# Heimdallr and Apā́m Nápāt: A Comparison

Signe Cohen

***Résumé :*** *Cet essai compare la divinité nordique Heimdallr à la divinité védique et iranienne Apā́m Nápāt. Les parallèles entre ces deux divinités incluent la naissance de mères multiples, l'association avec le feu dans l'eau et avec un arbre cosmique qui donne la vie, avec de l'or et avec des chevaux. Des comparaisons avec d'autres divinités indo-européennes et des figures mythologiques telles que Nechtan, Morann, Poséidon et Neptune sont également prises en compte. Cet essai soutient, cependant, que l'objectif principal de la mythologie comparée ne devrait pas être simplement de reconstruire un proto-mythe, mais plutôt de comprendre pourquoi le matériel hérité était interprété si différemment dans divers contextes historiques et sociaux.*

***Mots-clés :*** *Heimdallr, Apā́m Nápāt, Nechtan, Morann, feu dans l'eau, mythologie nordique, mythologie védique, mythologie irlandaise, mythologie indo-européenne, mythologie comparée.*

***Abstract :*** *This essay compares the Norse deity Heimdallr to the Vedic and Iranian Apā́m Nápāt. Parallels between these two deities include being born to multiple mothers and association with fire in water and with a cosmic life-giving tree, gold, and horses. Comparisons to other Indo-European deities and mythological figures such as Nechtan, Morann, Poseidon and Neptune are also considered. This essay argues, however, that the primary goal of comparative mythology should not be merely to reconstruct a proto-myth, but rather to understand why inherited material was interpreted so differently in various historical and social contexts.*

***Keywords :*** *Heimdallr, Apā́m Nápāt, Nechtan, Morann, fire in water, Norse mythology, Vedic mythology, Irish mythology, Indo-European mythology, comparative mythology.*

Nick Allen's inspired work on comparative mythology has encouraged many scholars to continue investigating and making sense of parallels between deities, myths, and rituals from different Indo-European traditions.[1] This paper concerns an enigmatic Norse deity, Heimdallr, and his ancient Indian and Iranian counterparts. Allen follows Dumézil in arguing for a parallel between the Norse Heimdallr and the Vedic Dyú/Dyáus and other Indo-European sky deities such as the Greek Zeus and the Roman Jupiter.[2] This essay, inspired by Allen's work, argues that one can see a striking parallel between Heimdallr and a different Vedic deity, Apā́m Nápāt ("The Child of the Waters"), a god who also

1. I am deeply grateful to Olga M. Davidson, John McDonald and Guillaume Oudaer for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

2. Allen, 2007; Dumézil, 1968, p. 182-190 and 2000, p. 151-188. Dumézil makes his argument based on the *Mahābhārata* character Bhīṣma, an incarnation of the Vedic sky god Dyáus.

has a counterpart in Avestan mythology.[3] Heimdallr and Apā́m Nápāt are both deities whose precise nature has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly speculation, but I argue that some of the mysteries surrounding the identities of these gods are illuminated when we recognize the many parallels between the two figures. While this essay emphasizes different aspects of Heimdallr than those that emerge through Dumézil and Allen's comparison to Dyú/Dyáus, the arguments presented here do not contradict their interpretation, but rather offers a complementary view, highlighting different aspects of the deity.

*Heimdallr*

This enigmatic deity is described in several Old Norse literary sources such as the *Vǫluspá* (10th century), Úlfr Uggason's *Húsdrápa* (10th century)[4], *Lokasenna* (10th century?), *Grímnismál*, (10th century?), *Rígsþula* (11th century?), *Hyndluljóð* (12th century), Þrymskviða (12th century), and the *Skíðaríma* (15th century). Snorri describes Heimdallr in the *Gylfaginning* and the *Skáldskaparmál* of his 13th century *Edda* as well. There is little remaining evidence of a cult of Heimdallr either in Scandinavia or on Iceland,[5] but the extant literary sources give us some insights into the nature of this deity.

Heimdallr is an ancient god, born at the beginning of the world, í árdaga,[6] and he is the ancestor of humanity.[7] But he is also associated with the end of the world as well as its beginning; Heimdallr announces Ragnarǫk by blowing the horn called *Gjallarhorn* ("the Hollering Horn").[8] He is the watchman or guardian (*vári* or *vǫrðr*) of the gods,[9] and therefore does not sleep, and he has supernaturally acute hearing.[10] His hearing is "hidden under the bright holy

3. Some parallels between Heimdallr and Apā́m Nápāt are noted in Haudry, 2013 and 2016 and Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015.

4. This poem is only preserved through quotations in Snorri's *Edda,* but the *Húsdrápa* can be dated with some precision to around 983 CE since it was composed on the occasion of the wedding of Óláfr pái at Hjarðarholt, an event mentioned in the *Laxdæla saga.*

5. Ström, 1961, p. 298; Sayers, 1993, p. 3. There are a few possible theophoric place names associated with Heimdallr. Cöllen mentions the mountain Heimdallshaugen ("Heimdallr's Hill") in Norway, but it is not entirely certain that this place name refers to the deity (Cöllen, 2015, p. 4). There is also a borough in the Norwegian city of Trondheim called Heimdal and a village in the Hedmark area by the same name.

6. *Hyndlulióð* 35.

7. *Vǫluspá* 1 and *Rígsþula.* Allen, 2007, p. 237, does not interpret Heimdallr as a literal father of the human race, but rather as a sort of catalyst for conception, much like Bhīṣma in the *Mahābhārata.*

8. *Vǫluspá* 46.

9. *Gylfaginning* 27, *Húsdrápa* 2, *Grímnismál* 13, *Grímnismál* 28, *Lokasenna* 48.

10. *Gylfaginning* 27.

tree" (*undir heiðvönom helgom baðmi*), the world tree Yggdrasill.[11] Heimdallr is referred to as "the white god" (*hvíti áss*),[12] "the whitest of the gods" (*hvitastr* ása),[13] and "golden-toothed" (*Gullintanni*)[14]. The color gold is also associated with his horse Gulltoppr ("golden mane").[15] Heimdallr lives in a place called Himinbjǫrg ("heaven's castle" or "heaven's mountain") by the rainbow bridge Bifrǫst. Loki accuses Heimdallr of having *aurgo baki,* an enigmatic phrase often rendered as "having a muddy back",[16] although the precise meaning of this expression remains unclear. Heimdallr is born to nine mothers, all of them sisters.[17] These nine mothers are referred to as "giant maidens" (*iǫtna meyiar*),[18] although Heimdallr himself is one of the *æsir*, or gods.[19] Heimdallr is also called "the seeker of Freya's necklace" **(***mensækir Freyju*),[20] and he is said to have contended with Loki for the necklace Brísingamen.[21]

The etymology of Heimdallr's name has been the subject of much debate. The first part of the name, *heimr,* means "home" or "world". The second element, *dallr* (also spelled *dalr*), is obscure, but may derive from a PIE root *dhel-*, to shine.[22] *Heimdali* is a rare word for "ram" attested in the *Skáldskaparmál,*[23] but

11. *Vǫluspá* 27. Turville-Petre and Sayers both read this passage as implying that Heimdallr sacrificed an ear in return for supernaturally acute hearing, a parallel to Óðinnés sacrifices of an eye (Turville-Petre, 1964, P. 149; and Sayers, 1993, p. 6).

12. *Gylfaginning* 27, *Skáldskaparmál* 15.

13. Þrymskviða 15.

14. *Gylfaginning* 27.

15. *Gylfaginning* 27.

16. *Lokasenna* 48.

17. *Gylfaginning* 27, *Skáldskaparmál* 15, *Húsdrápa* 2, *Heimdallargaldr*.

18. *Hyndluljóð* 35.

19. *Gylfaginning* 27, *Skáldskaparmál* 1. Heimdallr is, however, seemingly identified as one of the Vanir in Þrymskviða 15, "vissi hann vel fram/sem vanir aðrir" ("He knew the future well, like the other Vanir"). Sauzeau and Sauzeau see this apparent anomaly as a "functional translation" *(translation fonctionelle)*; while the Aesir generally represent Dumézil's functions F1, F2 and a potential F4 and the Vanir F3, Heimdallr and some other guardian deities like the Roman Portunus and the Kalash goddess Jatch are guardian gods within the third function. They regard Heimdallr as a fusion of an F3 guardian deity and a celestial god (and therefore associated both with the Aesir and the Vanir): Sauzeau and Sauzeau, 2017, p. 79-80.

20. *Skáldskaparmál* 15.

21. *Skáldskaparmál* 15.

22. Pokorny (1959, 246) derives the name Heimdallr from the IE root *dhel-* ("leuctend, hell") and connects the same root with Freya's obscure name Mardǫll (*Gylfaginning* 35) and with Dellingr, the father of the Sun (*Gylfaginning* 10). See also Cöllen, 2015, p. 256. De Vries takes *dallr-* in the sense of flowering or growth ("la floraison, la croissance") and spontaneous creative energy (de Vries, 1955, p. 266).

23. *Skáldskaparmál* 507.

this obscure term may be derived from the name Heimdallr, since the deity is associated with rams. A rare noun *dall(u)r* is also attested in the sense of a tree in modern Icelandic.[24] A likely interpretation of the name of the god would therefore be "the light of the world", or possibly "the world tree".

Much of the scholarship on Heimdallr has been focused on finding a thread to tie all of the god's disparate characteristics together and identifying the god with a single phenomenon or function. The scholarship of the 19th and early 20th centuries often leaned towards regarding Heimdallr as a manifestation of a natural phenomenon. Heimdallr has been identified with the dawn,[25] the sky,[26] the moon,[27] the sun,[28] and the rainbow[29]. Other scholars have viewed Heimdallr as a Norse representation of Christ,[30] a ram,[31] a goblin,[32] a counterpart to the Vedic fire god Agní,[33] or a personification of the world tree.[34] Yet others have focused more on Heimdallr's function within Norse mythology, rather than on his identification with a single phenomenon or object. Dumézil famously interprets Heimdallr as a "framing god", and thus a parallel to the Roman Janus or Vedic deities like Vāyú, Tváṣṭr, and Dyáus.[35] These figures are deities of opening and closing who live outside the temporal rhythms of other beings that they enframe.[36] DeVries follows Dumézil and regards Heimdallr as a framing god as well,[37] but also associates him with Dumézil's second function

24. Cöllen, 2015, p. 257. This meaning is attested in Björn Haldorsen's (1824-1894) Icelandic dictionary, along with (wooden?) "bucket". Haldorsen specifies that *dallr* is a "Træstamme som setter Skud og Grene" ("a tree trunk that produces shoots and branches"), and Cöllen (2015, p. 258) therefore connects this meaning to a "growing power" in general ("Wachstumskraft"), which recalls de Vries' notion of *dallr* as creative energy or growth.

