

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.¹ But because of this rare consensus, few efforts have been made to place the *Edda* within a broader survey of specifically oral poetry.² This undertaking is overdue, and today the work of Parry and Lord seems an inevitable reference point.³ Initially many accepted the invitation to regard the brilliantly analyzed South

1. Sophus Bugge seems a rare exception in statements like, "The old Norse poems which arose in the British Isles were carried ... to Iceland,—and certainly in written form" (*The Home of the Eddic Poems, with Especial Reference to the Helgi-Lays*, rev. ed., tr. W.H. Schofield [London, 1899], p. xviii).

2. Important older work: Andreas Heusler, *Die altgermanische Dichtung*, 2nd ed. rev. (Potsdam, 1945; rpt. Darmstadt, 1957); H.M. and N.K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, I (Cambridge, 1932); Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, *Íslenzkar bókmenntir í fornöld* (Reykjavík, 1962), pp. 177–99. Stefán Einarsson's theory in "Harp Song, Heroic Poetry (Chadwicks), Greek and Germanic Alternate Singing," *Budkavlen*, 42 (1963), pp. 13–28 and four earlier articles (*Budkavlen* 30 [1951], pp. 12–32; *Arv*, 7 [1951], pp. 59–83; *Skírnir*, 125 [1951], pp. 109–30; *Skírnir*, 136 [1962], pp. 107–29) relates Germanic to other oral poetry but cannot be considered very successful; cf. also Tauno Mustanoja, "The Presentation of Ancient Germanic Poetry—Looking for Parallels," *NM*, 60 (1959), pp. 1–11.

3. Milman Parry's work is now collected in *The Making of Homeric Verse*, ed. Adam Parry (Oxford, 1971); A.B. Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960) is available in paperback (New York, 1965); and Lord's "Perspectives on Recent Work on Oral Literature," *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 10 (1974), pp. 187–210 provides an excellent bibliographical survey. Parry's and Lord's work has been used in

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.⁴ 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 Iclander; (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.

Eddic studies by Robert Kellogg, "A Concordance of Eddic Poetry" (Harvard Diss., 1958) and (with Robert Scholes), *The Nature of Narrative* (New York, 1966); and Lars Lönnroth, "Hjálmar's Death Song and the Delivery of Eddic Poetry," *Speculum*, 46 (1971), pp. 1-20 and more superficially by W.P. Lehmann, "The Composition of Eddic Verse," *Studies in Germanic Languages and Literatures in Memory of Fred O. Nolte* (St. Louis, 1963), pp. 7-14; P.B. Taylor, "The Structure of *Völundarkviða*," *Neophil*, 47 (1963), pp. 228-36; cf. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, *Bókmenntir*, p. 150 and "The Edda and Homer," *Laographia*, 22 (1965), pp. 531-52.

4. The term 'Oral Theory' seems a desirable loosening of 'oral-formulaic theory' and is now ensconced 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:

Types:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Creation:	Impr.	Impr.	Impr.	Delib.	Delib.	Delib.
Transmission:	Impr.	Mem./Impr.	Mem.	Mem.	Mem./Impr.	Impr.

(Publications of the Milman Parry Collection, Documentation and Planning Series, No. 1 [Cambridge, Mass., 1973]); in connection with West Germanic Larry D. Benson's "The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry," *PMLA*, 81 (1966), pp. 334–41 should be mentioned as fundamental and thereafter the articles noted below.

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*;⁶ and of Type 4, longer skaldic poems like *Höfuðlausn*. 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.⁷ 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.⁸ 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. *Gísli sezk niðr ok gerir at trénu, horfir á hauginn Þorgríms en konur sátu upp í brekkuna, Þordís systir hans ok margar aðrar. Gísli kvað þá vísu, er æva skyldi. . . Þordís nam þegar vísuna, gengr heim ok hefir ráðit vísuna* (*Gísla saga in Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, ÍF, VI [Reykjavík, 1943], pp. 58–59 [ch. 18]).

7. Jeff Opland, "The Xhosa Tribal Poet and the Contemporary Poetic Tradition," *PMLA*, 90 (1975), pp. 185–208, esp. pp. 187–92.

8. "Daniel and Azarias as Evidence for the Oral-Formulaic Character of Old English Poetry," *MÆ*, 35 (1966), pp. 95–102.

the importance of memory. Jones apparently did not see the contradiction between her results and the classic oral-formulaic theory, and it remained for Alan Jabbour in 1969 to indict the brevity of Lord's treatment of memorization in contrast to its evident importance in the Old English poetic tradition.⁹ 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 Lönnroth, 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 Lönnroth'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.) Lönnroth cites Heusler on the difference between *yrkja* 'to compose a poem' and *flytja, fœra fram* 'to present a poem' and discusses *Egils saga* on the composition and presentation of *Höfuðlausn*.¹⁰ 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

9. "Memorial Transmission in Old English Poetry," *Chaucer Review*, 3 (1969), pp. 174-90; Lord, *Singer of Tales*, pp. 99, 125 (short texts more likely to be memorized than long) and Lord and Béla Bartók, *Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs* (New York, 1951), pp. 248-49, 259, n. 1, and notes to texts. For an exemplary application of this method see W. Holland, "Formulaic Diction and the Descent of a Middle English Romance," *Speculum*, 48 (1973), pp. 89-109.

