

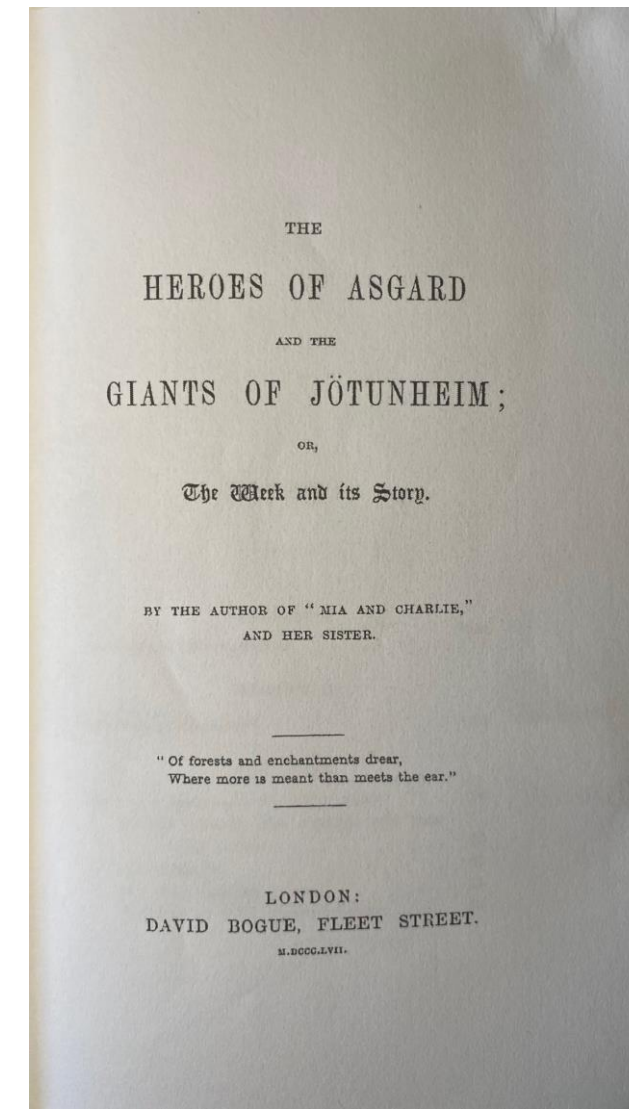
The Strange Case of Charles Altamont Doyle and *The Heroes of Asgard* (1857)

Facts to Consider:

The Heroes of Asgard and the Giants of Jotunheim; Or, the Week and Its Story (1857) presents several challenges for bibliographers:

- 1) The authors are credited as "The author of "Mia and Charlie," and her sister."
- 2) There is no mention of illustrations or an illustrator on the title page, and the Table of Contents does not display a list of illustrations.
- 3) Contemporary reviews do not mention an illustrator or comment on any of the five illustrations.

However, *The Heroes of Asgard and the Giants of Jötunheim* is advertised "With illustrations by C. Doyle" in the "The Advertisements of New Books" section in the 1857 edition of "The Publishers Circular" (75). The publisher, David Bogue of Fleet Street, also features the same acknowledgment for C. Doyle, but does not provide the names of "The author of *Mia and Charlie*, and her sister" in the "Books for Young People" catalogue in the back matter of *The Heroes of Asgard and the Giants of Jötunheim* (1857). Several of the illustrations contain Doyle's monogram, i.e., CAD.



Now ready, fep. 8vo. 5s. cloth,
THE HEROES OF ASGARD AND THE GIANTS OF JOTUNHEIM;
 Or, the Week and its Story. By the Author of "Mia and Charlie."
 With Illustrations by C. Doyle.
 By the same Author, each with Engravings,
SIDNEY GREY: a Tale of School Life. Fep. 6s.
MIA and CHARLIE; or, a Week's Holiday at Rydale Rectory. Fep. 4s. 6d. cloth.
 DAVID BOGUE, Fleet Street. (132)

Exhibit B: "The Publishers' Circular" (1857).



