Eddic Poetry as Oral Poetry:
The Evidence of Parallel Passages in the Helgi Poems
for Questions of Composition and Performance

It is usual to take the oral nature of Eddic poetry for granted; even those who view the manuscript tradition as extending back to Norway or make a case for runic transmission seem to assume that the life of such verse was ultimately an oral one. But because of this rare consensus, few efforts have been made to place the *Edda* within a broader survey of specifically oral poetry. This undertaking is overdue, and today the work of Parry and Lord seems an inevitable reference point. Initially many accepted the invitation to regard the brilliantly analyzed South


Slavic tradition of epic songs as typical of oral poetry *tout court*, but at least equally important for the *Edda* are modifications that the Oral Theory has passed through in application to other literatures, especially the nearly related West Germanic. Unlike Old English, Eddic poetry is everywhere conceded to be ‘in some sense’ oral, but the assignment now is to discover ‘in what sense’—more precisely, to describe it against the background of what is known and theorized about oral poetries in other traditions. The task would be seriously undermined by ignorance of work done in connection with the Oral Theory, to which many of our conceptual tools and, especially, the fresh *Problemstellung* are due. However, in attempting to work out the nature of Eddic poetry as oral poetry two cardinal mistakes are to be avoided: the force of foreign analogies must not be allowed to stand in the way of discovery of the special nature of the Eddic tradition; and, similarly, we should make sufficient allowance for the heterogeneity of the Eddic tradition itself.

The present small contribution to the needed revaluation follows well-beaten methodological paths deriving from the fact that oral traditions, including the Eddic, may generate parallel texts. The discussion arises partly as a series of reactions to theoretical aspects of recent work on non-Eddic oral literature and touches three topics: (1) the question of textual stability and memorization in our own view and also in that of a thirteenth-century Icelander; (2) compositional units in other oral poetry and in the *Poetic Edda*; and (3) tradition and innovation in the creation of an Eddic poem. However, my conclusions are offered as applicable only to the poems actually discussed, chiefly to *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, and are meant to be no more than suggestive for Eddic tradition in general.

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4. The term ‘Oral Theory’ seems a desirable loosening of ‘oral-formulaic theory’ and is now enshrined in the most recent publications, including the useful *Bibliography of Studies Relating to Parry's and Lord's Oral Theory*, by Edward R. Haymes.
Parallel Passages / Textual Stability / Memorization

Lord’s portrait of the Yugoslavian guslar presents one powerful model of the oral poet. His long narrative songs are improvised in performance, and the ‘text’ is in constant transition; or to put it another way, there is no text in our sense, only the subject of the poem (the story), the singer, and his technique or singing tradition. No rival model of equal force and clarity exists for Eddic or even for West Germanic verse, despite the shadowy figure of the scop, so that we are thrown back on inference from the skimpy evidence for textual flux or stability. Free flux should imply improvisation, where creation and transmission merge, while stability suggests memorization for the transmission of poetry but leaves its creation in doubt. For it is hard to see how ‘improvisation’ and ‘memorization’ can be construed without qualification as a simple pair of semantic opposites; and although memorization, as generally understood, has no role in the pure improvisational tradition of the South Slavic ‘men’s songs,’ all traditions may not be so pure.\(^5\) In the absence of a recognized term for the opposite of ‘improvisation’—that is, for a type of composition which takes place in private before a performance—I suggest ‘deliberative composition.’ Thus some of the possibilities:

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\(^{5}\) In *The Singer of Tales*, Lord prefers ‘oral (-formulaic) composition’ to the more pedestrian ‘improvisation’; this is justified for Yugoslavia since unqualified use of the ordinary word could mislead the reader into the assumption that he had a prior understanding of the mechanisms of the singing tradition. But the result of extending Lord’s terminology would beg the question of the nature of composition in Eddic poetry by implying that all composition in an oral culture is improvised. Lord’s latest statement seems to reject ‘improvisation’ as a concept by redefining it in a way I cannot accept: ‘... the poet does not ‘improvise,’ that is to say, he does not make up consciously entirely new lines or entirely new passages ... [he] is not afraid of using old expressions—a special kind of ‘improvisation,’ if you will, but not improvising out of whole cloth. In my attempts in the past to combat the idea of a fixed text that was memorized, I have apparently given the impression that not only is the text different at each singing by a given singer (which is true, of course), but that it is radically different, entirely
Examples of Type 1 are the South Slavic men's songs; of Type 3, skaldic short poems like Gísli's fatal *kviðling*; and of Type 4, longer skaldic poems like *Hofuðlausn*. Type 5 may be represented in *Hjálmar's Death-Song*, and two interpretations of Old English poetry discussed below hazily imply Type 2, but living traditions offer more certain examples. Finally, Type 6 exists, after a fashion, wherever the guslars have learned from a written source, such as one of the early songbooks, and the re-entry of written material such as fairy tales into an extemporaneous prose tradition is widespread; but for the survival of a tradition of deliberative composition, some transmission would, of course, have to be memorial. However, the mixed transmission of Types 2 and 5, and the possibility that poetic creation too could mingle its two modes, suggest that we should actually imagine a spectrum rather than discrete pigeonholes, even though the use of categories is necessary to discussion. In any case, there appears to be no direct way (failing significant external evidence) to determine where long-dead traditions like the Eddic and West Germanic belong in a range determined by the co-ordinates creation and transmission.

Alison Jones in 1966 seems to have been the first to realize the importance in this context of the famous *Parallelstellen* of Old English poetry. From a comparison of the Azarias with the corresponding lines of the Daniel, she concluded that they are variants of a common 'original'; and from the fact that where they differ, they differ in formulas, she surmised that the medium involved in their 'transmission' was that of oral-formulaic singers, although she also speaks of

improvised. This is not true. South Slavic oral epic is not, nor, to the best of my knowledge is any oral traditional epic, the result of 'free improvisation'" ("Perspectives," pp. 202-03). My disagreement is less with the substance of what is said here than with a definition that forces 'improvisation' to mean totally new, ex nihilo creation rather than extemporaneous, in-performance creation. I intend to use the word (in what is, I think, the ordinary sense) as a synonym of 'extemporaneous,' in semantic opposition to 'premeditated, prepared.' I am certainly not denying that the materials are pre-existing (as in musical improvisation, for which cf. R. Stevick, "The Oral-Formulaic Analyses of Old English Verse," *Speculum*, 37 [1962], pp. 385-86).

6. Gisli sezk niðr ok gerir at trúnu, horfir á hauginn þórgins en konur sátu upp í brekkuna, Pordis systir hans ok margar aðrar. Gísli kvæð há visu, er árva skýldi... Pordis nam þegar visuna, gengr heim ok hefur ráðit visuna (Gísla saga in Vestfirdinga sogur, ed. Bjorn K. Porólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, IF, VI [Reykjavík, 1943], pp. 58-59 [ch. 18]).


the importance of memory. Jones apparently did not see the contradic-
tion between her results and the classic oral-formulaic theory, and it remained for Alan Jabbour in 1969 to indict the brevity of Lord’s treat-
ment of memorization in contrast to its evident importance in the Old English poetic tradition. His method was to compare all the significant parallel passages in Old English poetry on the assumption that the less the variability between parallel passages, the greater the probability of memorization, and the more the variability, the more the proportion of improvisation. The illogicality of the simple opposition between a mode of creation (or transmission) and a mode exclusively of transmission (reflecting the influence of Lord’s analysis of the Serbocroatian heroic songs) somewhat muddles Jabbour’s results, but his clear statement on the significance of variant texts was an advance.

Lars Lönnoth, in his article “Hjálmar’s Death-Song and the Performance of Eddic Poetry” argues, in general, that the Eddic tradition is more memorial than improvisational. (Be it noted that Lönnoth’s admirable article deals with many other aspects of oral poetry in the Edda—for example, the external evidence touching performance, music, social setting and function—but the principal focus is on the issues discussed here.) Lönnoth cites Heusler on the difference between yrkja ‘to compose a poem’ and flytja, foæra fram ‘to present a poem’ and discusses Egils saga on the composition and presentation of Hófuðlausn. Conceding that this evidence for deliberative composition and memorization is skaldic and not Eddic, he concludes that nevertheless “the burden of proof must surely rest with anyone wishing to claim that any longer Norse poem, as we now know it, was based on an improvised performance” (p. 3). The main evidence for memorization is again that of


10. Lönnoth, p. 3; Heusler, Altger. Dichtung, pp. 120–21; however, kveda is ambiguous (Heusler, Altger. Dichtung, pp. 109, 119–20) and can mean improvise. The new dissertation by Gert Kreutzer, Die Dichtungslehre der Skalden. Poetologische Terminologie und Autorenkommentare als Grundlage einer Gattungspoetik (Kronberg, 1974) should bring important evidence together for the first time (so Germanistik, 17 [1976], p. 167); I have not yet seen the book.
parallel passages; Lönnroth's examination of Hjálmar's Death-Song shows that where the two versions disagree they tend to be more conventional and formulaic, and he argues that unusual expressions have to be either remembered "intact, changed considerably, or dropped completely" (p. 17). As I interpret his results, Lönnroth has concluded that the formulas indicate a degree of improvisation within a tradition of memorial transmission, just as Jones apparently regarded formulaic variations between parallel passages as evidence that formulas were used "as a kind of stop-gap to bolster up lapse of memory" (p. 102).

