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THE EDDIC TRADITION:
A STUDY OF THE MODE OF
TRANSMISSION
OF EDDIC MYTHOLOGICAL POETRY
IN THE MIDDLE AGES

by
Judy Quinn

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English, University of Sydney

June, 1990

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables iv
Acknowledgements v
Sigla vi
Abbreviations vii

Chapter 1 *Introduction* 1

Chapter 2 *Oral Traditions in medieval Iceland* 6
  §2.1 Oral traditions and the effects of literacy 6
  §2.2 Oral Traditions in medieval Iceland 11
    §2.2.1 Genealogies 11
    §2.2.2 Laws 20
    §2.2.3 Lists 23
    §2.2.4 Poetry 25
      §2.2.4.1 Skaldic poetry 25
      §2.2.4.2 Eddic poetry 30
      §2.2.4.3 Eddic dream verse 32
    §2.2.5 Other references to oral traditions 42

Chapter 3 *Written Traditions in medieval Iceland* 53
  §3.1 The runic tradition 53
  §3.2 The alphabetic tradition 70
  §3.3 Interplay between oral and written traditions 80
    §3.3.1 The treaty between Icelanders and the Norwegian king 85
    §3.3.2 The law-code 87
    §3.3.3 History 91
  §3.4 The intellectual background to the recording of eddic poems 97
  §3.5 From oral poem to written text 101

Chapter 4 *The preservation of eddic mythological poetry in quotations* 111
  §4.1 Quotations of eddic verse in thirteenth century prose works 115
  §4.2 The categories of eddic and skaldic verse 145
  §4.3 Eddic quotation and proslmetrum style in Snorri's work 158

Chapter 5 *The preservation of eddic mythological poetry as whole poems* 166
  §5.1 Quotations of whole poems in prose works 167
  §5.2 Codex Regius 181
  §5.3 AM 748 I 4to 191
  §5.4 The prehistory of the collection manuscripts 194
  §5.5 Eddic poems in compilation manuscripts 202
  §5.6 The categories of mythological and heroic poetry 207
  §5.7 The social context of the writing down of eddic poems 212
  §5.8 The naming of eddic mythological poems 216
List of Tables

| Table 1: Eddic mythological poetry preserved in manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries | 112 |
| Table 2: Verse quotation in *Gylfaginning* | 139 |
| Table 3: Quotation of eddic verse in other prose works | 142 |
| Table 4: The naming of eddic poems in medieval manuscripts | 217 |
| Table 5: The order of stanzas in the Regius and Hauksbók texts of *Voluspá* | 247 |
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Sigla

A AM 748 I 4to, leaves 1-6 (a fragmentary collection of eddic poems)
As AM 748 I 4to, leaves 7-28 (a fragmentary text of Skáldskaparmál, and The Third Grammatical Treatise)
A2 AM 748 II 4to (Snorra Edda)
D AM 62 fol. (Norna-Gests þáttir)
E Eirspennill, AM 47 fol. (Sverris saga)
F Flateyjarbók, CR 1005 fol. (Hyndluljóð and Norna-Gests þáttir)
G AM 81a fol. (Sverris saga)
H Hauksbók, AM 544, 4to (Völuspá)
R Codex Regius 2365 4to (the principal collection of eddic poems)
Rs Codex Regius 2367 4to (Snorra Edda)
T Codex Trajectinus (Utrecht paper manuscript of Snorra Edda)
U Codex Upsaliensis, De la Gardie 11, 8o (Snorra Edda)
V Codex Regius 1824b, 4to (Völsunga saga)
W Codex Wormianus, AM 242 fol. (Rígsþula, Snorra Edda and The Third Grammatical Treatise)
325 AM 325 VIII 4to (Sverris saga)
757 AM 757a 4to (fragmentary text of Snorra Edda)
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Akv</td>
<td>Atlaqviða in grænlenzca</td>
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<td>Alvíssmál</td>
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<td>SGT</td>
<td>The Third Grammatical Treatise</td>
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1

Introduction

More than two hundred years after Iceland officially adopted the Christian faith around the year 1000, anonymous alliterative poems dealing with the worlds of pagan deities, valkyries, giants, dwarves and legendary heroes and heroines were put into writing. Two extant vellum manuscripts preserve collections of poems - the Codex Regius (Gl. kgl. sml. 2365 4to) and AM 748 I 4to - both produced during the latter part of the thirteenth century, and both thought to be dependent on a common antecedent manuscript or manuscripts. Earlier in the century, the mythographer and writer on poetics, Snorri Sturluson, made use of some of these poems as source material in his own mythology, and preserved as well a number of quotations from poems not elsewhere recorded. A handful of single poems recorded in later compilation manuscripts (both medieval and post-medieval) completes what is conventionally thought of as the eddic corpus, though the eddic style of composition occurs in poetry outside the corpus as well. The description 'eddic' is applied to poetry of the type preserved in the two collection manuscripts, and those poems representing the speech or actions of otherworldly figures are usually termed 'mythological'. During the course of my examination of the eddic tradition, both these descriptive terms, and the categories they construct, will come under closer scrutiny (§4.2 and §5.6).

Most eddic poems are generally thought to be of great antiquity and to have been transmitted orally from generation to generation before they were finally fixed in writing in the thirteenth century. The aim of this thesis is to study eddic mythological poems in the light of recent research on verbal art forms in societies where literacy is a relatively new and restricted technology. My purpose is not to establish that the written texts of eddic verse represent oral poems - the nature of our records does not allow this - but to read the texts in the broad social and cultural context of their period. This involves, first of all, an examination of the eddic tradition itself, its distribution in time and space and through media. Eddic verse has been preserved in runic inscriptions on stone dating from the fifth century, in runes on wood from twelfth century Norway and in alphabetic texts written in Iceland in the
thirteenth century and later. In these manuscripts, the eddic mode of composition is evidenced in quotations of ancient poems within prose works, in the recording of collections of entire poems, in the reported speech of otherworldly beings appearing in the dreams of thirteenth century Icelanders and documented in contemporary sagas, and in Christian poems and scholarly translations of foreign works. The emergence of the eddic tradition in literary history is therefore a complicated textual and cultural phenomenon, against which the production of anthologies of traditional poems in the second half of the thirteenth century needs to be viewed.

I begin my study with a survey of oral traditions in medieval Iceland drawing on accounts of conventional oral discourses, comments (sometimes disparaging) about the content of orally transmitted material, and on texts, such as the law-code, which are the ostensible end-products of the complicated process of transformation from oral discourse into written document. Because we are necessarily bound to the evidence of the written word in this survey, I preface it with a general account of what has been deduced about the nature of oral traditions in a variety of other cultural contexts, and the consequences of literacy on those traditions (§2.1). While particular characteristics of both oral and literate traditions may be unique to the Icelandic context, inferences can still be drawn regarding the conceptual and social differences which pertain to an oral milieu. Comparative observations in fact provide a useful framework for the interpretation of medieval Icelandic references to the character of oral and written traditions alike.

An interesting aspect of the eddic tradition is its apparent survival as a productive mode of poetic composition well into the thirteenth century (and probably beyond). In sagas documenting Iceland's history in the thirteenth century, numerous dream-poems are quoted by saga authors which instantiate eddic conventions, even to the point of bringing to life classic figures of the eddic world, such as Guðrún Guðrúnardóttir. These texts are the focus of §2.2.4.3, within an overview of the oral poetry of medieval Iceland (§2.2.4). The idea that the eddic tradition was a living and vital tradition, and not just a precondition for the composition of a limited number of poems, will be taken up at various points in this study, in particular during my examination of the social context of the recording of eddic poetry (§5.7) and in my discussion of the compositional mode of extant eddic texts (chapter 6).
The beginnings of written culture in Iceland is the subject of chapter 3, which opens with a consideration of the indigenous writing technology of Scandinavia, runic inscription, which was sometimes utilised to transcribe poetic utterance (§3.1). Runic evidence unearthed in the last forty years in Norway indicates that rune literacy from the twelfth century was more widespread than previously thought, and that runes were used for a range of practical communications, as well as for inscribing spells and Christian prayers. In all likelihood, runic technology was also known and used in Iceland, although the nature of inscription surfaces available on the island has not resulted in records surviving the centuries, as they have on Continental Scandinavia. While eddic verse was occasionally carved onto stone or wood, the purpose of transcription does not appear to have been comparable with the recording in alphabetic writing of poems on vellum, and in general, it may be surmised that the impact of runic writing on oral discursive traditions, and more particularly on the transmission of eddic poetry, was small in comparison with the profound changes brought about by the introduction of the Latin alphabet.

The history of alphabetic literacy in Iceland is essentially a history of different discourses, some imported with the technology of writing by the Church from Continental Europe, and some of ethnic origin brought within the sphere of literate production during the course of the Middle Ages. In §3.3 I investigate the interpenetration of oral and literate traditions in some of these indigenous discourses, as well as the impact of literacy on particular social institutions, such as that of the law-speaker. In this section, I also address the nature of literacy in medieval Iceland, its demographic extent and likely cultural function, in order to gauge what effect it might have had on the continued transmission of traditional, indigenous oral discourses, such as eddic verse. The likely intellectual background to the recording of eddic poems needs to be considered in the light of scholarly and theological attitudes to the traditional ethnic culture of Iceland, and in the context of the development of antiquarian interests among those empowered by literacy (§3.4).

Chapters 4 and 5 document the history of the textualisation of eddic verse, in quotations within prose works (§4.1) and in collection and compilations manuscripts (§5.2 - §5.5). In §4.3, quotations of eddic verse are viewed against the background of medieval styles of prosimetrum composition, and Snorri's particular style of prosimetrum in Gylfaginning and Skáldskaparmál. The progression from the practice of quoting stanzas piece-meal for the purpose of
substantiating accounts in prose works to the enterprise of recording entire poems is apparent in the chronology of thirteenth century works, and also in the manuscript history of particular works, such as Snorri's *Edda*, some manuscripts of which include the text of a whole eddic poem appended at the end of a chapter. A different intellectual and social response to tradition is suggested by the desire to record a text of a whole poem on vellum, compared with the incorporation of verse as quotation in prose, and the implications of this change in literary activity is the focus of §5.1.

The discursive style of the Regius manuscript and its paleographic composition indicate that it is the product of a number of earlier collections, probably consisting of individual poems, sets of poems and short *prosimetrum* works. In §5.4, I discuss the likely prehistory of the eddic anthologies, and in §5.7, I consider the possible motivation for the writing down of traditional eddic poetry. While few definitive conclusions can be drawn about social attitudes to eddic verse in the thirteenth century, some interesting observations can be made about scribal attitudes to the citation and identification of eddic poems, which are apparent in the naming practices of manuscript producers (§5.8).

The final chapter of my study concentrates on the compositional mode of eddic poems, with a view to ascertaining what effects oral transmission may have had on their form, and more importantly, what the structures of recall might have been for the poems in an oral milieu. An analysis of *Völuspá*, the only eddic mythological poem preserved in two independent texts apparently derived from different oral versions, is presented in §6.2. This is followed by a general consideration of the compositional mode of other eddic poems in the light of recent work on narratology and speech act theory (§6.3). In my investigation of eddic compositional modes, I also examine the relationship of metre to discursive style (§6.4), and the principles of coherence in poems constituted of a variety of discourse types (§6.5).

The generic constraints apparently operating in eddic praxis include the discursive possibilities conventionally associated with different types of speakers (whether *völlva*, god or hero), the conventional patterning of particular speech acts (the structure of types of discursive interactions such as the *senna*) and the underlying mythological situation which the speakers enact. While most eddic mythological poems are non-narrative in mode, narrative development is expressed in the dramatic interaction of speakers, and it is this aspect of form
that is of particular interest to an understanding of the eddic compositional mode. To focus these observations on the matrix of determinants behind eddic compositional praxis, I analyse the text of *Fáfnismál* (§6.6), in order to bring to light the complex aesthetics of eddic composition.

The orientation of my analysis of poems follows the general direction of research undertaken in the last forty years on the orality of eddic verse, prompted by developments in other fields, most notably on the Homeric and South Slavic traditions. While the oral nature of eddic poetry has always been tacitly acceded to, the manifestations of orality in the extant forms of the poems have, until recent times, generally been passed over. The application to eddic poetry of theories formulated in relation to other traditions has required important modifications, primarily in recognition of the fundamental role of memorisation in the eddic tradition. But through its enunciation and adaptation, the Oral Theory of Albert Lord in particular has prompted a closer examination of the eddic corpus and a keener definition of its characteristics (see Foley: 1985, 712).

Starting with Robert Kellogg's initial engagement of the principles of the Oral Theory in his study of eddic verse in the late 1950s, significant progress has been made in the project of defining eddic orality - though it is an enterprise which still attracts trenchant criticism (see, for instance, Kristjánsson: 1990). In a series of important articles, Lars Lönnroth has examined various aspects of eddic transmission, probing in particular the nature of poetic performance (1971 and 1978) and the role of formulas in eddic composition (1981). The question of formulaic composition has also been investigated (in recent decades) by Teresa Pároli (1975), Joseph Harris (1983) and Elena Gurevič (1986). Joseph Harris's bibliographic survey (1985) documented the state of research on eddic poetry as oral poetry, and brought into focus the critical issues that have arisen in this area of scholarship. His work on the poetic grammar of certain eddic poems (1983, 1985 and 1990) has provided the foundations for my own investigation of the compositional mode of eddic poetry.
Oral traditions in medieval Iceland

To survey oral and written traditions in a medieval culture we are necessarily bound to written sources, from which to infer contemporary and preceding oral traditions. By working backwards in this way, there is a danger of noticing only those oral traditions which feed into later literate ones and to overlook the general implications of orality for cultural transmission both before and after literacy has been established as a technology. In this chapter, I therefore begin with a brief survey of what is known about oral traditions world-wide and the typical effects of literacy on these traditions. These observations are naturally generalisations drawn from typical situations, and are not intended as a means of defining the cultural situation in pre-literate Iceland. Rather they provide a context for the interpretation of references to oral and written traditions gleaned from a variety of medieval Icelandic texts. The view of Icelandic culture available from the writings of successive generations of literate men is necessarily a partial one, but in some of their writings shadows emerge that hint at cultural processes beyond the ostensible foci of their works. Chasing some of these shadows is the labour of §2.2.5 of this chapter. In §§2.2.1-2.2.4, I trace the outlines of the oral traditions that are explicitly or implicitly posited as the sources for literary genres by authors in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and in §2.2.4.3, I examine in some detail the eddic dream verse preserved in contemporary sagas of the thirteenth century as evidence of a living eddic tradition.

§2.1 Oral traditions and the effects of literacy

Work done this century by social anthropologists and other scholars studying cultures untouched by writing as well as newly literate cultures has greatly advanced our knowledge of orality. While these observations need to be applied tentatively to the study of medieval Iceland, a number of the distinctive features of verbal art forms transmitted in primary oral cultures can be quite clearly seen in the extant recordings of eddic poems, and to some extent the central conditions of oral transmission must still have obtained in
Iceland, even in the late thirteenth century. By that time, the spread of literacy is not likely to have extended to the population as a whole; nor, it seems, had the full range of traditional verbal art forms undergone transformation into written genres. Both runic literacy and alphabetic literacy appear to have been restricted to a small proportion of the population in the medieval period, and were applied to a limited range of writing activities (see further ch. 3). Runes do not seem to have been used for transcribing lengthy utterances, such as the law-code or even entire poems, and were probably never intended as a means of storing and transmitting the cultural repertoire. Alphabetic literacy, while having greater potential as the principal means of transmitting cultural heritage, was an imported technology in Scandinavia, brought there by the Church and intended to be deployed in its service. Initially it was directed towards those within Christian institutions (the clergy and school pupils), and was used to disseminate documents of the Church and Christian Latin culture.

The technology of writing was first used for the production of secular texts in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, and it was this development that appears to have prompted the adaptation of the Latin alphabet for writing in the vernacular, judging by the comments made by the First Grammarian later in the twelfth century (see §2.2.1). But manuscript production remained part of the resources of learned Latin culture, even when Icelandic was the language of writing. Only gradually were traditional ethnic discourses brought within the sphere of the written record, and as they were, their audience and social function would inevitably have changed. Much of the manuscript production in medieval Iceland appears to have been geared towards an elite audience of influential families rather than as a means of disseminating texts to the population at large, making it unlikely that written texts became the dominant mode of cultural transmission for the bulk of the population. This is not to say that alphabetic literacy would not have had a profound effect on all members of society: those unable to read no doubt came to see the book as a symbol if not a transmitter of authoritative utterance. Nevertheless, oral transmission must have been the primary mode of communication among a large proportion of the population in the thirteenth century, and the sole mode of transmission for certain kinds of discourse.

In their seminal article “The Consequences of Literacy” published in 1968,
Jack Goody and Ian Watt outline the conditions typical of oral transmission, which can be briefly summarised as follows:

Before writing is used to record a society’s cultural heritage, verbal elements of that culture are stored only in human memory, and transmitted only in face-to-face contact, where meaning is ratified by the situation, vocal inflection and physical gesture and the significance of information is always conceptualised in a concrete situation (Goody and Watt: 1968, 29).

In each generation the individual memory mediates cultural heritage, interpreting it with reference to contemporary realities and eliminating what is no longer relevant. Formalised patterns of speech operate as a conservative force in resisting the forces of forgetting, but the limitations of human memory and the situational context of verbal interaction mitigate against storage and transmission of cultural material which has lost social relevance (Goody and Watt: 1968, 30).

Goody and Watt have termed this the 'homeostatic' organization of the cultural tradition in a non-literate society. A few corollaries of these conditions, enunciated by Walter Ong in his book Orality and Literacy (1982, 31-57) are that oral discourse tends to be:

- set in situational, operational frames of reference
- participatory, moving freely between the voices of the first and third person
- based on repeated structural patterns
- aggregative and amplifying, and often
- agonistically framed.

Albert Lord (1987) has examined a number of these characteristics with specific reference to oral traditional literature, suggesting some refinements based on his own understanding of the nature of Homeric and South Slavic epic.

These modes of expression are profoundly affected by writing, the fixing of a text in a permanent but timeless, relatively context-free medium, which allows for what Goody calls “backward scanning” and the synchronic analysis of material from disparate sources. Two of the main effects of writing on human consciousness as distinguished by Goody and Watt are an awareness of the past as different from, and unassimilated into the present, and a growing awareness of the inconsistencies inherent in the written body of cultural tradition recorded at different times and in different contexts (Goody and Watt 56). These generalisations need to be qualified to some extent when dealing with
Scandinavia, where genealogies and memorised lists of kings and lawspeakers existed in the pre-literate period, and must have worked in distinguishing the past from the present, at least chronologically. But even so, there was probably less depth of field in the orally conceived picture of the past compared to the precise visual records available to a literate person. Perhaps the focus blurred after the recollection of five generations of predecessors, the extent of kinship knowledge stipulated in several articles of the law-code (see §2.2.1). Still, looming large in pre-literate Icelanders' conception of the past must have been the geographical translation of their cultural heritage from mainland Norway to their Atlantic island home. It has been argued that the recognition of this terra nova played an important part in the development of Icelandic literature (Schier: 1975) and it is not unreasonable to extrapolate from this that it may also have affected oral traditions in the period between settlement and the first written texts. The process of defining new political, legal and social orders would have already started before writing was employed to formally establish them.

According to Goody and Eric Havelock, who has written extensively about the transition from an oral to literate culture in early Greece, writing is the sine qua non of an historical sensibility, and of abstract analytical thought. More particularly, Havelock maintained that the development of analytical thought, logic and Western philosophy depended on the invention of the alphabet, which represented pure consonants and vowels (Havelock 1982). He has since refined his description of the invention of the alphabet as a "revolution" (1982), preferring to see the impact of literacy as a series of events beginning "in the creation of a topic as a subject of a "discourse" made possible by the conversion of acoustically preserved memorized speech into materially preserved visible artefacts that are capable of rearrangement." (1986, 103).

The uniqueness of the alphabet itself and the achievements of Greek society have recently been called into question and modified to some extent (Goody: 1987, 62), but the observation remains that the development of complex analytic thought and systematized knowledge in all cultures appears to depend on the development of written communication. How rapid and profound these changes are depends on the degree to which use of the system is diffused throughout the society. A critical condition in the case of Scandinavian history was the availability or development of writing materials able to carry lengthy inscriptions. This factor appears to have been crucial in the development of
the role played by runic writing in pre-Christian Scandinavian society, a subject I shall return to in the next chapter.

The study of the transition from orality to literacy in ancient Greece is of particular value, as the technological advances and their possible applications developed within that society and were debated by its members as they arose (Goody and Watt: 1968, 42, 49ff). In Plato's *Phaedrus*, for instance, Socrates maintains that people who put their faith in a written manual, who expect that "such writing will provide something reliable and permanent, must be exceedingly simple-minded." (Hackforth: 1972, 158). In subsequent cases of cultural transformation from orality to alphabetic literacy, the technology was imported accompanied by other cultural changes, including in the case of Scandinavia, a fundamental change in religious beliefs. Under these conditions, early writers were less critical of the differences between the modes of communication, since writing was automatically incorporated and justified within the powerful culture that controlled its dissemination. The terms of reference for any discussion were biased in favour of written exchange, which was identified, in Brian Stock's words (1984, 16), with "the progress of a beneficent rationality".

Some eleventh century Icelanders no doubt absorbed the mind-set of literacy, but they would have experienced it in relation to a distant, if not foreign world. For instance, the historical sensibility so central to a literate understanding of the world was based on permanent written records from continental Europe, representing the history of other cultures linked to Iceland primarily through their shared Christian faith. The development of an historical sensibility in relation to their own culture depended on the establishment and accumulation of their own written records, which were only begun, as far as we know, at the turn of the twelfth century. Once in place, records of Icelandic cultural heritage (such as laws and genealogies) would have established new frames of reference for the interpretation and documentation of other items in the cultural repertoire. In the meantime, these items continued to be transmitted orally.

In Snorri Sturluson's work on mythology from the first quarter of the thirteenth century, heathen mythology is placed within a vast context, extending far beyond medieval Iceland, geographically and temporally. In documenting ethnic traditions, Snorri links them to classical and Christian history, and
interprets them in this context. His project, in a way, is to write traditional Icelandic culture into the larger text of Christian learning. In Gylfaginning the organisational principle Snorri initially adopts is the literate one of topics: "Hverr er öxtr eða elztr allra göða?" (8, 27); "Hvat var upphaf?" (9, 9); "Hvernig var jörðin háttuð?" (12, 21), although the text later gives way to longer narrative accounts of myth. The systematic arrangement of material according to topic, expressed as generally as "Hvat er fleira at segja stórmerkja frá askinum?" (18, 28-29) gives rise to a synthetic account of mythological material, one in which contradictory details from disparate sources have to be rationalised. Snorri’s compositional style, and his use of apparently oral sources, will be taken up again in §4.3.

§2.2 Oral traditions in medieval Iceland

Oral traditions in medieval Iceland were rich and diverse, judging by the references made to them as sources in the earliest written works of the culture, and the records we have of some of their products, such as skaldic poetry. In trying to imagine these traditions, we are entirely dependent on the products of a written tradition: texts which we deduce to be the end-products of a process of transition from oral to written modes. In the earliest period of vernacular writing in Iceland, texts draw attention to their dependence on oral traditions for raw material, if not for their generic style or form. Outside the public realm of political and legal negotiation (see §§3.3.1-2), there is only scant evidence of the interface between oral and written traditions. What references there are often take the form of prohibitions or derisive comments about particular oral traditions. (These incidental references are dealt with in §2.2.5). To begin this survey of oral traditions, I shall consider first the types of discourse that constituted the earliest genres of written vernacular prose: genealogies and laws, for by contemporary testimony, these written texts were based on the words of learned and trusted men.

§2.2.1 Genealogies

Genealogical material appears to have been crucial to the formulation of the first vernacular writing produced in Iceland. Islendingabók, written by Ari Þorgilsson around the third decade of the twelfth century in close
consultation with the bishops of Iceland, is the earliest vernacular prose text still extant (J. Benediktsson: 1968, xvii-xviii). In his prologue, Ari refers to an earlier version of his work - now lost - which included genealogical material. On the advice of the Bishops Þorlákr and Ketill, Ari enlarged sections of his original book, but omitted the accounts of notable Icelandic families and Norwegian kings:

En með því at þeim líkaði svá at hafa eða þar viðr auka, þá skráfaða ek þessa af et sama far, fyr útán áttartölú ok konunga ævi, ok jökk því es mér varð síðan kunnara ok nú es gerr sagt á þessi en á þeir.

Prologus to Islendingabók (J. Benediktsson: 1968, 3)

The first element of the word ættatala denotes kinship groups, and the second element is related to the verb telja 'to count'. Its formal meaning is probably a 'genealogical list'. Speculation about the possible contents of Ari's first book has been treated in detail by Jakob Benediktsson (1968: vili-xvii), who refers to the case of Þoríðr Snorradóttir as an illustration of the transmission of genealogical material down through generations (1968: x). In a later account, Þoríðr is named as one of Ari's oral informants:

Ari nam ok margi fræði at Þoríði, dóttur Snorra goða. Hon var spók at viti. Hon munði Snorra, þaður sinn, en hann var þá nær hálftvertgr, er kristni korn á Ísland, en andaðsk einum vetri eptir fall Óláfs konungs ins helga.

Prologus to Heimskringla (Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, I 7)

Þoríðr's testimony is valuable since she provided a link between twelfth century literati and the momentous events marking the beginning of Icelandic Christianity which had occurred in her father's lifetime. In this source and others, women are named as important oral informants on matters of historical lore, suggesting that prior to and outside of the masculine world of literacy (see §3.2), genealogical and political discourses were the preserve of both sexes (Kellogg: 1973).

Appended to Ari's extant book is a short genealogical work introduced by the rubrik: "Petta es kyn byskupa Islendinga ok ættartala". The ancestors of each bishop are listed commencing with the settler ("landnámsmaðr/kona") who began the line. The work is in prose, but it is condensed and gives no further elaboration than names and homesteads. There are noticeable similarities between the form of this ættartal and the major Icelandic genealogical text Landnámabók which attracted numerous redactors during the thirteenth and
fourteenth centuries (Jóhannesson: 1941). Ari's written genealogies may indeed have formed the beginnings of this large and important work (J. Benediktsson 1968: cvi - cxx). A second genealogy appended to Isletingabók relates to Ari's own line of descent.

Genealogical concerns run through the early literary history of Iceland like a red thread. In the first flowering of vernacular literature, genealogies appear to have provided the raw material of history, and their impress on new literary genres can be seen in a variety of forms. In Ari's extant book, for instance, the genealogy is manifest as organising principle (of which more later), as source material and as appendices, situating both the author and his patrons in relation to the matter of the book. This latter interest in the glory reflected by the subject matter of a text on those who have commissioned its production becomes a very important dynamic in the literary history of medieval Iceland (see Clover: 1985, 270-271).

Whether the genealogical material Ari drew on was in the form of numbered lists, dynastic poems, prose accounts, or some other genre, we cannot know, but since Ari is generally credited with having been the first to put this kind of learning into writing, the genealogies he transcribed were almost certainly derived from oral tradition. The First Grammarian, writing sometime between 1125 and 1175 (H. Benediktsson: 1972, 31), lists the genres of Icelandic letters as laws, genealogies, interpretation of religious texts and the learned works of Ari:

\[
\ldots \text{ til þess at hægra verði at rita ok lefa fem nv týðiz ok a þessv landi bæði lög ok áttvísí eða þyðingar heigir eða ðva þav hin ípaklegv fræði er arí þorgilf tórn hérfr a þýkr fétt af færfræamlegv viti.}
\]

\textit{The First Grammatical Treatise} (H. Benediktsson: 1972, 208)

Áttvísí probably constituted a genre of narrative prose, a kind of family history, incorporating the brief ættartólur known from earlier sources (Turville-Petre: 1953, 166-7). Interestingly, the First Grammarian makes a distinction between this kind of text and Ari's work, presumably because of the latter's heterogeneous generic character. A range of learned models have been postulated behind Ari's style (Louis-Jensen: 1976).

There were strong social reasons for the transmission of genealogies in medieval Iceland. Genealogical knowledge was essential to the successful
operation of the law-code. Cognizance of kinship bonds to the fifth degree was necessary for the establishment of legal entitlement to inheritance (Grágás Ia 218ff., II 63ff), as well as for the enforcement of legal responsibilities, including guardianship (Grágás Ia, 225-30; II 69-70), care of dependants and baugatal or compensation (Grágás Ia 193-207). The proper enumeration of kinship was required in certain procedures in the Norse legal system, and provision was made to ensure its veracity (Grágás Ia 48). Genealogies are significant in oral cultures because they provide some justification for the distribution of power among members of the society (see Duby: 1980, 9). They have been described as 'charters of present social institutions' (Goody and Watt: 1968, 33). In the pre-literate period in Celtic countries, for instance, regnal lists were composed as a means of sustaining a claim to supreme power (J. Turville-Petre: 1978-9[1982], 57); Iceland's social organisation required a different form of charter.

The importance of genealogical knowledge in Norse society is evidenced not only in the law code, but also in literary reflexes, such as the genealogical discourse which constitutes much of the eddic poem Hyndluljóð. In this poem, a mythic figure, the giantess Hyndla, is attributed with extensive genealogical knowledge which is coveted by the goddess Freyja for her favourite, Óttarr. From their conversation, which purports to take place with the speakers riding to Valhóll on a golden boar and a wolf respectively, it can be deduced that genealogical knowledge was highly valued and presumably of use in political and social negotiations. In this case, Óttarr (temporarily disguised as Freyja's boar) has wagered his inheritance on his pedigree (st. 9).

Shortly after the turn of the thirteenth century, a short history of the bishops of Iceland was written, entitled Hungrvaka, or Appetizer. In stating the purpose of his work in the prologue, the author incidently provides a list of the written genres of vernacular prose current in his day:

Pat berr ok annat til þessa rits, at teygja til þess unga menn, at kynnisk várt máli at ráða, þat er á norænu er ritat, log eða sogur, eða mannfræði.

Helgason: 1938, I 72

With each new survey of contemporary genres we encounter different generic terms (see Tómasson: 1988, 73-80) - in this case mannfræði. No doubt the plethora of terms encountered in these sources reflects the development of genres in the burgeoning written culture, and the growing sophistication of historiography in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The meaning
of *mannfræði* is uncertain, but literally it denotes a knowledge of men, or more broadly, a knowledge of people who are identified with important events and values upon which the society’s ideological system depends. It may be considered to inscribe a conceptualisation of history through periodisation, marked in this case by the lives of particular figures in society. Another native tradition also bears witness to this conceptualisation: the *lögsmannatal* or the list of lawspeakers, which frequently formed the basis of historical accounts (J. Turville-Petre: 1978-9, 7-9). Kirsten Hastrup (1985: 68) offers an explanation of the importance in medieval Icelandic culture of the lists of law speakers and of genealogies in general:

> ... the ‘age’ or the state of the society was partly defined by the personal qualities of the nominal head who, once a year, was the society. In fact it also makes clear the importance of genealogies, because the members and the condition of the family at any point in time defined the state of the kin-group ... 

In this system, she argues, history itself was defined by “the succession of qualitatively different periods, rather than by an unambiguous identification of dates”, and these periods were associated with prominent people, and later particular families, such as the *Sturlunga old* of the thirteenth century.

Snorri Sturluson’s thirteenth century preface to *Heimskringla* is the most explicit appraisal of oral traditions as sources for written works, and although his purpose is to justify their use and establish their reliability, he also divulges the range of oral traditions available to him and provides a telling assessment of their relative stability during transmission. Snorri states that his history of the kings of Norway, stretching back into legendary time, is based on three types of oral discourse – narratives, genealogies and poems:

> Á bók þessi lét ek rita fornar frásagnir um hofsingjum þá, er ríki hafa haft á Norðrlandum ok á danska tungu hafa mælt, svá sem ek hefi heyrty fröða menn segja, svá ok nokkurar kynslóðir þeira eptir því, sem mér hefir kennt verit, sumt þat, er finnþ í langfélstí til, þar er konungar eða aðrir stóraættir menn hafa rakit kyn sitt, en sumt er ríti eptir fornum kvæðum eða sogulljóðum, er menn hafa haft til skemmtanar sér.

*Prologus to Heimskringla* (Ásbjarnarson: 1979, I 3-4)

As I noted above, the taxonomy of the generic terminology used by the first writers of vernacular prose in medieval Iceland is no easier to deduce than the taxonomy of the genres they pioneered. The precise textual
significations of áttvísí, kynslóð and mannfræði, for example, are open to speculation. It is clear, however, that they all enunciate genealogical information of some kind. In certain cases at least, the kinds of texts Snorri is thinking of can be identified or inferred. Some of the works in his second category he goes on to name - the dynastic poems Ynglingatal by Þjóðólfr of Hvín and Háleygjatal by Eyvindr skáldaspillir, usually dated to c. 900 and the second half of the tenth century respectively (Halvorsen: 1964, 91), though their antiquity has been doubted (see Krag: 1985). The tradition of genealogical poems continues into the literate period, with, for example, the composition in the late twelfth century of Nóregs konunga tal for the Icelandic chieftain Jón Loptsson. In this tradition, the subject of the praise poem is honoured by the listing of his illustrious forebears, who are usually traced back through kings to gods, such as Óðinn and Freyr (G. Jónsson: 1960). Von See (1989: 75-78) has argued that it is in fact only in Háleygjatal and Ynglingatal that this topos is instantiated in skaldic verse.

While the habit of tracing one's ancestors back to mighty figures of the past was in all likelihood an ethnic tradition, in texts from the twelfth century and later it appears to have been wed with the Continental fashion for tracing lineage back to Christian and classical forebears, such as Adam, Noah or the Trojan King Priam (Halvorsen: 1965). An example of this type of genealogical text, or langfæðatal, is found in the second appendix to Islendingabók. It is introduced by the rubrik "Pessi eru nófn langfæðga Ynglinga ok Briðfirðinga", and is in fact Ari's own pedigree. It consists of a numbered list of thirty-six names, beginning "I. Yngvi Tyrkjakonungr. II Njórðr Sviakonungr...". There is evidence that Ari was influenced in his composition by English and Continental genealogical traditions, although he is the first author to connect Norse gods with the Turks (Faulkes: 1977b, 184). As Joan Turville-Petre (1978-79, 12) has noted, forging a line of descent from Yngvi and Njórðr belongs to the same category of antique learning as the lines connecting English kings to Woden. Early Norse writers were also probably inspired to compile genealogies by biblical genealogy, such as Genesis and Matthew 1 (Faulkes: 1978-79[1982], 93).

In the pre-literate period poems like the genealogical panegyrical Ynglingatal were composed tracing the genealogies of ruling families back to their eponymous ancestors. But doubt has been cast on the antiquity of much of the genealogy in Ynglingatal by Anthony Faulkes, through his study of Snorri's use of the poem in Ynglinga saga: "It is possible that Þjóðólfr did not in
fact have any information about his patron's family further than five generations back, and so joined it on to the better-known Swedish dynasty" (1978-79[1982], 97). Faulkes has also advanced the hypothesis that gods might only have been introduced into genealogies after the coming of Christianity, in imitation of Continental and particularly Anglo-Saxon models, a view which might explain the discrepancies between the family relationships of the gods in mythology and in the euhemerised form in which they are found in genealogical works (1978-79[1982]: 94-95). There is considerable evidence for belief in divine descent in heathen Scandinavia, including the epithets reginkunnigr and godðborinn used in eddic poems (Faulkes, 92), whether or not this belief was expressed in the structure of genealogies. Nevertheless, if Faulkes's two suppositions are correct, oral genealogical traditions may have spanned shorter periods than is sometimes presumed, and were only rough precursors to the literary genealogies so popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It has been argued that the move from oral to written genealogies in medieval France between the tenth and eleventh centuries not only represented changed traditions but resulted in a profound mutation in the nature of kinship itself (Stock: 1984, 25-6). While the same effect may have been true to some extent in Iceland, at least some of the impetus for such a widespread and intense interest in genealogical writings might have come from oral habits of memorising kinship lines (Strömbäck: 1975, 3). And, as suggested earlier, the attention paid to genealogical knowledge in Iceland may well have been bound up with the emigrés' heightened awareness of new social formations and the need to establish claims to power. A comparative study of oral genealogical traditions, and the changes wrought on them by literacy, is found in Henige (1974).

The social importance of genealogies in the early twelfth century is borne out by the fact that they were among the first types of vernacular texts produced in medieval Iceland. It has been argued that interest in genealogies flourished in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a means of establishing rights to land, as the legal system moved towards a system of odal land ownership (Hastrup: 1985, 192). This interest, however, was grounded in a long tradition of genealogical discourse, which was transmitted in oral forms, both before and after genealogical texts were produced. Snorri's description of the transmission of genealogical works suggests that he knew them both from oral and written sources - "sem mér hefir kennt verit, sumt er finnsk í langfeðgatali" - the latter 'found' in presumably written pedigrees. His formulation may also
Indicate that well into the thirteenth century there was a robust oral genealogical tradition which he could learn from.

At this point it is necessary to note that the teasing out of references to sources in medieval Icelandic texts is confounded by the ambiguous signification of words like "sogn" and "frásogn", which were used of either written or oral communications (Tómasson: 1988, 228-9). The cast of sentences, such as the one quoted above, often implies a distinction operating in the perception of the writer, even if details of generic forms and their respective media are left unstated. The primary written source Snorri cites in his prologue is Ari's book (Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, l 5), the elder Íslendingabók, now lost. Using a similar opposition to the one just described, Snorri claims Ari's work combined old and new traditions of learning, a characterisation which refers directly to native and Latin models, and implicitly to oral and written traditions:

Ari prestr inn fróði Pargilsson, Gellissonar, ritaði fyrstr manna hér á landi at norroenu máli fróði, bæði forna ok nýja. Prologus to Heimskringla (Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, l 5)

The forn fróði Ari has committed to writing almost certainly included genealogies (Prologus to Íslendingabók 3). Another source attests to the continuing oral transmission of genealogical material in the decades following Ari's work, this time in a household well supplied with books. According to the author of Pòrláks saga, the bishop-to-be was taught genealogical and historical knowledge at his mother's knee:

Sv var þá hans þóla er hann var aa vngum alldri. at hann var longum at bocknæmi. en at Riti optílga. aa bænum þess j millum. en naam þáa er eigi dualdi annat þat er modir hans kunni kenna honum. ættuði ok mannfroði. Helgason: 1978: II 181

Oral traditions clearly ran parallel to written traditions in the teaching of the young, and would have been essential for the perpetuation of ethnic traditions of learning and the preservation of the Icelandic cultural heritage. Later in life, Bishop Þórikr is said to have learnt from a range of other orally transmitted discourses, which we can assume were widespread and common forms of communication. Here too the categories sögur and kveði are listed, along with the discussion of dreams and debate between wise people. While some of the amusements included in this list, such as instrumental music, are probably of Continental origin, the traditions of story-telling and verse recitation are most probably the continuation of ethnic traditions.
Hann henti Škemtan at fogum ok kvöðum. ok at ollum ñtrengleckum ok lodförum. ok athyggjina manna röðum. ok drönumum ok at ollu þi er godra manna Škemtan var utan leikcum. þuiat honum þotti fickt duellia unytar lýslur unodra manna.

Porláks saga (Helgason: 1978: II 221)

The list of entertainments, including narratives and poems, were those performed or recited before an audience, but some of them may have been based on written texts. I shall not be investigating the cluster of prose genres mentioned by Snorri and the author of Porláks saga except briefly in my consideration of verse transmission through story-telling entertainments. There is no need to treat the oral pre-history of the saga here, since as a field of inquiry it has been ransacked already. Whatever textual evidence there is has been fully documented (Anderson: 1964, 1966; Hallberg 1962) and there is ample coverage of the on-going debate (see for example, Clover: 1985, 241-53). The prose narrative cuts across some of the genres of genealogical material I have mentioned. The term mannafræði for instance, has as much to do with the definition of saga genres as it does with the definition of genres stemming from oral genealogical traditions. What matters here is not the exact form or content of oral narratives, but the fact that they existed (see Kristjánsson: 1975), and were considered important and authoritative enough to be drawn on by writers such as Snorri and the writers of bishops' sagas.

In his Prologue, Snorri raises a number of important issues related to oral transmission. Writing in a literate tradition where authority generally derived from books, Snorri was at pains to elevate his oral sources above the level of 'hearsay'. Of the different types of discourse he canvasses, Snorri concludes that poetry is the most reliable medium: "En kvæðin þykja mér sízt ór stað færð, ef þau eru rétt kvæðin ok skýnsamliga upp tekin." (Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, I 7). He considers that praise poetry may be taken to express a true record of events in regard to descriptions of journeys and battles (Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, I 5). But there are other aspects of the historical record less reliably anchored in space and time, or so far back in time, that Snorri cannot vouch for their veracity. For these sources he relies on the status of their transmitters: "En þótt vér vitim eigi sannendi á því, þá vitum vér dæmi til, at gamlir frœðimenn haft slíkt fyrir satt haft." (Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, I 4).

The provision of credentials for sources or informants is central to the methodology of early writers in Iceland, and to medieval historiography
generally. The reliability of individuals in the line of transmission is stressed, and usually derives from either first-hand experience of events or domestic connections (through birth or fosterage) with those involved in past events. As well, informants are usually praised for their good memories, and the exercise of integrity. Ari gives these details about one of his informants in *Islendingabók*:

> En Hallr sagði oss svá, es bæði vas minnigr ok dýginn ok munði sjálfr þat es hann vas skíðr, at þangbrandr skíði hann prevetran, en þat vas vetri ðýr en kristni væri hér í log tekin.

*Islendingabók* (J. Benediktsson: 1968, 21)

Despite the shift that was underway to identify authoritative utterance with the written word, oral traditions were still considered authoritative. As Snorri states, almost in a tone of protest (see Tómasson: 1989, 317):

> Því var eigi undarligt, at Ari væri sannfrøðr at forenum tíðendum . . . at hann hafði numit at gömlum mónnum ok vitrum . . .

*Prologus to Heimskringla* (Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, 1 7)

### §2.2.2 Laws

One important, and definitively authoritative ethnic tradition that had conventionally been orally transmitted was the body of laws, preserved and perpetuated by the only holder of public office in medieval Iceland, the *lógsogumaðr*. His responsibilities in relation to the oral transmission of the body of laws are specified by the extant records of the lawcode, and proffer a valuable model of a formalised system of transmission. The Icelandic code of law had traditionally been preserved in memory and recited each summer at the Alþing. The position of the lawspeaker existed expressly to tell men the law:

> Þess er lógsógo maðr scylldr at segia ollom þeim er hann spyria her lögmal bæði her oc heima.

Grágás la 216

As the laws depended on oral recitation for their transmission, detailed legal provisions were developed to ensure their preservation and promulgation. The lawspeaker was required to recite the entire body of laws during his term of three summers, and moreover, he was to recite each *þáttir* of the law as extensively as it was known:

-20-
If the lawspeaker felt his knowledge to be inadequate on any point, provision was made for him to arrange a meeting the day before the recitation with five or more experts in law (lögmennt).

The audience in this exchange was also legally bound to listen to the recitation, whether it was held out of doors or in the church if the weather was inclement (Grágás Ia 216). All fifty members of the lögretta were required to be present whenever the lawspeaker recited the laws, and if necessary, to appoint two people to listen to the laws for them (Grágás Ia 216) - a measure aimed at ensuring the preservation of the laws in a sizeable number of memories. The recalling of all the pættir of the law in all their detail was a collective effort by a small number of experts. The recitation itself appears to have been the sole responsibility of the lawspeaker. As Peter Foote has noted, the structure of the laws as written down preserve little sign of intrinsic mnemotechnic devices - such as alliteration or formulaic repetition - even in passages that retain the 'I' of direct dictation (1977b, 183). The few instances of rhythmical language are formal speeches to be uttered by parties in law-suits, such as oaths, peace speeches and truces (Foote: 1977a, 51). The traditional truce speech preserves lines in fornyrðislاغ which combine heathen and Christian referents in their definition of the space within which the truce is valid: "kristnir menn kirkjur sækja; heiðnir menn hof blóta;" (Meulengracht Sørensen: 1977, 110-111). The person who does not respect the truce risks being cast out of the precinct of civilisation, rhetorically described as the place where "falcon flies a spring-long day with a fair wind beneath both wings" (Dennis, Foote and Perkins: 1980, 185). Such rhetoric is not found in the rest of the law-code, which is spoken by the law speaker rather than declaimed by parties in law-suits.

The means by which law men retained the law pættir in their memories must therefore have depended on memory aids outside the text, or structures within the text not recognised by us as mnemonic. The famous act by the law speaker at the 1199 Alping of retiring to his booth and lying under a cloak for twenty-four hours is a captivating historical detail, but one which offers no particulars of the intellectual processes involved. Aðalsteinsson canvasses various interpretations of this act (1978: 103-107), and advances the theory that
Porgeirr stayed under the cloak in order to carry out an ancient soothsaying ritual (1978: 123), though Peter Foote (1979[1982]: 63-4) has cast doubt on this interpretation.

The annual recitation was the only formal means we know of by which members of Icelandic society could learn the laws of the land, and more particularly, the points of law relevant to cases being brought for settlement at the Alþing. Richard Perkins (1989, 261) has put forward a theory that pieces of oral law might also have formed "kernels" for oral traditions about actual law suits and the events surrounding them. The law speaker's delivery itself was the nexus between the stored heritage of laws ratified by successive generations of lawmen, and its effective application in society. The position of the law speaker was crucial to the successful workings of the legal process, and made great demands on the office-holder - both physically and intellectually. Early in the eleventh century the law speaker Grímr Sverlingsson had to pass the position onto his son because he himself had grown hoarse (Islendingabók 19). The law speaker's declaration of the law must often have amounted to his own interpretation of standing laws, and in a number of cases he appears to have initiated legislation (Dennis et al: 1980, 12). Innovations in law usually originated from the lógrétta but only became enforceable law if they were included in the law speaker's recitation (Grágás la 37).

One of the versions of Landnámabók states that Úlfjótr was the first to teach law in Iceland (Jóhannesson: 1974, 48-9). A number of references in sagas suggest that the institution of fosterage may have been connected with the perpetuation of various traditions of learning, including the law. It may have been that boys fostered with eminent law speakers were in effect apprenticed to them in the acquisition of knowledge about the law and its operation, as Njall's tutoring of several foster sons suggests. Studies in modern oral cultures show that learning usually takes place in situational contexts, where there is some practical application for the matter being learned (Ong: 1982, 42-43). Even after the repertoire of laws passed from oral transmission into written texts, instruction in law probably remained in the oral domain (Dennis et al: 1980, 11-12), making it a significant branch of education to remain free from clerical control.
Another legacy of the oral law tradition, which I mentioned earlier, was the logosgumannatal or list of lawspeakers. The institution of the lawspeaker was apparently used by the medieval Icelanders as a form of historical accounting, with encumbents remembered in sequential order, and in the company of significant legal and historical events. The list of lawspeakers is basic to the structure of Ari's Islendingabók, although he also uses the Christian scale of chronology in his history (Hastrup: 1985, 47-8). In his book, Ari describes his dependence on the accounts of lawspeakers themselves:

At hans [Markús Skeggjasonr] sogu es skrifuð ævi allra logosgumanna á bók þessi, þeirra es váru fyrir várt mínni, en hónum sagði Þórarinn bróðir hans ok Skeggi fáðir þeira ok fleiri spakir menn til þeira ævi, es fyrir hans mínni váru, at því es Bjarni enn spaki hafði sagt, foðurfaðir þeira, es munði Þórarinn logosgomann ok sex aðra síðan. Islendingabók (J. Benediktsson: 1968, 22)

The use of listing as a means of structuring information in early Scandinavian practice is attested to by a variety of extant genres (Clunies Ross 1987a: 80-87). Lists of kings are used to structure praise poems such as Ynglingatal, Háleygjatal, Nóregs konungatal and Háttalykill, as well as two prose works preserved in Flateyjabók, Hversu Nóregr byggðisk and Fundinn Nóregr (Halvorsen: 1964). While many of the extant texts are informed by learned literate traditions, the structural principle of listing, and, as we have seen, the compilation of genealogical lists, predate the advent of alphabetic writing in Iceland.

Metrical lists or púlar constitute an important genre of Norse verse, appearing in extant texts either independently or subsumed within other generic forms (for example the list of dwarves' names in Völuspá or the lists of names for Óðinn and for rivers in Grímnismál). The eddic poem Rígsþula is structured by a list of three mothers on whom Rígr begets a son, as well as including three lists of names for boy children. The word púla is incorporated into the title of a list of horse names preserved in Snorri's Edda (Skáldskaparmál 74) and the same name, Pógrímsþula, is cited as the source for a shorter list of ox names in the same chapter. Horse names are the subject of yet another list cited by Snorri in chapter 74, entitled Kálfsvísa in one manuscript but Alsvinnzmál in most. Recondite knowledge of lists of names constitutes the subject of a longer eddic poem with a similar title, Alvíssmál, which is indeed rendered Alvíssmál,
Alsvinznmál and Qlvismál in various manuscript versions of citations later in ch. 74 (see Table 3). Whatever the textual history of these particular verses, list poems appear to have been a traditional poetic genre in Iceland. Púlur which comprise lists of poetic names or heiti probably served the purpose of aídes-mémoire to skaldic poets (Turville-Petre: 1976, xli), and the oral composition of these lists is thought to have been practised before literacy became widespread, and may go back as far as the tenth century (Clunies Ross: 1987a, 81 and references there).

Orally composed púlur were supplemented with learned names, some Latin and Greek, by antiquarians from the twelfth century onwards. Snorri censures the use of these lists as resources for poets, because some of the words listed are not attested to in the poetry itself:

\[
\text{Þesi nofn himins erv ritvö, en eigi hofvöm vær fnndit iqvaðvm aði þesi heiti; en þesi skaldskapar heiti sem anvnr þícki mer óskyllt at hafa ískaldskap, nema aðr fini hann íverka hafvtskaldal þvílik heiti ...}
\]

Skáldskaparmál 166, 12-15.

The production of exhaustive lists has been noted as a product of newly adopted writing systems in other cultures (Goody: 1987, 116).

The lists of poetic heiti often begin with a formula such as "Skal ek tróllkvenna telja heiti!" or "Ek mun segja . . ." which inscribes the authoritative speaking subject in a mode similar to that found in Völuspá 12: "nú hefi ec dverga . . . rétt um talða." This construction of the ‘telling’ voice belongs to the poem as a whole: "vildo at ec . . . vel fyrtelia" (st. 1) and "alt veit ec, Óðinn . . ." (st. 28), suggesting that the mythological material encoded in eddic poems and púlur (within them and independent of them) was closely related in the minds of their composers. Although púlur must have been primarily intended for use by poets, especially in the thirteenth century, they may also have been mnemonic catalogues of important information about mythological beings, sites and events. The fact that Snorri only records púlur that are germane to the study of poetic diction does not preclude the possibility that other kinds of culturally valued material was cast in the form of a púla. The word púla is related to the verb pylja (to recite) and the noun púlur (sage), which is used in mythological contexts to describe Óðinn, the most erudite of the gods (Halvorsen: 1976b and 1976c).
§2.2.4 Poetry

Our knowledge of poetic traditions in Scandinavia before the introduction of alphabetic literacy comes from a number of sources: verses carved in runes on memorial stones and on wooden sticks, references to poetic activity in sagas and other works, and documentation of poetic forms in works such as Skáldatal, Snorri's Edda and the Third Grammatical Treatise. Medieval Icelandic verse has traditionally been divided into two types: anonymous eddic poetry and skaldic poetry—the work of named poets, usually cast in a sophisticated metrical form known as dróttkvæðr háttir (usually abbreviated to dróttkvætt) or court metre. The distinctions between these types are the subject of §4.2, and at this point I want only to survey the early history of both traditions. Full accounts are found in Heusler 1941, Helgason 1953 and Hallberg 1975, and in the bibliographic essays of Harris (1985) and Frank (1985).

§2.2.4.1 Skaldic poetry

The earliest extant dróttkvætt stanzas are attributed to Bragi the Old, a Norwegian who lived in the ninth century (Lie: 1956, 543). The names of earlier poets are known, though their works have not survived. As the name suggests, dróttkvætt poetry has its milieu at court, where poets composed impressive eulogies for their royal patrons. Over two hundred dróttkvætt poets are known by name, many from a thirteenth century Icelandic work, Skáldatal, which lists poets under the names of the princes for whom they composed (Holtsmark: 1970a, 386). The most celebrated poets belong to the period from the mid-ninth to the mid-eleventh century, although greater quantities of verse are preserved from later periods (Frank: 1985, 161). Some fourteen hundred stanzas are thought to survive from the Viking Age before Christianity brought the technology of writing to the north. The ornate metrical pattern of skaldic verse makes it unlikely that these early stanzas, antedating the Conversion, were significantly revised during the course of oral transmission. For this reason, they may provide some insights into the nature of praise poetry in heathen times. But it is also possible that some compositions, such as Pórsdrápa, were composed in response to missionary activity in Iceland, as a counter-force to Christian hymns (Lindow: 1988, 134). The picture they present of pre-Christian religious and poetic activity is therefore questionable (Frank: 1986).
The range and extent of the poetic traditions from this early period are probably not represented by the collection of verses that have been preserved as quotations in prose works, by authors of kings' sagas and Snorri, whose selections are obviously biased towards material appropriate to the subjects of their works (Frank: 1985, 162). In the early period, seven women poets are named, and a few of their stanzas have been preserved, but poetic composition by women apparently diminished in the Christian era (Helgadóttir: 1961 and Straubhaar: 1982). An incident in Gísla saga (Pórolfsson and Jónsson: 1943, 59) where Pórdís discovers the identity of her husband's murderer by unravelling the poetic knot of a skaldic stanza suggests that women were well versed in the skaldic art, even if they did not habitually use their knowledge in composition. References to them in earlier times has them taking on formidable opponents, such as the ruffian missionary Pangbrandr. According to Njáls saga Steinunn skáldkona informs the missionary in two stanzas that it was Þórr who wrecked his ship and rendered Christ's protection of him useless (Sveinsson: 1954, 265-7).

Slanderous níð verses were a potent weapon in the campaign by heathens to expel Christian missionaries from their shores in the late tenth century. Kristni saga tells of verses directed at the missionary Þorvaldr commissioned by heathens "Pá báðu þæt skald níða þá Þorvald ok biskup (Kahle: 1905, 11) as well as at the beleaguered Pangbrandr (22-28). Þorvaldr was accused of the ignominious act of having sired children, nine in fact, on his colleague, Bishop Friðrið. But the níð weapon could cut both ways, and at a meeting of the Alþing Hjalti Skeggjason declared the goddess Freyja to be a bitch (Islendingabók J. Benediktsson: 1968, 15). The níð traditions have been studied in detail by Almqvist (1965, 1974) and Meulengracht Sørensen (1980).

The oldest recording of a skaldic stanza is in runes on the Karlevi stone in Öland, dated to c. 1000 (Skjald 1A, 187 and Frank: 1978, 121-2; 128-9). The poetic text eulogises the dead chieftain buried beneath the stone, while the prose text introducing it identifies the chieftain and declares his comrades' intention of making a minni in his honour. Runes are also used to transcribe skaldic lines on another Swedish artefact, a copper box from Sigtuna, dated to the early eleventh century, and skaldic verse is found carved into rune-sticks from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, attesting to the continued tradition of skaldic composition in Norway (Liestøl: 1964, 35).

In the terminology used to describe skaldic praxis a distinction is made between the composition of verse and its recitation: yrkja and flytja/færa fram/
kveða (Heusler: 1941, 120 and Kreutzer: 1977, 133-166). Judging from extant manuscripts, skaldic poets did not leap at the chance to record their verse in the new alphabet. The first skaldic poetry to be recorded in the late twelfth century was newly composed Christian verse, and as far as we know, no collection of whole skaldic poems was ever preserved in writing in the Middle Ages. From comments such as Snorri’s in his prologue to Heimskringla -

Með Haraldi konungi váru skáld, ok kunna menn enn kvæði þeira ok allra konunga kvæði, þeira er síðan hafa verit í Nøregi . . .

Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, I 5

it has been surmised that there was a thriving oral tradition of skaldic verse recitation.

Debate about the context in which this verse was transmitted has been long and lively. (Robertta Frank’s bibliographic essay (1985: 175-178) summarizes the central arguments.) While most of the verse preserved in family sagas is quoted piece-meal, it has been argued that the saga writers took individual stanzas out of longer poems known to them orally, a thesis that is premised on the transmission of whole poems down through the centuries. It is also contended that from a very early stage in the transmission of the poetry, interpretive or narrative prose was accreted to each stanza, forming an oral prosimetrum which served as a discursive model for later literary sagas. Oral transmission of skaldic verse preserved the title and author of each verse, details which presumably contributed to the understanding of each stanza, although these contextualising details were also subject to reinterpretation over the centuries: at least one dróttkvætt stanza is assigned to three different poets, and several share two authors (Frank: 1978, 10).

Whatever the actual relation of verse to prose in oral tradition, historical accounts preserved in sagas depict verse accompanying oral narratives in story-telling entertainments. In Þorgils saga ok Hafliða, a description is given of the entertainment at a wedding feast in the year 1119 at Reykjahólar, though the saga is written in the following century (Brown: 1952, xxix). As it is described, the story-telling takes the form of entertainment before the assembled guests at a wedding feast, and consists of two compositions – a saga by Hrólf af Skálmarnei, containing “margar visur” and a saga by Ingimundr prestr, comprising not only many visur but a flokkr at the end of the piece:
Par var nú glaumr ok gleði mikil ok skemtan góð ok margaskonar leikar, bæði dansleikar, glímur ok sagnaskemtan. Par var sjau nætr fastar ok fullar setti at boðínu, af því at þar skyldi vera hvert sumar Óláfsgríður, ef korn gætti at kaupa, tvau mjólsáld, á þórisshesspingi, ok váru þar margir gildabróðr. A Reykjahólum váru svá góðir landskostir í þann tíma, at þar váru aldry ófærið akarrir. En þat var jafnan vann, at þar var nýtt mjöl haft til beinabótar ok ágætis at þerí veizlu, ok var gildit at Óláfsmessu hvert sumar. Frá því er nokkur sagt, er þó er litill tilkoma, hvert þar skemtu eða hverju skemt var. Þat er í frásogn haft, er nú mæla margir í móti ok látask elgí vitat hafa, því at margir ganga duldir ins sanna ok hyggja þat satt, er skrókkvat er, en logit þat, lerl satt er. Hrólfur af Skálmarneis sagði sogu frá Hróingvíði vikingi ok frá Óláfi liðmannakonungi ok haugbroti Þráins berserks ok Hrómund Gripeysyni, ok margir vísur með. En þessarri sogu var skemt Sverri konungi, ok kallaði hann slíkar lygisogur skemtligastar. Ók þó kunnu menn at telja aðtil sinar til Hrómundar Gripssonar. Þessa sogu hafði Hrólfur sjálfr samansetta. Ingimundur prestr sagði sogu Órms [Barreyjararskálds ok vísur margar ok flokk góðan við enda sogunnar, er Ingimundur hafði orían, ok hafa þó margir fröðir menn þessa sogu fyrir satt.

Porgils saga ok Hafliða (Brown: 1952, 17-18)

Peter Foote (1955-6) has addressed the question of tone in this passage, in particular the two comments beginning “ok þó” which appear to be in response to a contrary opinion. He rejects the conclusion that parts of the passage represent interpolations, and suggests that the writer was convinced of the authorship of these narratives, although he was aware that some members of his audience might believe the verses at least to be the compositions of the eponymous heroes of the narratives (1955-6: 74-5). Lönroth (1976, 172) interprets this reference to mean that the saga writer had come into contact with people in thirteenth century Iceland naive enough to trace their ancestry back to this legendary hero. While it involves a knotty piece of literary history, the passage serves to expose the contemporary differences of opinion about the depth of oral story-telling traditions, some believing they extended back to the actors of the narratives, and others to more recent composers (who nonetheless were dependent on previous oral traditions, but who forged the prosimetrum as it was handed on to thirteenth century writers).

There is also an account of story-telling in Norna-Gestir páttar - a páttar included in the history of King Óláfr Tryggvason. There, the visiting guest/narrator tells stories about legendary heroes such as Sigurðr the Volsung, including in his rendition quotations of eddic poems presented as illocutionary
acts by the actors themselves (Lönnroth: 1971, 4). In Sturlu Pátr it is told how Sturla Þórdarson entertained King Magnús's entourage with an oral recitation of Huldar saga. When the queen requests a repeat performance of the storytelling, she summons Sturla and directs him to "hafa með sér trollkonusöguna" (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, II 233), a formulation which certainly suggests a material text, though it may be simply a reflection of the queen's assumption that a text existed (Jóhannesson: 1946, II 310). The prevalence of oral delivery in the middle ages outside of Iceland is documented by Crosby (1936). At what point oral story-telling gave way to text-dependent recitations in Iceland is not clear. In his survey of narrative performances (1962), Hermann Pálsson has argued that it was early, though his conclusions based on the high degree of literacy in medieval Iceland have been contested (see Clover: 1985, 270). The likely audience of saga entertainment is investigated by Foote (1974b), who postulates a large mixed audience.

As heathen myths are embedded in the diction of most skaldic verse, it is a moot point to what extent the full mythic narratives underlying figures of speech were activated in the audience's memory when a kenning, especially a highly conventional one, was used (Lindow: 1985, 28). Since Christian poets continued to use traditional kennings containing non-Christian references, it seems likely that their power to evoke pagan ideology was considered minimal, or at least non-threatening. The metaphorical content of kennings was nevertheless essential for continued lexical innovation in the skaldic genre, and it was apparently to ensure creativity of this kind that Snorri Sturluson collected together the mythological narratives necessary for the understanding and use of kennings and heiti. In his time, there is no reason to believe these narratives were considered to be sacred, and they were only considered to be true within the euhemeristic framework constructed by Christian scholarship. In the two centuries before Snorri's explicit statements on this point, we may assume the attitude to skaldic diction was fairly much the same, at least among the practitioners of the art, many of whom belonged to the class who would have received a clerical education.

The case is somewhat different with eddic poetry, where in many cases myth forms the central subject matter of the poetry. In an oral culture, extensive bodies of myths and gnomes are unlikely to have been transmitted for purely antiquarian reasons. To have survived, these narratives about the gods, and dialogues between them, must have contributed something to the
transmitters’ understanding of the world. It is arguable that from the twelfth century pagan myths were apprehended within the intellectual framework of euhemerism (Meulengracht Sørensen: 1977, 172), although it is hardly probable that the sophisticated incorporation of paganism within Christian tradition - as it was later articulated by Snorri Sturluson - was digested by all members of society from the beginning of the Christian period. Residual belief in heathen ideology and mythology might be expected for some period, and among some members of society (Kuhn: 1942), though the extent of this belief, both across social groups and across time is not recoverable from our records. And, as John Lindow (1985, 36-37) has pointed out, the absence of religious belief in heathen myths does not exclude belief in them in other ways.

§2.2.4.2 Eddie poetry

The preservation of eddic poetry will be treated in detail in chapters 4 and 5. Suffice to say here that up until the thirteenth century when Snorri Sturluson quotes substantial amounts of verse in his treatise on mythology little is known about its transmission. Between this point and the appearance half a century later of the major extant collection manuscript of the poems, the Codex Regius, another profound hole in our knowledge of eddic transmission appears. Put bluntly, there is virtually no external documentation concerning the transmission or transcription of eddic verse, although we have evidence of eddic compositions from records spanning a considerable period.