25. Müllenhoff, 1886, p. 247; Golther, 1895, p. 363; Hermann, 1903, p. 244; von der Leyen, 1909, p. 218.

26. Koegel, 1894, p. 313; Much, 1898, p. 69; Meyer, 1907, p. 252; von Schroeder, 1914, p. 512-514; Clemen, 1934, p. 70; Dumézil, 1959, p. 263.

27. Müller, 1844, p. 229; Siecke, 1909, p. 38 and 208.

28. La Cour, 1923, p. 61-18; Ohlmarks, 1937, p. 257ff. See also Nagy, 1990, p. 156.

29. Petersen, 1849, p. 247; Hellquist, 1891, p. 171; Meyer, 1889, p. 16 and 1891, p. 228.

30. Meyer, 1889, p. 20; Krohn, 1922, p. 134.

31. Falk, 1889, p. 48; Rosen, 1919, p. 64; Much, 1930, p. 63-67; Turville-Petre, 1964, p. 151; Sayers, 1993, p. 9.

32. Pering, 1941.

33. Rydberg, 1886, p. 445; Schröder, 1967, p. 1-41; Haudry, 2013 and 2016.

34. Pipping, 1925, p. 49 and 1928, p. 43; Ellis Davidson, 1969, p. 105; Dronke, 1992, p. 667 and 1997, p. 107; North, 1997, p. 284; Heizmann, 2009, p. 514; Tolley, 2009, p. 369; Cusack, 2011, p. 165.

35. Dumézil, 1973, p. 128.

36. Dumézil, 1973, p. 128.

37. De Vries, 1935 and 1955.

and sees Heimdallr as a complement to Þórr; while Þórr protects the world through physical battle, Heimdallr protects through his role as a guardian.[38] Allen places the Heimdallr within his ingenious pentadic theory, which is an expansion of Dumézil's three functions. According to Allen, the three Dumézilian functions are bracketed by "two halves of an 'Otherness' function".[39] He therefore reads the *Rígsþula's* account of Heimdallr/Rígr's creation of the three social classes as following a 1+3+1 pattern, where the three classes are enframed by Heimdallr as the original progenitor and Konungr ("King"), the child of the next generation.[40] In Allen's work, Heimdallr retains his function as a Dumézilian "framing god" and is therefore a parallel to Dyáus/ Bhīṣma. Cöllen, in his insightful monograph on Heimdallr, avoids identification of Heimdallr with any single phenomenon, but rather chooses to emphasize the god's role in upholding the cosmic and social order.[41] Lindow sees Heimdallr as a spatially and temporally liminal deity.[42] The research on Heimdallr to date has produced many intriguing theories as to the nature of this deity, but most of them tend to account for only some, rather than all, of the disparate characteristics ascribed to Heimdallr in the Norse texts.

*The Vedic Apā́m Nápāt*

An almost equally enigmatic deity is encountered in Vedic India. The obscure god Apā́m Nápāt, whose name means "Child of the Waters" (or possibly "descendant" or "grandson" of the waters) is described in some detail in *Ṛgveda* 2.35, a hymn devoted entirely to him, as well as in a few scattered verses elsewhere in the *Ṛgveda*.[43] In *Ṛgveda* 2.35.15, he is identified with the fire god Agní, although the two deities are also regarded as separate in other contexts.[44] Apā́m Nápāt is described as golden (*híraṇyavarṇa*) and bright, shining without fuel in the midst of the waters.[45] He is strongly associated with gold:

> Golden-formed, he has a golden appearance – the Child of the Waters – and he is also golden-hued,
> (coming) out of a golden womb when he sits down (on the ritual ground). The givers of gold give food to him.[46]

38. De Vries, 1955, p. 267.
39. Allen, 2007, p. 233.
40. Allen, 2007, p. 245-246.
41. Cöllen, 2015, p. 274.
42. Lindow, 2001, p. 170.
43. *Ṛgveda* 6.50.13; 7.35.13; 7.47.2; 10.30, and 10.92.13.
44. See for example *Ṛgveda* 7.35.13.
45. *Ṛgveda* 2.35.4; 10.30.4.
46. *Ṛgveda* 2.35.10, translation from Jamison and Brereton, 2014, p. 453.

Apā́m Nápāt is pure (śúci), and shining (*dīdivi*)[47] and surrounded by waters.[48] He is born to three goddesses[49] who are identified with the waters[50] and referred to as "maidens".[51] Apā́m Nápāt has created all beings (*viśvāni bhúvanā jajāna*).[52] He is compared to a tree, and all beings are his branches.[53] Some of his epithets are somewhat mysterious; Apā́m Nápāt is described as "the one who impels swift (horses)" (āśuhémā),[54] and his back is mentioned in *Ṛgveda* 2.35.12: "I groom his back; I seek to provide (him) with wood-shavings. I provide (him) with food; I extol (him) with verses.[55]

One of the difficulties is determining the precise nature of this Vedic deity is that Apā́m Nápāt is sometimes used as an epithet to describe other deities, such as Agní, and at other times the name of a deity that is separate from Agní. Jamison and Brereton observe that Apā́m Nápāt is "in the course of becoming an epithet to Agní" in the *Ṛgveda,* although he is not yet fully identified with the fire god in *Ṛgveda* 2.35.[56] Overall, Apā́m Nápāt appears to have originated as a separate deity, who over time became identified with the more popular fire god Agní and forgotten after the Vedic period. Apā́m Nápāt is also associated in the *Ṛgveda* with the enigmatic figure Ajá ékapād ("the one-legged goat").[57]

But what was the nature of the original Apā́m Nápāt? Older scholarship has identified Apā́m Nápāt with the sun,[58] lightning,[59] water,[60] Soma,[61] fire,[62] or the moon.[63] More recent scholars generally regard Apā́m Nápāt as representing a

47. *Ṛgveda* 2.35.3; 2.35.8.
48. *Ṛgveda* 2.35.3-4.
49. *Ṛgveda* 2.35.5.
50. *Ṛgveda* 2.35.7.
51. *Ṛgveda* 2.35.9; 2.35.14.
52. *Ṛgveda* 2.35.2.
53. *Ṛgveda* 2.35.8.
54. *Ṛgveda* 2.31.6; 2.35.1; 7.47.2.
55. Translation from Jamison and Brereton, 2014, p. 453.
56. Jamison and Brereton, 2014, p. 452.
57. *Ṛgveda* 7.35.13.
58. Müller, 1868, p. 82.
59. Böhtlingk and Roth, 1855, p. 275; Macdonell, 1917 (2015), p. 67; Ludwig, 1878, p. 324; Bergaigne, 1883, p. 327; Spiegel, 1887, p. 193; Fay, 1894, p. clxxii and 1896, p. 1-29; Magoun, 1898 and 1900; von Schroeder, 1916, p. 490-91; Keith, 1925, Vol. 1, p. 136; Widengren, 1938, p. 238; Devi, 1938, p. 88; Dange, 1970, p. 2.
60. Oldenberg, 1894, p. 118ff; Gray, 1900; Geldner, 1951, Vol. 1, p. 321n.; Dandekar, 1962; Boyce, 1975, p. 40-52. Boyce further identifies Apām Napāt with the Vedic god Varuṇa.
61. Bergaigne, 1878, p. 167; Hillebrandt, 1891, p. 365-380.
62. Bergaigne, 1878, p. 167; Bergaigne, 1883, p. 17-20 and 36-41.
63. Hillebrandt, 1891, p. 365-380; Hardy, 1893, p. 38ff.

form of "fire in water". [64] The idea of fire contained within water is a Proto-Indo-European mythic element, attested in Indian, Iranian, Celtic, and Italic sources.[65] Several scholars, including Dumézil,[66] Findly,[67] Puhvel,[68] and White[69] have drawn parallels between Apā́m Nápāt, the Irish Nechtan, and the Greek Poseidon, an idea discussed in more detail below. Apąm Napāt is also attested in Zoroastrian texts, and it is therefore helpful to compare these texts to the Vedic ones describing the same deity.

*Apąm Napāt in Iranian Texts*

The Vedic deity Apā́m Nápāt has a counterpart of the same name in ancient Iran, although the Iranian Apąm Nąpāt is an even less prominent deity in the Zoroastrian textual corpus than Apā́m Nápāt is in the Vedas. The Iranian Apąm Napāt is mentioned in a few verses in hymns addressed to other divinities, but no hymn is addressed to this deity alone. He is mentioned in passing in Yasna 1.5, Yasna 2.5, Yašt 5. 72, Yašt 8.4, Yašt 8.34, and Yašt 13.95, often alongside other deities. The most significant reference to Apąm Napāt in the Zoroastrian corpus is in the *Zamyād Yašt* (Yašt 19) of the Younger Avesta. Stanzas 51 and 52 of this Yašt describe *xᵛarənah*, a luminous glory, hidden in the waters, and Apąm Napāt is reaching for it:

> Then that Glory swelled forward into the Vourukaša Sea. Then Apąm Napāt of swift horses reached for it, and in doing so, Apąm Napāt of swift horses urgently wishes: "I want to gain hold of this Glory which is unappropriated, (lying) at the bottom of the abyssal sea, at the bottom of the deep lakes."
>
> The exalted Ahura, the chief, majestic Apąm Napāt of swift horses we worship, the virile one who is of benefit when called, who has created heroes, who has fashioned heroes, the Yazata who abides in the waters, whose ears listen most attentively when he is being worshipped.[70]

We should note here that while Humbach and Ichaporia render *yō nərāuš da□a yo nərāuš tataša* as "who has created heroes, who has fashioned heroes" in the translation given here, the Avestan text is perhaps better translated as "who has created men, who has fashioned men", as most other translators interpret

64. Dumézil, 1973, p. 21ff; Findly, 1979; Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015; Brereton and Jamison, 2020, p. 75.
65. Mallory and Adams, 2006, p. 438.
66. Dumézil, 1973 (1981), p. 21-89.
67. Findly, 1979.
68. Puhvel, 1987.
69. White, 2017, p. 690-692.
70. Translation from Humbach and Ichaporia, 1998, p. 131.

this phrase.[71] If Apąm Napāt is indeed described as the creator of humans here, this would parallel the Vedic verse *Ṛgveda* 2.35.2: *apā́ṃ* nápād asuríasya mahn*ā́ viśvāni aryó bhúvanā jajāna* ("The Child of the Waters, our compatriot, with the greatness of his lordly power, begat all beings").[72]

It is noteworthy in this passage from the *Zamyād Yašt* that Apąm Napāt is described as "he of the swift horses" (*auruuat.aspō*),[73] which parallels the epithet āśuhémā applied to the Vedic Apā́ṃ Nápāt. The Iranian Apąm Napāt is further one "whose ears listen most attentively",[74] which is an intriguing parallel to the Norse Heimdallr, who is also known for his extraordinary hearing.[75] The phrase "the exalted Ahura" (*bərəzantəm ahurəm*)[76] recalles the Vedic *asura* ("lord") applied to Apā́ṃ Nápāt in *Ṛgveda* 2.35.2.

