

Indo-European  
Mythology and Poetics

# What is Mythology?

- Twofold meaning:
  - A culture's traditional narratives and beliefs:
    - Ancient Greek Mythology
    - Old Norse Mythology
    - Italian Mythology
  - The systematic study of these narratives and beliefs

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

## Indo-European Poetic Repertory

(reconstruction IE formulaic expressions and semantic collocations)

is our best source for

## Indo-European Comparative Mythology

(reconstruction of IE traditional narratives and beliefs)

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

- Latin *Iūpiter* < \**iou-pater*
- Homeric Greek Ζεὺ πάτερ *Zeû páter*
- Vedic Sankrit *Dyaus pitā*

Proto-Indo-European \**diéu-* *ph<sub>2</sub>tér-* ‘Father Heaven’

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

- Latin *Iūpiter* < \**iou-pater*
  - Homeric Greek Ζεῦ πάτερ *Zeû páter*
  - Vedic Sankrit *Dyaus pitā*
  - Luwian *Tatiš Tiwaz*
  - Hittite *Attaš Šiuš*
- Proto-Indo-European [FATHER – HEAVEN (\**d̥i̯éu-*)]

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

Formulas (fixed traditional phrases)

are the vehicles of

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

**Formulas** (fixed traditional phrases)

are the vehicles of

**themes** (verbal expression of traditional culture)

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

IE formula [FATHER – HEAVEN (*\*d̥i̯éu-*)]

is the vehicle of an

IE (mythological) theme “(God of) HEAVEN is FATHER”



# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

Whose Father?

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

Greek: Zeus (*\*diéu-* ‘heaven’) is called  
*πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε* “father of men and gods”

Latin: Iūpiter (*\*diéu-* ‘heaven’) is called  
*pater deum hominumque* “father of gods and men”

Old Norse: Óðinn is called *Vera-Týr* (*\*deiúó-* ‘heavenly’) and  
*faðir allra goðanna ok manna* “f. of all gods and men”

Whose Father?

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

IE collocation [HEAVEN] – [FATHER – of GODS and MEN]

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Whose Father?

**Mythological Themes like**

**HEAVEN is FATHER of GODS and MEN...**

**= myths as traditional beliefs**

**Mythological Themes like**

**HEAVEN is FATHER of GODS and MEN...**

**= myths as traditional beliefs**

- But what about myths as mythical narratives?**

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

The comparative analysis and reconstruction of  
**IE Formulas and Themes = IE Poetic Repertory**

is essential to

the comparative analysis and reconstruction of  
**IE Mythical Narratives**

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

- **Comparative IE Mythology**
- analyses correspondences between IE myths and reconstructs common PIE elements
- which find support in IE Poetic Repertory

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

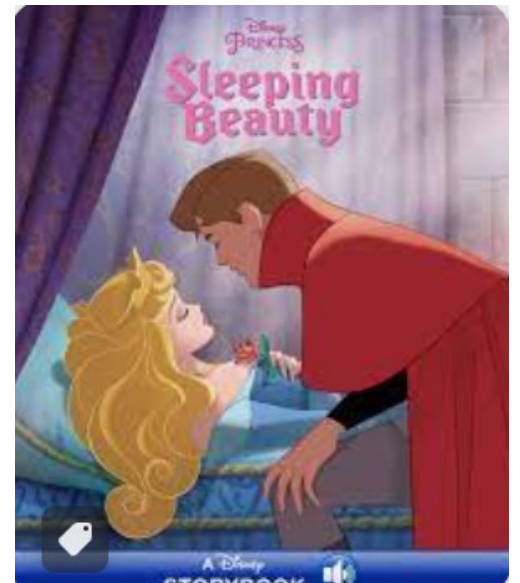
- **Comparative Literature or Folktale Studies**
- Analyse correspondences between texts / oral tales
- **With no interest in linguistics or linguistic reconstruction**



# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

International Folktales (= *Märchen*) are attested among people speaking different languages in several continents:

- Variants of ATU 410 “The Sleeping Beauty” attested in Europe, Asia, America
- They can hardly be traced back to a single culture.



# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

The comparative analysis and reconstruction of  
**IE Formulas and Themes**

is essential to

the comparative analysis and reconstruction of  
**IE Mythical Narratives**

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

The comparative analysis and reconstruction of  
IE Formulas and Themes

is essential to **AND** should be complemented by

the comparative analysis and reconstruction of  
IE Mythical Narratives

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

## Formulas:

- [HEAVEN] – [FATHER – of GODS and MEN]

## Theme(s):

- (God of) HEAVEN is FATHER of GODS and MEN

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

## Formulas:

- [HEAVEN] – [FATHER – of GODS and MEN]

## Theme(s):

- (God of) HEAVEN is FATHER of GODS and MEN

## Mythical Narratives:

- (God of) HEAVEN is NOT the BIOLOGICAL FATHER of GODS and MEN

# Indo-European Poetic Repertory and Comparative Mythology

Theme(s):

- (God of) HEAVEN is FATHER of GODS and MEN

Mythical Narratives:

- (God of) HEAVEN is NOT the BIOLOGICAL FATHER of GODS and MEN

A solution must be found which may account for both reconstructed theme and mythical narratives

Indo-European  
Mythology and Poetics

Gods and Men

# Gods and Men

IE collocation [HEAVEN] – [FATHER – of GODS and MEN]

Greek: Zeus (*\*diéu-* ‘heaven’) is called  
πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε “father of men and gods”

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*faðir allra goðanna ok manna* “f. of all gods and men”



# Gods and Men

IE collocation [GODS and MEN]

Greek: ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε “of men and gods”

Latin: *deum hominumque* “of gods and men”

Old Norse: *goðanna ok manna* “of gods and men”

# Gods and Men

- Homeric Greek:

formulaic expression [MEN (άνήρ) and GODS (θεός)] (25x)

- *Homeric Hymn to Apollon* 336–7

Τιτῆνες [...] τῶν ἐξ άνδρες τε θεοί τε

“The Titans, from whom (are descended) **men and gods**”

- Hesiod *Theogony* 220

αί τ' άνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε παραιβασίας ἐφέπουσιν

“[the Furies] who pursue the transgressions of **men and gods**”

In Archaic Epic often occurs within Zeus' epithet πατήρ άνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε.

# Gods and Men

- Latin:

formulaic expression [MEN (*homo*) and GODS (*deus*)]

- Vergil *Aeneid* 1.229–30

[...] *o qui res hominumque deumque / aeternis regis imperiis* [...]

“O you who rule the affairs of men and gods by your eternal supreme commands”

- Traditional exclamation (Plautus, Terentius, Cicero)

*pro deum atque hominum fidem*

“for the faith of gods and men”

Often occurs within Iuppiter’s epithet *patrem divumque hominumque* (Ennius apud Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.3.14), *patrem deum hominumque* (Livy 8.6) e *pater deum hominumque* (Livy 1.12).

# Gods and Men

- Indo-Iranian:
  - semantic collocation [**GODS and MEN**]
- Vedic: RV 1.35.2ab
  - ā kṛṣṇéna rájasā vārtamāno*  
*nivēśáyann amṛtam mártiyaṃ ca*
  - “Turning hither through the black realm,  
bringing to rest **the god and the human**”
- Avestan: Y 29.4 = 48.1
  - daēvāišcā mašyāišcā*
  - “to gods and men”

# Gods and Men

- Old Norse:

semantic collocation [MEN (*gumi, maðr*) and GODS (*guð*)]

- *Lokasenna* 55<sup>5-6</sup>

*þeim er rægir hér goð öll ok guma*

“to him who here torments **all gods and men**”

- *Gylfaginning* 21

[...] *hann er sterkastr allra guðanna ok manna* [...]

“he is the strongest of **all gods and men**”

# Óðinn All-father

- Most interesting passage: *Gylf.* 9.

The supreme god Óðinn is called:

[...] *faðir allra goðanna ok manna ok alls þess er af honum ok hans krapti var fullgert* [...]