Verse in eddic measure surfaces in written texts of various genres and ages: in runes on a Danish bracteate dating from the period 450-550 (Nielsen: 1970, 138-9), in a runic inscription on a fifth century Norwegian memorial stone (see below), on a late twelfth century rune stick excavated in Bergen (Liestøl: 1964, 37), as source material in thirteenth century scholarly treatises, as quotations in prose accounts of contemporary events written in the thirteenth century, and as the words of legendary heroes in fornaldrasögur. The text of one of the earliest poetic texts preserved in runes, the Tune stone from Østfold in Norway is dated by Antonsen to 400:

ekwiwazafter · woduri
dewitadahalaiwan : worahto ·
lmezvoduride : staina ·
prijozdrothrizdalidun
arbijarjostezarbijano
The extent of the records suggests that eddic genres were current across a wide expanse of time and lands. Indeed the setting of several of the poems recorded in the Codex Regius manuscript is in the heart of Continental Europe, and two of the heroic lays are assigned to Greenland by their transcriber (Atlavíða in grænlandzca and Atlamál in grænlandzco). Topographical references in some poems also point to Continental origins for certain works (Lindblad: 1978, 12). The metre used for narrative eddic verse, fornyrðislag, hardly differs from that used in the Old High German Lay of Hildebrand or the Old English Fight at Finnsburh (Turville-Petre: 1953, 22). The Rök stone inscription shows that heroic legends in versified form were known in Sweden in the early ninth century, and verses are found on other Swedish runestones. The Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus draws on heroic lays in his work that are clearly related to the poems later preserved in eddic collections in Iceland (Lönnroth: 1971, 3 and Friis-Jensen: 1987, 58ff.).

The Roman historian Tacitus, writing in the first century AD, also makes reference to the poems of the ancient Germanic tribes which served as their only record of the past:

celebrant carminibus antiquis, quod unum apud illos memoriae et annalium genus est, Tuistonem deum terra editum. ei filium Mannum, originem gentis conditoremque ...

Germania 2 (Much-Jankuhn: 1967, 44)

The epic narrative poems of Continental Europe and England, offspring of this early Germanic genre, are generally considered to have been accompanied by the harp, and in Iceland, the late medieval genre of narrative verse - rímur - were sung, but not accompanied by any musical instruments. There is no compelling evidence that eddic verse, which is generally shorter and often non-narrative, was set to any kind of music other than the rhythm inherent in the metre (Lönnroth: 1971, 5). A melody claimed to belong to Völuspá was published in France in the eighteenth century (H. Helgason: 1980), but its authenticity has not been widely accepted (Harris: 1985, 116-7).

1 In their ancient songs, which are their only kind of records or annals, they celebrate the god Tuisto, born of the earth, and his son Mannus, as the progenitors and founders of their race.
There has been much speculation about the age of each of the eddic poems preserved in the manuscript collections (Ulvestad: 1954), with a tendency in recent scholarship to date them later rather than earlier (Harris: 1983, 93-4). The poems are generally divided into three broad groups, according to three periods in which they are thought to have originated: the pre-Christian era, the period of transition to Christianity, and the Christian era itself (Lindblad: 1978, 9-10). Recent observations on the dating of eddic poems have been made by McTurk (1981), Soderberg (1986) and Kristjansson (1990). One poem *Hamðismál* is given the tag *in forno* in the Regius collection (Neckel-Kuhn: 1983, 274) indicating the contemporary belief in the antiquity of the poem. Snorri too applies the adjective *forn* to eddic verse -

Svá er sagt í fornum vísinum at þaðan af váru døgr greind ok áratál, svá sem segir í Völuspá

*Gylfaginning* 12, 11-12

and refers in *Háttatal* to the commonest metre of eddic composition as *fornyrðislag*. (The epithet *forn* will be discussed in more detail in §5.7.) Thirteenth century Icelanders believed this type of poetry to be ancient, and elsewhere in *Gylfaginning* lines of eddic poems are described as the words of the gods themselves:

Svá er hér sagt í orðum sjálfra Ásanna

*Gylfaginning* 34, 15

... svá sem hér er sagt at Óðinn mælir sjálfr við þann Ás er Loki heitr.

*Gylfaginning* 21, 19-20

But there is reason to believe eddic composition was not simply a relic preserved from the distant past, but a living poetic tradition in the thirteenth century (Meulengracht Sørensen: 1977, 91-2).

§2.2.4.3 Eddic dream verse

In the contemporary sagas, set and written in the middle of the thirteenth century, a significant number of eddic verses are preserved, usually within accounts of dreams. The texts suggest that the eddic mode was productive of new verses at this time, verses that expressed warnings and forebodings about political events in terms of traditional motifs and diction that date back to pre-
Christian times. The frequent references to the abundance of dreams dreamt during particularly tumultuous political feuds, not only in *Islendinga saga* but also in *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, would suggest that dreams and their transmission in verse from one person to another, and from one district to another was a social occurrence in medieval Iceland (Turville-Petre: 1958). “Margir váru aðrir draumar sagðir í þenna tíma, þó at hér sé eigi ritaður, þeir er tíðindavænir þóttu vera, svá ok aðrir fyrirburðir” (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, 1 421) is a typical reference of this kind. Particular attention is paid in these texts to establishing the reliability of the transmission of the dreams to the saga writer:

Porgrímur Hauksson sagði draum sinn sonum Pórðar, Ólafi ok Sturlu, er þeir riðu um Vatnaheiði.

Jóhannesson et al: 1946, 1 320

Within dreams described in the contemporary sagas, communication comes most often through a verse spoken by a figure from another world. Most of the eddic verse in *Islendinga saga* is spoken by valkyries who are linked to heathen tradition by their appearance as well as their speech. In Norse mythology valkyries function as intermediaries between humans and gods, choosing warriors on Óðinn's behalf, who will join him at ragnarök for the final battle against the forces of evil. It is not surprising therefore that it is valkyries who appear in dreams and voice prophecies about men's deaths in battle. In eddic tradition valkyries are sometimes represented as interceding on behalf of heroes and against the wishes of the gods - in *Sigrdrifumál*, for example. The role of the valkyrie is shifted there from that of a functionary within the supernatural system, to a mediator of that system, who is potentially sympathetic to humans.

Nearly all the dream verses in the contemporary sagas are clustered before important battles, at which the valkyries intend to set about their business of choosing the slain. They almost invariably mention battle or death. In their words they echo both the poetic conventions and cultural beliefs represented in eddic heroic and mythological poetry preserved in manuscript collections. Within the discourse of *Sturlunga saga* the authority of this impersonal eddic voice is predicated on a cultural belief in supernatural knowledge and wisdom. This belief is, of course, common to both Christian and pagan systems of thought, and manifests itself in the contemporary sagas through the phenomenon of dreams. The verb 'to dream' in Old Icelandic denotes an involuntary action, with the dreamer as the involuntary recipient of
material presented by the dream figure. Within *Sturlunga saga*, however, it can be seen that Christian dreams and visions spring from a different tradition from the prophetic visions voiced by valkyries. In the Christian dreams, which are narrated in prose, a bishop appears to a saga figure and advises or reassures him (Glendinning: 1974, 89ff.).

It is only those dreams which involve the appearance of a non-Christian supernatural figure that contain verse. Within a Christian context belief in the truth or the authority of words of heathen figures who represent heroic ideals is problematic, and requires some contextualisation. Great efforts are made in the prose of one cycle of dream verses, those experienced by a young woman named Jóreiðr (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 519-522), to contextualise this authority within Christian society. Jóreiðr asks the dream woman why a heathen has come to advise her, to which the valkyrie answers "Engu skal þik þat skipta . . hvárt ek em kristin eða helðin, en vinr em ek vinar míns" (521). That is, the emphasis is taken away from the awkward ideological problem posed by these figures of traditional wisdom, and shifted to their authoritative knowledge of ethics. In the first of Jóreiðr's dreams the valkyrie claims that the intention of the burners of Flugumyr was to spread heathendom throughout the land. In this statement the dream speaker contextualises the forces of good and evil in an ahistorical framework. She herself is on the side of good, and in that sense is not heathen. In the second verse of the first dream, the speaker identifies the significance of her words for Jóreiðr's family, and in this her function is similar to that of a fylgja, or the corresponding Christian figure, a guardian angel. The syncretism displayed by the blending of heathen and Christian figures in another cycle of dreams, in *Gísla saga*, has been analysed by Peter Foote (1974c, 86).

From the evidence of *Islendinga saga* then, it appears that by the thirteenth century heathen speakers to whom cultural authority was attributed had passed into a pluralistic dream tradition, in which figures of traditional authority could be accommodated within a Christian framework. Robert Glendinning (1966: 95-7) has suggested that v.4 of *Islendinga saga* (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 251), in which two grey-hooded men (possibly Grey Friars) rock violently as they chant about the day of judgement is a Christian companion piece to the preceding verse in which two bloodied valkyries Guðr and Gondul rock and chant about their mission to Rafthlíd where they will be worshipped by the sacrifice of warriors. The diction of the verse "á efsta dómi" appears to
provide convincing evidence of the assimilation of Christian rhetoric into the native dream verse tradition. Rather than overwhelming an oral tradition, Christian ideas have been caught up in the flow of a still powerful and popular eddic tradition.

A number of other conventional features link the dream poems to the tradition of eddic mythological verse. The authority of these supernatural dream figures stems in part from their detachment: the speaker of the verse usually comes from another world, or another time. In some cases the voice of authority is disembodied - "Petta var kveðit fyrir konu einni skammt frá Úpingeyrastað um ljósan dag, en eigi så hon manninn, en hátt var kveðit" (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 427). The speakers approach from specific locations, like the forces of evil at ragna rök in Völsunga. The valkyrie figure in the Jórelór cycle for instance, says she has just come from the world of the dead: "Norðan kom ek at .. ór násheim" (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 519). Other dream speakers are characterised as having travelled far and wide, like the figure of Óðinn in the mythological poems (in particular in Hávamál). For instance, the speaker of verse 71 begins: "Liðk of heimr ór heiml" (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 427). A number of the verses are in fact spoken by someone resembling Óðinn both in physical description and unruly intentions. In Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar for instance, two verses are spoken by a man who identifies himself in the verse as 'Faraldr' (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 217). The dream figures are frequently presented as all-knowing both in the texts of verse - "Vit tvau vitum þat" (320-321) - and in the surrounding prose - "þat veit ek allgerla" (519). One valkyrie appears to Sturla Sighvatsson to say explicitly that knowledge of the fates and successes of men is not permitted to him or other men (426).

Several verses are spoken by figures who have recently passed from the world of men to the world of the dead, but who return to give counsel (see Boberg: 1966, E366). Sturla Sighvatsson appears as the speaker in two dreams before his death at Gizurr's hands, and another verse is spoken by northern men, going into battle to meet their deaths. In the battle of Órlygsstaðir Sturla Sighvatsson is killed in a particularly gruesome way. He is wounded in the cheek and throat and is in the process of asking for quarter when Gizurr comes up and leaps into the air to strike him, leaping so high that men could see the sky between the horizon and his feet. Gizurr strikes him his death blow on the head from the left behind the eye. In the series of dream verses preceding this
battle a verse is spoken in a dream by a large man, badly wounded in the head and neck, who refers to his own death: "en vér erum felldir", and "því varðk norðr" (424). Like other dream verse speakers, he predicts the destruction and desolation caused by the warring, and the great loss of lives it will involve. This persona is an interesting fusion of a supernatural prophet and a draugr - he is miktill like other supernatural dream figures, but his wounds are particularised - "ok var höggvin af hnakkinn ok á hálsinn". His voice is personal and particularised - and at the same time prophetic and authoritative. Like the valkyries he predicts destruction in the world: "Pórnar heimr ok hrórnar, hríðeflir ferr víða." A similar kind of verse in eddic measure is found in Eyrbyggja saga also composed in the thirteenth century. A loose head addresses Freysteinn as he is tending sheep. The man's head prophesies that the avalanche Geirvör is reddened with men's blood, and will cover men's skulls (Sveinsson and Þórdarson: 1935, 116).

The first and last verses quoted in Islendinga saga are spoken in dreams by named figures from the past, the tenth century poet Egill Skallagrímsson and the figure from the cycle of eddic heroic poems, Guðrún Guðrúndóttir. Egill appears in a dream to his namesake Egill Halldórsson and expresses his dissatisfaction with the conduct of his descendants, Snorri and the other Myr men of the early thirteenth century. He then speaks a half stanza in dróttkvætt, claiming that men nowadays are cowards, and warning them of the troubled times ahead. Guðrún Guðrúndóttir names herself as the speaker of verses to the sixteen year old Jóreiðr from Miðjumdalr. Preben Meulengracht Sørenson (1988) has investigated a number of cases in thirteenth century literature where Guðrún's name is invoked and associated with the quality of absolute loyalty of action, loyalty without regard for its consequences. Of these cases, the Jóreiðr cycle is the only place where her words are actually quoted. She is, however, only named in the prose, and the verses she speaks are in different metres, and refer to events outside the immediate time of the saga. (As well, the authorship of the chapter in which they appear is uncertain.)

Nevertheless the incorporation of these verses together in one chapter, and their attribution to Guðrún in the prose suggests that to the thirteenth century audience she represented a cultural archetype of loyalty (Steblin-Kamenskij 1982, 87), and her words on loyalty, which echo lines in Hávamál, were regarded as authoritative. In this connection, Turville-Petre (1958) has also noted the directness of the allusion to the heroic legend of Guðrún made in
a verse quoted in *Gisla saga*, another thirteenth century work. These references suggest a lively interaction between conventional pre-Christian figures and narratives that acknowledge Christian ideology. Evidence against this supposition has been gathered by Peter Foote, who has surveyed some of the allusions to Óðinn outside eddic verse, and notes the monotony of the role in which he is cast - as instigator of strife or arch-deceiver. He concludes that "Óðinn does little more than appear in the Devil's guises" (1974c, 95-97). While it is true that many elements of heathen lore simply did service for Christian ideology, the range of references to a god such as Óðinn surviving in mythological stories and verses into the thirteenth century shows that he lived on in memories as a more complex figure than some sources might indicate.

To a certain extent the dream verses preserved in the contemporary sagas can be shown to be manipulated by the saga authors. Various pieces of textual evidence suggest that while the verses may have sprung from particular dreams, the context in which they are put by the prose frame is subject to authorial variation, whether deliberately or as a function of the greater propensity of details in prose to change during transmission compared with details preserved in poetry. For instance in the series of dream verses recorded in ch. 136 of *Islendinga saga*, the same dream verse is attributed to a man in Borgarfjörðr and later to a woman west in Svartadalr. No doubt in their selection of dreams, saga authors placed a certain construction on the events and the attitudes of people to contemporary political events. Robert Glendinning (1974) has in fact argued it is in the selection and placement of dreams in *Islendinga saga* that Sturla Þorðarson's political and moral views are most clearly represented.

While the provenance of some of the verses may be dubious, overall they bear witness to a robust tradition of eddic composition continuing in the latter half of the thirteenth century. Verse representing the words of supernatural figures seems to have been widely, if not commonly, produced and transmitted. The poetry spoken in these dreams shares many features of diction, metre and voice with the traditional eddic poetry recorded in the Codex Regius manuscript. The prophetic voice of many of the verses echoes *Voluspá* in the frequent use of present tense constructions, particular with the verbs 'vera' - "dimmt es í heimi" (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 425-6) and "nú er í skarpa skálmðl komin" (426) - and 'munu' - "Pá mun oddr ok egg" (426) and "Nú munu nauðir norðmenn kveða" (427). All of these characteristics are found in
Voluspá 45 (see below), as well as in other stanzas of the poem. The whole phenomenon of widespread valkyrie sightings is reminiscent of st. 30 of Voluspá, which describes the prelude to ragnarök:

Så hon valkyrior vitt um komnar,  
gorvar at ríða til Goðfiðar;

As well, the sentiments of Voluspá 45 -

Broðr muno bería oc at bónom verðaz,  
muno systrungar stífam spilla;  
hart er í heimi, hórdómr mikill.  
sceggjold, scáljold, scildir ro klofnir . . .

are echoed in some of the dream verses:

Ætla lýðir,  
pótt á laun fari,  
- kennr vél fyr vél -  
vélar at gjalda.

Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 417

Fásk munu sár af sárum,  
svás heldr, þars menn felldusk,  
koma mun hórd fyr harða  
hríð ok skammt at bída.

Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 427-428

Particular phrases spoken by valkyries, such as “Viltu enn lengra” (320-321) are similar to the diction of the völva (see Voluspá 27f and Hyndlulíð 31f). The appearance of this phrase suggests the relationship between the valkyrie and the dreamer was conceived along the same lines as the relationship between the reluctant völva and Óðinn, ever anxious for knowledge of future events. This antagonistic relationship is clearly modified in certain dream visions, perhaps as the result of Christian influence. In the Jórelfr cycle, for instance, the valkyrie is sympathetic and compassionate towards the dreamer and her community.

Another voice familiar from eddic mythological verse is also heard in the dream verses. The voice of traditional wisdom, characteristic of Hávamál, but also found in snatches in the composition of other poems, is found in the dream verses. In the dream verses the voice appears to act as a guide on questions of ethics, especially loyalty:

Yes þú vínr  
vinar minns,
en ek mun með svinnum
at saka bótum.

Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 520

Common to dream verses and the Regius collection of poems is the sinister implication of a grim stranger appearing and naming himself. In Grímnismál Óðinn's revelation of identity spells the end for his interlocutor, and in v. 3 of Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar a large man appears in a dream and proclaims:

Faraldr ek hettí,
ferk of aldar kyn,
emka ek sættir svíka.

Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 217

While sharing many general features with the corpus of eddic verse, the dream verses of Sturlunga saga can be distinguished as a particular sub-group by the following features:

- The metrical form of many verses includes the repetition of the last line. Jón Jóhannesson (1946: I 586 - 587) has distinguished this form as conventionally adopted in verse spoken by dead men or spirits. This feature is clearly related to the function of the verse in its narrative context, where the appearance of figures after their deaths is a conventional element in the development of the narrative.

- The speaker of the verse often uses the collective voice: "nú kveðum" (425-426) and "Ríðum allir" (424) (see Poole: 1990, 320). The eddic poem Grottasöngr, preserved only in manuscripts of Snorra Edda, also uses a dual voice in some stanzas.

- The speaker often exhorts the dreamer to transmit the verse, for example in v. 92:

Seg Þorvarði
þessa grímu,
ungum auðskata,
ef þik eftir spyrð.
En þöt þik eigi
eftir fregní,
þó skaltu segja
syni oddvita.

Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 521

- The verses are characterised by specialised diction relating to the activities of valkyries. Phrases such as "rignir blöði" and statements of intention to travel to a battle site are found in many verses, for example "Ríðum
allir rógstefnu til” (424), “verðk þangat til ganga” (427) and “Göngum blóðgir með banasárum” (427).

These last three features are also found in the fornyrðislag verse spoken by valkyries in ch. 157 of Njáls saga. A man named Þórrunr sees twelve female figures ride up to a stone hut, and through a chink, he watches while they weave a web made of human entrails and chant a verse. The phrase “rignir blóði” occurs in the first stanza, and the following verse, expressed in a collective voice, exhorts listeners to transmit the verse:

Vel kváðu vér
um konung ungan
sigrhljóða fíoð,  
synjum heilar!
en hinn nemi,
er heyrir á
getrfljóða hljóð,
ok gumum segi!

Sveinsson: 1954, 458

Stanza 4 expresses the valkyries’ intentions to travel to the place where their assigned warriors are fighting:

Fram skulum ganga
ok í fólk vaða,
þar er vinir várir
vápnunum skipa.

Sveinsson: 1954, 456

The composition of Njáls saga is roughly contemporaneous with the composition of Íslendinga saga, although the valkyrie verse in the former is supposed to have been heard several centuries earlier. Whether the Darrarhljóð represents a very old example of this kind of vision of valkyries reciting verse, or a contemporary composition, is not clear from the textual evidence. Njáls saga also preserves a verse in eddic measure, with the last line repeated, spoken by a very ominous dark man wielding a fire-brand (Sveinsson: 1954, 320-21).

The appearance of these verses in separate narratives written down in the late thirteenth century suggests that there was some kind of vogue for verse of this kind around the time the Icelandic Commonwealth was eclipsed by Norwegian rule. It is possible that the dream verses in both Sturlunga saga and Njáls saga were the inventions of saga writers, although the detailed
explanations given about their origins and transmission indicate that they were intended to be regarded as derived from actual events. The verses are full of specific references to contemporary events (including names of people, places and battles), and are presented as responses to events throughout the country. Whatever the origin of the verses, the narratives assume their audience's familiarity with heroic figures like Guðrún, mythological phenomena such as valkyries, and the implications of a visit from a large, much-travelled man. This assumption on the part of saga writers might indicate that their audience knew at least some of the poems preserved in the Codex Regius manuscript of eddic poems. Most probably it indicates that the sagas' audiences knew a range of the conventions instantiated in the Regius texts, and they knew these from a living oral tradition.

The dream verse material quoted in contemporary sagas shows up interesting class and gender distinctions operating in the community represented in the texts, particularly with regard to the addressee of each stanza. Skaldic stanzas are usually directed to members of the group of people who are at the centre of the action. A large number of male members of this group are presented as composing dróttkvætt stanzas themselves. Eddic dream verses, however, are represented as heard almost exclusively by people on the periphery of this group. With the exception of four verses, the source of all the dream verses in Íslendinga saga is people whose name and dwelling place is given, but who are otherwise not mentioned in the saga. The members of this group are both male and female (see Straubhaar: 1982, 98). The two instances of dream verses recited by named figures are also directed to otherwise insignificant people. While dreams involving traditional Norse figures are represented in the saga as more common among people who are not politically influential, these dreams nevertheless appear to have been transmitted far and wide, and to have been treated seriously by members of both groups. It is significant in this respect that Sturla Þórdarson, the author of the saga, represents himself as having been visited by a valkyrie in his dreams.

The other three exceptions to the pattern of valkyrie dreams being attributed to ordinary people are as follows: Sturla Sighvatsson has a dream in which a valkyrie denies him knowledge of the future (426) and an otherwise unmentioned person appears in a dream to Steinvör Sighvatsdóttir and asks her why a head is lying near the house (421). This dream prefigures the death of Steinvör's father Sighvatr. Steinvör is known from Skáldatal to have been a
In the retinue of Gautre á Mel (Straubhaar: 1982), so it is interesting that she is represented here as composing in eddic measure rather than skaldic. The fourth dream (419) is dreamt by Sighvatr, who dreams his horse Flóski comes into his room asking him why he does not offer him any food. The horse then devours all the food, and the dishes as well. In the verse of this dream, which is in dróttkvætt measure, Sighvat draws attention to the fact that he is mediating between the horse's speech and its reception, saying: "... kvað Flóski ... - hröður Boðnar báru". A number of other dream verses are also in dróttkvætt measure, but it is not always made so explicit that the skill and habits of mind of the dreamer affect the form of the transmitted verse. Dream verses in dróttkvætt measure are typically spoken to powerful male members of the community: to Sturla Sighvatsson (426), to Sturla Þórðarson (427), and to a priest (427). (Two verses are spoken to an otherwise unmentioned man, Snæbjörn of Sandvik (425). None of the dróttkvætt dream verses are spoken to female dreamers.

From the evidence of Sturlunga saga it appears that saga figures who are more important and influential members of the community were represented as adept in formulating dróttkvætt verse, whereas this skill was apparently less common among women and ordinary male members of the community. The best illustration of this pattern is in verses 66 and 67 (426-427). In the first verse a valkyrie appears to Sturla Sighvatsson in a dream and speaks half a stanza in dróttkvætt measure (female informant, male recipient: dróttkvætt measure). Sturla himself appears in the next verse as a spirit, addressing a woman named Þuríðr, and the verse is in eddic measure (male informant, female recipient: eddic measure). In this case, even though the male informant is capable and accustomed to composing dróttkvætt stanzas, the determining factor as far as metre is concerned appears to be the gender of the recipient. This pattern is of interest for its apparent reflection of compositional habits among Icelanders of the thirteenth century, although the author may have been responsible for the regularisation of the pattern, and conceivably, for its invention.

§2.2.5 Other references to oral traditions

The existence of various other oral traditions may be surmised from references in histories, sagas and the law-code. According to Ari Porgilsson
the legal ramifications of the conversion to Christianity for the general public of Iceland were three: universal baptism was to be mandatory, the long-standing customs relating to the exposure of infants and the eating of horse-flesh would not be overturned by the new Christian code, and heathen sacrifice should be carried out discreetly:

Pa vas pat maelt í logum, at allir menn skyldi kristnir vesa ok skirn taka, þeir es áðr váru öskirðir á landi hér; en of barnautburð skyldu standa en fornu log ok of hrossakjótsát. Skyldu menn blóta á laun, ef vildu, en varða fjörgaugsgarðr, ef váttum of kvæmi við. En síðarr fám vetrum vas sú heiðni af numin sem önnur.

Islendingabók (J. Benediktsson: 1968, 17)

Flagrant heathen practices (or practices that were found out) would attract the penalty of lesser outlawry. The tolerance towards private worship only lasted a few years, according to Ari. Whatever verbal accompaniment there was to the rites of sacrifice would presumably also have been driven indoors, and not transmitted - at least not openly. In another source, reference is made to a woman called Friðgerðr who conducted a sacrifice at the very time the missionary Þorvaldr was visiting her home preaching the Christian faith. The wording of this report in Kristni saga suggests that sacrifices were accompanied by the recitation of ritual words:

Þorvaldr talaði þar trú fyrir mðnnum, enn Friðgerðr var meðan í hofinu ok blótaði ok heyrði hvart þeira orð annars;

Kristni saga (Kahle: 1905, 9)

Poetic recitation in connection with religious ritual is mentioned by Adam of Bremen in the account of his visit to Uppsala in the eleventh century. These texts were unfortunately too shocking to transmit, but Adam does attest to their existence (Turville-Petre: 1964, 244).

The law code Grágás, preserved in texts written in the thirteenth century, explicitly prohibits a number of traditional heathen practices, including worship of heathen deities and the casting of spells, two activities almost certainly involving formalised utterance preserved and transmitted from generation to generation.

Menn scolo trva a einn Gvð oc ahelga með hans. oc blóta eigi heiðnir vættir. ða blótar hann heiðnir vættir. ef hann signir fe sitt oprum enn Gvði. eða helgum mavninnm hans. Ef maðr blótar heiðnir vættir. oc uarðar ðat fiorbaugs garð. Ef maðr ferr með galldræ eða gørninngar. eða fíolkýngi. ða ferr
It may be inferred that these articles of law were relevant and perhaps enforced during the period in which the laws were orally transmitted, otherwise there would be little point in preserving them. The fact that there were legal prohibitions at all against worship of heathen gods and heathen spell-binding also implies that the practices had not died out entirely by the early twelfth century. But whether they continued into the late thirteenth century is another matter, and one that cannot be resolved simply with reference to the continued transmission of these articles of law in written volumes. The written code may well have preserved a frozen image of twelfth century socio-legal practice into the thirteenth century. Nonetheless it is interesting that the article of law also specifies the teaching of spells as a crime, demonstrating that part of the strategy employed in eliminating un-Christian practices was breaking the line of oral transmission.

In Jóns saga, written early in the thirteenth century, we learn that a century earlier Bishop Jón had changed the names of the week which had heathen gods as their first element and forbidden all old heathen customs including sacrifices, magic and spells. Once again the fact that they had to be officially suppressed probably indicates a flourishing tradition:

Hann bannaði ok með öllu alla öðattu ok fornæskju eða blöðskapi, gerninga eða galdræ ok reis í möti því með öllu afli, ok því hafði eigi orðit af komit með öllu, meðan kristnin var ung.

Jóns saga (Jónsson: 1953, II 96-7)

Bishop Jón also forbade the reciting of love poems which was very popular at the time, though the saga writer mentions that he was not altogether successful in suppressing them:

Leikr só var monnum tíðr, er ófagrígr er, at kveðast skyldu at karlmaðr at konu, en kona at karlmanni, klækilgar vísur ok hæfðilgar, ok óheyrilgar, en þat lét hann af takast ok bannaði með öllu at gera. Mansöngs kvæði eða vísur vildi hann eigi heyrta kveðin ok eigi láta kveða. Þó fekk hann því eigi með öllu af komit.

Jóns saga (Jónsson: 1953, II 97)

In this reference to artistic prohibition, we incidentally get a description of an oral tradition which has not left its mark in literary texts. The practice of a
man and a woman exchanging improvised verses has been compared by Peter Dronke (1984, 105-6) to the genre of the tenso practised by male and female troubadours in southern France in the twelfth century.

While the Church made some attempts to suppress ethnic oral traditions, it also utilised oral modes for its own purposes. The Christian law section of the Icelandic law code outlines those Christian Latin texts that every Icelander was required to know by heart, after the edict of Bishop Jón (Jónsson: 1953, II 96):


Grágás la 7

Men were also obliged to know the correct wording for the rite of baptism in case the services of a priest were unavailable. Only a man might perform the rite of baptism, but recourse may be had to women to teach the correct wording, or in dire circumstances to execute the ritual:

Rett er at kona keni honom at skíra barn en eigi scolo konor skíra barn nema engi kosr se anar a.

Grágás II 5

To know a text by heart is a product of literate methods of teaching, and presupposes a fixed version of the text which any recitation can be checked against (Goody 1987, 177-8). The disjunction between this kind of ‘oral’ tradition and that familiar to illiterate Scandinavians is made clear in a story from Færeyinga saga (Vigfusson and Unger: 1860-8, II 400-1), where the once-heathen Prandr í Götu is rebuked for teaching his foster-son an idiosyncratic version of the Creed. The boy’s mother finds fault with Prandr’s kredda, saying “ok þiki mer æingi mynd a ... a kredo.” In finding the kredda without ‘mynd’, without proper form, she is comparing it to her own picture of the orthodox credo, a picture based on a written text, probably not read by her, but taught to her as a fixed form. This kind of visual memory (what is today termed ‘photographic memory’) is as foreign to Prandr as the notion of a single authoritative text, at least according to the characterisation of him created by the saga author, who, Peter Foote (1969) has argued, is indulging in a quiet joke with his audience over the story of the apostles’ Creed. Peter Foote elsewhere (1974c, 91-92) records his disagreement with Kuhn and Lange that this anecdote contains a genuine reminiscence of confusion in early Christian days,
preferring to see it as a reflection of the attitude abroad around 1200. Whatever the veracity of the theological matter in the anecdote, the construction of the differences in perception between Prándr and the boy's mother is illuminating, even if it is more appropriate to 1220 than 1000. It is significant that in this saga incident, despite his unsatisfactory grasp of Christian learning, Prándr is said to have taught his foster-son a thorough knowledge of the law - how to prosecute all cases and the full extent of his and others' rights.

In addition to references in law codes and Christian histories to sanctions against heathen practices, attitudes to certain oral traditions are also expressed in a number of literary reflexes. There are two occasions on which manuscript compilers associate the guardianship of knowledge and beliefs from the heathen past with old women. In both cases the comment made is aimed at discrediting the version related, or particular details in it, because it is at odds with the compiler's Christian point of view. In his preface to Saga Ólafs Tryggvasonar written in the late twelfth century, the monk Oddr Snorrason urges the telling of sagas about Christian kings to praise their works and glorify God. He contrasts such didactic Christian narratives with what presumably were popular traditional versions of stories based on the same events:

Ok betra er slict með gamni at heyra en stívp meðra saugvr, er hiardar sveinar segia, er enge veit hvart satt er. er lafnan lata konungin minztan isinvm frasognum.

F. Jónsson: 1932, 2

The authority of Oddr's account is based not only on the credibility of his own sources - "þvi at vitrir menn hafa oss fra sagt nokora lutí hans storvirkia" (Saga Ólaf's Tryggvasonar 2) - but on its alignment with a Christian view of history. Oddr's purpose is to recount the works of the evangelical king and saint who was responsible for the conversion of Norway and Iceland to Christianity. By the same token, the disparaging remarks made about the other kind of narrative, which clearly still held currency at the time, attack not simply its lack of authority - "er enge veit hvart satt er" - but also its questionable priorities - "er lafnan lata konungin minztan isinvm frasognum". The focussing of Oddr's criticism on the relative importance accorded the king in the two types of narrative suggests that they were probably based on the same stories, but Oddr was heir to a version which had been passed down within a different ideological context. An explicit statement to the effect that old stories should be understood as glorifying the Christian values of missionary kings and casting
doubt on the worth of heathen ideals is made by one of the compilers of Flateyjarbók, in the coda to Eiriks þáttir viðsörla (Vigfússon and Unger: 1860-8, I 35-6).

The two groups of people associated with transmitting this kind of narrative and perpetuating this view of history, shepherds and step-mothers, are representatives of those sections of Icelandic society which would have had least contact with literate Christian culture. We know from a number of sources that it was only the sons of powerful and wealthy families who received a clerical education (Islendingabók ch. IX and Jóns saga ch. 12). It is precisely to this audience that Oddr munk addresses his prologue: “Heyri þær breðr enir kristn vok feðr” (Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar 1).

**Jóns saga** mentions two exceptional individuals - one a carpenter and the other a woman - who in spite of their social status came to learn Latin. In both cases their knowledge was acquired aurally, and they appear never to have been taught to read. The carpenter Þóroddr overheard the Grammatica being taught while he was at work on the Bishop Jón's church at Hólar:

... hann var svá næmr, at þá er hann var í smíðinni, þá heyrdi hann til, er prestlingum var kennð fórött sú, er grammatica heittir. En svá loddi honum þat vel í eyrum af mikllum næmileik ok aðhuga, at hann gerðist inn mestri fóröttamaðr í þess konar námi.

**Jóns saga** (Jónsson: 1953, II 94)

**Jóns saga** was originally composed in Latin by the munk Gunnlaugr, but this text has been lost. The saga survives in a couple of translations into Icelandic (Hallberg, 1969 and Foote: 1975, 102). Jónsson's edition (1953, viii) includes two of these, the so-called "eldri gerð" and "yngri gerð". The former version mentions a woman called Ingunn who was said to be second to none in book-learning and actually taught Latin at Hólar:

Þar var ok í fræðinæmi hareinferðug jungfrú, er Ingunn hét. Engum þessum var hon lægri í sögum bóklustum. Kenndi hon mörgum grammaticam ok fræðdi hvørn, er nema vildi. Urðu því margir vel menntr undir hennar hendi. Hon rétti mjók látinnæmkr, svá at hon lét lesa fyrir sér, en hon sjálf saumaði, tefldi eða vann aðrar hannyrðir með heilagra manna sögum, kynnandi mönnnum guðs dýrð eigi at eins með orðum munnumáms, heldr ok með verkum hándanna.

Jónsson: 1953, II 43-44
It seems Íngunn could not read herself, as she had books read out to her while she sewed or did other handiwork. It follows that her comprehension of Latin, like Þóroðr's, derived from aural learning.

Þóroðr and Íngunn appear to have been exceptions and in general it may be assumed that Christian doctrine and history were known to most Icelanders at several removes from books. The dissemination of Christian documents and teaching to the Icelandic population must have been difficult, and must have depended on oral recitations of various kinds. In the year 1200 the Miracle Book of Saint Þórlákkr was read aloud at the Alþing (Helgason: 1978, 151), not only to celebrate Þórlákkr's recent canonization among those present, but also presumably with the expectation that it would be reported by listeners throughout the land in the following months. While this must have been the method of broadcasting traditionally practised in Iceland, it was probably one which did not lend itself well to the privileging of one authoritative version of a story, or by extension, official histories.

Under these circumstances it is conceivable that the shepherds and the women on farms responsible for looking after children continued telling traditional stories without realigning them to reflect Christian values and without elevating the figure of the Christian king as upholder of these values. The actual wording of Óðr's comment "stivp meðra saugvr, er hiarðar sveinar segia" suggests that the tales were conceived of as originating from stepmothers, but transmitted by farm-workers. Probably neither term is a literal designation of a social group, but a mechanism of literary reflex, disparaging the transmitters of these kind of tales as marginal members of society. Óðr's categorisation of narratives into two types, the superstitious or fictitious on the one hand, and the reliable and coherent on the other, accords with attitudes of early writers in other cultures, where literacy has made them acutely aware of, and critical of, inconsistencies in the body of orally inherited material (Goody and Watt: 1968, 49).

The conditions surrounding the written transmission of material differ significantly from those operating in a primarily oral milieu. The commitment of material to writing tends toward the establishment of a single authoritative version of a text, though this tendency was by no means fully carried through in the Middle Ages. The ideology of the transcriber becomes inscribed in the text. In Iceland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, anyone engaged in the
transcription and transmission of material on vellum would have received his education from clerics. The difficulties faced by a scribe in recording heretical material without comment is illustrated in the Codex Regius collection of eddic poems.

In the prose epilogue to Helgaqviða Hundingsbana Ónnor, the compiler explicitly dissociates himself from the heathen belief in re-incarnation, which he understands to be inscribed in his source text:

Þat var trúá í fornesclo, at menn væri endrbornir, enn þat er nú kólluð kerlingavilla. Helgi oc Sigrún er kallat at væri endrborin. Hét hann þa Helgi Haddingiascadí, enn hon Kára, Hálfdanar dóttir, svá sem vèóit er í Károlíðum, oc var hon valkyria.

The use of nú in opposition to forneskja establishes the context - temporal and ideological - in which the compiler is documenting these works. A similar distinction is constructed by the author of Fóstbrœðra saga (Pórólfisson and Jónsson: 1943, 212-213) who comments “Nu þó at kristni væri ung í þenna tíma hér á landi, þó var þar þó eigi sölð. . .”, though in this case, the period and beliefs being described are not those current in the thirteenth century. The term forneskja refers to ancient time, but in many of its occurrences connotes not just an historical period, but a period in which heathen beliefs and practices, such as sorcery, obtained (Fritzner: 1883-96, I 459). What is significant about the comment at the end of Helgaqviða Hundingsbana Ónnor, however, is that it refers to beliefs associated with, but not explicit in, the written form of the text itself. The scribe takes the opportunity to denounce what amounts to heresy in the traditional interpretation of events of the past. Furthermore, the very act of transmitting a narrative or verse which represented the re-incarnation of two legendary figures must have been viewed as implicit belief in the concept of re-incarnation. Whether or not those engaged in the transmission of eddic poems in the thirteenth century did in fact ‘believe’ in all the ideas expressed by them is a matter of speculation (Lindow: 1985, 32).

While the written medium allows the transmitter to distance himself from the underlying values expressed in a poem, this separation of speaker and utterance, and speaker and audience would not have obtained in an oral milieu. Not only must traditional poems and tales have carried some relevance for their audience from recitation to recitation, they would also have been continually
mediated in the telling to ensure that they remained meaningful. As Goody and Watt (1968, 30) have noted, in an oral society individuals tend to remember what is of critical importance to their experience of the main social relationships, and to forget whatever parts of their cultural heritage have ceased to be of contemporary relevance. Formalized patterns of speech, and particularly intricate metrical forms shield certain parts of the cultural heritage from the operation of 'structural amnesia', as it has been called by J. A. Barnes (Goody and Watt: 1968, 33). Nonetheless, it can be presumed that poems and tales instantiating heathen beliefs and values continued to be transmitted in Christian Iceland because they formed a critical part of their audience's understanding of the world. It is possible that belief in some kinds of traditional lore did not inhibit Icelanders' ability to participate in Christian cultural institutions, at least for those whose training in Christian theology was slight.

According to the Regius compiler, belief in reincarnation was called kerlingavilla ('old women's tales') in the second half of the thirteenth century. The attribution of these views to old women may well be scape-goating, as it represents a literary reflex dissociating the author, and with him, mainstream literate culture from views of this kind. As with the derogatory comments about stepmothers and shepherds, members of the group pin-pointed in the comment are less powerful members of society, less likely to have been empowered by literacy, and more likely to have adhered to traditional oral discourses. In this connection it is interesting to note the description Ari gives to one of his female informants, Púrilr Snorradóttir. Her nickname in spaka indicates that she was renowned for her knowledge. In Flateyjarbók she is called Púrilr spákonar, an epithet designating magical powers (Steffensen: 1966-69, 188). Ari and later Snorri Sturluson describe Púrilr as spaka, although Ari includes the important qualification that she was óljúðfróð — wise in an unmendacious way. This rider presumably distinguished his informant, and her material, from other 'wise' women, whose accounts could not be so readily accommodated into Christian history.

The poem which actually tells of the re-incarnation of Helgi and Sigrún, Karoli6t, is cited by the compiler, but it is not included in the collection. If the compiler was deliberately suppressing the text (and other explanations are possible) it might suggest that re-incarnation and residual belief in it was a sensitive religious issue at the time. Certainly some degree of suppression must
have gone on, since none of the extant eddic verse relates to heathen ritual or hymnody (Foote: 1974c, 98-99).

The coincidence of the word edda as a noun meaning 'great-grandmother' (*Rígsþula* 2ff. and *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 86: 190, 7) and as the title of Snorri's treatise on traditional poetry and myths is tantalising, given the other instances from medieval texts where old women are associated with knowledge of ancient lore. It is not known who bestowed the name edda on Snorri's scholarly work. It first appears in the rubric opening the work in the Codex Upsaliensis dating from the early fourteenth century (Grape et al.: 1977, 1), and soon made its way into compounds signifying skaldic craft— for example eddulistar and eddureglur. But as women, even very old ones, are not credited with expertise in skaldic composition by the thirteenth century, there is a lack of fit in the title 'great-grandmother' for Snorri's recondite work.

Stefán Karlsson (1971) and Anthony Faulkes (1977a) have independently suggested another explanation for the title, as a playful coinage from the Latin verb edere 'to compose', in imitation of the colloquial Icelandic kredda from the Latin credo. The proposed meaning of 'poetics' for the title 'edda' is without doubt more fitting for Snorri's learned enterprise. But since those reading Snorri's work might be expected to have been familiar with the lexis of *Rígsþula* and heiti, the title surely functioned partly as a pun, relying too on the convention of giving manuscripts whimsical titles. A twelfth century manuscript is entitled Gryla, or ogress, and a collection of records relating to Ribe cathedral in Denmark is entitled Ribe Oldemoder— Ribe's grandmother (Faulkes: 1977a, 36).

The scanty threads of evidence concerning oral traditions in medieval Iceland must be tied off now, before speculation weaves too fantastic a fabric. In conclusion, the various references to oral poetic traditions that have been surveyed suggest that in the second half of the thirteenth century eddic verse was still a generative mode of discourse, and that its conventions and mythological underpinnings were understood by a broad audience. In the next chapter I shall look at the impact of runic and alphabetic writing systems on a range of discourses, including poetry, and consider how traditional oral poetry was incorporated into the new literary tradition. Alphabetic literacy introduced new notions of textuality and authority, which early writers had to grapple with, but as we have seen, it also presented transcribers with ideological conflicts.
The way Icelandic writers transformed oral traditions into writings accommodating both the demands of new literate concepts of text and the texts' new Christian context is treated in the §3.5.
3

Written traditions in medieval Iceland

During the survey of oral traditions in the last chapter frequent reference has inevitably been made to the first products of alphabetic literacy in Iceland. Before turning to that imported technology in §3.2, and examining its profound consequences for all aspects of Iceland's cultural heritage, some account is necessary of the ethnic writing traditions of Scandinavia which were sometimes used to transcribe poetic utterance. Despite the length of time over which runic inscription was practised in northern Europe and the range of uses to which it was put, the impact of runic technology on oral discursive traditions appears to have been small in comparison with the changes brought about by the Roman alphabet. In §3.1, I shall survey the Scandinavian runic evidence before and after the conversion, with particular focus on metrical inscriptions and their likely social function. §3.3 takes up the important issue of the interpenetration of oral and literate traditions in the discursive practices of twelfth and thirteenth century writers, in the areas of treaties (§3.3.1), laws (§3.3.2) and historical records (§3.3.3). Throughout this chapter, the evidence of both runic and alphabetic texts is brought to bear on questions of eddic transmission, in preparation for the consideration in the next chapter of the context in which eddic poems were eventually fixed in writing in the collection manuscripts of the latter half of the thirteenth century. §3.4 prepares the way for this investigation by enquiring into the likely intellectual background to the recording of eddic poems in the light of scholarly and theological attitudes to the traditional ethnic culture of Iceland. In §3.5, I speculate more generally on the transition from oral poem to written text, taking into consideration observations that have been made about the history of poetic traditions in other cultures.

§3.1 The runic tradition

A number of eddic verses have been preserved in runic inscriptions which are several hundred years older than the extant manuscripts of eddic poetry. The practice of inscribing alliterative lines on stone or wood, however, seems
to have served particular and limited purposes not commensurate with the social effect of the transmission of texts in alphabetic writing. In the period before the conversion in Scandinavia, runic technology is widely attested, but it was apparently not used for discursive communication. Rune literacy was in all probability restricted, and texts were necessarily limited in length: writing surfaces made of stone were durable but not very portable, and wooden 'texts' were portable but short-lived. The primary aim of many of the extant runic inscriptions from the Viking Age does not appear to have been ready comprehensibility, suggesting that the readership of the texts was neither large nor general. The main uses of the technology were terse records of ownership, magical inscriptions and commemorative statements (Antonsen: 1980). Even the longer inscriptions from the early period are cryptic, relying on extra-textual knowledge for their full explication (Antonsen: 1980, 8).

The writing of runes was practised by Germanic people from the first century A.D. (Liestøl: 1969c, 471), but was gradually displaced by Roman script following the conversion to Christianity. In pre-Christian Scandinavia, single words were often transcribed in runes onto metal bracteates, which appear to have been used as amulets. Moltke (1976: 86-96) draws the conclusion from his study of bracteate inscriptions that anything that passed for writing seems to have served the purpose of endowing an object with magical force. Amulets that yield no linguistic sense have been variously interpreted as the work of confidence-tricksters, or, in the Christian period, as attempts to keep the devil busy with impossible tasks (Gosling: 1989, 179). Evidence gathered from many cultures indicates that writing is often regarded as an instrument of secret and magic power, especially in the early stages of literate development, or when the technology is restricted to a small number of practitioners (Goody: 1968, 15-16).

Runes, invoked or inscribed, are often associated with magical purpose in archeological and literary artefacts from Scandinavia (Liestøl: 1969b). There are examples of longer inscriptions of magic formulas being used on stones, such as the Eggjum stone from the eighth century, which is thought to have been placed in a grave to stop the dead walking. The inscription in this case was probably not intended to be read - either by the dead or by passers by - but to add potency to the spell and to serve as a concrete reminder of its existence (Jansson: 1969a, 481). In contrast to alphabetic writing, which is designed to 'carry' a message from a speaker to an addressee, the value of much runic inscription seems to lie in its substantiation of utterance, often
without regard to the other side of the (alphabetic) literate equation, the reception of utterance.

It is generally thought that knowledge of runes was restricted to a social élite, at least until late in the Viking age (de Vries: 1970, I 393-406). The evidence for this comes mainly from eddic poems associating rune knowledge with social rank and power, but it is supported by the esoteric nature of many of the extant inscriptions. References made on stone by the rune-carvers themselves to their art and their milieu also attest to an élite of highly trained individuals (Jansson: 1969b). In the poem Rígsþula a deity calling himself Rígr calls on three different couples and fathers a son with each of the women – Dræll, Karl and Jarl, who in turn beget families which apparently represent three social classes. Rígr returns to claim Jarl as his son, and teaches him runes. Jarl transmits this esoteric knowledge to his son Konr ungr, a name almost certainly meaning king. In this and other poems, rune knowledge represents an active power which allows the possessor to do such things as blunt an opponent's sword and still the sea.

Runes are also often associated with wisdom and power over knowledge about the world, the past and the future (Hávamál 139-45, Vafþrúðnismál 42-3), and they are taught to privileged humans by supernatural figures (Sigdrífumál, Rígsþula and Hávamál). Like other early systems of writing, they were apparently conceived of as given by the gods to men (Goody: 1968, 11). Two early Swedish runic inscriptions, on the Noleby stone and the Sparlösa stone from Västergötland, make reference to the divine origin of runes (Lindow: 1985, 21-2 n. 3). In the poem Sigdrífumál (stanzas 16-18) runes are written on a bear's paw, on bloody wings, in wine and in beer. They are described as being shaved off the surface they were written on and mixed with holy mead before being divided up and sent to the gods, elves and men. Runes are viewed as a concrete representation of knowledge, which as a material entity can be restricted to and transmitted within a particular social group.

The earliest extant inscriptions from Scandinavia, such as the Östfold stone from fifth century Norway, carry memorial inscriptions commemorating dead heroes. From what we know of the North Germanic sensibility, continuing fame after a valiant life was valued very highly, and heroic lays versifying the life and feats of warriors were commemorated and transmitted. The text of the Östfold stone and other early memorial stones is in alliterative verse, which
suggests that runes in the earliest period were sometimes used to record utterances which had already been composed orally for memorization and recitation. The Old Norse word *minni*, whose basic sense is 'remembrance', was also used in the sense of a memorial, and in the plural, in the sense of 'old lore' - as in the phrase *forn minni* (Fritzner: 1883-96, 11 701-3). Snorri Sturluson uses this expression in a description of the *hiástælt* metre in *Hattatal* to mean a proverb: ".. ok skal órðak vera forn minni" (222, 2). The word is frequently used to mean a 'memorial toast' which would have involved not only a commemorative drink but also some kind of spoken eulogy.

The recitation of both heroic lays and memorial toasts would have been essential to the transmission of an important cultural memory, but it is not always clear what function the inscribed *minni* would have fulfilled. Since rune literacy was probably restricted to a particular group in society, few people would have been able to read the inscription. If the stone did carry a *minni*, as I have suggested, it may well have functioned as a symbolic celebration of the orally known *minni* for all those who saw the stone, whether they in fact 'read' it or not. The idea that early runic inscriptions were mnemonic rather than communicative has recently been argued by Leonard Forster (1988), who interprets runic evidence within a broad conspectus of early systems of writing. In those runestones which articulate the relationship of the monument to the perpetuation of someone's memory, reference is made to oral genres of commemoration, such as the *grátr*, or lament (Helgason: 1944):

```
Munu æigi mærki
mærri verða
þan Úlfs synir
æftir gæðiðu,
smallir svæinar
at sinn fáður.
Ræistu stæina
ok staf unnu
ok inn mikla
at tæktum.
Ok Gyriði
gats at veri.
Þy man i gráti
getit lata.
```

Jansson: 1962, 127

This inscription, found on the Bällsta stones from Uppland in Sweden, is paralleled by another Swedish inscription, the Nöbbele stone from Småland:
The stones in these cases function both to celebrate the worthiness of the dead person in the eyes of their family, and to prompt the telling of more detailed oral minni of one form or another. The ‘reading’ of the stone therefore involves more than the comprehension of the inscription, and the readership of the inscription, in a broad and rather loose sense, involves more than those who were rune-literate.

A more obscure readership is involved in the particularly recherché inscription found on the Rök stone from ninth century Sweden. The exclusivity of runic communication is demonstrated in the extreme by this inscription, which utilises eight different types of secret coded writing, and whose disposition around the surfaces of the stone does not readily reveal in what order it is to be read. The text probably begins with a memorial to the rune-carver’s dead son with the rest of the text possibly structured by three pairs of riddles answered somewhat obliquely in three verses (Lönnroth: 1977a). Only one stanza in a recognisable metre (fornyrðislag) can be constructed with any certainty. One of the central structural devices of the inscription is the repeated formula sakumukminni which appears in some form in seven places in the text. While the interpretation of the word minni in this line is not beyond doubt, most commentators agree on a reading involving the concept of ‘a memory’ (Lönnroth: 1977a, 22-3 and Kratz: 1978-9, 11-12). A minni in the context of this inscription seems to have been an encapsulated reference to an important traditional story, the detailed recollection of which appears to have been set in motion by the posing of a puzzle-like question about some aspect of the story.

The pattern of allusive question and associative answer finds a parallel in the wisdom-contest structure known from a number of eddic mythological poems such as Vafóruðnismál, and demonstrates a strategy often employed in orally
transmitted material, which had to preserve the traditional wisdom of a culture in a didactic and memorable form (Ong: 1982, 44). Vésteinn Ólason (1969) has shown that a particular form of poetry known as greppaminni or minni of poets, distinguished by both stylistic and metrical characteristics, was used to preserve sets of questions and answers about old lore in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and it probably existed in some form in earlier centuries. The compositional principle of greppaminni probably existed in a number of oral traditions in medieval Europe, and seems likely to have been behind the form of the Rök stone inscription (Lönroth: 1977a, 18-20). Both the Rök stone inscription and Vafdrúðnismál show the use of the mnemonic device of numbering individual sections of the text, but the Rök stone text intriguingly only refers to the second, twelfth and thirteenth minni from an apparently larger, and extra-textual body. Such an unidentified poem may have existed (Lönroth: 1977a, 21), but it is clear that the relationship of written text to oral poem is oblique. It is certainly a far cry from the ethos of alphabetic literacy, where the text aims to supplant its sources, and to constitute the primary communication between writer and reader. By contrast, the Rök stone text functions as a highly-valued touch-stone in a much more complex relationship between writer, patron (or the commissioner of the carving), reader and oral tradition. Writing in this context is clearly ancillary to the dominant oral mode.

Developments in the rune-row itself suggest that the communication of texts was not the highest priority of the writing system. By the Viking Age the number of runes had generally been reduced from twenty-four to sixteen, although the cryptic section of the Rök stone inscription presupposes a knowledge of the old rune-row (Liestøl: 1981). The reduction in the number of runes seems to have been a deliberate reform aimed at simplifying the writing system to make inscription faster and easier. A number of runes from the old rune-row may have become superfluous following sound changes in early Scandinavian languages, but the reduction from twenty-four to sixteen runes also included the abandonment of the differentiation between the voiced consonants b, d and g and the unvoiced p, t and k. Drawing on remarks made in the thirteenth century grammatical treatise of Óláf r Þórdarson, Liestøl (1981: 263-4) has argued that the two sets of stops were judged to be so similar that there was no need to differentiate them, at least not in a remodelled system with economy as its guiding principle.
The reforms nevertheless represent a move away from a system with some potential for unambiguous phonetic transcription, such as the Roman alphabet, toward a simpler, more economic system needed for purposes where phonetic fidelity was not of overriding importance. The process of transforming an inscription back into utterance was probably quite a demanding task, considering not only the phonetic difficulties, but the disposition of runes around uneven surfaces and the indistinct separation of groups of runes into words. The eddic poem  *Atlarnál* preserves a description of the process of rune-reading, though the inscription in this case has been falsified and presents an exaggerated picture of the difficulties involved. Due to the suspected treachery surrounding the communication, Kostbera has to suppress her desire to speak the message out aloud in order to make sense of it, a technique common to rune and alphabet readers throughout the Middle Ages:

```
Kend var Kostbera, kunni hon scil rúna,
inti orðstafi at eld liósom;
gæta varð hon tungo í göma báða:
váro svá viltar, at var vant at ráða.  *Atlarnál* 93-10
```

Towards the end of the tenth century, about the time Christianity was making gains in Scandinavia, a system of dots was utilized in order to represent a greater range of sounds in the runic system. The change in the writing system seems to have been made under influence from England. Variant graphemes from the two rune-rows were used to represent vowels not expressed by the traditional system. By 1200, the rune-row had been adapted to mirror the Latin alphabet and was even rearranged to follow the order of sounds a b c d e . . . (Liestøl: 1969c, 475). Christian beliefs and practices no doubt had a great effect on the contents of runic inscriptions, but they also would have influenced the uses to which inscriptions were put. Many of the surviving runic inscriptions in Scandinavia date from the Christian era and in many cases the writing of runes was done in the service of the Church. Inscriptions have been found on baptismal fonts and church bells, and many of the surviving rune stones from Sweden commemorate 'good works' undertaken in the service of the Church (Jansson: 1962, 85ff). Because of the scanty evidence for the uses of runic inscription in pre-Christian times, especially on perishable material such as wood, it is difficult to tell how great the influence of foreign scribal culture was on indigenous traditions.

The earliest reference to the sending of a letter in runes is closely bound to a Christian context. In the *Vita Sancti Anskarri*, written by Rimbert in the
last decades of the ninth century, the missionary Anskar is said to have been sent back to Kaisar Ludvik from Sweden in the year 831 with a letter from the king written in runes (Liestøl: 1969a, 459). The sending of important political messages at this time was probably normally by means of a messenger and authenticating token (Harmer: 1946-53, 119-20). From the eleventh century the English practice of sending letters authenticated by the sender's wax seal was adopted in Scandinavia, at least for official correspondence. References to the sending of political missives on runakvafar during the ninth century are found in sagas written in the thirteenth century but probably reflect the author's conception of old methods of correspondence rather than historical reality. The eddic poems Atlakviða and Atlamál refer to the sending of an important message of warning from Guðrún to Gunnarr and Hogni via a messenger and demonstrate a mixture of notions about how messages were sent in the distant past. In Atlakviða, the warning is conveyed by a wolf's hair wound round a ring, and in Atlamál, arguably a twelfth century version of the same story (Dronke: 1969, 119-20), a message is carved in runes but the messenger falsifies it. In a short piece of prose dealing with the same story, the Dráp Njálunga, which may have been added by the compiler of the manuscript of eddic poems to try and forge a coherent narrative, Guðrún is said to send a message in runes and a ring wound with wolf's hair as a token.

The influence of foreign scribal practices can be detected not only in accounts of historical communication written in the thirteenth century, but also in the use of traditional runic writing in that century. A political message written in runes dating from the beginning of the thirteenth century was carved into the wood of a wax tablet before it was coated with coloured wax and inscribed with an inconsequential message. The underlying message urges the receiver to write to a certain woman in a convent for help and advice:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Pess vil ek býja pik, at þú far or þeima flokki. Snið rítt til sýstur Ólafs Hettusveins} & \quad -60- \\
\text{þystrúlausuhætusveinn} & \quad \text{hon er í Bjorgvini at nunnusætri} \\
\text{h} & \quad \text{ok leita ráðs við hana ok við frændr þína} \\
\text{onurí:biaruínatununusætri} & \quad \text{er þú vildir sættask. Egið} \\
\text{oklaetara(p)sul:hana:ok} & \quad \text{att þú synsemi jarls.} \\
\text{ulip:prónbr:pínaerpuui} & \quad \text{Liestøl: 1968, 21} \\
\text{dir:sætasekta:autusæmi} & \\
\text{iarsatsatvkenunsu:baetui.} & 
\end{align*} \]
It is significant that the word for ‘write’ is not the traditional Norse word for inscribing, *rísta*, but *rita* borrowed from Old English to describe the technology of writing Roman script on vellum introduced into Scandinavia by Christianity.

This letter in runes is among the many runic texts unearthed in a major find of runic material, made in Bergen in the 1950s, in the port area known as Bryggen. Below the harbourside site layers of artefacts had been preserved datable from fires which swept the district in 1170, 1198, 1248, 1332 and later. Over five hundred inscriptions have been found, which attest to a much higher level of rune literacy in twelfth and thirteenth century Norway than earlier evidence suggested. Unlike the texts of memorial stones, these texts are short and exoteric. They record the ownership of objects (including shoes and bowls) and commercial transactions, such as the debt incurred by the receiver of a consignment of goods - the twelfth century equivalent of a duplicate invoice statement. But the level of literacy in runic writing indicated by the twelfth century Bergen finds must be viewed in the light of the great influence of Christian scribal culture on the vernacular writing tradition. One of the runic finds is a letter written by a member of the Norwegian royal family, Sigurðr Lávarðr, ordering spears to be forged at a Bergen smithy. The salutatory formula he uses and the word order of the inscription are particular rhetorical devices found only in contemporary diplomas, and probably learnt by Sigurðr at the cathedral school of Nidarøss (Liestøl: 1974, 30). Many of the Bryggen inscriptions are of Latin texts, and although some are secular, the majority are religious. Over twenty inscriptions addressed to the Virgin Mary have been found in Norway, dating from 1200 onwards (Gosling: 1989, 177).

Several of the inscriptions contain verse in eddic measure. Parallels to many of the metrical inscriptions are readily found in poetry preserved in Icelandic manuscripts, suggesting that the Norwegian inscribers were familiar with the diction, genres and the mythological underpinnings instantiated in the Icelandic texts. One text, dated to c. 1200 reads:

```
þæilsepúok:úhúhum:goðum/por:úik:pinggi:open:úik æihi:

Heiði(s) sé þu
ok í hugum góðum.
Þórr þik píggigi.
Óðinn þik eigi
```

Liestøl: 1964, 37
The greeting is paralleled in *Hymiskviða* 11, and the second comment is illuminated by *Hárbarðlíoð* 24, where Hárbart says: “Óðinn á iarla, þá er í val falla/ en Þórr á þráela kyn.” The text is on two sides of a wooden stick which is irregularly shaped and may originally have borne a longer inscription. Whatever the precise context of the verse, it demonstrates that the eddic compositional mode was alive and productive in Norway at the turn of the thirteenth century, before the earliest stages of eddic recording which have been postulated for Icelandic material (Lindblad: 1980). Unless a complex *stemma* of lost manuscripts is postulated, written influence of manuscript texts on runic texts is out of the question. The Norwegian scholar Didrik Seip (1957) has in fact entertained the idea that eddic poems were written on vellum in Norway, but no hard evidence exists for his hypothesis. His arguments will be taken up in more detail in ch. 5, but the basis of his claims are traces of Norwegian paleographic features in existing Icelandic manuscripts rather than any historical material from Norway.

A half stanza in *ljóðahátr* metre is preserved on another stick, which is estimated to have originally contained around three hundred runes. It dates from around the time of the Codex Regius collection (Liestøl: 1964, 35). The stick is in two pieces, and like many of the rune sticks discovered in the Bryggen excavations, may have been deliberately broken in half before being thrown away (Liestøl: 1974: 21). This treatment of inscribed surfaces does not accord with a system of writing aimed at recording and preserving utterance. The verse fragment that is legible is as follows:

\[
\text{Sæll(1) ek þá póttumk er vit sátumk í hjá, ok komat okkar máðr á meðal.}
\]

Liestøl: 1964, 35

This reflective sentiment echoes *Hamðismál* 21 and a verse attributed to Gísl Súrsson (Pórólfsson and Jónsson: 1943, 46), but neither of them is in *ljóðahátr*. For a parallel to the metrical mode of the verse, we can look to the first person narrative accounts of Óðinn’s adventures in *Hávamál*, some of which constitute a lover’s reminiscences (sts. 96-110).

Liestøl has amended the first text to be grammatically consistent with a male addressee and the second with a male speaker, but unlike earlier runic practice these texts preserve doubled runes in masculine nominal forms (Liestøl earlier (1964: 10) transcribes “þor’kæll”). It is therefore possible that the
authors of these inscriptions were not exclusively male. It is generally agreed that the level of rune literacy indicated by the Bryggen finds is fairly high, and that the texts represent the day-to-day communications of a mixture of social classes. The runic letter from the first half of the thirteenth century quoted above implies that the woman with whom the writer wishes to communicate could read. Admittedly being in a nunnery suggests that Ólaf's sister was of high social rank, but other inscriptions indicate less privileged women could write. Among the 'pub' finds from Bryggen is the following threatening missive:

\[\text{gyasaehiratpukakhaem} \]

\[\text{Gyda segir at pu gakk heim} \]

\[\text{Liestøl: 1964, 21} \]

and another letter, requesting more stockfish, is addressed to the sender's wife, Lundney (Liestøl: 1974, 23).