The reference to the heavenly sea Vourukaša in Yašt 19.51 is also worth noting here, as this provides an indirect reference to a world tree and therefore a possible parallel to Heimdallr as well. According to Yašt 15.19, the Višpataokhma, the "tree of all seeds", grows in the middle of the sea of Vourukaša, a tree "whereon grow the seeds of [...] plants of every kind by hundreds, by thousands, by hundreds of thousands."[77] The enigmatic life-giving plant/tree called *Gōkarēn* ("Ox-Horn"), also known as White Haoma, also grows in this sea,[78] and the Gōkarēn and the Tree of All Seeds are sometimes confused with each other.[79] There is also a similar plant that grows in the center of the world, a "moist and milky" plant without twigs or bark or thorn, which is simply referred to as "the plant" (*urvar*), which contains in its nature the power of all plants.[80]

It is noteworthy that while the Vedic Apā́ṃ Nápāt himself seems to represent fire in water, his Iranian counterpart is not the fiery substance itself, but rather its rightful keeper.[81] The glory, *x$^{v}$arənah*, which Apąm Napāt retrieves from the waters has political as well as religious implications in Avestan mythology and

71. Darmesteter, 1882, p. 298-299; Boyce, 1975, p. 42; Hintze, 1994, p. 27.

72. Translation from Jamison and Brereton, 2014, p. 452.

73. *Yašt* 19.51, cp. *Yasna* 2.5 and *Yašt* 5.72.

74. *Yašt* 19.52.

75. *Gylfaginning* 27.

76. *Yašt* 19.52. Apām Napāt is also called *ahura* in *Yasna* 1.5., 2.5, and *Yašt* 5.72.

77. *Vendidād* 5.13, translation from Darmesteter, 1880, p. 54. See also Windischmann, 1883, p. 165; Boyce, 1975, p. 137; Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015, p. 35; and Agostini and Thrope, 2020, p. 48.

78. *Bundahišn* 6; Keith, 1917, p. 281; Windischmann, 1883, p. 169; Agostini and Thrope, 2020, p. 48.

79. Boyce, 1975, p. 138.

80. Boyce, 1975, p. 137.

81. Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015, p. 2.

can be identified as the power through which legitimate kings rule.[82] Humbach and Ichaporia describe the *xᵛarənah* as a "half-personified light phenomenon of heavenly origin".[83] The *Zamyād Yašt* is in large part devoted to *xᵛarənah* itself and the various divine and human actors who owned or wanted to own the *xᵛarənah.*[84] Hintze differentiates between two types of *xᵛarənah,* the one belonging to the Kauui (Keyanid) dynasty, which was passed down from Ahura Mazdā and lost by Yima when he told a lie, and the "gleaming *xᵛarənah*", which is not owned but desired by humans and gods.[85] This latter is the *xᵛarənah* which Apąm Napāt reaches for in 19.51-52.[86] But the *xᵛarənah* Apąm Napāt retrieves is also closely associated with kingship and legitimate rule, as well as with the significant Avestan concept of *aša*, truth or order, as opposed to *drug,* deceit and lies.[87] Olga Davidson has shown that Apām Napāt and Fraŋrasiian's rivalry over the *xᵛarənah* in the Avesta is echoed in the enmity of the hero Rostam and the Turanian Afrāsiyāb in the *Šāhnāmeh.*[88] Rostam, like Apām Napāt, is a guardian of *farr,* the classical Persian equivalent of *xᵛarənah.*[89] The *Šāhnāmeh* further describes the *farr/xᵛarənah* taking the form of a ram, which is an intriguing parallel to Heimdallr's association with a ram.[90]

In the later Pahlavi texts, Apąm Napāt is described as a water god watching over *xwarrah,* the Pahlavi equivalent of *xᵛarənah* (*Bundahišn* 26.91). In Pahlavi, the deity is usually referred to as Būrj, a name derived from his Avestan epithet *bərəzant* ("the high").

Based on the many passages describing his associations with water and his associations with water deities such as the rain god Tištrya, most Iranists regard the Iranian Apąm Napāt as a water god,[91] although comparative evidence suggests that he, like his Vedic counterpart, was originally associated with fire in water.

*Heimdallr and Apām Napāt: A Comparison*

As we have seen above, Heimdallr and Apām Napāt – both the Vedic and the Iranian versions - have some intriguing similarities. Both deities are born to multiple mothers who appear to represent water or waves, both are regarded

82. Boyce, 1986.

83. Humbach and Ichaporia, 1998, p. 14.

84. Hintze, 1994, p. 10-11.

85. Hintze, 1994, p. 11.

86. Hintze, 1994, p. 11.

87. *Yašt* 19: 30-34.

88. Davidson, 1985, p. 93, 2000, p. 71-73, 2013, p. 104. See also Nagy, 1990, p. 191, fn. 69.

89. Davidson, 1985, p. 88.

90. Mohl, 1876-1878, vol. 5, p. 288-292, cited from Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015, p. 17. Unfortunately, neither the Moscow edition by Bertels nor the Khalegi-Motlagh edition of this text were available to me at this time.

91. See Windischmann, 1883, p. 179ff; Gray, 1900; Boyce, 1975, p. 40ff.

as the creators of all human beings, both are associated with a cosmic life-giving tree and its branches, and both are characterized by their brightness and association with gold, rams, and horses.[92] Although Apām Napāt is more explicitly associated with fire than Heimdallr, the notion of a fiery "child of the waters" is also found in Old Norse literature; the 9th century *Ynglingatal* uses the kenning *sævar niðr*, "offspring of the sea" to describe fire,[93] and the necklace Brísingamen ("fire necklace"), which Heimdall retrieves, is also connected with fire. In the following, we will examine these points of comparison between Apām Napāt and Heimdallr in some more detail.

*Apām Napāt and Heimdallr as Offspring of Divine Waters*

The name of the Vedic and Iranian deity means "Child of the Waters". It is not entirely clear from the Vedic or Iranian texts how many maternal water figures are involved, except that the feminine genitive plural form indicates that there are three or more female "waters". *Ṛgveda* 2.35. 5 refers to three goddesses (*tisró devī́ḥ)*, which may suggest that Apām Napāt is born to three watery mothers, or alternatively, as Macdonell suggests, that his mothers are the collective waters of the three worlds.[94] The association between the number of mothers and the number of worlds is particularly interesting, since the Norse Heimdallr in born to nine mothers, a number that corresponds to the nine worlds of Norse myth.

The nine mothers of Heimdallr are often interpreted as the waves of the sea,[95] based on Snorri's assertion in *Skáldskaparmál* that the sea god Ægir and his wife Rán have nine daughters.[96] Following Pipping, Heimdallr's nine mothers have also been interpreted as the roots of the world tree, representing the nine worlds of the Norse cosmos.[97] Cöllen argues, however, that it makes no sense to assume that the nine mothers would be roots of the world tree since they are identified with named giantesses in the *Hyndluljóð*.[98] He therefore finds it natural to identify the nine mothers of Heimdallr with the nine daughters of the sea god Ægir, who are explicitly identified as giantesses and as personifications

92. Since Heimdallr is the first to reach Freya's necklace Brísingamen, it is possible that the *Skáldskaparmál* (15) implies that Heimdallr's horse is unusually swift, which would be a parallel to the epithet "having swift horses" that is associated with the Indian and Iranian Apām Napāt. I am grateful to Guillaume Oudaer for this suggestion.

93. Krause 1930: 17-19, Schröder 1967: 3. Sterckx and Oudaer draw an etymological connection between *niðr* and (Apām) Napāt, Neptune, and Nechtan (2014-2015, p. 3).

94. Macdonell, 1917 (2015), p. 71.

95. Müller, 1844; Pering, 1941, p. 166-170; Dumézil, 1973, p. 134-135.

96. *Skáldskaparmál* 41.

97. Pipping, 1925, p. 45-49; Dronke, 1992, p. 67 and 1997, p. 31ff.

98. Cöllen, 2015, p. 138, *Hyndluljóð* 37 gives the names of these giant maidens as Gjálp, Greip, Eistla, Eyrgjafa, Úlfrún, Angeya, Imdr, Atla, and Járnsaxa.

of the waves of the sea.[99] According to Cöllen, the identification of Heimdallr's mothers with the waves underscores his nature as a primordial deity, not born from other gods, but from the elements themselves.[100] Heimdallr's nine mothers are explicitly said to be maidens (*meyiar*), [101] just like the watery mothers that give birth to the Vedic Apā́m Nápāt. For our purposes, it is intriguing to note that the mothers, in both the Norse and Indian/Iranian texts, are associated with water, and that their number seems to correspond to the number of worlds in that particular mythology. We should also note that Ægir may come from an Indo-European root *$*h_2ep$-, from which Sanskrit áp (water) is also derived.[102] Since Heimdallr is born to Ægir's daughters, he is also, in one sense, the "descendant" or "grandson" of the waters, like Apā́m Nápāt.

One curious epithet of the waters in the Vedic hymn to Apā́m Nápāt is ásmerā ("unsmiling", 2.35.4). Many scholars have struggled to make sense of the unsmiling waters; both Macdonnell and Doniger suggest that the waters are merely taking their task of caring for the child very seriously, while Maurer proposes that the waters don't smile because they are shy.[103] Jamison writes in her commentary on the hapax legomenon ásmerā: "But I somehow think that this hapax is expressing something more particular, though I cannot define it more closely. It may be naturalistic: the circling waters perhaps whirl around without foam, which might be thought of as smiles. Or it may be meant to distinguish these attentive females from other natural phenomena: lightning, especially, is characterized by smiling (see I.168.8) and laughing, and Uṣas also smiles."[104] Here, it may be useful to note the parallel to the trope of the "sorrowful" wave-maidens in Old Norse literature. The 13th century *Hervarar Saga* contains a number of riddles, including four that have "waves" at their answers. The waves are always depicted as women, and identified with the daughters of the sea god Ægir.[105] The daughters of Ægir are elsewhere said to be nine in number, just like Heimdallr's mothers.[106] These wave-maidens are described as *ganga syrgjandi* ("going sorrowfully").[107] While the Norse riddles about the wave-maidens imply that their tendency to weep may be a result of not having husbands, the Vedic waters that surround Apā́m Nápāt have no particular reason for the unsmiling mood. It is possible that the attribution of

99. Cöllen, 2015, p. 140. Cf. Ellis Davidson, 1969, p. 105.
100. Cöllen, 2015, p. 148.
101. *Hyndluljóð* 35.
102. Kroonen, 2013, p. 7.
103. Macdonell, 1917, p. 70; Doniger renders ásmerā as "solemnly" (1981, p. 105).
104. Jamison: http://rigvedacommentary.alc.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/II-7-15-20.pdf
105. Burrows, 2013, p. 199.
106. *Skáldskaparmál* 41.
107. *Hervarar Saga* 68; Burrows, 2013, p. 198.

sorrowfulness to the wave maidens that give birth to a child is a remnant of an old Indo-European proto-myth.

