

The Theft of Fire: Prometheus and Loki

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Abstract:

Similarities between the binding of Prometheus and the binding of Loki hint to a common origin. While the giant Loki is not known for having stolen fire, he is the Norse god of fire. The similarities between the two grow when the details of the apportioning of the sacrificed ox between man and Zeus, through their intermediary Prometheus is near in form to a rather obscure episode in “The Theft of Idunn’s Apples” myth from the Eddas. In this case Loki must share a part of his ox with an eagle, the giant Thiassi (Zeus), in order for it to grant in return the heat of the fire necessary to cook the ox. The eagle takes its portion, but Loki is dissatisfied and striking at the eagle ends up being carried away, forced to secure his release must bring Idunn and her golden apples (an episode absent from the Prometheus version). The apples bring eternal youth and are much needed by the gods, so despite Loki’s escape he is compelled to return to release her, and Thiassi chases him in the form of an eagle and is burned. It is telling that fire used to burn the eagle, which likely explained why an eagle’s wings are “burned” at the tips. The white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) commonly found throughout Eurasia shows such markings. The sudden appearance of Thiassi’s daughter Skadi could be related to the birth of Athena; Loki and Prometheus are each accredited with the attack causing her manifestation. The mythical ensemble also appears to imply an association between the theft of fire and the need for humans to sacrifice a portion of an animal (what was unconsumable) back to the god of the sky through the use of fire (that sent its smoke up into the sky).

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Introduction

The story of Prometheus and Pandora are linked in Greek mythology, for it is the theft of fire that leads to the creation of women (Pandora is the first) as an evil to beset mankind, yet there are other consequences from this in store for him. In the paper “Prophetic Moon” it is revealed that the greatest loss to mankind came in the single act by the alluring and capricious Pandora opening the jar that held the powers of the gods. In this act all of them escaped back into heaven, but only ‘prophecy’ (most often translated ‘hope’) was to remain. Thus in the human view, the gods could have made their life easy, but it became a toil of labor and delusion, which is attributed to the circumstances created in these very early episodes of the history of man.

The myth of “Pandora’s Box” is related to the myth of the “Mead of Poetry”, which is itself sometimes viewed as comparable to Prometheus’ theft of fire from Zeus. The essential story tells of woman’s acquisition of the fruit of mental expansion, which is held in the realm of the gods. Following this acquisition mankind themselves are further prevented from reaching the realm of the gods and must be satisfied with what few divine gifts they retain. It is not entirely known, but likely, that a specific plant such as *ephedra* was originally viewed to be the gift brought down from the heavenly sphere. Yet the Prometheus myth also includes another gift from the gods, fire. This exceptional gift was already an essential feature of human life at the time these myths originally developed.

Just as in the case of the Pandora myth Norse mythology contains its own version of the theft of fire, yet its provenance is obscured through de-emphasizing the theft itself. Yet there are several correspondences between the Prometheus myth and the Norse. The essential form it takes derives from the same identical natural forces involved: the god of storms, the god of fire,

the goddess of nature, god of spring, and although some of the specific elements differ such transformations, especially over long time-spans, is to be expected. The original myth thus goes back to a time in remote pre-history, yet the basic elements of it can be reconstructed to some extent by taking note of similarities and also noting how the narrative shifted in emphasis through later transmission.

Prometheus and Loki

Just as with the similarities between the myths of Pandora and Gunnlod, there are also similarities between Prometheus and the Norse god Loki. Loki is known as the Norse “trickster” god and was originally a god of fire. Prometheus himself was known to have an “intricate and twisting mind” (Hesiod 1991: 153). As far as Prometheus’ origins he had two other brothers apart from Epimetheus: Atlas and Menoitios, his father Iapetos. Atlas plays a significant role in carrying the sky (the dome of the sky) upon his head, whereas Menoitios was sent down into deep Erebus. Prometheus plays a more active role in the fate of mankind; in Hesiod’s *Theogony* he tells the origin of sacrifice:

It was the gods, and mortal men, took their separate portions at Mekone, and Prometheus, eager to try his wits, cut up a great ox, and set it before Zeus, to see if he could outguess him. He took the meaty parts and the inwards thick with fat, and set them before men, hiding them away in an ox’s stomach, but the white bones of the ox he arranged, with careful deception, inside a concealing fold of white fat, and set it before Zeus...Ever since that time the races of mortal men on earth have burned the white bones to the immortals on the smoky altars. (Hesiod 1991: 155-156)

It was because of this deception that Zeus would not give fire to mankind.