The discovery of inscriptions of eddic verse from twelfth century Norway has shown that both the corpus and the diction of this poetry were well known in Norway, and were still being used for purposes including magic. The transcription of charms in eddic measure onto metal or wooden objects was probably viewed as adding potency to the utterance, and may be considered as a manifestation of the ancient tradition of effecting desires by carving runes. One of the poetic texts from Bryggen clearly exemplifies this (Liestøl: 1964, 40-41):

\[
\text{Rfst ek bótrúnar,} \\
\text{ríst ek bjargrúnar,} \\
einfalt við alfum, \\
tvifalt við trollum, \\
þrifalt við þursum} \\
\text{við inni skœðu} \\
'skag'-valkyrja \\
svát eð megi \\
pótt æ vili \\
lævis kona \\
lifi þinu} \\
\text{ek sendi þér,} \\
\text{ek síða þér} \\
ylgjar ærgi ok úpola. \\
Á þér renni úpóli \\
oð 'iðluns' mód. \\
Sittu aldri, \\
søf þu aldri} \\
\text{ant mér sem sjalfri þér. Beirist rubus osv.}
\]

-63-
This is the longest of the metrical runic finds in Norway. As well as the verbal echoes of *Sigrdrífumál* 19 and *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri* 38 the verse finds a ready parallel in the sentiments expressed by the messenger of Freyr in *Skírnismál*. One can only wonder whether the addressee of this stick was made as compliant as her mythological cousin, Gerdr. Close though the poetic utterance is to Icelandic texts, the scribal context is quite different: the inscription continues with a string of Latin words, apparently also of an incantatory nature (Liestøl: 1964, 50). The practice of inscribing charms on objects to render them ineffectual may date from the inception of this particular spell-casting tradition. Malicious *nǐð* verses were carved onto wooden objects in public places to render them effective, and the same principle may be behind the following charm - directed against cooking stones - found in Bergen:

\[ \text{Ími stein heitti,} \\
\text{at ar(n)-reykr rjúk!} \\
\text{Aldri seýðir soðni!} \\
\text{út yl!} \\
\text{inn kyl!} \\
\text{Ími stein heitti!} \]

Liestøl: 1964, 38-9

Like other traditions that originated in the pre-Christian period, later examples of inscribed charms bear witness to the influence and incorporation of Christian elements: a runestick has been found in Tønsberg which carries a charm against bleeding and another for good eyesight, which refers to the apocryphal story of Tobias (Gosling: 1989, 179).

Writing to promote efficacy and writing to convey a message or sentiment on the spur of the moment represent different communicative traditions from that of recording utterance for communication to endure across time and space. This practice, and indeed the technology that made it possible, were legacies of the Christianisation of Scandinavia. Whatever inference may be drawn from Bryggen that runes were used to record poems probably points to influence from Latin scribal tradition, rather than the continuation of a traditional practice of textual communication. In all likelihood, the fact that runes and wood were sometimes used rather than ink and vellum is indicative of a practical response to an imported cultural tradition. Both vellum and ink would have been expensive and their markets controlled by the Church. Pieces of wood could always be found in Bergen, which is surrounded by abundant forests. Runes were only rarely used in manuscripts, mainly because the technology of vellum preparation was part of the infra-structure introduced along with Latin scribal culture (Skautrup: 1969).
The corpus of metrical inscriptions preserved in the runic corpus in Norway deserves closer study to establish the distribution of eddic genres current in different locales at different points in history. What has been published of this material\(^1\) shows an interesting range of eddic conventions as they are known from Icelandic manuscripts, and suggests that the production of eddic verse was a living tradition in several parts of Norway from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. The local colour of a verse such as the following puts paid to any notion that runic texts were dependent on texts collected in manuscripts:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Þau eru bæði} \\
\text{i búð saman,} \\
\text{Klaufa-Kári} \\
\text{ok kona Viljalms.} \\
\text{Heill þú.}
\end{align*}
\]

Gosling: 1989, 182

This verse is found on one of the surfaces of a rune stick dated between 1250 and 1325, which also preserves a marriage proposal, a statement of ownership and a list of the initial letters of the numbers one to twenty. The stick is written in several different hands and bears traces of previous inscriptions at the ends of some of the sides. It was probably used for writing practice (Gosling: 1989, 180-2), and the preservation of the gossip in verse is probably simply the result of a casual inscription, or graffito.

I turn now to Iceland, where there is little extant evidence to suggest that the writing of runes was widely practised. The earliest surviving inscription dates from around 1200, on the door of the church at Valþjöfsstaðir, the wood for which would have been imported (Jóhannesson: 1974, 308). The most likely explanation for the absence of traces of inscriptions on the island is the scarcity of suitable materials to be carved or hewn. Unlike Sweden, where most of the memorial stones have been found, the volcanic stone of Iceland was not suitable for carving, and the small-growing birch trees of Iceland's scanty forests are unlikely to have yielded wood suitable for inscription. The unreliable supply of driftwood was probably used for more essential purposes than the short casual inscriptions found in Bergen, where the supply of wood was unlimited. On the other hand, the lack of extant inscriptions may simply be

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\(^1\) I am indebted to James E. Knirk of the Runic Archive, University of Oslo, for information about the extent and range of metrical inscriptions so far documented in Norway.
the consequence of the perishable nature of the surfaces on which inscriptions were made in Iceland.

In a recent study, Jan Ragnar Hagland (1989) has argued that runic inscriptions were probably not uncommon in Iceland, basing his conclusions on the evidence of numerous inscriptions found in Bergen and Trondheim whose contents suggest Icelandic writers or addressees. And there is other evidence of Icelanders abroad being competent in rune-carving (see Perkins: 1989, 255). Whether or not inscription was a common practice, the rune-row may have been retained and transmitted in a specialised context in Iceland, given the close conceptual association of rune knowledge and power over knowledge. Runes were evidently associated with esoteric knowledge, and valued because of their ability to empower whoever was taught them. An Icelandic rune poem, which incorporates the names of runes into gnomic discourse, is preserved in a late medieval manuscript, and may be presumed to have been orally transmitted during the Middle Ages.

When Latin scribal culture was introduced with Christianity, the symbol P, which is not in the Latin alphabet, was borrowed from the Old English þorn rather than from the Icelandic rune-row character þurs which represented the same sound (H. Benediktsson: 1965, 21-22). Other terms relating to literate practices also borrowed from Old English are bókfell 'parchment' and stafróf 'alphabet' (H. Benediktsson: 1965, 40). The adoption of terms was not entirely a one-way trade, however, and certain native terms were adapted to imported practices: the verb ræða used with reference to runic interpretation was transferred to Latin writing, and the word rún itself became used to denote Latin letters (H. Benediktsson: 1965, 17 n.2). The continued influence of English scribal practices is clearly evidenced in the development of Icelandic script (H. Benediktsson: 1965, 34-5).

In Iceland, inscriptions may also have been made using Latin letters carved into wood and wax in circumstances where vellum was not available. According to Fritzner (1883-96: III 138) the word runar in Old Icelandic had four fairly distinct semantic values: letters; runic characters; knowledge, learning and literature; and magic characters used for sorcery. The first sense included both runic and Latin letters. The author of The First Grammatical Treatise twice uses the word rún as a stylistic variant of stafr, 'letter' (H.
Benediktsson: 1972, 214), and once in an example of the distinction between vowel sounds (H. Benediktsson: 1972, 222).

In this light, the reference to the use of wax tablets for ‘runic’ inscription attested to in Prests saga Guðmundar góða (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 138) may well be an example of the first sense of the word, indicating the use of wax tablets for notes in Latin script. Wax tablets were indeed used for drafts and note-taking in preparation for writing on vellum in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Oberg: 1975). More importantly, there is no traditional association between runic writing and a wax writing surface, since wax was only imported into Iceland after the church had been established and needed a supply of wax for candles, seals and wax tablets (Eithun: 1975). The inscription referred to in the saga was after all executed by a priest in the last decades of the twelfth century. Another reference to inscription usually understood to imply runic writing is found in Íslendinga saga. Here a verse is said to have been found at Saudafell, inscribed on a wooden stick — “ristin á kefli” but the alphabet used is not mentioned (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 390). The verse contains serious allegations about the character of Órækja, and this along with the fact that the author is not named might indicate that transmission via inscription was preferred to face-to-face recitation for reasons of anonymity.

In Egils saga, written in the thirteenth century but set in the tenth century, reference is made to the transcription of a whole poem on a piece of wood. After the death of his son Böðvar, Egill is stricken with grief. His daughter Porgeirr at first tries to end both their lives by eating only sea-weed. When this fails, she urges Egill to compose a memorial poem for her dead brother — which she offers to carve into wood — as their last act before dying:

“Nú vilda ek, faðir, at vit lengðim líf okkart, svá at þú nættir yrkja erfíkvaði eptir Böðvar, en ek mun rista á kefli, en sifan deyju vit, ef okkr sýnisk.”

Egils saga ch. 78 (Nordal: 1933, 245)

Both of Porgeirr’s plans act to draw Egill back towards normal physical and social functioning: the sea-weed makes him so thirsty he drinks for the first time in three days, and the composition of the poem renews his spirit. By the time it is completed, he delivers it himself in front of his household, obviating the need for a written record of it to be posthumously ‘published’. The notion of transmitting a text outside the social realm — without the face-to-face contact of reciter and audience — would have been alien in a society unused to
alphabetic culture's practices and dependent on oral means of transmission. The saga author probably invented the idea of recording *Sonatorrek* on wood, projecting his conception of literary transmission back onto a pre-literate society. Régis Boyer (1973) has suggested that this incident is in fact borrowed by the saga author from Gregory's *Dialogues*.

On the basis of the Bergen rune finds, Liestøl (1974, 33) has called for a revision of the opinion (expressed in the Cleasby-Vigfússon dictionary) that *Egils saga* is not a reflection of social practice. It does not seem to me warranted to attribute to the age before alphabetic literacy practices that developed several centuries afterwards, even though we now have evidence of poems written on sticks. There is still no evidence, to my knowledge, of rune sticks being used to record poetry, in the manner represented in *Egils saga*, or in the manner of collection manuscripts produced within alphabetic literate culture. Some of the inscriptions preserve utterance in poetic measure, but these verses appear to have functioned as ephemeral communications, not as documentation.

Another saga reference to the transcription of a poem onto wood also functions in the narrative to account for the transmission of a poem where the usual delivery to an audience is made difficult by the poet's circumstances. Again in *Grettis saga* *Ásmundarsonar*, it is the poet's daughter who is the only one present, but in this case, the poet, Hallmundr, does in fact die in the interval between the completion of the poem and its delivery:

"Skaltu ni heyra til," sagði hann [Hallmundr], "en ek mun segja frá athofnum mínunum, ok mun ek kveða þar um kvaði, en þú skalt rísta eptir á keflí." Hon gerði svá. Þá kvað hann Hallmundarkviðu, ok er þetta þar í: . . . Eptir þat dró svá mikti ðallmundar, sem fram leið kvaðínu; var þat mjökk jafnskjótt, at kviðuðni var lokit ok Hallmundr dó.

*Grettis saga* ch 62 (G. Jónsson: 1936, 203-5)

The third party in this transmission, who has been waiting and listening in the wings, now comes forward and chats up Hallmundr's daughter:

Þar dvalðósk Grímr margar nætr í hellínum ok nam kviðuna, ok fór þá lagliga med þeim.

*Grettis saga* ch 62 (G. Jónsson: 1936, 205)

It is interesting in this case that Hallmundr's daughter is not regarded as competent enough to remember and recite the verse, although she is given the
responsibility for transcribing it. But it is probably foolhardy to seek social realism in an incident involving a cave-dwelling giant and his daughter “gilda vexti ok skórumga” anyway. The antiquity of these verses is doubtful (G. Jónsson: 1936: xxxvi-xxxix), and in general, there is less reason to view the incident as any kind of reflection of ancient inscription practices. The image found in thirteenth century texts of saga-age Icelanders writing runic texts is most likely a trompe-l’œil, giving the appearance of a true representation, but in fact presenting to our view an anachronistic and distorted picture of cultural practices in the period before the adoption of writing as a technology of transmission. They describe an attitude to textual recording that probably only developed after the adoption of the Latin alphabet (see Damsgaard Olsen: 1989, 196). In his prologue to the Gesta Danorum, the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus so exaggerates the image of ancient Scandinavians eagerly inscribing stone as though it were parchment, that he can only have meant it humorously (Friis-Jensen: 1987, 20):

... quibus tametsi Romanae uocis notitia abesset, tanta tradendæ rerum suarum memoriae cupidio incessit, ut uoluminum loco uastas moles amplecterentur, codicum usum a cautibus mutuantes?2

Gesta Danorum, Praefatio (Olrik and Ræder: 1931, I 4)

Earlier in his preface, Saxo refers to his ancestors inscribing stone with the texts of popular songs which told of the feats of their heroes, a description which clarifies his understanding of the ancillary relationship of inscription to oral poetry.

Whether or not the writing of runes enjoyed some popularity in Iceland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, historical and archeological evidence suggests it was not a significant medium of communication in earlier centuries. Whether for reasons of inappropriate materials or the absence of a social function for inscriptions in the new settlements, the technology of writing appears to have been peripheral to the needs of everyday life and the transmission of vernacular culture well into the eleventh century. Despite the paucity of evidence, it has been argued by the Icelandic scholar Björn M. Olsen (1883), and more recently by Jón Steffensen (1968), that runes were essential to

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2 “Even when they had no acquaintance with the Roman tongue, they had such an urge to transmit their record to posterity that in the absence of books they resorted to massive boulders and granite for pages” trans. Karsten Friis-Jensen (1987, 19).
the preservation of the eddic poems, but this theory has been discounted by Einar Ól Sveinsson (1962, 59-62).

§3.2 *The alphabetic tradition*

Many of the settlers of Norwegian birth or descent came to Iceland from the Norse colonies in Britain, where they would have come into contact with Christianity, and in some cases been converted. While some of the new settlers, including one known as Ketill the foolish, continued worshipping the Christian God in Iceland (Jóhannesson: 1974, 123), there is no evidence that the literate culture of Christianity took root at this time. This is not surprising, since the Christian faith itself was not entertained for very long in the new colony, although some of its artefacts and customs were adopted by some of the migrants. One new settler, Órlygr, built a church on Kjalarnes where his descendants adopted the custom of devotion to St Colum Cille, one of the principal saints of the Irish, even though they themselves were no longer Christians (Turville-Petre: 1954, 158). There is also mention of an iron bell and a missal book in Irish script brought by a settler to Iceland (*Kjalnesinga saga* 43-44), and there are references to other Christian artefacts, including books, left by Irish hermits in Iceland at the time of settlement (Strömbäck: 1975, 61-67 and McDougall: 1987-8, 180-1):

> Pá váru hér menn kristnir, þeir es Norðmenn kalla papa, en þeir fóru síðan á braut, af því at þeir vildu eigi vesa hér við heiðna menn, ok létir eptir bøkr írskar ok bjöllur ok bagla; af því mátti skilja, at þeir váru menn írskir.  
> *Islendingabók* (J. Benediktsson: 1968, 5)

It is unlikely however, that many of the settlers could read, and even less likely that they would have received training in writing.

The introduction of the Latin alphabet and the technology of manuscript writing was introduced into Iceland by the Church in the eleventh century. In the earliest period of the Christian era, the word of God must have been preached in Icelandic by Christian native speakers interpreting for foreign bishops (Jóhannesson: 1974, 125-6 and McDougall: 1987-8, 186-7), such as the infamous Þorvaldr who accompanied the Saxon Bishop 'Friðrekr' on his mission in the late tenth century:
Svá er sagt, at þeir biskup ok Þorvaldr fóru um Norðlendingajörðum ok talaði Þorvaldr trú fyrir munnun, því at biskup undirstóð þá eigi norrœnu, en Þorvaldr flutti jarðfliga guðs erendi, . . .

Kristni saga (Kahle: 1905, 5-6)

Written texts probably functioned purely as a symbol of status and authority as is suggested by the nickname of a foreign bishop 'Bjarnvarð hinn bókvisi' (Helgason: 1938, 80). Christian books brought to Iceland by converts from Ireland and by missionaries are unlikely to have found a large or significant audience in the first half of the eleventh century.

Literacy, and particularly the ability to write, was probably only developed among the small class Peter Foote has termed the 'clerical gentry' (1974c: 88). The class constituted by these literati was in most respects socially and economically an offshoot of the class of goðar. The alliance between the powerful families of pre-Christian Iceland and the Church was quickly effected, with the native aristocracy taking possession of ecclesiastical culture (Byock: 1988, 143-4). Indeed there was some economic incentive for goðar or their male relatives to train for the priesthood, following the loss of income from temple-dues and the imposition of expenses in maintaining a church. Financial benefit accrued to chieftains who maintained churches after the law of tithes was introduced in 1096 (Foote: 1951, 9-11). The following passage from Kristni saga demonstrates how the establishment of the new literate class did not represent a significant change in the power structure of the society:

Pá váru flestir virðingamenn læðir ok vigðir til presta, þóat hofðingjar væri, svá sem var Hálir Teitsson í Haukadal ok Sæmundr en fröði, Magnús Þórdarson í Reykjalóti, Símon Jórandarson í Æri, Guðmundr son Brands í Hjarðarhóti, Ari en fröði, Ingimundr Einarsson á Hólum, Ketill norðr Porsteinsson á Moðruvellum ok Ketill Guðmundarson, Jón prestr Þorvarðsson ok margir aðrir, þóat eigi sé ritaðir.

Kristni saga (Kahle: 1905, 50-51)

After the conversion, the sons of powerful families were sent abroad for their education, to England, France and Saxony (Foote: 1975). The first foreign bishops were teachers (Foote: 1951, 10), and a high priority of the first Icelandic bishops was the establishment of schools based on foreign models. In the second half of the eleventh century, according to Islendingabók, many chieftains had their sons educated for the priesthood by Bishop Isleifr, preferring him to foreign teachers, presumably because of his sensitivity to ethnic traditions (Turville-Petre: 1953, 77):
En es þat sjá hofðingjar ok göðir menn, at Ísleifr vas miklu nýtri en aðrir kennimenn, þeir es á þísva landi náði, þá seldu honum margir sonu sína til læringar ok léti vígja til prest.

Islendingabók ch. 9 (J. Benediktsson: 1968, 20)

This is corroborated by a reference in Jóns saga (G. Jónsson: 1953, II 7). The hero of the saga, 'inn sæli Jóhannes', was in fact fostered with Bishop Ísleifr at Skálholt, and in time set up an important school of his own at his bishopric of Hólar (Jóhannesson: 1974, 158-160). While the Skálholt and Hölar schools would have been under the control of religious orders, other schools were established in the homes of prominent families (Byock: 1988, 155), and presumably sought to serve the needs of those families and their allies. Ísleifr's son Teitr set up a school at Haukadalr (which was attended by Ari the Wise) and another school was established at Oddi, which could boast among its graduates Saint Þórákr and Snorri Sturluson. Sæmundr the Wise is thought to have been the first teacher at Oddi (H. Benediktsson: 1965, 38-9). A clerical education was considered a desirable accomplishment among the sons of the ruling class, and it was customary for young men aspiring to the position of chieftain to take priestly orders (Byock: 1988, 158), although by the end of the twelfth century Norwegian archbishops were acting to lessen the control of secular leaders over the church by prohibiting the ordination of göðar and circumscribing the secular roles of priests (Byock: 150; 163). Monasteries were not set up in Iceland until the twelfth century (the Benedictine Þingeyrar in 1133 and Þverá in 1155), and when they were, their role was more in the development of manuscript production than in the introduction of Latin learning.

Jóns saga ("eldri gerð") preserves an interesting insight into attitudes to literate activity in its description of the schoolmaster at Skálholt, Gísli Finnsson, preaching. Apparently, Gísli was assiduous in his mission of presenting holy writ to his audience unadulterated by any interpretation springing from the heart - perhaps a precaution against the mingling in the memory of traditional wisdom and Christian learning, or of error and heresy in a Christian sense:

Pá er meistari Gísli talði guðs orð fyrir fólkina at hátiðum, pá talði hann egi utanbókar marga hluti eða tressti mjöð á sitt minni, heldr skýrði hann út heilagra feðra ritningar eftir þeirri bók, sem á lektaranum lá fyrir honum. Gerði þessi vitugi maðr ok inn forsáli þetta mest sakir lítillætis, at þar sem hann var ungr at aldri, þætti þeim meira um vert, er til
The education available in Iceland in the twelfth century was closely modelled on Continental cathedral schools, mirroring their curriculum of the *trivium* - grammar, rhetoric and logic - and the *quadrivium* - arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music (Tómasson: 1988, 15-29). All students were instructed in Latin (Bischoff: 1961, 210). *Jóns saga* (G. Jónsson: 1953, II 41) tells that Gisli Finnsson *inn gauzka* taught grammar, and that a Frenchman, Rikini, taught *sönglist ok versgerð* (Strömbäck: 1975, 91 n3; 92 n. 2). Among Hólar's successful students were Bjarni *inn tölvís* (the Number-wise), who wrote a treatise on chronology and Stjörnu-Oddi (the Astronomer) (Jóhannesson: 1974, 159). During the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, the world of Latin learning opened its doors to young Icelandic men (Foote: 1975). As well their own teachers, Icelanders had access to international scholars, foreign travel (McDougall: 1987-8, 212ff.), Continental institutions of learning, and a small but growing library of classical texts and school primers (Olmer: 1902, 60-61 and Tómasson: 1988, 30-35). The assimilation of Latin learning is demonstrated by the authors of a number of twelfth century works (Tómasson: 1988, 39-44), including the First Grammarian who refers to the classical work *Disticha Catonis*.

Among the books in circulation was Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, which was confiscated by Bishop Jón when he came upon a young priest - later to become Bishop Klængr - reading it (G. Jónsson: 1953, II 97). More appropriate reading was chosen by a later bishop, Saint Þorlákr, who asked to be read St. Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis* on his death-bed (Hungvaka Helgason: 1938, I 96). *Guðmundar saga Arasonar* makes mention of a *bókakista* which is lost overboard on a voyage to Norway in the year 1180 (G. Jónsson: 1953, II 191), though there is no account given of its capacity or contents. Other references to containers for books are found in Olmer (1902, 84). Accounts of learned works known in twelfth century Iceland are found in Karlsson (1969), Turville-Petre (1953, 135ff) and Tómasson (1988), and information about later library inventories is provided by Olmer (1902) and Oleson (1957).

The excellence of learning achieved among 'the clerical gentry' by no means implies widespread literacy. It has been estimated that around four hundred priests were needed to serve Icelandic communities in the Middle Ages.
(Tómasson: 1988, 36). Many of those, however, may only have been able to
to read set liturgical texts and rubrics (Foote: 1974c, 87-88). An illustration of the
limited literacy of some clergy is given in Jóns saga where an unfortunate
Danish priest is shown up by Bishop Jón's superior reading skills (G. Jónsson: 1953, 119). It has been estimated that only one percent of the population
(approximately eight hundred people) around 1200 would have understood any
Latin (Foote: 1974c, 99 citing a study by Ernst Walter). Evidence from Anglo­
Saxon England indicates that literacy there was restricted to clerics, and that
there is very little to suggest that lay literacy was significant (Wormald: 1977).
The situation in Iceland was rather different, since the same syllabus was
apparently taught to all pupils, and resulted in a secular group of learned men
(the sons of the ruling chieftains) as well as those training for the priesthood
(Foote: 1969, 197), but outside this small select group, lay literacy was in all
likelihood negligible.

Reverence for Latin learning was probably intense among those involved
in writing and teaching, but it is not apparent that this reverence was generally
felt in the community. A reference in Grágás indicates that reluctance to learn
Latin on the part of young boys was respected, and was not something for
which they should be punished. In setting out the responsibilities incumbent on
a priest who takes a boy into training the law code states:

hann scal fa honum kenuv. oc fóstr. oc lata sva ræpa honum
at þat se sveininnm ð vegs lavst oc frændom. oc sva við gora
sem hans barn væri. Nu vill sveinn eigi nema. oc leipiz
honum bök. þa scal föra hann til annarra verka. oc ræpa
honum sva til at hvartki veriþi honum við ilt ne við örkyrnl.
enh halda til sem rikast at ollv annars.

Grágás la 17-18

This lack of insistence on literate education is less marked than the antipathy
evidenced in an earlier Germanic context, when the Goths campaigned against
their future regent Theodoric being given a Roman education, fearing that it
would inhibit his manliness (Wormald: 1977, 97-8). One curious record exists
which suggests that some effort was made to apprise Icelanders of secular and
everyday Latin vocabulary, including terms for a small dog, a saucepan and a
hiccup. But the purpose of the glossary preserved in GkS 1812 4to, which was
started towards the end of the twelfth century, is not known for certain, and
may have something to do with Icelanders' general predilection for 'orðspekt'
(Scardigli/Raschella: 1988, 311). Medieval Latin itself was an unusual mode of
communication, born out of a purely written tradition and learnt in an

As Latin was the only language in which grammar could be taught, anyone wishing to learn to read or write was obliged to master it (Stock: 1983, 26). Vernacular literacy was consequently predicated on a knowledge of Latin. On the figures quoted above, we can presume the extent of literacy in the Icelandic tongue was also rather slight. It has, however, been argued that the level of literacy in medieval Iceland was remarkably high, partly on the evidence of sixteenth century testimonies of widespread literacy among lay people (Karlsson: 1970). This theory and others related to manuscript production have been criticised by Lönnroth (1976, 166-170) who has examined the likely social conditions of saga production and consumption in the thirteenth century. It has also been argued that Iceland was blessed with ideal conditions for the manufacture of manuscripts - an abundance of time and vellum (Nordal: 1952). Even if animal skins were plentiful, other costs need to be reckoned: ink was expensive - in one English account it is one fifth of the cost of vellum (Clanchy: 1979, 93-4) - and, if skilled scribes were paid specifically for copying works, the price of their labour to execute the final product would have exceeded the cost of skins by a considerable amount (Clanchy: 1979, 94). Manuscripts were expensive commodities in any economy. The contemporary value of some manuscripts is known from fifteenth century sources and these have been converted from wadmal to krónur to dollars by Oleson (1957, 509-510). What evidence there is about private manuscript ownership suggests that only members of the highest social stratum could afford them (Lönnroth: 1976, 168).

Consequently, the number and distribution of books throughout the community might be expected to be rather low. In pre-Christian times, legal oaths were apparently sworn on a ring (J. Benediktsson: 1968, 315), but after the conversion this token was replaced by a cross or a book. While a cross sufficed for some oaths, a book was specified for others, such as the tithe oath (Foote: 1974c, 94 n. 23). The Regius manuscript of the lawcode stipulates that a Fifth Court oath should be sworn on a book of appropriate contents and size: “er heilog orð ero aritin oc meire en háls bók” (Grágás la 80). The solemnity of different legal oaths was presumably reflected in the preciousness (and rarity) of the token on which they were taken. In a reference in the Stæðarhólsbók to swearing an oath on a book, a marginal addition reads “or a cross” (Finsen: -75-
Perhaps indicating that it impeded procedures unduly to insist on a book as the only suitable token.

The costly and time-consuming process of preparing calf and sheep skin as a writing surface was introduced by the Church, and must have remained the preserve of clerical institutions for some time. The inventory of the church at Reykjaholt (H. Benediktsson: 1965, pl.1), one of the earliest extant vellum manuscripts, includes an entry from the first half of the thirteenth century "Snorri sturluson vi.kalfa fn.". Perhaps this was simply a record of a gift by Snorri to the church to be used as it wished, but it may be an illustration of the dependence of secular writers on the clerical production of vellum and possibly clerical scribes to copy out works. On the other hand, we might infer that secular leaders held some influence over the affairs of monastic institutions, since it was the custom in Iceland for monasteries to be founded and maintained by goðar and powerful farmers in the district, some of whom retired to the community in their old age (Byock: 1988, 152).

Vellum is unlikely to have been available in large quantities, indeed such is the inference from the two references made by the first grammarian to the economical use of the writing surface (H. Benediktsson: 1972, 231 and 243). Wax tablets and pieces of wood, probably imported, were the likely writing surfaces used for day-to-day communications by literate members of the laity. In England and on the Continent wax tablets were used in the preparation of drafts by St Anselm and Orderic Vitalis (Clanchy: 1979, 91 and Stock: 1983, 76).

References are made in Hungryaka and Jóns saga to letters, almost certainly written in Latin, sent between Iceland and ecclesiastic centres on the Continent in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries (Helgason: 1938, I 76-7; G. Jónsson: 1953, 29-31; further references are given by Tómasson: 1988, 232). In the same period, the earliest Icelandic texts are thought to have been composed in Latin (H. Benediktsson: 1965, 17). The earliest extant texts duplicate Continental literary texts, such as homilies, lives of saints, theological and devotional texts, but they show how the graphic potential of the newly imported technology was exploited to create records and new resources for the Icelandic church. The earliest extant document, AM 732 a VII 4to written in the period between 1121 and 1139 preserves an Easter table (Seip: 1954, 35-9) and later in the century a calendar is preserved in AM 249 1 fol. (H. Benediktsson: 1965, v).
By the middle of the twelfth century, the period to which the earliest extant manuscripts are dated, works appear to have been commonly written in Icelandic. Although the general provenance of the earliest manuscripts is clerical, we know from other sources that works of a more secular nature were written earlier in the century. Some manuscripts demonstrate the intellectual possibilities opened up by Continental learning – for example a treatise on computation (GkS 1812 IV 4to) – as well as the broadened horizons of learning in this cosmopolitan climate: a world map is preserved in GkS 1812 III 4to, and Veraldar saga is found in AM 655 VII and VIII 4to (H. Benediktsson: 1965, xxii and ix). In this early period there is also evidence that the storage capability of alphabetic culture was exploited, with detailed records kept at the church in Reykjaholt and the monastery of Pingeyrar, as well as the drawing up of a list of priests (H. Benediktsson: 1965, 14 and xxii).

A number of references are made in Icelandic texts to a scrá or a rolla (Hødnæs: 1969, 428-9), as opposed to books as writing surfaces. The earliest law text is given the name Haflíðaskrá in Grágás and the author of Hungrvaka refers to the bökling which he has composed and put down on a skrá (Helgason: 1938, 72). Earlier on the fateful day in 1238 before Gizurr makes his stupendous leap-attack at him and kills him, Sturla Sighvatsson is said to have gone to church and taken out a rolla from his bag, and sung a special prayer, the Ægísteinusbæn (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, I 430 and notes). In the mid-thirteenth century a long rolla documenting the dealings between the Sturlungar and the Haukdælar is said to have been taken to King Hákon in Norway (Porðar saga Kakala in Jóhannesson et al: 1946, II 82). In England, the related rotollus or roll was popular from the twelfth century for royal documents, a development not paralleled on the Continent (Clanchy: 1979, 105-6). The advantage of this kind of volume was its portability: it was used for instance to convey a text commemorating Matilda, the first abbess of William I's nunnery at Caen, on a tour around England shortly after her death (Clanchy: 1979, 109). A similar advantage might have been had in the Icelandic law texts on scrá to be packed in the saddle-bag and taken on trips to the ping, or in religious texts carried from one locality to another for preaching.

It is unclear from the extant number of leaves the size of some of the manuscripts produced in the early centuries of literacy: some may only have been booklets (H. Benediktsson: 1965, 15), while the dimensions of other leaves are so small that they may have been designed for portability. Amongst the
smallest leaves are those of a homily text measuring 18.3 x 12.2cm and a manuscript of *Mariu saga* 14.5 x 11cm (H. Benediktsson: 1965, viii pl. 11 and xii pl 1 respectively), both of which may have been used by itinerant preachers. A similar use may have been made of the popular medieval handbook on theology by Honorius Augustodunensis, *Elucidarius*, which is in the form of a dialogue between teacher and pupil (Turville-Petre: 1953, 137-140). The oldest manuscript of the text in Icelandic, AM 674a 4to, measures only 17.3 x 10.8cm (H. Benediktsson: 1965, vi pl. 6), and is distinguished by the abnormally large dimensions of the letters of the script (Helgason: 1957, viii). The third dimension of a book's size, its depth according to the number of leaves bound together, is an unknown quantity in a significant number of these cases. The *Elucidarius* manuscript contains thirty three leaves, but covers only about one third of the whole text as it is preserved in other languages (Turville-Petre: 1953, 139). But the thickness of a book is probably the least important dimension in terms of portability - a small thick book being easier to carry (by hand or in a pack) than a large thin book.

Another of the works copied onto a smaller size leaf is also a synoptic work, *Agrip*, or resumé of the kings of Norway, which was composed in the vernacular at the end of the twelfth century (Turville-Petre: 1953, 171-2). This manuscript, AM 325 II 4to, is perhaps the most compact of all the extant books from this period, having only twenty four leaves in all, with the writing neatly contained within two columns on each page (H. Benediktsson: 1965, xxi pl. 29-31). Even if it is the case, as Finnur Jónsson has argued (1928-32, ix), that it originally covered the kings of Norway up to the accession of Sverrir (1177) instead of leaving off with Ingi (d.1161), it still makes a very compact book. It is thought to have been used by a number of later writers of kings' sagas (Turville-Petre: 1953, 225; Andersson: 1985, 201-218).

The evidence of book sizes from the late twelfth century points to the fact that some Icelanders had acquired the habit of using written texts as a handy and portable source of reference. Judging from extant examples, however, it would appear that only certain kinds of texts were transmitted in this form, and only certain kinds of discourses were transformed into this kind of resource. In general, the mode is associated with didactic Christian works or works, such as *Agrip*, written and circulated among the *literati* of monasteries. From the beginning, the prose genres of kings' sagas and bishops' sagas were bound to a Continental style - often composed in Latin and often under the surveillance of
church or court (Meulengracht Sørensen: 1977, 149). Such was the case with Sverris saga, which the abbot of Pingeyrar, Karl Jónsson, was summoned to Norway to write in 1185, in close consultation with King Sverrir himself. Bjarni Guðnason (1978: 139) has argued that a work known as Hryggjarstykki, which was probably the first written saga, was composed in Iceland at the behest of powerful persons with an interest in Danish and Norwegian politics. The saga, composed around 1150, serves to support the sanctity of its hero, Sigurðr Slembir, who, having failed in his attempt to claim the Norwegian throne, was tortured and killed by his enemies in 1139. The work is now lost, but it is included in three later compendia of kings' sagas, where it is cited by name.

The word Hryggjarstykkt, which probably means 'a piece of parchment' (Guðnason: 1978, 67ff and Tómasson: 1979), offers an interesting insight into the materiality of written works as perceived by their transmitters. Rather than mentally associating manuscripts with a word designating their contents, Icelanders tended to bestow names on texts (and compilations) that described their physical appearance: other examples are 'Morkinskinna' (rotten skin), and 'Fagrskinna' (fine skin). Unlike sagas of bishops and kings (and would-be kings), discourses outside the supervision and influence of ecclesiastic institutions and the royal courts probably would have continued to depend primarily on oral transmission, supplemented in some cases by written texts, but rarely supplanted by them. It may be surmised that the great majority of men and women in Iceland would have lived with only minimal reference to the world of manuscripts in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The shadow of Church control inevitably extended to cover the secular discourse of law, since only clerics were able to write and indeed read the earliest texts documenting the previously orally transmitted laws, and in time other secular discourses came within the orbit of manuscript culture.

The diversity and number of early manuscripts produced in Iceland shows that the transplanting of Christian scribal culture to Icelandic soil bore fruits in a relatively short time. But the precocious development of certain written genres, even those in the vernacular, is not adequately indicative of the complex interplay between oral and written traditions that continued for centuries after the technology was first adopted.
§3.3 Interplay between oral and written traditions

In the foregoing survey of the Icelandic alphabetic tradition, I have drawn attention on a number of occasions to the restricted size of the population of literati. In ascertaining the influence of written modes of thought on the culture as a whole, it is necessary to bear in mind not only the small number of literates, but the great variations in proficiency among members of this group. As well, the separation of the literate practices of reading and writing needs to be borne in mind, since the ability to read in the Middle Ages did not usually imply proficiency in writing (Clanchy: 1979, 88). In the period when this class was responsible for the re-orientation of certain cultural institutions towards document-based systems, oral modes could be expected to have influenced new written forms as well as vice versa. After all, the shift was not from one mode to another independent mode, but a shift which added to rather than replaced the cultural equipment available to the society, adding a visuo-spatial dimension to language, which had previously only had an audio-temporal one (Goody: 1980, 120-2). Discussing this transitional period in Continental France (which occurred somewhat earlier than it did in the north Atlantic) Brian Stock has observed:

. . . between the sixth and eleventh [centuries] cultural institutions were generally thought of from an oral rather than a written standpoint; or at best, the question of communication was looked upon from oral and written points of view at once, in which, looking back from the vantage point of a more literate age, it is difficult to tell which side is more actively engaged in the process of acculturation.

Stock: 1984, 15

Although writing had the potential to change almost every facet of human verbal communication, it has been demonstrated that, in medieval England and elsewhere, preliterate habits of mind persisted long after documents became common (Clanchy: 1979, 226). For instance, manuscripts and letters continued to be read aloud to an audience rather than perused in private, and written documents were not considered trustworthy until appropriate processes of verification were developed (Clanchy: 1979, 263).

Of perhaps greater cultural importance than the proportion of literates in the society, or the degree of their proficiency, is a consideration of literacy as a determinant of different types of communication (Bauml: 1980, 264). The process of acculturation in medieval Iceland proceeded not so much
geographically, or socially, but discursively, with literate culture impinging on oral culture through different discourses. One by one, discourses that were culturally significant came within the ambit of textual production. As this process continued, it would have become less and less likely for people to remain out of touch with the social forces that the written word increasingly embodied (Stock: 1984, 15-16), but it must be remembered that the process was a protracted one in Iceland. In the case of eddic poetry, for instance, the oral discourse made its way into manuscripts at least a century after the production of the first law texts. And with the transformation of this discourse into a literary product, we can count on a rather different relationship between text and 'audience' than there was between the oral discourse and its audience (particularly in comparison with the audience of the law-code), a point I shall be returning to in chapter 5, when investigating what kind of readership eddic texts might have had.

While it may be supposed that literate culture came to affect an ever-growing proportion of the population, whether or not they themselves were literate, oral traditions also continued to be cultivated, even among those who had the greatest contact with literate culture. There is evidence, for instance, that even the most sophisticated writers of the thirteenth century were also masters of certain oral discourses. The author of Sturlunga saga, Sturla Þórðarson, is said to have turned his hand to oral story-telling for the Norwegian king, and produced a version of Huldar saga, a legendary saga about a troll woman, which delighted his audience and was judged a very superior telling of an apparently conventional tale. This anecdote in Sturlu Pátr (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, II 232-33) constitutes part of Sturla's image as an Icelandic intellectual vis-à-vis the Norwegian king, a common cultural stereotype in medieval Icelandic literature. Nevertheless, it is interesting that a thoroughly literate thirteenth century author represented himself as skilled in the art of oral recitation, and perhaps among his literate peers these skills were not uncommon. Certainly in Sturla's case, oral and literary expertise were two sides of the same narrative art (Meulengracht-Sørensen: 1977, 119). We cannot know in what details his oral and written narratives differed, but it is likely that the same individual's attitude to each genre would have been conditioned by his experience of their respective milieux and modes of transmission.

In the period during which a given discourse was transformed into written texts, we might suspect that the patterns of communication particular to that
discourse were more complicated than the written records at first suggest. A closer look at some of these records in fact shows the strains felt by the society as different oral traditions were brought within the mainstream of written culture at different phases in the history of the country. The move from orality to literacy in medieval Iceland, as noted above, is best represented as a sequence of shifts from oral to written mode according to particular discourses, as a complicated process rather than a straightforward change (see Damsgaard Olsen: 1989, 207). What evidence we have suggests that the transformation of one discourse, such as the lawcode, into written form did not necessarily affect the authoritative status of other oral discourses. Even within one discourse, such as the law, certain speech acts were accorded higher status than written texts: the principle of spoken testimony in evidential procedures, for instance, was quickly established during the codification of laws in medieval Europe (Stock: 1983, 8), and has survived to the present.

There is considerable evidence of the social and cultural changes that were necessitated by the shift to written documents in the spheres of law and political contracts, which I shall deal with presently. Less obvious are the changes in attitude evidenced in the prologues to new kinds of literary discourses, such as Islendingabók and The First Grammatical Treatise. The writers of both these texts shy away from the presumption that their works represent the last word on the subject, or that future redactors will necessarily preserve their works as the have left them, even though the fixity of a text is one of the advantages usually associated with the written medium in modern times. They both express an openness to the possibility of improvement (Meulengracht Sørensen: 1977, 131), that amounts to more than a modesty disclaimer (J. Benediktsson: 1968, xxvii). Behind their conceptions of discourse and audience may be the shadow of traditional oral attitudes towards dialectic, where argument is validated by the interaction of speaker and addressee, and remains valid only as long as it continues to be meaningful, that is, as long as it is valued enough to be transmitted:

En hvatki es missagt es í frœðum þessum, þá es skylt at hafa þat heldr, es sannara reynisk.

J. Benediktsson: 1968, 3.

þa lefe hann þetta kapitvlvm vandlega. ok bætí ðem í morgvm ftoðvm mvn þvrfa ok mete viðleitni mîna en várkynne v kænîkv. hafi ftaf rof þetta er her er aðr ritað vnnz hann fær þat er hönvm líkar betr.

H. Benediktsson: 1972, 246.
Attitudes such as these have been interpreted by Tómasson (1988: 155-163; 258-9) as echoes of *topoi* belonging to Latin rhetorical tradition. Familiar as they no doubt were with such conventions, Ari and the First Grammarian were doing more than paying lip-service (or pen-service) to them here. They both use the genre of the prologue to articulate their responses to critical social developments brought about by literacy. In both cases the authors are introducing ground-breaking works of Icelandic culture - the first vernacular history and the first treatise on the Icelandic language. The dialectic they envisage would most probably have been carried out using the written as well as the spoken word, and been confined to literate members of society. Nonetheless the considerations they raise reflect the traditional conception of the relationship between discourse and community, despite the new medium of the written text. The community represented in the Continental prologues is somewhat different, being markedly hierarchical, with the text passing through a series of readings before it is 'released', and the collective responsibility for the text's production is often the subject of comment by the humble author. In contrast to the Continental instances Tómasson cites, Icelandic authors do not seem to have masters or censors in mind when they broach the subject of improvement, but learned colleagues (although Ari makes mention of the patrons of his work).

In other historical works there is also a sense in which writers are mindful of the reception of their texts and the role of the text in relation to oral discourse. In the Prologue to *Sverris saga* for instance, the author acknowledges that a single written account is necessarily selective and may be regarded as unsatisfactory by those who have a greater store of accounts of King Sverrir's reign:

> En vera kann þat ef þeir menn sjá þessa bók, er allkunnigt er um, at þeim þykki skyndiliga yfir fari í mörgum stóðum ok margt þat eptir liggja, er frásagnar myndi vert þykkja, ok megu þeir þat enn vel lýta rita, ef þeir vilja.

*Sverris saga* (G. Jónsson: 1957, II 3)

In directing those who have material worth telling to have it written down, the author reinforces the higher status of the written record over oral accounts. Like the previous two writers, he expects improvement in the form of a text, but acknowledges that texts must measure up to the expectations created by orally transmitted material.
In twelfth century writing, the influence of learned Continental conventions is everywhere apparent, even to the extent that Latin prose-rhythm was imitated in vernacular writing (J. Benediktsson: 1974). But in the very first works which harnessed alphabetic technology for the cultivation of Icelandic traditions, the authors' sense of their native audience and their social role seem very close to the surface. In so young a tradition, texts appear to have been produced almost in response to conversations, and their reception was often imagined in terms of debate. As the vernacular literate tradition developed, a growing sophistication is apparent in the way authors perceived themselves both in relation to their native audience and to Continental traditions. The capacity of the written word to link writers to a world of letters beyond their own writing table, beyond territories and times that they have experienced, profoundly alters the nature of communication, and promotes a consciousness of textuality that overshadows the less immediate relationship of author and audience. By the thirteenth century, scholarly works written in Iceland, such as the Third Grammatical Treatise, bear witness to the enormous impact of classical and medieval learning on the minds of writers, who refer and often defer to the Continental masters of particular learned discourses. Their conception of authority was constructed by the discourses in which they participated, and by the auctores who commanded the field (Minnis: 1988, 10). The audience for whom these scholars wrote was ostensibly their contemporary countrymen, yet throughout their work there is the sense that they write in response to auctores and textual traditions from the Continent. By the fourteenth century, the way in which greater familiarity with Christian Latin conventions circumscribed vernacular traditions is made plain by the writer of the prologue to the Grammatical Treatises in Codex Wormianus:

Enn ný fka(al) lýfa hverfju ny fkaalld ok fræði menn, ok reinkannlega klerkarn(her), vilja lofaz lááta, hversu kveða fkal, ok onya æigi at helldr þat, sem forñer menn hafa framit, vtan þat sem klerklegar bæk kr banna, þvlat þat er nattvrvligt at menn fe ný fmaðmyglari fem fræði bækknar dreifaz ný viðara.

Björn M. Olsen: 1884, 153.

But the influence of Latin learning on vernacular writing need not be overplayed. Icelandic scholarship is marked by its preference for the vernacular rather than the Latin language, the conventional language of medieval learning, and the language used by the thirteenth century Danish historian, Saxo Grammaticus (Fris-Jensen: 1987, 39-40). As early as the third decade of the twelfth century, Icelandic writers such as Ari Þorgilsson felt
confidence in the status of the Icelandic language as a vehicle for serious cultural debate. By the time the First Grammarian was writing, Icelandic had established a firm foothold as the lingua franca of Icelandic scholarship. Despite later compositions in Latin by clerics, such as Oddr Snorrason, Icelandic continued to be the principal language of learning.

Another countervailing force to the influence of Latin on the process of acculturation is the influence of traditional social institutions on emergent literate conventions. When the newly acquired technology of writing was adapted for use in secular affairs, in areas where power was represented in different configurations from the governance of the Church, problems arose about how to invest the secular text with authority. This is apparent in the history of the writing down of the laws, but, before turning to that, I want to look briefly at the way legal agreements were validated in Iceland before writing.

§3.3.1 The treaty between Icelanders and the Norwegian king

Around the year 1020, a verbal agreement was made between the Icelanders and King Óláf à Haraldsson of Norway (1014-1030) concerning the privileges to be accorded to Icelanders and Norwegians visiting each others' countries. The authority of the agreement derived from the testimony of the parties and of those witnessing the event, as would probably have been the case with all important agreements made before the introduction of written and sealed contracts (see Duby: 1980, 8). The enforceability of the agreement would have depended on continued verbal confirmation of the existence of such an agreement. It is to be presumed that in a non-literate culture the life and details of this kind of agreement would be subject to the pressures of continuing relevance to circumstances in society. (For a nice example of changes in oral tradition according to political exigencies see Goody and Watt: 1968, 32-3). In England and on the Continent written records of legal agreements often played an ancillary role to verbal accounts, even into the thirteenth century (Clanchy: 1979, 211).

Towards the end of the eleventh century the particulars of the agreement between the Icelanders and Norwegians were fixed in writing - probably in Norway (H. Benediktsson: 1965, 16; and Johanesson: 1974, 116-7). An epilogue
to the treaty, as preserved in thirteenth century law manuscripts, sets out the stages of oral transmission and validation that preceded the writing down of the agreement:

\[ \text{Pan rett oc pál log gaf olafr hín hælgí konungr islendingom.} \]
\[ \text{er her er merkpr. Gitzor. byscop oc Teitr filius eius. Marcus.} \]
\[ \text{pess. at Jsleifr byscop oc menn með honom suorðo til þess} \]
\[ \text{rettar sem her er merkpr. At pan rétt gaf olafr en hælgí} \]
\[ \text{islendingom eða betra.} \]

Grágás 1b, 197

This is the earliest example we have of writing being used to validate material outside the direct control of the Church. It represents a stage in the process of acculturation, with writing used not simply to record or substantiate remembered utterance, but to confirm it. It probably goes even further in this process, gaining a 'dispositive' role, effectively superseding oral arrangements (Stock: 1983, 7), and forming the basis for future understanding of legal obligations between the Norwegians and Icelanders. As the text shows, there is a shift in focus from the transitory actors to the agreement, towards the writing 'merkpr' on the page. While the transformation of the verbal treaty into a written document does not seem to have been politically contentious, the intellectual transition from oral to literate modes of witness was by no means unproblematic. The conceptual novelty of the substitution of writing for speech in communication practices is illustrated in the following English explanation of the workings of the new technology. It is written by John of Salisbury in the mid-twelfth century:

Littere autem, id est figure, primo vocum indices sunt;

\[ \text{deinde rerum, quas anime per oculorum fenestras opponunt,} \]
\[ \text{et frequenter absentium dicta sine voce loquuntur.} \]

Metalogicon I ch. 13 (Webb: 1929, 32)

The tension between the old and new systems of evidence - between someone's word and a vellum text - has been well documented in twelfth century England, where debate arose between the authority of the verbal testimony of bishops on one hand, and "the skins of wethers blackened with ink . ." on the other (quoted by Clanchy: 1979, 208). Without appropriate infrastructure, the technology of

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3 "Fundamentally letters are shapes indicating voices. Hence they represent things which they bring to mind through the windows of the eyes. Frequently they speak voicelessly the utterances of the absent." trans. M. T. Clanchy (1979, 202).
writing can of course be unreliable – preserving innocent mistakes or used in the service of deceitful practitioners such as forgers and counterfeiters (Clanchy: 1979, 263). While the Icelandic evidence does not present instances of the wilful misuse of the technology in the twelfth century, the social and political adjustments necessitated by the change are manifest in the history of the Icelandic law-code which was written down in that century.

§3.3.2 The law-code

The writing down of the laws in Iceland represents a significant extension of the technology of writing and the concept of fixed and permanent records into an area of secular culture which was hitherto transmitted orally. Until the first decades of the twelfth century, the written vernacular was probably only employed by priests for writing sermons, a practice known in England and probably adopted by Icelanders who received their clerical training there (see Knudsen: 1961). The use of the written word in transmitting other kinds of information posed new challenges for Icelanders.

The authority of the written word in literate Christian culture is self-evident: Christianity is a religion of the book, not only in the sense of the authority vested in its sacred text, the Bible, but also in the centralised means of control available to the Pope through the medium of written doctrine and directives, that could be transmitted authoritatively to the far reaches of Christendom. It is not known what arguments were put forward for the fixing in writing of the law-speaker's repertoire, but in 1117, an undertaking was made at the Alþing to write down the secular laws of the country. Some sections of the laws may in fact have been written down earlier (J. Benediktsson: 1968, 24 n. 8 and Dennis et al: 1980, 10). According to the historian Ari Þorgilsson the laws were to be written down during the winter of 1117-118 at the farm of Haflói Másson:

Et fyrsta sumar, es Bergþórr sagði log upp, vas nýmæli þat gört, at log ór skyldi skrifa á bók at Haflói Mássonar of vetrim eftir at sögu ok umbræði þeira Bergþórs ok annarra spakra manna, þeira es til þess váru teknir. Skyldu þeir göra nýmæli pau óll í logum, es þeim litisk pau betri en en fornú log.

*Islendingabók* ch. 10 (J. Benediktsson: 1968, 23)
These men were also entrusted with the task of improving any section of the law they saw fit, indicating that the transcription process was viewed as an opportunity for the renovation, as well as the preservation, of *forn log*. The section of the law on homicide and some other parts of the law were apparently completed that winter, but it is not known how long it took to write down the entire code of law, or the relative status of written and unwritten sections in the meantime. With the writing down of the laws the arbitration of what was law shifted from a single authoritative declaration (over three summers) to permanent documents, which proliferated. The authority which had been vested in the law speaker’s recitation was dissipated over space and time, and posed new and fundamental problems for a society moving from oral to written modes of transmission of law and other branches of knowledge. A basic shift was occurring from law as social custom to law as fixed code (Goody: 1987, 55). Provisions had to be made in the law code ranking the authority of different written texts in order for the law to be enforceable:

It is significant that the office of lawspeaker was not given jurisdiction in determining which version of the law was valid. Authority in matters of textual exegesis still rested with the Church: an authoritative statement of the law was to be sought in the first instance from the books which the bishops owned. As well as his close association with authoritative written texts, the bishop also probably had the best resources for making copies of texts, and updating the code of law he owned. Resort to the opinions of other lawmen also appears to refer to their dictated texts, demonstrating the extent to which written authority had supplanted oral testimony in the legal world (Foote: 1977b). It is only in the last resort that the item of contention was to be taken to the law council for resolution.
Despite the radical shift in the source of authority, some traditional notions about the nature of authoritative utterance are still perceptible in the procedures quoted above. The version of greater length is given greater credence, presumably following the same principle that required the law speaker to recite each section of the law as extensively as it was known (Grágás la 209). Judging by the attitudes expressed in the text, the idea of a single comprehensive written code of law was not perceived as the goal in the early stages of recording. During this time, written texts functioned within a complex system of reference that included a hierarchy of texts (valued according to owner rather than content) and consultation between owners of texts and legal experts (Dennis et al: 1980, 10-11). Even in the massive law texts produced in the middle of the thirteenth century, particular sections are truncated, or the beginning and end of a section given only briefly, suggesting that whoever used these texts had access to other sources of reference on the full body of laws (Byock: 1988, 25).

In managing the multiple and fixed products of written technology, the Icelanders faced problems encountered long before by the Greeks. Their more skeptical response is enunciated by Socrates, and is worth quoting at length as an indication of the cultural adjustment necessary before written communication can serve the social purposes previously entrusted to the oral mode:

You know, Phaedrus, that's the strange thing about writing, which makes it truly analogous to painting. The painter's products stand before us as though they were alive; but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence. It is the same with written words: they seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing for ever. And once a thing is put in writing, the composition, whatever it may be, drifts all over the place, getting into the hands not only of those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it; it doesn’t know how to address the right people, and not address the wrong. And when it is ill-treated and unfairly abused it always needs its parent to come to its help, being unable to defend itself.

_Phaedrus_ (Hackforth: 1972, 158)

The 'drifting about' of law texts (both literally and metaphorically) probably caused considerable inconvenience in twelfth century Iceland, and in this case, no recourse could be had to their parent, the law-speaker, whose 'intelligent voice' was not consulted until all the written sources were exhausted. On top of
the lack of authority inherent in the uncontrolled proliferation of law codes, twelfth century Icelanders faced another problem. The adaptation of the Latin alphabet to their native tongue was still in process, with the result that not all texts were unambiguous representations of the spoken word on which they were based. The First Grammarian in fact specifies legal texts as the site of significant misunderstandings due to ambiguous transcription practices:

Eigi er þat rvinanna koštr po at ðv lefer vel eða raðir vel að likindvum þar fem rvnar vifa o fkyrt. helldr er þad þínn koštr enda er þa æigi orvænt at þæygi lefa ek vel eða mínð makí ef ða finnz eða ráðå ek vel at likindvm hl hverf enf retta færa fkal ef fleire vege ma færa til rettz enn æínn veg þat fem a æínn veg er þo ritað ok æigi fkyrt a kveðit. ok fkal geta til fem þu letz þat vel kvnna. Enn þo að allr mætte nakkvøß rett or giøra þa er þo víf von at þæygi vili allr til æíñf færa ef malí fkipir allra helldz í logvm . . . .
H. Benediktsson: 1972, 214

The first known written text of the laws, Haflóð's law text, appears not to have been updated, and this seems to have been the case with the texts commissioned by many law experts. Amending texts written on vellum would have been difficult, time-consuming and costly, especially if earlier texts were as sumptuously produced as Konungsók and Stadarholshók. As valid law depended traditionally on its inclusion in the law speaker's recitation, the text on which he based his recital would have been crucial. At the Alþing in 1118, the year after Haflóð's text was begun, the laws were read out not by the law speaker, but by clerics, presumably because the law speaker was unable to read (J. Benediktsson: 1968, 24). We might infer from this that the manuscript was also written by clerics, following the dictation of the law experts. Two sources, Hungrvaka (Helgason: 1938, I 95) and Grágás (Ia 36), mention the fact that the code of church law, written in the following decade, was dictated under the supervision of the bishops. Since the recitation of the laws functioned traditionally as the current interpretation of them, the recital by clerics amounted to the temporary loss of the mechanism of authoritative interpretation, and opened the way for an accumulation of possibly conflicting written laws.

For written texts to provide a useful source of authority they must be subject to some form of centralised control, such as the Church exercised with the production of theological and devotional texts. The need to stipulate procedures relating to the authority of legal texts in twelfth century Iceland suggests that the multiplication of texts did little to improve the administration.
of law, at least in the short term. No doubt part of the attraction of possessing a law text was the prestige conferred on the owner due to the rarity and expense of manuscripts, even though expertise in legal matters probably still derived largely from oral training and first-hand experience of legal debate. As time went on, however, it might be expected that the written law-code became an operative factor in all legal discourse. Even in situations where texts were not present, they would eventually influence memory recall, the recollection of legal precedent and social hierarchies, as if they were.

53.3.3 History

In general, the writing of history in medieval Iceland was not the product of a recognized social institution in the same way as the writing of the law code was. In the Middle Ages, history was not in fact one of the prescribed school subjects (either in the trivium or the quadrivium) but was subsumed under grammatica (Smalley: 1974, 18). There were, however, certain kinds of historical texts in medieval Europe, such as annals, where the text was written in the service of a centralised bureaucracy, and purports to be an authoritative record of significant events occurring in each year. The authority of texts of this type sometimes resounds through other historical writings, where writers are concerned about possible discrepancies between their texts and 'official' documents. The text of Karlamagnus saga, for instance, records the author's hope "at eigi muni minn þessi framburðr við sagtõn annál discordera" (Unger: 1860, 127), and the author of Laurentius saga biskups states:

Eru hier og marger hlutir saman settir af ymissum ath burdum sem fram hafa farith aa ymissum londum epter þui sem annaïar til uiña, huerir mestann frødleik syna.

Björnsson: 1969, 2

For writers of texts such as these, the annal stands pre-eminent because of its official, and singular, status. By contrast, some of the difficulties surrounding the effective transition from an oral to written legal code in Iceland arose for the very reason that there was apparently never one single text chosen by the legislature to represent its official version of the laws. The situation with regard to 'official history' was even more extreme. In Iceland there was no royal court, nor centralised institution of political power under whose auspices an official history might be written. The writing of annals was only begun towards the end of the thirteenth century, and, in an inversion of
the Continental model, the annals appear to have used vernacular prose histories as their major sources (J. Benediktsson: 1976, 436). The power behind the new discourse is not known for certain, although it has been suggested that it sprang from Sturla Þórarson or his circle (J. Benediktsson: 1976, 437). While numerous Icelandic texts were produced at the behest of the bishops, and in the service of the Norwegian court, a great deal of historical writing was produced in an environment where no 'official' account existed, where there was no anxiety to conform to a standard version.

The greatest fund of evidence regarding changing attitudes towards the spoken and written word as historical testimony is found in authors' descriptions of (and justifications for) their various sources. In much historical writing of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, an attitude of reverence towards written sources emerges, and along with it, a growing scepticism of the reliability of orally transmitted accounts. To a certain extent, this attitude may have been a posture adopted by Icelandic writers to conform to the expectations and conventions of Continental written traditions. It seems wherever possible, a preference was expressed for written sources over oral sources because of their perceived authority. The twelfth century Norwegian historian Theodoricus in fact records his dissatisfaction with the lack of written records on which to base his account of the reign of King Harald Hárfagri (Storm: 1880, 6). Of course in the early days of literary production, and in later works dealing with the pre-literate period, the desire for written records would naturally have been a source of frustration. As time passed, however, and the number of written works rapidly multiplied, authors had ever greater written resources to draw on. As well as letters and other written accounts of contemporary events, authors seeking authoritative material on past events could use older written versions of sagas as sources.

From the inception of the writing of history in Iceland, familiarity with various Continental rhetorical conventions (ultimately derived from Classical authorities) can be detected, particularly in the composition of prologues. For instance, the concern to establish the reliability of sources and the relative merit of eye-witness accounts and orally-transmitted accounts is evidenced in Continental writings such as Etymologies by Isidore of Seville, and echoes of these concerns are found in a number of Icelandic prologues (Tómasson: 1988, 201-208). In the early years of literary enterprise in Iceland, when authors were heavily, if not entirely, dependent on oral accounts for their material, they
needed to impress upon their audience the credibility of what they were relating. In *Islendingabók* for instance, the impression is given of the direct transformation of spoken accounts into written texts:

"Pat sagði Ulfheðinn oss."
"Penna atburð sagði Teitr oss at því, es kristni kom á Island."
En Hallr sagði oss svá, es bæði vas minnigr ok ólyginn ok munði sjálfr þat . . .

Ari presents the exchange of information as taking place in a context typical of an oral milieu, characterised by Goody and Watt (1968, 29) as a "long chain of interlocking conversations". Of course Ari's construction needs to be seen against the background of the privileging of eye-witness accounts in medieval historiography (Clunies Ross: 1987b, 74), but nevertheless, Ari's stress seems to be on the freshness of his conversations with various people, rather than their status as informants. The plural addressee of Ari's text reinforces the image of transmission within the normal social realm, rather than research carried out in isolation amid a household of silent texts. A century later, in his prologue to *Heimskringla*, Snorri reiterates the model of communication set out by Ari, although Ari has become Hallr's solitary addressee:

Hann [Hallr] lærdi Ari prest, ok marga froði sagði hann honum, þa er Ari ritaði síðan.

Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, I 7

Snorri's account also separates the information session from the writing session with the temporal adverb 'síðan'. As well as the first-hand knowledge of the oral informant, emphasis was given by authors of prose histories to the speedy transformation of an oral account into writing, as this comment in *Morkinskinna* shows:

Nú er at segja frá sonum Haralds konungs, . . . sem sagt hefðir vitr maðr ok skysamr, Eiríkr Oddson, ok er þessi frásogn mest eptir sogu Hákonar maga lêds mans. Hann sat yfir ok sagði frá þessum tíðindum er ritat var fyrsta sinni, en hann sjálfr ok synir hans váru í þessum ferðum ok í flestum orrostum.

F. Jónsson: 1928-32, 419

Because of the specialised requirements for the production of texts in the Middle Ages, the interval of time (and the geographical distance) between an event and the production of a written account of it is likely to have been considerably greater than it is in the era of note-pad and pen. The role of
memorisation and the transfer of the account between people in the stages of transmission leading to textual production were therefore more significant than they have since become, even if we presume that wax tablets played some part in the process. In Ari’s text, he presents his account as though it were the result of a fresh conversation. The value of quick recording was the stability lent to the account by the medium of writing, a judgement which highlights the perceived shortcomings of oral transmission for these writers:

\[
\text{Sum þessi tíðendi váru svá í minni fæst, at menn rituðu þegar eftir, er nýordin váru, ok hafa þau ekki breytt til sýðan.} \\
\text{\textit{Sverris saga} (G. Jónsson: 1957, II 1)}
\]

The writer of \textit{Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar} clearly articulates the perception that a written text can establish once and for all the veracity of an account:

\[
\text{Atburðir margir, þeir er verða, falla minnnum opt ór minni, en sumir eru annan veg sagðir en verit hafa, ok trúa því margir, er logit er, en tótryggja þat satt er. En fyrir því, at aprt hverfr lýgi, þá er þönnu metir, þá ætllum vàt at rita gökkura atburði, þá er góðk hafa á várum dogum á medal vár kunnra manna, sem vér vitum sannleik til.} \\
\text{Helgadóttir: 1987, 1}
\]

That the veracity of orally transmitted material was the subject of debate among thirteenth century Icelanders is apparent in a number of comments made by saga authors. The author of \textit{Porgils saga ok Hafliða} acknowledges the controversy when he refers to the reception of tales and verses told at the wedding reception at Reykjavík: “nú mála margir í móti ok látask eigi vitat hafa, . . . ok hafa þó margir fröðir menn þessa sögu fyrir satt.” (Brown: 1952, 17-18). Poetic sources were judged more reliable than prose because of the greater fixity lent the material by its metrical form. To justify the use of oral poems as sources, the author of \textit{Pídreks saga} adds the qualification “ok fornort váru þegar eptir tíðindum” (Bertelsen: 1905-11, I 2). No author defends the usefulness and reliability of oral poetry as a source as energetically as Snorri in his prologue to \textit{Heimskringla}. Sverrir Tómasson (1988: 215-219) in fact interprets Snorri’s assiduous defence as a reaction against the contemporary disparagement of old poetry as a historical source.