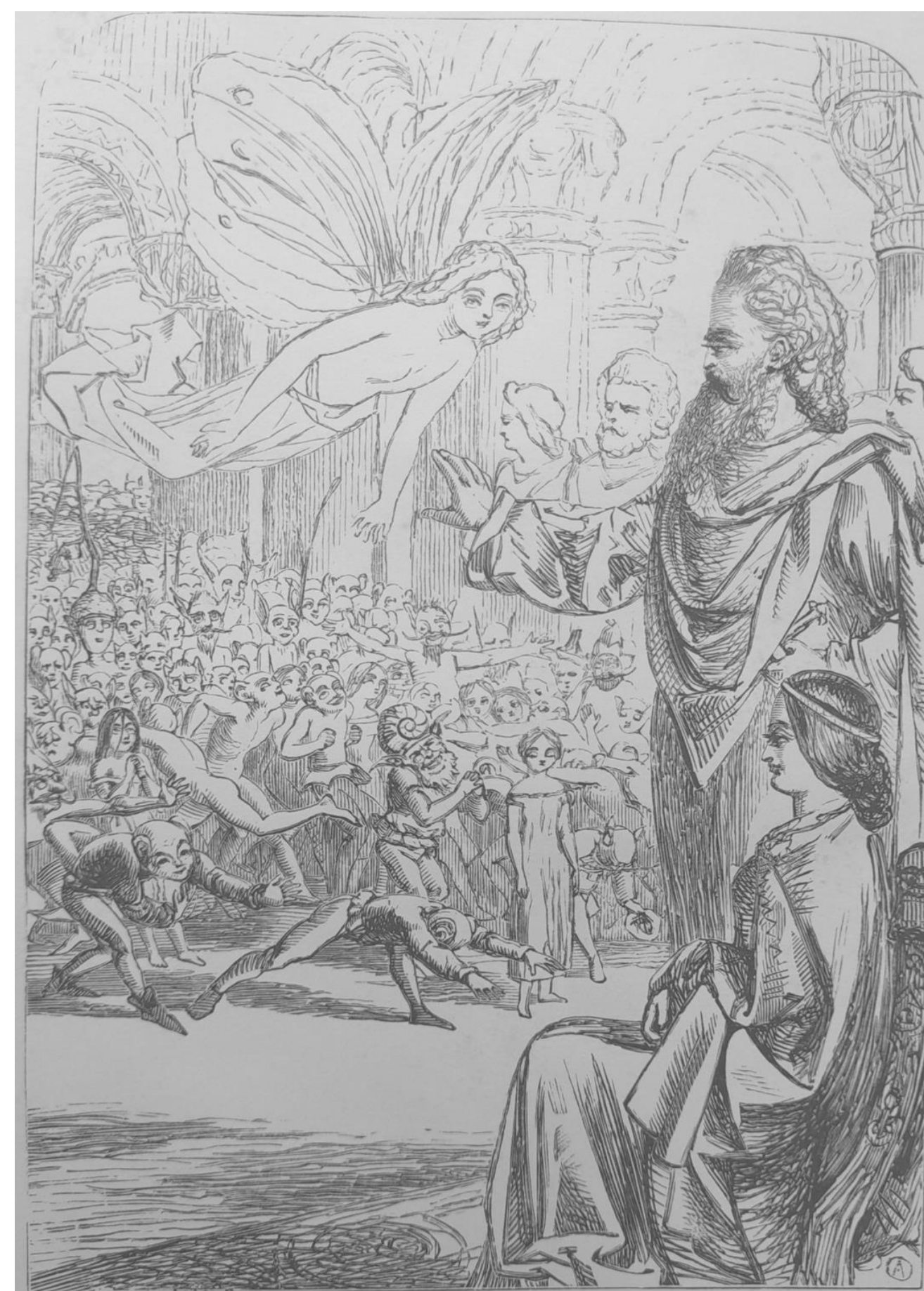
Exhibit A: [Title Page](#)

Exhibit C: Monogram



Royal Albert Museum: "[Meditation, Self Portrait](#)"

Late Breaking News: Charles Altamont Doyle, brother of Richard "Dicky" Doyle and father of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, now identified as the illustrator of *The Heroes of Asgard*!



Page 31 Photo: Jón Karl Helgason

"HERMOD'S RETURN WITH THE DWARFS"

Victorian Era: This scene is part of the Keary sisters' retelling, in *The Heroes of Asgard* (1857), of the Mead of Poetry myth from Snorri's *Edda* (Faulkes 62).