I am largely in agreement with Lönnroth's interpretation of the Old Norse oral-literary milieu in general. However, the reasoning from formulas to improvisation must be recognized as based on the South Slavic analogy and regarded skeptically: formulaic variations between parallel texts do not necessarily point to improvisational patching any more than formulas anywhere infallibly indicate improvisational origin. Jones and Jabbour have also been silently influenced by Lord's practical abolition of the boundary between creation and transmission in the men's songs; this resulted in an uneasy model of Old English poetic tradition in which creation was improvisational but transmission at least partly memorial. But Lönnroth followed the drift of Eddic scholarship in adumbrating a tradition with deliberative composition (which is not especially formulaic) and memorial transmission which is occasionally botched by improvisation (indicated by formulas). Both of these models ease the problem of the 'transitional text,' but both create models of tradition that violate the South Slavic analogy from which they all draw their central premise: formulaic therefore improvised. Moreover, all three tend to slight the possibility of variations being those of 'conscious revisers,' albeit impeccably oral revisers. Yet the poet of Azarias, an independent poem, may have had other intentions than that of Daniel, where the Parallelstelle is part of a longer whole, and one can at least see certain tendencies which may be intentional, not the accidents of failing memory in a performance.

situation, in the versions of Hjálmur’s *Death-Song*.\(^{12}\) Certainly the more we build up a case for deliberative composition (*yrkja*), with memorization (*nema, festa*)\(^{13}\) and public presentation (*flytja*), in Eddic poetry on the skaldic pattern, the more we must reckon with conscious oral revision.

The present discussion, like its predecessors, must operate with the precarious concept of ‘memorization’ and the even more fundamental ‘same and different,’ but the cultural relativity of these terms as applied to stories, poetic passages, and wording itself obscures some of the work stimulated by the Oral Theory. Lord’s informants often insisted they were singing the ‘same’ song, but we find each performance ‘different.’ Even within our own cultural parameters various degrees of identity are meant by users of these words—a textual critic, perhaps at one extreme and a folklorist at the other—and oral societies appear to vary almost as much if there is any force in the contrast of the wide latitude given ‘same’ in Yugoslavia with the arguments over textual purity by illiterate audiences in Somalia.\(^{14}\) The structural method of isolating meaningful linguistic units, in which a native speaker renders a decision on ‘same’ and ‘different,’ can hardly be imitated for the documents of oral literatures, and yet Lord’s

\(^{12}\) On these problematical relationships see *The Exeter Book*, ed. G.P. Krapp and E. van Kirk Dobbie (New York, 1936), pp. xxxiii–xxxiv for the older scholarship, and *Daniel and Azarias*, ed. R.T. Farrell (London, 1974), esp. pp. 38–45 for the newer. The version of Hjálmur’s *Death-Song* from *Ǫrvar-Odds saga* (*OS*) clearly emphasizes Princess Íngebjǫrg, the mutual tragedy of Hjálmar and Íngebjǫrg, and the royal setting at Úpsala and Sigtúnir, while in the *Hervarar saga* (*HS*) version Hjálmar’s own loss in the context of his property and family dominates; Íngebjǫrg’s grief and the Úpsala setting survive as vestiges but are de-emphasized by their context. A full discussion would have to consider critically the adequacy of Lónroth’s hypothetical process of improvisational change (p. 17) and his assumption that the variants constitute the ‘same’ poem (p. 10) which shows no progression (p. 12); for the moment I would like simply to test Lónroth’s hypothesis against a single example: *HS* has *Hrafn flygr austan* (st. 8), while *OS* has *Hrafn flygr sunnan* (st. 12). These are apparently meaningless formulaic variants, and yet *HS* also has *Hvarf ek ... austr við Sota* (st. 7) just where *OS* has *Hvarf ek ... ut með Sota* (st. 4). Is it not plausible that the emphasis on the east, precisely in *HS*, is intentional? (*Eddica Minora: Dichtungen eddischer Art ...*, ed. A. Heusler and W. Ranisch [Dortmund, 1903], pp. 49–55.)

\(^{13}\) Lónroth, p. 3, and Heusler, *Altger. Dichtung*, p. 120, on Egils saga (*hafði fest svæ at hann mætti kvæða um morginnin*); for *nema*, to ‘learn, memorize,’ see n. 6 above and *Darráðarljóð* (*Njáls saga*, ch. 157; Heusler and Ranisch (eds.) *Eddica minora*, p. 60).

informants actually provide plenty of material for understanding the ‘ethnic’ view in their singing tradition. Such an insider’s understanding of degrees of identity in early Germanic oral literature—in what sense the young Alfred the Great was understood to have ‘recited’ the book of poems, or exactly how much leeway King Haraldr harðráði allowed to the ‘saga-wise’ Icelander—would be of great interest even if it is unrecoverable in detail. (Though it would not replace our own conceptual tools—the definition of which is luckily a task for psychologists.) Some clues do emerge from the parallel passages of Helgakviða Hundingsbana I and II (HH and HHII), the surviving instances of parallel transmission most likely to yield information about the oral poetic tradition in Old Norse.

Codex Regius of the Elder Edda preserves two poems on the life of Helgi Hundingsbani and one on Helgi Hjörvarðsson. The two Helgis share so many biographical features that folkloristically-oriented scholars regard them as ultimately the ‘same,’ probably variants derived from a common ritual pattern in which a Helgi ‘the hallowed one’ mated with a goddess, probably of tribal sovereignty, and was ritually slain by a near relative. In addition this pattern was apparently realized in the career of Helgi Haddingjaskati, hero of the lost Károljóð; various other Helgis offer resemblance in isolated motifs but probably do not derive from the ritual pattern.

This variation within a single schema, so characteristic of oral literature, is also recognized by the ‘Collector’ (the man or men responsible for the final form of the Codex Regius). His ‘critical

15. For the contrast of ‘ethnic’ or native with ‘analytic’ or contemporary western (our) perceptions see Dan Ben-Amos, “Analytic Categories and Ethnic Genres,” Genre, 2 (1969), pp. 275–301.


17. The major work, incorporating the results of earlier insights by Uhland and Much, is Otto Höfer, “Das Opfer im Semnonenhain und die Edda,” in Edda, Skalden, Saga: Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Felix Genzmer, ed. Hermann Schneider (Heidelberg, 1952), pp. 1–67, but the ‘ritual pattern’ emerges more simply from Bertha Phillpotts, The Elder Edda and Ancient Scandinavian Drama (Cambridge, 1920), pp. 144–75. Further significant developments (especially on the nature of the valkyrie) are to be found in Alfred Ebenbauer, Helgisage und Helgikult (Diss. Wien, 1970).

18. Károljóð is mentioned at HHII, prose after stanza 50 (p. 42), in Eddadigte III:
metaphor’ is rebirth: Helgi Hjörvarðsson and Sváva were reborn as Helgi Hundingsbani and Sigrún and they in turn as Helgi Haddingjaskati and Kára. However, rebirth is an embarrassing superstition (kerlingavilla) for the Collector and for us proves opaque as an ‘ethnic’ literary-historical concept: the rebirth of the Helgi and the valkyrie is rightly evidenced to support ritual descent but does not lend much precision to a search for the degrees of literary relatedness perceived by the audience of Eddic poetry.

The situation is different when we come to HH and HHII, patently regarded by the Collector as two ‘different’ pieces about the same hero. From Jan de Vries’ study of the relationships among all the Helgi poems, I wish to adopt the notion that the Collector intended HH and HHII to be complementary: that is his chief reason for including both where in the interests of saving valuable vellum he might have been expected to harmonize them to one poem or saga. As he wrote out HHII, the Collector replaced with prose synopsis passages where the Vorlage duplicated the first Helgi poem. Thus HHII summarizes the hero’s birth in prose (from HH) but reports an otherwise unknown incident from the feud with Hundingr in verse; HHII’s prose report of the slaying of Hundingr derives from HH’s verse, but the following stanzas telling of the first meeting of Helgi and Sigrún are given because they do not correspond with HH; and so on. This explanation by de Vries calls for qualification in several respects, but the principle of complementarity probably did have an effect on the form of HHII: the Collector (here as redactor of HHII) was trying to give the whole story of Helgi but without repeating himself.


20. De Vries’ article is unsatisfactory on several particular points (e.g. on rógapaldr in Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar), but one major problem lies in his confused interpretation of the relationship of Volsungakviða í forna, HHII, and HH; he asserts, for example, that the source of HHII was “weitgehend ähnlicher” (p. 125) to that of HH before the parallel verses were reduced to prose. But the notion of the present HHII as
As he progressed through the life of Helgi in the Vorlage of HHII, the Collector came to the flyting corresponding to that of HH and suppressed it with a reference, almost a 'see above,' to his copy of HH a few leaves back:

Pá kvað Guðmundr, svá sem fyrr er ritat í Helgakviðo:

“Hverr er fylkir
sá er flota stýrir
ok feiknalið
færir at landi?”

Sinfiótli Sigmundar son svaraði, ok <er> þat enn ritat (HHII, pr. after st. 18).

Here it seems obvious (with de Vries) that the form of HHII is determined by Raumersparnis vis-à-vis HH; yet a little further on, and in a position which is totally out of order, the Collector abruptly inserts the flyting from HHII's Vorlage. Jan de Vries explains: “Aber vielleicht hat der Dichter von HHII [i.e. the Collector in this case] das [the flyting] nicht vornehm gefunden und mit Helgis Vorwurf, es sei unziemlich ónytom orðom at bregða eingestimmt. Hat er deshalb das ganze Stück erst einfach fortgelassen, später hat er dann doch die Strophen noch einmal durchgenommen und mit denen in HHI verglichen; er mußte dabei einige Abweichungen feststellen ... die ihm zu wichtig dünkten, um sie ganz zu unterdrücken” (“Die Helgildieder,” p. 124). Moral aversion on the part of the Collector is very dubious in view of his faithful transcription of the much nastier first flyting in HH and made supererogatory by the principle of complementarity; but the words of the Collector clearly indicate that the flyting is not copied at first because of its presence in HH, and the impossible placing, when after all it is copied into HHII, suggests that de Vries is right in implying that the Collector noticed too late that the flying was different in the Vorlage of HHII and recklessly interpolated it where he happened to be at the moment.