Of course the veracity of written sources did not always pass unquestioned. Tómasson (1988: 231) cites the author of \textit{Konungs skuggsíða} on this point, but further observes that such a sophisticated attitude to the nature of written transmission is not apparent in prologues to Icelandic works of the
time. Two examples from Icelandic prologues suffice to show the ready identification of written texts with reliable records of the past:

... ok Þykkr oss at líkara, at þær sagnir muni vera víð sannendum, er á bókum eru sagðar, frá ágætismönnum þeim, er verit hafa í forneskjú.

Sverris saga (G. Jónsson: 1957, II 4)

Svá segja fornir menn ok fröðir at saga sjá sé stóln, þó at hon hafi eigi á tabulum skrifuð verit.

Hrólf's saga Gautrekssonar (Detter: 1891, 78)

Reference is frequently made in Icelandic historical works to written sources, usually to bréf, which could signify either a letter or some other written report (Tómasson: 1988, 232-33, and references there). Written historical sources are accorded high status by the author of the Prologue of Sturlunga saga, composed at the turn of the fourteenth century (Jóhannesson et al: 1946, II xix):

Flestar altar sögur, þær er hér hafa gerzt á Islandi, aðr Brandr biskup Sæmundarson andaðist, váru ritáðar, en þær sögur, er slóðan hafa gerzt, váru líttr ritáðar, aðr Sturla skáld Póðarson sagði ﬂyr ﬀ öslendinga sögur, ok hafði hann þær til visindi af fröðum mönnum, þeim er váru á óndverðum dógu m hans, en sumt eftir bréfüm þeim, er þeir rituðu, er þeim váru samtíða, er sögurnar eru frá. Marga hluti mátti hann sjálfr sjá ok heyra, þá er á hans dógu gerðust til stórtíðindi.

Sturlunga saga: Formáli (Jóhannesson et al. 1946: I 115)

While both oral and written sources are specified in this description of material, stress is laid on the author's access to written records, and particularly on the fact that they were penned by men who were contemporaneous with events described. Oral accounts are of course not dispensed with, but the construction of the passage seems to rank the general stock of stories which reaches the author's ears lower than written testimony.

To a certain extent, the point where written authority takes precedence over oral tradition has been passed in the minds of those composing (and compiling) prose histories. Even though this historical moment occurs in the period in which eddic verse was making its way into manuscripts, it is by no means apparent that the intellectual shift towards the authority of the written text had occurred in the eddic context (a point I shall return to in a moment). In the discursive arenas of laws, treaties and official histories, the transition from dependence on oral accounts to written records is ideologically straight-
forward: the prevailing oral records of treatises and laws were of necessity those expressing hegemonic values, which in most cases would be those embraced by the producers and consumers of written documents. In addition, the process was generally facilitated by well developed foreign models, ample guides to the creation of new Icelandic written genres.

The discursive arena of legend and mythology, however, was expressive of traditional values which spanned the cultural history of Icelanders back to its pre-literate and pre-Christian beginnings. These discourses represented the ideology of heathendom through cultural practices such as sorcery and augury, and in stories of the past, beliefs and customs that were no longer officially sanctioned. While members of the society may have been comfortable talking about this cultural heritage, or making use of it in the sophisticated art of skaldic composition, putting the words of the gods themselves, and stories about them, into writing represents a very different ideological act. An important corollary of this is the absence of any social need to stabilise the texts of poems, since, unlike legal texts, they were not depended on as the new source of authority in a crucial social institution. If any social processes still employed eddic verse in this way, it may be assumed that the production of written texts had little effect either on those processes or the people involved in them. The desire to fix a single text of a particular poem therefore arose purely out of the conventions and attitudes inhering in literacy itself, and the resource provided by the texts was presumably to cater for those with antiquarian or poetic interests (see §5.7).

With the writing down of heathen mythology, the focus on the text's authority is necessarily widened to include the writer's attitude to the material and more importantly, his purpose in communicating such matter in writing to his audience. In the work of Snorri Sturluson both of these concerns are explicitly addressed. Aware of the presence of such scrutiny, he makes an unequivocal declaration on the way accounts of heathen mythology and lore should be understood by Christians:

En þetta er nav at segja vngvm skaldvm, þeim er ginnaz at nema mal skaldskapar ok heyia ser orpfiolpa með fornvvm heitvm eða ginnaz þeir at kv’na skilia þat, er hvilt er qvepit, þa skili hann þesa bok til fropleiks ok skemtvnar, en ecki er at gleyma eða osaNa sva þesar frasagnir, at taka or skaldskapinvm fornar kenningar, þær er hafvtskald hafa ser lika latit, en eigi skvlo kristnr menn trva ahejpin goð ok eigin asanyndi þesa sagna anan veg en sva sem her finz
The reference to the beginning of the book is to the Prologue of the *Edda*, where Snorri gives an euhemerised account of the gods worshipped by the Scandinavian people before the coming of Christianity. According to him, men of Asia (as he calls the Æsir) migrated from Troy to northern Europe, principally because one of their number, named Voden or Öðinn, had a premonition that they would be honoured above all kings in the northern part of the world (Prologue 5: 16-20). Snorri's likely purpose in documenting the myths of pre-Christian Scandinavians was to reveal their cognitive value as the background to Norse skaldic poetry, and by showing additionally the ways in which they paralleled aspects of natural science as it was expressed in the Continental intellectual tradition (Clunies Ross: 1987a, 155).

§3.4 The intellectual background to the recording of eddic poems

The fact that heathen mythology was written down at all in medieval Iceland is evidence of a tolerance not typical of medieval Christianity. The intellectual atmosphere in Iceland during the twelfth century in particular appears to have been broad-minded and sympathetic (Peter Foote: 1974a, 32). Heathen recollections and ancient lore, as distinct from heathen practices, were not regarded as dangerous, and were apparently able to be cultivated. And despite some injunctions against certain cultural practices, the Church did not have the centralised power, nor perhaps even the will, to completely suppress heathen lore. In the centuries following the conversion, there is little evidence of clerical zeal in stamping out knowledge about the heathen past (Foote: 1974c, 89).

It is not clear what the Church's attitude was to the transmission of mythological verse or stories, though it is worthy of note that only heathen practices were explicitly banned by Bishop Jón, according to his biographer. Certainly the composition of skaldic memorial poems, using traditional diction, was a respectable pursuit among educated Christians (Foote: 1974c, 90). In the extant eddic poems there is evidence of the mixing of heathen and Christian ideas and traditions (see Arnór: 1985), which suggests that the body of eddic mythological poems was partially assimilated into the Christian Icelanders stock.
of fræði, or knowledge about the society’s cultural heritage (Meulengracht-Sørensen: 1977, 124-125). While Christianity would have affected the matter of the poems, just as any major cultural change influences the content of orally transmitted material, literate practices probably had little impact on the corpus or its transmission until the thirteenth century.

The intellectual framework in which pre-Christian mythology could be viewed was provided by the theory of ‘natural religions’ and euhemerism, which, as we have seen in Snorri’s work, reconstructed heathen deities as historical kings who became worshipped by credible pre-Christians. This interpretative principle was well known in twelfth century Europe (Dronke and Dronke: 1977), and is evidenced in Icelandic scholarly works of the thirteenth century (Faulkes: 1982, xxiv and 1983). Euhemerism provided Christian Icelanders with the intellectual freedom to consider and document facets of their traditional culture spanning back to pre-Christian times, and to re-orient myths and conventional narrative themes in new interpretations of traditions (Boile: 1970, 36-7). It provided a means of “stripping religious belief from the myths” (Lindow: 1985, 38), at least in the context of their written transmission. At a more general level, the activity of writing fostered the intellectual construction of heathen times according to precepts of Christian thought (Harris: 1986, Weber 1981 and Lønnroth 1969).

The impulse to systematically collect and interpret knowledge from the past was part of a general antiquarian interest in medieval letters. Antiquarianism was itself made possible by the technology of literacy, which allowed for the accumulation of knowledge and the synthesis of material from disparate sources, including oral traditions (see Mitchell: 1985, 789). Icelanders were acknowledged as antiquaries by Danish and Norwegian writers of the late twelfth century (J. Turville-Petre: 1978-9, 7), including Saxo Grammaticus, who praised the extent of their historical knowledge (Olrik and Ræder: 1931, I 5). A recurrent concern expressed in the prologues to medieval Icelandic works was that the events of the past should not be lost to memory (Tómasson: 1988, 109). Presumably behind this concern is not so much a loss of faith in the traditional processes of oral memorisation, but the recognition that written preservation would elevate the status of historical material, lending it considerable authority, and ensuring its dissemination among members of the influential class in Icelandic and possibly Norwegian society. The project of preserving the deeds of forebears may also have been caught up with a political defence of certain
Icelanders' ancestry, as is attested by the epilogue to the Pórðarbók version of Landnámabók (J. Benediktsson: 1968, 336).

Snorri's project of collecting heathen lore was probably the result of his strong interest in the indigenous culture of Iceland, but it appears as well to have been partly inspired by the European intellectual tradition of codifying classical and contemporary knowledge of natural science, exemplified in works such as Bede's De natura rerum (Clunies Ross: 1987a, 153). The impulse to systematically collect and interpret material extended beyond the field of natural science and beyond the genre of the encyclopedia. Large codices were produced bringing together all kinds of material, sometimes texts of the same kind, sometimes apparently heterogeneous collections. A number of major collections of individuals' works were produced in medieval Europe around this time, including Peter Lombard's Sentences and Abelard's Sic et Non (Stock: 1983, 63). By the thirteenth century, highly developed theories of manuscript composition were being put into practice on the Continent, theories which differentiated between an unordered collectio and the orderly arrangement of a compilatio (Minnis: 1988, 97). Behind some of these productions was the idea that the book could instantiate the order believed to inhere in the cosmos (Gellrich: 1985, 18), and that it could represent a totality, bringing together fragments of learning to mirror the transcendental order of God. One such miscellany of encyclopedic lore, the Imago Mundi of Honorius Augustodunensis, is thought to have been translated into Icelandic in the twelfth century, and may have been used in the school-room (Clunies Ross: 1987a, 157).

A corollary of the growing sophistication of compilations, and the general proliferation of written records, was the development of new literary genres. It quickly became necessary to have secondary texts to act as keys to the burgeoning text of knowledge - hence in twelfth century England the proliferation of the glossa (Wieland: 1983) or the summa, to add to the already established genre of the florilegium, or collections of quotations (Clanchy: 1979, 84-5). The summa itself was envisaged as a shortcut to information - as a 'concise encyclopedia of instances' (Clanchy: 1979, 259). Catalogues and comprehensive lists were also produced in abundance during this period. On the Continent, these compilations went hand in hand with new methods of organizing knowledge, including, at the scribal level, running headlines, chapter titles in red, gradation in size of initials, cross references, and the citation of
authors quoted (Rouse and Rouse: 1982: 207), and these innovations also flowed through to Iceland.

The manuscripts of Snorri's *Edda* give ample evidence of the predilection for compilations in Iceland. Codex Regius (Gks 2367 4to) preserves a complete text of the *Edda* along with *pulur* which were accreted to Snorri's work (Clunies Ross: 1987a, 82), and the poems *Jórnsvíkingadrápa* and *Málhättakvæði*. Codex Wormianus, produced around the middle of the fourteenth century contains four grammatical treatises in addition to Snorri's work, and includes the only copy of the eddic poem *Rígsþula*. The hand of W is also thought to have been responsible for a text of *Völsunga* which is found in the Hauksbók manuscript (F. Jónsson: 1892-6, xvi), a compilation of sagas, theological, arithmetic and geographical lore. Medieval Icelandic authors frequently use verbs of compilation and editing, such as *setja saman*, *snara* and *lesta saman* to describe their enterprise of gathering material together and producing texts (Lönnroth: 1964, 78-97 and Tomasson: 1988, 180-189). In the fourteenth century massive volumes were produced, and it is in one of these compilations, *Flateyjarbók*, that the only text of the eddic poem *Hyndluljóð* is preserved (see further §5.5).

Stephen Tranter (1987, 2-4) has mounted a case for viewing *Sturlunga saga* as the work of a creative compiler, distinguishing his role from both that of an author and an anthologiser.

The Codex Regius collection of eddic poems, produced in the second half of the thirteenth century, is unprecedented in Icelandic literature as a collection of poetic texts, conceived, at least initially, as a repository of whole poems, rather than a *prosimetrum* drawing on orally transmitted poems to complement or authenticate an account in prose. There is little doubt that the compiler deliberately arranged the poems into a particular order, though the underlying rationale for this order is still debated (Harris: 1985, 76-78). The history of the preservation of eddic texts will be taken up in chapter 5, but at this point, it is worth pointing out that apart from Snorri's work, eddic poetry has unfortunately been preserved in contexts without prologues. As I mentioned earlier, the closest we can get to the view medieval Icelanders had of their own literary activity are the valuable occasions on which they share their thoughts with us in the writing of a prologue. Even these cannot be taken at face value, as the prologue writers were bound to a certain extent by the conventions of the Continental written tradition in which they worked. Neither of the collection manuscripts has an extant prologue. The handful of poems
preserved in later compilation manuscripts are either written in a different hand from the main body of texts (Völuspá in Hauksbók), preserved on loose leaves (Rígsþula in Codex Wormianus), or in the case of Hyndluljóð (F. Jónsson: 1930), occur in a manuscript with a brief statement concerning the owner and scribes of the manuscript and some of its contents, but without a prologue proper (see §5.5). The context in which these texts were produced is not articulated in the manuscripts themselves, though no doubt to those who commissioned, wrote and used the texts, the ideological framework in which they were understood and used was clear enough. Perhaps our only option is to read the accumulation of texts with reference to the framework Snorri provides, particularly as it is articulated in the passage quoted above from Skáldskaparmál.

§3.5 From oral poem to written text

Evidence of the kinds of shifts in attitude towards written authority that is perceptible in the discourses surveyed in §3.3 is not as obvious in the case of eddic material, simply because the corpus is presented by and large without mediation or contextualising commentary by its recorders, areas that are examined in detail in chapter 5. There is, unfortunately, little record of the writers' notions of what constituted an authoritative text of a poem, from where that authority derived, what the determinants of a poem's identity were (given that many poems go by the same name) or indeed what the boundaries of one poem were in the minds of the writers. What evidence there is depends primarily on the comparison of texts, and, in trying to intuit scribal attitude from stanzas occurring in various contexts, we can expect no more than speculative conclusions.

The manuscripts of Snorri's Edda, which all post-date his work by at least a century, present many instances in which variant texts of poetic quotations are unlikely to have been the result of faulty written transmission. On the basis of these variants, it has been postulated by Jón Helgason (1964, ix) that some compilers must have known different versions of the poems to the ones Snorri knew, or at least to the ones that have survived in other redactions of his work. A good illustration of this is Grímnismál 40-41, quoted by Snorri in Gylfaginning. The text on the left is from the Codex Regius manuscript of Snorri's Edda (Gk. S. 2367, 4to), one of the four principle manuscripts of the work (of which more later), all of which include this pair of stanzas within an account of the creation.
of the world. The text on the right is from a fragmentary text of Skálkskaparmál (AM 757 410), which along with another manuscript preserving a fragment of Skálkskaparmál (AM 748 1 410), quote the pair of stanzas in a survey of different heiti (ESS II, 431 and II 515):

Or Ymis holdi
var iorð of scópuð,
enn þó svéita sær,
bíorg ór beinom,
baðmr ór hári,
enn þó hauð himinn.

Enn þó hans brám
gerði blíð regin
miðgarð manna sonom;
enn þó hans heila
vóro þau in hardmóðgo
scý qll of scópuð.

Or Ymis holdde
var jórð of skóput.
enn þó hans sára svéita særr.
bíorg or beinum
hím þó hauð hans.

Enn þó hans brám
gerði blíð regin
miðgarð manna sonum;
enn þó hans heila
vóro þau hín hröðfellu
sky ðill of skóput. ESS II 514-5

Whoever added this section to Skálkskaparmál had access to a different oral version of Grímnismál to the one that was used for the text of Gylfaginning. Even within stanzas quoted in all four of the major manuscripts of Gylfaginning significant variations are to be found. In another stanza of Grímnismál, the holy waters under the bridge of the Æsir boil in three manuscripts, but simply flow in another (RsTW: "hellog votn hlöa"; U: "enn hellog votn flóa" st. 29). What is significant about the variations between texts is the fact that later copiers of Snorri's work did not consider the poetic texts in their exemplar to be the authoritative text of the poem, and consciously or unconsciously, substituted the version which they recalled from memory. In a study of the written transmission of Cædmon's Hymn, Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe (1987, 16) has observed that during the subvocalizing of phrases, and the commitment of words or lines to short-term memory, scribes made substitutions in their texts, to the point where reading and copying appear to have become conflated with composing. A similar process probably went on in the transmission of Snorri's Edda. In his study of the transmission of skaldic stanzas in the twelfth century, Bjarne Fidjestøl (1982, 46) discounts the possibility that writers changed their own version of poetic texts to accord with versions already written down in other texts, in favour of the view that identical written texts are likely to indicate complete dependence on written transmission, rather than reference to (and reverence for) already existing written works. Franz Bäuml (1980, 246) has also suggested that in the early stages of literate culture, the ability to write may not have implied recognition of the fixity of a particular text.
Since the process of substitution occurred in the written transmission of quoted stanzas within Snorri's text, it is perhaps not surprising that texts of whole poems often preserve versions of particular stanzas markedly different from the versions known to Snorri. There are instances in the Codex Regius where the compiler has quite clearly known and used Snorri's text, in the prose link preceding Regtnsmál 15 for instance (see Bibire: 1986, 35), and one instance where the Regius compiler has used part of Snorri's prose account in Gylfaginning - albeit his own edited version of it - but proceeded to record the text of a whole poem which is not consonant with the single stanza Snorri has earlier quoted from the (apparently) same poem (Helgason: 1965, x). The prose coda to the poem Locasenna echoes the narrative and often the precise wording used by Snorri in his description of Loki's fate in Gylfaginning:

Frá Loca (Codex Regius)
Enn eptir petta falz Loki í Fráangrsfósti í lax láki.
Þar tácó æsir hann.
Hann var bundinn með þormom sonar Nara.
Enn Narfi, sonr hans, varð at vargrl.
Scaði tóco eitrorm oc festi up yfir annlit Loca.
Draup þar ör eitr.
Sigmyn, kona Loca, sat þar oc helt munlaug undir eitríp.
Enn er munlaugin var full, bar hon út eitríp;
enn meðan draup eitríp á Loca.
Þá kiptiz hann svá hart við, at þaðan af scalf iorð òll;
þat ero nú kallaðir landsciálpptar.

Gylfaginning
En opt um daga brá hann sér í laxlíki ok falsk þa þar sem heitir Fráangrsfors.
(48:18-9)
Nú var Loki tekinn griðalauss . . . (49:5)
þá váru tekir synir Loka Váli ok Nari eða Narfi. Brugðu Æsir Vála í vargs líki ok reif hann í sundr Narfa bróður sinn.
Þá tóku Æsir þarma hans ok bundu Loka með yfir þa þrá steina . . .
(49:7-10)
Þá tók Skaði eitrorm ok festi upp yfir hann svá at eitrí skyldi drýupa ór orminum í andlit honom.
En Sigyn kona hans stendr hjá honum ok heldr mundlaugu undir eitrödrupa.
En þá er full var er mundlaugin þá gengr hon ok slær út eitrínu, en meðan draup eitrír í andlit honum.
Þá kippisk hann svá hart við at þóð òll skelfr.
Þat kallið þer landskjálpta.
Þar liggr hann í bónum til ragnarökrs
(49:11-16)

Despite the compiler's apparent dependence on Snorri's prose for his own prose, there seems to have been no influence from the poetic text Snorri quotes earlier in Gylfaginning on the poetic text which is written out in full in Codex Regius. In chapter 18, Snorri quotes a single ljóðaháttr stanza from an unnamed poem in support of his description of the ásynja Frigg, who is credited with knowledge of men's fates:
En Frigg er kona hans, ok veit hon orlog manna þótt hon segi elgi spár, svá sem hér er sagt at Öðinn mælar sjálfir við þann Ás er Loki heitir:

Œrr ertu Loki
ok ørviti,
hví ne legskapu, Loki?
Ørlog Frigg
hygg ec at oll viti
þótt hon sjálfgi segi.

Gylfaginning 21: 18-26

Parallels to various lines of Snorri's text are found scattered across stanzas of the text recorded in R. Lines 1-2 are spoken by Öðinn to Loki with reference to another prescient goddess, Gefion:

Œrr ertu, Loki, oc ørviti,
er þú sær þér Gefion at gremi,
pvfat aldar orlog hygg ec at hon oll um viti
iafnorga sem ec. Ls 21

The third half line of Snorri's text is paralleled in another stanza spoken to Loki by Heimdalr, this time accusing the trouble-making god of drunkenness:

Qir ertu, Loki, svá at þú er ørviti,
hví né lezcaðu, Loki?
pvfat ofírycción veidr alda hveim,
er sína mælgj né manað. Ls 47

In the senna between the gods as it is preserved in R, the defence of Frigg (the second half stanza of Snorri's quotation) is spoken not by her husband Öðinn, but by another goddess, Freyia:

Œrr ertu, Loki, er þú yðra telr
lióta leiðstafi;
ørlog Frigg hugg ec at oll viti,
þótt hon sjálfgi segi. Ls 29

A comparison of the text known to Snorri, and its apparent context outlined in the surrounding prose, with the whole poem recorded in R is suggestive of the protean nature of eddic stanzas in oral transmission, a point I shall be returning to in the next chapter. The need to establish a fixed text of an eddic work seems to have been a foreign notion to the manuscript producers of the thirteenth century. Even in cases where a fixed text would have been socially desirable, as in the establishment of a written law-code, singularity and fixity were a long time in coming. It is hardly surprising such considerations were peripheral to the purposes of those writing eddic texts, since, whatever
their social function was, it is unlikely to have been in the service of a centralised authority, or to have been used for public purposes. It is only in later eras that the desire for a fixed literary text has become so pressing, leading to editorial practices that are often unsympathetic to the cultural products of a newly literate society recording its oral heritage, and to a manner of textual production very different from our own.

At the heart of any study of eddic composition is the issue of the texts' relationship to their oral precursors - how closely they resemble orally transmitted texts, and to what extent written transmission has transformed them. It is a commonplace of research into the new literary products of a society recently empowered by literacy that the very process of committing to writing standardized oral forms is likely to result in changes to the forms themselves (Goody: 1987, xi-xii), as they are transformed from "utterance" to "text" (Olson: 1977, 258). In the following chapters, I shall look at the scribal and textual signs that might inform our assessments of the poems' orality. At this point, I want to consider the more general issue of the acculturation of oral poetic modes in the production of written texts in a newly literate society.

Eric Havelock has described in close detail the complex and developing partnership between oral and written modes in the early history of Greek literature, and his image of the process of literarisation in that case provides an interesting starting point for a consideration of Nordic poetry: "The Muse never became the discarded mistress of Greece. She learned to write and read while still continuing to sing." (Havelock: 1986, 23). While the concepts and artefacts of classical Greek culture do not necessarily have parallels in medieval Scandinavian culture, an examination of the Icelandic situation in terms of Havelock's formulation is, I think, illuminating. The Nordic 'muse' Öðinn was discarded as a god after the conversion, but his power over skaldic poets was retained, at least within the conventional ideological framework of poetic diction. In the period immediately following the conversion to Christianity, there was a marked fall in the popularity of mythological kennings (Frank: 1978, 67), but in time, the conventions of skaldic diction were themselves 'converted' to meet the needs to Christian poets (J. Benediktsson: 1969, 38). Allusions to the god of poetry himself were not easily expunged from skaldic poetry, though the attitude of poets to Öðinn became increasingly ambivalent. Around the turn of the eleventh century, the poet Halldreðr vandræðaskáld expresses his
reservations about abandoning Óðinn, despite his conversion to Christianity (Strömbäck: 1975, 51-2):

Qll hefr ætt til hylły
Óðins skipat ljóðum,
algilda mank, aldar
iðju várra niðja,
en trauðr, þvíð vel Viðris
vald hugnaðisk skaldi,
legg ek á frumver Friggjar
fjón, þvíð Kristi þjónum.

Skjald I 158.

In another contemporary composition, however, Óðinn has been unseated from his mound at Urðr’s well, and the role of determining men’s fates and inspiring poetry has apparently been transferred to Christ (Weber: 1970 and Frank: 1978, 108-9):

Setbergs kvéða sitja
sunnr at Urðar brunnl,
svá hefr ramr konungr remðan
Röms bands sík löndum.

Skjald I 144

Two centuries later, Bjarni Kolbeinsson, Bishop of Orkney, feels no compunction in disavowing Óðinn’s influence completely, though he composes in dróttkvætt and celebrates a legendary hero of the pre-Christian past:

Varkak fróðr und forsum,
fórk aldigi at göldrum,
hefkak ............

..................
óllumis namk eigi
Yggjar feng und hanga,

..................
Þleinstróðir mér óðar.

Jömsvíkingadráp 2 (Skjald II 1)

It is significant that this literate poet also dispenses with references to a live audience, from whom the skaldic poet traditionally asked for a hearing (Wood: 1960 and Frank: 1978, 70):

Engan kvéðk at óði
órum malma rýri
(hó gatk hróðr of hugðan)
hlyðis (atferðar prýði);
frammi mun ek fyr öldum
Yggjar bjór of föra,
hött einigir ytar
ættgðóðir mér hlyði.

Jömsvíkingadráp 1 (Skjald II 1)
During the twelfth century, a number of Christian poems cast in skaldic measure and exploiting traditional skaldic diction, were composed and recorded. One of the earliest extant manuscripts, AM 673 b 4to, produced around 1200, preserves a text of *Placitúsdrápa* (H. Benediktsson: 1965, v-vi), the story of Saint Eustace. During the latter part of the century Gamli, canon of Þykkvabær monastery, composed a skaldic poem on Christ's passion called *Harmsöll*, and earlier in the century in 1153, a poem entitled *Geisli* by Einarr Skúlason, was presented at Nínaróss cathedral in the presence of the archbishop and king (Einarsson: 1960, 230). In the creation of skaldic devotional poems by Christian writers in the twelfth century, it might be argued that the skaldic muse had learnt to write, though as Einarr's composition shows, its identity had changed to that of the holy trinity in the process:

Eins má óð ok bænir
(allsráðanda ens snjalla,
mjök's frófr, sás getr góa)
goðs prenning mér kenna;

*Geisli* (Skjald I, 427)

The extent to which skaldic diction had lost its cargo of heathen ideology is exemplified by the kenning "odda þings hyr–fröttur" (Óðinn of the flame of the meeting of spear-points) to describe a Christian martyr in *Placitúsdrápa* (Frank: 1978, 71). It is perhaps not surprising that it was these poems that were the first to be preserved on vellum. Jónas Kristjánsson (1988: 112) has even claimed that some of them were composed pen in hand, though as far as I know, we have no evidence of this. James Marchand's study (1976) of Christian skaldic fragments also comes to the conclusion that they were most probably the products of a written tradition. By the fourteenth century, judging by the devotional poem *Lilja*, Christian poets spurned the obfuscating diction of conventional skaldic composition, but retained the formal structure of the drápa and skaldic metres such as *hrynhent* (J. Benediktsson: 1965, 555). The skaldic muse had learnt to read and write and sing, but to a rather different tune.

Any literary history of a society moving from orality to literacy needs to acknowledge that some compositions depending on old traditional genres, such as the princely encomium, belong to that tradition but at the same time act to transform it. One such poem, *Háttatal*, combines the motive and diction of a praise poem with the structure of the Latin *clavis metrica*, though it also has its debts to oral tradition. It is not simply a written poem, but as Bjarne Fidjestøl (1982, 246) has termed it, a "skrivebordsdikt", one not simply transmitted in the
written medium, but created in and shaped by it. Roberta Frank (1978, 69) has observed the way in which the manuscript poem apparently changed the style of rhetoric in a number of skaldic compositions. One of the most striking examples of visual play in poetic composition is the use of the letters h, r, m, s, l as the alliterative staves in the first six stanzas of the poem *Harmsól*, and this technique of forming an incomplete anagram is widely found in early Latin verse (Frank: 1978, 98-9). Examples of poetry conceived of as visual units in Old English are discussed by Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe (1987, 6-7).

In the second half of the twelfth century, skaldic texts were sometimes transmitted in writing, according to a study of the quotation of praise poems in kings' sagas by Bjarne Fidjestøl (1982). He found that a sizeable proportion of stanzas quoted in kings saga manuscripts were apparently not cited by writers directly from oral tradition, but were transmitted in written form (Fidjestøl: 1982, 37-45). This practice may have begun as early as the mid twelfth century with the importation of *Eiriksrápa* in written form to Denmark (Guðnason: 1976, 136-7), though the mode of transmission in this case is not beyond doubt (Bech Skadhauge: 1988, 301).

The case of the eddic muse is rather different. Because the eddic tradition was fundamentally an anonymous one, the relationship between composer and his or her inspiration is never spelled out. Öðinn is more closely associated with skaldic composition - both in poets' invocations, and in his apparent habit of speaking in dróttkvætt himself (according to *Ynglinga saga*, chapter 6). In written works from the thirteenth century and later (in *Gylfaginning* and *fornaldarsögur* for instance), the speech of ancient gods and heroes is typically cast in eddic measure, and there seems to have been an association of the eddic idiom with age-old, unmediated utterance. Eventually, the idiom of eddic verse was put into service by Christian poets, but extant manuscript evidence suggests that the eddic tradition remained outside the ambit of written discourses for slightly longer than skaldic poetry did.

The most famous Christian eddic poem is *Sólarljóð*, which is cast in the eddic metre *ljóðahátt*, but it employs both the the gnomic idiom exemplified by *Hávamál* and the prophetic idiom of *Völuspá*. Compare for instance, *Hávamál* 112 and *Völuspá* 38:
and the following stanzas from Sólarljóð (32 and 39):

Vinsamling ráð
ok viti bundin
kenni ek þér sjau saman;
gørla þau mun
ok glata aldri;
guð eru þau nýt at nema

Sól ek sá
sanna dagstjörunu
drúpa dynheimum í;
en heljar grind
heyrða ek á annan veg
þjóta þungliga.

Fidjestol: 1979, 64-5

The influence of numerous Continental Latin works has been detected in Sólarljóð, which is marked by its deployment of adjectives and adverbs, and the use of symbolic names, not usually found in traditional Icelandic poetry (Njarðvík: 1971, 405). The poem is first found in paper manuscripts from the seventeenth century, and its dating within the Middle Ages is not certain. Njarðvík has observed that the date moves forward in time the more research is undertaken on the poem, and his surmise is that the poem was composed in the first half of the thirteenth century. In a monograph on Sólarljóð, Bjarne Fidjestøl concentrates on a hermeneutic analysis of the poem without directly addressing the problem of its date, though he notes in his foreword that he would tend to favour a late date (1979, 8).

Eddic metres were earlier used in learned compositions such as Hugsvinnsmál and Merlínúspá, both poems being the work of clerics. Merlínúspá was a translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Latin prose text The Prophecies of Merlin, which was rendered into fornyrðislag by the monk Gunnlaugr (d. 1218) (Turville-Petre: 1953, 200-202). While fornyrðislag is the principal metre of the work, the skaldic metre kvíðuháttr is also used, and there are also some examples of hrynhent (J. Benediktsson: 1966, 556). Hugsvinnsmál was a translation of the didactic Latin work, Disticha Catonis, which is thought to have been rendered into Ífðahátttr in the early thirteenth century (Holtsmark: 1958, 72). While these poems present evidence of the recording of eddic verse in manuscripts from the early thirteenth century, it is significant that all the compositions are new ones, and they are all closely associated with
learned environments. In Denmark as well, the writer Saxo Grammaticus was drawing on traditional eddic sources in his *Gesta Danorum*, but he reworked them into new Latin compositions in his text (Friis-Jensen: 1987, 58ff.). The eddic muse who had learnt to write was not the same as the one who was still singing, and whose voice was only recorded some time later in the century.
The preservation of eddic mythological poetry in quotations

Texts of eddic verse written down in the Middle Ages are preserved in three main contexts - as quotations in prose works, in collections of whole poems and as single items in compilation manuscripts. While the collections of eddic verse preserved in Codex Regius (Gl. kgl. sml. 2365 4to) and AM 748 I 4to are the mainstay of our knowledge of eddic verse, I am beginning this study of the preservation of eddic poetry with an assessment of the body of quotations of verse found in prose works. This is because eddic mythological verse makes its first appearance on the written page in the form of quotations within scholarly and other prose works (during the first half of the thirteenth century), and also because the range and number of eddic works apparently known to these authors suggest that the later collections cover only a part of the corpus of orally transmitted eddic poetry.

The collection and compilation manuscripts preserving eddic poems are the subject of chapter 5, which begins with a consideration of the history of the textualisation of eddic verse (§5.1). The progression from the practice of quoting stanzas piece-meal for the purpose of substantiating prose accounts to the enterprise of recording entire poems is apparent in the chronology of thirteenth century works, and also in the manuscript history of particular works, such as Snorri's Edda, some manuscripts of which include the text of a whole eddic poem appended at the end of a chapter. Another aspect of the literary history of eddic verse which will be taken up in the next chapter (§5.8) is the naming of poems, an exercise that appears to have been subject to the vicissitudes of scribal mood, the writer's immediate purpose in titling or citing a work, and perhaps even the broad narrative context in which a poem, or citation, was placed in a manuscript.

To lay the foundations for a study of eddic mythological verse quoted in prose works, Table I lists extant eddic poems and fragments found in manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries according to the context in which they are preserved (as quotation, within a collection of eddic poems or
in a compilation manuscript). Extant poems and fragments are arranged under three headings:

(A) Poems preserved in full in collection manuscripts which are also quoted in the *Edda* of Snorri Sturluson, in *Gylfaginning* (Gylf) or *Skálaskaparmál* (Skáld). Where these poems are also quoted in other prose works, the name of that work is listed as well: *The Third Grammatical Treatise* (3GT), *Fóstbædra saga* (Fóst) and *Sverris saga* (Sv).

(B) Verses and whole poems which are not found in either of the collection manuscripts (R and J), but are quoted within *Snorra Edda* or *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, or preserved in full in one of the manuscripts of *Snorra Edda*.

(C) Poems preserved in collection manuscripts which are not quoted in *Snorra Edda*. Some of these poems are quoted within prose sagas, in *Norna-Gests þáttr* (Norn) and *Volsunga saga* (V).

The division is aimed to show the overlap of poems occurring in collection manuscripts and in Snorri’s work, as well as the significant number of verses that are only found as quotations in texts of *Snorra Edda*, or in manuscripts preserving it. The second group (B) indicates the close association in the practices of manuscript compilers between the collection of individual poems and work on recensions of poetic and grammatical treatises.

### Table 1  Eddic mythological poetry preserved in manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Manuscripts</th>
<th>Number of stanzas quoted*</th>
<th>Work in which quoted</th>
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<td><em>Völuspá</em></td>
<td>collection</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>compilation</td>
<td>H</td>
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<td>quotation</td>
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<td>27 (U21)</td>
<td>Gylf</td>
</tr>
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<td>collection</td>
<td>RA</td>
<td>18</td>
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-112-
In this survey of the manuscript context of extant eddic verse, I am not aiming to present a comprehensive list of all the poetry recorded during the
Middle Ages in eddic measure, but to provide a background for the analysis of the compositional modes of eddic mythological poetry. This body of texts is not consistently distinguished as a separate category of verse in its medieval context, but it has long been a critical convention to divide medieval Icelandic verse into two broad types, eddic and skaldic, and in turn to divide eddic verse into two further types, mythological and heroic, the latter division based on the bipartite organisation of the Codex Regius manuscript collection of poems. Both these divisions, between eddic and skaldic on one hand, and mythological and heroic verse on the other, beg questions and some of these will be addressed in this chapter and the next. §4.1 consists of a survey of eddic quotations, taking into consideration variations in the number of quotations across different recensions of Snorri's work, and the different length of quotations in some texts. In the context of Snorri's use of quotations, §4.2 examines the interplay of skaldic and eddic styles in medieval composition, and the construction of categories, both in the medieval period and in modern scholarship. In §4.3, Snorri's quotations of eddic verse are viewed against the background of medieval styles of prose meter composition.

The poems that enter into my consideration of eddic mythological poetry perhaps require some clarification regarding generic definition. Eddic mythological poetry is usually defined as poems preserved in the first part of the Codex Regius collection (Heusler: 1937, 20), a definition that is not incompatible with my own in bare essentials, but which overlooks the close generic similarities between this verse and some of the verse in the second part of the collection, particularly when single stanzas are quoted out of narrative context, and with reference to the mythological information they express. My working definition of eddic mythological poetry is therefore expanded to include verse in eddic measure that has at least one speaker or actor who hails from the mythological world - a giant, elf, dwarf or deity, or from the demi-monde of valkyries, talking ravens and nut-hatches, creatures who appear to belong to the earthly world but who are privy to the fates of men.

One of the characteristics of eddic composition that I shall be returning to in chapter 6 is its fluid changes of mode and speaker, a property that renders categorisation into mutually exclusive groups of poems problematic. Helgaqvíða Híórvarðssonar, for instance, includes a senna between Atli and a giantess called Hrímgjerðr, yet the central figure of the poem is the young hero Helgi, and in Regius the poem takes its place in the opening series of heroic
poems. The case of Reginsmál, Fáfnismál and Sigrdrifumál is more straightforward, since in each of them a mythological speaker is a key player in the action and speech of the poem, but they too are not normally considered mythological poems. Nonetheless, Snorri quotes stanzas from Fáfnismál to substantiate the lines of descent of mythological beings (Gylfaginning 18: 17-22) and the mythological narrative which underlies various kennings for gold: "bol Fafnis", "bygð Fafnis" and "malmr Gnitaheillar" (Skáldskaparmál ch. 48: 130, 9-10).

In Table 1, I have therefore listed Reginsmál, Fáfnismál and Sigrdrifumál as eddic mythological poems since they are quoted as the words of mythological figures within prose works. On the other hand, I have omitted Hamðismál and Guðrúnargvíða qnorn (both of which are quoted in Volsunga saga) since the quotations concern the interaction of legendary figures - Hamðir and Sørli in the first case and Guðrún at the court of the Danish King Hálfr in the second. Also excluded from the table is eddic verse found in the fornaladarsögur (the so-called eddica minora, following the title of the 1903 collection by Heusler and Ranisch), the eddic verse of the contemporary sagas which I discussed in chapter 2, verse preserved in runic inscriptions and verse which is only preserved in post-medieval manuscripts. The reason for this is simply practical, since the group of eddic mythological poems covered by the three rubrics above is already quite large. Some reference will be made, however, to particular poems within these categories during the course of ch. 6, where I consider different aspects of eddic stylistics.

§4.1 Quotations of eddic verse in thirteenth century prose works

The earliest known recording of eddic verse (in alphabetic writing) is in quotations used by Snorri Sturluson in his scholarly treatise, called Edda, thought to have been composed c. 1225 (Clunies Ross: 1987a, 9), although all the manuscripts of Snorri's Edda postdate this period by at least three-quarters of a century (Faulkes: 1982, xxix-xxxiii). The four principal extant manuscripts of Snorri's Edda are Codex Regius (Gl. kgl. sml. 2367, 4º) (Rs) from the beginning of the fourteenth century, Codex Wormianus (AM 242 fol.) (W) from the middle of the fourteenth century, and Codex Trajectinus (MS No. 1374, University Library, Utrecht) (T) from the seventeenth century but believed to be a copy of an earlier text. The oldest of the manuscripts, Codex Upsaliensis (De la Gardie
11, 80) (U) dates from the turn of the fourteenth century, and is thought to have some connection with Snorri himself (Faulkes: 1982, xxx-xxxl). It contains a genealogy of the Sturlung family, a list of Icelandic law-speakers down to Snorri, and Skáldatal, the list of court poets. The text of the Edda in U is often much briefer than in other manuscripts, and some of the eddic quotations found in other versions of the text are omitted in this codex, or appear abridged or paraphrased. In several cases where a verse is quoted and its source named in other manuscripts, the U text does not contain a citation. While most editors favour the text preserved in the Regtus manuscript, the relationship of each of the extant manuscripts to Snorri's original work has not been established with any certainty, and there are considerable arguments for the value of U as closer to the original form of Snorri's work (Lindow: 1977, 107ff).

Manuscripts of Snorri's Edda contain quotations from twenty-one apparently different eddic mythological poems, including about one third of the text of Grímnismál (as it is preserved in R and A), and nearly half of the text of Völuspá. The majority of quotations of eddic mythological verse occur in the second part of Snorri's treatise, called Gylfaginning, which deals with the myths of the ancient Scandinavians. The prominence in Gylfaginning of poems expressing mythological lore, such as Vafðruðnismál, Grímnismál and Völuspá, is probably a function of Snorri's interest in setting out knowledge about the mythological world, from its genesis to its end in great detail. He depends on Völuspá not only for particulars of myths but also for the framework of mythological history; Vafðruðnismál and Grímnismál are quoted mainly in connection with cosmogony and eschatology (Schier: 1981, 420). Around twenty stanzas of eddic verse are also quoted in the next part of his treatise, Skáldskaparmál, dealing with the traditional diction of skaldic poetry. In the first work of the treatise, the Prologue, there are no quotations and only one reference to a poetic work, the skaldic poem Háleygjatal. The fourth part of the Edda, Háttatal, is itself a long praise poem, with an introduction and running prose commentary on metrical form. A small group of verses in eddic measure bring up the rear of this poem, though these are offered among examples of less felicitous ways of praising one's patron in the skaldic idiom rather than as quotations of traditional eddic compositions (see further §4.2).

In approximately two-fifths of cases, Snorri cites the name of the work he is quoting from, though not all manuscripts concur on all names, nor are the titles cited always consonant with the names preserved along with full texts of
the poems in collection and compilation manuscripts, a subject I shall treat in detail in the next chapter. Snorri often introduces a quotation with a simple formulation such as “svá sem hér segir” which seems to have sufficed to denote the verse lines as authoritative, without the need to actually name the poetic source of the lines. For instance stanzas 40-41 of Grímnismál are quoted in chapter 8 of Gylfaginning (12: 28-40), introduced with the words “svá sem hér segir”, but the name Grímnismál is not cited until a later quotation in ch. 36. The names Heimdalargaldr, Þórgrímspula, Alsvinnzmál and Grottasongr are only found in citations within Snorri's work, and fragments of up to seven otherwise unrecorded poems are quoted without being named in his work. In cases where Snorri quotes stanzas from different sources as evidence for some aspect of his mythology, he distinguishes between the verses even if the second source is not named (for instance in his quotation from Vólsespá in skamma followed by Vafðrúðnismál in Gylfaginning 10, 26).

This evidence suggests that the number of eddic poems in oral circulation in the thirteenth century was considerably larger than the number preserved in full in later collection codices. By the same token, some of the poems recorded in the collections were possibly unknown to Snorri, who neither quotes from them nor makes any allusion to their contents. This may have been the case with the poems Hárrbarðzliða, Prymsqviða and Bairds Draumar (Helgason: 1965, xiv-xv), which might have provided apposite quotations at various points in Snorri's account - the latter poem being of particular interest in the extensive treatment of Baldr's death in ch. 49 of Gylfaginning. Nonetheless, it does not necessarily follow that Snorri did not know a poem simply because there is no quotation from it in his work. The poem Hymisqviða is likely to have been behind Snorri's narrative account of Pórr's adventures in chapter 48 of Gylfaginning, although no verse is quoted (Schier: 1981, 411). It must also be borne in mind that many of the stanzas quoted in Gylfaginning are only of tangential relevance to the main focus of each answer given by Hár. (Note for instance the context of the quotation of a dialogue between the Vanir and a flying goddess within Hár's list of Ásynjur, or the quotation from Skírnismál discussed below.) The subject matter of other poems Snorri does not use, such as Völundarqviða, is outside the sphere of his interests in Gylfaginning, and therefore cannot be used one way or another in an investigation of the extent of Snorri's eddic repertoire.
Several of the quotations listed in division (A) of Table 1 only roughly approximate to the texts of whole poems in collection manuscripts which go by the same name. At the end of the last chapter, I compared Snorri's quotation of a stanza spoken by Öðinn to Loki with several stanzas from Locasenna. As noted then, neither the contents of the stanza nor the identity of the speaker squares with the details preserved in the Codex Regius text of the entire poem, though Snorri's stanza clearly derives from a poem of very similar content and compositional mode to Locasenna. In a later passage of Skáldskaparmál (chapter 33), during an explanation of why gold is called Ægir's fire, Snorri refers to a mythological incident which seems to accord with the narrative context of Locasenna:

... at Ægir sotti heimboð til Asgarðr, en er hann var bvin til heimferþar, þa bavð hann til sin Oðni ok aðlum aðrum ... þa senti Loki þar við ólí göð. . . .

Skáldskaparmál 121: 2-11

Snorri's use of the verb 'senna' suggests that he is familiar with the extended flyting that is described in Locasenna, although several other details he gives concerning events at the feast are not paralleled in the poem. Snorri goes on to say that Loki killed one of Ægir's servants, a certain Fimafengr, but his name is not found in the poetic text preserved in the Codex Regius. He is, however, mentioned in the prose introduction to the poem, which as I have already indicated, seems to have been derived from Snorri's account in Skáldskaparmál. We can only guess at the precise nature of Snorri's source poem for this quotation, but there are several reasons to think it was significantly different in the details of its composition, allusions and narrative context to the poem which was recorded in R.

The degree of difference between the text of Snorri's quotation and the text of stanzas in a recording of the whole poem is nowhere so wide as in this example from Locasenna. In the case of the poem Skírnisöl, the text of the quotation differs in rhythm and turn of phrase, but not in its essential meaning or in the speaker to which it is ascribed:

Long er nótt, lóng er ònnur1,
því mega ek þreyja þrjár?
Opt mér mánaðr minni þótti
en sjá hálft hýnótt.

Gylfaginning 31: 27-32

1 For ease of comparison, I have altered the graphic lay-out of eddic verse quoted from Faulkes's edition of Gylfaginning to accord with the lay-out of the Neckel Kuhn edition of eddic poems.
While the variations in meaning are slight, they nevertheless present nuances that are presumably particular to each version of the poem as a whole: the text in Snorri's work is perhaps more emphatic ("mega ek þreyja" rather than the more curt "þreyjaci"), though both texts play out the emotional strain of waiting through the second night in their own way ("langar ro tøvaer" / "løng er ñunnur"). Snorri quotes this stanza at the end of a prose account of the wooing of the giantess Gerð by Freyr's messenger Skírnir (30: 38 – 31: 26). Some of the details in the prose are not derived from the text of the poem preserved in the R and A manuscripts, and it looks likely that the Regius compiler has again had recourse to Snorri's text in the composition of his prose prologue:

Gymir hét maðr, en kona hans Aurbøða. Hon var bergrisa ættar. Dóttir þeira er Gerð er allra kvenna er fegrst. Þat var einn dag er Freyr hafði gengit í Hlíðskjálfr ok só of heima alla, en er hann leit í norðrætt þá þá hann á einum be miðit hús ok fagri, ok til þess húss gekk kona, ok er hon tók upp hónum ok lauk hurð fyrir sér þá lýsti af hónum hennar bæði í lopt ok á lög, ok allir heimar birtusk af henni. Ok svá hefndi honum þat mikla mikillæti er hann hafði setk í þat helga sætti at hann gekk í braut fullur af harmi. Ok er hann kom heim, mælti hann ekki, hvárti svaf hann né drakk; engi þóði ok krefja hann orða. Þá lét Njörð kalla til sín Skírnir, skósvine Freys, ok bað hann ganga til Freys ok beðða hann orða ok spyrja hverjum hann væri svá reiðr at hann mælir ekki við menn...

_Gylfaginning_ 30: 38 – 31: 12

Skírnir hét scósviinn Freys. Njörð bað hann vèðia Frey mals. Þá mælti Scaði:...
furnished with many incidental mythological details. The narrative describing Freyr's getting of a wife occurs at the end of an answer to Gylfi's question "Hverjar eru Ásynjurnar?" (29: 17), but Snorri uses this piece to transfer his focus onto Freyr's vulnerability in future martial encounters because he lacks a sword (31: 33 - 32: 2). His vulnerability is not mentioned in the poem, where Freyr is so distraught over Gerðr that he quickly accedes to Skírnir's request for his horse and sword (Skm 8-9). In Snorri's narrative, however, the god takes a more active part, commanding his servant to fetch the woman whether her father gives his permission or not, and offering Skímir a reward. Skímir at once stipulates the gift of the sword, and Snorri adds: "En Freyr lét eigi þat til skorta ok gaf honum sverðit." It is with the process of 'skorta' that Snorri's interest in this narrative lies, rather than with the protracted verbal bullying of Gerðr by Skírnir which forms the heart of the poem in the R and A recording (sts. 17 - 39). In Snorri's text the mission is accomplished with much more ease: "Pá för Skírnir ok bað honum konunnar ok fekk heitt hennar . ." (31: 23-4). A number of these differences between Snorri's account and the extant text of Skírnismál have been analysed by Paul Bibire (1986).

Since Snorri's narratological and mythological foci are at such variance from the poem as it stands in R and A, it is hazardous to speculate on the form of his poetic source. What can be commented on, however, are the implications of the variations between the quoted stanza in Gylfaginning and the text found in the R and A collections. Bjarne Fidjestøl (1982: 51-2) has isolated features of textual variations that appear to have arisen during the written transmission of verse - in the case of his study, skaldic stanzas in historical works written during the twelfth century. Two of his conclusions which are of relevance here are:

- Variants which preserve metrical errors (in the case of eddic poetry, lack of alliteration across a line) are unlikely to have arisen during oral transmission.
- Variants expressing the same meaning but using different words point to oral transmission.

The variations in lines 2-3 of Skm 42 could not be explained by any kind of misreading or miscopying of a written text, but are indicative of the kinds of variations generated in oral transmission. The implication of the variations in verse texts across manuscripts, and of the variations between individual stanzas Snorri quotes and the texts of whole poems, is that poetic texts were not completely stable during oral transmission. As we shall see in the §6.2, the
degree of difference between texts of apparently disparate oral provenance is
often not great, and can be analysed in terms of relatively few kinds of
variables.

Another kind of textual variation which probably stems from divergent
oral versions is the existence of extra lines or half lines in one text of a stanza
but not another. Such is the case with the first eddic stanza occurring in
Snorri's work, which is commonly attributed to the poem Hávamál. But there is
good reason to question whether Snorri was in fact quoting from this poem in
Gylfaginning in the same manner as he quotes from, say, Völuspá, and to
speculate more generally on the relationship of this poem with Snorri's work.
Snorri nowhere cites the poem by name, and the single stanza that is generally
attributed to the poem occurs outside the disquisition on mythological lore that
forms the core of Gylfaginning. It is spoken by the apprehensive Gylfi as he
crosses the threshold into the hall of the Æsir:

Pá lítaðisk hann um þóttí margir hlutir ótrúlegir þeir er
hann sá. Pá mælti hann:
  Gattir allar áðir gangi fram
    um skygnsk skyli
  því at óvist er at vita hvar óvinir
    sitja á fleiti þyrir.

Gylfaginning 8: 8-15

This is the only verse spoken by Gylfi himself, and functions as a kind of
interior monologue - a recourse to traditional wisdom couched in memorable
form at a moment when the speaker finds himself in a situation of potential peril.
The verse is not prefaced by the usual introductory formulation used in other
quotations of eddic texts, nor is its source cited. All the other eddic verse in
Gylfaginning is quoted by Hár, most often as evidence of myths or mythological
material already outlined in prose. Within the mythological discourse of
Gylfaginning, a handful of verses are quoted by Hár as the direct speech of
actors within narratives, but those actors are invariably gods or other
mythological figures - see further §4.3. In the form we have it, it is ambiguous
whether Gylfi recognises his utterance as part of a known poem, but if Snorri's
audience can be assumed to have known Hávamál, or similar instantiations of
this eddic genre, the utterance would presumably have been interpreted in this
context.

This stanza is therefore set apart from the rest of the eddic quotations in
the work, both stylistically and in its place in the frame story of Gylfaginning.
Perhaps it is better regarded as a snatch of proverbial or gnomic lore, put into the mouth of the narrative's protagonist (as is evidenced in other prose works) rather than a quotation from Hávamál. Just a few lines later in the text of Gylfaginning (still within the frame-narrative, before the question and answer session gets underway), Hár takes to aphoristic pronouncement, and this time there is even less formal indication that he is quoting:

Hár segir at hann komi eigi heili út nema hann sé fròðari, ok 'Stattu fram meðan þu fregn, sitja skal sá er segir.'

Gylfaginning 8: 22-25

Rather than viewing this as a quotation from another text (which no scholarship has been able to identify), we might more usefully see it as Hár's assumption of a certain kind of voice, in this case the voice of proverbial wisdom. This 'voice' is marked by its rhythm and alliteration, and lends the speaker authority on the matter of conventional protocol in a wisdom trial, or in the immediate context of Gylfi's visit, an audience with an authority on wisdom. The right of the host in such a situation to dictate the guest/questioner's proper posture is substantiated by Vafdröðnisamál 7-9, where Gagurðr is told to come in and take a seat if he wishes to test his wit against the giant. In this connection it is interesting that Gylfi is not accorded the status of competitor (and invited to sit down), but is told in no uncertain terms that he may only stand below and pose questions to the sages who are seated above him.

The concerns of this part of Gylfaginning ("en heimill er matr ok drykkr honum sem òllum þar í Háva hóll") shadow the preoccupations of the first stanzas of Hávamál, although as the guest/host relationship adumbrated in Hávamál is very broadly conceived, there is no precise analogue in that text for wisdom trial etiquette. Nevertheless, it is not beyond the bounds of reasonable speculation that the two verses used by Snorri within the prose frame of Gylfaginning derive from the same poetic whole, a poem similar in its tone and mode of composition to Hávamál, but which also incorporated a knowledge trial, either in passing as a point of useful etiquette, or in a more elaborate fashion, just as the extant text of Hávamál encompasses the delivery of runes and spells to an enraptured listener within its sequence of teachings. I would not wish to make an earnest argument for such a missing poem, but I have raised the possibility to point out the pitfalls in the one-to-one identification of quotations with extant poems, when there are numerous signs that Snorri's pool of poetic texts was more extensive than ours, and that it included stanzas that are similar.
to stanzas within extant poems, without belonging to precisely the same work (viz. Locasenna), and examples of poetic genres, of which we have limited knowledge (for example Heimdalargaldr).

Compared with the lines spoken by Gylfi, the text of the stanza in Hávamál includes an extra short line ("um scoðaz scyli") in the first half stanza, which suggests that if Snorri were quoting from that poem, the relationship of his text to the text recorded in the Codex Regius was not that of a fixed written version. Furthermore, details about Óðinn's magical defence against opponents' weapons described in Hávamál 148, and used by Snorri in chapter 6 of Ynglinga saga (Aðalbarnarson: 1979, I 17), do not indicate a source identical in every detail, although it may be inferred that Snorri probably knew a version of this stanza, and possibly the sequence of stanzas in which it is found in the Regius text (Evans: 1986, 2 and commentary on st. 148).

A quotation very similar to Gylfi's aphoristic utterance is found in Fóstbrœðra saga, thought to have been written early in the thirteenth century (Pórolfsson and Jónsson: 1943, lxixii). In ch. 21, the saga tells the story of a work-slave in Greenland, consumed with jealousy because his sweetheart is paying more attention to another man, who calls to mind an aphorism while pondering his misfortune:

\[\text{kom honum pá í hug kvíslægr sá, er kveðinn hafði verit um lausungarkonur:} \]
\[\quad \text{Á hverfanda hvéli} \]
\[\quad \text{vóro þeim hjörtu scöpuð,} \quad [\text{F: erol}] \]
\[\quad \text{brigði í brjóst lagið.} \]

(Pórolfsson and Jónsson: 1943, 225)

Similar sentiments are expressed in Hávamál, with only a subordinating conjunction the essential difference between the two texts:

\[\text{Meyiar orðom scyli mangi trúja,} \]
\[\text{né því er qveðr kona;} \]
\[\text{þvíat á hverfanda hvéli vóro þeim hjörtu scöpuð,} \]
\[\text{brigði í brjóst um lagit.} \]

Háv 84

When Loðinn in Fóstbrœðra saga recalls the 'kvíslæg' he knows from memory, there is no sign in the text that he is calling to mind the protracted catechism of gnomic lore directed by Óðinn to his listener in Hávamál (see Söderberg: 1986, 51). Even if the half stanza were known to Snorri and the author of Fóstbrœðra saga from a source poem of similar shape and dimensions to the
Regius text of *Hávamál*, the contexts in which they use the aphoristic lines suggest that they understood the speaker and addressee inscribed in the verses not as fixed mythological identities, but as figures very generally defined - the knowing self and the self in need of guidance - which could be attributed to the same individual in a range of different narrative situations.

The fact that the "Gáttir allar" stanza is the first eddic quotation in *Gylfaginning* and the very first stanza of the extant text of *Hávamál* has often excited theories on the relationship between the two works. In support of a theory of textual dependence, the similarity of the names Hárr and Hávi has been cited, and the echo of the final words spoken by Hárr to Gylfi has been heard in the last stanza of *Hávamál*. These resonances need, however, to be seen against the broad background of Norse mythological texts in general, and the frequency of conventional formulations, settings and names across different kinds of texts. It is true that the knowledgeable instructor in each text goes by the name of 'the High One' - Hárr in *Gylfaginning* and the weak form Hávi in *Hávamál* - though at some points the names shade together. In chapter 2 of *Gylfaginning*, for instance, Hárr's dwelling place is referred to as "Háva hóll" (8: 21). This perhaps indicates that the names were not absolutely distinct, and that both functioned as a kind of nick-name for a highly-revered informant on mythological lore. Both words are in fact found in metrical lists of Óðinn's names: Hárr in *Grímnismál* 46 and Hávi in a *pula* appended to *Skáldskaparmál* (Evans: 1986, 36-7).

Another coincidence between the two texts that has been taken as evidence of borrowing is the last stanza of the poem and the last words spoken to Gylfi by Hárr (except in the U manuscript), before the apparition of his hall disappears in a sudden clamour (Lindow: 1977, 117). While this echo has struck some modern scholars as curious (F. Jónsson: 1931, liv), it may well have seemed less curious to contemporary Icelanders, familiar with the multitude of ways in which conventional motifs could be instantiated in different contexts. The idea that coincidences of phrasing have their genesis in the deliberate borrowing by one author from another's work is grounded in the literate world of textual stability and authorial innovation, and may not necessarily be the most appropriate interpretation of similarities occurring in written works emerging from a traditional oral culture.

Nú ero Háva mál qveðin, Háva hólló í,
allþorf yta sonom,
The coincidence of the admonition - "Use well what you have learnt!" most probably constitutes something quite apart from self-conscious copying from an already existing text. For a start, the location called 'the hall of the High One' is not unique to these two texts - it is also the site for the burning of Gullveig in Völuspá 21. And the formulation urging a listener to make good use of privileged information is found in other texts apart from Havamál. The convention is expressed in the final stanza of Merlínusspá, composed by the monk Gunnlaugr (see §4.2). In Sigrdrífumál, the valkyrie ends her catechism of rune knowledge with the following invocation, which echoes the spirit and in some lines the idiom of Hávi’s last words to his listener/s:

\[
\text{Pat ero bócrúnar, pat ero biargrúnar,}
\text{oc allar glrírúnar,}
\text{oc mætar meginrúnar,}
\text{hveim er þær kná óviltar oc óspiltar}
\text{sér at heilom hafa;}
\text{nióttu, ef þú namt,}
\text{unz riúfaz regin.}
\]

Furthermore, the speakers of both Havamál and Sigrdrífumál are signing off their lessons by impressing upon their addressees the practical applicability of the magical knowledge they have just imparted (Óðinn has just recited a series of eighteen spells), and both stress that only the astute listener will stand any chance of gaining benefit from the knowledge ("sá er nam"; "ef þú namt"). Hávi’s parting speech to Gylfi is less challenging in this respect ("ok nióttu nú sem þú namt"), and furthermore, he is not referring to magical knowledge. The main thrust of his final words is the completeness of his coverage of mythological history, and the lack of any account which pushes further into future time than his has. In his diction ("lengra segja fram aldarfarit") he echoes the idiom of the prophetic speakers of Völuspá and Hyndluljóð ("fram sé ec lengra/vitoð ér enn eða hvat?" and "fáir siá nú fram um lengra") rather than the teachers of Havamál and Sigrdrífumál.
It might therefore be argued that the parallel between the phrase in Hávamál and Gylfaginning is not particularly significant, at least as evidence of literary imitation (see Lönnroth: 1981, 323). Instead of viewing a chain of extant or postulated texts as constituting a line of literary influence, we might better adopt recent interpretive methods of perceiving a particular medieval text as a "concretation of tradition" (Ólason: 1985) and tradition itself as 'intertextuality', or the totality of a text's relations to other texts as well as the text as code in relation to other contributory and subsumed codes (Harris: 1990, 236-39). Because the term 'intertextuality' has sometimes been misused to invoke the materiality of connected texts, Julia Kristeva (1984, 60) has renamed the phenomenon 'transposition', a term which is more readily applicable to the relationship of tradition to texts in an emergent written culture.

By winding up Hár's extended instruction on diverse mythological topics in the way he does, Snorri is most probably drawing on structural devices and conventional formulations known to him from a range of traditional poetry, possibly including Hávamál, but not necessarily. By the same token, the composer of Hávamál need not have had Snorri's work in mind to have come up with the wording of the final stanza of his poem (von See: 1975). The same considerations apply to the opening eddic stanza in each work. While it seems remarkable that the same stanza is found in Gylfaginning and Hávamál, it is also quite unremarkable that a gnome advising caution on entrance into a stranger's hall should be invoked as Gylfi enters the fantastic hall of the Æsir, and as we - the readers or listeners to Hávamál - take up the position of addressee for the awe-inspiring delivery in the Hall of the High One. While the setting of "Háva höll" is only made explicit in Hávamál further on in the text (sts. 109, 111ff), the situation of a guest arriving at a hall is implicit in the opening series of stanzas, and it is paradigmatic for the delivery of valuable knowledge by a host to a guest in other sources (Vafðruðnismál for example).

On the basis of the resemblances outlined above, Elias Wessen (1947, 9) has argued that Hávamál and Gylfaginning are in fact the work of the same man, Snorri Sturluson. The textual evidence does not lend conclusive support to this theory, since none of the parallels necessarily implies dependence of one text on the other. While Wessen (1947: 8) thinks he can detect Snorri's "samlande och ordnande hand" in Hávamál, no persuasive reasons are given for why Snorri would have tied these two texts together in this way. Klaus von See (1972b) has advanced a more elaborate thesis, positing the Latin poem Disticha
Catonis as a source and model for Hávamál, which necessitates pushing forward the date of the composition of Hávamál into the mid or late thirteenth century. (It is not known precisely when Hugsvinnsmál, the Norse poetic version of Disticha Catonis, was composed.) Von See (1975, 70) further claims that the use of the name "Hávi" is derived from Snorri, who, he maintains, invented the appellation for Öðinn. Some doubt has been cast on the textual evidence von See adduces to support his claims of textual dependence (Harris: 1985, 110-11) and in short, there seems to be no compelling reasons to date the composition of Hávamál after Snorri's work. Von See has continued his arguments on these points in a debate with David Evans in Skandinavistik (1987 and 1989).