Eddaic Myth: In the myth, Óðinn does not send Hermóðr to fetch the dwarfs nor does he punish them for killing Kvasir.

Illustrator's Interpretation: Hermóðr does not have wings in Norse mythology. Doyle's figure of Óðinn appears to be gesturing that the dwarfs should stay back rather than "beckoning them" to come forward as is described in *The Heroes of Asgard* (31). Doyle, depicts Óðinn and several other male figures with his own face, and other figures recall Doyle's illustrations of supernatural creatures in his watercolour "Meditation, Self Portrait." Doyle also depicts Frigg and several other female figures with the face of his wife, Mary.

Visual Associations: The Norse gods are attired as Greek gods.



Page 74 Photo: Jón Karl Helgason

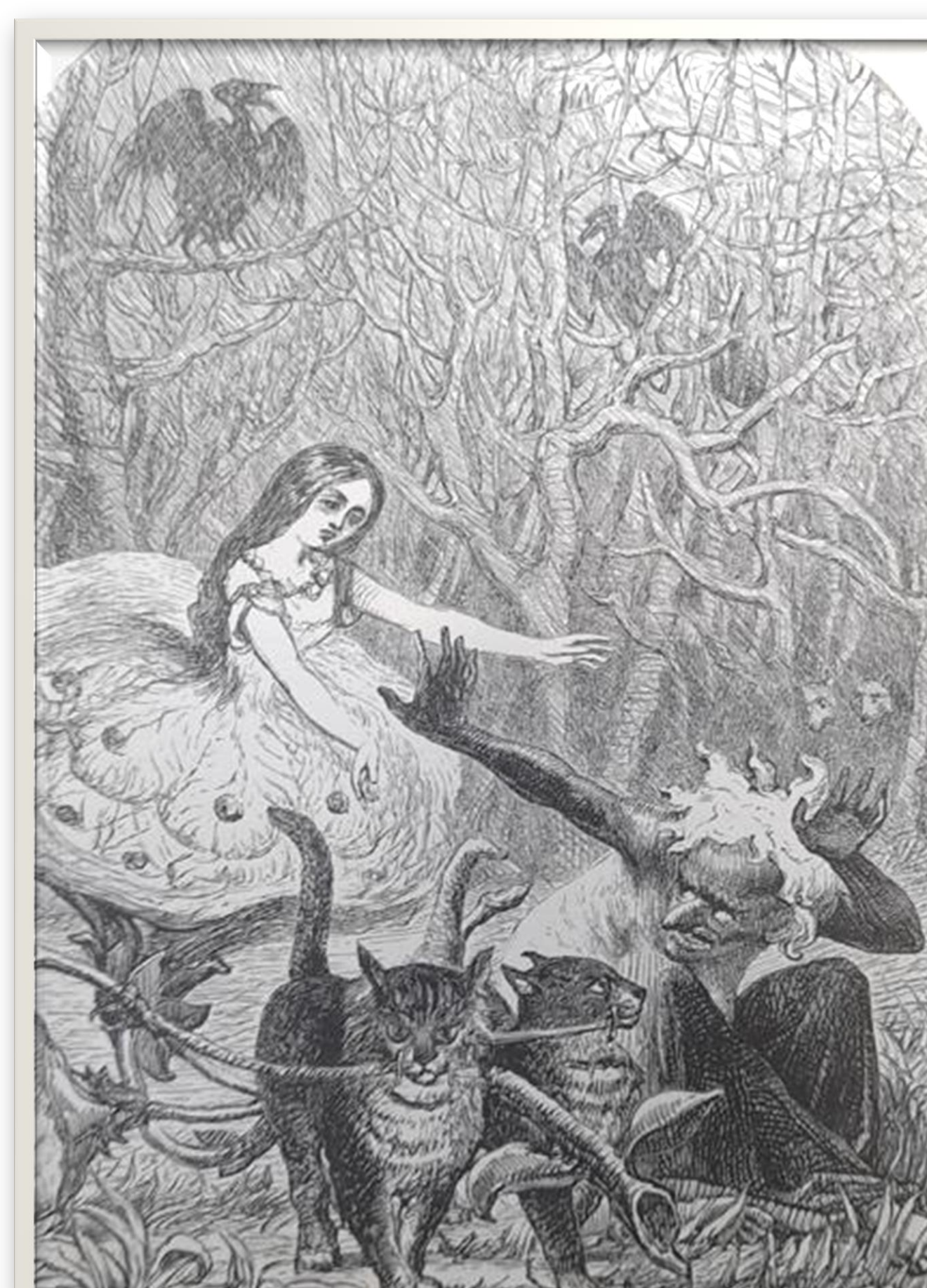
"THOR'S ATTACK ON THE GIANT SKRYMIR"