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a saga made up of disparate sources, one of which was Völsungakviða in forna, is much more consistent with the textual facts, and de Vries apparently gave up the contradictory arguments of this article when he came to write Altnordische Literaturgeschichte, 2nd rev. ed. (Berlin, 1964), I, pp. 309–10.
In other words, we have here the Collector’s decision on identity. How exact is the repetition?

The six stanzas of flyting in *HHII* correspond to a passage of 15 stanzas in *HH*, 120 fornyrðislag half-lines compared with fifty, plus two prose inquits. The passages are most similar at the beginning (*HHII* 19, 20; *HH* 32, 33, 35) and especially at the end (*HHII* 23, 24; *HH* 45, 46). They share twelve lines, exactly repeated, in common, and eleven of those exactly shared lines occur in the last two stanzas (within 16 lines of *HH*, 18 of *HHII*).

Perhaps the Collector gave a further hint about what he regarded as the ‘same’ passage by strongly abbreviating the last two stanzas of *HHII*’s flyting. Although not all the lines that are exactly alike are abbreviated, the deviations are clearly indicated, and the abbreviated lines seem to increase in frequency as if the Collector progressively realized that the stanzas were identical:21

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Thus the more substantial deviations from the previously copied HH (the grammar of 23/1 and 5; word choice of 23/7; word choice and order of 24/5; and the plus lines 24/9–10) are written out, even though some exactly repeated lines are also copied in full. Other significant agreements between the parallel flytings are less easy to judge. One closely similar passage appears in a different location and shows, in addition to one common line, pervasive small variations similar to those in the closing stanzas:

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<th>HH</th>
<th>HHII</th>
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<td>35, 1 Par minn Hauðbroðr</td>
<td>20 Her ma Hauðbroðr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Helga finna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>flaugtraúfan gram</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>i flota mípiom</td>
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But the shared line is not abbreviated. Two prose inquits in HHII correspond to verse in HH (HHII, prose before st. 19: Petta kváð Guðmundr Granmars son, HH 32: Frá goðborinn / Guðmundr at því; and HHII, prose before st. 20: Sinfiótlí kváð, HH 33/1–8: Sinfiótlí kváð, etc.), but here the Collector is not necessarily referring back to HH.

The first four lines of the flyting are preserved in three variants which can be explained in terms of the Collector’s perception of same and different. First he copied down HH 32/3–6:

Hvær er landreki
sá er líði stýrir
ok hann feiknalið
fræir at lande?

Later when he came to the opening of the flyting in the Vorlage of HHII he found:

of the abbreviations here is supported by Jón Helgason, who remarks of stanza 23/6 “forkortelsen af linjen må imedlejlidt opfattes som henvisning til den tidligere skreyne parallelstrofe” and of stanza 24/2–8 “skrives i R forkortet, fordi strofen er skr. for” (p. 37, nn.); such abbreviation is frequent in the Codex Regius where obvious and extensive repetitions occur (e.g., in Alvísímál) and is, of course, to be distinguished from ordinary abbreviation.
Hverr er skjöldungr
sá er skipom stýrir?
lær gunnfana
gullinn fyrir stafni (st. 19/1–4)

Apparently, the similarity was sufficient to cause him to hesitate to copy it in; perhaps he skimmed through and noticed the conspicuously similar stanza 20 (Hér má Höðbroðr, etc.) and the nearly exact two closing stanzas. In any case the similarity, whether of the first two lines only or of the whole passage, was sufficient to dictate his ‘see above,’ and as de Vries argued it must have been upon a second look that he decided to copy in HHII 19–24. The third variant is probably due to the Collector’s trying to quote HH from memory without turning back a few leaves to check:

Pá kvad Guðmundr, svá sem fyr er ritat í Helgakviðo:
‘Hverr er fylkir
sá er flota stýrir
ok feiknalið
færir at landi?’

He forgot landreki—lið and substituted fylkir—floti; the resulting line is less good (in the sense of less normal) than the original in HH because of the run-on alliteration, and it seems possible that his substitution of an A-line with fylkir for an original C with landreki occurred because he had before him the variant in HHII which is also an A (Hverr er sá skjöldungr).

From all this some feeling for the Collector’s sense of identity in poetry may emerge. By omitting and then taking up again the flyting he makes it clear that he regards those stanzas as a coherent unit, and despite the difference in wording of the opening lines and the difference in length, his initial (hasty?) reaction was to drop the unit as a repetition, probably under the stimulus of the principle of complementarity; but upon closer examination he must have seen that there were important differences. His treatment of the passage has less in common with the latitude of Lord’s singers than with our own view, not least in that he becomes more and more pedantic about textual variation the closer he looks. It is a valid objection
that the evidence of the Collector, a man of the pen despite his probably poetic activity in composing the variant with *fylkir—floti*, is of limited value; at least he is a contemporary. To *us*, at any rate, the degree of identity between the comparable stanzas is likely to argue for according a large role to memory in the transmission of this poetry. On the other hand, the differences between the two *sennur* considered as wholes show that mere memorial transmission, even with changes due to forgetting coupled with improvisational supplements, cannot explain the relationships.

**Compositional Units: The Senna**

The Collector's treatment of the *senna* in *HH* and *HHII* strongly suggests that it was felt to be a semi-independent unit, and this impression is confirmed by the presence of a similar semi-independent flying in *Helgakviða Hjórvardssonar (HHv)*, the so-called *Hrímerðarmál*, which also contrasts in meter with the remainder of *HHv*. Closely comparable passages in Old Norse poetry number at least twelve, suggesting that the battle of words is a stock compositional unit.22 The two principals are usually prevented by some

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22. *HH; HHII; HHv; Lokasenna; Hárrardósljóð;* four poetic episodes from *Ketils saga høngs* and *Gríms saga loðinkinna (Eddica minora, XV, “Schelgmehr”)* A, B, C, and D; three episodes from *Saxo*: Gro and Gram (1:IV:5–10), Ericus disertus and Grep (5:III:2–5), and Ericus disertus and Gotwar (5:III:17). (Cf. J. Svennung, “Eriks und Götvars Wortstreit bei Saxo,” *ANF*, 57 [1942] 76–98, general discussion pp. 85–88). The index of O. Elton and F. York Powell's translation of *Saxo* (*The Nine Books ....*) lists six more passages which all seem to me questionable as flytings; Heusler discusses “Qrvar-Odds Männervergleich” (*Eddica minora, XII,* “Ústeins Kampfstrophen” (XIII), and “Qrvar-Oddr in Biáalkaland” (XIV) in this context, but he is not attempting to define a corpus for formal study (*Altger. Dichtung*, pp. 105–07). Alois Wolf (cited below) adds the quarrel of the queens Brynhildr and Guðrún/Kriemhilt in the different versions (not represented in extant Eddic verse); *Bandamanna saga*, *Ǫlkufr háttir*, and *Nýls saga*, ch. 35, presuppose a model like *Lokasenna*, and the quarrel of St. Ólafr and Kálfr Arnson at Stiklastadir is cited by Anne Holtsmark in *KHL*, s.v. *senna*, the fullest recent discussion. Inger M. Boberg, *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnaeana, XXVII (Copenhagen, 1966) adds *Sigrðar saga þögla*, ch. 5, *Ásmundar saga vikings ins írza*, ch. 7 (under H507.5 Contest in scolding as introduction to battle), and *Magnússon saga in Heimskringla*, ch. 21 (under the allied motif H507 Wit Combat). The verbal encounters between Beowulf and Unferth in *Maldon* (and to some extent the dialogue between Beowulf and the coastguard II. 229ff.) and between Byrhtnoth and the viking messenger in *Maldon* are perhaps to be considered English analogues along with more full-bodied later pieces like *The Flying of Dunbar and Kennedy*. 
circumstance, at least for the moment, from converting the words to blows, and besides the main opponents, there may be a third who intervenes as in the three Helgi poems. The major insults are cowardice, sexual deviances, and unfree social status. The insults and threats are framed in fairly regularly alternating exchanges, and it would be possible to consider most extant examples of the *senna* in terms of a single dramatic schema or pattern: a preliminary, comprising an Identification (in the form of a question and answer) together with a Characterization (which may be insulting, factual, or even laudatory) and then a central exchange, consisting of either Accusation and Denial, Threat and Counterthreat, or Challenge and Reply or a combination.\(^{23}\)

The *senna* in *HHv* illustrates all these elements, and lends itself to comparison. The opponents are Atli, the hero's *stafnbúi*, and the giantess Hrímrgerðr; Helgi intervenes at the end, and the debate takes place between the protagonists on a ship at anchor and an antagonist on land. The relationships among the dramatis personae and the physical setting are closely paralleled in *HH* and *HHII*, and the unfriendly words between Gro and Bess, the lieutenant of Gram, are similarly ended by Gram himself (Saxo 1:IV 3–10); elsewhere the hero himself chides with a single adversary or a series. The Identification begins with Hrímrgerðr's