The possibility that either Snorri or the composer of Hávamál "borrowed" from the other cannot be dismissed out of hand, but if such a process is entertained, it seems more likely that the echoes would be in Snorri's work. If he knew the poem Hávamál in the same shape as the extant work (albeit with textual variations stemming from divergent lines of transmission), he may have wished to invoke the opening words of the weighty collection of sapiential lore spoken by Öðinn at the start of his own redaction of the High One's mythological wisdom. The case of Hávamál highlights the problems encountered in attempting to prove a line of dependence between texts of uncertain date (see Harris: 1985 and Söderberg: 1986), as well as sharpening our awareness of how difficult it is to deduce from Snorri's work the precise details of his sources.

It is only on a handful of occasions that we can conclude with any confidence that the poetic work Snorri knew was similar to, or identical with, the text of an entire poem preserved in a collection manuscript. Not only must we be assured of the identical nature of stanzas preserved in Snorri's work and outside it, we also need to have a significant sample from each poem before we can make a judgement on textual sameness, and to have some indication of the context or frame story attached to the stanzas Snorri quotes. It is only in the case of Vafðruðnismál and Grímnismál that these conditions come close to being met, and there is still room for some doubt. In other cases, even where the texts of stanzas are very close to the text of the whole poem, there is simply not enough evidence to categorically identify the extant text as one of Snorri's sources. For instance, Snorri records a quotation that is practically identical to the text of a stanza found in the Codex Regius version of the poem Fáfnismál.
A further two stanzas are quoted in *Skáldskaparmál* (129: 34 – 130: 4) that are virtually identical to stanzas 32 and 33 of the poem as it appears in the Codex Regius. Snorri gives no citation for either quotation. The verses quoted in *Skáldskaparmál* are presented as direct speech within a narrative about Sigurðr and Hreiðmarr's gold. We cannot leap to the conclusion that Snorri knew the comments of the nuthatches regarding Sigurðr's relations with Reginn from the same poetic context as is preserved in the Regius manuscript (which is constituted of groups of dialogue stanzas between different sets of speakers). In fact, we have no inkling of the overall shape of the poem/s Snorri quotes these stanzas from, although given the closeness of his quotations to the Regius text we might speculate that both works derived from a common written original, which would favour the existence of a stable poetic whole.

In addition to naming the poem *Grimnismál*, Snorri alludes to the mythological context of an utterance he quotes, which can be compared with the narrative frame (expressed in this case in prose) preserved in recordings of the entire poem, and may be taken as an indication that the poem Snorri knew was very similar (at least in outline if not in the phrasing of every line or the composition of every stanza) to the text preserved in the collection manuscripts. *Vafðrútnismál* is not named by Snorri, but its speakers are identified by him before one quotation, and it seems likely Snorri knew the narrative context of their exchange as a wisdom trial (see below).

There is one outstanding difference between the verses Snorri quotes from *Grimnismál* and the text preserved in the collection manuscripts - the consistent lack of ordinal numbers in the stanzas describing the halls of the gods in Snorri's text. Whereas R reads: "Prymheimr heitir inn sétti, er Piazi bió. . ." SnE manuscripts read: "Prymheimr heitir, er Piazi bjó. . .". The retention of the ordinal numbers in quotation would have been inappropriate, since they are not quoted as a sequence, but piece-meal at different points in Snorri's
disquisition on mythology. (Table 2 shows the order of Snorri’s quotations from Grímnismál. Stanzas beginning with the name of a hall are nos. 32 (Gm 12), 35 (Gm 11), 36 (Gm 14), 37 (Gm 13) and 39 (Gm 15)). In none of these citations does Snorri name the poem, although he does so in the quotations from Grímnismál immediately before and after the stanzas concerning halls. In chapter 20 Snorri quotes a long list of Öðinn’s names that accords with those parts of Gm 46-54 consisting only of names, and distills further names from those parts which include short prose descriptions relating to each name (461-7, 471-7, 481-4, 498-10, 501, distillation of 493-7 and 542-3, 544-6).

There can be little doubt Snorri knew this catalogue from a poetic context very close to the extant text of Grímnismál, since he introduces the list with the following background information: ‘... ok enn hefir hann lóðinn nefnzk á fleiri vega þá er hann var kominn til Geirrœðar konungs” (21: 30-31). As Snorri has already stated that the names belong to Öðinn, he omits 541 (“Öðinn ec nú heitt”), the dramatic climax of the poem, because it is superfluous to an undramatic presentation of mythological data. Similarly, we may attribute to Snorri the dropping of the ordinal numbers from the list of halls in quotations, since they are cited in a different order from that found in the extant text of the whole poem, and outside the context of an ordered catechism delivered by Grímnir to the young Agnarr. In the poem, the context for the numbered list of halls is provided by the preceding stanzas:

Land er heilact, er ec liggia sé
ásom oc álftorn nær;
enn í Prúðheimi scal Þórr vera,
unz um riúfaz regin.

Ydalir heita, þar er Úllr hefir
sér um gorva sali;
Álfheim Frey gáðo i árdaga
tivar at tannfé.

Bœr er sá inn þriði, er blið regin
silfri þoçþo sali;
Válascálf heittir, er vélti sér
áss i árdaga. Grm 4-6

We cannot be certain the Snorri knew the poem in exactly the same state as the collection manuscripts preserve it, but it is significant that in quoting a pair of stanzas from the poem (in reverse order from the order preserved in R and A), Snorri interrupts the flow of poetry to reintroduce the second verse as if it were from another source. In chapter 16 of Gylfaginning, Snorri quotes
Grimnismál 35 ("Svá segir hér") followed by Grimnismál 34 ("Svá er sagt") in contrast to other quotations of multiple verses from the same source, such as Völuspá, where the stanzas simply run on one after another without interruption. (The U manuscript draws even more attention to the break between verses, introducing the second with "Ok enn segir enn sva"). It is as if Snorri acknowledges that his quotation practice at this point involves juggling the pieces of a poem to suit the order of his prose account.

The exercise of measuring up Snorri's quotations against the stanzas of poems preserved in collection manuscripts is further complicated by the frequent variations between the poetic texts preserved in different manuscripts of Snorri's work, a dimension of poetic transmission that I shall investigate shortly. Sometimes the variations between manuscripts of Snorra Edda or between Snorri's quotations and whole poems are semantically insignificant, but often the degree and frequency of variation along with the size of the sample of stanzas that can be analysed lead to the conclusion that the poem Snorri has used and the poem that is recorded in a collection manuscript cannot be derived from the same written original. There is consensus that this is the case with the poem Völuspá (Helgason: 1964, viii), which will be examined in §6.2.

In Vafðrúðnismál, from which Snorri quotes nine stanzas (and paraphrases several others), the numbered structure of the mythological catechism is provided by the questions - a device not available to Grimnir since he delivers his soliloquy unsolicited. Since most of the mythological detail is contained in the answers, it is these which Snorri uses to support his prose mythology. He quotes stanzas 35, 37, 41, 45, 47 and 51 (spoken in the knowledge contest by the giant Vafðrúðnir), and stanza 18 (spoken by Óðinn disguised as Gagnráðr), though on each of these occasions Snorri's quotation is simply introduced by a formulation such as "hér segir svá", without mention of the poem's name or narrative situation. The first quotation from the poem in chapter 5, however, presents an interesting edition of stanzas 30 and 31, and shows that Snorri (or some of his redactors) knew the mythological catechism in the context of the knowledge contest between god and giant that constitutes the dramatic situation of the extant poem. The R and A texts preserve the following text of this pair of stanzas (with the speakers marked by o.q. (Óðinn qvað) and v.q. (Vafðrúðnir qvað) in what remains of the leaf margins):

\[
\text{Segðu þat it séttu, allz þic svinnan qveða o.q.} \\
\text{oc þu, Vafðrúðnir, vitir,} \\
\]

-130-
The answer stanza in R and A is unusual in being only three lines long, and it is reasonable to suspect that half a stanza has been lost during the written transmission of the poem. (The only other answer to consist of just half a stanza is st. 27, which is paraphrased by Snorri (21: 8-9); Jón Helgason (1965, ix) suggests that perhaps the next sentence in Gylfaginning is a paraphrase of the second half stanza.) A full stanza of st. 31 is preserved in all four manuscripts of Gylfaginning, where the verse is quoted to confirm Snorri's account that the frost-giants call their progenitor Aurgelmir, though he is otherwise called Ymir (Gylfaginning 10: 15-16). The name Aurgelmir only occurs in the stanza before 31 (unlike other answer stanzas Snorri quotes, which usually name a person or place in the opening half line). Thus in order to substantiate his claim that Aurgelmir is the name of the forefather of the giants, Snorri is obliged to quote from the question stanza as well. The quotation from Vafðrúðnismál is prefaced by a stanza from Völauspá in skamna which states that all giants are descended from Ymir, although that poem makes no mention of frost-giants. Snorri's clever juxtaposition and selective use of poetic evidence in this chapter of Gylfaginning has been discussed by Margaret Clunies Ross (1983, 51).

The texts of the two stanzas from Vafðrúðnismál vary across manuscripts of Snorra Edda, and in the reactions of different redactors we can glimpse the extent to which verse could be manipulated when it was used as evidence within a prose account. While most of the versions seek to preserve the name Aurgelmir in the metrical context of the question, none of them wish to include the formulaic first half stanza, which relates to the dramatic situation of the poem, and which has no direct relevance to the topic of mythology in chapter 5 of Gylfaginning. Of those texts preserving part of the question stanza, the Wormianus manuscript is the most succinct, subsuming the quotation of st. 304-6 as a noun clause following the main clause of the prose inquit:

En þær segir svá Vafþrudnir jötnun,  
þvíðan Örgelmir kom  
með jötna sonum  
fyrst, enn fróði jötunn  
or Elívagum  
stukku eitr-dropan  
ok óx unz ór varð jötun,  
þar orar ættir
The last half line of the question stanza fits well enough in this construction, referring to Aurgelmir, even though in its original context it functions as a kind of taunt by Öðinn against his opponent: that is, "enn fróði jötunn" refers to Vafðruðnir, and not Aurgelmir. Öðinn uses this formulation on a number of occasions during the contest, the line occurring in this final position in stanza 20 ("hvaðan tórð um kom eða uphiminn/fyrst, inn fróði jötunn"), and in a slightly different form in stanza 42 ("segir þu íp sannasta, inn alsvinni jötunn."). Rather more awkwardly than the W text of the verses, the Rs and T manuscripts further elucidate the context of the exchange, adding "þá spurði Gangleri" (abbreviated to G. in T) at the end of the prose inquit. The identification of the giant's inquisitor as Gangleri (the guest/questioner in the fiction of Gylfaginning) is presumably the result of confusion on the part of the Rs scribe; the abbreviation in T makes its reading ambiguous - either Gangleri or Gagnráðr (Öðinn's sobriquet in the poem) - but since Gagnráðr is not elsewhere mentioned in Gylfaginning it would be unlikely that the T scribe intended G. to stand for a name never written out in full in his text (cf. Faulkes: 1982, 74 - textual note to 10/26).

The Regius version of the poetic text is also slightly different from W, in its temporal construction ("when . . . ever"), and in the use of a passive form of the verb koma. These textual nuances are probably the product of divergent oral traditions of the verses known to redactors (or possibly of unconscious reconstruction during the process of copying), since there seems no better or worse fit of either version to the prose context. The final line of the stanza accords with the veiled hostility between Vafðruðnir and his challenger instanced at various points in the text of the whole poem, and this half stanza is unlikely to have been generated in the context of Snorri's mythology, where the tension between the two contestants is very much underplayed. As suggested above, the lack of this half stanza in the texts of the collection manuscripts is most probably a result of omission during the written transmission of the whole poem.

"Pá er ór Ælivágum
stukku eitrdropar
ók óx unz ór varð jötunn,
þar eru órar ættir
kornnr allar saman;
því er þat æ allt til atalt."  

*Gylfaginning* 10: 30-35
The link made between stanzas in Rs ("pá er") is arguably part of the prose rather than the beginning of the verse. The U manuscript of this portion of *Gylfaginning* is quite different again. It simply reads -

\[ \ldots \text{en hrimvessar kalla hann aurgelmi, ok þar er a þeirra} \\
\text{ættir sem her segir \ldots} \\
\text{ok en segir sva at} \\
\text{or elivagvm stvckv einr dropar} \\
\text{ok voxtv vindz. ok varð iotvin or.} \\
\text{þær einar ættir kona saman.} \]

Since only those lines that are essential to confirm the account of Aurgelmir's creation are quoted, the U text does not have to grapple with the question half stanza, or any details about the speaker or the context of the exchange. At some stage in the transmission of the U text, the personal pronoun órar has presumably been cut out, since it alludes to the context of Vafíðaðrinir's answer. The alteration, however, has destroyed the alliterative structure of the line, and has perhaps led to the changed metrical form of the first half stanza. Instead of the short line of a *ljóðaháttr* half stanza we find a *fornyrðislag* half stanza, the second line alliterating on "v", and preserving an elaborated description: "and grows awry(?) and became a giant". The genesis of this metrical version is obscure. In general, quotations from *Vafíðaðrinismál* in the U text preserve *ljóðaháttr* rhythm, but on a couple of other occasions the final three half lines of a stanza seem to have been conflated into rather awkward long lines:

\[ \text{morgin doggva þær oc þar um aldr alaz} \quad (454-6) \]
\[ \text{sú mun renna eða riða reginbrautir mær} \quad (474-6) \]

Both these verses are without the usual formulation indicating that poetry is being quoted, such as "svá sem segir" (F. Jónsson: 1931, 76), and perhaps the redactor/s at this point did not conceive of the texts as quotations, and felt freer to shorten them. Nonetheless, the lines do bear some semblance of alliterative structure, particularly in the case of 314-6 in U, though whether the phrasing is the result of a writer's paraphrase is impossible to judge.

The various treatments of the hall stanzas from *Grímnismál* and *Vafíðaðrinismál* 30-31 in manuscripts of *Gylfaginning* leave little doubt that Snorri and his redactors felt unconstrained as far as selective quotation of half stanzas was concerned, but it is still a moot point to what extent they
consciously changed the poetic text within a quotation. In most cases we are not in a position to ascertain how likely it is that Snorri has deliberately altered a text to suit himself, but at least one quotation prompts the surmise that this was not beyond the realms of possibility. The very first quotation within the discourse of Gangleri's informant kings, Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði, is cited from the poem Völuspá, and although there are minor variations in the various manuscripts, all four texts preserve the following opening line:

Ár var alda, þat er ecci var

whereas in both texts of the whole poem the line reads

Ár var alda, þar er Ymir bygði.

In Snorri's mythology, the giant Ymir is not introduced until several answers later (just prior to the quotation of Vafðrúðnismál 30-31 in fact), and the suggestion has been made that Snorri purposefully altered the quotation from Völuspá to conform to his account of the sequence of cosmic creation (Faulkes: 1982, note to p. 9/12-19). Since it is generally conceded that Snorri's text and the text later found in the Codex Regius collection of eddic poems are not based on the same written original, the possibility that variation between the two versions is the consequence of divergent oral traditions cannot be excluded. The case would be otherwise if a comparison of quoted stanzas from a particular poem suggested that the collection manuscript had used the same written version as Snorri had utilised, in which case such a consistent deviation across manuscripts might indicate that Snorri had revised the content of stanzas in the process of using them as evidence in his mythology. The only two poems that belong in this category are Grimnismál and Vafðrúðnismál (Helgason: 1965, ix), whose manuscript variants suggest that only minimal changes were made to texts of verse quotation, except perhaps in the U manuscript.

Textual variants within poetic quotation are found between the four principal manuscripts of Snorra Edda, and in a number of instances, they significantly affect the meaning of the verse. The most extreme readings are found in U, where in some cases, the mythological actors are quite different. For instance, in the Rs manuscript, the 'threshold' stanza quoted at the beginning of Gylfaginning is as follows:

Gáttir allar, áðr gangi fram,
    um skygnaz skyli,
því at óvíst er at vita, hvar óvinir
    sitja á fleti fyrir.
In the U text, however, it is men rather than doors who are the focus of attention:

Scatnar allir áðr né gangim fram
um skygnaz skyl,  
þvíat óvist er vita,  hvar óvinir
sitja á fletiorn fyrir.

In the U text of Vafþruðnismál 45, different actors again appear. Whereas in the Rs, T and W texts Lif and Lifórasir hide themselves in Hoddmímir’s wood, in U, both those hiding are female, and their hiding place is Mímir’s flesh:

Lif oc Lifórasir, en þau leynaz munu
f holti Hoddmímis;  
Lif oc Lifóraesir, er þar leynaz meyiar
f Mímis holdi;

(Rs)

(U)

Some of these variants are likely to have been generated during oral transmission, and yet they have apparently made their way into texts of Snorra Edda during its written transmission. How and when orally transmitted lines slipped through the net during manuscript production is not discoverable, but there is ample evidence to show how scribes’ own linguistic habits of mind affected written copies (H. Benediktsson: 1965 and Lindblad 1954). Because the textual differences between manuscripts of quotations do not follow a consistent pattern, it has not proved possible to construct a stemma relating manuscripts of Snorra Edda one to another (Faulkes: 1982, xxxi-xxxiil).

Most often it is the U text which stands apart, but this is not always so. For instance the texts of Alvissmál 30 quoted by Snorri in Skáldskaparmál (179: 6-8) preserve an array of different readings of heiti for night. According to W (with R), giants call night “óliós”, but Rs, T and A2 attribute the name “ósorg” to them and the reading in U is the apparently nonsensical “oldrg”. There is also some variation in the group of beings identified as users of each term. Whereas W (along with R) attributes the term “niöI” to the gods, T and U identify it as the word used “i helio”. A similar variety of terms is found in the earlier quotation of Alvissmál 20 (Skáldskaparmál 171:13-15), where “dynfara” is said to be the word for wind in the elfin language in W and U (with R), but Rs and T have the elves saying “gnyfara”, and A2 preserves the word “dynfagra”. According to Rs, the gods call the wind “vonsundr”, T and As preserve the reading “vonsuðr”, A2 “vofuðr” and in the full text of the poem, R records the word “vavoðr”. While some of these variants may be put down to differing
orthographic practices, others clearly represent different words in different
versions of the stanza, whose relationship to one another cannot be derived
from a common written original (Helgason: 1965, ix).

Another straightforward example of the complicated relationship between
manuscript versions is found in the quotation of Völuspá 3, where Rs T and U
preserve the line “lórð fannz eigi né upphíminn”, yet the reading in Codex
Wormianus is “lórð fannz æva né upphíminn”, in line with the texts preserved in
both the Regius and Hauksbók manuscripts of the entire poem. There can be
little chance that the W scribe has been directly influenced by the R and H
texts, since the first half stanza of this quotation retains the reading found in all
the SnE manuscripts “Ár var alda, þat er er ecci var” in contrast to the R and H
version: “Ár var alda, þar er Ymir bygði”. The likely explanation for the
variation in W is the scribe’s recourse to his own memory of the line or stanza
from the poem in oral transmission, or perhaps more generally to his own turn
of phrase or idiolect (Helgason: 1964, ix).

While the bulk of quotations are shared by the four principal manuscripts
of Snorra Edda (Rs, T, W and U), additional fragments appear in other
redactions of Skáldskaparmál: in AM 757 4to (757), AM 748 II 4to (A2) - both
from around 1400 - and AM 748 I 4to (leaves 7-28: As) dating from the early
fourteenth century. Both 757 and As record Grímnismál 40-41 (the texts of
which were discussed in §3.5), and As preserves texts of Alvíssmál 20 and 30
(mentioned above). These two stanzas are also found in the redaction of A2,
which includes a quotation of Valþuíðismál 47 as evidence of the use of the
word regin to mean gods (ESS II 591).

One of the four main manuscripts of Snorri’s work, Codex Wormianus, also
preserves the text of a whole eddic poem not elsewhere recorded (Rígsþula) as
well as eddic quotations within a grammatical treatise. Snorri’s nephew, Ólafr
Pórðarson hvítaskáld, wrote the work (now called The Third Grammatical
Treatise) some time between 1245 and 1252 (Ólsen: 1884, xxxv-xxxvii). In it, he
quotes half a stanza about Óðinn’s ravens from an otherwise unknown poem as
an example of prolemsis, and half a stanza from Grímnismál as an example of
polysyndeton (Ólsen: 1884, 92 and 99). The texts of Oláf’s treatise are pre-
served in W and AM 748 I 4to, the manuscript containing one of the two
collections of eddic poems. AM 748 I also contains a fragment of
Skáldskaparmál, which includes a quotation from an eddic poem within a section
devoted to various heiti related to the story of the wolf Fenrir (and introduced by the rubric “fra fenris ulfi”) (ESS II 431-32). The poem lists the extraordinary materials which make up the invincible fetter that the Æsir use to bind the wolf until ragna roc:

Or kattar dyn oc or kono sceggxi,
or fiscs anda oc or fugla miolc,
or biargs r6tom oc or biarnar sinom
or því var hann Gleipnir gerr.

A similar list is included within the prose of Gylfaginning, except that one of the essential ingredients is birds’ spittle and not birds’ milk:

Hann var gjörr af vi [RsT: vI hlutum: af dyn kattarins ok af
sceggxi konunnar ok af rótum bjargsins ok af sinum bjarnarins
ok af anda fiskins ok af fogls hraka.

Gylfaginning 28: 5-7

The form of the material in Snorri's prose account looks likely to have been derived from a fornyrðislag list, of a slightly different character from the one which a later redactor of Skáldsgramál had available to him. The variations in the order of lines and in the non-alliterating last syllable of one line are characteristic of variations in alliterative verse transmitted orally, as we shall see in chapter 6. The verse quotation is also found in AM 757 (again with milk, not spittle), but it is not quoted in any of the other texts of Skáldsgramál. This quotation, along with the variant stanzas of Grímnismál quoted in only two redactions of Skáldsgramál (see §3.5), suggest that redactors of Snorri’s work, while engaged in supplementing sections of Skáldsgramál and adding lists of heiti, drew on their own store of orally transmitted eddic verse to provide authenticating quotations.

And, as we have seen from the quotation in Fóstbræðra saga discussed above, it was not just redactors of Snorri's Edda who incorporated eddic verse into their written works. Another text quoting a snatch of eddic verse is Sverris saga, written early in the thirteenth century, before, it seems, the antiquarian pursuit of preserving whole texts of traditional eddic poems got under way. Again the quotations function aphoristically in the text, in this case as a reminder by King Sverrir to his son of the kind of military behaviour expected of a prince. Without citing any poem by name, the king twice quotes verse to reinforce his rebuke:
Litla ván eiga Birkibeinar þar gøðs höfðingja, er þú ert, ok er sem kveðit var:

Ólikr ertu
yðrum niðjum,
þeims framráðir
fyrri váru.

Ok enn mælti hann til þeira Birkibeina, er í kirkjunni váru:
"Ólikir eru þér ínum fyrrum Birkibeinum, þeir er gengu til lands með mér mötti Magnúsi konungi. Þeim þótt ek ekki nýtr til at vera í orrostum þeim, ok söðu þeir þó, at varygð gengi til, en allir aðrir söðu mér bleyði til ganga, en:
Fár er hvatr,
er hrôrask tekri,
ef hann er í bernsku til blauðr.

G. Jónsson: 1957, II 313-4

The first verse is not known from any other source, but the second half stanza is very similar to the last half of st. 6 of Fáfnismál (Helgason: 1968, xvi-ii), spoken by Sigurðr under cross-examination by the mortally wounded Fáfnir:

Hugr mic hvatti, hendr mér fulltyðo
oc minn inn hvassi hiðri;
fár er hvatr, er hrôðaz tekr,
ef í barnæsco er blauðr.

Again, we cannot leap to the conclusion that the saga writer is quoting Fáfnismál. It is more reasonable to assume that within the fiction of each text, King Sverrir and Sigurðr are both ‘quoting’ a traditional aphorism (Söderberg: 1986, 51).

A considerable amount of eddic verse that is found in Regius and Snorri’s Edda also appears in two other prose works, Volsunga saga and Norns gests þáttr. Volsunga saga is preserved in a single manuscript from the fourteenth century, but is thought to have been written in the latter half of the thirteenth century (Helgason: 1968, viii). As well as a substantial block of fifteen stanzas from Sigrdrífrumál, Volsunga saga preserves four stanzas of Reginsmál, three from Guðrúnarqviða qonnar and half a stanza from Hamðismál. None of the poetic sources are named. The relationship of the texts of these verses with the poems preserved in R suggests that they are derived from the same written source (Helgason: 1968, ix), although the author of Volsunga saga has also made use of other material. Several stanzas are quoted from otherwise unknown poems, one of which the author calls Sigurðarqviða. A further eleven stanzas of Reginsmál are quoted in Norna-Gests þáttr which preserves in addition all but one stanza of the poem Helreið Brynhildar as it is preserved in R. The
pattr is preserved in two manuscripts of Saga Ólafs Tryggvasonar, the earliest
of which dates from the end of the fourteenth century. The pattr itself is
thought to have been composed in the first half of the fourteenth century, and
to have drawn on a written text of the eddic poems (Helgason: 1968, xv).

To summarise this section on the quotation of eddic verse in thirteenth
century prose works, the following two tables present each instance of
quotation, its textual context and significant manuscript variants in the wording
of the introduction. The beginning of each quoted verse is taken from the
following editions: Gylfaginning (Faulkes: 1982), Skáldskaparmál (F. Jónsson:
1931), The Third Grammatical Treatise (Ólsen: 1884), Volsunga saga (G. Jónsson:
1954, I), Norna-Gests pattr (G. Jónsson: 1954, I), Fóstbræðra saga (Þórólfsson
and Jónsson: 1943) and Sverris saga (G. Jónsson: 1957). The texts of manuscript
variants of the introductory wording to quotations in Snorri's Edda are from F.
Jónsson (1931), or for verses not included there, from Edda Snorra Sturlusonar
I-III (1848-87). The patterning of Snorri's quotations according to types of
sources (skaldic and eddic) will be taken up in §4.2. The right-hand column of
each table refers to features of Snorri's prosimetrum which will be considered
in §4.3.

Table 2 Verse quotation in Gylfaginning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning of verse</th>
<th>No. of half lines</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Function in relation to prose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Gefjun dró frá Gylfa</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ragnars-drápa</td>
<td>Svá segir Bragi gamli</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Á baki létu blíkja</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Haraldskvæði</td>
<td>Svá segir Þjóðólfr inn hvinverski at...</td>
<td>evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Gáttir allar</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>?Háv 1</td>
<td>þa mælti hann</td>
<td>narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Stattu fram</td>
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<td>Hár segir ... ok...</td>
<td>narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Ár var alda</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vsp 3</td>
<td>Svá sem segir í Vulsþa</td>
<td>evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Surtr ferr sunnan</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vsp 52</td>
<td>Svá segir í Vulsþa</td>
<td>evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Eru völur allar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hdl 33</td>
<td>svá sem segir í Vulsþa hinni skömmu</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<td>8 hvaðan Aurgelmir (exc. U)</td>
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<td>Vm 30</td>
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<td>T. þa spurði G.</td>
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<td>Rs. på er</td>
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<td>U. ok enn segir sva</td>
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<td>Vsp 5</td>
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<td>evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Ör Ymis holdi</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gm 40</td>
<td>svá sem hér segir</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 En ór hans brám</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gm 41</td>
<td>-follows on-</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Austr þyr in aldna</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vsp 40</td>
<td>Svá segir í Völsúpa</td>
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<td>U. sva segir</td>
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<td>-follows on-</td>
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<td>18 Ñýt, Ñíði</td>
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<td>Vsp 11-</td>
<td>Ok þessi segir hon nofn peira overganna</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>U. ok segir þeim</td>
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<td>Vsp 15,13</td>
<td>En þessir eru ok overgar list</td>
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<td>þessi eru nofn þeira list</td>
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<td>Vsp 15-16</td>
<td>Øllinn í Völsúpa</td>
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<td>22 Kormot ok Qrmot</td>
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<td>Gm 29</td>
<td>er svá heita</td>
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<td>23 Sundrbornar mjók</td>
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<td>Fm 13</td>
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<td>Svá er sagt</td>
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<td>Vsp 19</td>
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<td>E. Ok enn segir her sva</td>
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<td>Function in relation to prose</td>
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<td>41 Ne ek flýg</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Hon segir</td>
<td>narrative</td>
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<td>42 Hrist ok Mist</td>
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<td>Gm 36</td>
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<td>Skm 42</td>
<td>þa kváð hann þetta</td>
<td>narrative</td>
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<td>44 Andhrímnir lætr</td>
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<td>Gm 18</td>
<td>Svá er hér sagt</td>
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<td>Gm 19</td>
<td>Svá segir hér</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<td>46 Huginn ok Muninn</td>
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<td>Gm 20</td>
<td>Svá sem sagt er</td>
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<td>47 Fimm hundrað dura</td>
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<tr>
<td>52 Þókk mun gráta</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Vsp 46-7</td>
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<td>evidence</td>
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<td>55 Hvat er með Ásum?</td>
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<td>Vsp 48</td>
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<td>evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>56 Hrymr ekr austan (exc.U)</td>
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<td>57 Kjöll ferr austan (exc. U)</td>
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<td>Vsp 51</td>
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<td>evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58 Surtr ferr sunnan (exc. U)</td>
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<td>evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>59 Pá kemnr Hlínar (exc. U)</td>
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<td>60 Gengr Óðins son (exc. U)</td>
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<td>62 Sól mun sortna (exc. U)</td>
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<td>Vsp 38</td>
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<td>65 Þar kvélr Njóðöggr</td>
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<td>Vsp 39</td>
<td>En í Hvergelmi er verst</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<td>66 Víðarr ok Váli</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vm 51</td>
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## Table 3: Quotation of eddic verse in other prose works

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<td>1 Ivalda synir</td>
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<td>Gm 43</td>
<td>sva sem her segir</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<td>(RsTWU)</td>
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<td>(W 3)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Vaxattv nu Vímvr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Pá qvað Pórr petta</td>
<td>narrative&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>3 Eino neytta ek</td>
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<td>(U)</td>
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<td>4 Glasir stendr</td>
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<td>U. sem her segir</td>
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<td>Fm 32</td>
<td>þa mælti ein</td>
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<td>(RsT)</td>
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<td>6 Þar liggr Reginn</td>
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<td>Fm 33</td>
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<td>(RsT)</td>
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<td>(qvað oNur at end of first half line)</td>
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<td>7 Nv ero komnar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gs 1</td>
<td>þat er sagt, at þær qveði lioð þav, er kallat er Grottasavngr ok er þetta upphaf at</td>
<td>evidence&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>(A2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Nv ervm komnar</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Gs 1-24</td>
<td>(whole poem quoted at end of chapter without introduction)</td>
<td>evidence&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>(RsT)</td>
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<td>9 Hrafn ok Sleipnir</td>
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<td>A. þæsir ærv hæstar taldir í þ.</td>
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<td>10 Vig ok Stvfr</td>
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<td>12 Dagr reið Dravslí</td>
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<td>Æstir ro en talþir í Alsvínz malvm As. Æstir hæstar ærv talþir í Kálfsvís U. frá hestum</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>(RsTU As A2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Vesteñ Vali</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Æstir oxna heitt erv í Ægrims þvív</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>(RsTU As A2)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Björn reið Blakki</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Æstir erv enn heitt nætrinnar í Alsvínz-malvm As A2. Alvismalvm</td>
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<tr>
<td>(RsTU As A2) (As 10)</td>
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<td>15 Gamalla vxna nofn</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Æstir erv enn heitt nætrinnar í Alsvínzmalvm As A2. Alvismalvm U. olvismalvm</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>(RsTU A2)</td>
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<td>16 Vindr heittir með monnvm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Alv 20</td>
<td>Sva segir í Alsvínz-malvm</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>(RsT As A2)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Nott heittir með monnvm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Alv 30</td>
<td>Æstir erv enn heitt nætrinnar í Alsvínz-malvm</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>(RsTU As A2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Sv skal renna</td>
<td>*3</td>
<td>Vm 47</td>
<td>Æstir erv enn heitt nætrinnar í Alsvínz- malvm</td>
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<td>(A2) [ESS II 591]</td>
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<td>19 Or Ymis holdi</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gm 40</td>
<td>Æstir erv enn heitt nætrinnar í Alsvínz- malvm</td>
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<td>(As 757) (757 5)</td>
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<td>20 Ænn or hans brám</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gm 41</td>
<td>Æstir erv enn heitt nætrinnar í Alsvínzmalvm</td>
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<td>(As 757) [ESS II 431, 514-5]</td>
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<td>21 Or kattar dyn</td>
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<td>Æstir erv enn heitt nætrinnar í Alsvínz- malvm</td>
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<td>(As 757) [ESS II 431-2, 515]</td>
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**Third Grammatical Treatise**

1 flvgv hramnar tvær (AsW) | 4 | - | sær her ær qveðít | evidence |
2 Saðr oc svipall (AsW) | *2 | Gm 47 | sær qveðít ær í grimmismalvm | evidence |

**Fóstbraða saga**

1 A hverfanda hvélt (HF) | *3 | Hág 84 | er kveðinn hafsði verit um lausungarkonur | narrative |

**Sverris saga**

1 Ólíkr ertu | 4 | - | sem kveðít var | evidence |
2 Får er hvatr | *3 | Fm 6 | en... | narrative |

**Ylsvunga saga**

1 Ristu af magni | 4 | - | sem kveðít er | evidence |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning of verse</th>
<th>No. of source half lines</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Introduction .mss variants</th>
<th>Function in relation to prose</th>
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<tr>
<td>2 Hvat er mat fiska</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rm 1</td>
<td>På mælti Loki</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Andvari ek heiti</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rm 2</td>
<td>-follows on-</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Gull er þér nú reitt</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rm 6</td>
<td>På kvað Loki</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
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<td>5 Hnikar hétu mik</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rm 18</td>
<td>Hann svarar</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Björ færik þér</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sdr * 5-13</td>
<td>[Brynhildr]mælti</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
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<td>7 Munk-at ek flæja</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sdr 21</td>
<td>Sigurðr svarar</td>
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<td>8 Eldr nam at æsast</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sva er kveðit</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<td>9 Sigurðr Grana</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-follows on-</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Sigurðr vá at orm</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>svá sem kveðit er</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Út gekk Sigurðr</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Svá segir í Sigurðar-</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kvöðu</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Sumir viðfiska tóku</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>sem skáldit kvað</td>
<td>evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Stuttar brynjar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gør II  199-12</td>
<td>sem kveðit er</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<td>14 Váru í því horni</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gør II  22</td>
<td>sem hér segir</td>
<td>evidence</td>
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<td>Gør II  23</td>
<td>-follows on-</td>
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<td>Hr 281-4</td>
<td>sem kveðit er</td>
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<td>Norna-Gests pátir</td>
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<td>1 Kominn er hingat</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rm 13</td>
<td>På kvað Reginn vísu</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
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<td>Rm 14</td>
<td>Ok enn kvað hann</td>
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<td>3 Hätt munu hleja</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rm 15</td>
<td>[Reginn] kvað vísu</td>
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<td>4 Hverir ríða hér</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rm 16</td>
<td>þessi maðr ... ok kvað</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
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<td>5 Hér erum vér Sigurðr</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rm 17</td>
<td>Reginn kvað í móti</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
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<td>6 Hnikar hétu mik</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rm 18</td>
<td>Heklumáðrinn kvað</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Segðu mér pat, Hnikarr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rm 19</td>
<td>Sigurðr kvað til</td>
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<td>hekulumanns</td>
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<td>8 Mörg eru göð</td>
<td>6 sts.</td>
<td>Rm 20-5</td>
<td>Hnikarr kvað</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Nú er blöðugr órn</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rm 26</td>
<td>På kvað Reginn</td>
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<td>10 Skaltu í</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hr 1-2</td>
<td>Gygr kvað</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Hvat skaltu vitja</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hr 2</td>
<td>-follows on-</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Bregðu mér eigi</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hr 3</td>
<td>På kvað Brynhildr</td>
<td>narrative 1  &lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Pú e rt, Brynhildr</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hr 4</td>
<td>Gygr kvað</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Ek mun segja þér</td>
<td>9 sts.</td>
<td>Hr 5-6</td>
<td>Brynhildr kvað</td>
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<td>8-14</td>
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</table>

**Key:**

1 indicates that the stanza is spoken in the first person.

< indicates that the speaker of the stanza is identified in the preceding prose.

* indicates that the number of half lines in the quoted stanza is different from the number in the source poem as it is elsewhere preserved.
§4.2 The categories of eddic and skaldic verse

It can be seen from the first four entries in Table 2 that Snorri's mode of citation and the type of poetry he quotes changes as he moves from the frame of his narrative into the discourse of the mythical kings, Hár, Jafnhár and Priði. The features and differences between these verses are of great interest for our understanding of thirteenth century perceptions of the categories of traditional poetry. Our own modern categorisation of medieval Icelandic verse into two types - eddic and skaldic - is broadly based on the practices of thirteenth century writers, though the bifurcation has tended towards a false separation of the two compositional modes. Unfortunately, the words "eddic" and "skaldic" themselves are imprecise (and downright inaccurate in the case of "eddic") but despite calls to abandon them in favour of other systems of classification (most recently by Pálsson: 1990) they will probably continue to be used. The terms properly designate poetic styles (rather than separate bodies of poetry) and if they are used in this sense they are indispensable to the description of Icelandic literary history.

The distinction between eddic and skaldic verse-styles is predicated on the Codex Regius collection of poems, which is used as a kind of litmus test to categorise poetry by stylistic affinity. Roberta Frank has described the practical definition of skaldic verse - which outnumbers eddic verse four to one in the quantity of lines that has survived from the medieval period - as "all Old Norse poetry from the ninth to the fourteenth century not in Codex Regius and not likely to have found its way into that late thirteenth century anthology" (1985, 159). The qualifications necessary for inclusion in the Codex Regius, or its sister manuscript AM 748 I, (which preserves six of the same poems plus one other) might be surmised and summarised as follows:

**Metre:** Eddic verse is composed in two basic types of alliterative metre, one of which alternates short lines with long. (The uses of these types and their affiliated sub-types, are treated in detail in §§6.4-5). The skaldic features of complicated patterns of assonance and rhyme are rarely found in eddic verse, which in general, does not have a strict syllable count to each line. It is marked by a simplicity and fluidity of metrical form, some poems preserving numerous shifts between metrical styles. In addition, some eddic verse is composed in blocks of lines that do not readily divide into regular stanzas.

**Diction:** Eddic verse is not characterised by a thorough-going use of kennings, although the skaldic style of poetic circumlocution is not unknown in poems preserved in R and A. Eddic texts do demonstrate a specialised poetic lexis to some extent, but in
general, eddic diction is not as removed from the lexis of prose (and presumably everyday speech) as skaldic. (Lexical studies of eddic poetry are referred to in Harris: 1985, 72.)

Syntax: While eddic syntax is less involuted than skaldic, certain syntactic patterns are recurrent in eddic verse, and are linked to metrical and generic form (see further chapter 6).

Actors: The actors in eddic poems are typically otherworld beings - deities, dwarves, giants, volur and elves - and legendary heroines and heroes. Birds and serpents are also well-versed in eddic conventions.

Authorship: All the poems recorded in the R and A collections are recorded anonymously, and no authors are named by writers quoting eddic verse.

Discourse type: Many of the poems are constructed as the unmediated words of the kinds of actors listed above. When the verse is constructed as third person narrative, it is not explicitly mediated by the teller of the story (Hymiskviða 38 is a rare exception).

Subject matter: The poems deal with interaction between deities, giants and dwarves on one hand, and between legendary heroes on the other, and in some poems, between a member from each group. A significant amount of dialogue (and monologue) in the poems expresses items of traditional wisdom, presented in didactic form.

Skaldic verse, on the other hand, is typically composed in more complex metres (such as dróttkvætt), it exploits a specialised lexis and mode of diction as well as particular syntactic patterns, and it is generally preserved as the work of a named poet. The discourse type of skaldic verse is typically impersonal third person narrative, or a report of the events transmitted by the poet to his public (the "I heard tell" formula), and the speaking subject is emphatically non-anonymous (Clover: 1978, 63). There are poems composed in either one of these styles that can sensibly be called eddic poetry or skaldic poetry, but between the two poles of 'typical eddic' and 'typical skaldic' verse lies a great deal of middle ground - poems by named skalds in eddic measure, for instance - and it is this middle ground that requires more careful mapping. The new system of classification advocated by Palsson (1990, 61) based on "subject matter and purpose", does not necessarily offer the possibility of a more sensitive charting of this literary territory. It is in the dimension of poetic style rather than subject matter that there seems to be a distinction operating in both the composition and quotation of Icelandic verse preserved in medieval manuscripts, and it is for this reason that the terms denoting styles (crude though they may be) remain useful. There is a difference in the construction of voice in eddic verse and skaldic verse that medieval poets and scholars not only acknowledged, but used to creative advantage.
It is therefore desirable to view the range of medieval Icelandic poetry as expressive of different configurations of traditional poetic conventions, rather than seeking to construct mutually exclusive types according to a set list of technical features. The latter approach inevitably results in a dead-end, or necessitates an about-turn, since numerous exceptions can be cited to any body of poems so defined — whether the main criterion is metrical form, style of diction, identity of the author or subject matter. Anne Holtsmark, for instance, states “Skaldediktning kan defineres som vn. poesi diktet i de skaldiske versemål” (1970b, 386) but immediately has to modify this attractively neat definition: “noen er i et eddisk versemål, málaháttr, f. eks. Hákonarmál, Eiriks-mál” (1970b, 387). Poems like these are better placed along a spectrum of stylistic gradations between eddic and skaldic, bearing in mind that it was not only skaldic poets who exploited eddic conventions: a number of eddic poems also show signs of ‘skaldic revision’ and the ornaments of skaldic diction were sometimes considered appropriate in eddic compositions (Harris: 1983, 232). The same themes and verbal formulas often occur in skaldic and eddic verse, suggesting not only that particular poems may have influenced each other (Söderberg: 1986, 53-4), but also that those composing in either mode did not draw from separate pools of poetic resources.

The fact that Icelandic poets did not themselves feel compelled to compose in dróttkvætt or other ‘skaldic’ metres all the time underlines the fact that their art was not bound in the way modern technical definitions suggest. It is not easy to deduce the exact nature of the constraints under which early skalds composed, especially since their work is preserved in thirteenth century contexts, in which we have reason to believe attitudes to skaldic praxis had changed. In Háttatal, the metrical treatise of his Edda, Snorri Sturluson demonstrated 100 different metres that he considered appropriate for the composition of praise poems in honour of a skald’s patron. Háttatal in fact consists of three poems, the last of these listing what Snorri deemed to be “lesser” verse forms, forms which he did not consider as polished and impressive as those in the first two poems:

Nv skal vpp hefia it iii. qvæpi þat er ort er eptir envm
smærvm hattvm, ok erv þeir hættir þo margir aðr ilofqvæpvm.

Háttatal 243, 18-20.

By his own admission, Snorri’s hierarchy is not reflective of the values of previous generations of skalds. The metres making up the tail end of this list
are málaháttr, fornyðislag (plus two variations of it, Bálkarlag and Starkarpar-
lag in which the position of alliterating staves is closer to dróttkvætt form)
líoðaháttr and galdralag (Háttatal 251-2). Snorri does not comment on the
particular uses to which these metres might be put, but it is evident from some
of the extant poems that poets did not use them as “lesser” forms, but as
vehicles appropriate for particular kinds of expression.

It does not seem to have been the metrical form itself that attracted
poets, but the matrix of its associations, including the type of utterance and the
type of voice that were conventionally cast in that metre. In §2.2.4.3, I noted
that the authors of contemporary sagas quoted eddic verse that was supposed
to have been spoken by other-worldly figures during dreams, and that the voice
of this poetry derived its authority from the detachment (in space and time) of
the speaker, and the knowledge of future events that the speakers displayed.
Only rarely did skaldic poets represent the speech of gods in their poems, their
most common mode of mythological composition being to narrate scenes painted
on ornate shields or other decorative items (Frank: 1978, 103-5). But there are
instances of figures from other worlds speaking in praise poems, such as
Haraldskvæði, Eiríksmál and Hákonarmál, all dating from the tenth century.
In these compositions, the skaldic poets tended to construct situations in which
they were in a position to overhear and transmit numinous utterance.

The voice adopted by the poet in the skaldic shield-poems is similar in
some ways to the depersonalised “I” of other early Germanic poetry (Clunies
Ross: 1981, 283), and comparable stylistically to the narrative voice of eddic
poetry. In the three poems mentioned above, the poets avail themselves not
only of the eddic mode of narration, but also the eddic construction of dialogue
between gods and heroes. But these poems are distinct from eddic poems (as
preserved in R and A) because of the unmistakable presence of the poet
mediating mythology and in some places unashamedly creating new mythological
situations, notably the reception of recently-deceased kings into Valhöll by
Óðinn and his retinue of Æsir and legendary heroes.

The poet of Haraldskvæði, for example, begins by calling attention to his
creation of a panegyric for the king, which records the words spoken by a
raven and transmitted by a wise valkyrie who understood the speech of birds:

Hlyði hringberendr,
meðan frá Haraldi
The metre of this stanza is *málaháttr* (although some others in the poem are *ljóðaháttri*) and this aspect of metrical form, the use of the voices of valkyries and ravens (as in *Sigrdrífumál* and *Helgaaqvíða* *Hljóvarðasonar*), and the structure of a dialogue composed of questions and answers ties the poem to eddic tradition and lends it authenticity as a vision of events outside the realm of (middle)earthly reality. Stanzas of *Haraldrskvæði* (a post-medieval name) are quoted in four different medieval works, and are variously attributed to Þorbjörn hornklofi, Þjóðólfr of Hvin and Ausun ílskælda, all of whom were poets at Harald’s court (Holtsmark: 1961a, 225-6). The lack of a medieval text of the whole poem and the confusion over authorship of various stanzas have led some scholars to view the poem as a composite work (von See: 1961, 296). A half stanza belonging to a series of stanzas usually assigned to *Haraldrskvæði* is one of the verses quoted by Snorri in the frame narrative of *Gylfaginning*, but I shall return to that in a moment.

It was not conventional for the poet of a praise poem to make himself invisible as the reporter of speech between gods and heroes; indeed it would have been counter-productive to his aim of presenting a finely wrought creation worthy of his patron’s (or his patron’s widow’s) honour. When the anonymous poet of *Eiríksmál* depicted the speech of Óðinn, Bragi and the heroes Sigmundr and Sinfjótli as they welcome the heroic Eiríkr Blood-axe into *Valhöll*, at least some medieval redactors presumed the poet was constructing their speech within his own dream. A single stanza of the poem is quoted by Snorri in ch. 10 of *Skáldskaparmál*, where the various manuscripts construe the first line rather differently, *W* attributing the words to Óðinn, and *R* and *U* constructing them as the poet’s bemused address to Óðinn:

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Hvat er pat drúma Óppín
ec hvögmec fír fir dag rísa
Valhalla rýða
fír fir vegn folki
veþpa ec Einberia
bæpa ec vpp rísa
becki at stra
biorker leyðra
valkyrrírv vin bera
sem visi komi.  
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Skáldskaparmál ch. 10: 91, 1-6

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-149-
In the R and U version, the poet follows the convention of much medieval dream vision poetry, casting himself as a dreamer in order to function as a medium through which the words from another world can be transmitted (Lid: 1958, 300). A longer quotation is preserved in Fagrskinna where the verse is used to authenticate the author's statement that Óðinn welcomed Eiríkr into Valhöll:

Eptir fall Eirlks lét Gunnhildr yrkja kvæði um hann, svá sem Óðinn fagnaði hónum í Valhöll, oc hefr svá:
“Hvat es þat drauma,” qvað Öðinn,
“es ek hugðumk fyr dag litlu . . .

(Einarsson: 1985, 77)

There are parallels to both these syntactic constructions in extant eddic poems: the addition of an inquit at the end of the first line of a stanza is found in Vkv 29, HHv 14, Rm 9, though it is not found in the first stanza of any other extant poem. Segments of dialogue are frequently begun with the formulation “Hvat er þat . . . ?” (Alv 2, BD 5, Rm 1) without either vocative or inquit. A vocative in this position is found, however, in the first stanza of Guðrínarqviða í príðla (“Hvat er þér, Atlí? æ, Buðla sonr . . .”).

As the text stands in Fagrskinna, the poetic style shows marked similarities to the eddic compositional mode, particularly in the construction of the poem as an unmediated dialogue, with minimal use of poetic circumlocutions (Marold: 1972, 21). Indeed the fact that the poet's name was not transmitted along with the verse might suggest that the audience's reception of the poem was expected to be along the same lines as that of eddic mythological poems representing the interaction of human kings with the gods - such as Gylfinsmál. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen has recently argued (1989, 240) that the attribution of an author to an eddic poem transforms it, and requires a recontextualisation of the poem since it no longer expresses the anonymity and timelessness inherent in the eddic convention. In Fagrskinna and in redactions of Skáldskaparmál, we are therefore witness to the various ways in which compilers dealt with the contextualisation of the poem in a written tradition, where skaldic poetry (including praise poems) was generally adapted to Continental conventions of citation, where the title of the work, its author and the circumstances of its composition were set forth (Clunies Ross: 1990b, 15-16). Snorri's usual method of citation for skaldic verse was to give the poet's name, and in a very small minority of cases, to simply state: “sem hér segir”. But Snorri has apparently had to alter his usual method here, presumably because the name of the author of Eiríksmál was unknown in the thirteenth century.
The title Snorri uses, *Eiríksmál*, is not found in *Fagrskinna*, and exhibits the same pattern of compounding a person’s name with a speech-act that is conventional in eddic titles (see §5.8). Why Snorri quotes the stanza at all in *Skáldskaparmál* is puzzling, since the verse is preserved within a long chain of quotations exemplifying kennings for Óðinn: “Nv skal lata heyra dæmin, hverning hæfuðskaldin hafa latit ser lika at yrkia eptir þesvm heitvm ok keþingvm, svæ sem segir . . . .” (ch. 10, 88: 4-6). The stanza of *Eiríksmál* contains no kennings for Óðinn, only his name.

Another tenth century princely encomium, *Hákonarmál*, by Eyvindr Finnsson skaldaspillir, also represents the dialogue of Valkyries and gods, but it does so within a narrative account rather than a dream frame. The poem is preserved, apparently in full, at the end of *Hákonar saga góða* in *Heimskringla* and 10 stanzas of it are quoted in *Fagrskinna*. In the prose introduction to the first quotation in *Fagrskinna*, the poem is explicitly compared to *Eiríksmál*, on which it was apparently modelled (Holm-Olsen: 1961, 51):

. . . sem Eyvindr segir í kvæði því, er hann orti eptir fall Hákonar, ok setti hann þat eptir því sem Gunnhildr hafði láttir yrka um Eirík sem Óðinn byði hónum heim til Valhallar, ok segir hann marga atburði í kvæðinu frá orrostunni, ok hefr svá:

    Gondul ok Skogul
sendi Gautatýr
at kjósa um konunga, 
hverr Yngva sættar
skyldi með Óðni fara
i Valhól at vesa.

Einarsson: 1985, 86

By comparing *Eiríksmál* with Eyvindr’s composition in this way, and twice stating that the poem about Eiríkr was commissioned by his widow, the compiler of *Fagrskinna* contextualises it in his work as a skaldic praise poem, one that has accidentally lost its auctor. Snorri’s contextualisation seems to draw the poem in the other direction, towards the anonymous eddic tradition of unmediated speech, although as noted above, some of the redactors of his work (or perhaps Snorri himself) were in two minds about who the speaker of the opening line of the poem was.

In praise poems, whether they have a mythological focus or not, the skald is usually quick to establish his persona, and draw attention to his authorial presence (Clunies Ross: 1981). In another work by Eyvindr skáldaspillir,
Haleygjatal, Eyvindr begins by calling for a hearing for his poem and ends by likening his creation to a stone-bridge (Skjald I 62). In Hákonarmál - and perhaps also in Eiríksmál if the inquit is original - the skald adopts a rather different procedure, assuming the depersonalised voice of eddic narration to lead the audience into a story which has a quite different focus from the eddic stories: in both poems, the dialogue of gods concerns the high status of the king. The title Hákonarmál is found in Heimskringla, and like the compound Eiríksmál, aligns the poem within the eddic tradition of gods' or heroes' speech unmediated by skaldic artistry, even though the speech of the kings constitutes only a small part of each poem.

Hákonarmál begins as a narrative account of two vakyries' mission to choose a battle hero for Óðinn. Their conversation is overheard by King Hákon, who questions them before they spirit him off to Valhöll where he is welcomed by Hermóðr and Bragi. Óðinn in fact has only a small speaking part in the poem and once within Valhöll, the focus is very much on Hákon who is presented, in his wise caution and readiness for battle, as an ideal king (von See: 1963, 322). In the last stanzas of the poem, the unassuming persona of the poet falls away, as Eyvindr extols Hákon's praises in a virtuoso display of eddic styles:

Góðu dögr
verðr sá gramr of borinn,
es sér getr slikan sefa,
hans aldar
mun æ vesa
at góðu getit.
Mun óbundinn
á yta sjot
fenrisulfr fara,
áðr jafngóðr
á auða tróð
konungmaðr komi.
Deyr fé,
deyja frændr,
eyðisk land ok láð;
siz Hákon
för með heldin goð,
morg es þjóð of þeúð.

Hákonarmál 19-21 (Skjald I 59-60)

It is these stanzas that Fagrskinna quotes (having omitted the dialogue of the vakyries and gods) and they are introduced as Eyvindr's words (Einarsson: 1985, 94). The direct references to mythological events and the syntactic
construction in the second stanza ("mun...aðr") are similar to lines of *Voluspá* (st. 45 for instance). The topos of a cataclysm occurring before a better leader appears elsewhere instantiated in the tradition of praise poems (in *Þórfinsdrápa* 24 by Arnór Þorðarson jarlaskald, for instance), as well as in love poetry (in Kormákr's verse expressing his passion for Steingerðr in Kormáks saga, v. 19 (Sveinsson: 1939, 222)). The line "Deyr fé, deyja frændr" also occurs in *Hávamál* (sts. 76-7) though it may be an alliterating cliché rather than a deliberate echo (Evans: 1986, 14). Whether the poet has in mind particular lines of an eddic poem or whether he is using eddic conventions to generate his own lines is a moot point, and to a certain extent it does not matter. The rhapsodic effect of the stanzas stems from Eyvindr's contextualisation of eddic idioms, and from his assumption of the voice of prophecy and the voice of wisdom, both of which are invested with great authority.

Poets continued to use the gnomic and prophetic modes of eddic composition in their works, though the vogue for skalds to represent the speech of the gods seems to have passed with the tenth century. In the last chapter I mentioned that two learned works composed around the turn of the thirteenth century, *Hugsvinnsmál* and *Merlínúspá*, employed eddic conventions. The significance of the eddic mode can be seen in sharp relief in *Merlínúspá*, as the original *Prophetiae Merlini* by Geoffrey of Monmouth was composed in Latin prose, while Geoffrey himself claimed he was following a 'British poem' (Turville-Petre: 1953, 200). When the monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson translated the work into Icelandic he chose not only to render it into verse, but to bring into play the conventional diction and verse-forms of eddic prophecy, as they are known from *Voluspá*, *Gripisspá* and *Fáfnismál* (J. Benediktsson: 1966, 557). Unlike those anonymous traditional works, however, the skald's persona is projected into the composition by his use of kennings and by the way he frames the prophecy with his own words. Like the poet of *Haraldskvæði* he established himself as the transmitter of another's utterance in the very first stanzas and elaborated on the way his audience should understand his work:

1. Róðumk segja
sundbáls viðum
spár spakligar
spámanns gafugs,
þess es á breiðu
Breitlandi sat,
hét Merlínus
margvitr gumí.

3. Leitiga ýtum
orð at vanda,
viti flotnar þat,
fræðis þessa;
heldr fýsumk nú
formra minna
miðsamlig rök
mönnum segja.
2. Sagðr vas lýðum
ok landrekum
myrk at ráða
mörk rór fyrir;
Kaarr vas hann kyni
krístnu þjóðar,
vasat á moldu
maðr vitrari.

4. Ljóð mun lýðum
ljóðborg vera,
þó es í fræði
flest at ráða,
þats fyrir jofurr
oldum sagði
brekkr þjóðu;
nú skal brag kveða.

Merlinusspá 1 1-4 (Skjald II 10)

In the final stanza of the poem, the poet employs the same conventional closing
that is found in Hávamál and Gylfaginning. Gunnlaugr is perhaps more forthright
in his call to his audience to exhibit prudence in the use of the knowledge he
sets out, urging them to cast aside that which is not appropriate to Christian
thinking:

Heilir allir
þeirs hlýtt hafa
fleinnvarpaðír
fræði þessu,
geri gött gumar,
en glati illu,
böði bráða
bót afruna,
haft hyljli guðs
ok himinríkki!

Merlinusspá II 103 (Skjald II 45)

The prophetic mode was only one of the modes of eddic composition that
attracted poets. The narrative mode familiar from the heroic poems of the
Codex Regius is found in twelfth century works such as Krákumál (Holtsmark:
1961c, 417) and continued to be used by poets in the twelfth and thirteenth
centuries. Two twelfth century panegyrics by Gísl Illugason and Ívarr
Ingimundarson also instantiate eddic conventions (Harris: 1984, 389), with both
poets drawing attention to their own roles in interpreting and presenting
material (for instance, Sigurðarbolkr st. 44 and 46; Erfikvæði um Magnús
berfaett st. 20). The poet’s presence within his composition is at the heart of the
difference between traditional eddic verse - which is invariably transmitted
without any indication of its author - and skaldic verse using eddic modes. A
case has also been made for the interpretation of particular verses and poems
as skaldic revisions of traditional eddic verse (Harris: 1983, 231-2), a
proposition that lends weight to the view of eddic and skaldic praxis as
interactive conventions, rather than mutually exclusive poetic traditions.

-154-
To return now to the quotation of verse in Snorri's Edda, where it is significant that Snorri used only eddic verse in quotations of the direct speech of mythological figures, a pattern that is found in both Gylfaginning and Skáldskaparmál. In his quotations, Snorri consistently distinguished between skaldic verse as the distinctive verse-form of human poets, and eddic verse as the utterance of the gods (Clunies Ross and Martin: 1986, 71). Thus, in the frame-story of Gylfaginning, two stanzas are cited to substantiate Snorri's narrative, and in both cases, Snorri names the skald who composed the lines: Bragi skáld gamli (1) and Þjóðólfr inn hvínverski (2). The metre of the first verse is dróttkvætt. The metrical form of the second verse is similar to eddic measure, though some of the traits of dróttkvætt style are found in Þjóðólfr's composition, more so in the second half stanza quoted in other sources, and in stanzas thought to belong to the same poem (Turville-Petre: 1976, 12). The style of diction used in each of the stanzas includes the use of kennings: "djúpróðull óðla" (deep wheel of the earth = plow) and "ennitungl" (forehead moons = eyes) in Bragi's stanza (Frank: 1978, 108-110) and "Sváfnís salnæfrar" (Óðinn's hall-shingles = shields) in the second verse (Faulkes: 1982, 134).

The first chapter of Gylfaginning containing Bragi's stanza is not found in the U manuscript of Snorra Edda, but there are strong literary reasons to consider the chapter as an integral part of Gylfaginning, providing as it does the motivation for Gylfi's quest (Clunies Ross: 1978, 151). None of the manuscripts of Snorri's work formally divide the Prologue from Gylfaginning with a rubric, but they indicate a transition of sorts by the use of a decorated initial capital (Lindow: 1977, 115). If the text of the Edda is to be regarded as a continuous piece here, there is nonetheless a perceptible shift to a new episode (either with the story of Gefion's creation of Zealand, or with the narration of Gylfi's quest, both of which are set in Sweden) following the trek of the gods northward from Tyrkland to Austr Saxland (5, 29), Jótland (6, 3), Svíþjóð (6, 4), and finally to Nóreggr (6, 18). Once within Scandinavia, Snorri has the resources of indigenous poetry to draw upon for his narratives, and he has the Icelandic literary model of historical prose sagas to follow, which employed quotations from skaldic poets as eye-witness testimony to historic events.

Snorri follows these models when he writes his 'historical' background to Gylfi's audience with the clever Æsir, substantiating points with reference to the words of named skalds. The second stanza Snorri quotes also happens to be quoted (in full) in Fagrskinna and Pátr Hálfðanar ok Haralds (Turville-Petre: 1982, 134).
1976, 14-15) and in Heimskringla (Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, I 117), where it is attributed to another poet, Þorbjörn hornklofi (Faulkes: 1982, 57). Despite the fact that the poet's identity is uncertain, both those named were poets at the court of King Haraldr hárfagri, and in the other contexts in which it is quoted, it is clear that the verse was understood as an eye-witness account of the enemy's retreat at the battle of Hafrsfjörðr, in which Haraldr was victorious. In Gylfaginning, Snorri quotes it to illustrate his account of the Æsir's capacity for creating delusions, presenting as they do a high hall thatched with gilded shields to Gylfi's view. Snorri's introduces the verse: "Svá segir Þjóðólf frinn hvíverski at Valhöll var skjöldum þokð" (7: 29-30), even though Þjóðólf frinn in fact describes a band of warriors retreating from a storm of stones with their shields on their backs - the term 'shield' being expressed by the kenning "Sváfnis salnæfrar", or Óðinn's shingles.

The relationship of the point being made in prose and the verse quotation is hardly straightforward, but that is perhaps in keeping with the complex levels of narration that Snorri is juggling at this point in his text. John Lindow (1977) has offered an ingenious explanation for Snorri's choice of poetic text here, interpreting it in the light of the whole text of Haraldskvaði (which treats the theme of life in a hall complete with poets, jesters and jugglers) and viewing it in its embedded context in ch. 2 of Gylfaginning. His argument that Snorri chose this text over an eddic stanza (such as Grímnismál 9) because it was "closest to hand" (Lindow: 1977, 124) seems strained given the distinct patterns of citation employed inside and outside the mythological discourse of Gylfaginning (although Lindow does argue that ch. 1 is without the authority of some manuscripts, and hence there is little basis for perceiving a pattern).

None of the verses quoted by Háð, Jafnhár or Priði are attributed to named skalds; in fact, as mentioned previously, they are often attributed to the gods themselves. Within the discourse of the kings in Gylfaginning, two levels of quotation are apparent: stanzas quoted by Háð (or Jafnhár or Priði) as evidence for details given in their answers to Gangleri, and stanzas spoken by mythological figures within discourses embedded within answers. The former kind of quotation is introduced by formulations such as "svá sem hér segir" (sometimes including a citation, such as "í Völsespá") and the latter "svá qað X" where X is a mythological figure. To distinguish between these two modes of quotation, Clunies Ross and Martin (1986, 71) adopted Grabski's (1981) term the "mention" use of quotation for the first mode, the second mode being simply
described as direct quotation. In an earlier study of quotation practices in
kings' sagas and family sagas, Bjarni Einarsson (1974, 118) distinguished
between these two types, describing them as verse quoted "as evidence" and
verse "to be considered part of the story".

Both the skaldic stanzas quoted in the frame of Gylfaginning are examples
of the mention use of quotation, introduced by the formulation used extensively
by Snorri in Skáldskaparmál "Svá segir X" where X is the skald's name. Indeed
the conceptual relationship of verse 2 to the prose preceding it fits well with
the kind of citation practice evidenced in Skáldskaparmál, where poetry is
quoted as proof of a particular turn of phrase within skaldic praxis in support
of Snorri's account of kenning structure and its mythological underpinnings. In
Table 2, both these stanzas are classified as functioning as evidence in relation
to the preceding prose. The symbol (’) indicates that the speaker of the verse
is identified in the prose introduction to the quotation. The speakers of the
next two verses in Gylfaginning (v. 3 and v.4) are also identified in the prose —
although not in the same way as the formal introductions used for verses 1 and
2. The style of quotation in verses 3 and 4 provides a transition from Snorri's
academic style to the interaction of the characters in his fiction. As suggested
above, verse 3 represents Gylfi's internal monologue and in verse 4, Hár adopts
an aphoristic style of utterance as he addresses Gylfi. In Table 2, I have
designated these two quotations as functioning to extend and develop the
narrative line of the prose, rather than substantiating points already made in it,
as evidential quotation does. The use of verse to develop the psychological
dimension of narrative — particularly by having characters turn to poetic
aphorism by way of reflection on their circumstances — is found in the
quotations from Fóstbræðra saga and Sverris saga discussed above.

