

'After that **Loki hid himself in the waterfall of Franangr**' *Ls*. final prose

(9) *En opt um daga brá **hann** sér í laxlíki ok **falsk þá þar sem heitir Fránangrsfors**. [...] þá sá hann at Æsir áttu skamt til hans [...]. **Hann hljóp** þegar upp ok út **í ána***

'But in the daytime **he (Loki)** often turned himself into the form of a salmon and **hid in a place called Franangr waterfall**. [...] Then he noticed that the gods were only a short distance away from him [...]. **He** immediately **jumped/ran** up and out **into the river**' *Gylf*. 50

(b.3) Connection of Loki's FLIGHT with ETIOLOGY involving FISH

(10) *Þórr greip eptir honum ok tók um hann ok rendi hann í hendi honum svá at staðar nam hǫndin við sporðinn. **Ok er fyrir þá sǫk laxinn aptrmjór.***

'Thor grabbed at him and got his hand round him and he slipped in his hand so that the hand caught hold at the tail. **And it is for this reason that the salmon tapers towards the tail**' *Gylf*. 50

(b.4) Loki's eventual CAPTURE: constructions [GODS – CATCH/OBTAIN – LOKI] and [GODS – BRING – LOKI – to LOCATION (away from WATER)]

(11) *Enn eptir þetta falz Loki í Fránangrsforsi í lax líki. **Þar tóco æsir hann***

'And after that Loki hid himself in the waterfall of Franangr, in the shape of a salmon. **There the gods caught him**' *Ls*. final prose

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ON construction $[V - Y_{\text{ACCUSATIVE}} - \textit{í } Z_{\text{ACCUSATIVE}}]$ 'to do V with Y by moving it into Z', as attested for instance in *Atlamál* 41.1f. *Hrundo þeir **Vinga**$_Y$ oc **í hel**$_Z$ **drápo*** "They pushed **Vingi**$_Y$ down and knocked (him$_Y$) into hell$_Z$".

(12) *Nú **var Loki tekinn** griðalauss ok **farit með hann í helli nokkvorn***
'Now **Loki was captured** without quarter and **taken to a certain cave (i.e.,
away from the river)**.' *Gylf.* 50

2.3 Thematic frame (c), the central event of the narrative: Loki's binding by the gods

Right after the FLIGHT/HIDING-CAPTURE episode, the central event of the myth
takes place: (c) Loki's BINDING. Several details of this thematic frame (c.1–3) are
especially relevant to our analysis.

Firstly, the minimal phraseological unit evoking this central thematic frame
is (c.1) the phraseological construction [GODS$_X$ – BIND – LOKI$_Y$] (transitive *Æsir*$_X$
bundu Loka$_Y$ "the gods$_X$ bound Loki$_Y$" in ex. 13; passivized in ex. 14), overtly
expressing both AGENT and PATIENT of the BINDING event. A PATIENT-focused
nominalized reflex of this same construction is Loki's epithet *hinn bundni* 'the
bound one' (*Skáldskaparmál* 16), a substantivization of the past participle *bundinn*
of the same verb *binda* 'to bind' used in examples (13–14). In the Eddic mythological
poem *Vǫluspá* "Seeress's Prophecy" (*Vsp.*), Loki's situation is instead evoked by
the word *haftr* 'captive' (*hapt Loca* in ex. 15). The use of both *binda* and *haftr* in
the ON treatments of Loki's BINDING has Germanic parallels in its Old English
counterparts, as argued below (Section 6 on the corresponding thematic frames (c)
and (e) in Old English poetics).

A further frame element that is also relevant to this investigation is (c.2) the
peculiar INSTRUMENT of the BINDING: Loki is BOUND by means of the entrails of
HIS OWN SON Nari (examples 16–17).

Finally, Loki is BOUND to (c.3) a peculiar LOCATION: THREE STONES corresponding
to THREE BODY PARTS of Loki, expressed by means of a tripartite construction
that indexically evokes the totality of Loki's body, namely [SHOULDERS$_X$ – LOINS$_Y$ –
KNEES$_Z$] (*undir herðum*$_X$ [...] *undir lendum*$_Y$ [...] *undir knésfótum*$_Z$ "under his shoulders$_X$ [...] under his loins$_Y$ [...] under the backs of his knees$_Z$" in ex. 18).

(c.1) Loki's BINDING: construction [GODS – BIND – LOKI]

(13) *Þá tóku **Æsir** þarma hans ok **bundu Loka** með yfir þá þrjá steina*
'Then the **gods** took his (Nari's) guts and **bound Loki** with them over the
three stones' *Gylf.* 50

(14) *Þar tóco **æsir** hann. **Hann var bundinn***
'There the **gods** caught him. **He was bound**' *Ls.* final prose

(15) ***Hapt** sá hon liggia / undir hvera lundi, / lægiarn líki / **Loca** áþeccian*
'A **captive** she saw lying under Cauldron-grove, an evil-loving figure, unmistakable as **Loki**'   *Vsp.* 35.1–4

(c.2) INSTRUMENT of BINDING: entrails of Loki's OWN SON

(16) *Hann var **bundinn með þǫrmom sonar Nara***
'He was **bound with the guts of his son Nari**'   *Ls.* final prose

(17) *Þá tóku Æsir þarma hans ok bundu Loka með*
'Then the gods took **his (Nari's) guts and bound Loki with them**' *Gylf.* 50

(c.3) LOCATION of BINDING: THREE STONES corresponding to THREE BODY PARTS of Loki, expressed by construction [SHOULDERS – LOINS – KNEES].

(18) *bundu Loka með yfir þá **þrjá steina**—einn undir **herðum**, annarr undir **lendum**, þriði undir **knésfótum***
'(The gods) bound Loki with them over the **three stones**—one under his **shoulders**, one under his **loins**, the third under the **backs of his knees**'
Gylf. 50

2.4 Thematic frame (d), after the binding: a pouring of liquid onto Loki's face

Loki's BINDING is immediately followed by a thematic frame (d), representing a scene involving the POURING of a LIQUID: a snake's venom drips onto Loki's face, while his wife Sigyn collects the liquid in a basin and pours it out whenever the basin becomes full (ex. 19).

Given that Loki's associations with FIRE (see Section 2.1 above) point to his origin as the (at least partial) reflex of an ancient FIRE-GOD and given that the phraseological construction [POISON – of FIRE] was a poetic periphrasis (a so-called *kenning*) for the concept WATER,[13] Sigyn's act of collecting and POURING out the POISON which DRIPS onto Loki's face[14] may be reminiscent of the POURING of WATER or other LIQUIDS onto the sacrificial FIRE (Ginevra 2018b: 67f.).

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13 Cf. Sigvatr Þórðarson's kenning for FISH in *Lausavísur* 1.2–4 *eitrs* [...] *leygjar orm* "serpent of the poison of fire", i.e., "serpent of water", as per Meissner 1921: 116; Fulk's (2012) translation "poison-serpent of the sea" is less likely, since ON *leygr* usually means 'flame' in Skaldic poetry.
14 On the mythological motif of the "mouth of the fire-god", see Ginevra 2018a: 72–77.

This ritual interpretation of the mythological scene may find support in the archaeologist Kaliff's (2005: 90f. and *passim*) reconstruction—on the basis of archaeological evidence from Bronze Age and Iron Age Scandinavia—of FIRE rituals involving the POURING of LIQUIDS in pre-Christian Scandinavian religious practice.

(d) Loki's BINDING is followed by the POURING of a liquid

(19)   *Þá tók Skaði eitrorm ok festi upp yfir hann svá at **eitrit skyldi drjúpa ór orminum í andlit honum**. En Sigyn kona hans stendr hjá honum ok heldr mundlaugu undir eitrdropa. En **þá er full er mundlaugin þá gengr hon ok slær út eitrinu***

'Then Skadi got a poisonous snake and fixed it up over him so that the **poison would drip from the snake into his (Loki's) face**. But his wife Sigyn stands next to him holding a basin under the drops of poison. And **when the basin is full she goes and pours away the poison**'   *Gylf.* 50

2.5   Thematic frame (e), Loki's (and fire's) release from the bonds: end of all time, Loki's movement, ruin and destruction

The last thematic frame (e) underlying the Norse narrative and analyzed in this contribution involves Loki's eventual RELEASE from his BONDS—as described in, e.g., ex. 20 from the Eddic poem *Baldrs draumar* "Baldr's dreams" (*Bdr.*). Several details of this thematic frame (e.1–3) are relevant here.

Firstly, the event's TIME (e.1): Loki's RELEASE will take place at the END of all time, when the Norse universe shall come to its final days.

Secondly, the god's RELEASE shall be—trivially— associated with (e.2) his MOVEMENT away from his prison, as expressed by the phraseological construction [UNBOUND$_x$ – LOKI$_y$ – MOVE] (*lauss$_x$ Loki$_y$ líðr* "freed, Loki moves" in ex. 20).

Third, the RELEASE will be immediately followed by (e.3) RUIN AND DESTRUCTION: i.e., by the well-known mythological catastrophe called *Ragnarǫk* 'Doom of the Gods', an apocalyptic event—see (e.1)—in which the gods and the whole universe shall be first destroyed and then regenerated.

As often mentioned above, Loki had an (at least original) connection with the concept FIRE. It is thus relevant to mention that a thematic frame FIRE RELEASED, similar in structure and phraseology to Loki's RELEASE, is not only crystallized in the well-known phraseological construction *eldr verðr lauss* "fire breaks loose" (*ONP*, s.v. *lauss*), but it is also extensively attested in, e.g., Sturla Þórðarson's poem *Hákonarkviða* (ex. 21). In this text a raging FIRE is described as *leystan elris gram*

"the released dog of the alder" and associated both (e.2) with MOVEMENT (*svipkárr selju rakki grenjandi fór* "the violent hound of the willow ran howling") and (e.3) with RUIN AND DESTRUCTION (*svalg hvert hús heitum munni viðar hundr Verma bygðar* "the hound of the forest swallowed every house of the settlement of the Vermir with its hot mouth").

(e) Loki's RELEASE: it occurs (e.1) at the END of time; it is linked to (e.2) Loki's free MOVEMENT and evoked by a construction [UNBOUND – LOKI – MOVE]; it is followed by (e.3) RUIN AND DESTRUCTION. The last two features have parallels in the FIRE RELEASED thematic frame.

(20)   *er **lauss Loki** / **líðr ór bǫndom** / oc **ragna rǫc** / **riúfendr** koma.*
       'until **Loki, loose, moves from his bonds,** and the **Doom of the Gods, tearing all asunder**, approaches.'   *Bdr.* 14.5–8

(21)   *þá er lofðungr / **leystan** hafði / **elris gram** / eski mettan. / **Svalg hvert hús / heitum munni / viðar hundr** / Verma bygðar, / ok **svipkárr** / **selju rakki** / of garðshlið / **grenjandi fór**.*
       'when the lord had sated **the released dog of the alder** (i.e., FIRE) with ash-wood. **The hound of the forest (FIRE) swallowed every house** of the settlement of the Vermir **with its hot mouth**, and **the violent dog of the willow (FIRE) ran howling** through the yard-gate.'
                                                        Sturla Þórðarson, *Hákonarkviða* 7.5–8.8

2.6 Thematic frames (a–e): narrative structure of "Loki's Binding"

As shown in the previous Sections (2.1–2.5), it is thus possible to identify as a prominent component underlying the myth of "Loki's Binding" a narrative sequence of five thematic frames (a–e), some of which are evoked by phraseological constructions that, as argued below, are particularly relevant from a comparative IE perspective.