Victorian Era: This scene is part of the Keary sisters' retelling, in *The Heroes of Asgard* (1857), of the myth concerning Þórr's Journey to the Court of Útgardaloki from Snorri's *Edda* (Faulkes 40) and concerns Þórr's encounter with a giant who says his name is Skrymir.

Eddaic Myth: In the myth, the giant Skrymir is described as human in form. Doyle's depiction of the giant in the form of a mountain is interesting because giants in Norse mythology are sometimes called "bergrisi", i.e., hill giants (Cleasby Vigfússon, *Icelandic English Dictionary* 60).

Illustrator's Interpretation: Doyle depicts Óðinn and several other male figures with his own face, and depicts Röskva with the face of his wife, Mary.

Visual Associations: The Cornish fairy tale "Jack the Giant Killer," or one of the Grimms' folk tales concerning "Tom Thumb" or "The Brave Little Tailor", all of whom were giant killers.



Page 150 Photo: Jón Karl Helgason

"FREYJA AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE IRON WOOD"

Victorian Era: This scene is part of the Keary sisters' retelling, in *The Heroes of Asgard* (1857), of Freyja and the Brisingamen necklace from Snorri's *Edda* (Faulkes 30). In their retelling of the Norse myth, the Kearys invent a curse attached to the necklace to explain why Freyja's husband can no longer be with her.

Eddaic Myth: The Kearys added the scene in which Freyja, while searching for her missing husband, enters the wood known as Járnvíðr and encounters the witch who lives there.

Illustrator's Interpretation: Freyja's cart is pulled by cats in Norse mythology, but the cart is not constructed out of flower blossoms with vines for reins. Doyle depicts Freyja with the face of his wife, Mary.

Visual Association: Thumbelina and flower blossoms.