The first two pairs of quoted verses and their prose contexts therefore
represent two different discursive styles — one I have termed an academic
discursive style, the other is aligned with a style of narrative prosimetrum found
in saga literature. The discursive mode of the rest of Gylfaginning is
distinguishable from both these styles, although the style of quotation within the
mythological dissertation can be broadly categorised according to the mention
type and the direct quotation type. (In Table 2, I have designated the
relationship of verse to prose according to the categories, evidence and
narrative; the third term, 'list', will be discussed shortly).
There is an important difference in the kind of authority assumed by Snorri when using the academic style of *prosimetrum* (in the frame of *Gylfaginning* and in most of *Skáldskaparmál*), where he produces historical evidence (or historically anchored accounts) as substantiation for his exposition, and within the fictional discourse of the kings and Gylfi, where the whole mythological discourse in fact functions as a report by Snorri. The words of the gods, for instance, are presented as spoken by the Æsir, quoted by Hár, and reported by Snorri. Perhaps, as Faulkes (1982, 66) suggests, we are to imagine the poems were composed in ancient times, before the migration of the Æsir. At the end of *Gylfaginning* (55: 2-3), Snorri explicitly distinguishes “peir Æsir er nú var frá sagt” and “pessir er þá váru þau sömu nófn gefin”. By marking the layers of his discourse in this way, Snorri is able to establish a distance from the words and ideologies he reports, and to exploit the narrative (and ideological) possibilities this distance offers (cf. Bauml: 1980, 250-3). As Margaret Clunies Ross (1990b: 15) has recently shown, there is also a marked difference in the citation procedure between Snorri’s discursive styles, the academic mode of citation being consonant with literate Continental practices, while the style of citation within the mythological discourse of *Gylfaginning* highlights the oral quality of eddic poetic authority. Furthermore, in *Gylfaginning* Snorri presents eddic poetry as the product of a much earlier age than skaldic poetry, and he depicts this age as more closely in touch with the mythic events of prehistory (Clunies Ross: 1990b, 13).

§4.3 Eddic quotation and prosimetrum style in Snorri’s work

It can be seen from Table 2 that the most usual function of eddic quotation in *Gylfaginning* is to provide evidence of mythological details attested by Snorri in his prose account. Frequently it appears that Snorri’s compositional procedure has been circular, with segments of the prose account directly derived from the following verse quotation, though very often Snorri’s prose presents a synthesis of details from apparently disparate sources. In cases where a poetic source is named there can be little question that the function of the citation and quotation is to verify the authenticity and age of Snorri’s mythographic account. When a source is not named (Table 2: no. 10 for instance), it appears that the metrical form itself constitutes authoritative utterance, which is reinforced by the formulaic introduction “svá sem hér segir”. The assumption that verse preserved a reliable account of events from the
distant past is evidenced in Snorri's thoughtful comments in his prologue to *Heimskringla*, and in other asides by thirteenth century manuscript compilers. For instance, the author of *Hervarar saga* describes in prose a conversation between Oddr and Hjálmarr before their encounter with Angantyr and then introduces a poetic quotation with the words: "Petta viðrœmæli þeira sanna þessar vísur . . . " (Tolkien 1960, 6). Other instances of the use of the verb *sanna* in the introduction of verse quotation are given by Einarsson (1974, 122-3).

The way in which verse is used in the earliest stages of the mythological disquisition in *Gylfaginnning* also reveals the special status of verse as a source on ancient ethnic ideology. The first two answers given by Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði present a version of the Scandinavian religion which, in the main, runs parallel to Christian beliefs:

'Hverr er þætr eða elþr allra goða?'
'Sá heittir Alþóðr . . . '
'Hvar er sá guð, eða hvat má hann, eða hvat hefur hann unnið framáverka?'
'Álfvíðr hann of allar aldr ök stjórnar ollu ríki sínú oðr ríllum hlutum stórum ök smám.'
'Hann smiðaði himin ok þóðr ok loptin ok alla eign þeira.'
'Hitt er mest er hann gerði mansinn ok gaf honum ónd þá er lífa skal ok aldrí týmisk . . . Ók skulu allir menn lífa þeir er rétt eru síðaðir ok vera með honum sjálfaum . . . en vándir menn fara til Heljar . . .'
'Hvat hafðisk hann áðr at en híminn ok þóðr væri góð?'
'Pá var hann með hrímþurrum.'

_Gylfaginnning* 8: 27 - 9: 8

Hár's candid answer to Gangleri's third question, however, sees the two religions go their separate ways, and the next question posed by Gangleri ("Hvat var upphaf? Eða hversu hófösk? Eða hvat var áðr?") elicits a response from Hár which is no more than a referral to the authority of ancient poetry:

Hár svarar: 'Svá sem segir í Voluspá:
Ár var alda
þat er ekki var,
Vara sandr né sær
né svalar unnið,
Jóðr fánsk eigi
né upphiminn,
gap var ginnunga
en gras ekki.'

_Gylfaginnning* 9: 11-19

-159-
Throughout the mythological treatise, verse introduced in this way ("svá sem (hér) segir") functions either to substantiate what has already been put forward in prose, or, in a small minority of cases, to present mythological material directly, without a preceding prose account (note, for instance, the introduction to v. 47 (Table 2) in the U manuscript of Gylfaginning). Apart from the quotation above, where the immediate transition into verse works to establish the ancient poems as the repository of mythological knowledge, other quotations that do not substantiate material already given in prose are all metrical lists. In these circumstances, a prose summary of the information has presumably been dispensed with for reasons of economy, since the verse presents densely packed mythological 'facts' without extraneous detail. As I noted above in relation to the quotation of Óðinn's names (Table 2: verse 30), extraneous details are often omitted from the verse list that Snorri quotes. The authenticity of a verse list is established either by the identification of the speaker in the preceding prose (Table 2: verses 18-20, 30), or the identification of its poetic source (Table 2: verse 42).

It is noteworthy that the speaker of the first list quoted in Gylfaginning (Table 2: verse 18) is identified simply by a personal pronoun, "Ok þessi segir hon nöfn þeira dverganna", referring back to the introduction of the preceding quotation: "Svá segir í Völuspá". Snorri weaves his text by having Hár directly quote the speech of the mythological völva - letting her name the dwarves as she did in mythological time - rather than excerpting verses from a poetic text and quoting them as though they were a dry, undramatic, third person account. The fact that the identification 'hon' is sufficient explanation of the speaker of the verse suggests that the voice encoded in compound titles such as Völuspá was far from submerged. Frequently the two words making up these titles are written out separately by scribes, underlining the clear perception of the verse as quoted words, rather than as poetry whose fiction includes a particular speaking subject. Perhaps every citation from Völuspá should also be understood as the words of an identified speaker, since Snorri almost always cites the name of the poem when he quotes from it (Clunies Ross: 1990b, 15).

In all the verse quotations occurring within extended narratives, and functioning to develop that narrative, the mythological speaker is identified in the preceding prose (verses 33, 34, 40, 41, 43 and 52). The content of this verse does not duplicate material in the preceding prose, but forwards the storyline, often in a very dramatic way, such as Þókk's dry retort at the end of
the story of Baldr (ch. 49). Most of these verses are spoken in the first person, and are designated in the table by the symbol (1). Both first person speech and speech by an identified mythological speaker are also found in those quotations used by Snorri as evidence. In verses 10, 21, 29, 38 and 49, direct quotation occurs within an embedded discourse, which as a whole serves to substantiate a point already made in the prose. The embedded discourses in which direct quotation occurs are basically narrative, although the story-telling can be extremely perfunctory, as in the introduction to the Locasenna stanza: "svá sem hér er sagt at Óðinn mælir sjálfri víð þann Æs er Loki heittir." In this case, the embedded discourse as a whole (21: 19-26) serves as evidence for Priði’s account, reiterating a mythological detail he has set forth in prose (namely, Frigg’s prescience). Even more elliptical is the narrative context of Heimdallr’s statement about his multiple maternity (26: 8). In other cases the narrative circumstances of the utterance are developed to different degrees across manuscripts (Vafðrúðnir’s words to Óðinn for instance, v. 9), or the narrative context of the utterance is only implicit in the juxtaposition of prose and verse (17: 18-28):

Par kom Alfrðr ok beiddisk eins drykkjar af brunninum, en hann fekk eigi fyrð en hann lagði auga sitt at veði. Svá segir í Völuspá:

Allt veit ek Óðinn
hvart þú auga falt,
í þeim ínum mæra
Mímis brunni.
Drekkr mjóð Mímir
morgun hverjan
af veði Valföðrs.
Vituð þér enn eða hvat?

Snorri frequently exploits the dynamism of a dramatic situation to underline the authenticity of his material. Both Óðinn and Heimdallr are quoted as though we catch them in mid-delivery ("ok enn segir hann sjálfri í . . .") (verses 29 and 38), and in a more complicated instance (verse 49), Snorri quotes the very words of the Æsir declaring that Óðinn is foremost of gods:

En satt er þat er þú sagðir: mikill er Óðinn fyrir sér. Morg
ðæmi finnask til þess. Svá er hér sagt í orðum sjálfra
Ásanna:

Askr Yggdrasills
hann er œztir viða,
en Skíðblaðnir skipa,
Óðinn Æsa,
en jöð Sleipnir,
Bifrost bruða,
In Grímismál it is Óðinn disguised as Grímnir who speaks this verse. In the corpus of extant poems there is no example of mythological lore being spoken by a plurality of gods, as Snorri's introductory wording seems to picture. Despite a common hypothesis that Snorri was in possession of a written text of the poems Grímismál and Vafþurðënismál when he wrote his Edda (the same texts as were later used by the compilers of the collection manuscripts), this introduction suggests that the dramatic situation in which this list of all-time greats is uttered may have been different from Grímnir's taunting catechism addressed to Geirrödr. Alternatively, the discrepancy might suggest that Snorri deliberately falsified the context in which he knew this stanza, perhaps to lend weight to the observation by constructing it as a general assessment, rather than a partisan declaration by Óðinn (in disguise at the time) of his own peerless status. He is therefore describing a (conventional or original) mythological situation in which the ancient Æsir talk together about the best in ash-trees, ships, horses and gods, and the verse he quotes is just one of many dæmi, or ancient poetic testimonies, which express Óðinn's supremacy.

Throughout Gylfaginning, Snorri uses eddic quotations that express mythological knowledge from the point of view of the grammatical first person. Often these verses function as evidence of mythological details without the context of the utterance being acknowledged at all. Sometimes the "I" simply encodes authoritative assessment: "Sundrbornir mjök/hygg ek at nornir sé" (v. 23) or "Breiðablik heita . . . í því landi/ek liggja veit . . ." (v. 32), but on others the speaker's knowledge is suggestive of much more profound and complex experiences: verse 10 refers to the speaker's earliest memory of time before the earth was created, and the speaker of v. 46 expresses intimate concern for two ravens named Huginn and Muninn. The context of utterance for those stanzas ascribed to Völuspá is perhaps implied, particularly in those stanzas including the refrain "vituð ér enn eða hvat?" (verses 15, 21, 55). By the same token, perhaps the first person voice is also implicitly identified as Óðinn's in stanzas attributed to Grímismál (verses 31, 42 and 47). Eddic mythological verse cast in the grammatical third person also constructs a voice of authority, if only in relation to the knowledge of men -

Askr Yggdrasils
drygir erfiði
meira en menn viti

verse 24 (Gylfaginning 18, 38-40)
or in its knowledge of what is told ("kveða") of mythological phenomena -

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Huminbjorg heita,} \\
\text{en þar Heimdall kveða} \\
\text{valda véum} \quad \text{verse 37 (Gylfaginning 26, 2-4)} \\
\text{af hans vængum} \\
\text{kveða vind koma} \\
\text{alla menn yfir} \quad \text{verse 28 (Gylfaginning 20, 36-38)}
\end{align*}
\]

In Gylfaginning the rationale behind Snorri's decision to quote directly from a poem rather than paraphrase it is not always clear. The density of quotation across the work as a whole is very uneven, with ten stanzas quoted in succession at the end of Gylfaginning, and several chapters of prose unleavened by verse in the last third of the work. The proportion of verse to prose and their arrangement are distinguishing features of Snorri's prosimetrum in comparison with the Latin prosimetra that were written by Continental scholars in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, many of which would have been known to Icelanders. Following Boethius, medieval prosimetrum writers such as Guibert de Nogent, Bernardus Silvestris and Alain de Lille carefully distributed verse throughout their prose, and integrated it into an almost seamless text, often without a change of register in the transition from prose to verse (Friis-Jensen: 1987, 30-35). Another point of difference between the Continental style and Snorri is the function of verse in relation to prose: in Gylfaginning, Snorri quotes from already existing poetry to confirm his prose account, whereas in Continental works such as Bernardus Silvestris's Cosmographia and Alain de Lille's De planctu Naturae poetry was composed in tandem with prose, and both were used to demonstrate the authors' versatility and skill (Friis-Jensen: 1987, 41).

In his study of the models of Latin prosimetrum that were probably known to the Danish historian Saxo, Karsten Friis-Jensen (1987), divides the ways verse is normally used in prosimetra into four types:

1) verse as direct speech put into the mouths of persons in the narrative
2) verse as direct speech by the author or narrator
3) a shift to verse when a description reaches a climax
4) quotation of verse as proof or exemplification

Whereas writers within the Latin tradition composed verse for the nonce, Saxo is thought to have translated earlier Norse verse into Latin in his Gesta Danorum. The style of Snorri's prosimetrum is overwhelmingly of the fourth
type, although as Tables 2 and 3 show, there are scattered examples of type 1 in *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*.

Quotations corresponding to types 1 and 4 are found in saga literature, the proportion of each type apparently depending on the genre and character of each particular work (Einarsson: 1974). Generally speaking, type 1 is more prevalent, being used in kings' sagas, bishops' sagas, family sagas, poets' sagas and *fornaldarsögur*. The use of type 4 implies a detached narrator, and an academic discursive mode, where the narrative or argument is substantiated by quotations from existing poetic authority. Type 1 involves an omniscient narrator relating verse recitation by actors within the unfolding narrative of Scandinavian history (in its broadest terms), as though he were a fly on the wall (or more often, on the horse). In all of these works, however, verse is presented as the quotation of already existing poetry, (although the antiquity of some of these quotations has been questioned by modern scholarship). Karsten Friis-Jensen (1987, 56) has attributed Saxo's inspiration in using the first type of *prosimetrum* to vernacular Norse literature, which he suspects carried over the essential features of a traditional oral *prosimetrum* (1987, 39).

While the direct quotation of verses spoken by actors in the narrative may have been patterned on oral story-telling practices, the desire to construct an authoritative voice backing the narrator's own words probably arose in the new environment of written texts, where the author was distanced from his audience by the written work: he could not assume his audience's familiarity with all the details of his material, and more importantly, he was not in a position to monitor and guide their reactions to his work. Writers therefore sought to transform orally transmitted poetry by named poets into the account of an *auctor* (Clunies Ross: 1990b, 15). In kings' sagas, for instance, the quotation of skaldic verse provided testimony to the newly-created written account, and established the writer as a knowledgeable and well-informed historian. Type 1 is also in evidence in kings sagas, especially if the king or a prominent figure in the saga is adept at skaldic composition (Einarsson: 1974, 119).

In this style of composition, piecemeal quotation generally suited the purpose of the writer best, allowing him to develop his own compositional design without being swept along the course of an earlier poet's account. In the early stages of the literary history of Icelandic poetry, in the latter half of the
twelfth century, the prominent type of poetry to be used as evidence in written accounts was skaldic poetry dealing with historical events (Guðnason: 1978). When Snorri turned his attention to a written mythography, he used eddic mythological poetry in much the same way, as established testimony to details in his written account. Occasionally his source text is so basic to the subject he is dealing with, that he quotes at length from it without interruption. Such is the case in Gylfaginning with the quotation from Voluspá in ch 51, which Snorri tacitly acknowledges as the definitive account of ragna róc. The recording of whole poems on vellum, either in collections, appended at the end of sections within prose works or as single unconnected items in compilations represents a significant development in the literary history of Icelandic poetry, one that will be investigated in the next chapter.
The preservation of eddic mythological poetry as whole poems

The desire to record a text of a whole poem on vellum represents a different intellectual and social response to tradition compared with the incorporation of verse as quotation in written prosimetra. As we have seen, both verse quoted as direct speech and verse quoted as evidence to support statements already outlined in prose tend to result in piece-meal quotation of single stanzas, where the voice, idiom and narrative direction of the prose discourse remains dominant, and contains, through quotation, the subordinant voices of the poetry. In the last chapter we saw how the voices of eddic mythological poems are contained in various ways by the process of quotation in Gylfaginning. Even when a poetic work is the major source for a prose saga, its coherence is lost once it is fragmented and used to serve the purposes of the prose narrative. In Ynglingasaga for instance, single stanzas from the poem Ynglingatal by Þjóðólfr inn hvínverski are quoted individually to support separate episodes of the saga (Fris-Jensen: 1987, 46).

In this chapter I shall consider the emergence of texts of whole eddic poems in manuscripts during the thirteenth century, a style of literary production that does not eclipse quotation as a use of traditional verse in written works, but which signals a change in attitude by manuscript compilers to the role of writing in relation to orally transmitted material. §5.1 of this chapter surveys extant texts of whole eddic poems preserved within prose works, and examines the way in which these kinds of quotations function in relation to the surrounding prose. The contents and discursive styles of the collection manuscripts of eddic poems, Codex Regius and AM 748 I 4to, are described in §5.2 and §5.3 respectively, and in §5.4, I investigate what is known and surmised about the prehistory of the collections, and the earliest stages of the recording of eddic poetry on vellum. §5.5, which treats whole poems preserved in compilation manuscripts, completes the survey of extant eddic poems.

The conventional division of eddic poetry into 'mythological' and 'heroic' verse is analysed in §5.6, with particular focus on the interplay of the two types.
of verse in eddic compositional praxis. The construction of the division 'mythological' and 'heroic' is viewed against the background of the poems' manuscript contexts, and with regard to the way in which literacy promoted new ways of interpreting and categorising the past and poetic works from the past. In §5.7, I consider the possible motivation for the writing down of traditional eddic poetry, and venture into the shadowy territory of the social context of the poems' transmission both in their oral and literate milieux. While few definitive conclusions can be drawn about social attitudes to eddic verse in the thirteenth century, some interesting observations can be made about scribal attitudes to the citation and identification of eddic poems, and I end this chapter with a study of the naming practices of manuscript producers in thirteenth century Iceland (§5.8).

§5.1 Quotations of whole poems in prose works

During the course of the thirteenth century, a growing interest is apparent in recording texts of whole poems rather than limiting the use of traditional poetry to brief quotations within prose works. This interest manifests itself primarily in the collections of whole eddic poems, but it is also apparent in the activity of scribes working on recensions of earlier works who, in certain circumstances, appear to have incorporated whole texts of poems which were originally only mentioned by name, or only quoted to the extent of one stanza. An (apparently) entire eddic poem, Dárťarljóð, is preserved within Njáls saga, written around the time that the Codex Regius collection of poems was produced, in the latter half of the thirteenth century. Saga writers continued to use quotations of traditional eddic poetry throughout the Middle Ages. There was no clear change in compositional style during the course of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, but there was a perceptible trend towards recording whole eddic texts in various written contexts. Nonetheless, works such as Völsunga saga and Norna-Gests þáttr bear witness to a new style of prosimetrum compared with the early style of saga prosimetrum exemplified by kings' sagas. In Völsunga saga and Norna-Gests þáttr whole poems are incorporated in the prosimetrum in order to bring to life the interaction of characters in the story, and to fully dramatise the narrative situation of the poems themselves.
According to the fictions constructed in sagas of ancient and contemporary times, the composition of single stanzas was a common form of poetic expression (Lie: 1965a), with verses presented as the improvisations of actors in the narrative, or in the case of dream-verses, by figures from another world whose verse utterance was reported by actors in the narrative. Single stanzas quoted in sagas are therefore not necessarily excerpted from a 'poem'. Because most medieval verse has been preserved within prose works, ascertaining whether single stanzas originally belonged to larger poetic wholes or were created as lausavísur, is problematic (Frank: 1978, 37). By the same token, extensive quotations from a named poem preserved within a prosimetrum may have constituted the whole of a poem known to a particular writer, or may have simply been an excerpt to suit his theme at that particular point. As a starting point in my investigation of longer quotations in prose works, I want to look briefly at Snorri Sturluson's prose histories.

In Heimskringla, Snorri generally quotes only one or two stanzas at a time, and he distributes verse quotations fairly evenly through his prose. Longer quotations, such as the six stanzas of Tøgdrápa by Þóririnn loftunga quoted in ch. 172 of Óláfs saga helga, are introduced in a way that suggests Snorri still considered the mode of quotation to be piecemeal. The pieces simply consisted of a larger structural unit than the stanza: "ok er þetta einn stefjabálkr" (Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, II 308). A second long quotation from another work by Þóririnn, Glæningskvöða, is introduced with the words "ok eru þessar vísur þar f" (II 406), which makes it plain that the stanzas quoted are only an excerpt from the poem. In Magnús saga ins gða, nine stanzas are quoted from the Bergsoglisvísur of Sigvatr skáld Þóðarson, but the sequence of stanzas is interrupted by the author, showing that the verses are being arranged to suit his purposes in the development of the prose narrative: "I því sama kvæði eru þessar vísur" (Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, III 27). A slightly different relationship of verse to prose is found in another extensive quotation from the work of Sigvatr skáld in Óláfs saga helga (Aðalbjarnarson: 1979, II 134ff.), where Sigvatr recites stanzas from his poem Austrfararvísur with prose links providing the narrative context for each verse (Frank: 1978, 73). Although the stanzas are quoted as direct speech, no more than four stanzas are quoted without prose interruption, and whereas the prose is cast in the third person ("Pa fóru þeir . . ."), the poet casts his account in the first person, and addresses it to the king. The vacillation between discursive modes therefore compromises the integrity of the poetic whole.
The only whole poem preserved in Heimskringla is Hákonarmál by Eyvindr skáldaspíllir, quoted at the end of Hákonar saga góða. In the third last chapter of the saga, five stanzas from the poem are quoted during the description of Hákon’s last battle (Ádalbjarnarson: 1979, I 186ff.). There is therefore some awkwardness when the poem is quoted in full, the five repeated stanzas coming immediately after the opening verse of the poem. In the first quotation of the stanzas (ch. 30) they are presented more or less as a third person description of battle scenes, the only trace of their original context as the sights seen by the valkyries Gondul and Skogul on their mission from Ollinn is the syntactic form of the first line of the first stanza: “Bróður fundu þær Bjarnar”. When the poem is quoted in full in chapter 32, its mythological context is explained in the preceding prose:

Mæltu þeir [vinir Hákon] svá fyrir grepti hans sem heitiðna mann síðr var til, visuðu honum til Valhallar. Eyvindr skáldaspíllir orti kveði eitt um fáll Hákonar konungs ok svá þat, hversu honum var fagnat. Þat eru koðluð Hákonarmál, ok er þetta upphaf:

Hákonar saga góða (Ádalbjarnarson: 1979, I 193)

The prose narrator of Hákon’s saga effectively bows out of the work at this point, and hands over the reins to another narrator to take up Hákon’s story after he has passed from the world of the living. The autonomous status given to Hákonarmál is rare in the prosimetrum of Heimskringla, but then again so is an account of a king’s after-life. Perhaps in the style of the prosimetrum at the end of the saga one can sense Snorri’s reluctance to incorporate the king’s welcome in Valhöll within his own history of Hákon’s reign - the next words of Snorri the historian are “Eiríkssynir töku þá konungdóm yfir Nóregl, síðan er Hákon konungr var fallinn” (Haralds saga gráfeldar, ch. 1). By quoting the poem in full without incorporating individual stanzas about Valhöll into his narrative, Snorri can both dissociate himself from the beliefs implicit in the work and enjoy the artistic effect of the panegyric to Hákon sounding a celebratory note at the end of his history.

It is, however, tempting to wonder whether the introductory formulation “ok er þetta upphaf” originally referred to a quotation of the first stanza of the poem only, perhaps cited as evidence of the traditional belief that Hákon was welcomed into Valhöll, rather than as an introduction to a text of the whole poem. Some manuscripts of Egils saga in fact preserve this introduction when only the first stanza of a lengthy poem is quoted. Egils saga is thought to have been written in the third decade of the thirteenth century, and although a
fragment survives from the mid-thirteenth century, the earliest of the complete manuscripts of the saga date from a century later (Sigfússon: 1958, 522-3). The Móðruvallabók text (AM 132, fol.) of the saga records only the first stanza of Egill’s Sonatorrek (Ralph: 1976), introduced with the words “Ok er þetta upphaf kvæðis”, although the whole text is preserved in the Ketilsbók text (AM 453, 4to) (Nordal: 1933, 245). Arnbjarnarkviða is not recorded at all in Ketilsbók, and in Móðruvallabók only the first stanza is quoted within the narrative (introduced by “ok er þetta upphaf at”), the full text of the poem being copied at the end of the saga by another hand (Nordal: 1933, 257-8). Two shield poems are also attributed to Egill by the saga-author, but in each case only the first stanza is quoted, prefaced by the introductory formulation “ok er þetta upphaf at” (Nordal: 1933, 272 and 275).

The place of the eddic poem Grottasongr in some manuscripts of Skáldskaparmál sheds further light on the question of the signification of this introductory formulation. The majority of quotations in Skáldskaparmál are of skaldic verse - most often cited by Snorri to exemplify the use of different kennings. In general the quotations are very brief, often of only half a stanza. There are interesting exceptions to this, which are of importance to a consideration of Snorri’s style of prosimetrum and also the evolution of texts of whole poems in Icelandic literary history. Substantial quotations are made in Skáldskaparmál from Haustlǫng by Þjóðólfr of Hvin (7 stanzas in ch. 26 and 13 stanzas in ch. 31; the former block not in the U manuscript, although the latter block is), Dórsdrápa by Eilíf the Goðúnarson (19 stanzas quoted en bloc in ch. 27) and Ragnarsdrápa by Bragi Boddason (5 stanzas in ch. 52 and 5 more in ch. 62). Although the verse quoted by Snorri often represents most if not all of the stanzas now extant of these poems (Clunies Ross: 1981, 277-8), his purpose in quoting them does not seem to have been to preserve a text of the whole poem. Haustlǫng and Ragnarsdrápa are broken into smaller segments for quotation, and in all three cases verses presumed to be from the poems are quoted singly at other points in the treatise. In some cases the verses are attributed to the skalds concerned, but are not said to come from Haustlǫng or Ragnarsdrápa. The verses are quoted to substantiate Snorri’s account of a mythological narrative (with introductory formulations such as “Eptir þessi savgy hefír Ort Þjóðólfr hvínleng fi Hæslang. Sva segir þar” (Skáldskaparmál 104, 14-16)), as well as to demonstrate the use of various kennings generated by the myth.

In two manuscripts of Snorra Edda (the Codex Regius and the Codex
Trajectinus, a full text of a whole poem is preserved, although it is placed without introduction at the end of a chapter, as if appended there by a later redactor, not by Snorri. The poem, *Grottasongr*, is usually classified as an eddic poem (Holtsmark: 1960a), and is only extant in this context. The chapter of *Skaldskaparmál* to which it is appended describes the myth behind one of the kennings for gold: "Hví er gyll kallat miol Froða?" (ch. 53: 135, 1). The narrative explanation tells the story of two slave girls, Fenia and Menia, bought by the Danish monarch, King Froði, who exploits the slaves' strength in his desire for "gull, fríðr ok sæla" which he orders them to grind for him, allowing them little time to rest (135, 19-23). Fenia and Menia (who happen to be the daughters of giants) subvert his plans by grinding out an army against King Froði. The poetic text bears an unusual relationship to the narrative in this case, since it is during the time taken to recite their chant (which articulates their pedigrees and spells Froði's doom) that the king's luck turns around. The manuscripts read:

\[ \text{pat er sagt, at pær qvaeþi lióð } \text{pau, er kallat er Grottasavngr.} \]
\[ \text{Ok aðr letti qvaeþinv, molv pær her at Froða, svá at á þeiri} \]
\[ \text{nott kom þar sa sækonvngr, er Mysingr hét, ok drap Froða.} \]
\[ \text{*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 53: 135, 23 - 136, 1} \]

In the U manuscript the whole story is more briefly told: "konvngr let pær mala gyll vm hriö. Þa gaf hann þeim eigi meira svefn en kveþa matt lióð elt. Siþan molþ þær her a hendr honvm ..." (ESS II 362-3). Another manuscript, AM 748 II 4to, picks up on the narrative significance of the poem, and although it does not quote the whole text, after the name of the poem is cited it adds the first stanza:

\[ \text{þat er sakt at þa qvaeþi pær hliod þau er kallat er} \]
\[ \text{grottauongr ok er þetta vpphaf at.} \]
\[ \text{Nv ero konmar til konungs husa} \]
\[ \text{framuisar tuær fenia ok menia} \]
\[ \text{þær ero at froda fridleifssonar} \]
\[ \text{mattkar meyiar at mani gloruar.} \]
\[ \text{ESS II 578} \]

The quotation of the poem lends credence to the narrative and also heightens the drama of the king's encounter with the maidens by giving them a voice. The decision to quote only the first stanza, however, and to introduce it in this way, diminishes the impact, and shows that the A2 redactor is concerned more with proving that there is an authentic poetic source for the story rather than wanting to enhance the telling of it. When Snorri quotes verse within a narrative account, it usually has much more dramatic power than this, for
instance when he quotes the words of the nut-hatches which goad Sigurðr on to killing Regin (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 48), or his quotation of Þókk's merciless refusal to weep Baldr out of Hell (*Gylfaginning* 48, 3-9).

The evidence of the A2 manuscript indicates that the formulation "ok er þetta upphaf" was used when just the first stanza of a work was quoted as evidence. In his introduction to *Egils saga*, Sigurður Nordal (1933, xv) dismissed suggestions that the introductory formulation could be taken as a sign that only single stanzas were originally quoted by the saga-writer as evidence of the existence of particular poems. He considers the formulation to be similar in kind to "Hér hefr upp . . ." but the latter wording is usually used to signal the beginning of a substantial work (*Bretha saga* in Hauksbók, for instance, or *Hyndluljóð* in Flateyjarbók or *Helgavíða Hundingsbana in Fyrri* in R), and does not carry the same meaning as "ok er þetta upphaf". It is therefore possible that this mode of citation was conventionally used to introduce single stanzas quoted as evidence of the existence of a poetic work, but that later redactors of the work incorporated whole texts of poems without necessarily changing the prose introduction to them. The quotation of just the opening lines of a poem rather than its full text may also be taken to imply that some manuscript compilers presumed their readers knew the traditional verse, and only needed to be reminded of it by the opening verse. On this point, Albert Lord (1960, 99) makes some interesting comments on the habit of Yugoslav guslars who refer to a poem by its opening lines, or by naming its actors and event, as a means of identifying it. To someone familiar with such a traditional poem, the opening presumably set in train the processes of memory recall that allowed the 'oral' poem to be reconstructed in the mind's ear, or in spoken delivery.

In all of the works from the first half of the thirteenth century mentioned above, it appears that the most common mode of quotation was of excerpts from poems, and usually very brief excerpts. In those cases where whole poems are recorded at the end of a chapter (that is, not within the original context of quotation), it seems reasonable to assume that the impulse to record a whole poem has come from later redactors of the works. (If the original writer was depending on acquiring a written text from somewhere in order to include it in his work, he would most probably have left sufficient space in his prose to fit the poem in.) This change in quotation practices, which apparently took place between the early thirteenth century and the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, signals an altered attitude by manuscript producers.
toward orally transmitted verse. Rather than viewing a written text as a new work drawing implicitly on its audience's knowledge of traditional lore, they sought to make their texts more explicit by internalising the information necessary to understand them. They minimised exophoric reference in the texts (a linguistic feature characteristic of spoken language and much oral literature), and maximised endophoric reference and the internal coherence of the work (Halliday and Hasan: 1976, 31-37).

In these practices, writers demonstrate the growing dominion of written texts over areas of oral culture, by bringing into the manuscript what seems to have functioned as source material (or evidence) in an earlier version of the written text, and more importantly, by showing that they understood the frame of reference in which the work was placed to be primarily literate. They were in fact in the process of redefining the frame of reference to reduce the importance of oral tradition and to privilege the written medium as a repository of traditional knowledge. The process of transforming oral works into written texts - a process termed 'literarisation' by Kurt Schier (1975, 171-2) - most probably wrought other changes in the poems themselves, though the nature and extent of these changes are obscure. The metrical form of the poems presumably mitigated against a high degree of alteration, but we are unfortunately not in a position to make a conclusive assessment of this.

The clearest manifestation of the desire to preserve texts of whole poems is the Codex Regius collection of eddic poems and the fragmentary collection of poems preserved in AM 748 I. Neither of these collections contains a prologue in which those responsible for the project of recording whole eddic poems might have revealed their motivation for doing so. Nevertheless, the literary taste for collections of poems, or anthologies, is widely attested in other European languages (Rigg: 1982), and there is no reason to think Icelanders would not have been aware of these kinds of works, or that they would not have joined other learned men in exploiting the capacity of the technology of writing for storing extensive bodies of texts. The desire to acquire and accumulate texts can therefore be viewed as a consequence of the growing sophistication of the Icelandic literati in the thirteenth century.

In the second half of the thirteenth century, manuscripts preserving collections of works of the same genre are prevalent; for example, collections of laws (AM 315 b fol., GlS 1157 fol., AM 334 fol. and AM 134 fol.), collected
lives of saints (AM 623 4r), lives of the kings of Norway (GkS 1009 fo.) and lives of the apostles (AM 652 4r) (H. Benediktsson: 1965, xxx-lilii). By the fourteenth century in Iceland, large compilations of texts, often of rather diverse nature, had become a common mode of manuscript composition. Judging by compilations such as Hauksbók and Flateyjarbók, those with the means to produce these kinds of codices sought to integrate numerous texts of different kinds and of different provenance into their own books. In using the terms 'collection' and 'compilation' to distinguish between these types of manuscripts, I am not presuming that Icelandic authors necessarily subscribed to the Continental theories of collectio and compilatio composition (Minnis: 1988, 97), in which a collectio was usually an unordered collation.

Medieval collections of Latin poems are thought to date back to the sixth century (Townsend: 1982), with interest in the compilation of Latin anthologies peaking in the thirteenth century (Rigg: 1982, 318). The most famous collection, the Carmina Burana (Codex Buranus, Munich Staatsbibliothek, MS clm. 4660), contains a wide range of secular Latin verse and over fifty pieces in Middle High German, mostly single stanzas (Groos: 1983). Although many of the poems in the collection have been identified as the work of particular authors - both classical and medieval - in all but three cases the manuscript presents the works as anonymous (Groos: 1983, 98). The manuscript is thought to have been compiled around the middle of the thirteenth century, possibly at the court of a bishop. A full bibliography of medieval Latin poetic anthologies is found in Rigg (1977). In England, collections of vernacular poems are known from the eleventh century, when the Exeter Book was compiled (Krappe and Dobbie: 1936), and a significant number of verse anthologies survive from the following centuries, among them the Bekynton anthology (Bodleian MS Add. A. 44) and the Harley lyrics (British Library MS Harley 2253). Against this background, it is hardly surprising that literate Icelanders created anthologies of traditional vernacular poems, especially considering the general interest they displayed in antiquarian pursuits (see §3.4).

The Codex Regius collection of poems is stylistically a very interesting anthology, since it begins by recording one poem after another with a minimum of authorial prose (Völuspá, Hávamál), but during the course of the anthology, the manuscript reveals a very active authorial voice, linking, cross-referencing and quoting verse in the weaving of a complex narrative of the lives of legendary heroes. In the first entries of the collection at least, each poem is
preserved as an independent entity, and the compiler's role is simply to provide an introductory rubric. The dominant voice of the discourse at the beginning of the manuscript is not the compiler's, but the different voices of the poems themselves. Note for instance the opening line of the manuscript: "Hliðaðs bīð ec allar helgar kindir,/meiri oc minni, mögo Heimðalar..." (Vsp 1). By the third item of the anthology, *Vafðruðnishmál*, the compiler appears to have expanded his role and identifies the speakers of stanzas in the dialogue. In the following work, *Grimnishmál*, a substantial prose introduction heads the poetic text.

With the increased activity of the compiler as the collection proceeds, the relationship of verse to prose bears some similarity to the Type 1 *prosimetrur* described in the §4.3, with prose linking together groups of stanzas of direct speech spoken by the actors in the narrative. The prose passages in Regius are heavily concentrated in certain groups of poems, with 61% of the prose occurring on 11 leaves (24% of the whole), those leaves carrying the Helgi poems and the Sigurðr section (Heusler: 1937, 19). The subordination of poetry to prose is particularly evident in this part of the text, and at some points approaches the style of Type 4 *prosimetrur* (where verse is quoted to support the writer's prose account), except that whole poems are quoted rather than individual stanzas. In the prose link between *Guðrúnarglæða in fyrsta* and *Sigurðarglæða in scamma*, for instance, there is no rubric marking the beginning of a new poem, simply a section of prose which subsumes the following poetic text as quotation:

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Pá lagði hon sic sverði til bana, svá sem segir í Sigurðarglæðo inni scómmo.
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At the end of the text of *Oddrúnargrátr* a similar process is apparent:

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Guðrún, Giúca dóttir, henvið bræðra sinna, svá sem frægt er orðit; hon drap fyrrt sono Atla, enn epir drap hon Atla oc brendi höllina oc híðina alla. Um þetta er siða qvíða ort.
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Earlier in the manuscript, this tendency is briefly evident in the prose introduction to the narrative poem *Völundarqvíða*:

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... Niðuðr konungr lét hann hóndom taca, svá sem hér er um qvédit.
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But, unlike other prose prefaces in the first part of the manuscript, which tell the story up to the point when the actors take to speech (*Grimnishmál*, *Skírnismál*, *Hárbarðslið* and *Locasenna*), the prose narrative of *Völundarqvíða*
overlaps with the first narrative stanzas of the poem (Völundr's capture by Níðudr occurs at st. 11 of the poem). None of the other poems in this part of the manuscript which commence with stanzas of third person narrative (Hymisqviða and Prymisqviða) are prefaced by prose. In addition, there are points of difference between the account in prose and the details set forth in the poem (Grimstad: 1983, 205, n.7), suggesting that the prose preface is not simply an adjunct to the poetic text, but an independent account of the story of Völundr, perhaps composed when the poem was first transformed into a written text, taking into account details from various versions of his legend: "Hann var hagastr maðr, svá at menn viti, í fornnum sogom."

At different points in the compilation, the Regius collection of eddic poems exhibits aspects of both the impulse to collect and order discrete texts into an anthology, as well as the habit of embedding poetic texts within a narrative prosimetrum, one that often works to synthesize material from disparate sources. In different sequences of poems in the collection, descriptive rubrics (introducing both prose passages and verse sequences) become more frequent and prose links assume a more important role, binding poetic pieces together, providing a commentary on the narrative and ideological contents of the poems, and making cross-references between works. In contrasting the two compositional styles of the manuscript, Lindblad (1980, 166) characterises the first as "en typisk dikt-samling" and the second as "en dikt-cykel", which incorporates several versified sagas.

Unlike the writers of prosimetrum histories, like Ari or Snorri, the Regius compiler never uses the first person pronoun (Friis-Jensen: 1987, 42), adopting instead a self-effacing style of authorial intervention, manifesting itself most obviously in the use of passive constructions, such as "sem nú er sagt" (prose preface to Ls), "sem fyrr er ritað" (prose link between sts. 18 and 19 of HH11) or "þat eró nú kallaðir . . ." (prose coda to Ls) and "er kallat at værti" (prose coda to HH11). This impersonal voice of the writer is often in evidence when oral works are first committed to writing, encouraging the reader to reflect on the work in the terms unobtrusively set out by the writer, rather than on the terms of the utterance itself (Goody: 1980, 130).

In several works from the second half of the thirteenth century and early fourteenth centuries, Type 1 prosimetrum style is used to incorporate extensive quotations of eddic verse into sagas. In chapter 157 of Njáls saga a man named
Dýrruðr overhears a group of valkyries chanting an ominous poem, which, as I pointed out in §2.2.4.3, is generically similar to some of the valkyrie stanzas preserved in *Sturlunga saga*. Because the verses are presented as direct speech, they are not attributed to a named poem, and as they are incorporated into the narrative account of Dýrruðr’s horrifying experience, there is no indication that the verses in fact constitute a ‘whole poem’:

Hann gekk til dyngjunnar ok sá inn í glugg einn, er á var, ok sá, at þar váru konur inni . . . Þær kváðu þá vísur nokkur: 

Rifu þær þá ofan vefinn ok í sundr, ok hafði hver þat, er halt á. Gekk hann þá í braut frá glugginum . . .

Sveinsson: 1954, 454-8

In the oral world of the saga (set in the tenth century), the integrity and completeness of a poem would have been assessed by the verbal context in which it was spoken, and the interpersonal events (between speaker and addressee) that preceded and followed it. On those terms, the poem is complete, whole. Our notion of a poetic ‘whole’, however, is predicated on the visual image of a written text and we are dependent on other signs in the prose text to indicate the integrity and context of the utterance.

Were it not for the Regius collection of poems, we would be faced with determining the integrity of a number of other groups of stanzas that are quoted as the direct speech of mythological figures in *Völsunga saga* and *Norna-Gest* þáttur. As Table 3 shows, substantial quotations are made from *Sigrdrífumál* in the saga and from *Reginsmál* and *Helreið Brynhildar* in the þáttur. Single stanzas are also quoted from other poems preserved in the Regius collection, and from poems that are not elsewhere preserved (verses 1, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). It is generally believed that the author of *Völsunga saga* used a collection of poems similar to R (Halvorsen: 1976a), though the different order of stanzas between texts and the additional poems known to the saga writer might provide grounds to doubt this.

In Regius, the end of *Sigrdrífumál* disappears into a lacuna, but the portion of the poem quoted in *Völsunga saga* coincides with an earlier part of the poem, sts. 5 to 21. Despite the different order of the stanzas in each text, the series of stanzas spoken by Sigrdrífa in both R and V forms an integral unit (beginning “Bíðr færí ec þér” and ending “Nú scaltu klósa”). In R it is preceded by a prose and verse account of Sigurðr’s meeting with Sigrdrífa (sts. 1-4 and
prose links). The last stanza quoted in Völsunga saga is Sigurðr's reply to Sigrdríf, which in the Regius text prompts the valkyrie to begin a numbered series of advice stanzas: "Pat ræð ec þér íp fyrsta..." (st. 22). Measured against the Regius text, the quotation in Völsunga saga is not a whole poem, but in the context of the interaction of characters in the saga it constitutes a complete exchange. It is significant that, if the writer were using a text of the poem such as Regius preserves, he decided to use prose for his narration of events up to the point when Sigrdríf begins her formal delivery of rune and magic wisdom, and from that point to the end of the chapter Sigurðr and Sigrdríf are left to play out their verbal exchange 'live'. In general, verse quoted as direct speech in Völsunga saga is reserved for mythological figures, such as Loki and the valkyrie - see Table 3 - (Friis-Jensen: 1987, 47), and third person narrative verse is quoted for evidential purposes. Paul Bibire (1986, 21) has also drawn attention to the literary convention in which legendary or mythical figures speak in verse on particularly significant occasions, while their deeds and lesser speeches are reported in prose.

The quotations from Reginsmál and Helreið Brynhildar in Norna-Gests þáttr display a similar compositional integrity. Stanzas 20-25 of Reginsmál represent another series of numbered advice stanzas delivered to Sigurðr, this time by a certain Hnicarr. They are quoted without interruption in the þáttr, preceded by st. 19 which is Sigurðr's request for information from Hnicarr. Other stanzas from Reginsmál are quoted by the þáttr-author, embedded in prose and following the narrative line found in the R text of the poem (see Table 3, verses 1-6 and 9). The poem Helreið Brynhildar in R represents an exchange between Brynhildr and a giantess, and all but one half stanza of the poem in R (st. 7) is quoted in Norna-Gests þáttr. Whereas the narrative frame of the poem in the R manuscript is rather spare ("...Svá er sagt, at Brynhildr óc með reiðinni á helveg oc för um tún, þar er gygr noccor bið. Gygin qvað: ", and with no end-frame), in the þáttr the exchange between Brynhildr and the giantess becomes a narrative event:

[gýgr máelti] "...ok fyrir þat skal ek ljóða á þík með hefðdarorðum þeim, at öllum sér þú at leiðari, er sílikt heyra frá þér sagt." Eptir þetta ljóðast þær á, Brynhildr ok gýgr. Gýgr qvað:

G. Jónsson: 1959, I 326

-178-
Brynhildr's rejoinder to the giantess's accusations in fact makes up the bulk of the poem (sts. 5-14), and in the prose following the poem in the *pátr* Brynhildr's vindication is reinforced:

\[\text{Pá æpti gygr ogurligri röddu ok hjóp inn í bjargr.} \]

G. Jónsson: 1959, I 331

With these words Gestr's tale also ends, underlining the closure inherent in the final line of the poem: "... Sókkstu nú gygr."

When there is extended direct quotation in sagas featuring mythological figures, there is a tendency to quote entire speech-acts, which I shall argue in chapter 6 constitute the compositional core of those eddic poems cast primarily as dialogue or monologue. The style of narrative *prosimetrum* allowed writers to explain the mythological and narrative background necessary to contextualise traditional poetry when it was put into writing. When poems were preserved in collections, or in compilations among other kinds of works, there was less scope for this, but as we shall see, writers seem to have felt the need to provide a new way of contextualising traditional oral works, cut off from the context of social interaction, and in need of some kind of frame in their novel medium.

Very few texts of whole poems are preserved without some sort of prose frame, even if it is only a brief rubric or colophon. In addition, in most parts of the collection manuscripts where there is dialogue between speakers in a poem, changes in speaker are indicated by marginal notation, or in abbreviated form within the body of the text itself. In adopting these methods of contextualisation, scribes of eddic poems probably imitated the way changes in speaker were indicated in Latin works cast as dialogue. In the early Icelandic manuscript AM 674A 4to, containing the didactic work *Elucidarius* (Helgason 1957), the speakers of questions and answers are signalled in the text by the abbreviations 'd' and 'm' (*discipulus* and *magister*). In both the Latin literary tradition and the emergent Norse one, writers sought to minimise the need for extra-textual knowledge from oral traditions to elucidate a work.

There are other signs, too, of the way in which scribes handled the transformation of orally transmitted works into written texts. In many poems, especially monologues, where there is no regular change of speaker, stanzas are often of uneven length. In oral delivery, changes in rhythm and pace would
presumably have been controlled by the voice of the recitor. But what strikes the ear as variation strikes the eye as unevenness, and it can be seen from different manuscripts that scribes divided up extended lists in different ways in order to regularise and tidy them. (See for example the division of the list of dwarf names in the R and H texts of *Voluspá*, where R starts a new stanza at 141 and 151 and H at 137, 151 and 165). The desire to shape the written text into nicely sized pieces, and to distinguish between sections within the poem, is also evident in the text of *Hávamál* in R, where large initials (usually reserved in this manuscript for the start of a new poem) are employed at the beginning of stanza 1, stanza 111 and stanza 138.

The most obvious signs of the writerly in the collection manuscripts are in cross-references made by the scribe himself, referring to the process of written compilation. In *Helgaqviða Hundingsbana onnor*, the Regius compiler refers back to the text of a previous poem with the following words: “Pá kváð Guðmundr, svá sem fyrr er ritað í Helgaqviðo” (see Harris: 1983, 215). Other remarks not advertised as the scribe’s own by the use of the verb rita can nevertheless be ascribed to him because of the way they refer to connections made in the written manuscript: in the prose Introduction to *Locasenna* for instance, reference is made to the contents of the previous poem in the collection—“... sem nú er sagt”. In §2.2.5, I quoted instances where prose links are clearly the work of the Regius scribe (or one of his predecessors) because of the way the remarks distinguish between mythological time and the time of writing, in the case of reincarnation, as a means of distancing the writer from the ideological contents of the poetry.

Outside the R and A collections, whole eddic poems are also preserved in compilation manuscripts, heterogeneous collections from the fourteenth century and later, which, as I have observed, preserve a wide variety of literary genres. The two types of manuscript composition are not dissimilar in the way they frame and record eddic poems. The connection between the two styles is evidenced in the second part of Codex Regius, which is effectively an amalgamation of individual texts and sections of narrative *prosimetrum*. Lindblad (1980, 161) has in fact argued that the heroic part of the Regius collection has been built up out of *fornaldarsögur*, groups of poems, and individual poems. The similarity between the Regius compiler’s method of contextualising poems and that found in the fourteenth century compilations can be seen in the similarity of the introductions to poems in R (for example the
In the following sections I shall take a closer look at the way eddic texts are presented in the collections manuscripts R and A (§§5.2 - 5.3) and the likely prehistory of these collections (§5.4), before surveying the poems preserved in later compilation manuscripts (§5.5).

§5.2 Codex Regius

Codex Regius (Gl. Kgl. sml. 2365 4to) is a manuscript now consisting of forty-five leaves, written in a single hand in Iceland around the year 1270 (Lindblad 1954, 233). The forty-five leaves are arranged in six gatherings, the first five of eight leaves each, and the last of only five leaves. The codex appears to be complete at the beginning and end, but after the fourth gathering there is a lacuna, estimated by Lindblad (1980, 142) to have contained eight leaves. The text breaks off mid-poem, during a numbered series of advice stanzas delivered by Sigrdrífa to Sigurðr (Sigdrífurnál 37) and resumes again mid-stanza in a narrative poem about Sigurðr - entitled Brot af Sigurðarqvíðo in modern editions. The manuscript begins with the text of the poem Vóluspá and without any kind of prologue. It seems from the distribution of leaves into gatherings that this was its original beginning.

Gustaf Lindblad (1954) has made a thorough examination of the paleography of the Codex Regius and has noted that the hand of the manuscript resembles that of a single leaf of the Kringla manuscript of Heimskringla (preserved in Stockholm Perg. fol. 9 I) and hand A of the Stadhróðsbók manuscript (AM 334 fol.) of the Icelandic lawcode (Lindblad: 1954, 245). The resemblances are not thought to constitute evidence of common penmanship for the three works, but of a common scribal style, possibly that of a scriptorium of some significance (Dronke: 1969, xii). While it has not been possible to localise the provenance of the Codex Regius any more closely than to the island of Iceland, Lindblad has observed scribal features in some parts of the manuscript (notably in the text of Hávarmál) characteristic of manuscripts produced in the
north-western part of Iceland (Lindblad: 1954, 218-19). Gustav Neckel (1927: xiii) earlier advanced the hypothesis that the manuscript may have been connected with the monastery of Pingeyrar. But manuscripts produced in late thirteenth century Iceland present very heterogeneous paleographic styles, and attempts to consistently distinguish regional characteristics have not been successful (Lindblad: 1954, 254ff.).

Didrik Seip’s study of the Codex Regius (1957) yielded rather different results from Lindblad’s. Seip argued (1957, 191-3) that the extant collection of eddic poems shows significant influence from the “prenidarosisk” scribal style of south-east Norway, and that the most likely explanation for this was that the Icelandic texts were copied from a Norwegian original (although he also entertains a number of other possible ways in which Norwegian influence could have manifested itself in Icelandic manuscripts). Seip (1957, 194-5) speculated that a manuscript was written in Norway c. 1200, and that it was this manuscript which later became the basis for the Regius collection. Lindblad (1954, 282-83 and 1978, 11) claims that the orthographic and paleographic evidence attested by Seip may be explained as the general influence of Norwegian scribal culture on Icelandic texts. Nonetheless Lindblad’s hypothesis that the Regius collection is dependent on numerous earlier texts (see below) does not rule out the possibility that some of these may have originated in Norway. The runic verses discovered in Bergen prove that eddic poetry was still cultivated in Norway in the thirteenth century, and it is not inconceivable that vellum transcripts of poems were made in that country.

The texts of the poems in Codex Regius are written out as prose, with stanzas demarcated by a capital letter and a full stop. Large initial letters in red or green ink stand at the beginning of each poem, and in most cases, a title or description of the poem is written in red ink in the centre of the first line of the poem, or in the space left at the end of the last line of the previous poem. As noted above, the manuscript is arranged initially as a collection of individual poems, each one introduced by a coloured rubric giving its title or contents, sometimes followed by a prose preface providing narrative background to the drama of the verse.

Some of these prose introductions (to Grímnismál, Völundarqvíða and Locasenna, for instance) seem to have been accorded the same status in the manuscript as the poems themselves, with the decorated initial letter of the
prose the same size and in the same format as that at the beginning of the verse, adding force to the view that the compiler did not conceive of the prose passages simply as adjuncts to poems, but as integral parts of his overall work. The tops and edges of many leaves are worn: Volsupá, for instance, is without an introductory rubric, although the dimensions of the written text in relation to other pages suggests that one originally existed (Helgason: 1964, 1, note to title). Marginalia are not very significant in the manuscript, except for the use in some dialogue poems of marginal notation of a change in speaker. As I noted in §5.1, after the first eleven poems (which occupy leaves la to 20a) the organising principle of the collection changes, and the boundaries between one 'poem' and the next are often blurred. The borders of the discrete text - its title and prose frame - are broken down and give way to a more continuous compositional mode: what in modern editions are set out as seven separate poems (Helgaqvíða Hundingsbana in fyrrí to Sigrdrífumál) in fact form a single text mass in the manuscript. The contents of the manuscript, and the rubrics used in it are set out in the left hand column of Table 4.

The new compositional mode of the manuscript is signalled by a larger than usual initial letter at the beginning of the poem Helgaqvíða Hundingsbana in fyrrí and an especially prominent rubric. Halfway down folio 20a, the rubric in coloured ink extends across the entire line, effectively breaking the text on the page into two distinct blocks. The poem is untitled in the manuscript, but the rubric reads "Hér hefr up qvæði frá Helga Hundingsbana þeira oc h.", indicating the scribe's sense of a new beginning, in contrast to the descriptive rubrics heading other poems which follow the simpler format "frá . . .". The initial A of the poem is five lines high and extends into the text the width of approximately eleven letters, whereas the average dimensions of the initial letters of poems after the very first poem, Volsupá, is three lines high and five letters wide. The initial letter of Volsupá - "H" - is also five lines high and takes the space of about nine letters across the page.1

The division halfway down folio 20a in fact goes deeper than the graphic lay-out of the manuscript. In his study of the paleographic character of the Codex Regius, Gustaf Lindblad (1954, 266-7) observed a striking boundary between the texts on either side of this division - Alvíssmál and Helgaqvíða

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1 In these observations, I am indebted to the Arnamagnæanske Institut, Copenhagen for supplying me with infra-red photographs of the Regius and other manuscripts of eddic poems, taken by Arne Mann Nielsen.
**Hundingsbana in fyrri** - suggesting that the Regius scribe (or one of his predecessors) made use of source texts of divergent origins. In a later article on the prehistory of the Regius collection, Lindblad (1980, 160) expressed the opinion that it is highly likely the two parts first came together in R. He further argued that the two parts of the manuscript are of such markedly different written derivation, that they probably represent different scribal schools.

Beyond the two main blocks of text, Lindblad also perceived fine-grained divisions between other poems. On the basis of scribal style, he distinguished, among others, the poems *Völsespá, Hávamál, Hymisvия*, *Alvissmál* and *Atlanál* from those around them in the manuscript (Lindblad: 1954, 275). The changing complexion of the orthography and paleography throughout R, Lindblad argues, may be explained as the result of the compiler using texts from different localities, or at least of distinct paleographic styles. He also concluded that the prose links between and within poems were, for the most part, of similar scribal style to the verse itself (1954, 284-6), indicating that the earlier small collections on which Regius is based also preserved prose along with verses. In the first part of the manuscript, the exception to this is the prose frame of *Locasenna*, which, as I noted in §3.4, bears striking similarities to Snorri's account of Loki's nemesis, and is considered by Lindblad (1954, 286) to have been written no earlier than c. 1250.

The two parts of the manuscript are usually described as containing mythological poems, and heroic (or legendary) poems respectively. These descriptive categories beg a number of questions which I shall address shortly (see §5.6), suffice to say here that the majority of poems dealing with the gods, giants, elves and dwarves occur in the first half of the manuscript. The sequence of poems in this part of the manuscript, which spans three gatherings, is as follows (leaf numbers are given in the second column):

**Völsespá**  
1a-3a  
**Hávamál**  
3a-7b  
**Vafðruðnismál**  
7b-8b  
**Grimnismál**  
8b-11a  
**For Skírnis**  
11a-12a  
**Hárbarðstljóð**  
12a-13b  
**Hymisvия**  
13b-15a  
**Locasenna**  
15a-17a  
**Prýmsvия**  
17a-18a  
**Voλundargvía**  
18a-19b  
**Alvissmál**  
19b-20a
Unlike the poems in the second part of the manuscript, which are arranged to reflect narrative development, the sequence of these poems does not represent a 'story'. The beginning and end of the mythological world are described in *Voluspá* and references to mythological events are made throughout the poems, but in no general sense are they set out before us as a linear narrative, as serial events in a time sequence (see Prince: 1982, 1). The final destruction of the gods is referred to throughout the sequence of poems, in *Voluspá, Vafðruðnismál, Grímnismál* and *Locasenna*.

The prose passages do not serve to link poems to one another according to a chronological system, except in a brief detail concerning a kettle - obtained by Þórr from a thieving giant in *Hymisqviða* and necessary for the brewing of ale by Ægir, the host of the feast which is the setting for the shouting match of the gods, *Locasenna*. The kettle is not mentioned in the poem, and Ægir’s ale is only briefly referred to, although accusations of inebriation are frequent. Under the rubric “Frá Ægir og göðum” the compiler writes: “Ægir, er qóðo nafni het Gymir, hann hafði búit ásom øl, þa er hann hafði fengit ketil inn micla, sem nú er sagt”. The attitude of the writer in documenting the two names by which Ægir was known echoes the concerns of the mythographer, stitching together details from disparate sources into a piece, where names for the same thing are collected together, and where possible, explained with reference to mythological narratives. Both Gymir and Ægir are mentioned frequently in the mythological texts of the Regius manuscript, but at no other point are they linked. Gymir is consistently the father of the giantess Gerðr, whom Freyr is infatuated by and eventually marries, while Ægir, a more complex figure, is a giant who functions as a sea-god and as the one responsible for brewing ale for the gods. The mention of Gymir in connection with Ægir, while possibly having sound sources, seems nevertheless to have been at the initiative of the compiler, who exhibits a desire to interpret mythology as well as to transcribe texts.

The compiler’s desire to link the poems chronologically (by introducing *Locasenna* as though it occurred after the events of *Hymisqviða*) is thwarted by details in the poems themselves, and results in the compiler having to make a narrative *volte face*. *Hymisqviða* ends with the god Þórr returning home victorious after giving the giants a good thrashing, and delivering the kettle to Ægir (*Hymisqviða* 36-39). In the prose link to *Locasenna*, however, in the very next line after the compiler has tried to link the two poems together with
reference to the kettle, he says: “Til þeirrar veitló kom Öðinn oc Frigg, kona hans. Þörð kom eigi, þvíat hann var í austrvegi” (a detail also found in Snorri’s account: Skáldskaparmál ch. 42: 121, 6-7). In another context, Stephen Tranter (1987, 5-6) has commented on the difficulties inherent in arranging independent works into a consecutive and homogenous whole, in the case of his study, in the Sturlunga saga compilation.

The manuscript compiler’s work of organising the poems into a coherent new work was confounded by the temporal system underlying the composition of the poems themselves. At one level, mythological time operates as a system in suspense - looking back to the genesis of the mythological world, and forward to a detailed knowledge of its end. Within the temporal space defined by these two points, a period ensues in which few events are related chronologically to one another. They are defined instead with reference to the end points of time, and only occasionally with reference to one another. In Meletinskiij’s analysis of the system of Scandinavian mythology (1973, 56), two temporal codes are distinguished, one that is characterised by irreversibility and pertains to the vertical axis of the Norse cosmological model (which in turn corresponds with the world-tree Yggdrasill, connecting Midgarðr to Hel below and Valhöll above). The other temporal code is characterised by reversibility, in which cosmological order remains constant, and the narrative interaction of gods and giants across the horizontal dimension of Ásgarðr/Miðgarðr and Útgarðr is inconsequential (Hastrup: 1985, 150).

In this temporal code, despite the constant hostility between gods and those ‘others’ living at their borders, the mythological world remains in relative equilibrium, with no side scoring a decisive victory or defeat. Each mythological poem presents different aspects of the tension between the gods and their enemies (Klingenberg: 1983, 135), and although each one individually works towards a resolution that is comforting for those cheering for the gods, there is no sense of prevailing supremacy. Þörð’s actions at the end of Locasenna, for instance, seem to signal his physical control of Loki, but the giant/god has the last word, taunting his host with the threat of fire which will destroy his hall. Meulengracht Sørensen (1989, 255) has argued that the hall epitomizes both the social and cosmic order of the Æsir, which Loki and the giants stand to annihilate.

In the prose coda to Locasenna, the compiler describes Loki’s subsequent
capture by the gods. However *Prymsqvída*, the very next poem in the manuscript opens (without prose preface) with the god Þór discovering that his hammer has been stolen, by giants, of course. Þór turns immediately to Loki who, far from immobilised or weakened by an eternity of poison ingestion, joins him on a mission to retrieve the hammer. The prose coda to Locasenna is demonstrably dependent on the account of Loki’s capture in *Gylfaginning*, which ends “Þar liggur hann [Loki] í bondum til ragnarókr” (49, 16-17). It is significant that this detail has not been carried over by the Regius scribe, who does not want to close off the mythological narrative with any mention of ragna roc at this point — despite numerous references to it in the poem itself — (see Klingenberg: 1983 and McKinnell: 1987-8), but seeks to juxtapose one encounter between Þór and Loki with another, suspending as best he can the finality implied by Loki’s incarceration.

In contrast to the poems describing various mythological events, those poems that take as their actors legendary figures generally describe narrative events that follow a chronology marked by the sequence of human generations. The poems are arranged according to the ‘saga principle’ — events narrated in chronological order, and linked by references to kinship relationships — even if our understanding of that compositional principle must be modified slightly to include “relationship by rebirth” (Harris: 1984, 386). It is poems of this type that are used by the manuscript compiler in the second part of the *Regius* collection. These poems are organised along the lines of an over-arching narrative, beginning with Helgi’s birth and ending with Guðrún’s goading of her sons Hamðir and Sǫrli to take revenge on Jǫrmenrekkr. Those poems which are not strictly narrative are incorporated into the super-narrative by virtue of their placement, and by prose introductions. So, for instance, *Gripisspá*, which is a dialogue between Sigurðr and the prescient Grípir, forecasts narrative, and the dramatic monologue *Oddrúnagrátir* looks back at narrative.