Of course, it goes without saying that this (probably inherited) traditional structure is not necessarily the only component that underlies the ON texts analyzed here: on the contrary, like all traditional texts, they are likely to have been shaped by several influences during their historical development and oral transmission (e.g., motifs of Christian culture, given that they were all written down during the Middle Ages).

This narrative structure of five thematic frames and their respective constructions may thus be summarized as in the list below. As we shall see in the next

section (§3), this complex has a number of parallels in traditional Indic texts about "Agni's Yoking".

(a) BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE about Loki
   (a.1) MALE GOD (originally) ASSOCIATED WITH FIRE,
   (a.2) who CAUSES the LIGHT-GOD Baldr TO BE PIERCED with a MISTLETOE TWIG,
   (a.3) and whose WIFE Sigyn is associated with the POURING OF LIQUIDS
(b) BEFORE THE BINDING: FLIGHT/HIDING-CAPTURE
   (b.1) Loki FLEES: [LOKI – MOVE – AWAY], [LOKI – HIDE]
   (b.2) into WATER: [LOKI – HIDE – in WATER], [LOKI – MOVE – into WATER]
   (b.3) in association with an ETIOLOGY involving FISH
   (b.4) and is finally CAPTURED: [GODS – CATCH/OBTAIN – LOKI], [GODS – BRING –
       LOKI – to LOCATION (away from WATER)]
(c) BINDING
   (c.1) Loki is BOUND by the GODS: [GODS – BIND – LOKI]
   (c.2) by means of chains made out of Loki's OWN SON
   (c.3) BOUND to 3 STONES corresponding to 3 BODY-PARTS of Loki: [SHOULDERS –
       LOINS – KNEES]
(d) AFTER THE BINDING: POURING OF LIQUID
    (d) VENOM DRIPS onto Loki's face
(e) RELEASE FROM BONDS
   (e.1) Loki's RELEASE shall happen at the END of all time
   (e.2) followed by his MOVEMENT: [UNBOUND – LOKI – MOVE]
   (e.3) and by RUIN AND DESTRUCTION

3 The Indic myth of "Agni's Yoking"

Several Indic mythological and ritual texts composed in the Vedic and Classical varieties of Sanskrit attest a traditional narrative that may be referred to as "Agni's Yoking". Most of these texts have already been subject to careful treatments from the perspectives of Indic philology and history of religion by scholars like Krick (1982: 538–562) and Feller (2004: 49–126), who have mostly focused on the first part of this traditional complex, namely "Agni's Hiding" (discussed in Section 3.2 below). The present analysis shall focus instead on the whole tradition of "Agni's Yoking" as attested in two of its earliest and most complete Vedic sources, namely the *Ṛgveda* "Veda of verses" (*RV*; approximately end of the 2nd millennium BCE), and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* "Brāhmaṇa (ritual text) of one hundred paths" (*ŚB*; first half of the 1st millennium BCE). The details of the Indic myth of Agni that

are most relevant to this investigation are discussed in the following subsections (3.1–3.5) and summarized in the final subsection (3.6).

3.1 Thematic frame (a), background knowledge about Agni: 'Fire(-god)', wounder of the Sun-god, and lover of divine Waters

Oral narratives about our Indic protagonist, Agni, were clearly part of Vedic and Classical Sanskrit traditional culture; therefore, as already assumed above for Loki, any mention of the god Agni—either by his most common name or by a distinctive epithet—would have immediately evoked in the audience a background frame (a) of this deity's traditional features and associations, some of which (a.1–3) are especially relevant to this research.

Firstly (a.1), as is well known, Agni is the MALE GOD who obviously has the closest association with the concept FIRE in Indic mythology: his name *Agní-* literally means 'fire' and he is the god who, among other things, presides over the ritual fire used for oblations to the gods (ex. 22).

Secondly (a.2), Agni fatally wounds a god associated with LIGHT in the myth of the "Wounded Sun", which has been carefully reconstructed by Jamison (1991: 133–303) within this ancient narrative, Agni, referred to as *Svàr-bhānu-* '(he who has the) splendor of the Sun' (ex. 23) or just as *ástar-* 'archer' (ex. 24), is said to PIERCE the Sun-god (in ex. 23) or the Sky-god with a PROJECTILE WEAPON (*didyúm* in ex. 24).

Thirdly (a.3), Agni's FEMALE PARTNERS are closely associated with FLOWING WATER or POURED LIQUIDS: the god copulates with the divine Waters in Vedic myth (ex. 25), as well as with rivers such as the Gaṅgā in Classical Sanskrit epics (cf. *Mahābhārata* 13.84.53), where his legitimate WIFE is also identified as Svāhā, a goddess whose name reflects the frequent invocation *svāhā!* uttered during specific sacrifices (e.g., offerings of *sóma-*, cf. *RV* 3.50.1 and *passim*; on *sóma-* see below, Section 3.4) and who, according to Doniger O'Flaherty (1973: 95), was a personification of the (mostly liquid) oblation as "the natural partner of the sacrificial fire".

(a.1) Agni is the MALE GOD most closely associated with FIRE
(22) *vayā́ íd **agne agnáyas** te **anyé** / **tuvé** víśve **amŕtā mādayante***
       'The **other fires** are just twigs of you, **Agni**. **In you do** all the **immortals bring themselves to euphoria** (by enjoying the **oblations**).' *RV* 1.59.1ab

(a.2) Agni (as Svarbhānu) is said to PIERCE a LIGHT-GOD (Sun or Sky) with a PROJECTILE WEAPON

(23) *yát tvā sūrya súvarbhānus / támasā́vidhyad āsuráḥ*
'When, **o Sun, Svarbhānu Āsura pierced you with darkness**' *RV* 5.40.5ab

(24) *sṛjád ástā dhṛṣatā́ didyúm asmai*
'**The archer (Agni)** boldly **loosed a missile at him (Father Sky)**' *RV* 1.71.5c

(a.3) Agni's FEMALE PARTNERS are closely associated with WATER.

(25) *agnír ha vā́ apò 'bhídadhyau mithunyàbhiḥ syām íti*
'Now Agni at one time cast his eyes **on the waters: 'May I pair with them,'**
he thought *ŚB* 2.1.1.5

3.2 Thematic frame (b), before the yoking: Agni's flight and hiding in water, an etiology involving fish, and his eventual capture by the gods

As in the corresponding section of the Norse myth, within the Indic myth Agni's yoking by the gods is preceded by a complex thematic frame (b), involving at least two sub-frames FLIGHT/HIDING and CAPTURE describing the god's fear of the procedure and his unsuccessful attempt to avoid it at all costs, and comprising several details (b.1–4) that are relevant here.

Firstly, the minimal phraseological units that evoke Agni's FLIGHT (b.1) are the phraseological constructions [AGNI$_X$ – MOVE – AWAY$_Y$] (Ved. *dūrám$_Y$ āyaṃ* "I$_X$ went far away$_Y$" in ex. 26) and [AGNI$_X$ – HIDE] (*sá$_X$ nílilye* "he$_X$ concealed himself" in ex. 27).

A second relevant detail is the GOAL/LOCATION where Agni decides to FLEE to and HIDE in, namely WATER (b.2), a frame element overtly expressed in the more specific constructions [AGNI$_X$ – HIDE – in WATER$_Y$] (nominalized as Agni's epithet *ápagūḷham apsú$_Y$* "the one who was hidden in the waters$_Y$" in ex. 28) and [AGNI$_X$ – MOVE – into WATER$_Y$] (*sò$_X$ 'paḥ$_Y$ práviveśa* "he$_X$ entered into the waters$_Y$" in ex. 29).

A later account of this myth, occurring in the famous Sanskrit epic *Mahābhārata*, attests a quite interesting parallel with the corresponding section of the Norse myth, namely the incorporation within the narrative of (b.3) etiologies involving various animal species, including FISH: Agni's FLIGHT is the ultimate reason why 'fish' (*matsya-*) are eaten by other animals (ex.30).

Eventually, of course, Agni is CAPTURED (b.4): this event is evoked by the constructions [GODS$_X$ – OBTAIN/FIND – AGNI$_Y$] (*tám$_Y$ devā́$_X$ anuvídya* "him$_Y$, the gods$_X$, having discovered" in ex. 31) and [GODS$_X$ – BRING – AGNI$_Y$ – (to LOCATION)

away from WATER$_z$] (*táṃ$_Y$ devā́$_X$ sáhasaivā̀dbhya$_z$ ā́ninyuḥ* "him$_Y$ the gods$_X$ brought forcibly away from the waters$_z$" in ex. 31).

(b.1) Agni's FLIGHT: constructions [AGNI – MOVE – AWAY] and [AGNI – HIDE]

(26) *tásmād bhiyā́ varuṇa **dūrám āyaṁ***
'(Agni:) In fear of this, Varuṇa, **I went far away**.' *RV* 10.51.6c

(27) *yò 'yám etárhy agniṃ **sá** bhīṣā **nílilye***
'Thereupon **the one** who still constitutes the fire in our own time **concealed himself** from fear.' *ŚB* 1.2.3.1

(b.2) WATER as GOAL/LOCATION: constructions [AGNI – HIDE – in WATER] and [AGNI – MOVE – into WATER]

(28) *nidhīyámānam **ápagūḷham apsú** / prá me devā́nāṁ vratapā́ uvāca*
'The protector of the commandments of the gods has announced to me that **the one who was hidden in the waters (=Agni)** is (now) being installed.'
  RV 10.32.6ab

(29) *yò 'yám etárhy agniṃ sá bhīṣā nílilye sò **'paḥ práviveśa***
'Thereupon the one who still constitutes the fire in our own time concealed himself from fear. **He (Agni) entered into the waters**.' *ŚB* 1.2.3.1

(b.3) Connection of Agni's FLIGHT with ETIOLOGY involving FISH

(30) ***matsyās** tasya samācakhyuḥ kruddhas tān agnir abravīt / **bhakṣyā vai vividhair bhāvair bhaviṣyatha śarīriṇām***
'The **fishes** reported on him, and in anger he said to them, "**You shall be the food of creatures in your various modes of being**".'
  MBh. 3.212.9b–10a

(b.4) Agni's eventual CAPTURE: constructions [GODS – CATCH/OBTAIN – AGNI] and [GODS – BRING – AGNI – (to LOCATION) away from WATER]

(31) *sò 'paḥ práviveśa **táṃ devā́ anuvídya sáhasaivā̀dbhya ā́ninyuḥ***
'He (Agni) entered into the waters. **Him the gods discovered and brought forcibly away from the waters**' *ŚB* 1.2.3.1

3.3 Thematic frame (c), the central event of the narrative: Agni's yoking by the gods

After the FLIGHT/HIDING-CAPTURE frame, a thematic frame (c) represents the central event of the narrative, namely Agni's YOKING: some features of this thematic frame (c.1–3) closely parallel those discussed above for the BINDING frame within the Norse myth. The obvious difference between the BINDING event in Loki's myth and the YOKING event in Agni's myth is discussed in the comparative analysis of the two traditions below (Section 4). From an Indic perspective, however, it may already be noted here that the peculiar detail of Agni's YOKING is synchronically motivated by the well-known Vedic poetic image of FIRE as a HORSE, as argued by Feller (2004: 68f.).