Page 194 Photo: Jón Karl Helgason

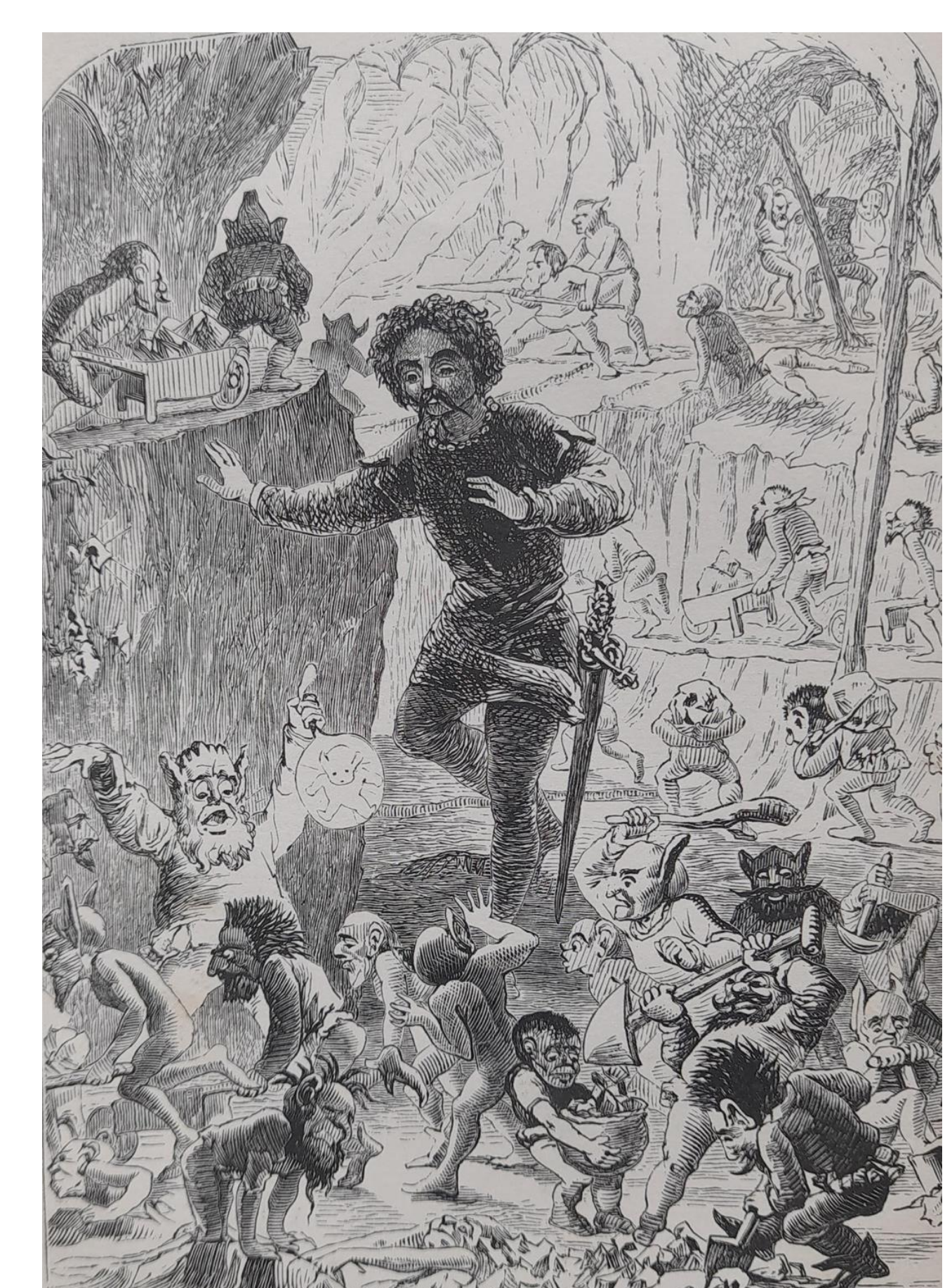
"IDUNA AND THE ELLEWOMEN"

Victorian Era: This scene is part of the Keary sisters' retelling, in *The Heroes of Asgard* (1857), of the myth concerning The Abduction of Iðunn from Snorri's *Edda* (Faulkes 40).

Eddaic Myth: The Kearys inserted the Danish folktale figures known as Ellekvindr, i.e., Ellevomen, into their retelling of the myth. The Ellevomen, or Elf Women, were beautiful but were hollow behind like a "dough-trough" (Keightley, Thomas. *The Fairy Mythology*, 1828 81. [Web](#)).

Illustrator's Interpretation: Doyle depicts Iðunn and several of the Ellevomen with the face of his wife, Mary. Doyle choose gowns that were unfashionable for the time and skillfully drew the details to reveal that the women are hollow. Doyle's Ellevomen have hollow heads as well as bodies.

Visual Associations: Cinderella scrubbing the floor with her stepsisters looking down at her.



Page 270 Photo: Jón Karl Helgason

"SKIRNIR AMONG THE DWARFS"

Victorian Era: This scene is part of the Keary sisters' retelling, in *The Heroes of Asgard* (1857), of the myth concerning the Binding of Fenrir from Snorri's *Edda* (Faulkes 27 -29). Doyle incorporates the Keary sisters' detail from their retelling of the myth that Óðinn banished the dwarfs to throw "fuel upon the great earth's central fire" as part of their punishment for killing Kvasir (33).

Eddaic Myth: In the myth, Skirnir was sent to ask the dwarves to make the magic chain to bind Fenrir. Doyle does not depict the forging of the chain.

Illustrator's Interpretation: Doyle depicts several of the male figures with his own face, and other figures recall his illustrations of supernatural creatures in his water colour "Meditation, Self Portrait" (Royal Albert Museum).

Visual Associations: Several of the faces appear to be portraits of contemporary Victorians, possibly politicians.

Selected Sources

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- MyNDIR: My Norse Digital Image Repository*. Ed. P. A. Baer. 2022. Edition 2.2. Victoria, B. C.: Humanities Computing and Media Centre, University of Victoria. 2022. Web.
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DH+BH: an Interdisciplinary Conference
 on Digital Humanities and Book History
 September 22-24, 2022
 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



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