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{Hverir ro hóldar} \\
& \text{i Hata fírði?} \\
& \ldots \text{kennið mér nafn konungs!}
\end{align*}
\]

She is answered with "*Helgi hann heitir*," etc. (*HHv* 12–13), and the whole process is repeated for Atli (stanzas 14–15) and Hrímrgerðr (stanzas 16–17). Besides *HH* 32 and 35 and *HHII* 19–20, each of the *Scheltgespräche* in *Ketils saga hœngs* and *Gríms saga loðinkinna* begins with Identification (single or double), as does, in Saxo, the Gro and Gram episode and Ericus disertus' debates with Grepus and

\(^{23}\) This informal model could easily be made more precise by, for example, specifying optional and obligatory features, but there is a danger that such a typology, especially one cast in form of generative rules, will beg the literary-historical questions at issue (cf. Pardee Lowe, "Discourse Analysis and the ðátr: Speaker Tagging," in *Studies for Einar Haugen*, ed. E.S. Firchow et al. [The Hague, 1972], pp. 11–23).
with Olmar. The Characterizations are descriptive details attached to either the question or answer of the Identification; the most typical give the father’s name and fame as in:

Hrímgrðr ek heiti,
Hati hét minn fadir,
þann vissa ek ámátkastan ióttun.
(HHv 17)

Hrímgrðr’s description of Helgi’s ships and men, with its handsome parallels in HHII and Saxo,\(^\text{24}\) can also be assigned to a Characterization. Passing over more problematic elements in the Hrímgrðarmál, we can clearly recognize in HHv 20 an Accusation of ergi and in stanza 21 a Denial. The central portion of the senna in HH is a series of such Accusations, but only once does the poet pause to provide a Denial, which, however, immediately passes to a new Accusation:

“... ek var einn fadir þeira!”
“Fadir varattu
... sízt þík geldo
fyr Gnupalundi
þursa meyiar
á Pórsnesi!” (HH 39/4-40/8)

In Hrímgrðarmál we can also recognize one or two Challenges with Reply (stanzas 22–23 [an evasion]; stanzas 24–25 [a refusal]) with perhaps another in HH 43/8—44/7. Threats and Counterthreats meld into other elements; for example, Atli’s Denial in HHv 21 contains a threatening element as do some of the Characterizations (e.g., HHv 13/2–6). Purer examples are to be found in Heusler’s Scheltgespräche (e.g., the mutual threats of Gúsir and Ketill). Elsewhere Threats may pass over into straightforward curses (e.g., HHv 16/4–6; HH 44/8; Hárbarðsljóð 60; Saxo 1:1v:3–10) and toward

the end of *Hríðgerðarmál* to questions and answers involving lore or news (*HHu* 27–28). No standard pattern emerges for the endings of the extant *sennur*: in *HH* (and in *HHII*?) Guðmundr rides away to prepare the battle that follows; Hrímgérðr is petrified by the rising sun; all of Heusler’s *Scheltgespräche* lead directly to a fight; when Grep is worsted in words he rides home to raise the alarm (like Guðmundr), but an open fight is prevented, and he must resort to *nīð*; Thórr parts with Hárbardr with threats; and so on.

From this brief survey it appears that the *sennur* are typologically recognizable compositional units: stereotyped but variable in form, traditional in content, repeated in the poetic corpus, structurally (and contextually?) predictable within limits. Stock compositional units are regarded by Lord and others as integral components of an oral style, and characteristics like those just listed are generally considered essentials of the strict literary ‘grammar’ that informs and makes possible oral-traditional literature. But how much further do the similarities to the compositional units of the Oral Theory go?

Parry and Lord recognized only one such unit, ranking in the ‘grammatical’ hierarchy between formula and system on the one hand and story pattern on the other. These ‘themes’ were the “groups of ideas regularly used in telling a tale in the formulaic style of traditional song,” and instances from South Slavic tradition include: a Council, the Gathering of an Army, or a Wedding. Magoun’s ‘theme’ of the Beasts of Battle in Old English verse, however, was something much smaller, while Rychner treated “les thèmes” broadly, like Lord, but as comprising constituent ‘motifs’; and there have been still other comparable systems independently arrived at and still other derivations from Parry and Lord aiming at the isolation of literary units from the point of view of composition. But it will be sufficient here simply to adopt for comparison the dual

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system proposed for Old English by Donald Fry who recognized (1) type-scenes and (2) themes.\textsuperscript{28}

The type-scene is the more tangible; in Fry’s definition it is “a recurring stereotyped presentation of conventional details used to describe a certain narrative event, requiring neither verbatim repetition nor a specific formula content” (p. 53). For example, Sea Voyages recur in Old English poetry in similar forms comprising conventional details; and Fry and others have devoted especially elaborate analysis to Approach-to-Battle type-scenes in Old English.\textsuperscript{29} The technical term itself derives from Homeric studies, where such units as Arming or Sacrifice are obvious to all.

At first glance the \textit{senna} may seem to have much in common with this conception of the type-scene. It recurs fairly frequently, given the small size of the surviving corpus, and is a “stereotyped presentation of conventional details.” However, it does not describe a ‘narrative event’ in the ordinary sense: ‘type-scene’ would have to have an almost theatrical meaning to accord with the more \textit{dramatic} nature of Old Norse poetry by comparison to Old English. (The relationship between drama and narrative in the \textit{sennur} is complex; some insults narrate the past and some threats the future; and in some cases this dramatically enclosed narrative is relevant to the larger narrative context.)\textsuperscript{30} However, the most immediately striking difference from the type-scene of Old English verse is that the \textit{senna} enjoys ‘ethnic’ recognition in the form of a native term. Old English possesses the much-debated ‘fit’ and some vaguely generic terms for types and subdivisions of poems but hardly a label for something

\textsuperscript{28} Donald K. Fry, “Old English Formulaic Themes and Type-Scenes,” \textit{Neophil}, 52 (1968), pp. 48–53.


\textsuperscript{30} Heusler comments briefly in \textit{Die altgermanische Dichtung}, p. 105; Larry D. Benson mentions that an important function of the \textit{senna} in \textit{Beowulf} is the recognition and reconciliation of different versions of a story (“The Originality of \textit{Beowulf}” in \textit{The Interpretation of Narrative: Theory and Practice}, ed. Morton W. Bloomfield, \textit{HES}, 1 [1970], pp. 1–43, esp. 20–22), and this function is plain in the near \textit{senna} in \textit{Fáfnismál} 7–8.
like the Approach-to-Battle.\textsuperscript{31} Not only does the \textit{senna} have a name of its own and corresponding treatment, but it exists in a wide range of sizes. Its generic context also varies: the \textit{senna} in \textit{HH} is part of a \textit{kviða}, in \textit{HHII} and \textit{HHv} of a heavily poetic ‘saga,’\textsuperscript{32} in Saxo and the instances from the \textit{Eddica minora} it is part of a regular \textit{fornaldarsaga}. In \textit{Lokasenna} and \textit{Hárbarðsljóð}, the \textit{senna} expands to become a genre in its own right rather than a ‘building block’ (as Lord calls his themes) of a larger composition. Variety of length is characteristic of the type-scene in Old English, Homer, and the South Slavic epic also, but the relatively uniform cast of these epic literatures makes for an inevitable contrast with the greater generic variety of Old Norse; and of course a type-scene in the sense used in studies of Old English, Greek, and Serbo-Croatian epic poetry can almost by definition not become an independent genre: there are no poems which are Approaches-to-Battle or Armings.

‘Theme,’ as it has recently been used in studies of Old English poetry, is considerably more elusive. Not literary \textit{forms} like the \textit{senna} nor scenes or events of the narrative or dramatic surface, not even discrete units to most eyes, this kind of theme is defined by Fry as a “recurring concatenation of details and ideas, not restricted to a specific event, verbatim repetition, or certain formulas, which forms an underlying structure for an action or description.”\textsuperscript{33} Themes in this sense are difficult to detect; Greenfield’s ‘exile’ is relatively easy because of the way its expression has become predictable and because we have a common concept for it,\textsuperscript{34} but Crowne’s ‘hero on the beach’ is more puzzlingly interesting.\textsuperscript{35} This theme, which is

\textsuperscript{31} The recent discussion by David R. Howlett, “Form and Genre in \textit{Beowulf},” \textit{SN}, 46 (1974), pp. 309–25, attempts more precision than is possible.

\textsuperscript{32} Lönnroth, pp. 9–10; de Vries, \textit{Literaturgeschichte}, I, p. 310; Gering-Sijmons, \textit{Kommentar}, II, pp. 27–32.

\textsuperscript{33} Fry, “Formulaic Themes,” p. 53; in the unpublished paper referred to in note 29 above, Fry criticizes J. Thorlindsson ("Variation on the Theme of ‘The Hero on the Beach’ in \textit{The Phoenix}" \textit{NM}, 71 [1970], pp. 187–90) for “seeing the elements of the same theme scattered over 677 lines ... rather than concentrated in a discrete unit” (p. 3). I agree with the criticism, but it is hard to see how recurring concatenations forming underlying (semantic?) structures ever amount to discrete units except of larger underlying (semantic?) structures.


said to occur some twenty times in Old English verse and has been thoroughly studied, is supposed to comprise the following elements: (1) the hero (2) on a beach (3) with his retainers (4) before or after a journey or voyage (5) in the presence of a flashing light. Crowne and Fry quote *Beowulf* (ll. 1963–66) as a concentrated expression of the theme:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Gewat him ða se hearda} & \quad \text{mid his hondscole,} \\
\text{self æfter sande} & \quad \text{saewang tredan,} \\
\text{wide warōðas.} & \quad \text{Weorcndandel scan,} \\
\text{sigel suðan fus.} & \quad \text{Hi sō drugon . . .}^{36}
\end{align*}
\]

Even here, where the “details are ideas” are “concatenated” in brief space, the result is hardly a scene, and usually these elements are scattered with less obvious surface coherence over a longer stretch of text. Theme in this sense comes close to a semantic ‘deep structure’; but it has not been treated as such, and the ‘meaning’ of the hero on the beach (as opposed to exile) is obscure.