The minimal phraseological unit evoking this thematic frame is (c.1) the phraseological construction [GODS$_X$ – YOKE – AGNI$_Y$] (*mā̆$_Y$ yunájann deváḥ$_X$* "the gods$_X$ yoke me$_Y$" in ex. 32), overtly expressing AGENT and PATIENT of the BINDING event. The same construction is also instantiated in nominalized form by the name of a peculiar Vedic ritual described in *ŚB* 9.4.4, the *agni-yojana-* 'yoking of the fire/Agni', a ritual which marks the first day of libations within the greater ritual called *agni-cayana-* 'piling of the fire/Agni'.[15]

The description of this specific ritual in *ŚB* attests a further relevant element, which closely parallels the role of Loki's kin in the Norse narrative, namely the INSTRUMENT of the YOKING (c.2): Agni is YOKED by means of the *paridhí-* 'enclosing sticks' (ex. 33), which were originally fires as well (ex. 34), more precisely Agni's OWN BROTHERS who passed away (ex. 35).[16] The fear of ending up like them is precisely what causes Agni to flee and hide in the first place.

Finally, the figurative LOCATION (c.3) to which Agni is YOKED is the *hotrá-* 'sacrifice; hotarship, function of sacrificer (*hótṛ-*)' (ex. 36), which on a more literal level is likely to mean that Agni is YOKED to the SACRIFICIAL ALTAR. This detail is relevant to the present comparative analysis, because when Agni himself is identified with the sacrificial altar in the *ŚB*, he is said to be built by means of THREE BLOCKS of bricks (one$_Y$ larger block of four bricks in the middle, plus two smaller blocks of two bricks – one$_Z$ behind it and one$_X$ in front of it) which correspond to THREE of Agni's BODY-PARTS, expressed by a tripartite construction indexically evoking the totality of Agni's body, namely [ARMS$_X$ – CORE/TRUNK$_Y$ – THIGHS$_Z$] (*ātmā̆$_Y$* [...] *sakthyaù$_Z$* [...] *bāhū$_X$* "body$_Y$ (i.e., the core/trunk) [...] thighs$_Z$ [...] arms$_X$" in ex. 37).

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15 On the *agni-cayana-* in general, see Krick 1982.

16 On this mythological episode, cf. also Feller 2004: 74ff.; Krick 1982: 552–562.

(c.1) Agni's YOKING: construction [GODS – YOKE – AGNI]

(32) *hotrā́d aháṁ varuṇa bíbhyad āyaṁ / néd evá **mā yunájann** átra **deváḥ***

'(Agni:) I went in fear of the Hotarship, Varuṇa, lest **the gods yoke me** to it' *RV* 10.51.4ab

(c.2) INSTRUMENT of YOKING: Agni's OWN BROTHERS

(33) *paridhíṣu yunakti agnáya ete yát paridháyo 'gníbhir eva tád agníṃ yunakti*

'**He yokes it (fire/Agni) on the enclosing-sticks**, for those enclosing-sticks are fires: **it is with fires (Agni's brothers) he thus yokes the fire-altar**' *ŚB* 9.4.4.2

(34) *trīn pū́rvān prā́vṛdhvaṃ te prā́dhanviṣus* [...] *tā́n asmā etān ávākalpayaṃs tá ete paridháyaḥ*

'(Agni to the gods:) **Already you have chosen three (Agnis) before, and they have passed away.** [...] They restored to him those (three former Agnis): they are these **enclosing-sticks**' *ŚB* 1.3.3.13

(35) *agnéḥ pū́rve bhrā́taro ártham etáṁ / rathī́vā́dhvānam ánu ā́varīvuḥ / tásmād bhiyā́ varuṇa dūrám āyaṁ*

'(Agni:) **The brothers of Agni earlier** kept rolling along after this business, like a charioteer along the road. In fear of this, Varuṇa, I went far away' *RV* 10.51.6abc

(c.3) Figurative location of YOKING: *hotrá-* **'sacrifice; hotarship, function of sacrificer (***hótṛ-***)'. Agni as sacrificial altar is built by means of THREE BLOCKS of bricks corresponding to THREE of Agni's BODY-PARTS, i.e., [ARMS – CORE/TRUNK – THIGHS].**[17]

(36) *hotrā́d aháṁ varuṇa bíbhyad āyaṁ / néd evá **mā yunájann** átra deváḥ*

'(Agni:) I went in fear of the **Hotarship**, Varuṇa, lest the gods **yoke me to it**' *RV* 10.51.4ab

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17 Ex. 37 explicitly says that "this body (of ours) consists of four parts", apparently contradicting the claim that Agni as altar is built by means of THREE BLOCKS of bricks corresponding to THREE BODY-PARTS: the "four parts" mentioned in the text, however, are internal sections of a single BODY-PART of Agni, his 'body' (*ātmā* in the text), i.e., the CORE/TRUNK, and they each correspond to a single brick of the larger BLOCK of bricks in the middle.

(37)   *sa cátasraḥ prā́cīr úpadadhāti dvé paścā́t tiráścyau dvé purástāt tad yā́ś
       cátasraḥ prā́cīr upadádhāti sá **ātmā́** tad yat tā́ś cátasro bhávanti cáturvidho
       hy áyám ātmā́tha yé paścāt té **sakthyàù** yé purástāt taú **bāhū́** yátra vā́ ātmā
       tád eva śíraḥ*

       'He puts on (the circular site) four (bricks) running eastwards; two be-
       hind running crosswise (from south to north), and two (such) in front.
       Now the four which he puts on running eastwards are the **body (i.e., the
       core/trunk)**; and as to there being four of these, it is because this body (of
       ours) consists of four parts. The two at the back then are the **thighs**; and
       the two in front the **arms**; and where the body is that (includes) the head'
       ŚB 7.1.1.18

3.4 Thematic frame (d), after the yoking: a pouring of ritual liquids as oblations onto the sacrificial fire

Just like Loki's BINDING, Agni's YOKING is supposed to take place before a POURING
of LIQUIDS as well, matching thematic frame (d) in the Norse myth.

Firstly, as is clear from ex. 38, once yoked, Agni takes on the role of *hótr̥*-
'sacrificer' of the gods, mythologically conveying to them the oblation, which,
within the ritual, is offered to the deities in the sacrificial FIRE.

The gods' oblation in turn consists of a POURING of ritual LIQUIDS, such as the
Indic *sóma*-: as is clear from ex. 39, the Vedic ritual of the *agni-yojana*- 'yoking of
the fire/Agni' described in *ŚB* 9.4.4 was directly followed by the *prātaranuvāka*-,
which is the prayer that precedes the *prātaḥsavana*-, the first *sóma*-POURING of the
first pressing day of the *agnicayana*-ritual.[18]

(d) Agni's YOKING followed by POURING of a LIQUID

(38)   *kurmás ta ā́yur ajáraṁ yád agne / **yáthā yuktó** jātavedo ná ríṣyāḥ / **áthā
       vahāsi sumanasyámāno** / **bhāgáṁ devébhyo havíṣaḥ sujāta***
       '(Gods:) We will make a lifetime for you, which is free from old age, Agni,
       so that **yoked (to your task)** you will not suffer harm, Jātavedas. **Then will
       you, showing your benevolence, convey their portion of the oblation
       to the gods, o well-born one?**'
       RV 10.51.7

(39)   *átha prātáḥ prātaranuvākám upākariṣyán agníṃ yunakti yukténa sá-
       maśnavā íti téna **yukténa** sárvān kā́mānt sámaśnute **taṃ vaí purástāt***

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18 On these rituals and their names, cf. Keith 1925: 355; Renou 1954: 2; Gonda 1981; Krick 1982.

sárvasya kármaṇo yunakti tad yat kiṃ cā́tra ūrdhváṃ kriyáte **yukte** *tat sárvaṃ samā́dhīyate*

'**Then, early next morning, when about to speak the morning prayer, he yokes the Fire-altar**, thinking, 'With it, when **yoked**, I shall obtain;' and by it, when **yoked**, he obtains all wishes. **He yokes it prior to the whole performance**, so that all that is done thereafter is loaded on that **yoked** (altar-cart)' *ŚB* 9.4.4.1

3.5 Thematic frame (e), Agni's release from the yoke/bonds: end of the day, Agni's movement, destructive force

Even though the mythological narratives about Agni's yoking do not explicitly attest a final thematic frame (e) describing the god's eventual RELEASE from his YOKE and matching the last part of the Norse myth of Loki, several correspondences (e.1–3) may be found in both Vedic ritual and poetics.

Firstly, just like the ritual called *agni-yojana-* 'fire/Agni's yoking' takes place at the beginning of the day (see above, Section 3.4), the inverse ritual called *agni-vimocana-* 'fire/Agni's release' must take place (e.1) at the END of the day (cf., e.g., Keith 1925: 355). The FIRE/Agni must thus be YOKED and RELEASED day by day at the BEGINNING and at the END (ex. 40).

Furthermore, a thematic frame of Agni's RELEASE from some generic BONDS is actually attested in the poetics of the *RV*, but with no clear connection to the YOKING myth, e.g., in ex. 41–42. These passages also attest two further correspondences with the Norse myth of Loki and with the Norse poetic image of the RELEASED FIRE: Agni's RELEASE is trivially associated with (e.2) his free MOVEMENT, as expressed by the construction [UNBOUND$_x$ – AGNI$_y$ – MOVE] (*dvimātā́*$_y$ *abandhanáś*$_x$ *carati* "he who has two mothers$_y$ roams without a binding (rope)$_x$" in 41), and it is also associated (e.3) with DESTRUCTIVE FORCE (in 42).

(e) FIRE/Agni's RELEASE from the YOKE occurs (e.1) at the END of the day. The RELEASED FIRE/Agni is linked to (e.2) free MOVEMENT (construction [UNBOUND – AGNI – MOVE]) and associated with (e.3) DESTRUCTIVE FORCE.

(40) *yuñjyād* **áharahar vímuñcet**
'Let him therefore yoke and **unyoke day by day**' *ŚB* 9.4.4.15; .16; .17

(41) *śayúḥ parástād ádha nú* **dvimātā́** / **abandhanáś carati** *vatsá ékaḥ*
'He who was lying down far away—now **he who has two mothers roams without a binding (rope)**, their only calf' *RV* 3.55.6ab

(42) **tápūṁṣi agne juhúvā** *pataṁgā́n* / **ásaṁdito ví sr̥ja víṣvag ulkā́ḥ**
 '**Unfettered, o Agni**, **with your tongue hurl out bursts of heat**, flying
 (embers), **firebrands in all directions**'   *RV* 4.4.2cd

3.6 Thematic frames (a–e): narrative structure of "Agni's Yoking"

As shown in the previous sections, it is thus possible to identify a narrative sequence of five thematic frames (a–e) as one of the structures—again, not necessarily (and most likely not) the only one (as mentioned above for the Norse myth)—that underlie the Indic myth of "Agni's Yoking". Most of these thematic frames are evoked by phraseological constructions that are relevant to this comparative investigation, as argued below.

   The narrative structure of the Indic myth, closely resembling the Norse one discussed in Section 2.6, may be summarized as in the list below, possibly reflecting an inherited IE poetic and religious tradition, as we shall see in the next section.