*Apām Napāt and Heimdallr as Creators of All Beings*

According to *Ṛgveda* 2.35. 2, Apām Napāt "created all beings". *Ṛgveda* 2.35. 8 further suggests that not just humans, but other living beings, such as animals and plants originate from Apām Napāt:

> As offshoots of him, other beings and plants propagate themselves through offspring (*vayā id anyā bhuvanāni asya/pra jāyante vīrudhaś ca prajābhiḥ*).

The Norse Heimdallr is likewise a creator god. Heimdallr is the father of humanity and the progenitor of the various human social classes.[108] The poem *Rígsþula* describes how the god Rígr fathers humans, and the prose introduction to the text identifies this otherwise unknown deity with Heimdallr.[109] The *Rígsþula* details how Rígr visits a human couple, Ár and Edda ("great-grandfather" and "great-grandmother") and makes Edda pregnant. She gives birth to a son called Þræll (thrall). Rígr then visits Afi and Amma ("grandfather" and "grandmother"), and Amma gives birth to Rígr's son Karl ("farmer, freeman"). Finally, Rígr visits Faðir and Móðir ("father" and "mother"), and Móðir gives birth to his son Jarl ("earl"). Eventually, Jarl becomes the father of Kon the Young (*Kon Ungr)* whose name signifies that he is to become a king (*konungr*).[110] Significantly, the name Rígr is associated with the Old Irish royal title *rí* ("king", *ríg* in the oblique case),[111] which also resonates with the theme of royalty and succession found in the *Zamyād Yašt.*

*Apām Napāt, Heimdallr, and the World Tree*

The association of Apām Napāt with a tree whose branches are all beings is particularly interesting and suggests that the deity may be connected to a world tree of sorts, comparable to the Norse Yggdrasill. But how can a fiery substance in the water be associated with a tree? In Indian context, this makes perfect sense: The inverted Aśvattha tree, whose roots are above and branches below, is closely associated with the fire sticks that are used to produce the ritual fire.[112] The Aśvattha tree is also associated with gold, just like Apām

108. *Vǫluspá* 1 and *Hyndluljóð* 40.

109. It is possible that this passage is a later addition to the verse text, added because the scribe was familiar with Heimdallr as the father of humanity from the beginning of *Vǫluspá*, see Cöllen, 2015, p. 47.

110. *Rígsþula* 32.

111. Allen, 2007, p. 234; Cöllen, 2015, p. 71.

112. *Atharvaveda* 6.11.1.

Napāt himself.[113] The image of an upside-down tree with its roots in heaven is already mentioned in *Ṛgveda* 1.24.7:

> In (the airy realm) without a base, king Varuṇa of purified skill firmly holds the crest of the (nyāgrodha) tree on high.
> They [=its trunks] reach downward, their base above. They should be set down as beacons within us.[114]

The tree rooted in heaven (often identified as an Aśvattha tree) becomes an important symbol for the highest reality in the *Bhagavadgītā* and the Upaniṣads.[115] This cosmic tree with its roots in heaven and the branches below in this world appears to be an inverted world tree, and several scholars have compared the Indian Aśvattha tree to the Norse tree Yggdrasill.[116] Apām Napāt's association with a tree whose branches are all beings is therefore particularly interesting. We should note that the Norse world tree Yggdrasill, like the Vedic Apām Napāt, is connected with women, wells and the waters of multiple worlds; Yggdrasill has three roots: one among the æsir, one among the giants, and one over Niflheim. Under the root that is among the æsir is the Well of Urd, one of the three Norns that weave the fate of men. Under the root among the giants is another well, Mimir's Well, where Odin has to give up one of his eyes for wisdom. Both the Aśvattha tree and Yggdrasill are further associated with horses. The name of the Aśvattha tree (*ficus religiosa*) contains the elements *aśva* ("horse") and *sthā* ("to stand") and is usually interpreted as a "tree under which horses stand".[117] The Norse name *Yggdrasill* means "the horse of Ygg ("the terrible")", usually taken as a reference to the tree as "Odin's horse", upon which he "rides" as he hangs on the world tree.
As noted previously, Heimdallr is also closely connected with the world tree, under which his hearing is hidden.[118] Several scholars have interpreted Heimdallr himself as a representation of the world tree.[119]

*The Glory in the Waters and the Sea-Kidney*

While the Iranian Apām Napāt is associated with retrieving an abstract "glory" from the waters, the Norse deity Heimdallr is the retriever of a more tangible

113. *Atharvaveda* 19.19.14-16, Paippalāda recension only.
114. Translation from Jamison and Brereton, 2014, p. 120.
115. See *Bhagavadgītā* 15.1-3, *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 6.1, *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 3.9c.
116. See for example Hall, 2019, p. 36ff.
117. See for example Monier Williams, 1899, p. 115. For more on the equine associations of the World Tree, see Kovtun, 2012, p. 101.
118. *Vǫluspá* 27.
119. Pipping, 1925, p. 49 and 1928, p. 43, Ellis Davidson, 1969, p. 105; Dronke, 1992, p. 667 and 1997, p. 107; North 1997, p. 284; Heizmann, 2009, p. 514; Tolley, 2009, p. 369; Cusack, 2011, p. 165. See also the discussion in Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015, p. 35.

shining object, Freya's necklace/torc Brísingamen. Like the Iranian *xᵛarənah,* the Brísingamen is associated with fire (*brísingr*). This necklace is also mentioned in *Beowulf* 1197-1201 (*Brosinga mene*), where it is not associated with Freya, but rather with kingship (as the Iranian *xᵛarənah*). In *Beowulf,* the warrior Háma (Heime in Old Norse) steals the necklace from the Gothic king Eormanaric. The Norse *Þiðreks saga* contains a variant of this story; the Norse text also connects Háma/Heime with the Gothic king, and states that the warrior Heime takes sides against the king Ermanaric and robs him (of a sword, not a necklace) and has to flee the kingdom.[120] It is tempting to speculate that the name Háma/Heime associated with the person taking a precious object from the king may be an echo of the myth of Heimdallr retrieving the Brísingamen. In the second stanza of Úlfr Uggason›s *Húsdrápa* (10th century), Heimdallr is associated with an object referred to as a "beautiful sea-kidney" (*hafnýra fǫgru*), usually interpreted as a kenning for a stone or jewel and identified with the Brísingamen.[121] For our purposes, it is particularly interesting, if this identification is taken as valid, that the Brísingamen is associated both with fire and sea and possibly a bright "treasure" in the waters.

The Iranian *xᵛarənah* is like the Brísingamen an object associated with royal power and contested ownership. In the *Zamyād Yašt*, the *xᵛarənah* runs away from the king Yima when he is lies and is therefore no longer worthy, and hides in the waters of the Vourukaša Sea, where Apām Napāt retrieves it and tells all mortals to strive for the *xᵛarənah* as well, as a source of abundance and strength.[122] But when the Turanian Fraŋrasiian attempts to reach the *xᵛarənah,* he fails to do so, and the waters retract from him.[123] Apām Napāt and Fraŋrasiian's rivalry over the *xᵛarənah* is an interesting parallel to the rivalry of Heimdallr and Loki, a worthy and an unworthy contestant, over the Brísingamen.

But what about the Vedic Apā́m Nápāt? There is no similar "treasure" or "glory" to be retrieved from the waters in the Vedic texts that describe this deity; rather, Apā́m Nápāt *himself* is the fiery glory hidden in the waters:

---

120. *Þiðreks saga* 146-147.

121. The word *hafnýra* ("sea kidney") is only attested in this passage, and its meaning is debated. Mogk, 1880, p. 331; Ohlmarks, 1937, p. 124; Pering, 1941, p. 21; and Schier, 1976b, p. 583 see it as a stone. But *hafnýra* could also refer to a rock in the sea, see Schier, 1976a, p. 583-384; and Marold, 2000a, p. 296-297; and Marold, 2000b, p. 284. De Vries interprets *hafnýra* as amber (1933, p. 129), as does Sayers (1993, p. 7). But since Snorri himself assumes that *hafnýra* refers to Brísingamen here, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the necklace is indeed meant. Heizmann (2009, p. 512-521), for example, assumes that the *hafnýra* is Brísingamen, which he associates with birth and regeneration.

122. *Yašt* 19:30-34.

123. *Yašt* 19:56.

> With his gleaming, dexterous (flames) he shines richly for us, (though) without fuel, with his garment of ghee, in the waters.[124]

The identification of the Vedic Apā́m Nápāt with the fire/light/object in the waters rather than its retriever makes sense in the ritual context of the *Ṛgveda*, where the Child of the Waters is eventually identified with Agní, the sacrificial fire.

*The Back of Apām Napāt and Heimdallr*

Another curious parallel between the Vedic Apā́m Nápāt and Heimdallr is the mention of each mythological figure's back in a context that suggests that their backs have been soiled and must be made clean. The back of Apā́m Nápāt is mentioned in *Ṛgveda* 2.35.12: "I rub his back bright." This enigmatic phrase may be compared to an equally puzzling statement made about Heimdallr's back in the *Lokasenna* 48*:*

> þér var í árdaga
> *it lióta líf um lagit:*
> *aurgo baki*
> þú munt æ vera
> *ok vaka vörðr goða*
>
> For you in ancient days
> was an ugly life ordained.
> You shall always have
> a muddy back
> and keep watch as the guardian of the gods.

The Old Norse hapax legomenon *aurgo* ("muddy?") has been the subject of much speculation. Dronke translates *aurgo baki* as "with muck on your backside".[125] Larrington, similarly, translates "a mucky back", but both authors note that the muck here is likely associated with the mysterious white loam (*aurr*) that nourishes Yggdrasill, and that sitting under the world tree and keeping watch likely causes Heimdallr to be moistened by this loam.[126] The rubbing of Apām Napāt's back, however, is likely connected to his almost-identity with the Vedic fire god Agní, and the production of fire through rubbing fire-sticks together. The *aurr* may here be compared to the melted butter in which Apām Napāt is clothed,[127] or to *soma.*[128]

124. *Ṛigveda* 2.35.3; Jamison and Brereton, 2014, p. 453,

125. Dronke, 1997, p. 343.

126. Larrington, 1996, p. 295, n. 48; and Dronke, 1997, p. 368.

127. *Ṛgveda* 2.35.4.

128. Dumont (1992, p. 323) argues that *aurr* must be understood as the sugary substance exuded by many species of ash trees, a substance often associated with honey. He proposes that the Vedic *soma* may represent a "confused memory of ash trees, which do not grow on the subcontinent".