The very recent discussion of themes by Michael Nagler employs different terminology at every point, but his ‘motif sequence’ in Homer does bear a resemblance to the Old English theme of Fry in being a kind of subsurface semantic structure with a variety of realizations. Nagler discusses the ‘convenership sequence’ in Homer in terms of three components: “waking, preparing (dressing, arming, or both), and the convening of an assembly of some kind.”\textsuperscript{37} There is a natural order of elements which, however, can be manipulated; the parts may themselves be type-scenes (clearest for arming), but the sequence is, like the Old English theme, rather to be thought of as the relationships underlying events and even scenes of widely varying verbal form. Unlike both Fry’s theme and Nagler’s motif sequence, the *senna* is less a subsurface set of coherences than a single stock dramatic unit, potentially complete in itself. Instead of

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\textsuperscript{36} Ed. F. Klaeber, 3rd ed. rev. (Boston, 1922); Crowne, p. 368.

concatenations, the *senna* is based on alternation; instead of narrative, chronological, or mysteriously traditional order its structure is dialectic; the ‘details and ideas’ of the content are traditional but not necessarily their arrangement.

This is not to say that there are no recognizable themes in Fry’s sense in Eddic poetry. In fact the stanzas of *HH* in which the valkyrie, accompanied by lightning, first appears to Helgi, where the theme underlies the transition from a brief voyage and battle to a dialogue, do seem to constitute the elements of the hero on the beach.\(^{38}\) If the theme is more than an accident at this point and if it is as old as presence in Old English, Old Norse, and perhaps Middle High German\(^ {39}\) indicates, one might be tempted to see here a hint of the original

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38. The *journey* (st. 13) leads to battle; after which the *hero* (*visi*, st. 14/1) and his *retainers* (*bildingar*, st. 15/1; *bildingom*, st. 16/6) rest in a scene imagined as an island with cliffs, if not precisely a *beach* (*at Logafjöllom*, st. 13/4; *um ey*, st. 13/8; *und Arnstaemi*, st. 14/4 etc.); the *light* is first supernatural (*lióma*, st. 15/1), then meteorological (*en af þeim liómom / leiptir kvóma*, st. 15/3-4), then, in parallel construction, reflected (*en af geirom / geislar stobo*, st. 15/9-10). The *battle* is not supposed to form part of the theme, but “the theme ... frequently precedes a description of (or reference to) a scene of carnage in which the theme of the Beasts of Battle is used” (Crowne, p. 373). (Fry mentions that the order of elements, as implied by Crowne’s “precedes” here, cannot be maintained (“Elene,” p. 36) and further associates the beasts with the hero on the beach in his edition cited below.) The Beasts of Battle are represented in the *HH* passage by “fara Víðris grey / valgiprn um ey” (st. 13/7-8) and are also present in the passage from *Finnsburg* mentioned below.

39. Alain Renoir (“Oral-Formulaic Theme Survival—A Possible Instance in the *Nibelungenlied*,” *NM*, 65 [1964], pp. 70-75) identifies this theme in *NL* (B)sts. 1837-49; Fry, “Hero on the Beach in *Finnsburg*,” approves and adds *Finnsburg* (ll. 2-12) as a further instance in which the hero is not on a beach but in a doorway (a “juncture between two worlds,” according to Renoir, p. 73). However, it seems to me that a different and quite unmysterious heroic topos is being employed in *NL* and *Finnsburg*: one retainer holds watch or wakens early and prevents a surprise attack when he notices signs of the enemy and notifies one or more of his companions. This (and not the hero on the beach) is the essence of these two passages and of an episode in *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* in Snorri’s *Heimskringla* (ch. 35; ÍF, XXVIII p. 116) where it is compounded with a similar ‘mythicizing’ allusion to the tactics of Fyrisfellir. In what is probably the prose resolution of some verses in *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* (ed. A. LeRoy Andrews, Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek, XIV [Halle, 1909], p. 107) the first retainer wakens, notices smoke in the hall, and nods off again; the pattern is repeated by a second; finally the king himself notices and *hann stóð upp ok vakti hótl í ok bað hó vápnaz*. The best known instance of the topos is associated with the *Bjarkamáli*: in the prose resolution of *Hrafn’s saga kraka* (ed. D. Slay, Ed. Arn., B, 1 [Copenhagen, 1960], pp. 112-14) Hjalti notices activity in the enemy camp as he goes to the house of his mistress (presumably at night) and takes his time about returning to alert King Hröfr; in the prose Hjalti’s words (*vakid herra konur þat ofridur er í gardinum*, p. 113) are inappropriate since Hröfr and the champions are not asleep but sit drinking, careless and ignorant of the danger. This
meaning: the shedding of light as a marking of the hero’s special status, like the sign of charis that accompanies a hero’s preparation in Homer.40 But however intriguing the speculations raised by the hero on the beach with his flashing (why flashing?) light, I am not entirely convinced that mere chance in Old Norse or direct borrowing from Old English are not to blame for the ‘thematic’ pattern in HH.41

These results are mainly negative. Despite shared general characteristics, the *senna* is not closely similar to the type-scene of epic verse and is even less like the subsurface ‘themes.’ Its dramatic nature and ‘ethnic’ recognition suggest that it may typologically antedate the ‘host’ narrative. Heusler maintained that the form was old but derived from everyday life, and an origin in ritualized or socially organized abuse-games seems an attractive hypothesis;42 in any case, the *senna* will have had a history of its own, separate from both *kvida* and *saga*. This may explain its functional variety (another contrast with type-scene, if not with theme) and the way it mediates between part (as in *HH*) and whole (as in *Lokasenna*). It remains to be seen whether or not it is a mistake to regard the *senna* as representative of the compositional units of Eddic poetry; the *hvot*, the *mannjafræði*, and the *spá*, at least, share its characteristics. Alois Wolf, of recent Eddic scholars, comes closest to adumbrating a system of such ‘middle-level’ (above ‘language’ and below ‘poem’) units, in his *Gestaltungskerne*, with a method which attempts an illumination of individual works by

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Eddic Poetry as Oral Poetry

But a poetics of Eddic poetry as oral poetry ought first to discover and describe common features—here the middle-level units—and construct a compositional theory stimulated but not prejudiced by the Oral Theory. Such a theory could not ignore borrowing. The Oral Theory tends to explain repeated features as products of a common style, either filtered by a common poetic grammar or selected from a common pool, and the surviving poetic corpora appear as productions of a single generative device: the tradition. But on close inspection this synchronic view does not do justice to all the problems in Old English and perhaps also in Homeric verse and has never been in vogue for the Poetic Edda. There the variety of styles, dates, and provenances is all too obvious, and instead Eddic scholars have usually worked with concepts of borrowing and allusion very similar to those that apply to modern written literature. Eddic scholarship seems to have overestimated the individual borrowings and undervalued the force of collective tradition, especially at the level of lexical choice and phrasing. Yet in our test case it is impossible to overlook some kind of genetic relationship between the poems about Helgi Hundingsbani and particularly their sennur.

The Skaldic Revision

Eddic scholarship is rightly still concerned with dating and establishment of a relative chronology based, partly, on borrowings at oral stages. In HH and HHII the exactness and extent of the parallels

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44. Before Wolf and Heusler, an important start was made by R.M. Meyer, Die altgermanische Poesie nach ihren formelhaften Elementen beschrieben (Berlin, 1889) and R. Heinzl, Der Stil der altgermanischen Poesie, Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach- und Culturgeschichte der germanischen Völker, XX (Strassburg, 1875).


and their context in versions of the same story forms convincing evidence of a more or less direct historical connection, and the scholarship generally concedes greater age to HHII, at least for the relevant portions. Perhaps, then, something can be learned about the composition of at least one Eddic poem by investigating HH in terms of transmission and innovations from a known starting point in HHII? Such a study is compromised at the outset by an obvious circularity as well as by uncertainties about the form and sources of HHII. I cannot argue all the relevant points here but must simply assume that one of the sources of HHII was the poem referred to in HHII as Völuspingakviða in forna, which must have included the source of the extant stanzas 14–18 (meeting of Helgi and Sigrún) and stanzas 19–24 (flyting) and probably also stanzas 25, 26 and 28 (interview on the battlefield) of HHII. I assume that the obviously parallel parts of HH also derive somehow from Völuspingakviða in forna.47 If the senna in HHII is closer to the common original, then one feature of the manner of composition in the HH passage is dilation. The basic idea of the senna and its narrative context is preserved along with some of the original wording at the beginning and end, but at the beginning this framework is expanded by several minor poetic devices—including versified inquits (sts. 32/1–2, 33/1) and a narrative interruption within an inquit (st. 33/2–8).48 The sources of inspiration in several of these stanzas are fairly clear even where no wording is borrowed.49 The framework is just slightly terser (by two

47. Accepted common assumptions about HH and HHII will not be documented individually; see the general treatments of de Vries, “Helglieder,” and Literaturgeschichte, S. Bugge, Helgi Lays, and the articles by Wessén and A. Bugge cited below.