“father of all gods and men and of everything that was completed by him and his power”

Interesting points:

- Odin is ‘father’ of things (everything that was completed by him and his power): it can’t be literal!

# Gods and Men

- Most interesting passage: *Gylf.* 9. The supreme god Óðinn is called: [...] *faðir allra goðanna ok manna ok alls þess er af honum ok hans krapti var fullgert* [...] “father of all gods and men and of everything that was completed by him and his power”

Interesting points:

- Odin is ‘father’ of everything that was completed by him and his power
- **Opposition: [GODS and MEN] vs. everything else**

**What distinguishes [GODS and MEN] from all other objects?**

# Gods and Men

- Opposition [GODS and MEN] vs. everything else
- What distinguishes [GODS and MEN] from the rest of the cosmos?

(1) ANIMACY? Not PLANTS or ROCKS, but ANIMALS as well:

RV 1.89.5a

*tám íśānaṃ jágatas tasthúṣas pátiṃ*

“the one who holds sway, the lord of the moving and the still”



# Gods and Men

- Opposition [GODS and MEN] vs. everything else
- What distinguishes [GODS and MEN] from the rest of the cosmos?

(1) ANIMACY

(2) INTELLIGENCE! ANIMALS do not know right from wrong:

Hesiod *Works and Days* 277ff:

“(Zeus decided) that **fishes and beasts and winged fowls** should devour one another, for **right is not in them;** but to **mankind he gave right** which proves far the best.”

# Gods and Men

- ANIMACY and INTELLIGENCE distinguish [GODS and MEN] from the rest of the cosmos.
- [GODS and MEN] = [INTELLIGENT ANIMATED BEINGS]  
as opposed to [ANIMALS] = [NON-INTELLIGENT ANIMATED B.S]  
and other [THINGS] = [NON-ANIMATED BEINGS]
- POETIC GRAMMAR:  
[GODS and MEN] is a MERISM ([A + B] = [C])

# Gods and Men: Differences

[GODS]

Immortal, Immortality

Non-Ageing, Eternal Youth

Heavenly, Sky

[MEN]

Mortal, Death

Ageing, Old Age

Earthly, Earth

# Gods and Men: [IMMORTALS and MORTALS]

- Merism [IMMORTALS and MORTALS] : [GODS and MEN]

- Vedic: RV 1.35.2ab

*ā kṛṣṇéna rájasā vártamāno  
niveśáyann amṛtam mártiyaṃ ca*

“Turning hither through the black realm,  
bringing to rest **the immortal and the mortal**”

- Greek: *Il.* 12.241–2

ἡμεῖς δὲ μέγαλοιο Διὸς πειθώμεθα βουλή,  
ὃς πᾶσι θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἀνάσσει.

“No, let us put our trust in the counsel of great Zeus,  
he who is lord over all **mortals and immortals.**”

# Gods and Men: [IMMORTALS and MORTALS]

- Merism [GODS and MORTALS] : [GODS and MEN]

- Vedic: RV 6.015.08cd

*devāsaś ca mārtiāsaś<sup>o</sup> ca jāgrviṃ / vibhúṃ viśpátim námasā ní ṣedire*

“Both gods and mortals set down with homage the wakeful one as a far-extending clanlord.”

- Avestan: Y. 29.4 = 48.1

*daēvāišcā mašyāišcā*

“to gods and mortals”

- Pahlavi:

*dēwān ud mardōmān*

“gods and mortals”

# Gods and Men: [IMMORTALS vs. MORTALS]

- Antithetic collocation [IMMORTAL] – [MORTAL] : [GOD] vs. [HUMAN]

- Latin: Naevius' Epitaph

*immortales mortales si foret fas flere,  
flerent diuae Camenae Naeuium poetam.*

“If it were right for **immortals** to lament **mortals**,  
the divine Camenae would lament the poet Naevius”

- Greek: Hesiod, *Theogony* 940–3 (accusative – nominative)

Καδμηΐς δ' ἄρα οἱ Σεμέλη τέκε φαίδιμον υἷον  
μιχθεῖσ' ἐν φιλότῃτι, Διώνυσον πολυγηθέα,  
ἄθανατον θνητή [...]