*Association with Rams*

Heimdallr is closely associated with rams. Among the names given to the god are *Hallinskiði* ("with curved horns"?) and *Gullintanni* ("golden-toothed"),[129] both of which are synonyms for rams, the latter because the teeth of old rams assume a golden hue.[130] *Heimdali,* a word that seems to be derived from the name of the deity, is listed as a rare word for "ram" in the *Skáldskaparmál.*[131] Heimdallr's horn, the *Gjallarhorn,* also evokes the horn of a ram.[132]

Similarly, Apā́m Nápāt is also associated with a ram, the mysterious figure Ajá ékapād ("the one-legged goat").[133] The goat is identified with the sun in ancient Indian texts such as the *Nirukta* and the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, and Sterckx and Oudaer therefore interpret the goat as a symbol of the celestial fire and closely associated with Apā́m Nápāt.[134]

Based on these comparisons, I argue that we may reconstruct an Indo-European proto-myth that involves a divine child born to several mothers who represent the waters of multiple worlds. This divine child is associated with a world tree, horses, rams, the creation of life, and a powerful fiery substance contained within the waters. This reconstruction is further confirmed when we look at the Celtic and Greek/Roman parallels, where we can see further points of similarity to both Heimdallr and Apām Napāt.

*Apām Napāt, Neptune, Poseidon, Proteus, Nechtan, Morann, and Heimdallr*

It has long been suggested that there are parallels between the Indian/Iranian deity Apām Napāt, the Greek Poseidon, and the Roman Neptune.[135] Girard de Rialle sees Apām Napāt both as fire and as a creative force contained within the waters.[136] He compares Apām Napāt to Poseidon and Neptune, and compares the nymphs surrounding the Greco-Roman god of the sea to the female waters

129. *Gylfaginning* 27.

130. Dumézil, 1959, p. 272; Sayers, 1993, p. 9.

131. *Skáldskaparmál* 507.

132. Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015, p. 33. While "Gjallarhorn" is usually interpreted as "the hollering horn", perhaps as a reference to the loud noise when the horn announces Ragnarök, Lincoln derives Gjallarhorn from the river Gjöll, one of the rivers of the Otherworld in Norse mythology (Lincoln, 1982, p. 26). If this is correct, the Gjallarhorn must be understood as a drinking horn, rather than an instrument.

133. *Ṛgveda* 7.35.13.

134. *Nirukta* 12.29, *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 11.1.2.8; Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015, p. 38. Sterckx and Oudaer further argue that the goat associated with Heimdallr and Apā́m Nápāt represents the *axis mundi.*

135. Girard de Rialle, 1869, p. 49ff.; and Windischmann, 1883, p. 186.

136. Girard de Rialle, 1869, p. 50-51.

around Apām Napāt.[137] Windischmann likewise compares the water nymphs surrounding Poseidon with the female waters surrounding the Vedic Apā́m Nápāt [138] He further associates the name Neptune etymologically with Apąm Napāt.[139]

Dumézil, in his study "La saison des rivières" in the third volume of *Mythe et épopée,* compares the Indo-Iranian Apām Napāt to the Irish Nechtan and the Roman Neptūnus and proposes that the Vedic, Iranian, Irish, and Roman materials all reflect an original Indo-European proto-myth about fire in water.[140] The Irish Nechtan is one of the legendary Tuatha Dē Danann, and possesses a secret well that only he and his three cup bearers can approach. Nechtan's wife Bóand approaches the well following her adulterous affair with the Dagda, and three waves from the well sever her thigh, her hand, and her eye. She flees the waters, which keep pursuing her, and eventually she drowns and gives her name to the river Boyne. [141] The notion that only a worthy person may approach the sacred water has a parallel in the Avesta; the Turanian Franrasyan is unable to retrieve the *xᵛarənah* from the waters due to his status as a foreigner.[142] Dumézil proposes that the Irish name Nechtan, the Indo-Iranian Napāt, and the Latin Neptūnus may all go back to a Proto-Indo-European **Nept-o-no-s*.[143] Dumézil further connects the account of the overflowing of Lake Alban found in Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Cicero, Valerius Maximus, Zonaras and other sources with the Irish and Iranian myths of the fiery glory hidden in the water and the punishment of those who approach without being worthy.[144]

Littleton compares both the Indo-Iranian Apām Napāt and the Irish Nechtan to Poseidon, citing a myth about the origin of the Lerna river from Apollodoros and Hygnius.[145] The young woman Amymone is accosted by a satyr and calls upon Poseidon for help. Poseidon throws his trident at the satyr, who runs away. The trident strikes a stone, and when Amymone pulls the trident out again, three springs appear and run together to form the Lerna river. Littleton finds that Poseidon's role as a guardian of the waters as well as a guardian of moral behavior is

137. Girard de Rialle, 1869, p. 56-57.

138. Windischmann, 1883, p. 186.

139. Windischmann, 1883, p. 186.

140. Dumézil, 1973, p. 21-89.

141. Stokes, 1894, p. 315; Dumézil, 1973, p. 27; Ford, 1974, p. 69; Puhvel, 1987, p. 279.

142. Dumézil, 1973, p. 31-34; Puhvel, 1987, p. 278.

143. Dumézil, 1973, p. 34-38. Mallory and Adams agree that it is possible to reconstruct a Proto-Indo-European **neptonos* or **$h_2$epōm nepōts,* "grandson/nephew of the waters" (Mallory and Adams, 2006, p. 438).

144. Dumézil, 1973, p. 39-62.

145. Apollodoros 11.14; Hygnius *Fabulae* 169; Littleton, 1973.

comparable to the roles of both Apām Napāt and Nechtan.[146] He further associates the trident with fire, sun, and lightning and interpret it as an embodiment of fire in water.[147] Littleton interprets the name Poseidon etymologically as "husband of the waters", which is a loose parallel to the "child of the waters".[148]

Louden sees some parallels between Bacchylides' description of Theseus' dive and motifs associated with the Indo-Iranian Apām Napāt. Theseus has to demonstrate that he is Poseidon's son by retrieving a golden ring King Minos throws into the sea. According to Louden, Theseus represents legitimate rule, while Minos is the illegitimate usurper.[149] Louden sees the golden ring that must be retrieved from the water as a counterpart to the Iranian *xᵛarənah,* and the Nereids as representations of the female waters in the Vedic hymn to Apām Napāt.[150] Here, there is still a connection to Poseidon, although an indirect one through his son Theseus.

Sterckx and Oudaer have also noted several parallels between the Greek Poseidon, Apām Napāt and Nechtan, including association with horses, water, and ordeals.[151] They point out that Poseidon is the father of the ram that becomes the Golden Fleece, which is a further parallel between the Greek deity and his Indian and Iranian counterparts.[152]

Another possible parallel to Apām Napāt in Greek mythology has been noted by Bader, who argues that Proteus also represents fire in water.[153] Bader also points out that the hapax *νέποδες καλῆς Ἁλοσύδνης* ("the descendants of the beautiful seas") in *Odyssey* 4.404, used as an epithet for the seals of Proteus, is a striking parallel to Apām Napāt.[154]

In addition to the parallels noted by Dumézil and others, there are other Celtic parallels to both Heimdallr and Apā́m Nápāt. Irish mythology also knows "nine waves" comparable to Heimdallr's nine wave-mothers; in Irish myth, the Otherworld is said to be located "beyond the ninth wave".[155]

---

146. Littleton, 1973, p. 428.

147. Littleton, 1973, p. 430.

148. Littletton, 1973, p. 435.

149. Louden, 1999, p. 63.

150. Louden, 1999, p. 64.

151. Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015, p. 6-7.

152. Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015, p. 28.

153. Bader, 2004, p. 1.

154. Bader, 2004, p. 3; see also West, 2007, p. 271; and Haudry, 2016, p. 136. The reference to seals here is particularly intriguing since the Norse Heimdallr is said to have transformed into a seal in order to contend with Loki over the "sea kidney" (*Skaldskaparmál* 15). Bader (2004, p. 13) further connects the Greek φώκη ("seal") to the verb *vi-bhā* ("to shine") used to describe the activity of Apā́m Nápāt in *Ṛgveda* 2.35.8, but this is not a generally accepted etymology of φώκη. I am grateful to John McDonald for bringing Bader's work to my attention.

155. Flanagan *et al.*, 1998, p. 132. There may be a parallel to the child born of the waves in the Arthurian legends. In Tennyson's retelling, in *Idylls of the King: The*

The ninth wave is supposed to have particularly shining foam, which is compared to the beauty of women. In one of Cynddelw Bryddydd Mawr's poems, for example, Efa, the daughter of Madog ab Maredudd is compared to the "color of the beautiful foam at the crest of the ninth wave".[156] The connection between the ninth wave and women recalls Heimdallr's nine wave-mothers.

In Ireland, the ninth wave is associated with the Otherworld in general, but this association can also be a threat to humans. Ó hÓgáin notes that the Irish until recently still believed that the fairies of the Otherworld move in the waves of the sea, and that the ninth wave, called *tonn báithe,* "the drowning wave", was particularly dangerous.[157]

In the 14th century Welsh *Book of Taliesin,* the poet claims to have been born, in a fashion similar to Heimdallr, "by the water of the ninth wave".[158] In Taliesin's poems, the Otherworld is further referred to as "a castle on the ninth wave".[159] There is also a parallel in Breton folk culture, where the expression "the ninth wave" (*nogejoù*) designates something strange and unexpected.[160]

Another Celtic parallel to the child born to nine waves is the mythic Irish judge Morann, whose father wanted to drown him at birth because he was born with

---

*Coming of King Arthur,* the infant Arthur is born "of the ninth wave", and also, like Apām Napāt, associated with fire: "Wave after wave, each mightier than the last/ Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep/And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged/ Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame/And down the wave and in the flame was borne/A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,/Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried "The King!/Here is an heir for Uther!" And the fringe/Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,/Lashed at the wizard as he spake the word,/And all at once all round him rose in fire./So that the child and he were clothed in fire." There does not seem to be an antecedent for this idea of the infant Arthur born of the ninth wave in any of the known Arthurian sources Tennyson used for his poem, however, and it is unclear what sources, if any, Tennyson may have drawn on for this description of the fiery Arthur born from the waves. One possible source is the medieval Welsh poem *Oianau Myrddin,* which describes Merlin as an incarnation of Taliesin and where Merlin declares: "I will prophecy before the ninth wave" (Stanza 14, Jarman and Jones, 1982, p. 29).

There is a reference to Arthur being born of a wave in Verney 1876: 401, but the author does not cite her source, except to reference "his [Arthur's] new history", which may simply refer back to Tennyson's poem. There is also some Welsh evidence that the "ninth wave" was known as a "ram", an animal closely associated with Heimdallr, Sayers (1993, P. 3). See also Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015, p. 25.

156. Jones and Owen, 1992, p. 65; Sterckx, 2019, p. 12.

157. Ó hÓgáin, 2002, p. 39-50; Sterckx, 2019, p. 16-17.