(a) BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE about Agni
  (a.1) MALE GOD of FIRE
  (a.2) who PIERCES the SUN-GOD or SKY-GOD with a PROJECTILE WEAPON
  (a.3) and whose FEMALE PARTNERS are associated with POURED LIQUIDS (Svāhā)
      or FLOWING WATER (divine Waters, river Gaṅgā)
(b) BEFORE THE YOKING: FLIGHT-CAPTURE
  (b.1) Agni FLEES: [AGNI – MOVE – AWAY], [AGNI – HIDE]
  (b.2) into WATER: [AGNI – HIDE – in WATER], [AGNI – MOVE – into WATER]
  (b.3) in association with an ETIOLOGY involving FISH
  (b.4) and is finally CAPTURED: [GODS – CATCH/OBTAIN – AGNI], [GODS – BRING –
      AGNI – (to LOCATION) away from WATER]
(c) YOKING
  (c.1) Agni is YOKED by the GODS: [GODS – BIND/YOKE – AGNI]
  (c.2) by means of enclosing-sticks made out of Agni's OWN BROTHERS
  (c.3) Agni is YOKED to SACRIFICE, i.e., to the SACRIFICIAL ALTAR, made of 3
      BLOCKS corresponding to 3 BODY-PARTS of Agni: [ARMS – CORE/TRUNK –
      THIGHS]
(d) AFTER THE YOKING: POURING OF LIQUID
  (d) Ritual LIQUID is POURED onto yoked Agni

(e) RELEASE FROM YOKE/BONDS
- (e.1) Agni is RELEASED from his YOKE at the END of the day.
- (e.2) Agni's RELEASE from BONDS is followed by his free MOVEMENT: [UNBOUND – AGNI – MOVE]
- (e.3) and associated with DESTRUCTIVE FORCE

4 The IE myths of the "Fire-God's Binding/Yoking": comparative analysis and reconstruction

As anticipated above, the Norse and Indic traditions analyzed in this study attest a series of close correspondences and exact matches which can hardly be due to chance. The wealth and precision of parallels in the poetic devices that structure these two traditions allow for the identification of a culturally-prominent IE oral-traditional complex (i.e., a myth) about a "Fire-God's Binding/Yoking", which may be traced back to prehistoric IE poetic and religious heritage. The features of this inherited tradition that may be reconstructed by means of the comparative method are discussed in the following points (a–e) and summarized at the bottom of this Section.

(a) Background knowledge about the protagonist: a FIRE-GOD, the PIERCER of a LIGHT-GOD, and the LOVER of one (or more) GODDESS(ES) associated with MOVING (POURED or FLOWING) LIQUIDS

As was assumed for both the Norse and Indic traditions above (see Sections 2.1 and 3.1), it is conceivable that the mention of the proper name or distinctive epithet of any mythological character would have immediately evoked in the audiences of a prehistoric IE oral-traditional narrative a thematic frame involving this character's features and associations (a), which were part of their shared knowledge of traditional poetics and religious culture. By comparing some common features of the Norse protagonist Loki and of the Indic protagonist Agni, we may thus reconstruct at least three associations (a.1–3) for the main character of the IE myth.

(a.1) The protagonist is a MALE GOD who is closely associated with the concept FIRE, hereafter referred to as FIRE-GOD (a reconstructed association for Loki, see 1–2; a synchronically attested one for the god called *Agní-* 'Fire', see 22).

(a.2) The FIRE-GOD is also responsible for the PIERCING by means of a PRO-JECTILE WEAPON of a god associated with LIGHT (Loki kills Baldr, see 3–4; Agni wounds the Sun-god or the Sky-god, see 23–24).[19]

(a.3) The FIRE-GOD also has one (or more) FEMALE PARTNER(S) closely associated with MOVING LIQUIDS, either POURED LIQUIDS (Loki's wife Sigyn, see 5; Agni's wife Svāhā, personification of the oblation) or FLOWING WATER (Agni's sexual partners, the divinized Waters in 25).[20]

(b) Before the BINDING: the FIRE-GOD's HIDING in WATER and eventual CAPTURE by the GODS

The actual plot begins with the FIRE-GOD's unsuccessful attempt to avoid his fate. By comparing the corresponding sections of the Norse and Indic narratives, a complex thematic frame (b) FLIGHT/HIDING-CAPTURE may be reconstructed, involving two semantically complementary subevents comprising several features (b.1–4) shared by both traditions.

(b.1) The minimal phraseological units evoking the FIRE-GOD's FLIGHT are the constructions [FIRE-GOD$_X$ – MOVE – AWAY$_Y$] (ON *hljóp hann$_X$ á braut$_Y$* "he$_X$ ran away$_Y$" in 6 ; Ved. *dūrám$_Y$ āyaṃ* "I$_X$ went far away$_Y$" in 26) and [FIRE-GOD$_X$ – HIDE] (ON *hann$_X$ fal sik* "he$_X$ hid" in 6 and *falz Loki$_X$* "Loki$_X$ hid himself" in 7; Ved. *sá$_X$ nílilye* "he$_X$ concealed himself" in 27).

(b.2) The FIRE-GOD selects WATER as LOCATION of the HIDING, a detail expressed by the constructions [FIRE-GOD$_X$ – HIDE – in WATER$_Y$] (ON *hann$_X$ falz í Fránangrs-forsi$_Y$* "he$_X$ hid himself in Fránangr's Waterfall$_Y$" in 8; Ved. *ápagūḷham apsú$_Y$* "the one who was hidden in the waters$_Y$" in 28) or [FIRE-GOD$_X$ – MOVE – into WATER$_Y$] (ON *hann$_X$ hljóp í ána$_Y$* "he$_X$ jumped/ran into the river$_Y$" in 9; Ved. *sò$_X$ 'paḥ$_Y$ práviveśa* "he$_X$ entered into the waters$_Y$" in 29).

(b.3) The FIRE-GOD's FLIGHT is explicitly connected to an ETIOLOGY involving FISH (ON *lax* 'salmon' in 10; Sanskrit *matsya-* 'fish' in 30).

(b.4) Eventually, the FLIGHT attempt fails and the FIRE-GOD is CAPTURED in the same WATER where he is HIDING. This event is expressed by the constructions

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19 The comparative analysis and reconstruction of this IE tradition are discussed in Ginevra 2023.
20 As argued in Ginevra 2018b and summarized in Section 2.4, however, the LIQUID in Loki's myth may have originally stood for WATER as well, and Loki's wife ON name *Sígyn* (**seik^u-n-ieh$_2$-*) has a very close cognate in the Celtic theonym and river-name *Sēquana* (**seik^u-en-eh$_2$-*, the present-day river Seine in France). The association of the FIRE-GOD's FEMALE PARTNER with the MOTION of WATER may thus be an original feature of the reconstructed IE myth and an important one as well, given that only WATER-entities with intrinsic motion energy (such as rivers and springs) were usually conceptualized as animated forces (and thus subject to cult) in IE traditions, whereas stagnant waters were most often not (Durante 1976: 142f.; cf. West 2007: 274–279).

[GODS$_X$ – CATCH/OBTAIN – FIRE-GOD$_Y$] (ON *tóco æsir$_X$ hann$_Y$* 'the gods$_X$ caught him$_Y$' in 11; Ved. *táṃ$_Y$ devā́$_X$ anuvídya* "him$_Y$ the gods$_X$ discovered" in 31) and [GODS$_X$ – BRING – FIRE-GOD$_Y$ – to LOCATION away from WATER$_Z$] (the location WATER is pragmatically implied by ON *farit með hann$_Y$ í helli nokkvorn$_Z$* 'he$_Y$ was taken [by the gods$_X$] to a certain cave$_Z$ [away from the river/waterfall]" in 12; it is instead explicitly marked by Ved. *táṃ$_Y$ devā́$_X$ ầdbhya$_Z$ ā́ninyuḥ* "him$_Y$ the gods$_X$ brought forcibly [to a location] away from the waters$_Z$" in 31).

(c) The central event of the narrative: the FIRE-GOD'S BINDING/YOKING by the GODS
In both Norse and Indic, the FLIGHT/HIDING–CAPTURE episode is followed by the central event of the myths, the thematic frame of (c) the FIRE-GOD'S BINDING/YOK-ING, (at least) three features of which (c.1–3) may be reconstructed on the basis of the parallels between the two mythological traditions.

(c.1) The minimal phraseological unit evoking the thematic frame BINDING/YOK-ING is a (clearly formulaic) phraseological construction [GODS$_X$ – BIND/YOKE – FIRE-GOD$_Y$] (*Æsir$_X$ bundu Loka$_Y$* "the gods$_X$ bound Loki$_Y$" in 13, cf. also 14–15; Ved. *mā$_Y$ yunájann devā́ḥ$_X$* "the gods$_X$ yoke me$_Y$" in 32). This phraseological construction is our myth's "basic formula", i.e., "a common IE verbal formula expressing the central act of the inherited [...] myth", as per Watkins's (1995:301) famous definition.[21]

The noteworthy fact that the semantics of the verbs at the center of this construction alternate between BINDING in the Norse texts and YOKING in the Indic texts requires the assumption that in the reconstructed IE poetic tradition terms for BINDING and terms for YOKING could evoke the same frame, i.e., be partially synonymous. This is actually an unproblematic assumption: a close parallel may be found in English itself, where the verbs *bind* and *yoke* may be analyzed as partially synonymous terms evoking the same ATTACHING semantic frame (Fillmore, Petruck, et al. 2003: 299), "in which somebody attaches (or affixes or joins) one thing to another thing, using some kind of connector". The same phenomenon also occurs within ancient IE traditions, cf., e.g., the partial synonymy of Ancient Greek verbs *déō* 'bind' and *zeúgnymi* 'yoke' in *Iliad* 5.730 **dễse chrýseion kalòn zygón** [...] "she **bound (i.e., attached)** the fair golden **yoke**" and Eur. *El.* 317 *Idaîa phárē chryséais **ezeugménai** pórpaisin* "their Trojan garments **yoked (i.e., attached)** with gold brooches".

In other words, the phraseological construction that is central to both the Norse and the Indic traditions may also be formulated here as [GODS$_X$ – ATTACH –

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21 The "basic formula" concept was first used by Watkins (1995) in his treatment of the DRAGON-SLAYING myth, but it may obviously be applied to any similar phraseological construction within an inherited IE mythological tradition.

FIRE-GOD$_Y$ – to LOCATION – with CONNECTOR], a formulation that, however, won't be employed in the remainder of this study because it is too generic: the four IE traditions analyzed in this contribution actually attest verbs that specifically refer to acts of BINDING and/or YOKING (and not any generic type of ATTACHING), justifying the more specific notation of the formulaic construction as [GODS$_X$ – BIND/YOKE – FIRE-GOD$_Y$].

(c.2) The INSTRUMENT (or CONNECTOR) of the BINDING/YOKING is quite peculiar: the FIRE-GOD is BOUND/YOKED by means of objects made out of (one or more of) HIS OWN KINSMEN (the entrails of Loki's SON Nari in 16–17; Agni's three BROTHERS corresponding to the *paridhí-* sticks in 33–35).

(c.3) The original LOCATION to which the FIRE-GOD is BOUND/YOKED may be reconstructed by analyzing and combining the Norse and Indic data:

- In the Norse myth, the god Loki is literally BOUND to THREE STONES (*þrjá steina*) which correspond to THREE of his BODY PARTS, expressed with a tripartite construction that indexically evokes the totality of Loki's body, namely [SHOULDERS$_X$ – LOINS$_Y$ – KNEES$_Z$] (*undir herðum$_X$* [...] *undir lendum$_Y$* [...] *undir knésfótum$_Z$* "under his shoulders$_X$ [...] under his loins$_Y$ [...] under the backs of his knees$_Z$" in 18);
- In the Indic myth, the god Agni is instead figuratively YOKED either to the act of SACRIFICE itself or to the office of SACRIFICER (*hotrá-* in 36); on a more literal level, this is likely to signify that Agni is YOKED to the SACRIFICIAL ALTAR, which was built by means of THREE BLOCKS of bricks corresponding to THREE of Agni's BODY-PARTS, expressed by a tripartite construction indexically evoking the totality of Agni's body, namely [ARMS$_X$ – CORE/TRUNK$_Y$ – THIGHS$_Z$] (*ātmā$_Y$* [...] *sakthyaù$_Z$* [...] *bāhū$_X$* "body$_Y$ (i.e., the core/trunk) [...] thighs$_Z$ [...] arms$_X$" in 37).