So Zeus, who knows imperishable counsels, spoke in his anger, and ever remembering this deception thereafter, he would not give the force of weariless fire to the ash-tree people, not to people who inhabit the earth, and are mortal (Hesiod 1991: 156)

Loki is also involved in similar circumstances, in “The Theft of Idunn’s Apples” he encounters an eagle who prevents him from cooking an ox until he grants him a certain portion in return.

Three Aesir set out—Odin and Loki and Haenir—and crossed mountains and wildernesses, and food was difficult to come by. And when they came down into a certain valley they saw a herd of oxen and took one of the oxen and set it in an earth oven. And when they thought it must be cooked they opened the earth oven and it was not cooked. And a second time when they opened the oven after some time had passed, it was still uncooked. Then they discussed among themselves what could be the reason. Then they heard someone talking in the oak tree up above them, saying that the one that was sitting there claimed to be responsible for the oven not cooking. They looked up and it was an eagle sitting there, and no small one. Then said the eagle: ‘If you will grant me my fill of the ox, then the oven will cook.’ They agreed to this. Then it let itself drop from the tree and sat on the oven and to begin with immediately put away the ox’s two hams and both shoulders. (Sturluson 1987: 59)

Prometheus is also punished for his part in this by being captured and bound, as told in two versions within the Greek sources:

After he had fashioned men from water and earth, Prometheus also gave them fire, which he had hidden in a fennel stalk in secret from Zeus. But when Zeus learned of it, he ordered Hephaistos to nail his body to Mount Caucasos (a mountain that lies in Scythia). So Prometheus was nailed to it and held fast there for a good many years; and each day, an eagle swooped down to feed on the lobes of his liver, which grew again by night. (Apollodorus 1998: 36)

And in ineluctable, painful bonds he fastened Prometheus of the subtle mind, for he drove a stanchion through his middle. Also he let loose on him the wing-spread eagle, and it was feeding on his imperishable liver, which by night would grow back to size from what the spread-winged bird had eaten in the daytime. (Hesiod 1991: 154)

In a similar way Loki himself is caught and bound for his offences against the gods, also told in two instances.

Now Loki was captured without quarter and taken to a certain cave. Then they took three stone slabs and set them on edge and knocked a hole in each slab. Then Loki's sons Vali and Narfi were fetched. They took the guts of Vali, but Narfi changed into a wolf and thus escaped. Then the Aesir took his guts and bound Loki with them across the three stones—one under his shoulders, one under his loins, the third under the backs of his knees—and these bonds turned to iron. Then Skadi got a poisonous snake and fixed it up over him so that the poison would drip from the snake into his face. But his wife Sigyn stands next to him holding a basin under the drops of poison. And when the basin is full she goes and pours away the poison, but in the meantime the poison drips into his face. Then he jerks away so hard that the whole earth shakes. That is what you call an earthquake. (Sturluson 1987: 52)

And after that Loki hid in the waterfall of Franangr, disguised as a salmon. There the Aesir caught him. He was bound with the guts of his son Nari. But his son Narfi changed into a wolf. Skadi took a poisonous snake and fastened it over Loki's face; poison dripped down from it. Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat there and held a basin under the poison. But when the basin was full, she carried the poison out; and meanwhile the poison fell on Loki. Then he writhed so violently at this that all the earth shook from it; these are now called earthquakes. (Larrington 1999: 95-96)

The binding of Loki however is not specifically associated with the theft of Idunn's apples. It proceeds that the eagle is Thiassi in disguise who threatens Loki to lure Idunn beyond the protective wall of Asgard.

He shouted and begged the eagle most earnestly for a truce but it said that Loki would never get free unless he vowed solemnly to get Idunn to come outside Asgard with her apples, and Loki accepted. Then he got free and went up to his comrades. And nothing else noteworthy was told for the moment of their expedition until they got home. But at the agreed time Loki lured Idunn out through Asgard into a certain forest, saying that he had found some apples that she would think worth having, and told her she should bring her apples with her and compare them with these. Then giant Thiassi arrived in eagle shape and snatched Idunn and flew away with her to his home in Thrymheim. (Sturluson 1987: 60)

Comparisons

Within the myths Thiassi would share the same position as Greek thunder-god Zeus while Loki takes the place of the titan Prometheus.¹ The giant Thiassi was said to have created a storm wind when he flew after Loki in the form of an eagle. Loki is already known to be a god of fire, but there is no particular episode relating to him actually having stolen it.