158. From the poem *Cad Goddeu* ("Battle of Trees") from *The Book of Taliesin,* Skene, 1868, p. 28.

159. Evans, 1910, p. 43; Sterckx, 2019, p. 12.

160. Sterckx, 2019, p. 9.

a caul on his head, as were his two brothers before him. Morann's mother had a vision of a fairy who told her to bring the child to the ocean and allow nine waves to wash over him. The ninth wave removed the caul, which was then transformed into a gold collar or torc around the baby's neck, a torc that had the power to judge whether someone spoke the truth.[161] While Morann is not born of the nine waves in a literal sense, his ability to serve as a supernatural arbiter of truth arises from his "rebirth" from the waves. We should note that the Vedic Apā́m Nápāt is also closely associated with truth,[162] as is the *xᵛarənah* that the Iranian Apąm Napāt protects.[163] Heimdallr is not as explicitly linked to truths and oaths, although the hapax legomenon *vári* in *Húsdrápa* 2, usually rendered as "guardian", has also been interpreted as "Schwurgenosse" ("oath partner").[164] Morann's gold torc may further have a parallel in the Norse Brísingamen, the necklace retrieved by Heimdallr. Intriguingly, Morann is, like Heimdallr, associated with horses; his epithet Echdonn means "Dark Horse".[165] Morann is also associated with kingship and rightful rule. Even though he himself is the son of the usurper Cairbre Cinncait, he himself becomes the guardian of the rightful royal lineage. After his father's death, he does not attempt to claim the throne for himself, but rather sends for the sole survivor among the noblemen killed by his father, Fearadhach Feonn.[166] Morann himself gives the new king advice on how to rule well, advice that is comparable to that which *Rígr/Heimdallr* gives to Konungr in the *Rígsþula.*[167]

Dumézil's findings are later summarized by Puhvel and Briquel.[168] Puhvel proposes that the Indo-European proto-myth of a deity hoarding a fiery power immersed in a body of water, a power that punishes those who approach it without being worthy, may be inspired by natural oil seepage and oil flares on the shores of the Caspian Sea.[169] Ford, however, sees this power as more abstract and identifies the fiery substance sought in the water in the Irish myth as "a brightly burning essence" sought by poets in particular, the *imbas forosnai.*[170] He points out that both the Irish and the Iranian myth feature an unworthy person who attempts to capture this essence from the waters (Bóand, the wife

161. Hopkins, 1992, p. 82. See discussion in Sterckx, 2019, p. 40-42.

162. *Ṛgveda* 2.35.6.

163. *Yašt* 19.35.

164. Marold, 2000, p. 283.

165. Wagner, 1981, p. 19.

166. Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 360-361.

167. I am grateful to Guillaume Oudaer for this insight.

168. Puhvel, 1987, p. 277-283; and Briquel, 2004. See also Sayers, 1983; and Haudry, 2013, p. 11.

169. Puhvel, 1987, p. 279.

170. Ford, 1974, p. 68; see also McDonald, 2015, p. 31.

of Nechtan in the Irish tale and the Turanian Frangrasyan in the Iranian one).[171] Bóand is punished by losing her thigh, her hand, and an eye.[172] Other scholars have added to the parallels discussed by Dumézil and Ford. In his analysis of the Irish myth, Sayers compares Nechtan to the Celtic water-horse, *ech uisce*[173] and the Scandinavian *nykkr* and English *nixie,* all likely derived from a *PIE root *neig*ʷ- "to wash, to purify", which Sayers also speculates is the origin of the name Nechtan.[174] If this alternative etymology were to be accepted, it would weaken Nechtan's linguistic connection with Apām Napāt, but strengthen the thematic connection through the association of a horse with the fiery deity in the water. McDonald proposes an intriguing connection between the Irish and Vedic myths based on the etymology of Bóand, the first element of which means "cow". He points to the prevalence of both bovine and milk imagery in the Vedic hymn to Apām Napāt. [175]

White follows Dumézil, Puhvel, and Ford in assuming that there must have existed an Indo-European proto-myth involving fire in water, and proposes that this proto-myth later was reinterpreted as an allegory for the extraction of mercury in alchemical Sanskrit sources from the thirteenth century onwards.[176] White summarizes the proto-myth, based on Indian, Iranian, Celtic, Greek, and Roman sources as follows:

> 1) A local deity, 2) whose name **nep(ō)t* means "Descendant (of the Waters)," 3) is embodied as a fluid numinous being immersed in a body of water. 4) This deity is frequently associated with horses. He is 5) provoked by a sacrilegious act 6) committed by a man, (or men,) or a woman 7) who approaches or circles his abode. 8) After rushing upward from his basin, well, or depths, the 9) deity in his caustic, fiery, superheated, or volatile form 10) blinds, maims, and in some cases kills the sacrilegious individual(s)—or else he flees. 11) The advancing igneous fluid (deity) may be neutralized or drained off through channels, which in some cases redirect him/it back to his/its source.[177]

White argues that this proto-myth likely originated in the trans-Caucasian homeland of the Indo-Europeans before the third millennium BCE and was based on observation of a geothermal phenomenon such as a superheated naturally

171. Ford, 1974, p. 69.
172. Ford, 1974, p. 69. See also Stokes, 1894 and 1895; and Wagner, 1989, p. 19ff.
173. Sayers, 1983, p. 65.
174. Sayers, 1983, p. 66.
175. McDonald, 2015, p. 32.
176. White, 2017, p. 694-696.
177. White, 2017, p. 694.

occurring fluid.[178] While White's analysis is insightful, his reconstruction of the Indo-European proto-myth is strongly influenced by the later medieval alchemical accounts.

There are also some further parallels to the myths of Heimdallr and Apām Napāt in the life-giving world tree in the Irish tale of Nechtan: Next to the well of Nechtan (also known as Connla's well), there grow nine hazel trees together as one, and they drop their hazel nuts into the waters where they are eventually eaten by the salmon of wisdom.[179] It is tempting to see these nine life-giving hazel trees as an echo both of Heimdallr's nine mothers and of the Norse world tree itself, with its nine roots. Intriguingly, these falling nuts from the nine hazel trees in Irish myth are compared to ram's heads, which suggests that the world tree/well and its protector are also associated with rams in Celtic as well as Norse myth.[180] Significant life-giving trees are also, as we have seen, components of the Indian and Iranian textual materials relating to Apām Napāt. No such tree is involved in the myths of the Greek Poseidon or the Roman Neptune.

*Heimdallr, Apām Napāt, and the Proto-Indo-European Myth of Fire in Water*

The Vedic and Iranian deity Apām Napāt has some striking parallels to the Irish legends of Nechtan and Morann, Poseidon and Neptune as well. How does our interpretation of the reconstructed Indo-European proto-myth of fire in water change if we also recognize parallels to the Norse Heimdallr?

Based on the Norse, Vedic, Iranian, and Irish materials, it is possible to reconstruct the following proto-myth:

> A deity is born to multiple mothers who represent waters (Heimdallr, Apām Napāt, Morann). This deity is himself bright and fiery (Heimdallr, Indian Apām Napāt) or associated with a bright and fiery substance in the water (Heimdallr, Nechtan, Iranian Apām Napāt, Morann, Theseus). The deity is also closely associated with a world tree (Heimdallr, Indian and Iranian Apām Napāt, Nechtan) whose seeds/nuts nourish all the worlds (Nechtan, Iranian Apām Napāt). Horses are also closely associated with the deity (Heimdallr, Indian and Iranian Apām Napāt. Morann, Poseidon) and possibly the world tree itself (Norse, Vedic). The world tree or the deity is associated with a supernatural bright substance (Norse *aurr*, Iranian *xᵛarənah*, Irish *imbas forosna*) or with a shiny object in the waters (Brísingamen, Morann's torc). The deity is responsible for creating all beings (Heimdallr, Indian and Iranian Apām Napāt). The deity is further strongly associated with gold (Heimdallr,

178. White, 2017, p. 696.

179. Gwynn, 1903, p. 293.

180. Sterckx and Oudaer, 2014-2015, p. 12.

Indian and Iranian Apām Napāt), with supernatural hearing (Heimdallr, Iranian Apām Napāt), with truth (Indian and Iranian Apām Napāt, Morann, Nechtan, Poseidon), with rams (Heimdallr, Indian and Iranian Apām Napāt, Morann, Poseidon) and with kingship (Heimdallr, Iranian Apām Napāt, Morann).

What is the "meaning" of this proto-myth? I do not think that this proto-myth can be easily reduced to an explanation of a single natural phenomenon as Puhvel and White propose. Bringing Heimdallr and Morann into the comparison weakens the argument that the fiery substance in the water originally represented a localized geothermal natural phenomenon, since there is no hint of this present in the Norse texts or the myth of Morann (or, for that matter, in the Vedic materials). Rather, the proto-myth that can be reconstructed on the basis of all these textual materials seems to involve complex speculations about the origins of life itself, including human life and vegetation, born out of a primordial fiery and luminous spark in the cosmic waters. This life force manifests itself as a cosmic tree (possibly itself identified with a horse) and is associated with power, light, and glory.

But I would argue that our goal as scholars of comparative mythology is not merely to reconstruct a proto-myth, but rather to understand why this ancestral myth took on such radically different meanings in different Indo-European societies. Bruce Lincoln recently suggested that comparative mythologists are comparing apples to oranges.[181] And in a way, of course, we do. But our goal is not simply to reconstruct the proto-fruit from which both apples and oranges could have been derived, but rather to understand something about the societies in which particular fruits were consumed.

Here, I would like to turn to a work that is particularly helpful for articulating an academically responsible 21st century form of comparative religion. In their edited volume, *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age,* Kimberly Patton and Benjamin Ray invoke a well-known essay by Jonathan Z. Smith, "In Comparison a Magic Dwells" that argues that comparative religion has often been a superficial juxtaposition of similarities, a comparison that may in itself be compared to a form of "sympathetic magic": If two things are superficially alike, maybe there exists some "mystical" connection between them.[182] But while J. Z. Smith is ready to dismiss all such comparison, Patton, Ray and their co-authors set out to salvage the discipline of comparative religion. They find that a facile juxtaposition of similarities is useless, but they advocate for a more in-depth form of religious comparison that pays attention to differences as well as similarities, and to cultural context as much as shared

181. Lincoln, 2018.

182. Smith, 1982; Patton and Ray, 2000.

origin, as does Lincoln in his most recent work.[183] While Lincoln favors what he calls "weak comparisons" that are limited in scope and critiques more extensive and wide-ranging comparative work such as Michael Witzel's magnificent and provocative *The Origin of the World's Mythologies,*[184] I do not think we should dismiss the value of more ambitious cross-cultural comparison. That comparison must, however, be accompanied by a recognition of difference as well as similarity, and of the cultural and historical context of the comparanda. This essay demonstrates that although the idea of a fiery deity or divine substance hidden in the waters and associated with creation is attested in many ancient Indo-European cultures, this inherited material assumes very different meanings in different social, historical, and religious contexts. As Allen reminds us in his essay on Heimdallr and Dyáus, comparison often sheds new light on the materials from all the cultures involved.[185] The similarities and parallels between the myths of Heimdallr, Apām Napāt, Morann, and Nechtan can indeed help us reconstruct an ancestral proto-myth. But the *differences* in how this shared material was interpreted in different Indo-European societies at specific points in time can tell us something very crucial about the religious and social values held by the authors who recorded their versions of the myths. Through the lens of comparison, we are able to observe that the Vedic texts are more concerned with ritual performance, that the Iranian texts stress the connections between cosmic order, truth, and legitimate royal power, that the Irish texts highlight the association between sacred bodies of water, truth, and poetry, and that the Old Norse texts are concerned with the maintenance of social and cosmic order. The shared Indo-European idea of a fiery substance in the water becomes a way of legitimizing sacred kingship in Iran, a part of the all-important Vedic fire ritual in India, a metaphor for the sacred power of water itself in Ireland, and a necklace that must be wrestled away from the trickster Loki in order to restore order to the world in Scandinavia. The comparison therefore helps us identify some of the most pressing concerns of each time and place where the myth was retold and reshaped.