10. Lönnroth, p. 3; Heusler, *Altger. Dichtung*, pp. 120-21; however, *kveða* 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,'¹¹ 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

11. A.B. Friedman, "The Formulaic Improvisation Theory of Ballad Tradition—A Counterstatement," *JAF*, 74 (1961), pp. 113–15; Jabbour acknowledges Friedman's conscious revisers in a memorial tradition (p. 181), but does not examine the parallel passages of Old English in this light.

situation, in the versions of *Hjálmar'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 *Hjálmar's Death-Song* from *Qrvar-Odds saga* (OS) clearly emphasizes Princess Ingibjörg, the mutual tragedy of Hjálmar and Ingibjörg, and the royal setting at Uppsala and Sigtúnir, while in the *Hervarar saga* (HS) version Hjálmar's own loss in the context of his property and family dominates; Ingibjörg's grief and the Uppsala setting survive as vestiges but are de-emphasized by their context. A full discussion would have to consider critically the adequacy of Lönnroth'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 Lönnroth's hypothesis against a single example: HS has *Hrafn flýgr austan* (st. 8), while OS has *Hrafn flýgr sunnan* (st. 12). These are apparently meaningless formulaic variants, and yet HS also has *Hvarfek ... austr við Sota* (st. 7) just where OS has *Hvarfek ... 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. Lönnroth, p. 3, and Heusler, *Altger. Dichtung*, p. 120, on *Egils saga* (*hafði fest svá at hann mátti kveða um morgininn*); for *nema*, to 'learn, memorize,' see n. 6 above and *Darraðarljóð* (*Njáls saga*, ch. 157; Heusler and Ranisch (eds.) *Eddica minora*, p. 60).

14. B.W. Andrzejewski and I.M. Lewis, *Somali Poetry: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 45–46.

informants actually provide plenty of material for understanding the 'ethnic' view in their singing tradition.¹⁵ 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' Icclander¹⁶—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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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.

16. *Asser's Life of King Alfred ...*, ed. W.H. Stevenson, rev. D. Whitelock (Oxford, 1959), ch. 23 (p. 20): "recitavit," (cf. ch. 22 [p. 20]: *Sed Saxonica poemata die noctuque solers auditor, relatu aliorum saepissime audiens, docibilis memoriter retinebat*); also L.C. Jane, tr., *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (London, 1926), p. 117; *Porsteins þáttir sǫgufróða*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, ÍF, XI, pp. 335–36.

17. The major work, incorporating the results of earlier insights by Uhland and Much, is Otto Höfler, "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.¹⁹ 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,²⁰ 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.

Heltedigte, første del, ed. Jón Helgason, Nordisk filologi, series A 8 (Copenhagen, 1968); I will cite this edition where possible. Summarizing the older literature on Helgi Haddingjaskati: H. Gering and B. Sijmons, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, (Halle, 1931), II, pp. 27–32; more recent: Ursula Brown, "The Saga of Hro-mund Gripsson and Thorgilssaga," *SBVS*, 13 (1947–48), 52–77 and Ebenbauer; the major 'other Helgis' are Helgi Hálfðanarson in *Hrólfs saga kraka* and Saxo's confusing Helgo's.

19. "Die Helgilieder," *ANF*, 72 (1957), pp. 123–54.

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 *Völsungakviða in forna*, *HHII*, and *HH*; he asserts, for example, that the source of *HHII* was "weitgehend ähnlich" (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:

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

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

Sinfjötli 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 Helgilieder," 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 flyting was different in the *Vorlage* of *HHII* and recklessly interpolated it where he happened to be at the moment.

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 inquit. 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

<i>HH</i>	<i>HHII</i>
45, 1 "Væri ycr, Sinfiotli .q.	23 "Þer er, Sinfiotli
2 sęmra myclo	sęmra myclo
3 gvnmi at heýia	gvnmi at heyia
4 oc glaþa orno	oc glaþa orno,
5 en se onytom	enn onytom
6 orþom at bregðaz,	o. a. d.
7 þot hringbrotar	þott hilldingar
8 heiptir deili.	heiptir deili.
46, 1 Þicciat mer godir	24 Þiccit mer goþir
2 Granmars synir,	gran. s.
3 þo dvgir siklingom	þo d. s.
4 satt at męla	s.a.m.
5 þeir hafa marcat	þeir męrcþ h.
6 a Móinsheimom	a. m. r.
7 at hvg hafa	at hvg hafa
8 hiorom at bregda."	hior. a. b.
9	ero. hildingar
10	haullzti sniallir."