Idunn herself is known among the gods as the custodian of the golden apples that grant eternal youth. Loki assists to help Thiassi attain the apples just as Prometheus aids Hercules to attain the apples of the Hesperides ('daughters of the night', perhaps the heavenly bodies). In one variant Hercules acquired them by killing the guardian snake before taking them, although the best known occurs when Prometheus, after being freed by Hercules, advises him upon how to trick his brother Atlas to attain the apples. So Hercules is triumphant in attaining them although it is Athena that returns them to their rightful place. (Apollodorus 1998: 83) Interestingly enough, a deity emerges from Zeus when Prometheus strikes him with an axe:

When the time arrived for the child to be born, Prometheus, or according to others, Hephaistos, struck the head of Zeus with an axe and from the top of his head, near the River Triton, leapt Athene, fully armed. (Apollodorus 1998: 31)

This is similar to the Norse story where following the death of Thiassi his daughter Skadi suddenly appears on the scene, fully armed to confront the Aesir.

¹ Thiassi is the son of a giant called Alvaldi, who had two other sons Idi and Gang; while the goddess Idunn is to have been the daughter of Ivaldi as told in 'Odin's Raven's Song'. Ivaldi is known only as being the father of dwarves, so it is not clear how far this might be relied upon. It is interesting to note that Zeus's own wife Hera was also his own sister.

But Skadi, daughter of giant Thiassi, took helmet and mail-coat and all weapons of war and went to Asgard to avenge her father. But the Aesir offered her atonement and compensation, the first item of which was that she was to choose herself a husband out of the Aesir and choose by the feet and see nothing else of them. (Sturluson 1987: 61)

And who was the goddess that fastened the poisonous snake above Loki after he was bound to the rock slabs but Skadi herself. Thus there is a clear link between “The Theft of Idunn’s Apples” myth and “The Binding of Loki” episode.

The binding of Loki is both associated with the myth of Balder’s death and the conclusion of a spate of insults directed at the various gods. It does not make perfect sense that either of these two incidents were the true cause of his binding, the notion must have been around before they were incorporated into these myths², and yet it in some way involves Skadi, since she not only is taking revenge upon him but is also known as “Loki’s adversary”, which is a distinction only Heimdall shares with her.

Hephaistos himself, who bound Prometheus, is equivalent to the Roman god Vulcan, the god of fire and metallurgy. Known for being deformed, he is also described by Homer as having very large muscular arms but skinny legs, probably a mere reflection of the occupational “deformity” that afflicted any smith.

Thus there is both a link between Prometheus and fire as there is between Loki and fire, where in the first case the binding of Prometheus on a mountain by Hephaistos appears to represent the taming of fire by the practiced smith, while in the second case the binding of Loki

² Other versions of the Balder myth do not contain the Loki character (see “Brother Gods of Light and Darkness”), and the binding episode at the end of *Lokasenna* was attached at the end by the compiler.

within a cave is used to explain the existence of earthquakes. It is likely then that these two were variations on the same initial myth, and that the eagle of Prometheus served the same function as the snake of Loki, to cause him to writhe and cause earthquakes.

Goddess of the Golden Apples

Idunn is the goddess of the golden apples that bring youth, a treasure of the gods. Once falling into the underworld in her sadness she is consoled by her husband Bragi, who through the playing of his harp heralds in the budding of spring. The myth relates to the disappearance of Idunn and Bragi during the winter months, but their return in the spring to fructify the earth. Bragi himself is said to be the son of Odin and Gunnlod, born in that very cave where Odin went to fetch the Mead of Poetry (the Moon).³ This thus links this particular tale with that of the mead. Yet there appears to be no apparent equivalent to the god Bragi in any other mythological tradition except Balder himself. Balder appears in the same place as the Syrian Dumuzi, who is associated with the goddess Inanna, who herself falls into the underworld. Balder is similar to Bel, a prevalent Near Eastern god who was also similar to Apollo.