48. The interrupted inquit is certainly characteristic of Old English (e.g., Beowulf, ll. 405–07 “Beowulf madelode—on him byrne scan, / searoneot seowed smíþe orþancum—: / ‘Wæs þú, Hróðgar, hál!’”) but apparently rarer in Old Norse (e.g., Atlakviða has two: sts. 2 and 15; Volundarkviða, HHII, HHc none); the three instances in HH (sts. 33; 54–55; and less impressively 24–25) may be further evidence for the Bugge-Hofmann thesis of Old English influence. Cf. the ‘envelope pattern’ in A.C. Bartlett, The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry (New York, 1935), pp. 9–29.

49. For example, HH 33/2–4 sløyng upp við rá / raúðom skildi, / rónd var ór gulli seems to be a modernizing adaptation of HHII 19/1–8 lætr gunnfana / gullinn þýrir stafni; / þikkia þér fróðr / í farar broddi, / verþr vigroða / um vikinga. The herskjöldr is characteristic of the viking period (cf. Wessén, cited below, p. 27) and belongs with realistic viking age vocabulary like leið (Wessén, p. 22 and n. 2) while gunnfani gullinn seems reminiscent of an earlier time (cf. Beowulf, l. 47 segen goldene; l. 1021 segen gylden; l. 2767 segn eallgylden; l. 1022 broden hildembar; and ll. 1204, 2505, 2776, 2958; elsewhere in Old English guðfana, fana).
lines) at the end (despite the internal repetition, sts. 45/5-8, 34/1-4). Most of the dilation in HH is accomplished by sandwiching a series of eight or nine stanzas generated by recursive use of the central paradigm of any *senna* (Threat [and Counterthreat], Accusation [and Denial], etc.) between the parts of the inherited (and partly modified) framework. There is no strict overall narrative order in the new exchanges, though some of the stanzas demand a certain sequence (sts. 38-40, 43-44); instead the internal order depends on the logical-dramatic structure of *senna* exchanges and the conceptual structure of the charges and countercharges themselves. The contents of the insults in the central portion suggest that the poet was drawing on a knowledge of law and old lore to expand the original with material partly from the legendary history of Sinfiðtli, partly from current insult-formulas, and probably partly from lost stories. The South Slavic epic tradition produces similar dilations of themes and whole songs in particularly favorable performance situations, but in HH the framework of near and exact repetitions from *Volsungakvida in forna* together with the predictable structure and origins of the new material argue rather that the passage is a conscious revision of a remembered core.

Another distinction from the expansion of a theme by a gifted guslar is the way intentions, *Tendenzen*, in the dilations match with the modified framework and the poem as a whole. By comparison to HHII, the poet of HH speaks with an extreme voice; the humor is of a drastic kind, the ‘colors’ strong and simple. A *mountain* of shame is heaped on Guðmundr by Sinfiðtli, and Guðmundr does not spare to *repeat* Sinfiðtli’s crimes (sts. 36 and 41); both sides are so stained by

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50. Gering-Sijmons, *Kommentar*, is adequate for most of these points; in addition see Bo Almqvist, *Norrönn narradiktning: Traditionshistoriska studier i versmagi*. 1 Nid mot furstar, Nordisker texter och Untersökningsar, XXI (Stockholm, 1965). Examples of the ‘commonplace’ nature of these insults: st. 36/3-4 *ok braðr þinum / at bana ordit*: Beowulf, l. 587 *þæah du þinum broðrum to bana wurde* (cf. ll. 1165b-68a); st. 41/9-10 *guðir þik fraðgian / af firinverkom*: Beowulf, l. 2480 *fæðe ond fyrene, suva hyt gefræge wes* (cf. ll. 879, 915); st. 44/8 *deili gróm við þik*: Hárbardljoð 60 *Farðu ni, þars þik háfi allan granim* (and see Gering-Sijmons); st. 42/1 *brúðr Grana* (see Gering-Sijmons on Lokasenna 23); st. 39/1 *Nío áttó vit*, etc. (Gering-Sijmons on HH 41, Lokasenna 23, and Almqvist); st. 38/1-2 *þú vart en skaðá, / skass, valkyria* (read: en skaðá *skag[s] valkyria*: a poem preserved on one of the Bergen rune-staves *víd inni skaðá skag-valkyria*: Aslak Liestøl in *Viking*, 1963, pp. 41 f. [unavailable to me but reported by Ólafur Briem, ed., *Eddukvæði*, Íslensk úrvalsrit, V (Reykjavík, 1968), p. 274]).
the mudslinging that Helgi with his welcome intervention shines the more heroically forth. These tendencies are most obvious where HH can be closely compared with HHII. The flying in HHII is relatively gallant; in stanza 19 Guðmundr positively admires the approaching enemy; in HH 32 this initial question has become insulting, and the idea of HHII 19/3–8 is taken out of Guðmundr’s mouth and put into the narrator’s in HH 33/2–4. Part of Sinfjötli’s first answer, HHII 20/5–8, seems to include an obscure insult or at least a threat; in HH the equivalent stanza (35) escalates to an obvious insult and retains the admirably defiant answer (stanza 35/1–4) in a less emphatic position (after st. 34). The main exchange in HHII 21 and 22 is fairly decorous, with both sides sounding a bit like the warriors at the Battle of Maldon;51 the source of HHII 22 seems to be the inspiration for the less sporting gibe in HH 34, and Guðmundr’s noble defiance in HHII 21 is compromised by reference to the gibe (HH 44). In short, in HH a poet of radical sensibilities reinterprets the older passage predominantly in terms of praise and blame.

One epithet in HH apparently does not agree with the tendency to vilify and exalt; but I think a countering trend toward allusion, either mythic allusion or the linguistic allusion summed up as ‘wordplay,’ explains why Guðmundr is called godborinn (st. 32).52 Mythic allusions are very prominent in the senna: Guðmundr is said to have been a völva (st. 37) and a valkyria of Alfaðir (st. 38) and Loki-like to have given birth to wolf-monsters (fenrisulfar, st. 40) on Sága’s promontory (st. 39); þursa meyjar and Pórsnes (st. 40), Grani and Brávellir (st. 42) are invoked. Some other allusions may be to unknown myths

51. The resemblances to Byrhtnoth’s defiant parley with the wicinga ár, lying mainly in the scene itself and a few expressions, probably do not warrant the assumption of any extensive generic influence from the senna on The Battle of Maldon (ed. E.V. Gordon [London, 1937]); the similarities: (1) HHII 20/1–4 Hér má Höðbroðr / Helga kenna /flótta trauðan / í flota miðiom : Maldon, l. 51 ... her stynt unförucd eorl mid his werode; (2) HHII 20/5–8: Maldon, l. 52 (note eðli: epe, but the sense of the passages appears to be very different); (3) HHII 21/1–4: Maldon, ll. 46–47, 60–61 (the irony and the rhetorical ‘before’); (4) HHII 21/5–8; Maldon, ll. 55b–58 (the general idea); (5) HHII 22/7–8 þat er þér bilmára / en brimis dómar : Maldon, ll. 31b–33 ond eow betere is / þat ge þúne gæras mid gafole forgylolon / þonne we swa hearde hilde dælon (the rhetoric and sense; cf. also HHII 23/1–2). Further comparison with HH brings out the idea of the return message (HH III 34–35; Maldon, ll. 49–55a), and general resemblances include the attitude (Maldon, l. 27 on beot) and common expressions (e.g., ordom skipta: wordum målan).

52. Höfler, p. 16, n. 62, and p. 54.
or heroic legends. Wordplay is less obvious: *landreki* ... *lidi stýrir* ... *feiknalið fórir at landi* (st. 32) presents a pattern of chiastic repetition (*ploce*). (Broken underlining for ‘conceptual rhyme.’) Stanza 33 is echoed in the negative by stanza 36: (*Sinfotli* ... *sá er svara kunni / ok við qölinga / orðom skipta*: ‘Fátt mantu, fylkir, fornra spialla, / er þú qölingom / ósonno bregðr!’). Further echoes in stanzas 45 and 46 form parts of a pattern, a theme (in the ordinary sense) of language, truth, and art.53

These features of the *senna* in *HH*—stylistic extremism in the service of praise and blame, mythic and verbal allusiveness—agree with the skaldic affiliations of *HH* as a whole. Scholars have often pointed out that like skaldic praise poems, *HH* has a more developed vocabulary for ‘prince’ than any other Eddic poem; and Wessén adds that the synonyms for ‘prince’ are an important feature of the verse itself in this poem.54 *HH* has more kennings and *heiti* than any Eddic poem except *Hymiskviða*, regarded as the most skaldic in language, and *HH*’s language is rich in new compounds which find their closest parallels in skaldic poetry. The poem seems to borrow from left and right; but among its skaldic models, *Haraldskvæði* stands out as sharing (among many other things) the extensive vocabulary of battle and battle sounds.55 Wessén explains several puzzling expressions in *HH* out of skaldic practices; for example, *skalf mistar marr, / hvar<s> megir fóro* (st. 47/7–8) is clarified as a bold reversal of a traditional skaldic kenning: “Ytterst vanligt är nu i skaldepoesien, att havet benämnes ‘sjö-konungens land (väg).’ Omvänt skull då jorden, med en djärv bild, kunna kallas för ‘valkyrjans hav.’”56 The spirit of the poem is that of skaldic panegyric, glorifying the victorious king, portraying the fleets and armies of the real-life viking prince (and in proper technical terms)

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53. See further stanzas 37/4; 41/3; 41/9–10; 43/8.
rather than the individual acts, personalized history, of the older heroic poetry. There is a scholarly consensus dating the poem to the mid to late eleventh century and placing it at a king's court, and Alexander Bugge's impressive attempt to assign the authorship to the hfrðskáld Arnórjarlaskáld at the court of Magnus Óláfssofn of Norway (c. 1046) remains the most probable effort of its kind.