21. Diplomatic text here and below from Sophus Bugge, ed., *Norraen fornkvæði* ... (Christiania, 1867; rpt. Oslo, 1965), pp. 186–95 and nn. there. My interpretation

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:

	<i>HH</i>		<i>HHII</i>
35, 1	Par mvn Hauðbroddr	20	Her ma Haudbroddr
2	Helga finna		Helga kenna
3	flaugtrauþan gram		flotta trauþan
4	i flota miþiom		i flota miþiom.

But the shared line is not abbreviated. Two prose inquires in *HHII* correspond to verse in *HH* (*HHII*, prose before st. 19: *Petta kvað Guðmundr Granmars son*, *HH* 32: *Frá goðborinn / Guðmundr at því*; and *HHII*, prose before st. 20: *Sinfiqtli kvað*, *HH* 33/1–8: *Sinfiqtli kvað*, 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:

Hverr er landreki
 sá er liði stýrir
 ok hann feiknalið
 færir 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 imidlertid opfattes som henvisning til den tidligere skreyne parallelstrofe” and of stanza 24/2–8 “skrives i R forkortet, fordi strofen er skr. før” (p. 37, nn.); such abbreviation is frequent in the Codex Regius where obvious and extensive repetitions occur (e.g., in *Alvíssmál*) and is, of course, to be distinguished from ordinary abbreviation.

Hverr er skjöldungr
 sá er skipom stýrir?
 lætr 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 Høðbroddr*, 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:

Þá kvað Guðmundr, svá sem fyrr 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 Hjörvarðssonar* (*HHv*), the so-called *Hrímgerðarmál*, 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

22. *HH*; *HHII*; *HHv*; *Lokasenna*; *Hárbarðsljóð*; four poetic episodes from *Ketils saga hængs* and *Gríms saga loðinkinna* (*Eddica minora*, XV, "Scheltgespräche" A, B, C, and D); three episodes from Saxo: Gro and Gram (1:IV:3–10), Ericus disertus and Grep (5:III:2–5), and Ericus disertus and Gotwar (5:III:17). (Cf. J. Svernung, "Eriks und Götvaras 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), "Útsteins Kampfstrophen" (XIII), and "Qrvar-Oddr in Biálkaland" (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*, *Qlkofra þáttr*, and *Njáls saga*, ch. 35, presuppose a model like *Lokasenna*, and the quarrel of St. Ólafr and Kálfr Arnason at Stiklastaðr is cited by Anne Holtsmark in *KHL*, s.v. *senna*, the fullest recent discussion. Inger M. Boberg, *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature*, Bibliotheca Arnarnagaeana, XXVII (Copenhagen, 1966) adds *Sigurðar saga þögla*, ch. 5, *Ásmundar saga víkings ins írzka*, ch. 7 (under H507.5 Contest in scolding as introduction to battle), and *Magnússona saga* in *Heimskringla*, ch. 21 (under the allied motif H507 Wit Combat). The verbal encounters between Beowulf and Unferth in *Beowulf* (and to some extent the dialogue between Beowulf and the coastguard ll. 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 Hríngerðr; 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 Hríngerðr's

Hverir ro hǫldar
í Hata firði?
... kennið mér nafn konungs!

She is answered with "*Helgi hann heitir*," etc. (*HHv* 12–13), and the whole process is repeated for Atli (stanzas 14–15) and Hríngerðr (stanzas 16–17). Besides *HH* 32 and 35 and *HHII* 19–20, each of the *Scheltgespräche* in *Ketils saga hængs* 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 þátrr: 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:

Hrímgerðr ek heiti,
 Hati hét minn fadir,
 þann vissa ek ámatkastan iqtun.
 (HHv 17)

Hrímgerðr’s description of Helgi’s ships and men, with its handsome parallels in *HHII* and Saxo,²⁴ can also be assigned to a Characterization. Passing over more problematic elements in the *Hrímgerðarmál*, 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 faðir þeira!”
 “Faðir varattu
 ... sízt þik geldo
 fyr Gnipalundi
 þursa meyar
 á Þórsnesi!” (HH 39/4–40/8)

In *Hrímgerðarmál* 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

24. Saxo 1:1V:4 (p. 14); *HHII* 19; *HH* 33; cf. Paul Herrmann, *Erläuterungen zu den ersten neun Büchern der dänischen Geschichte des Saxo Grammaticus*, Zweiter Teil: Die Heldensage des Saxo Grammaticus (Leipzig, 1922), p. 83; and S. Bugge, *Helgi-Lays*, ch. 16.

the end of *Hrímgerðarmál* to questions and answers involving lore or news (*HHv* 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; Hrímgerðr 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 *níð*; Thórr parts with Hárbarðr 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.²⁵ Magoun's 'theme' of the Beasts of Battle in Old English verse, however, was something much smaller,²⁶ while Rychner treated "les thèmes" broadly, like Lord, but as comprising constituent 'motifs';²⁷ 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

25. *Singer of Tales*, ch. 4; Parry, "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making, I: Homer and Homeric Style," *HSCP*, 41 (1930), 73–147 or *Making of Homeric Verse*, pp. 266–324; cf. also Fry's discussion cited below ("Formulaic Themes").