Apollo had a twin sister Artemis (equivalent with the Roman Diana)⁴, he was a god of disease and his arrows were believed to strike people with fever. Fever was thus associated with the Sun, which Apollo was the god of. She was a goddess of hunting, no doubt by her association with the Moon, which as a crescent resembles a giant bow. As such they were similar to the Sun

³ These details are probably mere embellishments added by Guerber, so should not be entirely relied upon.

⁴ It was the twins Apollo and Artemis who were responsible for attacking the giant Tityus for attempting to rape their mother Leto, who Zeus also hit with lightning. Tityus ended up in the underworld where he lay and, like Prometheus, had his liver picked at by vultures.

god Helios his sister the Moon goddess Selene (the Roman Luna). Apollo would have also been associated in his early form with the arrival of the summer, just as Bragi is said to have been, and just like Bragi Apollo was a skilled musician.

There is another interesting connection that might be made: that the goddess Idunn herself shares some similarities with the story of Adam and Eve, particularly her name is comparable to the name of the garden Eden. Since Idunn is the custodian of the fruit of youth and immortality, the fruit of the Tree of Life, she would also be equivalent to the goddess of the garden itself. Perhaps originally the Garden of Eden meant the garden of the goddess Eden. While this very well could be the case, it is not as clear if Idunn is identical with Eve or whether the first woman stole some of the fruit from the garden to give to the first man contrary to Eden's wishes. In effect, that they were destined to not be like the gods. In addition, the forming of Adam by Yahweh out of earth is very similar to the way in which Prometheus forms men out of water and earth.

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 02:04-02:09, KJV)

In “Odin’s Raven’s Song” Idunn herself is said to have been sitting on the world tree prior to her falling into the underworld Niflheim. The world tree is the ash Yggdrasil which should be considered equivalent to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, as both serve the same function: the fruit of each tree brings eternal youth.⁵ The ensemble of the creation of man, the theft of fire, and “Pandora’s Box” equates with the circumstances that lead to the misery of man in his “fall from grace”:

For the gods have hidden and keep hidden what could be men’s livelihood. It could have been that easily in one day you could work out enough to keep you for a year, with no more working. (Hesiod 1991: 23)

Summary

From all of this is it possible to determine whether they were really derived from some incipient form? If so, what route did it take before it found its way into the Near East and Europe? There is surely a possible link, so how do the equivalences pan out? A summary of how the gods relate is shown in *Figure 1*.

⁵ This relies upon the ability to equate Idunn’s apples with the fruit of the world tree, which arises purely from Idunn’s association with Yggdrasil.

Figure 1.
How the gods compare in the Theft of Fire myth

Designation	Southern Europe	Northern Europe	Biblical
God of the Sky	Zeus	Thiassi	Yahweh
God of Fire	Prometheus	Loki	-
Goddess of the Garden	Hesperides	Idunn	Eden(?)
Daughter of the Sky	Athena	Skadi	-
God of the Sun/Summer	Apollo	Bragi	-

Apart from Zeus/Thiassi there is no clear equivalence between the names, except for the link between Pandora and Eve, with that of Idunn and Eden. The name Bragi could also arise out of the same root as the name Apollo but only by an unfathomable line of descent that is thus difficult to demonstrate.

It remains an arduous task to uncover the underlying mythological framework that would have led to the original myth. Yet it does appear to be tied to some early Mesopotamian form that likely goes back to at least the same time in which the spread of agriculture into Europe occurred, between 10,000 and 4,000 BC. One of the difficulties here is that the Biblical form, which hypothetically derived from a Mesopotamian original, has been restructured to suit its monotheistic emphasis. The other strange issue is whether the myth was actually adopted into Mesopotamia through Persia, since there is no myth from there that matches this structure, yet the Persian mythological base, captured in the Zoroastrian *Avesta*, shares similarities with Nordic mythology.

It could be that if it went into Persia the names were transformed, so that the name of the original Mesopotamian storm god was not retained. Clearly if this was an original myth adopted by the Hebrews, that they also replaced any divinity with that of their supreme god Yahweh. Thus the remaining myths each in their own way fragmentary, with nothing arising from either the *Avesta* or the *Rig Veda* relating to this particular mythical ensemble.