How can comparison help us better understand individual deities, such as Heimdallr and Apām Napāt? The parallels between these deities suggest that they may both have originated in the idea of a bright otherworldly substance in the water, a substance that is also described as a live-giving cosmic tree. But in Vedic India, this brightness is associated with sacrificial butter and sacrificial fire, and Apām Napāt is gradually transformed into Agni, while the Norse Heimdallr, "the light of the world", as bright and gleaming as his Vedic counterpart, becomes a literal guardian of the ordered cosmos and gets to

183. Patton and Ray, 2000; Lincoln, 2018, p. 58.

184. Witzel, 2012.

185. Allen, 2007, p. 233.

usher in its demise at Ragnarǫk, an event that signals an upheaval of social and religious structures. Why did Apām Napāt eventually become a fire god in India, while the Norse Heimdallr blows the Gjallarhorn to signal the end of the world? We can't know for certain, but perhaps it has something to do with Vedic hymns being composed during a period of intense preoccupation with the power of sacrificial ritual, while the Norse texts were written down at a time of transition to new religious and social structures after the conversion to Christianity.

The purpose of comparative mythology is not merely to find similarities, but also to find differences – and not only to find them, but to attempt to explain them. What is the local and historical context that gives similar phenomena entirely different meanings in two different societies? In short, this essay argues that comparing apples and oranges can be (pardon the pun) a fruitful undertaking for scholars of mythology and culture.

University of Missouri

Agostini, Domenico, and Thrope, Samuel, 2020: *Bundahišn: The Zoroastrian Book of Creation,* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Allen, Nick J., 2007: "The Heimdall-Dyu Comparison Revisited", *Journal of Indo-European Studies,* 35,3, p. 233-247.

Bader, Françoise, 2004: "Le Vieux de la Mer et ses phoques", *General Linguistics,* 41, 1, p. 1-20.

Bergaigne, Abel, 1878: *La Religion védique, d'après les hymnes du Rig-Vida,* vol. 1, Paris: F. Vieweg;

—, 1883: *La Religion védique, d'après les hymnes du Rig-Vida,* vol. 2, Paris: F. Vieweg.

Bertels, Y. E., *et al*., 1957-1971: *Shāhnāma,* 9 vols, Moscow, Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR.

Böhtlingk, Otto von, and Roth, Rudolph, 1855: *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch* I, St. Petersburg, Buchdruckerei der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Boyce, Mary, 1975: *A History of Zoroastrianism, I*: *The Early Period*, Leiden, E. J. Brill;

—, 1986: **"**APĄM NAPĀT", in *Encyclopaedia Iranica:* https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/apam-napat

Brereton, Joel P., and Jamison, Stephanie W., 2020: *The Rigveda: A Guide,* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Briquel, Dominique, 2004: "La thème indo-européen du feu dans l'eau. Applications en Grèce", *in* Gérard Capdeville (éd.), *L'Eau et le feu dans les religions antiques,* Paris, De Boccard, p. 11-23.

Burrows, Hannah, 2013: "Enigma Variations: Hervarar Saga's Wave-Riddles and Supernatural Women in the Old Norse Poetic Tradition," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 112, 2, p. 194-216.

Clemen, Carl, 1934: *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte,* Bonn, Ludwig Röhrscheid.

Cöllen, Sebastian, 2015: *Heimdallr – der rätselhafte Gott. Eine philologische und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 94, Berlin & Boston, Walter de Gruyter.

Cusack, Carole M., 2011: *The Sacred Tree: Ancient and Medieval Manifestations,* Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars.

Dandekar, R. N., 1962: "Some Aspects of the Agni- Mythology in the Veda," *Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda*, XI.4, p. 363-368.

Dange, Sadashiv A., 1970: "The Cosmic Foetus and the Symbolism of Rain from the Rgveda," *Journal of the University of Bombay*, XXXIX, p. 1-5.

Darmesteter, James, 1880: *The Zend Avesta,* vol. I, Oxford, The Clarendon Press;

—, 1882: *The Zend Avesta,* vol. II, Oxford, The Clarendon Press.

Davidson, Olga M., 1985: "The Crown-Bestower in the Iranian Book of Kings", in *Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce* (=*Acta Iranica* 24), Leiden, Brill, p. 61-148;

—, 2000: *Comparative Literature and Classical Persian Poetics: Seven Essays,* Costa Mesa, Mazda Publishers;

—, 2013: *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings,* 3rd ed. Boston, Ilex Foundation.

Devi, Akshaya Kumari, 1938: *The Evolution of the Rigvedic Pantheon,* Calcutta, Vijaya Krishna Brothers.

Doniger, Wendy, 1981: *The Rig Veda,* London, Penguin Books.

Dronke, Ursula, 1992: "Eddic poetry as a source for the history of Germanic religion," *in* Heinrich Beck, Detlev Ellmers and Kurt Schier (eds.), *Germanische Religionsgeschichte: Quellen und Quellenprobleme,* Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, p. 656-684;

—, 1997: *The Poetic Edda: Vol. II: Mythological Poems,* Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Dumézil, Georges, 1959: "Remarques comparatives sur le dieu scandinave Heimdallr," *Études celtiques* 8, p. 263-283;

—, 1963: "Le puits de Nechtan", *Celtica* 6, p. 50-61;

—, 1968: *Mythe et épopée,* vol. 1, Paris, Gallimard;

—, 1973: *Mythe et épopée,* vol. 3, Paris, Gallimard (reprint 1981);

—, 1973: *Gods of the Ancient Northmen,* ed. Einar Haugen, Berkeley, University of California Press 1973. First published as *Mythes et dieux des Germains,* Paris, Gallimard, 1939;

—, 2000: *Mythes et dieux de la Scandinavie ancienne,* Paris, Gallimard.

Dumont, Darl J., 1992: "The Ash Tree In Indo-European Culture," *Mankind Quarterly*, XXXII, 4, p. 323-336. Online at http://www.musaios.com/ash.htm.

Ellis Davidson, Hilda R., 1969: *Scandinavian Mythology,* London, Paul Hamlyn.
Evans, John G., 1910: *Llyfr Taliesin*, Llanbedrog, [s. n.].
Falk, Hjalmar, 1889: "Die nomina agentis der altnordischen Sprache," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 14, p. 1-52.
Flanagan, Laurence, *et al*., 1998: *The Irish Spirit,* New York, Gramercy.
Fay, Edwin W., 1894: "Some Epithets of Agni," *Proceedings of the American Oriental Society,* Dec. 1894, p. clxxii-clxxiv;
—, 1896: "The Aryan God of Lightning," *American Journal of Philology*, XVII.I, p. 1-29.
Findly, Ellison Banks, 1979: "The 'Child of the Waters': A revaluation of Vedic Apāṃ Napāt," *Numen* 26, p. 164–184.
Ford, Patrick K., 1974: "The Well of Nechtan and 'La gloire lumineuse'", *in* Gerald James Larson *et al*. (eds.): *Myth in Indo-European Antiquity,* Berkeley, University of California Press, p. 67-74.
Geldner, Karl Friedrich, 1951: *Der Rig-Veda,* Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
Girard de Rialle, Julien, 1869: *Agni petit-fils des eaux dans le Véda et dans l'Avesta,* Paris, Maisonneuve et Cie.
Golther, Wolfgang, 1895: *Handbuch der germanischen Mythologie,* Leipzig, S. Hirzel.
Gray, Louis H., 1900: "The Indo-Iranian Deity Apam Napat," *Archiv fur Religionswissenschaft*, 3, p. 18-51.
Gwynn, Edward, 1903: *The Metrical Dindshenchas,* vol. 1, Dublin, Hodges, Figgis & Co.
Hall, Matthew, 2019: *The Imagination of Plants: A Book of Botanical Mythology,* Albany, SUNY Press.
Hardy, Edmund, 1893: *Die Vedische-brahmanische Periode der Religion des alten Indiens*, Münster i.W., Aschendorff.
Haudry, Jean, 2013, "Les Feux de Rome," *Revue des études latines* 90, p. 57-82;
—, 2016: "Le Rejeton des Eaux", *in* Céline Redard (éd.), *Des Contrées avestiques à Mahabad, via Bisotun: études offertes en hommage à Pierre Lecoq,* Neuchâtel, Recherches et publications, p. 131-142.
Heizmann, Wilhelm, 2009: "Der Raub der Brísingamen, oder: Worum geht es in Húsdrápa 2?" *in* Wilhelm Heizmann *et al.* (eds.), *Analecta Septentrionalia: Beiträge zur nordgermanischen Kultur- und Literaturgeschichte,* Berlin and New York, de Gruyter, p. 502-530.
Hellquist, Elof, 1891: "Bidrag till läran om den nordiska nominalbildningen," *Arkiv for nordisk filologi* 7, p. 1-62.
Hermann, Paul, 1903: *Nordische Mythologie.* Leipzig, Wilhelm Engelmann.
Hillebrandt, Alfred, 1891: *Vedische Mythologie,* vol. 1, Breslau, Wilhelm Koebner.
Hintze, Almut, 1994: *Zamyād Yašt: Introduction, Avestan Text, Translation, Glossary,* Wiesbaden, Ludwig Reichert Verlag.