26. F.P. Magoun, "The Theme of the Beasts of Battle in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *NM*, 56 (1955), pp. 81–90; cf. A. Bonjour, "Beowulf and the Beasts of Battle," *PMLA*, 72 (1957), pp. 563–73, and R.E. Diamond, "Theme as Ornament in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *PMLA*, 76 (1961), pp. 461–68.

27. Jean Rychner, *La Chanson de Geste* (Geneva, 1955), esp. p. 126; also see Fry's brief but comprehensive discussion ("Formulaic Themes," cited below).

system proposed for Old English by Donald Fry who recognized (1) type-scenes and (2) themes.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.²⁹ The technical term itself derives from Homeric studies, where such units as Arming or Sacrifice are obvious to all.

At first glance the *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 *dramatic* nature of Old Norse poetry by comparison to Old English. (The relationship between drama and narrative in the *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.)³⁰ However, the most immediately striking difference from the type-scene of Old English verse is that the *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

28. Donald K. Fry, "Old English Formulaic Themes and Type-Scenes," *Neophil*, 52 (1968), pp. 48-53.

29. Donald K. Fry, "Themes and Type-Scenes in *Elene* 1-113," *Speculum*, 44 (1969), pp. 35-45, and "Type-Scene Composition in *Judith*," *AnM*, 12 (1972), 100-19; F.J. Heinemann, "*Judith* 236-291a: A Mock-Heroic Approach to Battle Type Scene," *NM*, 71 (1970), pp. 83-96; L.C. Ramsey, "The Theme of Battle in Old English Poetry," Diss. Indiana, 1965 (= *DA* 26 [1965], 2758) and "The Sea Voyage in *Beowulf*," *NM*, 72 (1971), 51-59; George Clark, "The Traveler Recognizes his Goal: A Theme in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *JEGP*, 64 (1965), pp. 645-59; also Fry, "The Present State of Oral Literary Studies in Old English," unpublished paper.

30. Heusler comments briefly in *Die altgermanische Dichtung*, p. 105; Larry D. Benson mentions that an important function of the *senna* in *Beowulf* is the recognition and reconciliation of different versions of a story ("The Originality of *Beowulf*," in *The Interpretation of Narrative: Theory and Practice*, ed. Morton W. Bloomfield, *HES*, 1 [1970], pp. 1-43, esp. 20-22), and this function is plain in the near *senna* in *Fáfnismál* 7-8.

like the Approach-to-Battle.³¹ Not only does the *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 *senna* in *HH* is part of a *kviða*, in *HHII* and *HHv* of a heavily poetic 'saga,'³² in Saxo and the instances from the *Eddica minora* it is part of a regular *fornaldarsaga*. In *Lokasenna* and *Hárbarðsljóð*, the *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 *forms* like the *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."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,³⁴ but Crowne's 'hero on the beach' is more puzzlingly interesting.³⁵ This theme, which is

31. The recent discussion by David R. Howlett, "Form and Genre in *Beowulf*," *SN*, 46 (1974), pp. 309–25, attempts more precision than is possible.

32. Lönnroth, pp. 9–10; de Vries, *Literaturgeschichte*, I, p. 310; Gering-Sijmons, *Kommentar*, II, pp. 27–32.

33. Fry, "Formulaic Themes," p. 53; in the unpublished paper referred to in note 29 above, Fry criticizes J. Thormann ("Variation on the Theme of 'The Hero on the Beach' in *The Phoenix*" *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.

34. Stanley B. Greenfield, "The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of Exile in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *Speculum*, 30 (1955), pp. 200–06.

35. David K. Crowne, "The Hero on the Beach: An Example of Composition by Theme in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *NM*, 61 (1960), pp. 362–72; Donald K. Fry, "The Hero

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:

Gewat him ða se hearda	mid his hondscole,
sylf æfter sande	saewang tredan,
wide waroðas.	Weorldcandel scan,
sigel suðan fus.	Hi sið drugon . . . ³⁶

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.”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

on the Beach in Finnsburg,” *NM*, 67 (1966), pp. 27–31 and “The Heroine on the Beach in *Judith*,” *NM*, 68 (1967), pp. 168–84.

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

37. *Spontaneity and Tradition: A Study in the Oral Art of Homer* (Berkeley, 1974), p. 113; cf. Mark W. Edwards, “Type-Scenes and Homeric Hospitality,” *TAPA*, 105 (1975), pp. 51–72, esp. pp. 52–53.