Reconstruction

The Greek version assembles events in a particular order, although there is no reason to believe it holds the original order, while the Norse version appears to be fragmented, there is no reason to believe this means it is less like the original form. A specific comparison of the various events contained within this myth is shown in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2.
Significant events comprising the Theft of Fire myth

Event	Southern Europe	Northern Europe
Sacrifice	Prometheus fools Zeus into taking the less choice bits of the sacrificial ox.	Loki offers an ox they have killed to an eagle that has taken away the fire's power.
Theft of Fire	Prometheus steals the fire from where Zeus hid it in a fennel stalk.	Loki is the god of fire.
Divine Gift	Prometheus aids Hercules in obtaining the golden apples of the Hesperides.	Loki must lure the goddess Idunn out of the walls of Asgard.
Capture	Prometheus is hunted down by Hephaistos.	Loki is hunted down by the Aesir.
Punishment	Prometheus is bound to a mountain where an eagle picks at his liver.	Loki is bound in a cave where a snake drops poison into his face.
Escape	Prometheus is freed after Hercules shoots an arrow to kill the eagle.	Loki is freed at the end of the world.

What is interesting here is that there are distinct correspondences, yet this particular sequence of events in the Greek version has nothing to do with the story of the goddess with the golden apples (Idunn), however the events are linked in both the Norse and the Greek versions, but not in the Biblical version. To get a better grasp of the situation, it might be possible to “roll back” the Norse version to attempt to see how it might have equated more clearly to the Prometheus version.

In the Norse myth about the theft of Idunn's apples the three gods are attempting to cook an ox when they are frustrated by an eagle. Not surprisingly the eagle was the animal of Zeus, who himself took the form of one when pursuing Ganymede. The eagle in Norse myth is taking away

the power of the fire to cook, but agrees to permit it to return if they offer him some of the ox in return. So just as in the case of Prometheus and Zeus, now Thiassi takes his portion of the ox and it is Loki who in his fury strikes at the eagle and is carried off. Zeus's withholding of fire from men is not so different from the eagles withholding the power of fire from the gods.

In effect, fire existed but was useless because the storm god withheld its heat. Here however the fire is granted in exchange for a portion of the ox, whereas in the Prometheus myth the two events are sequentially told. It is not, however, clear if Loki first acquired fire but when attempting to use it found that its heat had been withheld, and thus in exchange for acquiring the heat of the fire the storm god sought in return a portion of all slaughtered animals to be burned at his altar. In essence, the bits that humans found inedible, such as bone matter, were explained as holding some meaning (i.e. from the question they might ask: "Why are we not allowed to eat the bones?")

Loki is carried away from his companions (originally it was probably only Loki who was there) by the eagle into the sky. Here is then when Idunn appears. It is possible, as it normally occurs in mythology, that related stories get recombined yet are never entirely disassociated; thus just as it follows that after the theft of fire by Prometheus and the supposed theft of fire by Loki, the introduction of the goddess. In this case Thiassi is forcing Loki to bring her beyond the safety of Asgard. At this point it is difficult to recognize an original form, despite the similarities. This is largely because the goddess Idunn does not share an equivalent role with Pandora. There is no mention, in fact, of the origin of Pandora's jar, and it is unfortunate that any other versions of the tale have not survived.

In the case of the Biblical telling it is impossible for now to reconstruct what the original myth might have been, except from the other two versions. It is again possible that the intent of the myth was lost in the Norse version, while Idunn was undoubtedly a goddess of spring, it is difficult to know if the original return of Idunn in the form of a nut was actually transposed from the theft of fire inside a nutshell (thus the Norse equivalent of the fennel stalk) or whether it is, as is normally viewed, a symbol of renewal. In any case, Loki is threatened by the gods to bring Idunn back in order to restore their youth. He goes in Freiya's falcon form and brings her back, but in the process is chased by raging Thiassi in the form of an eagle. The gods light wood shavings to burn the eagle and it catches fire. Then it is related how the gods kill the giant Thiassi.

It is worthy to note that the weapon that the gods now use against Thiassi is fire itself, which also plays a part earlier in the myth; this appears to be no accident. It might have even gone on to explain why the storm-god remains in the sky and no longer comes down to earth: because he fears being burned again by the human's fire. Yet there is one other likely matter at hand, that it is not uncommon to include an etiological explanation within myths. Just as it is said that Loki being bound caused earthquakes, the fire set by the gods probably did scorch the eagle's wings, and it was probably said that it was because of this that the eagle has dark (burnt) coloration on its wingtips. This is evident in the White-tailed Eagle known to inhabit Eurasia shown in *Figure 3*.