The compiler’s forging of a super-narrative causes considerable strain to the texts of some poems. His desire for narrative consistency — or at least narrative control — is particularly close to the surface of the text in a prose passage in *Helgaqvíða Hróvarðasonar*, where the narrator attempts to make a smooth transition between two episodes involving Helgi and Sváva. In the first episode, Helgi is given his name by a valkyrie (sts. 6-9), identified in a prose explanation as Sváva, the daughter of King Eylimi, whom Helgi visits again after st. 30. In the meantime the hero Helgi has to contend with the amorous
advances of a giantess named Hrímgardr whose father he has just slain. In taking up the story of Sváva once more the compiler virtually begins again - trying to get the narrative back on the track it was on before the Hrímgardr interlude:

Heðinn var heima með fóður sínom, Hiorvarði konungi í Nóregi.

Helgaqviða Híórvarðssonar prose between stanzas 30 and 31

Reorienting the narrative partly involves relocating everyone back home: recontextualising the actors ready for the next stage of the narrative. But the compiler also feels the need to make details as consistent as possible - a considerable challenge when not only do the actors have the potential to change roles - from princess to valkyrie and back again - but also to be reincarnated and to take on another identity altogether (Sváva's later lives are described in the prose between stanzas 4 and 5 and at the end of Helgaqviða Hundingsbana önnur). The scriber nevertheless attempts to forge a consistent identity for Sváva - "var Sváva valkyria enn sem fyrr" - to facilitate the forwarding of narrative. Another symptom of the compiler's desire for a smooth narrative is the prevalence of rubrics announcing deaths: "Frá dauða Sinfotla", "Frá dauða Fáfnis", "Frá dauða Sigurðar", "Dráp Niflunga" and "Dauði Atla". Like a writer of soap-operas, the Regius compiler has to keep killing off his characters in order to keep the story moving, or at least he has had to relate their deaths to tie off all the loose ends created by the poems, and to string together the events described from one poem to the next.

The impulse to craft a consistent narrative is briefly evident in one of the prose links in the first half of the manuscript. In the prose end-frame of Grímnismál, the Regius compiler describes the aftermath of Geirroðr's death (the ascension to the throne of his son Agnarr), but he also states: "Óðinn hvarf pá". This reference to Óðinn's subsequent movements is not found in the other manuscript of Grímnismál (AM 748 I) which preserves an almost identical text to R. Óðinn does not play a role in the next poem in the Regius collection, Skírnismál, but reappears (in disguise) in the following poem, Hárfariðlitið. The intervention of the R scribe in the prose epilogue to Grímnismál seems to be motivated by a desire for closure between texts which are not related by
events or protagonists, in order that the separate incidents may be told one after another without too much narrative dislocation.

Heinz Klingenberg's attempt (1974, 16) to interpret the whole manuscript in terms of a unifying idea - the demise of the gods foreshadowing the tragic end of the age of heroes - goes some way toward elucidating the overall design of the codex, though there are many points in Klingenberg's argument that have been questioned (see for instance Harris: 1985, 77-8). The precise order of poems within the mythological part of the manuscript is less easy to explain. There is general agreement that Völuspá opens the collection because of its cosmic scope and grandeur; the early position of Hávamál is perhaps accounted for by its size and compendious nature (Heusler: 1937, 26). For the rest, it has been argued that they were organised into groups determined by the protagonist of each poem (Heusler: 1937, 20). According to this theory, the first four poems constitute the Óðinn group, the next poem, Skírnismál, is classified as Freyr's 'group', and the final group deals with the god Þórr. These groups are unlinked, and with only one exception (mentioned above), the poems within each group are unlinked.

This explanation of the order of mythological poems is not very compelling. It is difficult to view Skírnismál as a poem representing the god Freyr, since most of the action of the poem is undertaken by his proxy, Skírnir. Nevertheless, as Mitchell (1983) has pointed out, it is the only poem in the collection to focus on the Vanir and their marriage making. The theory that Hárbarðslóð forms a transition between the Óðinn and Þórr groups is upset by the interruption of 'the Freyr poem', which mentions neither god. Heusler's argument (1937, 20-21) that Skírnismál is placed where it is because it would have seemed too isolated after the Þórr group, does not explain very much. Within the Þórr group is also included a senna between Loki and a great number of gods and goddesses in which Þórr only makes an appearance towards the end. The final poem in which Þórr plays a major role is Alvíssmál, in which he contends with a presumptuous dwarf who intends to marry his daughter. Preceding this poem, however, is a narrative poem telling the story of the treacherous dealings between a certain Völundr (an elf-smith) and an apparently human king, Níðuðr, and in this poem, Völundargviða, Þórr does not rate a mention. It is true that Óðinn looms large at the beginning of the collection, other gods appear in the middle, and the final few poems deal with elves and
dwarves — beings of lower status than the gods or the giants — but there seems to be little evidence of an organisational principle beyond this general pattern.

Because of the appearance of a human king in Völundargviða, the poem has sometimes been categorised with the heroic poems (Wessén: 1945, 18; Holtsmark: 1961c, 414), though the appearance of Geirroðr in Grímnismál has not elicited the same reaction. Karen Grimstad (1983, 193) has argued convincingly that the hero of Völundargviða belongs among mythological beings since he is called “visi álfa” and he is able to fly like a bird (st. 38) (see also Burson: 1983, 1). In addition, Lindblad (1954, 274) found the scribal character of the text of Völundargviða to have more in common with the mythological poems en masse, than with the heroic poems. Grimstad (1983, 193) also considered the poem formed a ‘duet’ with the dwarf-poem Alvíssmal, based on the class of beings to which Völundr and Alvíss belong, rather than the genre of the poetic compositions. Both protagonists share the characteristics of expertise in forging valuable artefacts, and a predisposition to having their way with desirable young women: in both cases the daughter of the poem’s other main actor. While there may be internal consistency in the pair of poems in isolation, their order in Regius is problematic, since Völundargviða stands between two poems about Pórr.

Perhaps a partial explanation for the order of the mythological poems may be deduced from some of Lindblad’s other findings. He notes a common scribal style for Vafðrúðnismál and Grímnismál but distinct styles for both Völuspá and Hávamál (1980, 158). Both of the narrative poems Hymiskviða and Þrymskviða are distinguished paleographically from those around them (Lindblad: 1980, 157), and the poem Alvíssmal also stands apart. On the other hand, the two poems Skírnismál and Háðbarðzlíðóð are grouped together by common scribal features (Lindblad: 1980, 158-59). These patterns suggest that the Regius scribe, or possibly someone before him, interleaved poems or pairs of poems from different sources, and perhaps their organisation can be attributed in part to the groupings in which they made their way to him, or even the sequence in which they were received. The positioning of Þrymskviða after Locasenna may have been a casualty of the compiler’s desire to exploit the rare opportunity to forge a narrative link between poems offered him by Hymiskviða and Locasenna, which both make reference to the ale-brewing kettle. The position of Alvíssmal after Völundargviða may have arisen because the text of Pórr’s contest with the dwarf was not available until after Völundargviða was written.
out, a possibility pointed out by Finnur Jónsson. Some support for this argument is lent by the state and order of the other collection of poems, AM 748 I 4to, which does not include Alvíssmál, but which does pair Vafðrúðnismál and Grímnismál together.

§5.3 AM 748 I 4to

AM 748 I (A) is thought to date from the first quarter of the fourteenth century, between 1300 and 1325 (Wessén: 1945, 14). An incomplete gathering of six leaves at the beginning of the manuscript preserves the following seven poems - four of them are fragmentary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Leaves</th>
<th>From/To</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hárbarðziðóð</td>
<td>1a-1b</td>
<td>from st. 197 to end</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldrs Draumar</td>
<td>1b-2a</td>
<td>up to st. 27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skírnismál</td>
<td>2a-2b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vafðrúðnismál</td>
<td>3a-3b</td>
<td>from st. 202 to end</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grímnismál</td>
<td>3b-5b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymisqviða</td>
<td>5b-6b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vǫlundarqviða</td>
<td>6b-</td>
<td>the beginning of the prose introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gathering is incomplete at the beginning and end, and there is a lacuna after the second leaf. Six of the poems are common to both R and A, but the poem Baldrs Draumar is preserved only in A. (The rubrics to poems and prose passages in A are listed in the second column of Table 4.)

An examination of the paleographic style of the two collections, in particular the evidence of common errors in both texts, shows that the manuscripts derive from a common written original (Lindblad: 1954, 287ff.). The order in which the poems are written down in A is at variance with R in each instance, except, as noted above, in the pairing of Vafðrúðnismál with Grímnismál. Presumably at an early point in the prehistory of both collections these poems were included as a pair. The link made in the prose of R, between Locasenna and Hymisqviða, could not have been made in the A text, even if Locasenna were originally part of its collection, since the poem Vǫlundarqviða follows immediately on from Hymisqviða. Lindblad paired the poems Hárbarðziðóð and Skírnismál together on the basis of paleographic style. The poems follow one another in R, but in A appear in reverse order and are
separated by Balds Draumar. If the two poems Hárrarhuslóð and Skírnismál derived from the same written source, as Lindblad's findings might indicate, perhaps the Regius compiler chose to place Hárrarhuslóð second, to lead into the group of poems with Þór as protagonist. It is a moot point whether the R scribe deliberately left out Balds Draumar from his collection, or whether it made its way into the A collection at a stage after the two manuscript lines had parted ways. Heusler's preference (1937, 24) for regarding it as an addition on the grounds that the R scribe "would hardly have omitted it" is hardly convincing, especially considering the evidence in the second half of Regius that the compiler knew and named poems without necessarily including their texts in his collection.

Speculation about the original size of the A collection of poems is difficult on a number of counts, not least among them the variable number of leaves to a gathering in Icelandic manuscripts of this period. Although a standard of eight leaves to a gathering seems to have existed (in, for instance, the Codex Regius manuscript of Snorra Edda), the manuscripts preserving eddic poems are less consistently built. The last gathering of R contains only five leaves, and gatherings 5 and 9 in the Hauksbók manuscript consist of six and nine leaves respectively. The gathering in A consists of three sheets folded to form six leaves. Using the proportionate lengths of poems preserved in full in both A and R, it can be deduced that the beginning of Hárrarhuslóð would have been contained on one side of one leaf, that the remainder of Skírnismál and the missing beginning of Vafðruðnismál would have fitted onto two sides of one leaf, and that the rest of Völundarqviða would have taken up two sides of one leaf. This postulated gathering would have contained at least nine leaves, with a single leaf inserted between leaves two and three, and a folded sheet forming two more leaves at the beginning and end of the gathering. If more than a single leaf originally stood where the lacuna now is, the additional sheets must have taken their place between 2b and 3a, as there is no break in the text between leaves 4b and 5a, where the other half of a folded sheet might be expected. The a side of the first leaf of the postulated gathering could either have contained a short poem of approximately the same length as Balds Draumar, the end of a longer poem started at the end of a previous gathering, or something else altogether. There is, by the same token, no reason to assume that this collection ended with Völundarqviða. The place of the postulated sheet forming the outer leaves of this gathering could well have been taken by another gathering on either side of the preserved one.
The presence of Völundargviða in A has been taken by some as evidence that the manuscript also contained heroic lays, but this argument is premised on the theory that Völundargviða does not properly belong among the mythological lays (see §5.2 above). The poem's position at the end of each extant collection is probably no more than coincidence, since the order of poems according to a hierarchy of protagonists that is perceptible in R is not present in A: Óðinn appears in poems one, two, four and five, Pórr in one and six and Freyr in the third poem. Although it is generally held that there is no system in the collection of poems in A compared to the R collection (Wessen: 1945, 17), A presents poems in groups that could broadly be described as generic. Unlike the R collection, the A manuscript groups the two narrative poems together (Hymiskviða and Völundargviða), and precedes these with a group of poems cast predominantly in ljóðaháttr metre, and representing some kind of verbal duel between actors. Hárbardsljóð consists of a senna between two gods; Baldrs Draumar is a knowledge quest undertaken by Óðinn which breaks down into an insult exchange at the end (BD 13); most of the poem Skírnismál is taken up by the delivery of an insulting curse against the giantess Gerðr, and the two poems Vafnismál and Grimnmismál present catechisms of mythological wisdom delivered in the first poem, during a contest between Óðinn and a giant, and in the second by Óðinn alone as a show of might against a foolish king. I shall be returning to the matrix of metrical and stylistic features that constitute eddic genres in more detail in the next chapter.

As the A manuscript now stands, no links are made in the prose between poems. It is interesting to note, however, that the prose introduction to Skírnismál in A refines the temporal setting of the poem (at least in comparison to the R text) by describing it as a fresh narratological start:

Freyr, sonr Niarðar, hafði einn dag sezc í Hliðsílf . . .

Perhaps in this detail the A scribe can be seen deliberately working to create a collection of discrete texts, rather than meshing the poems together into a continuous whole.

The second, third and fourth gatherings of AM 748 I form a continuous compilation and were written in one hand, apparently the same hand as the first gathering, although the letters are generally larger and there are consequently fewer lines to the page (Wessen: 1945, 14). The second gathering of eight leaves begins with the conclusion of a rhetorical treatise not otherwise known,
and then contains most of the *Third Grammatical Treatise* by Ölafur Póroðarson hvítaskáld. (There are lacunae after leaves 8 and 12.) A list of kennings bridges gathering 2 and gathering 3, which consists of eight leaves and is the only complete gathering of the manuscript. In it is preserved a redaction of parts of *Skáldskaparmál*. This work continues on to the first five leaves of the fourth gathering (of six leaves) which then contains a short glossary and the only copy of *Islendingadrápa* by Haukr Valdisarson, the end of which is missing.

Whether the first gathering originally belonged with the other three gatherings is unclear. Although it is in basically the same format and appears to be written in the same hand, the first gathering is not connected with the other three, and the difference in the size of the writing may indicate that it was written at a different time from the others. At the end of the *Third Grammatical Treatise* in gathering 2 there is a note in red ink stating that it is the end of that part of the book which Ölafur Póroðarson had put together, and the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál* (Wessen: 1945, 13). Although it is possible that this remark refers back to gatherings 1 and 2, it seems more likely that it refers only to the extant gathering 2, and whatever leaves or gatherings immediately preceded it, terminating in the otherwise unknown rhetorical treatise. As the remark goes on to refer to the remaining contents of the manuscript as it has been preserved, it casts some doubt on whether the first gathering, a collection of eddic poems, was included in the manuscript at the time the scribe wrote the rubric.

Nonetheless it is interesting that the collection was apparently written by the same person who drew together learned works on Norse poetics, and the skaldic poem *Islendingadrápa*. This indicates that the preservation of texts of eddic poems was bound up with the scholarly project of integrating and interpreting the whole body of traditional poetry that had been orally transmitted down to the thirteenth century.

§5.4 The prehistory of the collection manuscripts

In the course of describing the Regius manuscript, I have drawn attention to particular details in its paleographic style which indicate that the large collection of eddic poems was dependent on earlier written texts of single
poems, or groups of poems. A comparison of the poetic texts in R and those in A and in manuscripts of Snorra Edda allows us a partial view of the literary history of eddic poetry during the thirteenth century, though the picture that emerges from paleographic and historic deductions is still only sketchy. Parts of the R manuscript present scribal errors and gaps left for words or lines (Heusler: 1937, 16), that indicate the text must have been copied from another written text, and could not be a transcription of an oral recitation. In this connection, Lindblad (1954, 247) cites a particular stanza of Guðrúnargvilla onnur which describes the inconsolable grief of Sigurðr’s horse Grani after his master is murdered:

Gecc ec grátandi við Grana rœða, urughlyra, ið frá ec spílla;
ðhipnæði Grani þá, drap í gras hopði;
iðr þat vissi: eigendr né lifdot. Gör II 5

The manuscript in fact attributes the deep recognition of death to the earth rather than the horse (“iør vissi”), based on a misreading of the source text’s abbreviation of “þat” to “þ”. Other kinds of scribal errors – such as writing down the same line or verse twice, or transcribing a row of letters that are a confusion of a word (for example “eyglíf” for “Eyiðlíf” in the prose after HHII 13) also indicate that the compiler of Regius was using written sources for at least some parts of his collection.

In general the texts of poems preserved in both R and A are so similar that there seems little doubt that they derive from a common written source (Wessen: 1945, 21). In particular, it has been observed that the closeness of the prose passages indicate derivation from a common written original (Wessen: 1945, 18), and there is also evidence of common scribal errors and chance spellings occurring in both manuscripts (Heusler: 1937, 24). In those places where the poetic texts diverge, the differences can usually be put down to scribal error. One such slip occurs in the A text of Hárbardzhóð. A rather rattled Pórr accuses Hárbardr of lying after he has declared that Pórr’s wife, Sif, has a lover at home whom Pórr should go and meet. In the R text, Hárbardr nonchalantly continues his taunting of Pórr, saying:

Satt hygg ec mic segia, seinn ertu for þinni;
langt myndir þú nú kominn, Pórr, ef þú lítom færir. Hrbl 50

In A, Hárbardr replies: “Satt hygg ec þic segia”, a thoroughly unlikely
There are instances, however, when the texts do preserve minor differences, including numerous examples of variant word order (for example Skm 271-2, Hrbl 268, or Vm 313), different words occurring in unstressed (non-alliterating) positions (Gm 15, Vm 225) and constructions that are syntactically distinct, such as Vafðruðnismál 364-6:

hvaðan vindr um kæmr, svá at ferr vág yfir;  
æ menn hann stálfan um stá.  

hvaðan vindr um kæmr, sá er ferr vág yfir;  
æ maðr um stálfan hann sér.  

A more significant variation is found in the A manuscript version of Grímnismál 44, a list of all-time-greats, which is also quoted by Snorri (Gylfaginning 34: 16-24). In manuscripts of Snorra Edda and in R, the stanza contains nine lines, but in A a tenth line is found: “enn Brimir sverða”.

This suggests that an individual scribe’s own knowledge of a poem may have sometimes influenced the text he wrote out (O’Brien O’Keefe: 1987), a phenomenon that was observed in the survey of manuscripts of Snorri’s work in the last chapter. The A text of the prose preface to Grímnismál also preserves extra lines which elucidate the story. Whereas R reads “Kerling fóstrafði Agnar, enn karl Geirrøð”, the A text elaborates “enn karl fóstrafði Geirrøð ok kenði hánnum ráð.” In the end frame of the poem, the A text makes the drama of Geirrøð’s terrible mistake more immediate by switching to the present tense – “Enn er hann heyrði, at Öðinn var þar kominn, þá stóð hann up ok vill taca Öðin frá eldömin” while the R text constructs the whole in the past tense – “oc vildi taca Öðin frá eldömin”.

The stages of collection preceding R (the earliest of the extant collections) are largely unknown, though Lindblad (1980, 166) believes it may well have been the Regius compiler who first brought the mythological and heroic collections together, more out of an interest in the genealogical/historical structure this lent the manuscript, than out of an antiquarian desire to make the archive of eddic texts larger or more complete. Like Klingenberg, Lindblad (1979, 31) has interpreted the mythological poems as providing “en grandios bakgrund” to the poems of the heroic cycle. The idea that the Regius compiler wished to construct the history of the Völungs as
stretching back into ancient times is supported by other examples of traditional material being organised according to genealogical models (see §3.3.3).

In §5.2 I mentioned Lindblad’s finding that the scribal characteristics of the set of mythological poems and the set of heroic poems are significantly distinct to warrant speculation that the collections may have derived from separate scribal schools. It is plausible that the context in which poems about legendary heroes were recorded might have been different from the context in which poems about the Æsir were recorded, at least up until the Regius collector saw the literary potential in combining the two. Leaving aside the mythological poems for the moment, the prehistory of the collection of poems about the Völsungs, sketchy though it is, can be tentatively traced. Sagas dealing with the ancient history of Scandinavian dynasties might first have been composed during the late twelfth century (Andersson 1985, 214). Activity in the field of composing written sagas does not, however, necessarily imply activity in the recording and collection of whole poems.

There is general scholarly consensus that part of the Regius collection was dependent on a lost *Sigurðarsaga* (see Lindblad: 1979, 23) though how early this work can be dated is open to speculation. A reference by Snorri in *Háttatal* to a Sigurðarsaga could refer equally well to an orally transmitted work as to a written text: “pa orti hann qveæpi, er kallat er qviþan skialfhenda eða drapan steflávsa, ok qveþit eþtir Sigvrþar sigv” (231: 17-19). Literary interest in the Völsung dynasty is confirmed by a work from the second half of the century, the *Völsunga saga*, which, as I have mentioned, incorporates texts of several eddic poems. The existence of an earlier written saga about Sigurðr has been adduced from a reference in the prologue to *Þiðreks saga*, a Norwegian work dated to the middle of the century (see Curschmann: 1984 and Andersson: 1986), but the date of composition for this lost work is debatable. The use of the verb *samanfæra* (Bertelsen: 1905-11, I 2) to describe the lost composition probably indicates that the prologue writer is referring to a written work about Sigurðr. The wording of another reference to the story of Sigurðr in *Norna-Gests þátr* might also be taken to imply a written source: “ok fóru svá þeira skipti sem segir í sógu Sigurðar Fáfnisbana” (G. Jónsson: 1959, I 322), but again the evidence is not incontrovertible.

There is no knowing whether the author of *Sigurðarsaga* quoted stanzas from traditional poems known to him from oral transmission, or whether he had
a written collection of poems at his disposal. Andersson (1980, 101) suspects the author of the lost saga converted most of his poetic sources into prose, a theory that does not lend weight to Lindblad's hypothesis (1979, 23) that oral poems dealing with the Sigurðr legend were collected and fixed in writing very early in the century. Even if the comment in the prologue to Pióreks saga ("Norðrænr menn hafa samanferti nokkurn part sogunnar, en sumt með kveðskap") is taken to imply that a collection of whole poems existed (Lindblad: 1978, 18, n. 9), the date of the collection cannot be assumed to be much earlier than the middle of the century.

Sound debate about the early history of eddic literature is only possible once some comparison can be made between extant written texts, and this only becomes possible with reference to the last three quarters of the thirteenth century, after Snorri Sturluson's Edda has been written. I noted in the last chapter that a comparison of the eddic texts Snorri quoted in Gylfaginning with those preserved in later collections indicated that Snorri knew a wide range of eddic verse from oral transmission. Only in the case of two poems, Vafðrúðnismál and Grímnismál can an argument be mounted that Snorri was quoting from the same written text that was later used by the compilers responsible for the chain of texts that led to the manuscript on which both the R and A collections drew. Wessen's hypothesis (1947) that Snorri commissioned the writing down of a pamphlet containing Völsungaþesy, Vafðrúðnismál and Grímnismál has been disproved by Lindblad on the basis of paleographic distinctions found between the texts, and the demonstrable differences in origin of the Regius text of Völsungaþesy and the text Snorri quotes.

Further, it is reasonable to infer from the detail and breadth of learning exhibited in Snorri's mythographic and poetic treatises that his knowledge of traditional learning could not have been derived entirely from written texts (unless a great many manuscripts have been lost). The fact that Snorri analysed and synthesised mythological details from diverse contexts need not imply that he had that knowledge in material (written) form. Heusler's (1937, 25) depiction of Snorri with poems "in front of him, as it were, in the dissecting room" is a particularly literate conception of the processes of the synthesising imagination. The rationale for this judgement, given that Snorri is thought to have known numerous eddic stanzas from oral transmission (Lindblad: 1979, 24), appears to rest on an assumption that longer quotations indicate reliance on a written source.

-198-
It has frequently been noted that the ability to recall verbal art forms is markedly better in cultures not accustomed to relying on written texts (Ong: 1982, 57ff), and Icelanders in the first quarter of the thirteenth century had hardly had the opportunity to become dependent on the written word for their cultural repertoire. Snorri also quotes a great deal of skaldic poetry - some of it at considerable length - and this fact is not usually taken as evidence of his dependence on written texts of poems. In his prologus to Heimskringla, Snorri in fact makes big claims for knowledge among his contemporaries of praise poems from the preceding centuries:

Með Haraldr konungi váru skálid, ok kunna menn enn kvæði þeira ok allra konunga kvæði; þeira er síðan hafa verit í Nóregj.

Adalbjarnarson: 1979, 15

Knowledge of praise poems by famous skalds of the past (and an ability to recite them) was probably not uncommon in the thirteenth century (see Heusler: 1937, 31), especially among members of ruling-class families with an interest in Scandinavian dynasties. The fact that around two-thirds of the older skaldic poetry has been preserved in Snorri's work (Lindblad: 1979, 19) enables us to infer that Snorri knew a considerable amount of traditional poetry, and probably was able to quote it without needing a written text to be made of someone else's recitation. Some at least of the skaldic stanzas he quotes are likely to have been recorded in early historical sagas, and perhaps some of these Snorri had in written form.

Up until Snorri wrote his treatise on mythology, there is no evidence of eddic poetry dealing primarily with the world of the gods being used in written works, either as brief quotations or as whole texts. As I have pointed out, Snorri's project did not seem to involve the transcription of whole poems, although later redactions of his work preserve some poems in their (apparent) entirety. Snorri's aim was to perpetuate the tradition of skaldic composition (or so his 'advice to young poets' suggests) rather than 'saving' whole poems for posterity. His exploitation of the archival capacity of literate technology seems to have been limited to lists of heiti and kennings for the benefit of practising skalds. His own mythology set out in Gylfaginning is carefully constructed as a fiction, and does not claim to be a store-house of traditional eddic poetry. If Snorri had wished to establish an archive of traditional poems, he might be expected to have devoted his attention to skaldic praise poems, a poetic tradition he obviously valued very highly. The rubric to the text of
Skáldskaparmál in AM 748 I 4to - "Hær ær . . . vpphefr skaldskaparmal ok kenningar æptir þvi sem fyri fvnndið var í kvæðum hofvtskallda ok Snori hæfr sían samanfæra lattit" (ESS II 427-28) - might suggest, however, that Snorri was engaged in commissioning work on traditional poetics from others, and it is possible that their work encompassed the transcription of whole poems, eddic and skaldic.

Having said this, the figure of Snorri Sturluson nevertheless looms large in any history of the recording of eddic poems, not only because his work appears to have first brought eddic poetry into the sphere of literature, but also because his mythology clearly influenced those creating collections of poems, both in their manner of contextualising poems (the prose coda to Locasenna for instance), and in their desire to complement his work by including in manuscripts of his Edda poetic texts of related interest. It seems most likely that his influence was indirect, since many poems he quotes never seem to have found their way into collections, and some texts of poems in later manuscripts are clearly based on different oral versions from the ones Snorri knew (Lindblad: 1979, 29). In the middle decades of the thirteenth century (c. 1230 - 1270) we have only a few clues on which to base our speculation about the interaction between Snorri (or those who worked for and with him) and those engaged in producing written texts of whole eddic poems.

In seeking to chart the history of the collection of eddic poems between Snorri's work and the appearance of later collection manuscripts, we are entirely dependent on paleographic projections about the probably date at which individual poems were fixed in writing. Gustaf Lindblad's (1978, 20) hypothesis is that a large collection on which both R and A depended was in existence around 1240-1250. Since the texts of Vaföruðnismál and Grímnismál quoted by Snorri are so close to those which later make their way into collection manuscripts, it seems likely, though it is not absolutely certain, the two poems were already fixed in writing when Snorri quoted them (Helgason: 1965, ix). On paleographical evidence, Lindblad (1979, 31) has suggested that Vaföruðnismál may even have been written down by 1210. While I have no argument with Lindblad's paleographic findings, some of his deductions are based on questionable assumptions about literary evolution in a culture still broadly in touch with its oral traditions. For instance, he subscribes to the theory that Vaföruðnismál must have been available in written form at the time
Gunnlaugr Leifsson wrote *Merlinúsþpa* simply because there are echoes of the poem in his work.

Verbal 'loans' have been detected in *Merlinúsþpa* from *Völsþpa*, *Helgavíða Hundingsbana in fyrri*, *Gripissþpa*, *Hymisvíða*, *Fáfnismál* and *Reginsmál* (Lindblad: 1979, 22), leading Jan de Vries (1967) to postulate that Gunnlaugr had a substantial written collection of mythological and heroic poems before him when he translated the *Prophetiae Merlini*. Given the parallels between *Merlinüsþpa* and *Hávamál* set out in §4.1, it is curious that that poem too is not added to the list. In chapters 3 and 4 I made reference to the similarities in compositional mode and idiom between this work and various eddic poems recorded in later codices, as evidence of Gunnlaugr's knowledge of eddic conventions, and, in the context of the debate about the date of *Hávamál*, I noted the risks involved in interpreting verbal and stylistic echoes as literary borrowings (see also Harris: 1985, 122-125). The awkwardness of the particular argument advanced for *Merlinúsþpa* can be seen in the list of fused lines and stanzas from eddic poems offered by Finnur Jónsson (1892-6, cxii-cxiii) as evidence of Gunnlaugr's 'borrowings'. It is more likely that a learned Icelander interested in prophetic literature and wisdom poetry would have been familiar with his own culture's traditional expressions of these genres. Whether he knew the poems himself or sought to hear them from someone who did, it is not necessary for a text to have been written down for the idiom and cadences of these genres to have found their way into his work.

Although it is uncertain when the very first eddic poem was recorded on vellum, it seems probable that the accumulation of texts that resulted in the collection manuscripts proceeded gradually. The theory that the collection of eddic poems developed in stages was advanced last century by Müllenhoff and has been confirmed by Lindblad's paleographic study of the Regius manuscript, with a number of other scholars, including Heusler and Wessén, working at a similar theory of evolution during the intervening years (see Lindblad: 1978, 14ff and Harris: 1985, 75ff). Wessén (1945, 21) put forward the theory that poems were originally recorded on loose leaves, which might explain the difference in ordering in the later R and A collections. Since the eddic poems are of uneven length, and would not all fit on a single leaf (or would result in a substantial amount of wasted space on a second leaf), this hypothesis implies a rather extravagant attitude by writers towards their vellum (see §3.2).
To conclude this examination of the prehistory of the collection manuscripts, I want to note that both the size and prestige of the Regius collection have tended to elevate it to the status of a canon of eddic poetry, and while it has undoubtedly become that in post-medieval times, there are a number of reasons why we should not view it as the culmination of the impulse to preserve texts of eddic poems in medieval times. First of all, individual poems were incorporated into a number of fourteenth century compilations, and one of these texts, *Voluspá*, duplicates a work of the Regius collection, although the text preserved in the fourteenth century manuscript appears to be derived from a different oral tradition. In other words, the manuscript context of Regius was just one of the textual environments in which it was considered desirable to include a text of *Voluspá*, and there may have been others. Secondly, the accretions of other poems (such as Hávamál and Baldrs Draumar) to the various branches of the manuscript tradition which lead to R and A indicates that there was considerable activity in procuring and copying eddic texts, and not just one or two “editions of the great collection of lays” (Heusler: 1937, 25). Finally, the range and number of eddic verses glimpsed in Snorri’s work is greater than that preserved in the sum of extant manuscripts, and it may be that some of these were also written as whole poems in medieval manuscripts, now lost. The scattered evidence of interest in eddic texts further shows that there was no single point of contact between the oral eddic tradition and the new written tradition (as Wessen (1945, 22) seems to imply) but a continuing interface between the two.

§5.5 Eddic poems in compilation manuscripts

Other manuscripts preserving eddic mythological poetry date from around the same period as A or later. Codex Wormianus of Snorri’s *Edda*, written shortly after the middle of the mid fourteenth century (Nordal: 1931, 5), contains the only text of the poem *Rígsþula*. The poem, which is preserved with a brief prose preface, takes up both sides of leaf 61, the first of three discontinuous leaves making up the eighth (incomplete) gathering of the extant manuscript. The first six gatherings are each of eight leaves, and contain the Prologue to Snorri’s *Edda*, Gylfaginning, Skáldskaparmál, and four grammatical treatises. The seventh gathering is of six leaves only, and contains a text of *Háttatal* incomplete at beginning and end. As all the extant leaves are written in the same hand, and the first seven gatherings were all originally of eight leaves each, it
seems likely that five leaves have been lost from the last gathering. The other two extant leaves of this gathering contain lists of ókend heiti.

The poem has no title, although two small spaces have been left at the right-hand ends of the first and third lines of the prose introduction; if these contained writing it is no longer readable. Within the collection of heiti on the following leaves, a reference is made to the list of names in stanza 12 of the poem: “præla heiti standa i rigs. þviv.” (ESS II 496). This cross-reference indicates that the poem was deliberately incorporated into the compilation by the scribe, and not simply appended to the manuscript at a later date. According to Sigurður Nordal (1931, 16), the single hand of the manuscript is skillful and competent in the various discourses it transcribes. He guesses that the compiler wrote it for his own use.

Because of the state of the last gathering, the relationship of the poem to the other contents of the manuscript is unclear. The explicit connection made by the compiler might suggest that Rígsþula was of interest because of its lists of names (stanzas 12, 13, 24, 25 and 41). Whether or not the poem is complete is not beyond doubt either. The last extant stanza is the second advice stanza spoken to Konr ungr by a crow, in which the young prince is urged to leave off idle bird-bating, and take on more challenging pursuits like armed combat and, if the comment “Á Danr oc Danpr dýrar hallir/œðra óðal, enn þr hafit” functions as a mild taunt, the acquisition of wealth. In this its structure is similar to the end of Fafnismál, where a group of nut-hatches proffer Sigurðr advice about action appropriate for the next stage of his life, the acquisition of a wife (Fm 40-44).

The hand of W has been identified as the hand of another text of a single eddic poem, Völuspá, preserved in the Hauksbók compilation (F. Jónsson: 1892-6, xvi). Numerous hands worked on this manuscript, including Haukr Erlendsson himself, who owned the book and presumably oversaw the writing of most of its contents (J. Benediktsson: 1961, 250). Haukr, a prominent Icelandic lawyer, spent a considerable amount of time in Norway, particularly in the first two decades of the fourteenth century, and intermittently after that. It is thought his codex was produced during the third decade of the century, and apart from his own hand, the work of both Norwegian and Icelandic scribes has been identified (J. Benediktsson: 1961, 250). It is possible that the text of Völuspá was added after Haukr’s death in the mid 1330s (F. Jónsson: 1892-6, cxxxiii).
The poem is written from the top of leaf 20a to half way down 21a, after which the leaf has been cut in two. The edges of the leaves are worn, including the top of the page on which the poem begins, so it is not possible to say if there was originally a rubric titling the poem. Leaves 20 and 21 are conjugate with 15 and 17 (16 is a single leaf) (F. Jónsson: 1892-6, x), which suggests that if *Voluspá* was written much later than the rest of the gathering, space was left, either for it or some other text. It was not inserted into the manuscript on a separate leaf.

The poem stands between a collection of what Finnur Jónsson termed 'heimspeki ok helgfræði' and a text of *Trójumanna saga*. Although there is no prose introduction to the poem (and no mention of it in the prologue to the manuscript) the context in which the poem has been preserved suggests it catered to the same interest that brought together the collection of encyclopedic lore, and texts treating world history (*Kristni saga*, *Trójumanna saga* and *Bretasögur*). *Voluspá* also describes a history of the world, and in its sharply focussed depiction of the directions from which outsiders approach Ásgarðr, it is analagous to one of the items preceding it in the collection, the *Civitas Hierusalem famosisima* (leaf 19a). In medieval works, Jerusalem was usually portrayed as a medieval fortified town (Nordström: 1962, 572), and in this map, the gates surrounding the town are carefully marked and identified (“porta aurea qua ingressus”). Whereas *Voluspá* describes the dwellings of the Norse mythological world (“Sal sér hon standa, sólo fegra...”), in the map of Jerusalem the disposition of buildings and temples is clearly set out, including “habitatio regum et prophetarum”. Like the map of Jerusalem, *Voluspá* provides an overview of cultural and ideological beliefs, and probably attracted the compiler/s because it was a vernacular complement to Continental texts of this kind.

Another single eddic poem which has been incorporated into the contents of a compilation manuscript is *Hyndluljóð*, preserved near the beginning of the large, deluxe manuscript, Flateyjarbók, produced in the second last decade of the fourteenth century (F. Jónsson: 1930). The manuscript was apparently written for the chieftain Jón Hákonarson of Víðidalstunga in northern Iceland, by two priests, Magnús Dórhalisson and Jón Dórðarson. Flateyjarbók is a massive collation of kings' sagas (Vigfússon and Unger: 1860-68), in which the scribes seemed to have aimed to be as exhaustive as possible. In his dedication, the scribe Magnús lists the sagas, adding after *Óláfs saga*
Tryggvason “með öllum sínum páttum” (F. Jónsson: 1930, intro.). It is thought the scribes made use of manuscripts from nearby Æingeypar monastery for parts of the compilation (J. Benediktsson: 1959, 413). The group of works in which Hyndluljóð is found is as follows: two skaldic poems about Ólafr Haraldsson (Geïsi by Einarr Skúlason and Óláfrsóma by Einarr Gilsson), Hyndluljóð, an excerpt from Kristnisaga meistara Adams, and the prose páttir frá Sigurði konungi stefu and Hversu Noregr bygðist, followed by some genealogic lists. The poem is prefaced by the rubric “her hefr upp Hyndlolióð qveðit um Ottar heimska”. The common theme of all these works is genealogical and Sigurður Nordal (1944, ix) has argued that the mention of one Klyppr in Hyndluljóð encouraged the owner of the manuscript, Jón Hákonarson, who traced his own line of descent back to a chieftain named Klyppr, to view the poetic text as evidence of his own pedigree.

Stanza 33 of this poem is quoted by Snorri in Gylfaginning, and ascribed to a poem he calls Voluspá in skamma. Because of Snorri’s citation, editors have generally considered stanzas 29-44 of Hyndluljóð as a separate poem which has been incorporated into the larger work (Klingenberg: 1974, 9). But Hyndluljóð is an entirely coherent poem as it stands and there is no sign in the manuscript that stanzas 29 to 44 were regarded as separate from the poem. In fact, there is every reason to believe it was deliberately positioned, and the text conscientiously executed (see Gurevich: 1973). Hyndluljóð is structured as a dialogue between the goddess Freyja and Hyndla, a giantess who is coerced into providing the pedigree of Freyja’s favourite, Óttarr heimsci. The series of stanzas giving mythological genealogies comes at the point when Hyndla has traced back Óttarr’s descent through a multitude of historical kinship lines, and has pursued these lines further back into legendary history, and further still, to the mythological antecedents of these lines.

The notion that genealogical lines stretched back through recorded history to ancient times and still further back to the gods was almost a commonplace in thirteenth century Scandinavian literature, and there is no reason to suspect the integrity of the shift from the genealogies of past heroes in stanza 28 to the lineage of the god Baldr in stanzas 29 and 30, especially since both stanzas end with the line “alt er þat ætt þin, Óttar heimsci”. Hyndla proceeds to describe the genealogies of other gods, including the reputed father of the human race, Heimdallr, who was born of nine mothers. The giantess also tells of the monsters Loki gave birth to (st. 40-1), and it is the creation of this generation of descendants that spells the end of the world of
the gods, as Loki's progeny turn against the gods and the cataclysmic events of *ragna röc* ensue. Hyndla's dissertation closes in on itself in the next stanzas, as she begins to describe what happens after the end of the world, when another, supreme male is to be born.

In mythological time, this is in the future, and, as she says, there are few who can see further forward than the moment when Óðinn meets the wolf at *ragna röc* (st. 44). But to Óttarr and his family, their mythological forebears live in the far distant past. The time-zone they inhabit both post-dates mythological time, and is subsumed within it, since humans face *ragna röc* along with the gods. (Hyndla in fact says that Loki's monstrous progeny arrive "á foldo" st. 417.) It is at this moment of impasse that Freyja interrupts Hyndla, and demands that she give her favourite Óttarr, a memory drink so that he can retain his pedigree in his memory. The poem earlier tells us he has made a wager with another man about his right of inheritance, and he needs to be able to rehearse his forebears to win the wager. Further demands annoy the giantess Hyndla, who has given all the genealogical information reluctantly anyway, and the poem ends with an insult exchange between the giantess and the goddess (sts. 47-50). The flow of stanzas in this part of the poem does not seem to me any less continuous or logical than the transitions characteristic of eddic poems, and it is probably only Snorri's title, *Völuspá in skamma*, that has led editors to carve up the poem and question its cohesion, a point I shall return to in §5.8. Gro Steinsland (1989, 461-94) has recently argued for the unity of *Hyndluljóð* on the basis of her investigation of kingship ideology in this and other poetic sources.

Two further poems that seem to belong to the medieval tradition of eddic composition, *Grógaldr* and *Fjólsvinnsmál*, are only preserved in later copies of the Codex Regius manuscript (from the seventeenth century and later), though they are believed to have been composed around the middle of the thirteenth century (Holtsmark: 1972, 585). The two poems probably constitute a poetic unity (named *Svipdagsmál* by Sophus Bugge), and provide an important insight into the dynamic of eddic composition as it moves between discursive modes, a topic I shall return to in the next chapter. Like *Hyndluljóð*, *Svipdagsmál* combines both heroic and mythological situations, and defies categorisation as either a 'mythological' or a 'heroic' poem (see Motz: 1975). In my consideration in §4.2 of the categorisation of medieval Icelandic verse into two classes, eddic and skaldic, I noted that the Codex Regius collection played a crucial role in
the establishment of that division. The sub-division within the corpus of eddic verse — into mythological and heroic poetry — is also predicated on the Regius manuscript and in the following section I shall look more closely at the basis for this division.

§5.6 The categories of mythological and heroic poetry

The division between mythological poems on the one hand and heroic poems on the other has become entrenched in scholarship about eddic verse (see for example Anne Holtmark's entries "Guediktnlng" and Heltediktning" in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* 1960b and 1961c or Klingenberg in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 1984), and, like the categorisation of eddic and skaldic poems, has tended towards a dichotomy which does not properly represent the generic complexity of eddic poetry. For example, the division is not upheld in the compositional practices or conceptual basis of eddic poems themselves, where human heroes interact freely with mythological figures, and are said to be descended from them (Hm 163 and HHI 321-2). In a prose link in the poem *Helgaqvíða Hundingsbana qnon* (between sts. 38 and 39), Helgi is indeed said to rule alongside Óðinn once he has arrived in Valhöll.

Outside the Regius collection other poems exemplify the intercourse (in one case literally) between humans and gods: *Rígsþula* describes the travels of the god Heimdalr (or so Rígr is identified in the prose prologue to the poem in Codex Wormianus), and his visits to various couples along the way. The third son he begets he claims as his own, and bestows on him his heritage: "pañn bað hann eignaz ódalvöllo/ódalvöllo, alðnar bygðin" (st. 36). As we saw above, *Hyndluljóð* also deals with the links between human dynasties and their mythological forebears, but whereas *Rígsþula* is set back in mythological time and follows the story of Rígr's offspring up to Danr, reputed to have been the first king of the Danes (Lukman: 1961, 421-2), *Hyndluljóð* represents Freyja's divine intervention in the life of a young prince (Óttarr ðungli, Ínnsteins buri) to help him discover his ancestry among legendary and mythological figures. That is, the two poems set out their genealogical information in opposite chronological order, but both conceive of historical lines as continuous with legendary and mythological lines. Extant eddic texts suggest that this
integration was traditional, and not a product of literary synthesising, or the "mythologisierte Heldenzeit" as Klingenberg (1974, 15) has described it.

Numerous medieval Norse texts, in both verse and prose, attest to the belief that history was conceived as stretching back from present times to mythological times, and that the connections were made through kinship lines (see for example Ynglinga saga, Ynglingatal and Saxo's Gesta Danorum). Although written texts tended to separate the mythological past from recent history and the present, usually by describing events or beliefs of the distant past first, a pattern that is found in Heimskringla, the Codex Regius collection of eddic poems, and to some degree in Snorri's Edda if the order Prologue, Gylfaginning and Skáldskaparmál can be understood as Snorri's intended sequence, this separation does not seem to have existed in oral conceptions of the interface between mythology and the present, or by extension, between mythology and history. Poem such as Hyndluljóð and the Helgi poems in Regius demonstrate that in the Norse poetic imagination, the legendary and the mythological past were co-eval. And as I noted in §2.2.4.3, some contemporary sagas would also have us believe that the activities of mythological and heroic figures such as Guðrún Guðkadóttir and Egill Skallagrímsson were not confined to the past at all, but continued to influence the sleeping and waking imaginations of thirteenth century Icelanders.

The division between 'heroic' and 'mythological' verse (as it is constructed from the Regius collection) is not strictly followed in Snorri's quotation of eddic poems in his Edda, though most of the quotations in Gylfaginning are from the 'mythological' group. In Gylfaginning, Snorri also quotes from the poem Fáfnismál to confirm details in his account of pagan mythology, even though Fáfnismál falls squarely within the heroic cycle of poems in the Regius collection. Fáfnismál, like several other poems found in both parts of the manuscript, describes the meeting of a human king or prince with a 'supernatural' figure. In most of these poems the ensuing dialogue constitutes the action of the poem, and the hero gains access to specialised and valuable knowledge not otherwise available to humankind. According to Norse tradition, these 'supernatural' figures usually hail from another world: from Ásgarðr, the home of the gods, from Iðunheimr, home of the giants, or from the various abodes of dwarves and elves (see Motz: 1973-4). Most of these beings share the ability to disguise their identity, or to change their form altogether, into birds, fish or serpents (see Boberg: 1966, A132, F420 and F451). In Ynglinga
saga (chapter 7), Óðinn is said to be able to transform himself into a bird, animal or fish, and in both Prymskviða and Skáldskaparmál, Loki takes to flight with the aid of a feather-coat. The giants Hræsvelgr, Piazi and Suttungr are all able to assume the shapes of birds, and in the Sigurð series of eddic poems an 'other-worldly' family is described as comprising an otter, a dwarf and a third brother takes the form of a dragon, although he is also identified as a giant.

Two poems which represent the interaction between these polymorphous beings and human heroes are Fáfnismál and Sigrdrífumál. Fáfnismál consists of a dialogue between the young prince Sigurðr and the dragon Fáfnir, and in Sigrdrífumál, a catechism of rune and other knowledge is delivered to Sigurðr by the valkyrie Sigrdrífa. The discursive style of both these deliveries is similar to the mythological catechisms in Háamál and Grímnismál. In Rígsþula, the young aristocrat is also taught rune knowledge (st. 43) and learns to understand the speech of birds (st. 44). Helgaqvída Hígrvarðssonar and Helgaqvída Hundingsbana Ónnor also contain segments of dialogue between a 'hero' and a mythological figure. A valkyrie converses with the hero Helgi in Helgaqvída Hígrvarðssonar (sts. 6-9) and Helgaqvída Hundingsbana Ónnor (sts. 5-13) and, in Helgaqvída Hígrvarðssonar (sts. 12-30), the young aristocrats Helgi and Atli engage in debate with a giantess. Interviews between heroes and birds occur in Helgaqvída Hígrvarðssonar (sts. 1-4) and Fáfnismál (sts. 32-44). Generically, these poetic segments are closely affiliated with poems representing exchanges between the Æsir and other-worldly beings, such as Alvíssmál. The human protagonists in fact often adopt the same strategies as their divine counterparts in bringing about narrative resolution: like Pórr in Alvíssmál, Helgi and Atli engage the giantess Þrímrgerðr in debate until day-break, at which point she, like the dwarf Alvíss, turns to stone.

The other side of the coin with regard to relations between aristocrats and mythological beings is seen in another group of eddic poems, Grímnismál, Vafðrúðnismál and Grottasongr, where a king abuses a mythological figure and is subsequently dealt an awful death. In Grímnismál, a learned monologue is addressed to King Geirrós by Óðinn, disguised as Grímnir. In this case, King Geirrós forfeits enjoyment of Óðinn's detailed account of life for the einheriar in Valhöll, because of his action in torturing his guest. Óðinn's recitation of lore in fact works as his cruel revenge on the king. Thematically the poem is akin to Grottasongr, which tells of King Froði's attempts to extract unreasonable labour from two slave girls called Fenia and Menia, who, unfortunately for the
king, turn out to be of giant kin. During the course of their poetic recitation, they produce an army which crushes Froði at his own mill.

The *topos* of revenge by an otherworldly figure against a human king for wrongful incarceration (or exploitation) is also expressed by the poem *Völundarvíða*. As mentioned above, Völundr's otherworldly identity becomes increasingly clear during the course of the poem until he finally takes to flight, leaving the miserable king Niðuðr, admitting he is unable to avenge himself on someone dangling in the air high above him (st. 38), to confirm the truth of Völundr's boasts with his now pregnant daughter, Bóðvildr. Curiously, the prose prologue to the poem in Regius plays down Völundr's otherworldly identity, instead identifying him as a human prince, the son of a Finnish king. Although only a few lines of the prose introduction to the work are extant in the A manuscript, the two prose introductions appear to have been the same in this respect, both specifying Völundr and his brothers as "synir Finnakonungs". As I noted in §5.1, the relationship of the prose introduction to *Völundarvíða* is different in scope from prose introductions to other poems, and the range of details accompanying the legend of Völundr suggests they were derived from sources other than the poem. It is likely that the reference to Völundr as the son of a Finnish king was already incorporated into the text when the Regius compiler acquired the work, and although in the positioning of the poem in the collection the compiler has clearly associated it with works told from the point of view of other-worldly figures, he has not clarified this matter in his own prose notes (in say, the way he reiterates Sváva's identity as a valkyrie in prose links within *Helgavíða* Hiðrvarðasonar).

Karen Grimstaad (1983, 200) has suggested that *Völundarvíða* belongs to the province of folk legend (rather than heroic poetry), where, typically, a human being has a disastrous encounter with a supernatural being. But as she notes, in this poem the moral tale is told from the point of view of the 'wronged elf' rather than the human, just as *Grimnismál* and *Grottaþongr* are constructed as tales against human beings. While these poems show structural similarities to folk legends, they represent a significant enough group to constitute a traditional eddic class, thematically, if not generically, bound together.

The interpenetration of the the worlds of men and the worlds of air-born creatures and rock-dwelling beings was apparently basic to the traditional Norse world-view. Through the intervention of valkyries in the lives of men
and in the common fate of men and Æsir at ragna roc, the world of human beings was inextricably meshed with the life-world of gods, giants, elves and dwarves. Far from distinguishing the 'supernatural' from the 'natural', the old Scandinavian religion appears to have seen aspects of the palpable world, such as elements and seasons, as animate beings (see Clunies Ross: 1987a, 91). The very distinction implicit in the word 'supernatural' arises from an abstract categorisation of phenomena into separate and stable groups, an intellectual process that would probably be foreign to cultures unfamiliar with literate habits of mind (Goody: 1987, 69). Across historical periods and cultures, writing has in fact promoted a formal distinction between the divine, the natural and the human (Goody and Watt: 1968, 62), and this process is in evidence in Icelandic written works of the thirteenth century.

It is significant that in the U manuscript of Snorra Edda, all the mythological narratives are grouped together, Óðinn's acquisition of the mead of poetry and Þórr's encounter with Geirrøðr following directly on from Gylfaginning with no apparent break in the text (Lindow: 1985, 35). In all the manuscripts of Skáldskaparmál, the 'heroic' narratives (concerning Sigurðr) stand as explanations for particular kennings. In manuscripts other than U, however, the Hrungnir and Geirrøðr episodes are integrated within the list of kennings for Þórr within the text of Skáldskaparmál (ch. 25: 100, 18ff.). As the relationship of the various manuscripts to Snorri's original version (or versions) of the Edda is unclear, it is difficult to interpret U's system of classification in a historical context.

The apparent division of the Regius manuscript of eddic poems into two parts is more a division between compilatory styles than types of poetry, with poems in the second half lending themselves to narrative shaping by the compiler because of familial connections between their protagonists (see §5.2). Incorporated in this half are 'mythological' poems told from the point of view of men, while poems which are told against men are included among the poems of the gods in the first part of the manuscript. If, as Lindblad has suggested, the two collections of poems arose separately, the deep division between 'mythological' and 'heroic' verse may owe more to the vagaries of antiquarian taste than to a strongly held perception among thirteenth century compilers that traditional verse was sub-divided in that way.
Exactly what perceptions thirteenth century manuscript compilers held of traditional eddic poetry is not known. Unfortunately we know nothing at all of the precise circumstances in which the collectors went about their work, or of their attitudes to their collections (Meulengracht Sørensen: 1989, 241). What few facts we can gather on the probable social context of both the oral and literary transmission of eddic poetry, however, do not accord with the dominant model of literary production, set out by Elias Wessen (1947), and frequently followed since (for example, Lindblad: 1978, 15). Wessen imagined a society in which there were "litterärt bildade män, män av Snorres typ" on one hand and "traditionsbärare" on the other (1947, 11). Following the model of nineteenth century folklore collectors, he seems to have pictured highly literate urban(e) men roaming the countryside in a bid to acquire works not otherwise accessible to them. This model constructs those possessing knowledge of traditional works as living outside the mainstream of the society's culture, separated from their literate countrymen by a deep social and cultural divide. The projection of this relatively modern social scenario onto thirteenth century Iceland requires some ingenuity.

There is no hard evidence that thirteenth century Iceland was a polarised culture (at least not along socio-cultural lines) and a lot to suggest that in fact social conditions favoured a high degree of integration between people of different socio-economic levels (Meulengracht-Sørensen: 1977, 123). Indeed, as we saw in §2.2.1, aspects of traditional oral culture appear to have been considered an important component in the education of children, including future bishops. Although centres of learning were established in Iceland by the thirteenth century, they were not cut off from an alienated non-urban or urban population in the way that cities and universities became in modern times, particularly after the industrial revolution. It is inappropriate, in other words, to liken Snorri and his colleagues to figures like Boswell and Johnson (in the English-speaking world), moving through a world of people from whom they feel a large social and cultural distance.

Nevertheless, Wessen argues with some vehemence that there must have been a deep divide between traditional oral culture and the new culture of writing (1947, 11): "Man kan icke förutsätta, att de ha nedskrivit kvädena ur sitt eget minne. Däremot kan man givetvis tänka sig, att de ha lärt dem för att
As well as the evidence presented in chapter 2 of the apparent widespread familiarity with eddic conventions in thirteenth century Iceland and Norway, I would now like to add to that the evidence presented in this chapter, of the demonstrable familiarity of learned writers with a broad range of eddic conventions and particular poems. The principal writer of Sverris saga, which quotes a couple of snatches of traditional gnomic verse in the eddic style, was Karl Jónsson, abbot at the monastery of Pingeyrar at the turn of the thirteenth century. Abbot Karl is known to have completed the section of the saga he calls Gryla, but whether this included the chapter quoting eddic verse has not been established with certainty (Andersson: 1985, 215). At the same institution, the monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson wrote Merlinuspa, in which he displays his knowledge of traditional prophetic verse and the gnomic idiom of eddic convention.

A strong case can also be made that Snorri knew a considerable number of eddic poems orally, even if it is conceded he may have used a written text of two or three poems in his work on pagan mythology. Two of his nephews also quote eddic verse, Oláfr Þórðarson quoting lines from a traditional poem in his grammatical treatise, and Sturla Þórðarson quoting verses apparently composed about contemporary events. It seems a reasonable deduction from this that eddic traditions were widely known throughout society, by the learned laity and the clergy, as well as by those 'ordinary' people whose dream verses were quoted in contemporary sagas. The substantial amount of eddic verse recorded in formaldarsogur in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries supports the surmise that eddic poetry continued to be orally transmitted during this period.
(Buchholz: 1980), and there is little reason to think that the *literati* of the thirteenth century were unfamiliar with these stories (note in particular the comments of the writer of the prologue of *Piðreks saga*).

It has been suggested there may have been stronger traditions of handing down old poetry in particular families, such as the Sturlungs (Meulengracht Sørensen: 1977, 120-121), and it is also possible that certain members of the community were better versed in eddic compositions than others, but we have no evidence of these unsung reciters, or the part they played in the writing down of eddic texts. Extant manuscripts provide some evidence that knowledge of traditional poetry was not evenly spread among those at work on producing manuscripts. In the Regius manuscript of *Snorra Edda*, for instance, a page is left for the text of the poem *Hauströng* to be written by another scribe (Wessen: 1940, 6), and the practice of scribal specialisation in prose or verse texts is suggested in other manuscripts (Frank: 1978, 30). However, in general, it has been observed that thirteenth century scribes were familiar with the language and metre of eddic verse, and were competent at writing it down (Heusler: 1937, 23).

There is evidence of a total of one hundred scribes’ work down to the end of the thirteenth century in Iceland (H. Benediktsson: 1965, 13-14), and almost without exception manuscripts were written by trained hands. (H. Benediktsson (1965: xxxiii) notes the exception of an unskilled hand penning six lines in AM 325 VII 4to, a manuscript of *Olafs saga Helga*). Clerical scribes were probably employed on commission to produce most, if not all manuscripts in the thirteenth century, and according to contemporary records, all those who were attributed with actually writing manuscripts (as opposed to dictating or commissioning them) were clerics (Lönroth: 1964, 52-75). I have noted in passing the connection of various texts with the monastery of Píngeyrar, which suggests that that institution may have been involved in producing texts of eddic poems, either for its own collection or on commission from antiquarians. The heterogeneous origins of texts in fourteenth century compilation manuscripts might lend support to the hypothesis, premised on Seip’s paleographic findings, that some eddic texts were even imported into Iceland by enthusiastic antiquarians.

There is little to suggest that the writing down of eddic poems was intended as a textual fall-back to operate within the environment of orally
transmitted texts. As Heusler (1937, 31) notes, the collections of eddic poems were not prompt books. The traditional audience of eddic poems presumably recognised the identities of speakers in mythological verse, and did not need to be informed when the insults started to be hurled back in the other direction. Most probably they were also familiar with the narrative background to the mythological poems (Clunies Ross: 1990b, 15), and did not need to be advised of the alternate names for particular giants, or where particular members of the Æsir were when certain events took place. The texts of eddic poems recorded in medieval codices were probably intended for the perusal of the manuscript owners, their literate friends, and colleagues interested in similar antiquarian pursuits. The A2 manuscript includes a genealogy of one of the descendants of Snorri's son-in-law, suggesting that the manuscript was passed down within the family (Wessén 1945, 15), and the U manuscript also contains material concerning the Sturlung family.

The putative audience of the eddic texts is therefore set apart somewhat from the general audience I have presumed the poems had in oral transmission. The supposed literate audience of the manuscripts might also explain the general lack of an interpretive apparatus in extant works, which provide neither a euhemerising framework for the poems, nor Christian commentaries on the contents of the poems. If the texts were intended as a resource for literate members of society, they might have been expected to have absorbed the spirit in which such texts should be read and understood.

The range of contexts in which eddic verse was preserved in the Middle Ages shows that the antiquarian interest in traditional mythological poems was bound up with different literary tastes and different compilation projects. An interest in encyclopedic literature, including sybilline poetry, has been detected in the Hauksbók and Flateyjarbók use of eddic mythological texts (Clunies Ross: 1990b, 8-9). And, as we have seen, Flateyjarbók and the Regius collection also bear witness to a literary interest in this poetry for its elucidation of dynastic models, linking present generations with their forebears in the legendary and mythological past. Klingenberg (1974, 118) has suggested the Codex Regius collection may also express the political apprehensions of its own moment of production: "Der Sammler als Zeuge der Endzeit und seiner Zeit".

Clues to the social context of the writing down of eddic poetry are quickly exhausted, but the texts themselves provide other kinds of evidence of the ways
in which compilers understood the poems, their relationship one to another and the context in which they knew or learnt about them. In the following section I shall examine the titles and citations of eddic poems, which raise interesting questions about the poetry's mode of transmission into and between manuscripts, and the attitudes to it revealed in the naming practices of manuscript producers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Iceland.

§5.8 The naming of eddic mythological poems

In the corpus of eddic poetry, it is striking that a single name, such as Guðrúnarqvíða, appears to have served as the title for three distinct poems, two of which are copied one after another in the same manuscript. It is also curious that particular names are qualified by epithets, such as inn skammi, apparently to distinguish one work from another of the same name, and that the same poem could attract different titles in different manuscripts - for Scírnis in one, and Skírnismál in another. The rubrics to poems in R and A are listed in Table 4. The left hand column lists works in the order in which they are preserved in the principal repository of eddic verse, the Codex Regius manuscript. Names printed in italics (such as Völundarqvíða) are those given in post-medieval paper manuscripts or modern editions. The second column gives the rubrics found in A. Quotations of eddic verse in thirteenth and early fourteenth century works are given in the third column, and those poems recorded in full outside the collection manuscripts R and A are shown in the column to the far right of the table.

The rubrics to poems are shown in non-italicised print, and where I consider these to function as titles of poems, they are printed in bold. The basis for my designation of one rubric as a title and another as a kind of chapter heading is as follows. The rubric in the manuscript which introduces the poem we call Völundarqvíða (text 10) is "Frá Völundi oc Nóðaði", the names of the two main actors of the poem. This heading does not seem to function as a title in the same way as, say, Prymsqvíða does. One of the constituents of the compound Prymsqvíða is the noun kvíða, which Andreas Heusler (1957, 154) has argued is a particular Scandinavian expression for a Germanic poetic genre of narrative verse. (See also Erik Noreen's (1924) earlier article concerning kvíða, in which he casts doubt on Elias Wessén's (1915) theory that kvíða originally denoted a kind of elegy.) Other kvíða-titles are constituted in the same manner,
Table 4  The naming of eddic poems in medieval manuscripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubrics in Codex Regius</th>
<th>Rubrics in A</th>
<th>Titles given in other contexts</th>
<th>Rubrics to whole poems in other manuscripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 ??</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ygga (quotation in SnE)</td>
<td>?? (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Hávamál</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>?? (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Yafdrúðsrímál</td>
<td></td>
<td>(beginning of poem missing)</td>
<td>quotation in SnE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capitulum (between sts. 19 and 20)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 (introducing prose prologue to Grú)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frá sonum Hraunungs konunga</td>
<td>Frá Hraunungs konunga</td>
<td>Grímnmál</td>
<td>Grímnmál (quotation in SnE &amp; JG1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locasenna</td>
<td></td>
<td>(introducing coda to Ls)</td>
<td>(quotation in SnE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frá Loca</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Prymsgviða</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 (introducing prose prologue to Vkv)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frá Vólundi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frá Niðaði konungi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frá Vólundi oc Niðaði</td>
<td></td>
<td>(poem missing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Alvíssmál</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alvíss/Alvísnz/Quítsmál (quotation in SnE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 (introducing HIIII)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 (introducing prose prologue to HIIV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frá Hrorvarði oc Sigfríði</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 (introducing prose prologue to HIIII)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frá Vólungron</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Frá dauða Sinfotla (prose passage)</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 (continues on new line with prose introduction to Grp, which has no rubric)</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 (introducing prose prologue to Rm)</td>
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<tr>
<td>?? Frá Sigurði</td>
<td></td>
<td>(quotation in V &amp; Norn)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(introducing prose link to last stanza of Rm)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capitulum</td>
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<tr>
<td>(prose continues without break into introduction to Fn)</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Frá dauða Fáfnis</td>
<td></td>
<td>(quotation in SnE &amp; Sv)</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 (prose continues without break into introduction to Sd)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 (introducing prose coda to Br, the text after the lacuna)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frá dauða Sigurðar</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 Guðrínarskammba</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 Qviða Sigurðar</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sigurðarvía in skamma (in prose introducing poem)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(prose link without rubric)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23 Brynhylfr reið helveg</td>
<td></td>
<td>(quotation in Norn)</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 Dríp Niflunga (prose passage)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Guðrínarskammba</td>
<td></td>
<td>Qvðrínarskammba in forn (citation in prose of Brot in R)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitulum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Qviða Guðrínar</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rubrics in Codex Reglus</td>
<td>Rubrics in A</td>
<td>Titles given in other contexts</td>
<td>Rubrics to whole poems in other mes</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 (introducing prose prologue to Od)</td>
<td>Frá Borgný/lo oc Oddrūno</td>
<td>/</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 (introducing prose link to Akv)</td>
<td>Dauði Atla</td>
<td>Atlagvīða in grænænsco</td>
<td>Atlamál in grænænsco (in prose introducing poem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 (introducing prose link to Guðrúnarhvǫt)</td>
<td>Frá Guðrūno</td>
<td>Guðrúnarhvǫt</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 (introducing prose link to Guðrúnarhvǫt)</td>
<td>Hamðismál</td>
<td>Hamðismál in forn (in prose coda to poem)</td>
<td>- (quotation in V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
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</table>
| 32 | / | / | /
| 33 | / | / | /
| 34 | / | / | /
| 35 | / | / | /
| 36 | / | / | / (W)
| 37 | / | / | / Hyndluhlíð (F)
| 38 | / | / | /
| 39 | / | / | /
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| 42 | / | / | /
| 43 | / | / | /
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| 56 | / | / | /

**Key:**

- ?? denotes a probable rubric, though the text is now unreadable.
- / is used when a poem is not included in one or both of the collection manuscripts.
- - indicates that the poem is quoted elsewhere but without a title being cited.
- fragm. Fragments of verse preserved in quotations, corresponding to the "Bruchstücke und einzelstrophen" of the Neckel Kuhn edition, and following that system of numbering.
using the genitive case of a person's name: Guðrúnarvígða, Atlaðvíða, et cetera. Most of the other titles to poems are compounds using a range of terms which designate specific speech genres, and arguably, particular poetic genres. Among them are spá (text 1), senna (text 8), hvót (text 30), pula (text 47) and the more general term mál (text 2). The praise poem Eiríksmál also uses this kind of title, perhaps because it privileges Eiríkr's speech in Valhöll to such a degree (see §4.2). To these speech genres, tal might also be added. Two skaldic poems in eddic metres are named by Snorri as Háleygjatal (in the Prologue) and Ynglingatal (in Heimskringla) and his own tour de force in the genre of list poems is called Háttatal.