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 German³⁹ indicates, one might be tempted to see here a hint of the original

38. The *journey* (st. 13) leads to battle; after which the *hero* (*vísi*, st. 14/1) and his *retainers* (*bildingar*, st. 13/1; *bildingom*, st. 16/6) rest in a scene imagined as an island with cliffs, if not precisely a *beach* (*at Logafíglom*, st. 13/4; *um ey*, st. 13/8; *und Arasteini*, st. 14/4 etc.); the *light* is first supernatural (*líóma*, st. 15/1), then meteorological (*en af þeim líómom / leiptrir kvómo*, st. 15/3–4), then, in parallel construction, reflected (*en af geirom / geislar stóðo*, 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 Viðris grey / valgiðr 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 Fyrisvellir. 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 liðit ok bað þá vápnaz*. The best known instance of the topos is associated with the *Bjarkamál*: in the prose resolution of *Hrólfs 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 Hrólfr; in the prose Hjalti’s words (*vakid herra kongur þui ofridur er j gardinum*, p. 113) are inappropriate since Hrólfr 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 *kviða* 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 *mannjafnaðr*, 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

speech is derived from the old *Bjarkamál* which probably opened *Vaki æ ok vaki, vina hofuð* (ÍF, XXVII, pp. 361–62; *Eddica minora*, p. 31); and Saxo makes the night setting explicit (*Noxque haec aut finis erit aut vindicta malorum*, etc., *Eddica minora*, p. 22). The topos seems to be parodied in *Hreiðars þátrr heimska* (ÍF, XX, p. 248: *Ok snimma um morgininn, áðr menn væri vaknaðir, stendr Hreiðarr upp ok kallar: 'Vaki þú, bróðir,' etc.*).

40. Nagler, pp. 117–19, esp. p. 118, n. 11 (references associating *charis* with light).

41. Bugge, *Helgi-Lays*, esp. pp. 11–27, 155–73 (*senna*, pp. 163–64), 196–209; Dietrich Hofmann, *Nordisch-englische Lehnbeziehungen der Wikingerzeit*, Bibliotheca Arnarnaganaeana, XIV (Copenhagen, 1955), pp. 114–30; Hofmann summarizes his study of *HH* with the probability that "ein dem Beowulf ähnliches Gedicht die Handlungsführung des Helgiliedes beeinflusst und den Dichter ... angeregt hat," and that "die Tendenz zum breiteren epischen Stil ... auf Impulse aus der angelsächsischen Dichtung zurückgeht" (p. 130).

42. Heusler, *Altger. Dichtung*, pp. 105–07; an example of abuse games: the 'dozens,' cf. pp. 39–60 in Roger D. Abrahams, *Deep Down in the Jungle: Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia*, rev. ed. (Chicago, 1970). A new Harvard dissertation by Joaquín Martínez Pizarro (1976) can be expected to throw an anthropological light on *senna* origins (private communication from T.M. Andersson).

bringing to bear ‘the typical.’⁴³ 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.⁴⁴

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 verse⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ 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

43. *Gestaltungskerne und Gestaltungsweisen in der altgermanischen Heldendichtung* (Munich, 1965); Wolf discusses the *hvöt* in connection with *Hamðismál*, pp. 16–37, esp. pp. 22–23, and in sagas, pp. 109–47, the *senna*, pp. 179–96.

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. Heinzel, *Der Stil der altgermanischen Poesie*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach- und Culturgeschichte der germanischen Völker, XX (Strassburg, 1875).

45. At the beginning of the controversy, Claes Schaar, “On a New Theory of Old English Poetic Diction,” *Neophil*, 40 (1956), pp. 301–05, pointed out the diachronic/synchronic problem; cf. G.S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge, 1962) and several essays, including “The Search for the Real Homer,” *Greece and Rome*, 2nd series, 20:No.2 (1972), pp. 124–39.

46. Cf. F.P. Magoun, “Two Verses of the Old-English Waldere Characteristic of Oral Poetry,” *Beitr* (Halle), 80 (1958), pp. 214–18.

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 *Volsungakviða 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 *Volsungakviða 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 inquit (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, “Helgilieder,” 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 maðelode—on him byrne scan, / searonet seowed smiþes orþancum—: / ‘Wæs þú, Hrōðgár, hál!’”) but apparently rarer in Old Norse (e.g., *Atlakviða* has two: sts. 2 and 15; *Völsungakviða*, *HHII*, *HHv* 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 *slong upp við rá / rauðom skildi, / rǫnd var ór gulli* seems to be a modernizing adaptation of *HHII* 19/2–8 *lætr gunnfana / gullinn fyrir stafni; / þikkia mér friðr / í farar broddi, / verpr vígroða / um víkinga*. 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 geldene*; l. 1021 *segen gylðenne*; l. 2767 *segn eallgylðen*; l. 1022 *broden bildecumbor*; 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 Sinfiotli, partly from current insult-formulas, and probably partly from lost stories.⁵⁰ 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 *Völsungakviða 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 Sinfiotli, and Guðmundr does not spare to *repeat* Sinfiotli’s crimes (sts. 36 and 41); both sides are so stained by