A possible combinatory reconstruction of this element unifying the Norse and Indic versions may thus be the following: the LOCATION to which the FIRE-GOD is BOUND/YOKED is the SACRIFICIAL ALTAR, consisting of THREE STONES/BLOCKS that correspond to THREE BODY-PARTS of the FIRE-GOD, whose entire body was indexically evoked by the tripartite construction [UPPER LIMBS$_X$ – CORE/TRUNK$_Y$ – LOWER LIMBS$_Z$]. Future research in cooperation with archaeologists may determine whether prehistoric sacrificial altars could indeed have had a tripartite structure reminiscent of this detail of the reconstructed myth.

(d) After the BINDING/YOKING: POURING of (ritual) LIQUIDS onto the FIRE(-GOD)

A thematic frame representing (d) the POURING of some LIQUID follows the BIND-ING/YOKING event both in the Norse tradition and in the Indic one, even though it is presented in very different ways in each of them.

- In the Norse myth, Loki's BINDING is followed by a scene of torture involving the POURING of POISON (see 19), which, as discussed above (Section 2.4), may reflect pre-Christian Scandinavian FIRE rituals involving the POURING of LIQUIDS.
- In the Indic tradition, Agni's mythological YOKING is followed by his acceptance of the role of *hótr̥*- 'sacrificer' of the gods, i.e., of sacrificial FIRE onto which ritual LIQUIDS (such as *sóma*-) are POURED as oblation (see 38; this detail exactly matches the fact that the ritual called *agni-yojana*- 'fire/Agni's yoking' is supposed to take place before the first *sóma*-LIBATION of the day, see 39).

In the inherited IE oral tradition, the BINDING/YOKING of the FIRE-GOD may thus have been followed by the POURING of ritual LIQUIDS onto the (sacrificial) FIRE(-GOD). The latter may actually have been the original purpose of the BINDING/YOKING altogether, as attested in Indic; in contrast, the Norse tradition inconsistently presents the BINDING as Loki's punishment for either his involvement in Baldr's death (*Gylf.* 50) or for his poor behavior at a banquet (*Ls.*), two diverging accounts that most likely reflect innovations on the original material.

(e) The RELEASE from the BONDS/YOKE: association with ENDINGS, MOVEMENT, and RUIN AND DESTRUCTION.

Finally, the comparative analysis of the Norse and Indic texts allows for the reconstruction of a last thematic frame, namely (e) the RELEASE of the FIRE-GOD from his BONDS/YOKE, comprising (at least) the following correspondences (e.1–3):

(e.1) The FIRE-GOD's RELEASE takes place at the END of a time period (END of all time in Norse text 20; END of the day in Indic text 40).

(e.2) It is (perhaps trivially) linked to the free MOVEMENT of the FIRE(-GOD), an element expressed by a construction [UNBOUND$_X$ – FIRE-GOD$_Y$ – MOVE] (ON *lauss*$_X$ *Loki*$_Y$ *líðr* "freed, Loki moves" in 20, matching the description of a RELEASED FIRE in 21; Ved. *dvimātā́*$_Y$ *abandhanáś*$_X$ *carati* "he who has two mothers$_Y$ roams without a binding (rope)$_X$" in 41).

(e.3) The FIRE-GOD's RELEASE and MOVEMENT are followed by RUIN AND DE-STRUCTION (for ON see 20, matching the description of a RELEASED FIRE in 21; for Vedic see 42).

Let us sum up briefly the results of this investigation so far. The same narrative sequence of five thematic frames (a–e) underlies both the Norse texts on the myth of "Loki's Binding" and the Indic texts on the myth of "Agni's Yoking". The correspondences display enough arbitrary linkage to rule out the possibility of fortuitous resemblance: this shared mythological structure may be reconstructed as a specimen of inherited IE poetic and religious culture. As summarized in the list below, by comparing the two traditions we are able to reconstruct not only the narrative sequence of the thematic frames and respective elements, but also some of the phraseological constructions by which they were formally expressed: in other words, the oral-formulaic diction that was associated with this IE myth.

(a) BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE about PROTAGONIST
  (a.1) FIRE-GOD
  (a.2) who PIERCES a LIGHT-GOD with PROJECTILE WEAPON
  (a.3) and has a FEMALE PARTNER associated with POURED LIQUIDS or FLOWING WATER
(b) BEFORE THE BINDING/YOKING: FLIGHT/HIDING-CAPTURE
  (b.1) FIRE-GOD FLEES: [FIRE-GOD – MOVE – AWAY], [FIRE-GOD – HIDE]
  (b.2) into WATER: [FIRE-GOD – HIDE – in WATER], [FIRE-GOD – MOVE – into WATER]
  (b.3) in association with an ETIOLOGY involving FISH
  (b.4) and is finally CAPTURED: [GODS – CATCH/OBTAIN – FIRE-GOD], [GODS – BRING – FIRE-GOD – to LOCATION away from WATER]
(c) BINDING/YOKING
  (c.1) FIRE-GOD is BOUND/YOKED by the GODS: [GODS – BIND/YOKE – FIRE-GOD]
  (c.2) by means of objects made out of the FIRE-GOD'S OWN KINSMEN
  (c.3) BOUND/YOKED to a SACRIFICIAL ALTAR, made of 3 STONES/BLOCKS corresponding to 3 BODY-PARTS of FIRE-GOD: [UPPER LIMBS – CORE/TRUNK – LOWER LIMBS]
(d) AFTER THE BINDING/YOKING: POURING OF LIQUID
  (d) Some (ritual) LIQUID is POURED onto the FIRE-GOD
(e) RELEASE FROM BONDS/YOKE
  (e.1) FIRE-GOD'S RELEASE happens at the END of a time period
  (e.2) followed by his MOVEMENT: [UNBOUND – FIRE-GOD – MOVE]
  (e.3) and by RUIN AND DESTRUCTION

On the basis of the frames and constructions enumerated in this list, the inherited IE mythological tradition of the "Binding/Yoking of the Fire-god" may be reconstructed as a narrative sequence in which a protagonist who was (a) a male god traditionally associated with fire (and also the wounder of a light-god and the husband of one or more liquid-related goddesses) participates in a series of events:

first, (b) the fire-god's flight into water and capture by the other gods; then, (c) his binding or yoking to the sacrificial altar by means of peculiar instruments (made out of flesh of the god's closest relatives); after that, (d) a liquid is poured, most likely for ritual purposes; lastly, (e) the god is released from his bonds or yoke at the end of a time period, and his free movements have dangerous consequences (perhaps initiating a new cycle of the sequence).

This set of traditional structures and elements seems to be exclusively attested in ON and Indic in its totality. In the following sections, however, it is shown to have partial reflexes in at least two further IE traditions, namely the Greek myth of "Prometheus' Binding/Yoking" and the Old English poetics of "Fire's Binding".

5 Partial reflexes in the Greek myth of "Prometheus' Binding/Yoking"

As already mentioned above (Section 1), the myth of "Prometheus' Binding/Yoking" (on the second term, see below) has long been noted to be a Greek counterpart to the Norse narrative of "Loki's Binding"; its equally close parallels with the Indic myth of "Agni's Yoking", however, seem to have gone unnoticed so far. Probably one of the most famous myths of Classical Antiquity, its earliest complete sources are Hesiod's *Theogonía* "Birth of Gods" (Hes. *Th.*; between the 8th and 7th centuries BCE), which devotes a whole section to the story of Prometheus' deeds and punishments (lines 521–616), and Aeschylus' *Promētheús Desmṓtēs* "Prometheus Bound" (A. *Pr. B.*; middle of the 5th century BCE); fragments and retellings of the myth are of course to be found in other sources as well.[22] The most striking parallels of Prometheus' myth with the Norse and Indic traditions analyzed above are discussed in the following subsections (5.1–5.5) and summarized in the final subsection (5.6).

5.1 Thematic frame (a), background knowledge about Prometheus: a male divine being with a connection to fire and husband of a goddess associated with flowing water

Given that oral narratives about Prometheus were part of Greek traditional culture, it may be assumed, as already done above for the Norse and Indic protagonists,

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22 For an overview of the attestations of Prometheus' myth in Greek literature and art, cf., e.g., Gantz 1993: 154–166 and Viccei 2012f.

that any mention of this character's name or distinctive epithets would have immediately evoked in the audience a background frame (a) of his traditional features and associations, two of which (a.1 and a.3) closely match those discussed above for the other traditions.

Firstly (a.1), as is well known, Prometheus is another MALE DIVINE BEING who is closely associated with FIRE, an element that he managed to steal from the gods and give to human beings (ex. 43),[23] and may thus be analyzed as a FIRE-GOD. More precisely, Prometheus is a so-called Titan, i.e., a god of the older generation that preceded the Olympians, but he is nonetheless referred to as a *theós* 'god' in the texts, see ex. 49 below.

Furthermore (a.3), just like Loki and Agni's female partners, Prometheus' WIFE Hesione is closely associated with a MOVING LIQUID, namely FLOWING WATER: she is a daughter of the RIVER Ocean (ex. 44).

(a.1) Prometheus is a MALE DIVINE BEING who is closely associated with FIRE.
(43)   *klépsas* akamátoio **pyròs** tēléskopon **augḕn** / en koílōi nárthēki [...]
       '(Prometheus fooled Zeus) **by stealing the** far-seen **gleam of** tireless **fire**
       in a hollow fennel stalk'   Hes. *Th*. 566f.

(a.3) Prometheus' WIFE Hesione is a daughter of the RIVER Ocean.
(44)   hóte **tàn homopátrion ágages Hēsiónan** pithṑn **dámarta** koinólektron
       '(Daughter of Ocean:) when you (Prometheus) wooed and **won my sister
       Hesione to be your wife** and bedfellow'   A. *Pr. B*. 558–560

5.2 Thematic frame (b), before the binding/yoking: Prometheus' flight and hiding and his eventual capture by the gods

The initial event of the Norse and Indic narratives, described by (b) a complex thematic frame involving the FIRE-GOD'S FLIGHT/HIDING and eventual CAPTURE, has no clear parallels in Hesiod's earliest account of Prometheus' myth, but its two most prominent features (b.1 and b.4) may have reflexes in Greek drama.

Firstly (b.1), Loki's and Agni's FLIGHT and HIDING find an indirect parallel in a passage from Aristophanes' *Órnithes* 'Birds' (414 BCE), in which Prometheus is

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23 Cf. also the current etymology of the name *Pro-mēth-eús* as a reflex of PIE **math₂-* 'steal' (**meth₂-* 'tear away' in LIV²: 442f.) with an exact match in Vedic *pra math-* 'rob, steal, carry away' (Narten 1960: 25 n. 40; Watkins 1995: 255f. n. 3), closely matching Ved. *Māthavá-* (**māth₂-eu̯-ó-*), the name of a king who carries fire in his mouth in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.4.1 (cf. Gotō 2000: 110).

comically represented as HIDING (the noun *synkalymmós* 'covering' is used in ex. 45) from Zeus and the other gods, who he fears to be "behind him", i.e., searching for him. Even though it has no explicit connection with the myth of Prometheus' BINDING, this parodic scene shows—at the very least—that the event FLIGHT/HIDING could be easily associated with the Prometheus tradition within Greek culture. However, in light of the IE myth reconstructed above, one could even go so far as to hypothesize that Aristophanes may have been inspired by unattested traditional accounts of Prometheus' HIDING similar to those seen above in the Norse and Indic traditions.