Hopkins, Pamela, 1992: "The Symbology of Water in Irish Pseudo-History", *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 12, p. 80-86.
Humbach, Helmut, and Ichaporia, Pallan R., 1998: *Zamyād Yasht: Yasht 19 of the Younger Avesta. Text, Translation, Commentary,* Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag.
Jamison, Stephanie W., and Brereton, Joel P., 2014: *The Ṛgveda,* 3 vols, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Jarman, Alfred O.H., and Jones, Evan D., 1982: *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin,* Cardiff, Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru.
Jones, Nerys A., and Owen, Ann Parry, 1992: *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr*, I, Cardiff.
Keith, Arthur Berriedale, 1917: "Indian", *in* Louis H. Gray *et al.* (eds.), *The Mythology of All Races,* Boston, Marshall Jones, 1916-1932, vol. 6;
—, 1925: *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads,* vol. 1, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
Khaleghi-Motlagh, Djalal, 1987-: *Shāhnāmah*, New York, Bibliotheca Persica.
Koegel, Rudolf, 1894: "Germanische Etymologien," *Indogermanische Forschungen* 4, p. 312-320.
Kovtun, Igor, 2012: "'Horse-Headed'Staffs and the Cult of the Horse Head in Northwestern Asia in the 2nd Millennium BC", *Archaeology, Ethnology, and Anthropology of Eurasia* 4, p. 95-105.
Krause, Wolfgang, 1930: *Die Kenning als typische Stilfgur der germanischen und keltischen Dichtersprache,* Halle, Max Niemeyer.
Krohn, Kaarle, 1922: *Skandinavisk mytologi,* Helsingfors, Holger Schildt.
Kroonen, Guus, 2013: *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic,* Leiden, Brill.
la Cour, Vilhelm, 1923: "Hjemdals navne," *Danske studier* 20, p. 61-68.
Larrington, Carolyne, 1996: *The Poetic Edda,* Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Leyen, Friedrich von der, 1909: *Die Götter und Göttersagen der Germanen,* München, Beck.
Lincoln, Bruce, 1982: "Waters of Memory, Waters of Forgetfulness," *Fabula* XXII, p. 19-34;
—, 2018: *Apples and Oranges: Explorations In, On, and With Comparison,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
Lindow, John, 2001: *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs,* Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Littleton, C. Scott, 1973: "Poseidon as a Reflex of the Indo-European 'Source of Water' God," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 1, p. 423-440.
Louden, Bruce, 1999: "Bacchylides 17: Theseus and Indo-Iranian Apâm Napât", *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 27, p. 57-78.
Ludwig, Alfred, 1878: *Der Rigveda, oder Die Heiligen Hymnen der Brahmana,* vol. III, Prague, F. Tempsky.

Magoun, Herbert W., 1898: "Apām Napāt in the *Rigveda*", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 19, p. 137-144;
—, 1900: "Apām Napāt Again", *The American Journal of Philology,* 21, 3, p. 274-286.
Mallory, J. P., and Adams, D. Q., 2006: *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World,* Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Marold, Edith, 2000a: "Die Húsdrápa als kosmologisches Gedicht", *in* Geraldine Barnes and Margaret Clunies Ross (eds.), *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society: Proceedings of the 11th International Saga Conference, 2-7 July 2000, University of Sydney,* Sydney, Sydney Centre for Medieval Studies, p. 290-302;
—, 2000b: "Kosmogonische Mythen in der Húsdrápa des Úlfr Uggason", *in* Michael Dallapiazza *et al.* (ed.), *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber,* Trieste, Edizioni Parnaso, p. 281-292.
Macdonell, A. A., 2015: *A Vedic Reader for Students,* 1917. Reprint Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 2015.
McDonald, John, 2015: "Building Bulls and Crafting Cows: Narratives of Bovine Fabrications from Iran, Ireland, and In-Between", *in* H. E. Chelabi and Grace Neville (eds.), *Erin and Iran: Cultural Encounters between the Irish and the Iranians,* Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, p. 14-35.
Meyer, Elard Hugo, 1889: *Völuspá. Eine Untersuchung,* Berlin, Mayer & Müller;
—, 1891: *Germanische Mythologie,* Berlin, Mayer & Müller.
Meyer, Richard M., 1907: "Beiträge zur altgermanischen Mythologie," *Arkiv for nordisk filologi* 23, p. 245-256.
Mogk, Eugen, 1880: "Untersuchungen über die Gylfaginning II: Die Quellen der Gylfaginning und ihr Verhältnis zu den sog. Eddaliedern Anhang Úlf Uggason", *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 7, p. 203-334.
Mohl, Julius, 1876-1878: *Le Livre des rois,* Paris, Impremerie nationale.
Monier Williams, Monier, 2002: *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary,* 1899. Reprint Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass 2002.
Much, Rudolf, 1898: *Der germanische Himmelsgott,* Halle a. S., Max Niemeyer;
—, 1930: "Der nordische Widdergott," *Deutsche Islandsforschung* 1, p. 63-67.
Müllenhoff, Karl, 1886: "Frija und der Halsbandmythus", *Zeitschrift für deutschen Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 30, p. 217-260.
Müller, F. Max, 1868: *Chips from a German Worshop,* vol. II., 2nd ed., London, Longmans, Green, and Co.
Müller, Wilhelm, 1844: *Geschicte und System der altdeutschen Religion*, Göttingen Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Nagy, Gregory, 1990: *Greek Mythology and Poetics,* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, https://chs.harvard.edu/read/nagy-gregory-greek-mythology-and-poetics/#

North, Richard, 1997: *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Ohlmarks, Åke, 1937: *Heimdalls Horn und Odins Auge,* Lund, C. W. K. Gleerup.
Ó hÓgáin, Daithi, 2002: *Irish Superstitions*, Dublin, Gill & MacMillian;
—, 2006: *The Lore of Ireland: An Encyclopaedia of Myth, Legend, and Romance,* Woodbridge, Boydell Press.
Oldenberg, Hermann, 1894: *Die Religion des Veda,* Berlin, Wilhelm Hertz.
Patton, Kimberley C., and Ray, Benjamin C. (eds.), 2000: *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age,* Berkeley, University of California Press.
Pering, Birger, 1941: *Heimdall: Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Verständnis der altnordischen Götterwelt,* Lund, C. W. K. Gleerup.
Petersen, N. M., 1849: *Nordisk Mythologi,* København, J.H. Schubothes boghandel.
Pipping, Hugo, 1925: "Eddastudier I," *Studier i nordisk filologi,* 16, p. 1-52;
—, 1928: "Eddastudier II," *Studier i nordisk filologi,* 18, p. 38-43.
Pokorny, Julius, 1959: *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch. 1. Band,* Bern/München, Francke Verlag.
Puhvel, Jaan, 1987: *Comparative Mythology,* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.
Rosen, Helge, 1919: *Studier i skandinavisk religionshistoria och folketro,* Lund, Carl Blom.
Rydberg, Viktor, 1886: *Undersökningar i germanisk mytologi,* vol. 1, Stockholm, Albert Bonnier.
Sauzeau, Pierre, and Sauzeau, André, 2017: *La Bataille finale, Mythes et épopées des derniers temps dans les traditions indo-européennes,* Paris, L'Harmattan.
Sayers, William, 1983: "The Old Irish Bóand/Nechtan Myth in the Light of Scandinavian Evidence", *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies / Études scandinaves au Canada* 1, p. 63-78;
—, 1993: "Irish Perspectives on Heimdallr", *Alvíssmál* 2, p. 3-30.
Schier, Kurt, 1976a: "Húsdrápa 2: Heimdall, Loki und die Meerniere", *in* Helmut Birkhan (ed.), *Festgabe für Otto Höffler zum 75. Geburtstag,* Wien/Stuttgart, Wilhelm Baumüller, p. 577-588;
—, 1976b: "Die Húsdrápa von Úlfr Uggason und die bildliche Überlieferung altnordischen Mythen", *in* Gudni Kolberinsson *et al.*, *Minjar og menntir. Afmælisrit helgað Kristjáni Eldjárn 6. desember 1976,* Reykjavík, Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, p. 425-443.
Schroeder, Leopold von, 1914: *Arische Religion,* vol. 1, Leipzig, H. Haessel;
—, 1916: *Arische Religion,* vol. 2, Leipzig, H. Haessel.
Schröder, Rolf, 1967: "Heimdall," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 89, p. 1-41.
Siecke, Ernst, 1909: *Mythologische Briefe,* Berlin, Ferd Dümmler.
Skene, William F., 1968: *The Four Ancient Books of Wales,* vol. 1, Edinburg, Edmonston and Douglas.

Smith, J. Z., 1982: "In Comparison a Magic Dwells", *in* J. Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 102-120.

Spiegel, Friedrich von, 1887: *Die Arische Periods und ihre Zustiinde,* Leipzig, Wilhelm Friedrich.

Sterckx, Claude, 2019: *La Neuvième vague et autres essais sur le légendaire celtique de Bretagne,* Marseille, Terre de Promesse;

—, and Guillaume Oudaer, 2014-2015: "Le feu dans l'eau, son bestiaire et le serpent criocéphale", *Nouvelle Mythologie Comparée* 2, http://nouvellemythologiecomparee.hautetfort.com/archive/2015/04/20/claude-sterckx-et-guillaume-oudaer-le-feu-dans-l-eau-son-bes-5607148.html

Stokes, Whitley, 1894: "The Prose Tales in the *Rennes dindshenchas*", *Revue celtique* 15, p. 272-336, 418-484;

—, 1895: "The Prose Tales in the *Rennes dindshenchas*", *Revue celtique* 16, p. 31-83, 135-167, 269-312.

Ström, Folke, 1961: "Heimdal(l)", *in* Ingvar Andersson and John Granlund (eds.), *Kulturhistoriskt lexicon för nordisk medeltid från vikingstid till reformationstid.* vol. 6: *Gästning – Hovedgard,* Malmö, Allhems Förlag, p. 298-299.

Tolley, Clive, 2009: *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic,* Helsinki, Academia Scientarium Fennica.

Turville-Petre, Edward, 1963: *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia,* London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Verney, F. P., 1876: "Old Welsh Legends and Poetry," *The Contemporary Review*, p. 396-416.

Vries, Jan de, 1935: "Studien over Germaansche mythologie, 9: The Oudnoorsche god Heimdallr", *Tijdschrift can Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde*, 54, p. 53-76;

—, 1933: *The Problem of Loki,* Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia;

—, 1955: "Heimdallr, dieu énigmatique," Études germaniques, 10, p. 257-268.

Wagner, Heinrich, 1981: "Origins of the Pagan Irish Religion," *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 38, p. 1-28.

West, Martin L., 2007: *Indo-European Poetry and Myth,* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

White, David Gordon, 2017: "Variations on the Indo-European 'Fire and Water' Mytheme in Three Alchemical Accounts," *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 137, 4, p. 679-698.

Widengren, Geo, 1938: *Hochgottglaube im alten Iran: Eine religionsphänomenologische Untersuchung,* Uppsala, A.-B. Lundequistska bokhandeln.

Windischmann, Friedrich, 1883: *Zoroastrische Studien: Abhandlungen zur Mythologie und Sagengeschichte des alten Iran*, Berlin, Ferd. Dümmler.

Witzel, Michael, 2012: *The Origin of the World's Mythologies,* Oxford, Oxford University Press. Tucson, Arizona, USA.