50. Gering-Sijmons, *Kommentar*, is adequate for most of these points; in addition see Bo Almqvist, *Norrön niddiktning: Traditionshistoriska studier i versmaga*. 1 Nid mot furstar, Nordisk texter och undersökningar, XXI (Stockholm, 1965). Examples of the ‘commonplace’ nature of these insults: st. 36/3–4 *ok bræðr þínom / at bana orðit*: *Beowulf*, l. 587 *þeah ðu þinum broðrum to banan wurde* (cf. ll. 1165b–68a); st. 41/9–10 *gøðir þik frægian / af firinverkom*: *Beowulf*, l. 2480 *fæhðe ond fyrene, swa hyt gefræge wæs* (cf. ll. 879, 915); st. 44/8 *deili grøm við þik*: *Hárbarðsljóð* 60 *Farðu nú, þars þik hafi allan gramir* (and see Gering-Sijmons); st. 42/1 *brúðr Grana* (see Gering-Sijmons on *Lokasenna* 23); st. 39/1 *Nío átto vit*, etc. (Gering-Sijmons on *HH* 41, *Lokasenna* 23, and Almqvist); st. 38/1–2 *þú vart en skæða, / skass, valkyria* (read: *en skæða skag[s] valkyria*): a poem preserved on one of the Bergen rune-staves *við inni skæðu skag-valkyrja* (Aslak Liestøl in *Viking*, 1963, pp. 41 f. [unavailable to me but reported by Ólafur Briem, ed., *Eddukvæði*, Íslenzk úrvælsrit, 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 flyting 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 *goðborinn* (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 (*fenrisúlfr*, st. 40) on *Sága's* promontory (st. 39); *þursa meylar* and *Þórsnes* (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 Høðbroddr / Helga kenna, / flótta traudan, / í flota miðiom* : *Maldon*, l. 51 ... *her stynt unforcuð eorl mid his werode*; (2) *HHII* 20/5–8: *Maldon*, l. 52 (note *eðli: epel*, 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 bliðara / en brimis dómur* : *Maldon*, ll. 31b–33 *ond eow betere is / þæt ge þisne garræs mid gafole forgyldon / 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* 34–35: *Maldon*, ll. 49–55a), and general resemblances include the attitude (*Maldon*, l. 27 *on beot*) and common expressions (e.g., *orðom skipta: wordum mælan*).

52. Höfler, p. 16, n. 62, and p. 54.

or heroic legends. Wordplay is less obvious: *landreki* ... *liði stýrir* ... *feiknalið foerir at landi* (st. 32) presents a pattern of chiasitic repetition (*ploce*). (Broken underlining for ‘conceptual rhyme.’) Stanza 33 is echoed in the negative by stanza 36: (*‘Sinfiqtli ... sá er svara kunni / ok við qðlinga / orðom skipta’*: ‘Fátt mantu, fylkir, fornra spialla, / er þú qðlingom / 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 skall 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)

53. See further stanzas 37/4; 41/3; 41/9–10; 43/8.

54. Elias Wessén, “Eddadiktarna om Helge Hundingsbane, I-II,” *Fornvännen*, 22 (1927), pp. 1–30, 65–95, here p. 13, n. 3, and p. 29; cf. Alexander Bugge, “Arnor jarlaskald og det forste kvad om Helge Hundingsbane,” *Edda*, 1 (1914), 350–80, 367; and S. Bugge, *Helgi-Lays*, p. 27.

55. Wessén, pp. 12–14, 24–25; S. Bugge, *Helgi-Lays*, p. 394; B.M. Ólsen, “Et Bidrag til spørgsmaalet om Helgedigtenes oprindelse. Efterladt afhandling,” *ANF*, 39 (1922–23), pp. 97–130, here p. 119, n.; A. Bugge, pp. 366–67.

56. Wessén, p. 21; for S. Bugge’s rival explanation, cf. *Helgi-Lays*, pp. 14–17; references to other attempts, Wessén, p. 20, n. 1.

rather than the individual acts, personalized history, of the older heroic poetry.⁵⁷ 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 *hofuðskáld* Arnórr jarlaskáld at the court of Magnús Ólafsson of Norway (c. 1046) remains the most probable effort of its kind.⁵⁸

HH recasts the Helgi legend in a form suitable for performance before a king and *hirð*. The skaldic revision comprises the diction and rhetoric, the vocabulary and topoi,⁵⁹ 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.),⁶⁰ 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: *pá er sókn lokit!* But this irony of mortality is no more foreign to

57. Wessén, 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; Wessén, like A. Bugge, thought the poet must be an eleventh-century Icelandic 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).