Secondly (b.4), in contrast to Hesiod's, Aeschylus' account does indeed make a very brief explicit reference to Prometheus' CAPTURE by Zeus, thus matching Loki's and Agni's CAPTURE by the gods. This event is evoked by means of a phraseological construction [GOD$_X$ – CATCH/OBTAIN – FIRE-GOD$_Y$] (*labṓn se$_Y$ Zeùs$_X$* "arresting you, Zeus$_X$" in 46) that matches the construction [GODS$_X$ – CATCH/OBTAIN – FIRE-GOD$_Y$] attested in the Norse and Indic narratives.

(b.1) Prometheus' FLIGHT/HIDING from the gods

(45)   *PROMĒTHEUS. oímoi tálas, ho Zeùs hópōs mḗ m' ópsetai. / poû Peisétairos ésti'?*
    *PEISETAIROS. éa, toutì tí ên? / tís ho **synkalymmós**?*
    *PROMĒTHEUS. **tôn theôn horâis tina / emoû katópin entaûtha?***
    'PROMETHEUS. Oh what a fix! Zeus mustn't see me! Where's Peisetaerus?
    PEISETAERUS. Yipes, what is this? What's this **mufflement**?
    PROMETHEUS. **Do you see any of the gods back there behind me**?'
<div align="right">Aristophanes Órnithes 1494–1496</div>

(b.4) Prometheus' CAPTURE: construction [GOD – CATCH/OBTAIN – PROMETHEUS]

(46)   *pánt' ekkálypson kaì gégōn' hēmîn lógon, / poíōi **labṓn se Zeùs** ep' aitiámati / hoútōs atímōs kaì pikrôs āikízetai: / dídaxon hēmâs, eí ti mḕ bláptēi lógōi.*
    '(Chorus to Prometheus:) Tell us everything and reveal the story: on what accusation **did Zeus arrest you**, to abuse you in such a cruel and degrading way? Explain it to us, if it doesn't harm you to do so.'   A. *Pr. B*. 193–196

5.3 Thematic frame (c), the central event of the narrative: Prometheus' binding and yoking by the gods

Prometheus' CAPTURE is followed by the same thematic frame (c) that has already been reconstructed for the IE myth on the basis of the Norse and Indic evidence:

the protagonist's BINDING and YOKING by the gods, the central event of the myth. The Greek tradition attests at least two of the peculiar features (c.1–c.2) that have been identified above in the other IE traditions.

Firstly (c.1), the minimal phraseological units evoking this frame have exact parallels both in the Norse and in the Indic myth: the central event of the narrative is conceptualized both as a BINDING (as in Loki's myth) and as a YOKING (as in Agni's myth), and correspondingly evoked both by a phraseological construction [GOD$_X$ – BIND – PROMETHEUS$_Y$] (*dêse Promēthéa$_Y$* "he$_x$ bound Prometheus$_Y$" in 47) and by a construction [GOD$_X$ – YOKE – PROMETHEUS$_Y$] (underlying the passivized *enézeugmai* "I$_Y$ am yoked" in 48). This detail confirms the reconstruction of the basic formula [GODS$_X$ – BIND/YOKE – FIRE-GOD$_Y$] proposed above on the basis of the Norse and Indic phraseological constructions evoking the central act of the myth.

Secondly (c.2), at least in Aeschylus' version, Zeus orders that Prometheus be put in chains by the divine smith Hephaestus, who consistently stresses the fact that Prometheus is his *syngenḗs* 'kinsman' (ex. 49): Prometheus is thus BOUND by his OWN KINSMAN Hephaestus, functioning as INTERMEDIATE AGENT of the BINDING (as opposed to the ultimate agent Zeus) and closely matching the role of the KINSMEN of the Norse and Indic protagonists, whose bodies are used to make INSTRUMENTS of the BINDING/YOKING (so-called CONNECTORS) both in Norse (where the chains that bind Loki are made out of the entrails of his OWN SON Nari) and in Indic (where the enclosing-sticks on which Agni is yoked are made out of the god's OWN BROTHERS). This correspondence between animate INTERMEDIATE AGENT and inanimate INSTRUMENT reflects a complementary distribution of such elements in IE poetics that was already argued for by Watkins (1995: 361) with regard to the animate COMPANION and inanimate WEAPON of the DRAGON-SLAYING formula.[24]

There seem to be no evident matches in the Greek tradition for (c.3) the LOCATION of the BINDING as reconstructed in the previous section, i.e., a SACRIFICIAL ALTAR comprising THREE STONES/BLOCKS corresponding to THREE BODY-PARTS of the FIRE-GOD. However, the tripartite construction [UPPER LIMBS – CORE/TRUNK – LOWER LIMBS] indexically evoking the totality of the FIRE-GOD's body in the Norse and Indic myths has a loose parallel in lines 55–81 of Aeschylus' tragedy, where Prometheus' BODY-PARTS (HANDS, ARMS, CHEST, RIBS, LEGS) are listed one by one while Hephaestus locks them in bonds.

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24 As noted by a peer reviewer, "one might pun that both are "instrumental" in the event"; cf. also Ginevra 2023 for another example of this INTERMEDIATE AGENT vs. INSTRUMENT correspondence.

(c.1) Prometheus' ʙɪɴᴅɪɴɢ/ʏᴏᴋɪɴɢ: constructions [ɢᴏᴅ(s) – ʙɪɴᴅ – Pʀᴏᴍᴇᴛʜᴇᴜs] and [ɢᴏᴅ(s) – ʏᴏᴋᴇ – Pʀᴏᴍᴇᴛʜᴇᴜs]

(47)   ***dêse* d' *alyktopédēisi Promēthéa* poikilóboulon, / desmoîs argaléoisi, méson dià kíon' elássas**

'And with painful fetters **he (Zeus) bound** shifty-planning **Prometheus**, with distressful bonds, driving them through the middle of a pillar'

Hes. *Th*. 521f.

(48)   [...] *anánkais taîsd' **enézeugmai** tálas*

'**I (Prometheus) am** in this wretchedness, **yoked** in these constraining bonds'

A. *Pr. B*. 108

(c.2) ɪɴᴛᴇʀᴍᴇᴅɪᴀᴛᴇ ᴀɢᴇɴᴛ of the ʙɪɴᴅɪɴɢ: Prometheus is ʙᴏᴜɴᴅ by his ᴏᴡɴ ᴋɪɴsᴍᴀɴ Hephaestus

(49)   ***egṑ* d' *átolmós eimì syngenê̂ theòn* / *dê̂sai* bíāi**

'But for my part, **I (Hephaestus)** can hardly bring myself to take **a kindred god** and forcibly **bind him**'

A. *Pr. B*. 14f.

5.4 Thematic frame (d), after the ʙɪɴᴅɪɴɢ/ʏᴏᴋɪɴɢ: a parody of sᴀᴄʀɪꜰɪᴄᴇ?

No ᴘᴏᴜʀɪɴɢs of ʟɪǫᴜɪᴅs (as attested in the Norse and Indic myths) seem to follow the ʙɪɴᴅɪɴɢ/ʏᴏᴋɪɴɢ of Prometheus in the Greek tradition. Instead, as is well known, the myth has Zeus send his divine eagle every day to devour Prometheus' liver, which in turn grows back every night, in order to be eaten again by the hungry eagle the day after (ex. 50).

A loose thematic parallel may perhaps be identified in the Indic myth, where Agni's ʏᴏᴋɪɴɢ is followed by the sᴀᴄʀɪꜰɪᴄɪᴀʟ ᴏʙʟᴀᴛɪᴏɴ: Vernant (1989: 56) has proposed that Prometheus' torture after his binding may be interpreted as a parody of sacrifice, i.e., "the founder of the sacrifice is made into the victim of insatiable hunger, transformed through his liver into a meal readied daily, into a portion of meat that is indefinitely restored with no hope of ever satisfying the immortal appetite that Zeus has set against him". If Vernant's intuition is correct, the ʙɪɴᴅɪɴɢ/ʏᴏᴋɪɴɢ of the ꜰɪʀᴇ-ɢᴏᴅ thus precedes some kind of sᴀᴄʀɪꜰɪᴄᴇ both in the Indic myth and in the Greek one.

(d) Prometheus' BINDING/YOKING followed by a parody of SACRIFICE?

(50) *kaí hoi ep' **aietòn** ȏrse **tanýpteron: autàr hó g' hȇpar / ȇsthien athánaton**, tò d' aéxeto îson hapántēi / nyktós, hóson própan ȇmar édoi tanysípteros órnis*

'and he (Zeus) set upon him (Prometheus) **a long-winged eagle which ate his immortal liver**, but this grew again on all sides at night just as much as the long-winged bird would eat during the whole day' Hes. *Th*. 523–525

5.5 Thematic frame (e), Prometheus' RELEASE from his BONDS/YOKE: association with RUIN

Finally, as is well known the thematic frame (e), Prometheus' RELEASE from his BONDS/YOKE, is supposed to eventually occur in the Greek tradition as well, as it underlies the title of Aeschylus' lost tragedy *Prometheus Unbound*. Furthermore, in *Prometheus Bound* Aeschylus links the Titan's RELEASE with Zeus' RUIN (see 51), a detail that closely matches the reconstructed element (e.3) attested by the Norse and Indic myths, according to which the FIRE-GOD's RELEASE is followed by RUIN AND DESTRUCTION. In contrast to the two other IE traditions, however, in the Greek tradition Prometheus' eventual RELEASE is supposed to have the opposite effect, since the Titan actually helps avert Zeus' RUIN (see, e.g., A. *Pr. B*. 770).

(e) Prometheus' RELEASE is linked to (e.3) Zeus' RUIN.

(51) *nŷn d' **oudén** esti **térma moi** prokeímenon / **móchthōn, prìn àn Zeùs ekpésēi tyrannídos***

'(Prometheus says:) as it is, **no end** has been set **for my toils, until Zeus falls from his autocratic rulership**'   A. *Pr. B*. 755f.

5.6 Thematic frames (a–e): narrative structure of "Prometheus' Binding/Yoking"

Let us sum up briefly the results of this section. The Greek mythological tradition of Prometheus' BINDING/YOKING seems to attest not only all five thematic frames (a–e) that have already been identified above for the Norse and Indic narratives, but also some of the same peculiar features and phraseological constructions discussed above. These include, among others: the union of the Greek FIRE-GOD Prometheus (a.1) with a FEMALE PARTNER associated with FLOWING WATER (a.3); the double conceptualization of the central event of the myth as both a BINDING and a YOKING

(c.1), signaled by the use of both variants (BIND and YOKE) of the construction [GODS – BIND/YOKE – FIRE-GOD]; the material involvement of a FIRE-GOD's OWN KINSMAN in the BINDING/YOKING. These numerous correspondences, summarized in the list below, are unlikely to be due to chance and support the reconstruction of the inherited myth proposed above (Section 4) on the basis of the Norse and Indic data, further reflexes of which may be found in several poetic texts of the Old English tradition, as shown in the next Section (6).