Figure 3.
Eurasian White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)



Then comes the arrival of Skadi, who is equivalent to the goddess Athena only because she is said to have arrived in battle dress: “took helmet and mail-coat and all weapons of war”. In addition, in one version it is Prometheus who strikes Zeus’s head with an axe that causes Athena to appear. In this case it could have been Loki who dealt him with a death blow on his head that caused Skadi to appear (although Loki boasts himself as being “first and foremost” in the act of killing Thiazi (Larrington 1999: 93) it is elsewhere attributed to Thor).

Thus in this case we would have to figure that Skadi was the daughter of Thiassi and Idunn. There is nothing to imply this except for the sudden appearance of Skadi at this point in the myth. She comes seeking revenge and in the Norse version is awarded a husband and a laugh in compensation. It is very likely that her compensation initially did come in the form of revenge: that she took Loki and was responsible for binding him in the cave and hanging the snake over him. This would round out the account very well.

Conclusion

After the divergence of the original myth both the Greek and the Norse versions continued to evolve independently, each reinterpreting events. This is not only to be expected but is often due to the nature of oral transmission over hundreds or thousands of years. It is actually surprising to find that there is so much consistency between the two, but it is sure that other versions of these myths would have been told and that what has come down to us are only a very few of them.

If other variations are identified it could well lend further support and clarity to the initial myth, which according to what is reconstructable would retain something of this similar form: the fire god went into the sky to steal the fire from the storm god (who held the power of the thunderbolt) and returned to the earth, the sky god took the shape of an eagle to retrieve fire (or rode on an eagle's back) but was willing to allow men to have this in return for the bones of all animals, but from the fire god he settled upon the goddess of the garden. The god of fire then brought the goddess to him, yet the god of fire was then persuaded to fetch her back and the storm god in the shape of the eagle created a great storm with its wings. Unable to stop when it encountered the fire set to entrap him, the eagle's wingtips were singed. The sky god's daughter appeared who for revenge took the fire god and bound him within a mountain cave, where when he is attacked by the eagle or snake he writhes with his chains creating earthquakes (where he is also the source of hot springs and lava flows). Yet mankind was left with the gift of fire in exchange for their willingness to use it to burn that portion that was designated for the storm god, the bones and entrails.

What is clear then is that the woman in the Moon was not actually the Idunn character. Rather it was Idunn who was the goddess who kept the grove of fruit (the World Tree, i.e. the night sky), where the woman in the Moon had merely acquired some of the fruit herself. For in the Norse telling it was the dwarfs (or giants) who created the mead and it was then taken from them before it eventually found its way into Suttung's hands.

This suggests that the realm of the dwarfs was also the same as the realm demons or trolls were thought to inhabit, which existed beyond the World Tree, in Norse terms the world of Utgard. Thus the divine fruit was actually the fruit of the world tree, which in another case within Norse myth is expressly said to assure an easy delivery for any woman who ate its cooked fruit.⁶

It is not clear thus far why Thiassi demanded the goddess Idunn, yet in the case of the birth of Athena she was the product of an intercourse between Zeus and the Oceanid Metis. Metis is to have given Zeus the drug that caused Kronos to disgorge his own children, whom he had swallowed. Thus it is possible that she was acting in a position equivalent to Idunn, and just as the product of this union was the goddess Athena, in the case of the Norse myth it produced the Asyniur Skadi. However, there is no specific description of Skadi having emerged from Thiassi fully grown as in the case of Zeus, yet it is possible that the specific incidence of her birth was lost, or perhaps its meaning was not understood and was left out.

Yet the relationship between the goddesses does seem to rely upon some form of rivalry: that Idunn was a goddess of the spring and growth (as was Bragi) while Skadi was a goddess of the winter, known as the "ski-goddess" she also was a huntress with her bow and arrow (Simek 1993: 286). It is appropriate then that in the marriage of Skadi with Niord they find themselves

⁶ This recalls yet another association with the Garden of Eden, where banishment from the garden comes with a punishment against women, to experience pain in childbirth.

incompatible, for she preferred hunting in the snowy mountains. Except for her belligerent nature, the characteristics of Skadi and Athena bear little resemblance to one another.⁷

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⁷ It is possible that Athena was not the original goddess, but apart from the appearance of Prometheus here it is not even clear that the birth of Athena played any role in the mythological sequence relating to the theft of fire.