“Semele, daughter of Cadmus, having united in love with  
Zeus bore him a splendid son, Dionysus, the source of  
Much cheer, an **immortal** though she was a **mortal**”

# Gods and Men: Differences

[GODS]

Immortal, Immortality

Unageing, Eternal Youth

Heavenly, Sky

[MEN]

Mortal, Death

Ageing, Old Age

Earthly, Earth

# Gods and Men: [UNAGEING] vs. [AGEING]

- Greek: [GODS] are [IMMORTAL and UNAGEING]

- *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 214

ὥς ἔοι ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρως ἴσα θεοῖσιν,

“that he was **immortal and unageing**, as a god”

- Hesiod, *Theogony* 949:

τὴν δέ οἱ ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήρω θῆκε Κρονίων,

“the son of Cronus made her **immortal and unageing**”



# Gods and Men: [UNAGEING] vs. [AGEING]

- Old Norse: [GODS] are unageing, [MEN] are ageing

- *Gylf.* 26

*Hon varðveitir í eski sínu epli þau, er goðin skulu á bíta, þá er þau eldast, ok verða þá allir ungir*

“She guards in her chest of ash those apples which the gods must taste whensoever they grow old; and then they all become young”

- *Gylf.* 47

*engi hefir sá orðit ok engi mun verða [...] at eigi komi ellin öllum til falls*

“no such man has existed and none will exist, that old age will not bring them all down”

# Gods and Men: [UNAGEING] vs. [AGEING]

- Vedic: the goddess Dawn is [IMMORTAL and UNAGEING]

- RV 1.113.13d

*ajārāmṛtā carati svadhābhiḥ*

“Unaging, immortal, she proceeds according to her own customs.”

cf. the Homeric formula: ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρως “immortal and unageing”

Ved. *ajāra*- ‘unageing’ : Gk. ἀγήρως ‘id.’ (PIE *ǵérh<sub>2</sub>*- ‘to age’)

# Gods and Men: [UNAGEING] vs. [AGEING]

- Vedic: divine beings like the goddess Dawn are [IMMORTAL and UNAGEING]
- Old English: the Christian [GOD] is unageing
  - *Maxims I* 9–12

*ne wendað hine wyrda*

*adl ne ylðo*

*ne gomelað he in gæste,*

*þeoden gepyldig*

*ne hine wiht dreceþ,*

*æelmihtigne;*

*ac he is gen swa he wæs,*

“nor does sickness or age trouble the Almighty in any way;

he does not grow old in heart, but is still as he was, the patient Lord”

# Gods and Men: Differences

[GODS]

Immortal, Immortality

Non-Ageing, Eternal Youth

Heavenly, Sky

[MEN]

Mortal, Death

Ageing, Old Age

Earthly, Earth

# Gods and Men: [HEAVENLY] vs. [EARTHLY]

- Greek: [GODS] inhabit [HEAVEN] vs. [MEN] live on [EARTH]

*Odyssey* 6.149ff (Odysseus meets Nausikaa)

γουνουμαί σε, ἄνασσα: θεός νύ τις, ἢ βροτός ἐσσι;  
εἰ μὲν τις θεός ἐσσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν, [...]  
εἰ δέ τις ἐσσι βροτῶν, τοὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ ναιετάουσιν,

“I beg you, O queen,—are you a **goddess**, or are you **mortal**?  
If you are a **goddess**, one of those who hold broad **heaven**, [...].  
But if you are one of **mortals** who dwell upon the **earth** [...].”