(a) BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE about Prometheus
  (a.1) MALE GOD associated with FIRE
  (a.3) whose WIFE Hesione is associated with FLOWING WATER (as daughter of the RIVER Ocean)
(b) BEFORE THE BINDING/YOKING: FLIGHT/HIDING(?)-CAPTURE
  (b.1) Prometheus FLEES/HIDES (?)
  (b.4) Prometheus is CAPTURED: [GOD – CATCH/OBTAIN – PROMETHEUS]
(c) BINDING/YOKING
  (c.1) Prometheus is both BOUND and YOKED by the GOD Zeus (ultimate agent who gives the order): [GOD – BIND/YOKE – PROMETHEUS]
  (c.2) but materially by his OWN KINSMAN Hephaestus (intermediate agent who performs the BINDING).
(d) AFTER THE BINDING/YOKE: SACRIFICE (?)
  (d) Modality of Prometheus' torture may be a parody of sacrifice (?)
(e) RELEASE FROM BONDS/YOKE
  (e.3) Prometheus' RELEASE is associated with Zeus' RUIN

6 Further partial reflexes in the Old English poetics of "Fire's Binding": *Exeter Riddles*, Old English *Boethius*, and *Solomon and Saturn*

Unfortunately, no mythological narratives involving pre-Christian fire-gods are attested for the Old English tradition: its earliest poetic text, Cædmon's *Hymn*, was composed in England sometime during the 7th century CE in an already Christianized context. Partial reflexes of the inherited IE poetic and religious tradition reconstructed above may be found, however, in several literary texts dating to the last centuries of the 1st millennium CE and attesting what may be referred to as the Old English poetics of "Fire's Binding". A series of correspondences between the diction and contents of these Old English texts and the features (a.1, c.1, e.2–e.3)

of the IE tradition reconstructed on the basis of the Norse and Indic evidence are discussed in the following paragraphs and summarized at the end of this section.

In an Old English riddle of the *Exeter Book* (a manuscript dating to the 10th century CE) whose solution is currently thought to be FIRE (ex. 52), this element, inherently inanimate and lexically evoked by the neuter noun *fȳr* 'fire', is personified as (a.1) a MALE character, closely matching the Norse, Indic, and Greek MALE FIRE-GODS discussed above: more precisely, FIRE is a MALE warrior, for whom the masculine pronoun *he* 'he' (accusative *hine*, dative *him*) is used several times in the text (unusual for a neuter like *fȳr*).

(a.1) FIRE is personified as a MALE character

(52)   ***Wiga*** *is on eorþan | wundrum acenned*
        dryhtum to nytte | of dumbum twam
        torht atyhted | þone on teon wigeð
        feond his feonde | fer strangne oft
        *wif **hine** wrið | **he** him wel hereð*
        *þeowaþ him geþwære | gif **him** þegniað*
        mægeð & mæcgas | mid gemete ryhte·
        *fedað **hine** fægre | **he** him fremum stepeð*
        life on lissum | leanað grimme
        *þe **hine** wloncne | weorþan læteð*
        'A **warrior** is wondrously brought into the world for the use of lords by two dumb things; brightly extracted, which for his hurt foe bears against foe. Strong though he is a woman binds **him**. **He** obeys them well, serves them quietly, if maids and men tend **him** duly, feed **him** fairly. **He** exalts them in comfort for their joy in life, grimly rewards one who lets **him** grow proud.'

        Exeter Riddle 8 for FIRE in Baum 1963
        Riddle 50 in Krapp & Van Kirk Dobbie 1936[25]

This text already briefly mentions some sort of BINDING of FIRE: according to the *Riddle*, "a woman" (of uncertain identification; perhaps a personified pot?) "binds him" (whatever it may mean).

However, a thematic frame of (c) FIRE's BINDING by the Christian God, paralleling the central event of the IE mythological traditions discussed above (the FIRE-GOD's BINDING/YOKING by the gods), is developed much more extensively in two further passages, one in verse (ex. 53) and one in prose (ex. 54), from the Old

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25 Also as *Riddle* 48 for FIRE in Williamson 1977.

English *Boethius* (9th–10th century CE), a prosimetrum that is a loose translation of Severinus Boethius' Latin opus *De consolatione philosophiae*.

Within these two passages, the minimal phraseological unit evoking the BIND-ING thematic frame is (c.1) a phraseological construction [GOD$_X$ – BIND – FIRE$_Y$] (*hafað fæder engla$_X$ fyr$_Y$ gebunden* "the father of angels$_X$ has bound fire$_Y$" in 53; *þu$_X$ gebunde þæt fyr$_Y$* "you$_X$ bound that fire$_Y$" in 54), matching the "basic formula" construction [GOD(s) – BIND/YOKE – FIRE-GOD] expressing the central act of the myth in Norse, Indic, and Greek. Since the Old English *Boethius* is a loose trans-lation of a Latin work, it is of particular relevance to this study that, as noted by Cavell (2016: 186f.), "the prose and poetic passages both represent an expansion of the Latin", i.e., they contain elements lacking in Boethius' original text. The Old English translator appears to have introduced the thematic frame of FIRE's BINDING and the corresponding constructions independently from the Latin origi-nal: a possible reason for this peculiar choice may have been the influence of a genuine Anglo-Saxon tradition rooted in ancient pre-Christian Germanic poetics and religion.

This hypothesis may find further support in the etymological match between the Old English verb (*ge-*)*bindan* employed in 53–54 to evoke the thematic frame of FIRE's BINDING and the ON verb *binda* occurring in the passages 13–14 of the myth of Loki's BINDING discussed above (repeated here as 55–56). Both verbs must be traced back to one and the same PGmc strong verb **bend-a-* 'to bind' (Seebold 1970: 102–104).[26] This etymological match allows us to reconstruct an already PGmc lexically specified formulaic construction [GOD(s) – BIND (**bend-a-*) – FIRE(-GOD)], verbally evoking a thematic frame FIRE-GOD's BINDING, which may have been a traditional theme within ancient Germanic culture, if Roman statesman Gaius Iulius Caesar was correct in claiming that 1st-century-BCE Germanic tribes "reckon among the gods those only whom they see and by whose offices they are openly assisted – to wit, the Sun, the Fire-god, and the Moon" (*De Bello Gallico* 6.21).

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26 A further possible match may be the Vedic adjective *a-bandhaná-* 'without binding (rope)', referring to Agni in 41, whose second element °*bandhaná-* must ultimately be traced back to the same PIE root **bʰendʰ-* 'to bind' (LIV²: 75) that also underlies PGmc **bend-a-* id.'. If it is not due to chance (the Indic myth otherwise exclusively attests verbs meaning 'to yoke' for this thematic frame), this parallel may allow for the reconstruction of an inherited IE construction [GOD(s) – BIND (**bʰendʰ-*) – FIRE(-GOD)]. I am grateful to Patrick Stiles for useful discussion on this topic.

**(c.1) FIRE'S BINDING: OE construction [GOD – BIND (°*bindan*) – FIRE],
etymologically matching the ON construction [GODS – BIND (*binda*) – LOKI] as two
reflexes of the same PGmc construction [GOD(S) – BIND (**bend-a-*) – FIRE(-GOD)]**

(53) *Hafað fæder engla | fyr gebunden*
efne to þon fæste | þæt hit fiolan ne mæg
eft æt his eðle, | þær þæt oðer fyr
up ofer eall þis | eardfæst wunað
'**The father of angels (God) has bound fire** precisely so fast that it may
not return to its homeland where that other fire, above all this, remains
firmly fixed'   Old English *Boethius* 20.153–156, verse

(54) *Þu gebunde þæt fyr mid swiðe unanbindenlicum racentum þæt hit ne mæg
cuman to his agenum earde, þæt is to þam mæstan fyre ðe ofer us is, þy læs
hit forlæte þa eorðan*
'**You (God) bound that fire** with exceedingly unloosable chains, so that it
may not come out to its own land, that is, to the greatest fire which is over
us, in order that it should not forsake the earth'
                                Old English *Boethius* 20.206–209, prose

(55) *Þá tóku **Æsir** þarma hans ok **bundu Loka** með yfir þá þrjá steina.*
'Then the **gods** took his guts and **bound Loki** with them over the three
stones'   *Gylf.* 50

(56) *Þar tóco **æsir** hann. **Hann var bundinn***
'There **the gods** caught him. **He (Loki) was bound**'   *Ls.* final prose

Finally, FIRE'S BINDING is logically implied by semantic contiguity in a further
passage (ex. 57) from the Old English poem *Solomon and Saturn* (9th century CE),
in which the author, however, focuses on a different thematic frame, namely (e)
FIRE'S RELEASE from its BONDS, with close correspondences (e.2–3) in the thematic
frame reconstructed above on the basis of the Norse and Indic evidence.

More precisely, within this text, FIRE'S RELEASE from its BONDS is linked to (e.2)
FIRE'S free MOVEMENT, evoked by a construction [(UNBOUND$_x$ –)[27] FIRE$_y$ – MOVE]
(*gif hit unwitan ænige hwile healdað butan hæftum$_x$, hit$_y$ wædeð* "If the imprudent
for any while holds it without bond$_x$, it$_y$ goes"), closely paralleling the construction
[UNBOUND – FIRE-GOD – MOVE] identified above in both Norse and Indic.

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27 The semantic element UNBOUND$_x$ expressed by *butan hæftum$_x$* is bracketed here because it
is actually external (from a purely syntactic perspective) to the structure [FIRE$_y$ – MOVE] that
underlies the phrase *hit$_y$ wædeð* "it$_y$ goes", even though it refers to the same referent, FIRE.

Furthermore, the RELEASED FIRE's consequent free MOVEMENT is trivially followed by (e.3) RUIN AND DESTRUCTION (*bryceð and bærneð boldgetimbru* "it breaks and burns the timbers of the house"), as in the Norse and Indic texts.

It may be further noted that the OE noun *hæft* 'bond' (outcome of PGmc **haft-a-*), which in this passage is connected with *fyr* 'fire', has a close formal match with the ON adjective *haftr* 'captive' (also reflecting PGmc **haft-a-*), which is used to describe the BOUND god Loki in the passage 15 quoted above (and repeated here as 58). This etymological match and the one involving **bend-a-* 'bind' discussed in the previous section may both be reflexes of an inherited oral tradition about the BINDING of the FIRE-GOD which may have still been current in the common Germanic period.

(e) FIRE's RELEASE from *hæft* 'bond' (PGmc. **hafta-*, matching Loki's description as *haftr* 'captive') is linked to (e.2) its MOVEMENT, evoked by a construction [(UNBOUND –) FIRE – MOVE], and associated with (e.3) RUIN AND DESTRUCTION.

(57) *Gif **hit** unwitan | ænige hwile*
  *healdað **butan hæftum**, | **hit** ðurh hrof **wædeð**,*
  ***bryceð and bærneð** | **boldgetimbru**,*
  seomað steap and geap, | stigeð on lenge,
  clymmeð on gecyndo, | cunnað hwænne mote
  ***fyr** on his frumsceaft | on fæder geardas,*
  eft to his eðle, | ðanon hit æror cuom.
  'Often if the imprudent for any while holds **it without bonds**, **it goes** through the roof, **it breaks and burns the timbers of the house**; steep and high it looms, aloft it rises, it climbs in its nature; **fire,** when it can, strives towards its origin in the dwellings of the Father, back to the home from whence at first it came'   *Solomon and Saturn* 450–456

(58) ***Hapt** sá hon liggia / undir hvera lundi, / lægiarn líki / **Loca** áþeccian*
  '**A captive** she saw lying under Cauldron-grove, an evil-loving figure, unmistakable as **Loki**'   *Vsp*. 35.1–4

To sum up briefly, several Old English texts seem to attest isolated features of the IE poetic and religious tradition reconstructed above on the basis of Norse, Indic, and Greek evidence. More precisely, out of five thematic frames identified in the other IE traditions, only three are attested in Old English sources as well, namely: (a) the background knowledge of FIRE as (a.1) a MALE CHARACTER; (c) the event of FIRE's BINDING by God, evoked by (c.1) a construction [GOD – BIND (°*bindan*) – FIRE] that exactly matches the construction [GOD(S) – BIND – FIRE-GOD] attested in the other IE traditions, while also displaying a close etymological match (PGmc

*_bend-a-_ 'bind') with the ON construction [GODS – BIND (_binda_) – LOKI]; (e) the final RELEASE of FIRE from its bonds, with an association with (e.2) free MOVEMENT and (e.3) RUIN AND DESTRUCTION, which closely parallels what is found in the other traditions. The correspondences of the Old English tradition with the rest of the IE ones may be summarized as in the following list.