59. *HH* 35/5–8, *sá er opt hefir / orno sadda, / meðan þú á kvernom / kystir þýjar*, seems to comprise a mainly skaldic topos; cf. Cecil Wood, "Nis þæt seldguma: Beowulf 249," *PMLA*, 75 (1960), pp. 481–84 and F. Detter and R. Heinzel, *Sæmundar Edda*, II (Leipzig, 1903), p. 336.

60. Wessén, 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 *Haraldskvæði*, to name one example.

We cannot determine with certainty the whole shape of the *HH* poet's main source, what I am calling *Völsungakviða 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,⁶¹ 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).⁶² 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 *Völsungakviða 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 *Völsungakviða 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

61. S. Bugge, *Helgi-Lays*, pp. 7–11, 386–87; Wessén, 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.

62. Naming: Höfler, pp. 13–19, 23–25; Sijmons-Gering, *Kommentar*, to *HHv* 7, *HH* 8. The sword: W. Wiget, "Ítrlaukr," *ANF*, 41 (1925), pp. 277–80; Gering-Sijmons, *Kommentar*, to *HHv* 8 and *HH* 7; A. Bugge, p. 353, n.; S. Bugge, *Helgi-Lays*, pp. 11–14; Klingenberg, pp. 65–66. Ebenbauer comments extensively on both.

sexual relationship to Helgi (*HHII* 15/1–4: *HH* 17), and then of her forced engagement to Hǫðbroddr (*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 hiálmi*: *HH* 15/5 *und hiálmom*; *HHII* 16/7 *hefi ek míns fǫður* / [*munráð brotit*]: *HH* 18/1–6 *Hefir mín faðir* / ... / ... *ek hefi* ... [*kveðinn*]; *HHII* 18/1–2, *Hirð eigi þú* / *Hǫgna 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 *mær*: *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 úlfíði*). The skaldic reviser also made some interesting changes in the relationship between Helgi and Sigrún. In *Vǫlsungakviða 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 hiálmi*) 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 hiálmom* (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 *hylli* 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 *Högnar reiði* 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:

þú skalt, mæ'r ung,
at mér lifa;
ætt áttu, in góða,
er ek síámk (*HHII* 18/5–8).⁶³

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 Höðbroddr (*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 *Högnar reiði* is almost certainly meant to shift the reference from Högni to Höðbroddr (*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 Lünig (*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:

<i>HHII</i>	<i>HH</i>
st.16/1 “Var ek Hǫðbroddi í her fǫstnoð, en iǫfur annan eiga vildak; þó síámk, fylkir, frænda reiði; hefi ek míns fǫður munráð brotit.”	st.18 “Hefir minn faðir meyio sinni grimmom heitit Granmars syni; en ek hefi, Helgi, Hǫðbrodd kveðinn 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 Hǫgni 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—*faðir/ek*; verb—*hefir heitit/hefi kveðinn*; 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.’⁶⁴ The plus passages

64. Anne Holtsmark, “Kattar sonr,” *SBVS*, 16 (1962–65), pp. 144–55; Bjarne Fidjestøl, “Kattar sonr. Ein merknad til Helgakvida Hundingsbana I, str. 18,” *MM*, 1971, pp. 50–51.

in the *HH* stanza tend to magnify the figure of Hǫðbroddr; the engagement *í her* in the original poem gives way to an attribute, *grimmr*; Hǫðbroddr is first alluded to with a patronymic periphrasis, then by name, and finally the kenning-allusion is added. Here and throughout the poem Hǫðbroddr 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 trauða / iofur, þann er olli / ægis dauða* (st. 55/6–8). This heroic development of Helgi's opponent is not diminished by the satire of the comparison to a *kattar sonr* in the mouth of Sigrún (who also praises Hǫðbroddr here and at the end) any more than it is by the long *senna* assigned to Sinfjǫtli: 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 structure⁶⁵ combine with an underlying ironic stance toward the plot, the characters, and the exuberant language itself. The audience for these "enamelled terms," 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 *Vǫlsunga 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,

Vǫlsunga saga
Sumir viðfiska tóko,

65. Cf. Klingenberg, esp. pp. 78–91.

2	sumir orm sniðo,	sumir vitnishræ skífðo,
3	sumir Gothormi	sumir Guthormi gáfo
4	af gera deildo,	gera hold
5	áðr þeir mætti,	við mungáti
6	meins um lystir,	ok marga hluti
7	á horskom hal	aðra í tyfrom. ⁶⁶
8	hendr um leggja.	