# Gods and Men: [HEAVENLY] vs. [EARTHLY]

- Greek: [MEN] are [on the EARTH, EARTHLY] (ἐπι-χθόνιος : ἐπί 'on', χθών 'earth')

*Iliad* 9.558

Ἴδew θ', ὃς κάρτιστος ἐπιχθονίων γένετ' ἀνδρῶν  
“and Idas, who was the strongest of all men upon earth”

*Odyssey* 8.479

πάσι γὰρ ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισιν ἀοιδοὶ  
“For among all men upon the earth, singers”

Hesiod, *Theogony* 755

ἡ μὲν ἐπιχθονίοισι φάος πολυδερκὲς ἔχουσα  
“she who holds the light that illumines all who dwell on the earth”

# Gods and Men: [HEAVENLY] vs. [EARTHLY]

[MEN – WALK – on EARTH]

- Greek:

Hesiod, *Theogony* 272

ἀθάνατοί τε θεοὶ χαμαὶ ἐρχόμενοι τ' ἄνθρωποι,

“both immortal gods and men who walk on the earth”

- Old Norse:

*Fáfnismál* 23 4–6

*manna þeira, er mold troða,*

*þic qveð ec óblauðastan alinn.*

“of those men who walk on earth

I say you are the bravest”

# Gods and Men: Poetics and the Lexicon

[GODS] vs. [MEN]

[IMMORTALS] vs. [MORTALS]

PIE \**h<sub>2</sub>*-*m<sub>1</sub>*tó- vs. PIE \**m<sub>1</sub>*tó- ‘mortal’ :

Gk. βροτός, OPers *martiya*-, Sogdian  
*mrtyy*, Farsi *mard* = ‘human being’



# Gods and Men: Poetics and the Lexicon

[GODS] vs. [MEN]

[IMMORTALS] vs. [MORTALS]

PIE \**h<sub>2</sub>m<sub>r</sub>tó-* vs. PIE \**m<sub>r</sub>tó-* 'mortal' :

[CELESTIALS] vs. [EARTHLY]:

\**d<sub>i</sub>éu-*derivatives vs. \**d<sup>h</sup>éǵ<sup>h</sup>om-*derivatives

# Gods and Men: Poetics and the Lexicon

[CELESTIALS (\**d̥i̯éu-*)] vs. [EARTHLINGS]

\**d̥i̯éu-*/*d̥i̯u-* ‘sky, heaven’ (\*shining)

Greek Ζεύς ‘sky-god’

Vedic *dyaus* ‘sky’

Hittite *šiuš* ‘god, sun’

Palaic *tiuna* ‘god’

Lydian *ciw* ‘god’

# Gods and Men: Poetics and the Lexicon

[CELESTIALS (\**diéu-*)] vs. [EARTHLINGS]

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\**diu-* → \**deiu-ó-* ‘god’ (\*‘heavenly’)

Ved. *devá-* ‘god’

Lat. *deus* ‘god’, *dīvus* ‘id.’

Old Norse *tívar* ‘gods’

# Gods and Men: Poetics and the Lexicon

[CELESTIALS (\**diéu-*)] vs. [EARTHLINGS (\**d<sup>h</sup>éǵ<sup>h</sup>om-*)]

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Old Norse *tívar* ‘gods’

\**d<sup>h</sup>éǵ<sup>h</sup>ōm/d<sup>h</sup>ǵ<sup>h</sup>m-* ‘earth, land’

Hittite *tekan* ‘id.’

Greek *χθών* ‘id.’

Vedic *kṣám-* ‘id.’

Old Irish *dú* ‘id.’

Lithuanian *žėmė*

Tocharian A *tkam*

# Gods and Men: Poetics and the Lexicon

[CELESTIALS (\**diéu-*)] vs. [EARTHLINGS (\**d<sup>h</sup>ég<sup>h</sup>om-*)]

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Old Norse *tívar* ‘gods’

\**d<sup>h</sup>ég<sup>h</sup>ōm*/*d<sup>h</sup>g<sup>h</sup>m-* ‘earth, land’

Greek *χθών* ‘id.’

Vedic *kṣám-* ‘id.’