(a) BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE of FIRE
   (a.1) FIRE is a MALE CHARACTER
(c) BINDING
   (c.1) FIRE IS BOUND by GOD: [GOD – BIND – FIRE]
(e) RELEASE FROM BONDS
   (e.2) FIRE'S RELEASE is followed by ITS FREE MOVEMENT: [(UNBOUND –) FIRE – MOVE]
   (e.3) and by RUIN AND DESTRUCTION

Even though the complex of features identified in this comparative analysis occurs in a less systematic way in English compared to Norse, Indic, and Greek, the peculiar detail of the BINDING OF A FIRE-GOD BY OTHER GODS is described or implied in all three Old English passages analyzed here, with the Old English _Boethius_ even going so far as attesting exact reflexes of the same construction [GODS – BIND – FIRE-GOD] that evokes the central act of the myth in the other traditions (its basic formula). While these close matches involving such a peculiar thematic frame and phraseological construction would be enough to support the identification of at least the FIRE'S BINDING motif as a reflex of IE heritage, the additional parallels of FIRE's MALE gender (in the _Exeter Riddle_) and of its DESTRUCTIVE potential when RELEASED (in _Solomon and Saturn_) allow for the identification of all these features as _disiecta membra_ – partial and isolated reflexes – of a greater poetic and religious complex about FIRE'S BINDING that was inherited as a whole from Germanic and IE antiquity.

    Further support for this theory comes from the fact that the protagonist of the BINDING is clearly identified as the personified FIRE in English, in contrast with the Norse and Greek traditions, where the protagonists are GODS with a connection to FIRE, not its personifications. This diverging feature may reflect an archaism that supports the IE origin of the whole traditional complex in English: if this detail was shared with the other European traditions, one may argue that it could have arisen by means of the well-known contacts of the British Islands with the Classical and Scandinavian worlds during Antiquity and the Middle Ages. In contrast, the only tradition where the protagonist is clearly identified as the personified FIRE is the Indic one, a tradition that had no historically ascertained contacts with the English one at the time.

7 Conclusion

The results of the investigation presented here may be summarized in the following points.

1. The comparative analysis of the thematic frames and phraseological constructions occurring within the Norse myth of "Loki's Binding" and within the Indic myth and ritual of "Agni's Yoking" allows for the identification of a number of shared features. These parallels do not include noteworthy etymological matches, but the structural and semantic correspondences are remarkably exact, with enough arbitrary linkage to support the reconstruction of an inherited IE oral tradition about the "Fire-God's Binding", consisting of the following (a–e) components.

   (a) The protagonist was (a.1) a MALE FIRE-GOD, who was also (a.2) responsible for the PIERCING by means of a PROJECTILE WEAPON of a god associated with LIGHT, and whose (a.3) FEMALE PARTNER was closely associated with FLOWING WATER or POURED LIQUIDS.

   (b) The BINDING was preceded by the FIRE-GOD's attempt to avoid it by FLEEING and HIDING, which unsuccessfully ended with his CAPTURE. The FLIGHT-HIDING subevent was evoked by (b.1) the phraseological constructions [FIRE-GOD – MOVE – AWAY] and [FIRE-GOD – HIDE]. More precisely, the LOCATION element of this thematic frame may be identified as WATER, as signaled not only by (b.2) the phraseological constructions [FIRE-GOD – HIDE – in WATER] and [FIRE-GOD – MOVE – into WATER], but also by (b.3) the insertion within this scene of an ETIOLOGY involving FISH. As required by the narrative, the HIDING attempt was doomed to fail and the FIRE-GOD would eventually be CAPTURED, a subevent evoked by (b.4) the phraseological constructions [GODS – CATCH/OBTAIN – FIRE-GOD] and [GODS – BRING – FIRE-GOD – to LOCATION away from WATER].

   (c) The central event of the narrative was, of course, the FIRE-GOD's BINDING/YOKING, evoked by (c.1) a phraseological construction [GODS – BIND/YOKE – FIRE-GOD], the "basic formula" of the whole myth. Two further elements that may be reconstructed for this thematic frame are: (c.2) the INSTRUMENT by means of which the FIRE-GOD was BOUND/YOKED, an object that was remarkably made out of the body of the god's OWN KINS-MEN; (c.3) the LOCATION to which the FIRE-GOD was BOUND/YOKED, which may be reconstructed by combinatory analysis as the SACRIFICIAL ALTAR, consisting of THREE STONES/BLOCKS corresponding to THREE BODY-PARTS

of the FIRE-GOD (indexically standing for the totality of his body) evoked by a tripartite construction [UPPER LIMBS – CORE/TRUNK – LOWER LIMBS].

(d) The BINDING/YOKING of the FIRE-GOD may have been followed by the POURING of (ritual) LIQUIDS onto the FIRE(-GOD); the latter may have been the original purpose of the BINDING/YOKING altogether, as is the case in the Indic tradition.

(e) Finally, the FIRE-GOD's eventual RELEASE from the BONDS/YOKE was supposed to take place (e.1) at the END of a specific time period; it was associated both with (e.2) the free MOVEMENT of the FIRE(-GOD), as signaled by the phraseological construction [UNBOUND – FIRE-GOD – MOVE], and with (e.3) the coming of RUIN AND DESTRUCTION.

All the reconstructed thematic frames and phraseological constructions of this IE mythological narrative have reflexes in the Norse and Indic traditions analyzed above; partial matches, however, may also be found in two other IE traditions, namely within the Ancient Greek myth of "Prometheus' Binding/Yoking" and in the Old English poetics of "Fire's Binding".

2. The correspondences in Greek myth are quite evident. The (a) protagonist Prometheus is (a.1) another MALE FIRE-GOD (more precisely, a divine fire-thief) whose (a.3) WIFE Hesione is also associated with FLOWING WATER (being a daughter of the RIVER Ocean). The (b) FLIGHT/HIDING-CAPTURE sequence occurring in the Norse and Indic myths is partially attested by Aeschylus' use of the construction [GOD(S) – CATCH/OBTAIN – FIRE-GOD] to evoke the CAPTURE subevent; the HIDING subevent, however, may have an indirect reflex in Aristophanes' comedy. In contrast, the reconstructed features of the central (c) BINDING/YOKING scene are very well attested within Greek: interestingly, this event is conceptualized (c.1) both in terms of BINDING (as in the Norse myth) and of YOKING (as in the Indic myth) – as signaled by the use of both BIND and YOKE variants of the construction [GODS – BIND/YOKE – PROMETHEUS]; the BINDING/YOKING is materially performed by (c.2) one of Prometheus' OWN KINSMEN, Hephaestus, an animate INTERMEDIATE AGENT matching the KINSMEN who become inanimate INSTRUMENTS of the BINDING in the Norse and Greek myths. No (d) POURING of LIQUIDS seems to occur after this event, but Prometheus' torture by the eagle may be interpreted as a parody of SACRIFICE, matching the Indic myth. Finally, the thematic frame of (e) Prometheus' RELEASE from his BONDS is attested as well and associated with (e.3) someone's RUIN as well (namely Zeus').

3. The parallels in Old English poetics are less numerous, but conspicuous too. In the *Exeter Riddles*, (a.1) FIRE is personified as a MALE character (a warrior) and referred to by means of masculine pronouns, matching the main characters of the other IE myths. In the Old English *Boethius*, the thematic frame of (c)

FIRE'S BINDING by the Christian GOD is developed extensively and evoked by means of (c.1) a phraseological construction [GOD – BIND – FIRE] that reflects a Christianized variant of the construction [GOD(S) – BIND/YOKE – FIRE-GOD] occurring in the other IE traditions – with an exact etymological match between the respective Old English and ON verbs (reflexes of PGmc **bend-a-*); this analysis is further supported by the fact that the Old English passages find no matches in the original Latin text, and are thus likely to reflect a genuine Anglo-Saxon tradition. Finally, the thematic frame of (e) FIRE'S RELEASE from its BONDS is at the center of a passage of the Old English poem *Solomon and Saturn*, in which the RELEASE is linked to (e.2) FIRE's free MOVEMENT and followed by (e.3) RUIN AND DESTRUCTION. Etymological parallels between these Old English passages and the ON texts about Loki's binding (OE *hæft* : ON *haftr*; OE °*bindan* : ON *binda*) allow identification of these two traditions as reflexes of a common oral-traditional poetic heritage rooted in Germanic antiquity.

4. From the results of this study, the following general conclusions naturally follow: early IE poetic culture and religious thought knew a MALE DIVINE FIGURE associated with FIRE, i.e., a FIRE-GOD (whose FEMALE PARTNER was correspondingly associated with LIQUIDS like WATER), whose potentially DANGEROUS POWER had to undergo some sort of RESTRAINING in order to become a functional part of the natural order. More precisely, this fire-character was to be ATTACHED by means of either BONDS or a YOKE to a specific physical LOCATION and practical TASK: this is likely to have been the SACRIFICIAL ALTAR, where the LIQUID OBLATION was POURED onto the RITUAL FIRE. This ancient poetic and religious complex had an everyday counterpart in the trivial (at least for a pre-modern society) experience of fire as an element that is absolutely necessary for life (justifying its conceptualization as a divine power), but whose destructive energy needs to be somehow restrained (cf. also Ginevra 2018a: 76f. on the "restraining of fire's voracious mouth") by "attaching" it – i.e., limiting it – to a specific location in the house, the hearth.

5. The present reconstruction may without doubt be improved, as it relies on a comparative analysis of the oral-traditional features attested in only four early IE traditions (Old Norse, Old Indic, Ancient Greek, and Old English) and it is almost exclusively based on an essentially linguistic methodology that combines only historical-comparative linguistics on the diachronic side and cognitive linguistics on the synchronic side. Among other aspects, future investigations may attempt to verify, on the one hand, if the same series of inherited features identified in this contribution also occurs in other IE (or non-IE) traditions and, on the other hand, if the linguistic and textual details discussed here may be combined with research data and interpretative models from archaeology and cultural anthropology, in order to achieve both a better

synchronic understanding of the historically attested traditions and a more realistic reconstruction of the linguistic habits and cultural conceptions of the earliest speakers of IE varieties.

Abbreviations

EDG   Robert S. P. Beekes (2010). *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*. 2 vols. Leiden & Boston: Brill.
JB   Stephanie W. Jamison & Joel P. Brereton (2014). *The Rigveda. The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*. 3 vols. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
LIV²   Helmut Rix & Martin J. Kümmel (2001). *Lexikon der indogermanischen Verben*. 2nd ed. Wiesbaden: Reichert.

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