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 *úlfr/ormr* of the original. In the event he lost a more subtle ‘beauty’ that we also associate with skaldic influence, the rhyme *sniðo/sniðo*, 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. *Hymiskviða* 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 *Atlakviða*.”⁶⁸ Apparently the word ‘skald’ is linked only once to an Eddic poem, fittingly to the variant

66. Neckel, *Edda*, p. 318.

67. See T.M. Andersson, “Did the Poet of *Atlamál* Know *Atlaquiða*?” [in *Edda: A Collection of Essays*, ed. by Robert J. Glendinning and Haraldr Bessason (Winnepeg, 1983), pp. 243–57 (Eds.)]; older references there.

68. Felix Genzmer, “Der Dichter der *Atlakviða*,” *ANF*, 42 (1926), pp. 97–134.

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 *Kálfsvísa* (*Alsvinnsmál*) and *Þorgrímsþula*.⁶⁹ 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"⁷⁰ (talking ravens, Valhøll 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.⁷¹

Snorri's *Háttatal* tells how Þorvaldr veili was shipwrecked on a skerry in cold weather. There he *orti ... kvæði, er kallat er: kviðan skjálfhenda eða: drápan steflausa, ok kveðit eptir Sigurðar sögu*.⁷² Snorri's interest in the matter lies in the invention of the meter *skjálfhenda*, a modification of *dróttkvætt*, 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;

69. B. Sijmons, *Einleitung* (to Gering-Sijmons, *Die Lieder der Edda* [Halle, 1906]), pp. clxii-clxxi, esp. p. clxv, n.; pp. clxv-clxvi; *Völsunga saga* (ch. 30 in the edition of S. Bugge and W. Ranisch [Berlin, 1908]).

70. Felix Genzmer, "Das eddische Preislied," *Beitr.* 44 (1919), pp. 146-68.

71. Konstantin Reichardt, "Hymiskviða. Interpretation. Wortschatz. Alter," *Beitr.* 57 (1933), pp. 130-56; de Vries, *Literaturgeschichte*, II, pp. 113-17 and "Das Wort *goðmálugr* in der Hymiskviða," *GRM*, 35 (1954), pp. 336-37; the occasion suggested by *goðmálugr* (st. 38), an obvious calque on *theo-logos* (or, with de Vries, on *poeta theologus*), might be a disagreement with some other twelfth- or thirteenth-century mythographer even one as late as Snorri Sturluson (so Reichardt, but cf. de Vries in *GRM*).

72. Ch. 36, pp. 211-12 in *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. Þorleifr Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1875); ch. 35, p. 16 in *Háttatal Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. Th. Möbius (Halle, 1881), the only editions available to me here.

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 *lausavísa* 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 *Völuspá*. Thjóðolfr's exploit appears in *Sneglu-Halla þáttur* (*Eyfirðinga sögur*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, ÍF, IX [Reykjavík, 1956], pp. 267–69).

74. Donald K. Fry, "Caedmon as a Formulaic Poet," *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 10 (1974), pp. 227–47.

75. *Beowulf* (ll. 867–915) still seems (with Klaeber, notes, and C.L. Wrenn, ed., *Beowulf with the Finnesburg Fragment*, rev. W.F. Bolton [London, 1973], notes) to presuppose improvisation of sorts, despite Norman Eliason, "The 'Improvised Lay' in *Beowulf*," *PQ*, 31 (1952), pp. 171–79; cf. Jeff Opland, "Beowulf on the Poet," *Mediaeval Studies*, 38 (1976), pp. 442–67, esp. pp. 457–58.

76. For example, Franz H. Bäuml and Edda Spielmann, "From Illiteracy to Literacy: Prolegomena to a Study of the *Nibelungenlied*," *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 10 (1974), pp. 248–59.

tion and transmission as well as, obviously, many types of poems and audiences; yet all this poetic activity is, with very few doubtful exceptions,⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸

77. From oral poetry preserved in runes (e.g., Egill's *Sonatorrek* according to Þórgerðr'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 *lausavísur* against Eiríkr and Gunnhildr ("Om troldruner," *Edda* [1916], pp. 225–45). Cf. also Jón Steffensen, "Hugleiðingar um Eddukvæði," *Árbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags*, 1968 (publ. 1969), pp. 26–38.

78. Dietrich Hofmann, "Vers und Prosa in der mündlich gepflegten mittelalterlichen Erzählkunst der germanischen Länder," *FMAS*, 5 (1971), pp. 135–75 and "Die mündliche Vorstufe der altnordischen Prosaerzählkunst," *AUS*, 10 (1961), pp. 163–78; Peter Buchholz, "Fornaldarsaga und mündliches Erzählen zur Wikingerzeit," [in *Les Vikings et leur civilisation. Problèmes actuels*, ed. by Régis Boyer, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales: Bibliothèque arctique et antarctique, 5 (The Hague, 1976), pp. 133–78 (Eds.)]; H.M. Heinrichs, "Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit: ein Problem der Sagaforschung," in *Akten des V. internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses: Cambridge 1975* (Bern, 1975), pp. 114–33; T.M. Andersson, *The Problem of Icelandic Saga Origins* (New Haven, 1964) and various articles.