Old Irish *dú* ‘id.’ (PCelt \**gdū*)

\**d<sup>h</sup>ég<sup>h</sup>ōm* → \**d<sup>h</sup>g<sup>h</sup>om-jo-* ‘earthly’

Greek *ἐπι-χθόνιος* ‘earthly’

Gaulish /*°gdonio-*/ ‘human’

Old Irish *duine* ‘person’

# Gods and Men: Poetics and the Lexicon

[CELESTIALS (\**diéu-*)] vs. [EARTHLINGS (\**d<sup>h</sup>éǵ<sup>h</sup>om-*)]

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\**d<sup>h</sup>éǵ<sup>h</sup>ōm*/*d<sup>h</sup>ǵ<sup>h</sup>m̥-* ‘earth, land’

\**d<sup>h</sup>éǵ<sup>h</sup>ōm-* → \**d<sup>h</sup>ǵ<sup>h</sup>om-jo-* ‘earthly’

Gaulish /<sup>o</sup>*gdonio-* ‘human’

\**d<sup>h</sup>ǵ<sup>h</sup>m̥-* → \**d<sup>h</sup>ǵ<sup>h</sup>m̥-n-* ‘earthly’

Lat *homo, hominis* ‘man’ (\*‘hemo’)

PGerm. \**guman-* ‘man’

(ON *gumi*, OE *guma*, Germ. *Bräuti-gam*)

Old Lithuanian *žmuõ* ‘id.’

# Gods and Men: Transferred Epithets

From [CELESTIAL (\**deiu-ó-*) – GOD] to [GOD (\**deiu-ó-*)]

Ved. *devá-* ‘god’

Lat. *deus* ‘god’, *dīvus* ‘id.’

Old Norse *tívar* ‘gods’

From [EARTHLY (\**d<sup>h</sup>ǵ<sup>h</sup>m̥-n-*) – MAN] to [MAN (\**d<sup>h</sup>ǵ<sup>h</sup>m̥-n-*)]

Lat *homo, hominis* ‘man’ (\**hemo*)

PGerm. \**guman-* ‘man’

(ON *gumi*, OE *guma*, Germ. *Bräuti-gam*)

Old Lithuanian *žmuõ* ‘id.’

# Gods and Men: Poetics and the Lexicon

- Gaulish *°gdonio-* ‘human’ is attested in an inscription  
    <TEVOXTONION> /dēwo-gdonio-/ ‘of gods and men’
- Phrygian formula με δεως κε ζεμελος κε understood as  
    ‘among gods and men’
- Vedic *kṣámyasya jánmanas ... divyásya*  
    ‘of the earthly race and of the heavenly.’
- We may reconstruct an IE formula [CELESTIALS (\*d̥i̯éu-) and EARTHINGS (\*dʰǵʰm-)], a variant of our merism [GODS and MEN] that has been blended with another merism – on which see the next lesson!



# Gods and Men: Poetics and the Lexicon

- IE formula [CELESTIALS (\**diéu-*) and EARTHLINGS (\**d<sup>h</sup>ǵ<sup>h</sup>m-*)],
- In PGermanic: [GODS (\**tīwa-*) and MEN (\**guman-*)]
- In Old Norse: [GODS (*tívar*) and MEN (*guma*)]
- BUT Old Norse [GODS (*goð*) and MEN (*gumi*)] is attested instead:

*Lokasenna* 55<sup>5-6</sup>

*þeim er rægir hér goð öll ok guma*

“to him who here torments all **gods** and **men**”

- Why?

# Gods and Men: Poetics and the Lexicon

- IE formula [CELESTIALS (\**diéu-*) and EARTHLINGS (\**d<sup>h</sup>ǵ<sup>h</sup>m-*)],
- In PGermanic: [GODS (\**tīwa-*) and MEN (\**guman-*)]
- In Old Norse: [GODS (*tívar*) and MEN (*guma*)]
- BUT Old Norse [GODS (*goð*) and MEN (*gumi*)] is attested instead:

*Lokasenna* 55<sup>5-6</sup>

*þeim er rægir hér goð öll ok guma*

“to him who here torments all gods and men”

- Why? **Lexical renewal for the purpose of alliteration!**