HH recasts the Helgi legend in a form suitable for performance before a king and hird. The skaldic revision comprises the diction and rhetoric, the vocabulary and topoi, but extends also to the structure of the legend. The story is arrested with Helgi's greatest victory and ends with a kind of battlefield consecration that might imply a coronation or wedding as the occasion of its composition. The latter, in the primitive form of the king's espousal to the tribal goddess, may inhere in the Helgi material from the beginning, but the poet has clearly selected just this segment, the rising action of an ultimately tragic legend, for his fable. Like the typical skaldic konungs drápa, HH is jubilant in praise of the king; nevertheless, it is not deeply optimistic. However we regard the norns' activity at the opening (sts. 3, 4) and interpret the puzzling introduction to the raven's prophecy (st. 5: "Eitt var at angri," etc.), it is certain that a courtly audience could hardly miss the ironic tension of celebrating a victorious young king through a tragic legend; and the confident concluding words (clearly the original end of the poem) are not vouched for by the narrator but assigned to the fated king's lover:

But this irony of mortality is no more foreign to

57. Wessen, pp. 21-23.
58. Sophus Bugge, Helgi-Lays, offered no name but argued that the author was a Norwegian at the court of the Scandinavian king of Dublin, composing 1020-1035 with Canute in mind; Wessen, like A. Bugge, thought the poet must be an eleventh-century icelander but did not name him; de Vries (Literaturgeschichte), p. 309, thinks of the court of Sveinn Úlfsson of Denmark about 1070; Asgaut Steinnes, ("Noko um Helge-dikte i Edda," MM [1963], pp. 3-25) proposes Vest-Agder about 1050-1150 and three possible poets: Kali Sæbjarnarson (d. 1099), his contemporary Sigurðr sneiss, and Rognvaldr kali (d. 1158).
60. Wessen, pp. 2-9 with references to earlier work; A. Bugge, p. 360; Heinz Klingenberg, Edda—Sammlung und Dichtung, Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie, III (Basel and Stuttgart, 1974), pp. 58-78.
praise poetry than is the kind of vilification we find in the senna; both are present in Haraldskvædi, to name one example.

We cannot determine with certainty the whole shape of the HH poet’s main source, what I am calling Volsungakviða in forna. He must have known that Helgi was to be sacrificed by Sigrún’s surviving relative, but he may well not have known the Lenore theme (the revenant lover) at the close of HHII. If he knew of the first meeting of Helgi and Sigrún and the name-giving by the valkyrie (HHII 5–13), he has suppressed it and given us instead an escalating sequence of three fights (Hundingr, st. 10; Hundingr’s sons, sts. 11–14; Hǫðbroddr, sts. 21-end), the third and weightiest being prefaced by the valkyrie’s mission. Some elements of the passage on Helgi’s birth and childhood (sts. 1–9) have obvious models, but as a whole the passage is unparalleled in Old Norse poetry; perhaps the poet altered some form of the childish pranks told in HHII to add royal dignity and destiny. The naming of the hero by the valkyrie in HHII 10 and 13 (cf. HHv 6–7) is probably an ancient religious feature which our poet changed to a sonorous state occasion (st. 8); similarly the valkyrie’s gift of a sword in HHv 8 may once have been a primitive cultic component but has become royal realism here (sts. 7–8). Such is the direction of the skaldic revision in stanzas 1–9, but we cannot be as sure of the form of the source as when dealing with the senna.

After the Parallelstellen of the senna, only one other passage allows certain conclusions about the process of composition; HHII 14–18 (explicitly said to be from Volsungakviða in forna) is almost certainly the major source of HH 15–20. Although this is the second meeting of Helgi and Sigrún in HHII, it must have been the first in Volsungakviða in forna as in HH; so the situation has been taken over intact. The sequence of ideas is basically the same: Sigrún sought out Helgi (HHII 14/1–8: HH 15–16) and spoke, first of her own

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61. S. Bugge, Helgi-Lays, pp. 7–11, 386–87; Wessen, pp. 2–10; the recent book of Klingenberg (esp. pp. 37–78) now presents the most important discussion of Helgi’s birth and childhood, but the book has come into my hands too late to be useable here.

sexual relationship to Helgi (HHII 15/1-4; HH 17), and then of her forced engagement to Hóðbrodr (HHII 16/1-2; HH 18/1-4), of her aversion to the match (HHII 16/3-4; HH 18/5-8), and of her need for Helgi’s protection (HHII 17/3-4; HH 19/1-6); Helgi answers that she should not fear (HHII 18/1-4; HH 20/1-2). However, only a few phrases seem verbal echoes (HHII 14/6 und ðialmi: HH 15/5 und ðialmom; HHII 16/7 hefi ek mins foðdur / [munráð brotit]: HH 18/1-6 Heðir min faðir / ... / ... ek hefi ... [kvedinn]; HHII 18/1-2, Hjörð eigi þú / Högna reiði: HH 20/1-2 Uggi eigi þú / Ísungs bana!), and the other shared vocabulary items are not necessarily products of textual dependence (HHII 17/1 and 18/5 með: HH 19/5 mey; HHII 16/5 fylkir: HH 19/1 fylkir).

To these similarities we may add the rhetorical-syntactic similarities in HHII 16 and HH 18 (compared below) and HHII 18/1-2 and HH 20/1-2.

It is evident, then, that the HH poet has expanded this passage, though less fully than in his treatment of the senna (dilation from 32 to 44 lines compared with 50 to 120 in the senna); both poems have an even balance of third-person narrative and dialogue at this point (16+16 lines: 22 + 22). Many of the characteristic interests apparent in the senna and throughout are also here: ‘mythification’ through place names and more god-like conception of the valkyrie, who significantly does not ride alone (sts. 15-16); obvious influences on the scene from skaldic poems like Hákonarmál and Haraldskvæði in stanzas 15-17; and the highly colored, semi-skaldic diction already discussed (e.g., st. 16/2 ór úlfði). The skaldic reviser also made some interesting changes in the relationship between Helgi and Sigrún. In Volsungakviða in forna Sigrún loved Helgi before she had ever seen him (st. 15/1-4); she made the first advances (st. 14/5-6, kysti ok kvaddi konung und ðialmi) before he warmed to her (st. 14/7-8); she emphasizes her fears (st. 16/5-8) and expresses her dependence on Helgi’s favor directly (st. 17/3-4). In HH this romantic relationship becomes roughly playful as Sigrún changes from human to divine: not the hero but the valkyries are und ðialmom (st. 15/5); here Helgi speaks first, not to offer tender devotion but a straightforward sexual ‘proposition’ (st. 16); Sigrún’s cool reply, far from the maidenly fears of HHII, belittles the proposal, brushing it aside for the moment in favor of the more manly war-work ahead
(sts. 17, 18); and the earlier heroine’s rather vague request for Helgi’s *hylfi* becomes an unsentimental exposition of consequences and alternatives (st. 19).

Another significant set of changes reduces the importance of the father/daughter conflict in *Völsungakviða in forna*. The earlier Sigrún was torn between her destined love of Helgi (*HHII* 15), the ‘other hero’ whom she ‘wished’ to possess (*HHII* 16/3–4), and her family loyalty; she fears her relatives’ wrath (*HHII* 16/5–6) and sounds touchingly conscience-stricken at violating her father’s will (*HHII* 16/7–8). The earlier Helgi’s reassurance is directed against *Högni reidi* and even generally against *illan hug ættar þinnar* (st. 18/1–4), and his consoling speech climaxes in an affecting and unusual idea: let your lover *become* your family:

\[ \text{flu skalt, mær ung,} \\
\text{at mér lifa;} \\
\text{ætt áttu, in góða,} \\
\text{er ek siámk (HHII 18/5–8).}\]

This conflict of love and blood must have been a main theme of the old poem but would have detracted from the jubilant effect, the happy ending, and the panegyric concentration on the figure of Helgi as hero and king sought and achieved by the poet of *HH*. De-emphasizing the intra-familial conflict, the skaldic reviser was able in part to substitute more weight on the opponent *Höðbroðr* (*HH* 18–19). For example, when adapting Helgi’s speech at the climax of the scene, the *HH* poet omitted references to Sigrún’s father and family, and the substitution of *Ísungs bani* for *Högni reidi* is almost certainly meant to shift the reference from *Högni* to *Höðbroðr* (*HHII* 18/1–4: *HH* 20/1–2); and in the closing lines of the stanza and passage the idea of the woman’s dependence on her husband

63. The ‘standard’ interpretation of Gering-Sijmons, *Kommentar*, to *HHII* 16 (p. 115), “you have a family … which I do not fear,” requires an emendation that goes back to Luming (*es eigi seomk*); but Neckel seems to have been right (*Edda ...*, ed. G. Neckel [Heidelberg, 1914], I, 149–50, n. to st. 18/8) in not emending and is silently supported by Detter-Heinzel and Jón Helgason. The unemended reading, improved by removal of the comma (*ætt áttu in góða = your good, i.e. real, family*), fits the fragment of *Völsungakviða in forna* very well.
as a new family is replaced by the simpler notion of Helgi's warlike defence (HHII 18/5–8: HH 20/3–4).

Many of the features of the HH poet's method may be viewed in the microcosm of a single stanza:

**HHII**

st.16/1 “Var ek Hǫðbroddi í her fóstnoð, en Íðfur annan eiga vildak; þó síámk, fylkir, frænda reiði; heti ek míns fóður munráð brotí.”

**HH**

st.18 “Hefir minn fáðir meyio sinni grimmom heitit Granmars syni; en ek hefi, Helgi, Hǫðbrodd kvéðinn konung óneisan sem kattar son.”

The sentimental language (munráð) and the inappropriate part of the plot, the family theme, in the second helming are eliminated as far as possible, but the plot still required the mention of Hógni here and in the final battle (st. 52/1). The substance of the first helming is doubled to fill the whole stanza except that the romantic antithesis and shy expression of the original ('engaged to Hǫðbroddr, but I wanted another,' i.e. Helgi) has become a satirical antithesis boldly expressed (engaged to Hǫðbroddr, but he is unworthy). The new poet has also adopted the rhetorical structure of antithesis turning on *en* but has taken it much further; his stanza presents a nearly complete set of syntactic and verbal contrasts that can perhaps be schematized thus: subject—fáðir/ek; verb—hefri heitit/hefri kvéðinn; object 1—meyio sinni/Hǫðbrodd; object 2—grimmom syni Granmars/óneisan (sem kattar son). The types of object are grammatically different, but verbal repetition and the parallel positioning of their last lines (*Granmars syni: sem kattar son*) helps make clear the wordplay that is apparently intended here with *kattar son*, for it has been argued that this is a kind of name-kenning alluding to a playful interpretation of Gran-marr as 'bewhiskered horse,' that is, 'cat.'

in the HH stanza tend to magnify the figure of Hǫðbroðr; the engagement í her in the original poem gives way to an attribute, grimmr; Hǫðbroðr is first alluded to with a patronymic periphrasis, then by name, and finally the kenning-allusion is added. Here and throughout the poem Hǫðbroðr is elevated to Helgi’s worthy enemy; this replacement for the excised family-feud theme helps to lend glory and finality to the poem’s conclusion where Helgi can be praised for having slain inn flugar trauda / iófur, þann er olli / òegis daudha (st. 55/6–8). This heroic development of Helgi’s opponent is not diminished by the satire of the comparison to a kattar somr in the mouth of Sigrún (who also praises Hǫðbroðr here and at the end) any more than it is by the long senna assigned to Sinfjötli: praise and blame are two sides of the same coin in skaldic art.

The skaldic revision was carried out by a poet of brilliant surfaces. Like ‘aureate’ poets elsewhere his strong points are not psychology and the penetration of human tragic depths. His figures are like icons: one-dimensional, unemotional, brightly colored public symbols. However, icon-like symmetry of parts (like the stanza just discussed) and a firm, almost rigid sense of overall structure combine with an underlying ironic stance toward the plot, the characters, and the exhuberant language itself. The audience for these “enamelled termes,” allusions, satirical squibs, and mythification of kingship is best imagined as a Norwegian royal court.

Conclusions

The composition of one Eddic poem seems to be extensively recoverable in HH, but ‘skaldic revision’ of older oral sources was not always so fastidious and probably not so firmly based in a king’s court. The parallel transmission of stanza 4 of Brot presents a brief and simple example; I assume that Volsunga saga here presents a later revision of a stanza which its poet had heard in a form very similar to that of the Codex Regius:

Codex Regius

st. 4, 1 Sumir úlf sviðo,

Volsunga saga

Sumir viðfiska tóko,

The traditional rhetorical pattern and the ideas of the first helming are preserved, though lines three and four can aptly be described as corrupt; the poor meter in connection with very similar wording shows that they were probably not purposely recomposed, rather the second poet could not remember exactly and substituted a more prosaic and explicit wording. But in lines one and two the later poet has clearly attempted a ‘skaldic revision’ by the simple device of substituting alliterating kennings for ulfr/ormr of the original. In the event he lost a more subtle ‘beauty’ that we also associate with skaldic influence, the rhyme svido/snido, replacing it with the very prosy tóko and the kitchen-word skífðo. In the second helming he totally deserts the tersely narrative original and continues to expand the ideas of the first helming: “What potables were served with the wolf and serpent flesh? Why small beer, of course.” And, he adds helplessly, “many more things in magic potions.” This stanza presents a simple skaldic revision in the substantive substitutions of lines one and two but also exemplifies the expanding and prosifying tendency and the plebeian taste we find much more fully developed in Atlamál, certainly a revision of an older poem.67

There is nothing new in the idea that some Eddic composition was in fact revision. Hymiskvíða is another obvious example of a skaldic reworking of older material, but skaldic ‘influence’ is often noted in other Eddic poems. A particular skald has been forcefully proposed as “der Dichter der Atlakvíða.”68 Apparently the word ‘skald’ is linked only once to an Eddic poem, fittingly to the variant

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stanza cited above from *Völsunga saga*; but the distinction between Eddic anonymity and the named authors of skaldic poetry is further mediated by the authorial names associated with the Eddic verses of *Kálfsvisa* (*Alsvinnsmál*) and *Þórrgrímsþula*. The opposition skaldic: Eddic is indispensable, of course, and does reflect real differences, but it may be appropriate to think of stylistic gradations rather than irreconcilably different types of poetry. Along the spectrum we find *Haraldskvæði*, a praise-poem by a known skald with a strongly ‘epic’ imagination, *Hákonarmál*, which has even more narrative and invents an end to its hero’s life as *HH* does a beginning, and *Eiríksmál*, anonymous, mythic, and narrative/dramatic, like the Eddic poems but still occasional and panegyric like the skaldic. *HH* follows naturally in this series, probably praising a particular king on a particular occasion but extending the fictitious trappings of the “Eddic praise-poems” (talking ravens, Valhöll in the background) to a traditional story treated perhaps as political allegory; *Hymiskviða* also belongs somewhere in this spectrum, but the occasion for that poem seems to have been a private one.

Snorri’s *Háttatal* tells how Þorvaldr veili was shipwrecked on a skerry in cold weather. There he *orti ... kvæði, er kallat er: kvíðan skjálfhenda eda: drápan steflusa, ok kvæðit eptir Sigurðar sögu*. Snorri’s interest in the matter lies in the invention of the meter *skjálfhenda*, a modification of *drottkvætt*, but the larger significance of the passage comprises the information that a known skald composed a poem in what is surely a contemplative situation rather than in public performance and that the poem was on the story of Sigurðr;
perhaps the poem made use of the Sigurðr material for self-consolation or complaint or was being prepared as an epic praise poem against the day Þorvaldr should reappear at court. In any case, it was not a single lausavísda like the exercises by Thjóðolfr Arnórsson, for it was known as a kviða—or by a name that would also fit our idea of HH: steflaus drápa.73

For the problem of characterizing Eddic poetry as oral poetry these skaldic connections bear an obvious relevance but one limited to a few of the extant poems. If a poem such as HH or Hymiskviða or Þorvaldr’s lost steflaus drápa can be regarded as skaldic revision of more or less remembered older poems or stories, then the model of skaldic composition probably applies to them as well. The sources speak of extemporized skaldic lausavísur in a way that makes it clear they were, if not rare, at least regarded as tours de force, but the references to drápur and flokkar suggest deliberative composition, memorization, and later recitation. In fact this skaldic model may well be more appropriate to some Old English poetry than usually thought; in his latest study Fry shows beyond doubt that Caedmon did not extemporize but worked out his compositions in advance.74 That some improvisation, however, co-existed in England with Caedmonian deliberative composition (“quasi mundum animal ruminando” in Bede’s phrase) is still very probable.75

Recent work on oral as contrasted with literate cultures is open to charges of exaggeration or oversimplification;76 the skaldic-Eddic literary milieu before the twelfth or thirteenth century evinces a greater variety than would be suggested by the sharp oppositions sometimes offered. There is evidence for different types of composi-

73. The skaldic stef itself is very close to the various types of Eddic refrains, esp. in Voluspá. Thjóðólfur’s exploit appears in Sneglu-Halla háttr (Eyfróðinga sögur, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, ÍF, IX [Reykjavík, 1956], pp. 267-69).


tion and transmission as well as, obviously, many types of poems and audiences; yet all this poetic activity is, with very few doubtful exceptions, just as ‘oral’ as that of the Yugoslavian coffee houses. At least one of the traditional compositional units of Eddic poetry, the *senna*, is not easily assimilable to imported categories, but the more general insight—not exclusively one of recent years—that a highly organized and recursive poetic ‘grammar’ is proper to oral poetry does seem to extend to the Eddic material. But much more work on the structure and significance of this ‘grammar’ is desirable and further integration with studies of foreign oral poetries and also with the results of the newly revived domestic interest in oral saga.

77. From oral poetry preserved in runes (e.g., Egill’s *Sonatorrek* according to Thórir’s proposal in *Egils saga*, ch. 78) to poetry intended from the beginning for runic writing is a short step; the recently unearthed rune-staves from Bergen mediate further between the two types of composition, as does Magnus Olsen’s famous theory about the runic basis of Egill’s two *lausavisur* against Eiríkr and Gunnhildr (“Om troldruner,” *Edda* [1916], pp. 225–45). Cf. also Jón Steffensen, “Hugleðingar um Eddukvæði,” *Árbók íslenska fornleifafélags*, 1968 (publ. 1969), pp. 26–38.