In my scheme, those rubrics that form a nominal group in this way, and include a word which designates some kind of verbal utterance, are called titles. Those rubrics beginning "frá . . . " are treated differently, although they do function as a kind of title, or heading, informing the reader of the contents of the following piece. There is a further group of rubrics that have been included in the category of titles, which do not include a word for a poem, or utterance, but form a nominal group in the same way using the genitive of a person's name. These are Baldrs Draumar, Helreið Brynhildar and For Scírnis which in the A manuscript is called Skírnismál, perhaps because of the A compiler's sense that the poem instantiated the mál genre rather than a narrative genre. I am not assuming that the title used in a manuscript was necessarily the same as the name by which people knew a poem in oral transmission, though in many instances this was quite probably the case.

The use of rubrics in the style "frá x", which function as chapter headings, was probably influenced by prose mythography, such as that written by Snorri Sturluson earlier in the thirteenth century, or perhaps more generally by written prose works which divide up material into chapters, and introduce them with the formulation: "frá x". In §5.2, I observed how the discursive style of the prose introduction to Locasenna demonstrated these concerns. The earliest extant manuscript of Snorra Edda, Codex Upsaliensis, preserves headings within the text that are similar in form to those found in the manuscripts of eddic poems, for example "frá nora íaðni ok natt dottur hans"; "frá heimboði asa með ægi" and "her hefr sogu þors ok utgarþa loka" (ESS II 258, 293 and 281). In her study of oral poetry world-wide, Ruth Finnegan (1977, 107) made the observation that oral poems do not normally have titles. While this may be too sweeping a generalisation, it seems true in the case of eddic material that some
titling practices demonstrate a particularly literate mind-set. In the context of medieval Iceland, it seems rather unlikely that phrases such as "frá Völundr" would have been used in spoken discourse to refer to a poem about Völundr's adventures. This suggests that a distinction was made between literary titles and the names poems were known by in common parlance.

The inheritance of learned Continental titling practices of this kind is nowhere more obvious in Codex Regius than in the use made of the Latin term capitulum, which is found in several places dividing the narrative into chapters. It is even used within a poem, Vafðrúðnismál, where it creates a division between the first and second rounds of the wisdom contest between Óðinn and the giant Vafðrúðnir, breaking up the poem as though it were a prose narrative. Icelandic writers do not, however, appear to have adhered to the strict rules governing the use of such Latin terms, as articulated in Continental handbooks of the thirteenth century (Minnis: 1988). Unlike the writers for whom these handbooks were designed, who were occupied in composing new texts according to rhetorical conventions, Icelandic manuscript producers were frequently faced with producing works of another kind. In cases such as Codex Regius and AM 748 I, they were casting oral poems into a new written genre, which had no precursors in the Latin rhetorical tradition. These traditional oral poems had their own logic of composition, and their own cultural history, which could not readily be adjusted to fit conventions prescribing 'nomen auctoris' for instance, much less 'intentio auctoris'.

The manuscript compiler's work of organising the poems into a coherent new work is seen most clearly in Text 14, which has no name in the manuscript but which is known in modern editions as Helgaqviða Hundingbana Ónnur. In this text of 51 stanzas, there are no less than 18 prose passages, providing narrative background to the matter of the verse, and forming links between groups of stanzas. The whole work is headed by the rubric "frá Völsungum". At one point the compiler quotes 5 stanzas from a poem he calls Völsungaqviða in forna, a poem which is otherwise unknown. Upon resuming the story, the compiler refers back to a text he has already written, calling it Helgaqviða and quoting a half stanza. As many editors and critics have noted, the lines he quotes are different enough from stanza 32 of Helgaqviða Hundingbana I (text 12), to suppose that the compiler has not turned back the leaves of the book to recopy the lines, but has quoted them from memory (Harris: 1983, 218). In his memory too, he identifies the earlier poem by the name Helgaqviða, though
when he first wrote that poem, he labelled it *Völsungaqvíða*, perhaps a description of its subject matter (like the *Guðrúnarqvíða* rubrics), rather than a title (Lindblad: 1978, 17). The final citation made by the compiler within text 14 is to a poem called *Károlíða*, an otherwise unknown poem, which the compiler neither quotes from, nor records in full at any point in the codex. His reference to it here is very much in the manner of Snorri's citations in his treatise, where a poem is invoked as the source of particular information, to lend authority to the account. (See for example the Prologue (6, 19-20), where Snorri refers to a poem without quoting from it: "... svá sem segir í Háleygjatal".)

The three examples of citation in *Helgaqvíða* *Hundingsbana* *qnorr* bring to light a number of odd citation practices, which do not seem to have been particular foibles of the Regius scribe, but characteristic of the manner of naming poetic works in thirteenth century manuscripts. To begin with, the dual appellations *Helgaqvíða* and *Völsungaqvíða* for the same poem suggest not only that titles were not fixed fast to poems, but that the title chosen to identify a work was dependent on the context in which it was used. In the rubric at the beginning of text 12, the compiler draws attention to the wide scope of the following narrative and the plurality of its actors: "Hér hefr up qvæði frá Helga Hundingsbana þeira oc Hǫðbrodds". (The abbreviation "h" is open to interpretation, Lindblad (1978, 17) speculating that it may stand for "hans"). Heinz Klingenberg (1974: 107-117) has argued that *Helgaqvíða* *Hundingsbana* *fyrri* was carefully placed at this point in the manuscript to herald the cycle of heroic poems (in the same way that *Völsuspá* sets the stage for the series of mythological poems), and that its placement was designed to echo some of the motifs and concerns of *Völsuspá*, which, he argues, are only fully realised in the final poem of the manuscript *Hamðismál*.

Hence a more inclusive name is given to the poem *Völsungaqvíða*, even though the poem follows the life of just one hero, Helgi, and calls him a Völsung on just one occasion (HHI 52). Helgi is called an Ylfing in three places (sts. 5, 34, and 49) but it is only in the prose introduction to HHI that the compiler equates the two names as alternatives for Sigmund's family. And hence the broader scope of the rubric to the poem *Helgaqvíða* *Hundingsbana* *in fyrri*, which alludes to the death of Hǫðbrodd's entire host, even though this is only narrated later on, in a prose passage in *Helgaqvíða* *Hundingsbana* *qnorr*. When details of this poem are recalled by the compiler, however, it is as *Helgaqvíða*. And as I mentioned, he makes this citation within an unnamed work, which is

-221-
headed by the rubric which continues to express his wide view of legendary history: "frá Vólsungom". Perhaps Helgaqviða was the name by which the poem was known in oral transmission, though this, of course, can never be known. In some respects, it is a more appropriate name for the poem, as its focus is on Helgi. Helgaqviða also accords with the general principle apparent in other titles of using the name for one person rather than a family or group - as is done, for instance, in Locasenna. The intertextuality and cross-referencing of this group of texts has been examined in detail by Joseph Harris (1983).

If the name Helgaqviða has its origins in oral parlance, we need to consider a possible operational distinction between name as extra-textual identifier, and title as textual identifier. This is perhaps borne out by the prose appellations surrounding the final text of the manuscript. It is prefaced by the title in red: Hamðismál, with no further prose frame. At the end of the poem, the compiler writes: "Petta erð kolluð Hamðismál in forno". Unless the compiler was casting about looking for an authoritative and sonorous line to end his codex, this presumably represents a popular appellation for the work, which the compiler had formally abbreviated in his title - Hamðismál. It is possible that in spoken as well as written contexts the epithet inn forni may have been an optional addition, employed to underline the antiquity of a particular poem.

In another context, it has been suggested that the epithet inn forni may simply have been an honorific (Harris: 1976, 175). Snorri refers to a poem, apparently composed in the 11th century, as Bjarkamál in fornu, although three manuscripts of his work simply call it Bjarkamál (Skáldskaparmál ch. 57: 143, 5 and note). Within the Codex Regius the epithet inn forni is used on two other occasions within prose citations - but never in rubrics giving titles to poetic texts. As mentioned above, Vólsungaqviða in forna is mentioned in a prose interlude within Helgaqvíða Hundinghsbana qonnor, and at the end of text 20, the compiler cites Guðrúnarqviða in forna as evidence for the account that Sigurdr was killed out of doors, and not asleep in bed. In both cases the compiler is seeking to substantiate his narrative account of legendary events by drawing on an authoritative source, and it may well be that the tag - inn forni- simply serves the purpose of impressing upon the audience the credentials of his source. Drawing attention to the age, and implied authenticity of a poetic source is a function of the increased focus on the compiler as the dominant voice addressing the audience, rather than the voice of the poems themselves.
Most importantly, the use of the two appellations *Hamðismál* and *Hamðismál in forno* for the same poem in Regius indicates that the epithet *inn forni* is not employed to distinguish one work from another. Rather the epithet is considered appropriate in one context but not in another. By the same token, the citation of *Guðrúnarvíða in forna* within the prose of text 20 does not seem to function within a system of distinct and identifiable titles used consistently by the Regius scribe for poems about Guðrún. The reference is generally taken to refer to text 25, although within the manuscript the compiler gives the titles *Guðrúnarvíða, Guðrúnarvíða* and *Qvíða Guðrúnar* to three different works (texts 21, 25 and 26). Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (1989, 242) has suggested that the epithet *inn forni* means nothing more definite than "remote from the present" and has further observed that there is no evidence that the Regius compiler or his audience distinguished any difference in antiquity between one eddic poem and another.

Another use of the epithet *inn forni* is found in *Norna-Gests þátr*, a narrative account of a mythical story-teller who visits King Óláf Tryggvason's court and entertains the King and his entourage. "Ok at lýktum słær hann Guðrúnarbrögð in fornu. Þau höfðu menn eigi fyrir heyr’t." (G. Jónsson: 1959, I 311). Joseph Harris (1976) has argued that the work was probably of Saxon origin, and represented a version of Guðrún's story that was different from the versions circulated in the north. In this case, the adjective *forn* suggests 'from ancient lands' as much as 'from the ancient past'. In *Orkneyinga saga* (Guðmundsson: 1965, 185), reference is made to a poem *Háttatal ykill inn forni* composed one winter during the 1140s (Holtsmark: 1961b), a decade not usually relegated to 'ancient times'. It is not clear in what way the author of this saga was meaning to distinguish the poem, but it is plausible that he simply meant to establish its early age in relation to other works in the genre of *clavis rhythmica* in the Norse tongue. One of the manuscripts of *Orkneyinga saga* in fact names the poem *Háttatal it forna* (Guðmundsson: 1965, 185, note 1).

Apart from *inn forni*, there is another epithet that is found appended to titles of eddic poems - *inn skammi* - or the short. Text 22 in Regius is introduced by the rubric *Qvíða Sigurljár*, but in the prose link preceding it, it is given the title *Sigurðarvíða in skamma*. The two titles follow one after the other, one in black ink and the other in red. The citation functions to lend weight to the compiler's account of Guðrún's suicide: "Pá lagði hon sic sverði til bana, svá sem segir í Sigurðarvíðo inni scómmo." As in the use of *inn forni* the
The epithet *inn skammi* also occurs in a citation of verse in Snorri's *Edda*, where, having twice quoted stanzas from a poem he calls *Völuspá*, Snorri refers to his next poetic source as *Völuspá in skamma*. The stanza he quotes from this source is not found in Codex Regius, but in a poem preserved in a later compilation manuscript, where it is given the title *Hyndluljóð* (text 37). The stanza is in the same metre as *Völuspá*, the diction, style and circumstances of delivery are similar to those of *Völuspá*, and it deals with the origin of different kinds of beings, a concern also of the early part of *Völuspá*. Perhaps Snorri's authority impressed itself on the Regius scribe, who adopted his practice of distinguishing between two generically similar sources by tagging one of them as the shorter. It has certainly impressed generations of modern scholars, who have referred to the section of *Hyndluljóð* in which this stanza is found as an interpolation (but see §5.5), and continue to refer to the series of 16 stanzas which deal explicitly with mythological lore as *Völuspá in skamma*.

The reasons why Snorri calls his source poem *Völuspá in skamma* are unfortunately hidden from us. It is possible he knew the series of mythological stanzas as a discrete unit, but it is also possible the poem he was thinking of was the same, or very similar to the one preserved in Flateyjarbók. The title he chose for it, or the name he knew it by, may simply reflect a different process of generic identification as the basis for its name. I have already commented on the fact that the poem entitled *For Scírnis* in R, is called *Skírnismál* in A, presumably reflecting its generic similarity to other *mál* poems. In another place in the *Edda*, Snorri quotes a stanza listing horses' names (text 49), which is attributed in three manuscripts of his work to a poem named *Alsvinnsmál*, and to a poem named *Kálfsvísa* in another. Shortly after this citation another stanza is quoted and attributed to *Alsvinnsmál*, and this stanza (unlike the first quoted) is from the poem entitled *Alvissmál* in R. Because of the formal structure of answers in *Alvissmál*, it is very unlikely that the first stanza quoted could have been known from the same poetic context as the second.
stanzas. Snorri, or redactors of his work, seem to have nonetheless identified another stanza of mythological lore as belonging to a poem called Alvíssmál, perhaps because this title, like Völuspá, could be used as a kind of generic name, to designate a type of poem, or an eddic sub-genre, rather than a singular poem. Although the extant collection of eddic poems preserved in the A manuscript does not include Alvíssmál, it is possible that it originally did, and that the scribe working on Skáldskaparmál in the same manuscript wished to distinguish between the poem he had already copied by the name of Alvíssmál and the dissimilar poem from which he copied a quotation within the poetic treatise.

In an oral environment, there would probably have been less need to distinguish between different instantiations of these sub-genres than there was in the context of a written collection, where different poems were gathered together, compared and selected for different features they offered to the work as a whole. Although I am arguing that the use of inn skamma might only have arisen in the written medium to distinguish between different texts, I should at this point take into consideration the Guðrún poems, where the Regius compiler has obviously not sought to do that. But unlike the stanza from Hýndluljóð which Snorri quotes and the Völuspá text, the three Guðrún poems are generically fairly dissimilar. Guðrúnarqvíða in fyrsta begins as a third person narrative of Guðrún’s life but opens into a series of dialogues between Guðrún and the women trying to console her after the death of her husband. Guðrúnarqvíða qnorn is a monologue spoken by Guðrún, which begins with her birth and continues with reminiscences of her life, including her next marriage to Atli. The poem ends, rather abruptly, during a scene in which Guðrún and Atli are in bed (see Glendinning: 1983, 277). Guðrún recalls, without comment, that Atli woke up in a terrible state, telling her that he has just dreamt that she has murdered him. It is a frightening premonition for Atli, a premonition which unfortunately comes true. Guðrúnarqvíða in þríðja is quite different – it is a very short poem of only 11 stanzas, structured as an adultery trial of Guðrún and Atli’s former concubine Herkia. It is in the form of dialogue, with 4 stanzas taken up by Guðrún’s defence.

According to the prose introduction to Guðrúnarqvíða in þríðja, Herkia tells Atli that she has seen Guðrún together with a certain Píóðrec, and this is what prompts the adultery trial. There is no mention of Píóðrec in the text of Guðrúnarqvíða qnorn, but the prose introduction to that poem gives a con-
versation between Guðrún and Þiódred as the mise en scène for Guðrún's soliloquy. What is interesting about the Regius compiler's treatment of these poems is his deliberate attempts to meld them into a continuous narrative about Guðrún, and perhaps this impulse towards narrative continuity might explain why the poems are all given the same title. All three poems carry along the story of Guðrún, and all three are designated as a qviða about her. In this context, the compiler is not particularly interested in distinguishing between the poems on the basis of genre, although the conventions surrounding the creation of compound names for poems suggest that distinctions were possible, and may well have been known to the compiler. There is a reference in Norna-Gests páttr to a poem called Guðrúnarræða, which is very similar to the reference at the end of text 20 in Regius to Guðrúnarqviða in forna. Both citations are given as evidence for the account that Sigurðr was killed out of doors, and not in bed with Guðrún. If the work the writer of the páttr is referring to is Guðrúnarqviða qnnor (and as he does not quote any stanzas, that is not known for certain), the title Guðrúnarræða seems more appropriate, since the term ræða catches more of the spirit of Guðrún's long monologue than the term kviða, which usually denotes a third person narrative.

There is a further instance in the Regius manuscript where the compiler apparently avoids using the same title for two poems which go over the same narrative ground. The titles given to the poems are Atlaqviða in grænlenzca and Atlamál in grænlenzco. In her edition of these poems, Ursula Dronke (1969, 45) has argued that Greenlandic origin may be possible for the later Atlamál, but it is unlikely for Atlaqviða. Having apparently made the mistake of titling the first poem he copied out Atlaqviða in grænlenzco, the scribe presumably did not wish to falsify the origins of the second poem he copied, and so he called it Atlamál in grænlenzco. If the characteristics of other poems with mál in the title are taken as a yardstick - a formalised dialogue taking place in a conventional situation, such as a wisdom trial, for instance, or the use of ljðaháatr metre - there is little in the poem's style to distinguish it from Atlaqviða, except perhaps a slight increase in the amount of dialogue between actors compared to the former poem. It may be that, stuck with the epithet "the greenlandic", the compiler wished to distinguish between the poems somehow, and chose what to him may have seemed the least obtrusive change. One might speculate that, given his leaves over again, the compiler would have titled the first poem Atlaqviða and the second Atlaqviða in grænlenzca. Unlike the Guðrún poems, these texts do not constitute an on-going story - the second
text simply retells, and amplifies, the narrative action of the first (see Andersson: 1983). In the prose link between the poems, the compiler writes: "Enn segir gleggra í Atlamálom inom grønlenzcom." Lindblad (1954, 268-9) also observed a difference in scribal character between Atlamál and the group of poems preceding it, indicating perhaps that the text of Atlamál was acquired after Atlakviða had already been written out in the Codex Reglus, or perhaps in an earlier stage of the collection. Jón Helgason (1953) and Lindblad (1978, 12) have proposed that an explanation for the Greenland attribution of both poems may be that both works were known to the compiler (or earlier recorders) from oral traditions in Greenland.

The high proportion of titles formed using a generic term and the name of one of the poem's actors suggests that this was the characteristic mode of naming eddic poems in the medieval period. The variations in both the generic term and the person's name, however, suggest that the titles were not hard and fast, and their constitution depended on the context in which they were used. We can only speculate on how different contexts might have affected titles in an oral environment, and indeed how titles or names were used outside the context of written texts. From the point of view of the audience, when someone recited qviða Guðrúnar, the existence of other accounts of Guðrún's life, and works in other genres treating the same materia~ probably formed a backdrop to the recitation. To the teller of Guðrún's story, what had been inspired or derived from other accounts he or she had heard over the years would probably have been woven seamlessly into the poem. One eddic poem, Hymisqviða, however, reveals the currents of thought moving between the reciter and his audience during the telling of a story, revealing indeed the seams of his composition. Towards the end of his narrative relating Pórr's quest for an ale-brewing kettle, the speaker refers to the laming of one of Pórr's goats (Hymisqviða 37), but rather than digressing into a full telling of this story, the narrator throws out a challenge to his audience to recount that story if they wish (and are able to):

Enn ér heyrt hafið - hverr kann um þat
goðmálugra gørr at sællia -,
hver af hraunbúa hann laun um fecc,
er hann bæði galt born sin fyrir.  

The way in which the narrator refers to the wider body of myths is not to name another discrete work - a second, shorter, ancient or Greenlandic version of Pórr's adventures - but to activate in his audience memories of poems they had
heard which tell the tale of the laming of the goats. (In Gylfaginning the laming is told in the context of a different trip Þorr takes to giantland: 37: 15-16). Because of the unusual nature of this aside, Heinz Klingenberg (1983, 139-140) in fact considers it to be a spontaneous interpretation by the writer of the text, a neomythologizing of an older myth. There is no reason to think, however, that neomythologizing was the sole preserve of writers, and that it did not go on during the oral transmission of old material.

The conceptualisation of different poetic accounts as shorter or older relative to one another, is probably bound to a literate environment, where disparate works are brought together across space and time into one continuous written text. Within this environment, we may deduce that variability in titles has arisen as a result of a writer's particular purpose in titling a work, and the relationship of the surrounding texts to the poem quoted or recorded.
The composition of eddic poetry

§6.1 of this chapter begins with a survey of research on eddic poetry as oral poetry. As there is a general consensus among scholars working in this field that the memorisation of poems was fundamental to eddic transmission, I shall also investigate how the mechanisms of memory recall might have operated in regard to non-narrative oral poetry. In this section I also consider recent work on eddic compositional practices, including the analysis of speech acts and the application of the methods of narratology to the eddic corpus. The only eddic mythological poem to have been preserved as a whole poem in two different manuscript contexts, apparently derived from different oral traditions, is the subject of investigation in §6.2. The observations I draw from the study of the two texts of Völuspá about the areas of the poem where textual variations appear to have been generated during oral transmission, are developed in §6.3, where the relationships between different levels of discourse - between speech acts and 'frames' - in a variety of different poems are surveyed.

Although Völuspá is the only poem to offer us positive proof of the kinds of variation produced during oral transmission, the extant texts of a number of other poems shed further light on the conventions of eddic composition. In particular, poems that exhibit shifts in metre as well as shifts between discursive styles demonstrate the complex way in which coherence in eddic works operates. In §6.4, I look briefly at contemporary attitudes to eddic metres and the differentiation in their discursive use, that are detectable in Snorri's statements on poetics and in his quotation practices. In this section I also attempt to characterise eddic metrical styles according to discursive type and the identity of speakers. Section §6.5 builds on the observations of §6.4, examining how shifts between metres work in a selection of eddic poems. §6.6 is an analysis of the eddic poem Fáfnismál, which brings to light the complex aesthetics of eddic composition.
§6.1 The orality of eddic verse

The paucity of evidence concerning the transmission and recording of eddic verse in thirteenth century Iceland has required scholars to look more broadly to oral poetries from other cultures and periods to try to establish the character of the eddic tradition. Because of the uniqueness of the poetry, and in particular, the non-narrative nature of much of the extant corpus, ready parallels have not been found. Nonetheless, important deductions have been made regarding the likely mode of creation and the mode of transmission of eddic verse, prompted in part by the suggestive work of Parry and Lord on the South Slavic tradition of epic composition (the so-called Oral Theory). Unlike that tradition, however, there is little to suggest that eddic praxis involved wholesale improvisation, either in the creation or transmission of poems. In the absence of direct information about the creative act of eddic composition, inferences have been drawn from evidence of skaldic creation (Lönnroth: 1971, 3), which in the main, appears to have been deliberative (Harris: 1983, 211-12). The subject of eddic delivery has been investigated in detail by Heusler (1957), and examined in the light of the Oral Theory by Lönnroth (1971) and Harris (1985).

Eddic poems, in contradistinction to the Yugoslav material, are comparatively short and tightly structured (Lönnroth 1971, 2). While descriptions of eddic poems as “careful compositions by highly trained poets - not rustic products of peasant conviviality” (Lehmann: 1963, 14) or “polished products .. showpieces meticulously preserved from one performance to the next” (Lönnroth: 1971, 10) now seem rather overstated, such characterisations of the eddic tradition were initially necessary to show the way in which it differed from the Homeric and Yugoslav traditions. The relationship between parallel eddic texts generated during oral transmission, such as Hjalmars Death Song which is preserved in both Qrvar-Odds saga and Hervarar saga ok Heilöreks konungs has been analysed to show that improvisation did not play as significant a part in the transmission of eddic verse as it did, say, in the Yugoslavian guslar tradition (Lönnroth: 1971). Russell Poole (1985) has also shown the lack of evidence for poetic improvisation in skaldic verse. While formulas play some part in the eddic mode of composition, they clearly do not constitute the basic building blocks of poems. Recent work on the nature of eddic formulas (Gurević: 1986 and Meletinsky: 1986) has helped to clarify their
role in composition, and provided the methodological apparatus to complement the data bases of Lehmann and Dillard (1954) and Kellogg (1988).

Although the analytic apparatus of the Oral Theory has been developed with primary reference to narrative verse of considerable length, Albert Lord (1987) has himself recently addressed the question of its applicability to shorter lyric verse. His analysis of textual variability in the lyric poetry of several Eastern European oral cultures has led to his observation that different versions of poems "contain a more or less stable core of verses tied together by various kinds of what were later called rhetorical devices and surrounded by variant settings to which they were adapted" (Lord: 1987, 64). While eddic verse is not lyric verse, nor are the poems as short as the ones Lord considers, the notion of "a more or less stable core" is not entirely incompatible with the evidence of textual variation in eddic records. And, despite Lord's (1987, 66-7) unnecessarily oppositional definitions of improvisation and memorisation (the latter, he believes, means a "word-for-word recalling of a passage"), he makes a valid distinction between a fixed text, and this "more or less stable core". The implications of this formulation for the analysis of eddic material hinge on the metaphorical signification of the word 'core', and the latitude understood by 'more or less', two points I shall return to at the end of §6.2.

There is consensus among scholars that the transmission of eddic verse was based principally on the memorisation of texts (Helgason: 1953, 28-31). Where multiple texts of poems have been preserved, however, there is evidence of a range of variations in the wording, order and structure of poems sufficient to indicate that the text was not 'fixed' in oral transmission in all its particulars. Whether those variations arose as a result of formulaic patching (Lönroth: 1971) or as a result of conscious revision (Harris: 1983, 228-9), it has generally been thought that, in the main, eddic poems were relatively stable during transmission.

As I noted in ch. 3, there are numerous references in medieval Norse texts to the importance of the power of memory for the transmission of material from the past. Icelanders in general were renowned for their capacity to remember traditional lore, according to Saxo's preface to Gesta Danorum (Olrik and Ræder: 1931 I, 4; see Guðnason: 1981) and Theoderic's prologue to Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagntensium (Storm: 1880, 3). In other references to the process of committing oral knowledge to writing, we can gather something
of the mechanics of memorisation as they were conceptualised by thirteenth
century Icelanders. The verb *nema* ‘to take, learn’ is commonly used to
describe the memorisation of a poem (for instance, *Gísla saga* ch. 18) and in *Darradarljóð* the valkyries use this verb in their encouragement of men to
transmit their song:

> Vel kváðu vér
> um konung ungan
> sigrhljóða fjóði,
> syngum heilari
> en hinn nemt,
> er heyrir á
> geirfljóða hljóð,
> ok gumum segi!

Sveinsson: 1954, 458

Another expression that is found in medieval sources is *festa í minni*,
literally ‘to fix in memory’. In the prologue to *Pírðeks saga*, a distinction is
made between the kinds of works that could be memorised in this apparently
traditional way, and long or unfamiliar works that were better transmitted in
writing:

> Ef menn vilja gírnask at heyra þau stórtljóðendi, er verit
> hafa í fornum síð, verðr hvártvegga at gera at spyrja
> þess, er menn viti eigi áðr ok svá festa í minni. Ef
> menn vilja kunna ökunnar sögur ok langar, þá er betr,
> ok gengr síðr ór minni, at ritaðr sé.

Bertelsen: 1905-11, 1

A description in *Morkinskinna* suggests that the memorisation of a story was a
task conscientiously accomplished by breaking up the narrative into manageable
segments - in this case episodes that were told by Hálldór Snorrason each
summer at the þing, and retold to King Magnus during the evenings following
Christmas night (Meulengracht Sørensen: 1977, 120). Presumably the Norse
author of *Píðreks saga* deemed writing necessary for his story because of its
foreign provenance, great length and its compendious nature - telling as it does
the stories of King Píðrekr, the legendary hero Sigurðr, the Vélsungs and
various other kings and heroes. Theodore Andersson (1986: 366-7) has argued
that the compendious saga and most of its prologue are probably translated
from a German book, but even if this were the case, the opposition between
oral narrative and literary epic (dependent for its existence on the storage
capacity of writing) appears to have been countenanced by the Norse writer as
pertaining equally to Scandinavia as it originally did to a German context.
The author of *Hungrvaka* also describes the way in which orally transmitted material -I _minni fest_- is written down, lest it falli or _minnt_.

En ek hefi þó nálaga ðílu við sleigt, at rita þat sem ek hefi í _minni fest_. Hefi ek af því þenna boekling saman settan, at eigi falli mér með ðílu ór _minni_, þat er ek heyrða af þessu máli segja hinn fróða mann . . .

**Helgason: 1938, I 72**

The use of the expression in this context suggests that it meant “fresh in the memory” rather than fixed in memory, and able to be recalled at a later date. This sense is duplicated in the prologue to *Sverris saga*:

_Sum þessi tiðendi váru svá í minni fest, at menn rítuðu þegar eptir, er nýrðin váru, ok hafa þau ekki breytzt síðan._

**G. Jónsson: 1957, II 3**

Within a literate culture the mechanisms of memory recall are generally altered (Goody: 1987, 167ff) and perhaps the evidence of these two prologues speaks for literate scepticism about the reliability of oral recall (and awareness of the variations generated during oral transmission) and tells us less of the traditional mechanisms of memorisation than it at first appears to. Rather than unsel£consciously trusting in their own and others' memories of past events, these writers appear to be distinguishing between the operation of short-term and long-term memory, and trusting only in the former as a temporary storehouse for experience, until it could be written down. The clearest picture in medieval sources of deliberative skaldic composition, found in *Egils saga*, also seems to comply with this sense of the expression. Egill composes a poem during the night “ok hafði fest svá, at hann mátti kveða um morgininn . . .” (Nordal: 1933, 183). Having cast doubt on the verisimilitude of descriptions of the runic transmission of poetry in *Egils saga* (see §3.1), it may be prudent to acknowledge that this model of how a tenth century poet composed, memorised and presented his poem was possibly grounded in thirteenth century conceptions of literary production, and is not necessary a reliable account of pre-literate poetic composition.

However pre-literate Icelanders memorised poetry, or conceptualised the process, there are reasons to believe they would not have conceived of memorisation as verbatim reproduction in our modern sense. Some notion of medieval Icelanders' sense of a faithful reproduction of verbal utterance is
exemplified by a passage in *Grágás* which elaborates on what constitutes proper testimony by witnesses. False witness occurs if additions or omissions are made which affect the case, but variations in the wording of the testimony do not invalidate the account:

\[\text{Þot maðr sveði eigi sva at öllum orðum sem han var at nefndr oc scipti eigi male. oc er þo rett borit sva se.}\]

*Grágás* 1a 57

Here, in a context where a premium is placed on establishing an accurate account of an encounter or event, we see that the latitude given to the speaker of testimony was considerable - so long as the pertinent 'facts' of the evidence were not altered. The difficulty of assessing what constituted the 'same' work in thirteenth century Iceland has been raised by Joseph Harris (1983, 214) with reference to eddic poetry. Without a written and fixed copy of the words as they were first uttered, it is indeed unlikely that anyone present at a particular delivery could vouch for certain that the testimony or poem was identical with a previous rendition. Unless the two texts could be viewed side by side, as only writing allows, they could not be compared for exact identity. Our own concept of a correct version of a text, which can be learnt in exact form, is probably entirely dependent on the existence of writing.

For this reason, most oral societies do not generally place great value on exact reproduction of utterance, as is done in the memory training exercises of many written cultures, such as rote-learning and line-by-line verbatim testing (Goody: 1987, 168). In Iceland we can assume this practice was introduced by the church along with other procedures of schooling. In chapter 2, I quoted a section of *Grágað* which specified that everyone should know certain Christian prayers by heart, and in *Jöns saga* the author exhibits how highly verbatim memorisation was prized in clerical culture:

\[\text{... ok svá glögg var hann í sönglist ok minnigr, at hann kunni utanbókar allan song ú fófi mánuðum, baði í dagtiðum ok öttusöngum ...}\]

G. Jónsson: 1953, I 41

This kind of learning requires deliberate aural repetition coupled with visual checks with reference to the fixed, written text, a procedure which often induces subjects to close their eyes and put their fingers in their ears (Goody: 1987, 177). The process of blocking out the external world to concentrate on
the fixing of a visual pattern in the memory, while no doubt encouraged by the clergy, would have been the antithesis of the normal procedures of oral communication, of face-to-face contact and verbal interaction. Given the need in an oral culture to keep traditions meaningful in relation to social reality (the 'homeostasis' of oral tradition mentioned in ch 2), the activity of exact recall would presumably have been less desirable than imaginative re-creation.

In an early study of the operation of memory, Bartlett (1932, 201) described the process of narrative recollection as "constructive remembering", noting that those engaged in calling to mind a narrative or argument tended to be very active in organising the 'original' material, and reconstructing it (Rosenberg: 1987, 84). The generative reconstruction practised by literates and non-literate alike in remembering a story or other aurally-received information is probably not dissimilar to the processes of recollection operating in medieval oral transmission, although of course the alliterative and (to some extent) stanzaic form of eddic verse along with the highly structured form of some poems would have fostered close duplication to some degree. There is little evidence to suggest that verbatim learning was widespread in oral cultures, and most instances of mnemotechnical devices to aid exact recall have evolved in literate cultures. The classical art of memory, for instance, which was cultivated to enhance the performance of orators (Yates: 1966) is steeped in the concepts of literacy and employs the images of wax-tablets and letters (Goody: 1987, 181).

As I have argued in the preceding chapters, eddic poetry appears to have been transmitted for centuries without recourse to written texts, runic or alphabetic. The manner in which poems were recalled by generations of Icelanders unfamiliar with written texts or the mnemonic power of graphic layout is unknown, but we can assume it did not lead to successive reproductions of poems identical in every nuance, and in every detail of structure. As I mentioned in ch. 2, in an oral milieu there would have been no point transmitting and continuing to recite an eddic poem unless it had some meaning in its cultural context. The process by which poems were stored in between recitations is of course not known, but it was perhaps not dissimilar in style to the operation of language acquisition in children, where patterns of syntax and diction are learnt in direct communication, through the rehearsal procedures inherent in conversation, rather than indirectly in private rote learning, or by the deliberate exercise of memory skills (Goody: 1987, 174). It is
unlikely that texts were self-consciously learnt 'by heart', by being 'committed to memory' or by any other process of internalising the text and disengaging it from the context of interpersonal communication. In this respect it is significant that a recurrent device in certain kinds of eddic composition is incitement to transmit, instanced in Darraðarljóð and other valkyrie poems (see §2.2.4.3), which establishes a context for remembering the speaker's words without necessitating formalised learning of the utterance.

The fact that within Icelandic society there was no single authoritative speaker of eddic mythological poems (as the law-code had its officially recognised speaker), and, as far as we know, no authoritative context for the delivery of eddic poems, makes it even more unlikely that oral versions of a particular poem, separated in time and space would have been identical in all respects. In §6.2 I shall examine one case of multiple texts of an eddic poem, apparently not dependent on a fixed written text, but before moving onto that, I want to consider briefly what the cognitive operations involved in transmitting an oral poem might have been.

The process of recall in the human brain is thought to be based on a system of intermediary aids (or codes) which form multidimensional matrices from which the subject must choose (Luria: 1973, 284). Far from being a simple or passive reproduction of material, memory appears to work indirectly, and to engage the subject in a highly complex and active investigative activity. As the process is determined in part by the context of the task of recalling and the motives for recall, we might assume that the immediate context in which an oral poem was remembered played some part in the re-constitution of the poem for delivery, or comment. From his work on the recitation of the Bagre myth in Ghana, Jack Goody (1987, 172-3) postulates that the framework of reproduction in an oral environment consists mainly of large-scale incidents and events, rather than the surface-level recall of verbatim phrasing and sequences of lines, or the recollection of the 'deep structure' of myths as these are discerned by modern critical analysis.

The exact duplication of a great many individual lines occurring in different oral versions of the same eddic poem is therefore probably a result of familiarity both with the general idiom of eddic composition and the recall of particular instantiations of eddic phrasing, rather than the result of deliberate memorization of whole poems, line by line. Such an explanation might account
for the variation between Snorri's recall of the stanza from the poem about Loki's sena with the gods, and the stanzas of Locasenna preserved in Codex Regius (the texts were quoted in §3.5). The mythological 'event' recalled in each case is most probably the same (Loki's unwelcome attendance at a feast and his even more unwelcome slanders about past events and taunts about ragna rqc), the group of actors participating in the speech act appear to agree in each text, but the details of speaker attribution and the actual composition of the stanza are at variance between the texts. Nevertheless, there are striking formal similarities between the stanza and the syntactic, lexical and stylistic patterns of the poem as a whole, particularly with the set of stanzas which are spoken as rebuffs to Loki (for example, sts. 21, 29 and 47). In a milieu where it seems likely mythological 'plots' were well known to the audience, the recall of these details was probably easily triggered by a brief reference, perhaps simply by the name 'Locasenna' (cf. Rosenberg: 1987, 83).

Instances in other cultures of the exact repetition of long oral works are rare, and where they are found, they are in works entrusted to specialist reciters who play an important role in a centralised political system (Goody: 1987, 177 and Rosenberg: 1987, 81-2). In chapter 3, I suggested that a social institution of this kind in Iceland was the transmission of the laws. There is insufficient evidence to say how closely each recitation of the laws resembled one another. Since each recitation was in fact delivered in instalments and spread over several years, it seems unlikely that any given recitation would have been identical in every detail with the previous recitation, especially if there had been a change in law-speaker in the meantime. In ch. 3, I also noted that it is highly unlikely that traditional eddic poetry was transmitted under the auspices of an official social institution. It would therefore not have been subject to any kind of centralised monitoring, and there would probably not have been any mechanisms for authorising one version instead of another, except in the general sense that the social context in which a poem was recited may have influenced its transmission. As well, certain reciters may have commanded more respect than others, and certain renditions may have struck a deeper chord with their audience than others.

If eddic poems were not memorised verbatim, how then were they stored in memories over time? Goody's research suggests that oral memory operates at the level of 'event', that is, beyond the surface level of verbatim line recall, but not at the level of the whole as a fixed entity, as it is stored in the written
medium. Since much eddic poetry is not constructed as linear narrative, the notion of 'event' requires some qualification if it is to be meaningfully applied to the corpus. In an important contribution to the study of eddic composition, Margaret Clunies Ross (1990a) has demonstrated how theories of narratology can be applied to eddic poetry, to explicate the relationship between different voices in poems, and the position of the narratee. She has also drawn attention to the narrativity of poems that at first glance seem non-narrative, poems where there is a minimal narrative frame and the words of the poem’s actors are presented as act, not text (1990a, 221). Poems of this type vary a great deal in the extent to which they develop narrative, or in Prince’s terms (1982, 145), in their degree of narrativity. At one end of the scale is a dialogue poem such as Skírnismál where narrative development is expressed in prose links between stanzas as well as in the changing relationships between speakers. The relatively high degree of narrativity in such eddic poems allows their narrative structure to be studied according to Propp’s method of analysing wonder-tales (cf. Clunies Ross: 1990a, 229 and Schier: 1981a, 984-987). The various ways in which narrative is expressed within the skaldic tradition has been investigated by John Lindow (1982).

The narrative development in other poems is of a lesser degree, amounting to a simple change in the relative positions of speakers between the beginning and end of their verbal exchange. In her analysis of the compositional units of the saga, Carol Clover has shown the way in which ‘event’ needs to be broadly conceived with reference to compositional models. She observed that “if the ‘event’ of the [saga] scene lies in a story action, the scene may generate a suitable bit of dramatic dialogue; conversely, if the ‘event’ lies in the nature of the dialogue, the scene may generate a situational context” (1974: 81): In the eddic poem, Alvíssmál, the whole poem consists of dialogue between Pörr and the dwarf Alviss. Nevertheless, a 'story' takes shape during their verbal exchange: Alviss seeks to take away Pörr’s daughter from Ásgard to marry her (st. 1), and by engaging the imposter in a formalised verbal test (st 8), Pörr is able to dupe him into exposing himself to the sun’s early rays, and to his own death (st. 35). While it seems reasonable to characterise this poem as non-narrative, it nevertheless exhibits narrativity at the level of the frame story. It also represents a mythological 'event' which may have formed the basis of the poem’s identity in oral memorisation. The 'event' is perhaps better described as a dramatic encounter, during which a range of ideological problematics (such as the exogamous marriage of Ásynjur and the breaking of
oaths) are played out between the god and the otherworldly being. That the coherence of the poem operates in the dimension of drama rather than narrative is shown by the import of some of the verbal exchanges within Þórr's trial of the dwarf's knowledge of synonyms. When Þórr asks by what name the sun is known in different worlds, Alvíss replies:

Sól heitir með munnom, enn sunna með gøðum,
    kalla dvergar ðvalins leica,
eyglö lotnar, álfar fagrahvéL,
alscðir ása synir.

Alv 16

Alvíss is not yet wise to Þórr's game, and does not apprehend that it is he who will soon become the subject of sport and mockery. Towards the end of the trial, Þórr asks him for the names for night. Little does Alvíss realise why the gods call it grímo ('hood' or 'mask') and why to the dwarves it is draumnítorum ('dream-fantasies'). Alvíss's dreams of Þórr's lovely daughter belong indeed to the night, and will soon be swept away by the bright shining rays of the sun. Most of Þórr's questions are structured as pairs, or sets of associated words (earth/heaven, moon/sun fire/wood, grain/ale etc.), yet there is no mention of day by Þórr, no reminder to the dwarf that day inevitably follows night (see Klingenberg: 1967).

If we acknowledge the dynamic of eddic dialogue poems as dramatic rather than narrative, the principles of their compositional mode become clearer. The substance of what is spoken between two actors is not governed by the patterns of story, but by dynamic discursive patterns generated by their interaction, determined in part by the kinds of discourses each speaker conventionally speaks (the spá spoken by a volva, for instance). I shall illustrate these points with reference to the poem Fáfnismál in §6.6. In advocating a greater focus on the dramatic dimension of eddic texts, I do not wish to resuscitate older theories about ritual performance (Philpotts: 1920) or speculation about the 'stagings' of poems (Gutenbrunner: 1958), but to sharpen our perception of the dynamic of the poems, in both their narrative and dramatic dimensions. The more dialogue a text contains, the more dramatic it becomes (Bal: 1985, 148), notwithstanding its narrativity. Narrative and drama cannot be distinguished simply on the basis of whether or not a story-teller is present in the text (Scholes and Kellogg: 1966, 4). In works constructed as dialogue or monologue the mimetic effect is achieved through direct quotation of actors' words, but it is quoted by a narrator nonetheless (Rimmon-Kenan:
1983, 106-8). A textual analysis of eddic poetry needs therefore to keep in mind development in both these dimensions.

Narrativity may inhere in the interaction between actors to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the scope and nature of the poem. In Grímnmál for instance, the long catalogue of mythological lore delivered by Öðinn to Agnarr adumbrates the story of Öðinn's revenge on King Geirroðr in a very subtle way. Grímnr states that Agnarr shall rule Geirroðr's kingdom alone (st. 2), that it is Öðinn who chooses slain warriors for Valhöll (sts. 8 and 14), that those who make it to Valhöll will recognise it easily (sts. 9 and 10), though few know what the einherjar eat (st. 18), and few know all the other details about life in Valhöll that Grímnr sets forth (sts. 20-26) before he finally reveals himself as Öðinn and pronounces Geirroðr's terrible fate, to die and forfeit the honour of joining the einherjar (sts. 51-3). The mythological catalogue therefore functions as a cruel psychological punishment of Geirroðr for mistreating and failing to recognise the divine speaker - "Fióð ec þér sagða, enn þú fát um mant" - (Klingenberg: 1983, 156).

Narrativity in a dialogue poem may be found in the subject of verbal exchanges as well as in the 'event' that is represented. In Locasenna the 'event' consists of Loki gatecrashing a feast of the gods, abusing and picking arguments with various deities, and his eventual expulsion from the hall by Þórr. But there is a degree of narrativity within particular exchanges between the gods, for instance in the alternate accounts of Njörðr's trip to the east and the birth of his son (sts. 34-6). Heinz Klingenberg (1983, 150) has described the narrative expression of myths in Locasenna as “myth abbreviations, which have an epic function as well as a referential and prefigurative function.” In some exchanges too, the import of the 'stories' (relating both past and future events) that are traded between speakers have ramifications for the larger narrative context (Harris: 1983, 221). One such example is Loki's taunt that Freyr will be weaponless at ragna roc (st. 42). Even in a wisdom trial or contest, some of the items of knowledge are narrative in nature: for example, Vafriðnir's account of the creation of the earth (st. 21) or of the fate of mankind following ragna roc (st. 45). In his analysis of the way narrative events are encoded into an even smaller unit of poetic language, the kenning, Frederic Amory (1990 forthcoming) has described this linguistic phenomenon as a “narrative precipitate”, and this term has been applied to embedded non-narrative discourse in eddic poems (Clunies Ross: 1990a, 222).

-240-
Returning to Goody's theory of oral recall according to 'events' and its applicability to the eddic corpus, it is first of all necessary to identify what the structures of eddic composition might have been, and how they may relate to the concept of 'event' or 'encounter'. Joseph Harris (1985, 120-1) has examined the applicability of Albert Lord's poetic grammar to the eddic corpus, noting that the middle-level units perceived in narrative epic, the 'type scene' and 'theme', do not seem generally applicable to eddic verse, partly because of its more dramatic nature (Harris: 1983, 221-2). He has directed attention instead towards ethnic genres (such as the *senna*) which could be realized as both middle-level building blocks or as poem types (1985, 120). A considerable amount of work has been done documenting the character and discursive context of the *senna* (Pizarro: 1976; Harris: 1979, 1983), as well as other ethnic compositional units such as the *spá*, *hvót*, and *mannajafnaðr* (Wolf: 1965). In medieval Icelandic verse, however, the identification of ethnic generic categories (see Ben-Amos: 1969) is problematised somewhat by the titling practices of scribes, which, as I noted in the last chapter, may not necessarily represent traditional oral categories.

Nevertheless, identifying the way these ethnic genres work as compositional units, or building blocks, has been fairly straightforward in cases where they basically constitute a whole poem, or a clearly defined portion of it. (In this connection, see Joseph Harris's comments (1990, 235-6) on "primitive" and "sophisticated" forms). But they surface as well in more complicated discursive patterns, where spatially-based metaphors (such as the building-block) do not adequately describe their function. By focussing on the dramatic dimension of the interaction between speakers in eddic poems, I think it becomes clear that ethnic generic conventions often work to generate discourse in a dynamic and protean way, which is not easily translated into a spatial schema, but which makes sense in the context of the temporal and linear logic of oral poetry (experienced over time, and not in space, like the written text). I will return to this subject in §6.3, where I investigate poetic form using another spatially-based metaphor, the 'frame', to show the usefulness (but limitations) of this analytic apparatus.

Joseph Harris (1990) has also focussed attention on the plausible derivation of indigenous poetic genres (such as the *senna*, *spá* and *hvót*) from speech acts in the light of Jolles's (1972) and Todorov's (1976-7) theories relating literary genres to speech "gestures" and speech acts. Different
approaches to literary analysis have been predicated on the study of speech acts (see, for example, Pratt: 1977) and their usefulness for the analysis of eddic poetry has been demonstrated by Harris. In §6.3, I shall look at the way different kinds of speech acts constitute or inform the discursive patterns of eddic poems, but before turning to that general analysis, I want to investate the composition of the only eddic poem preserved in independent recordings, to ascertain how oral transmission might have affected the structure and composition of the poem.

§6.2 The composition of *Voluspá*

*Voluspá* is the only eddic mythological poem which has been preserved in two separate texts which do not appear to derive from a common written original. It has generally been supposed that the differences between the Regius (R), Hauksbók (H) and *Snorra Edda* (SnE) texts of the poem are a consequence of divergent oral traditions (see chapter 5). The textual evidence provided by *Voluspá* is therefore of critical importance to the analysis of eddic compositional practices, and by extension to the study of eddic genres. Moreover, the two independent texts of *Voluspá* allow us to examine textual variation as a function not only of composition, but more significantly, as a function of poetic structure.

The R and H texts differ at all levels of composition – in the content of half lines and lines and their order within half stanzas, as well as in the content and order of half stanzas. At significant points in the structure the two texts also vary – in the extent to which the frame narrative is developed, the positioning of refrains, the incorporation of additional stanzas and the sequence of stanzas in the poem as a whole. While the similarity between the texts leaves little doubt that their transmission has depended primarily on memorization, the differences between them indicate that a considerable range of textual variation was possible within this mode of transmission. In the following analysis, I shall distinguish different types of variation between texts, with the aim of locating the areas of structure where specific variations appear to be generated. In addition I will note the ways in which the relationship between the speaking subject of the poem and her audience appears to be inscribed in each text, and, I would like to suggest, this is one aspect of the
text which may have been particularly susceptible to variation in the process of transmission.

To begin at the level of the line, it is apparent that the alliterative form of eddic poetry generally worked to preserve the same meaning in lines occurring in multiple versions of the same poem. There are nonetheless numerous instances of the alliterative pattern being maintained while individual words were altered. (Included in the following examples are lines of *Voluspá* preserved in quotations in Snorri’s *Edda*):

```
RHRsTW: hvat er með álforc?  U: hvat með álforc?  482
RRs: enn giðr rata          U: enn guðar hrata     526
RHU: hart er i himl           RsTW: hart er með höldom  455
R: Austr sat in aldi          U: Austr býr in arma    401
RHRsTW: morðvargar          U: morðingar           394
RHRsTW tungls tiúgari        U: tungls tregari       407
```

Variations could also occur in the choice of non-alliterating words. While some of these examples represent significant variations in meaning, other variations represent slightly different images of mythological detail, which over time might have affected the meaning of certain myths. For instance the *R* text pictures the norns emerging from a pool of water, whereas in *H* the image is of their exit from a hall (sæ/sal: 203). Other examples of different words occurring in non-alliterating positions are:

```
RH: gulli þacþarn          RsT: gulli betra       643
RH: þar saug Níðhoggr      SNE: þá qvelr Níðhoggr  397
RH: Sá/Séð hon þar vaða   SNE: Scoló þar vaða     391
RH: Asc veit ec standa     RsTW: Asc veit ec ausinn 191
RH: hár baðmr, ausinn hvítaauri  RsTW: hár baðmr, heilagr, hvíta aurí 193-4
RH: [dvergar] sem Durinn sagði  U: sem þeim Dyrinn kendi 108
```

These kinds of variations are not confined to *Voluspá* alone, and are found in the texts of other poems quoted in Snorri’s *Edda* (other examples were listed in chapter 4):

```
RRsTU: hygg ec at nornir sé           W: segi ec at nornir sé           Fm 132
R: sumar ero áskungar                T: sumár ero álkunnigær           Fm 134
RRsW: scír brúðr goda               U: scír brúðr guna                 Gm 115
R: sú skal riða                     As: sú scál reña                   Vm 474
R: er Piazi bió                     U: þar nú Piazi býr                Gm 112
```
The subject of textual difference between the two versions of *Völuspá* has generally been approached with a view to explaining away variation rather than exploring the space defined by the two branches of the extant poem. The synthesised and edited text of the poem which we find in most editions and which forms the basis of much criticism is predicated on the literary notion of a single original or authentic text which can be retrieved from the sum of extant versions. Because the edited text is an aggregation of all extant stanzas it represents a poem that is not only larger than life but which also conceals the integrity of each of the extant versions. A hermeneutic approach to each text leads to an appreciation of the variation in focus and pace between the versions, and provides a rationale for the patterns of repetition and amplification in each text. The fivefold repetition of the "Geyr nú Garmr mioc" refrain in H, for example, is not a literary infelicity, but an indication of the character of the poem preserved in this recording. In the R text the refrain appears three times, but in H it is more frequently repeated and on one occasion after only three intervening stanzas. It can be seen from the overall structure of H - in particular the patterning of tenses and the circling of the narrative back to the moment when *róc ragna* is realised - that in this version, the moment of apocalyptic release is held in focus for a considerably longer period than it is in R (that is for the last 28 stanzas as opposed to the last 21 in R). Thus in H the refrain "Geyr nú Garmr mioc fyr Gnipahelli/festr mun slítna enn freki renna" is repeated throughout the description of events that precede *ragna róc* proper. The reiteration of the image of the wolf breaking free of its bond also serves to link other mythological descriptions more closely with the narrative of doom: in H the vision of the harp-playing herdsman of the giantess, glad Eggper, is directly preceded by the refrain, as is the description (found only in H) of the yawning jaws of the snake.

In both texts of the poem, there is a progression from the use of the past tense to the present tense, as the presentation of events leading up to *ragna róc* is made more vivid to the audience. (The way present tense constructions are used in orally transmitted narrative in Irish has been examined by Hildegard Tristram: 1983). The process of bringing the events of the prophecy into the immediate present is also seen in the use of the deictic of present time "nü". (I use this linguistic term to denote the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of utterance; see Elam: 1980, 138-44). The "Geyr nú Garmr mioc" refrain first appears in both texts as "Geyr Garmr mioc", but in subsequent appearances the baying of the hound is represented as happening "nü". The stanza in both texts
on which the tense change from past to present is pivoted describes the crowing of cocks in Ásgarðr and Niflhel:

Gól um ásom Gullinkambi,
sá vecr hölða at Heríafoðrs;
enn annarr gelr fyr iorð neðan,
sótrauðr hani, at sóljom Heliar.

Whereas the tense change occurs in the 33rd stanza of the H version of the poem, in the R text the move to the present is made later, in the 42nd stanza. The temporal structure of the R text is relatively straightforward and linear - a history is constructed using the past tense, up until the crowing of Goldencomb among the Æsir. With the corresponding crowing of the soot-red cock in the underworld, the text shifts into the present, but unlike the H text, it does not dwell there, and moves straight into the predicted future - "Bræðr mun rúð berlaz . . ."

In the H text the shift into the present tense at the 33rd stanza draws the spá itself into the present as well as the events it narrates. Whereas in R the volva saw the hall at Náströnd, and saw men wading heavy streams, in H these sightings are reported in the present tense, that is, within the temporal space shared with the audience - "Sal sér hon standa sóló fiarrí . . . Sér hon pàr vaða þunga straumar". In R the point where the vision and the delivery become contemporaneous only occurs in the final stanzas: "Sér hon upp koma" (st. 59), "Sal sér hon standa" (st. 64). From stanza 33 onwards, therefore, the events of the apocalypse are presented in H as more immediate to the audience. They are represented as unmediated by any lapse in time between the vision and the spoken prophecy. The point at which this happens in R is in the description of the re-creation of the world, with the result that immediacy is given to a positive vision of the eventual future, rather than to the catastrophic events which intervene.

The focus in H on apocalypse, coupled with the penultimate stanza of the H text which describes the Second Coming, underline the Christian contextualisation of the heathen vision of the volva. This is in keeping with the spirit of the Hauksbók manuscript as a whole, with many texts constituting versions of Christian world history within an encyclopedic scheme (see §5.5). It contrasts with the manuscript context of the R text, where Voluspá stands at the beginning of the Codex Regius, without a euhemerising prologue, and
without an interpretive prose preface to mediate between poetic text and audience.

In stanza 45 of both texts an aside is made which functions as a comment on the state of the world both in the dramatised historic present of the poem, and also potentially in the present time of delivery. The aside therefore functions to immediate the matter of the spá. The stanza as a whole deals with future time ("muno" occurs in the first and last long lines) but the tense switches to the present in the second half stanza:

Brœdr muno beriaz oc at bônom verðaz,
muno systrungar sifrom spilla;
hart er í heimi, hórdómur mikill,
sceggold, scálmold, scildir ro klofnir,
vindgold, vargold, áðr verold steypiz;
mun engi maðr goðrom þyrma.

In the Uppsala text of Snorra Edda the last half stanza reads: "vingold vargold unz verold steypiz/grundir gialla, gifr flúgandimun enn maðr goðrom þyrma." Here, the speaker's temporal perspective is closer to that of the audience, although the expectation of demise is still expressed - "unz . . enn . ". The speaker in the U version does not assume the position of hindsight, expressed by "áðr . . ", which is found in the other versions. Across different versions of the poem there appears to be considerable play in the use of tenses, and this variability seems to be connected with the position assumed by the speaking subject vis-à-vis the putative audience.

The order of stanzas in each version of Völsunga reflects differences in the focus and pace of the unfolding vision, aspects of the tempo of oral poetry which Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe (1987, 3) has termed the "intense temporality of the speech act". The different order also amounts to slightly different interpretations of mythological events. In the following table, the order of stanzas in R and H is set out with those stanzas occurring as a group in both texts designated by a letter (A, B C etc). In some cases a group of stanzas represents a technical unity: group A for instance, where "fólkvig fyrst í heimi" is mentioned in the first and last stanzas of the group, or group D comprising the linked pair of stanzas 40 - 41. In other groups the cohesion of the stanzas is less explicit.
| Table 5 The order of stanzas in the R and H texts of Völsunga saga |
|---|---|
| **Codex Regius** | **Hauksbók** |
| 1 | Hliðs bið ec allar | (1) | Hliðs bið ec allar |
| 2 | Ec man iotna | (2) | Ec man iotna |
| 3 | Ár var alda | (3) | Ár var alda |
| 4 | Áðr Burs synir | (4) | Áðr Burs synir |
| 5 | Sól varp sunnan | (5) | Sól varp sunnan |
| 6 | Pá gengó/nótt oc niðiðom | (6) | Pá gengó/nótt oc niðiðom |
| 7 | Hittuz æsir | (7) | Hittuz æsir |
| 8 | Teflóð í tún | (8) | Teflóð í tún |
| 9 | Pá gengó/hverr skyldi dverga | (9) | Pá gengó/hverr skyldi dverga |
| 10 | Pá Mótsognir | (10) | Pá Mótsognir |
| 11 | Óli oc Niði | (11) | Óli oc Niði |
| 12 | Veigr oc Gandálfr | (12) | Býorr, Býorr |
| 13 | Fíll, Ktí | (13) | Fíll, Ktí |
| 14 | Mál er, dverga | (14) | Aurvangr, lari |
| 15 | Pá var Draupnir | (15) | Pá var Draupnir |
| 16 | Álf r oc Yngvi | (16) | Álf r oc Yngvi |
| 17 | Unz þvír gýmo | (17) | Unz þvír gýmo |
| 18 | Ónd þau né atto | (18) | Ónd þau né atto |
| 19 | Asc veit ec standa | (19) | Asc veit ec standa |
| 20 | Páðan koma meyir | (20) | Páðan koma meyir |
| 21 | Pá þar log logðo | (21) | Pá þar log logðo |
| 22 | Pryðvar brendo | (22) | Pá gengó/hverr skyldo |
| 23 | Heiði hana hét | (23) | Pá gengó/hverr skyldo |
| 24 | Fleygði Óðinn | (24) | Fleygði Óðinn |
| 25 | Pá gengó/hverr skyldo | (25) | Pá gengó/hverr skyldo |
| 26 | Pórr einn þar | (26) | Pórr einn þar |
| 27 | Veit hon Heimdallar. . .vitoð | (27) | Veit hon Heimdallar. . .vitoð |
| 28 | Ein sat hon úti. . .vitoð | (28) | Ein sat hon úti. . .vitoð |
| 29 | Valdí henni Hérðr | (29) | Valdí henni Hérðr |
| 30 | Sá hon valkyrior | (30) | Sá hon valkyrior |
| 31 | Ec sá Baldri | (31) | Ec sá Baldri |
| 32 | Varð af þeim meði | (32) | Varð af þeim meði |
| 33 | Pó hann eða hendr. . .vitoð | (33) | Pó hann eða hendr. . .vitoð |
| 34 | Hapt sá hon liggja. . .vitoð | (34) | Hapt sá hon liggja. . .vitoð |
| 35 | Á fellr austan | (35) | Á fellr austan |
| 36 | Stóð fyr norðan | (36) | Stóð fyr norðan |
| 37 | Sal sá hon standa | (37) | Sal sá hon standa |
| 38 | Sá hon þar vaða. . .vitoð | (38) | Sá hon þar vaða. . .vitoð |
| 39 | Austr sat in alðna | (39) | Austr sat in alðna |
| 40 | Fylliz fiorvi. . .vitoð | (40) | Fylliz fiorvi. . .vitoð |
| 41 | Vítar er með ásom . . .vitoð | (41) | Vítar er með ásom . . .vitoð |
| 42 | Göl um ásom | (42) | Göl um ásom |
| 43 | Brœðr muno beríaaz | (43) | Brœðr muno beríaaz |
| 44 | Vindold, vargold | (44) | Vindold, vargold |
| 45 | Leika Míms synir | (45) | Leika Míms synir |
| 46 | Scelfr Yggdrasil | (46) | Scelfr Yggdrasil |
| 47 | Hvít er með ásom . . .vitoð | (47) | Hvít er með ásom . . .vitoð |
| 48 | Geyr nú Garmr mioc | (48) | Geyr nú Garmr mioc |
| 49 | Geyr nú Garmr mioc | (49) | Geyr nú Garmr mioc |
### Codex Regius

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<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Geyr Garmr mioc</td>
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<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Breðr muno berlaz</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Leica Mims synir</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>ymr íp aldna tré</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>Hvat er með ásom . . . vitoð</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>Geyr nú Garmr mioc</td>
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<td>Hrymr ecr austan</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>Kiðill ferr austan</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>Surtr ferr sunnan</td>
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<td>Finnæs æsir</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>Par muno eptir</td>
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<td>62</td>
<td>Muno ósánir</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>Pá kná Hœnir . . . vitoð?</td>
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<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Sal sér hon standa</td>
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<td>Par kómr inn ríkti</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>Par kómr inn dimmi</td>
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### Hauksbók

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### Key

Unbracketed numbers refer to the stanza numbers in the Neckel-Kuhn edition; bracketed numbers to the order of stanzas in each manuscript.

* Apart from one or two additional stanzas in each manuscript, the order of stanzas from st. 44 to the end of the poem is substantially the same. Variations in position within this group are discussed below.

In H, groups A and B are separated by the pair of stanzas (group D) describing the rearing of the wolf which will swallow the sun at *ragna rœc*:

```
Austr býr in aldna í lárnvíði
oc fœðir þar  Fenris kindir;
verðr af þeim ðillum einna noccorr
tungls tíugari í trollz hamri. Vsp 40
```

In this version of the poem the stanzas serve as a premonition of the cosmic destruction to come, and therefore cast an ominous shadow across the events of the “fólcvig fyrst í heimi” which is described in the stanzas that follow (see Dronke: 1989). In R the first two verbs of st. 40 are in the past tense - “Austr sat in aldna. . . oc fœddi þar” - and the stanzas are positioned just before the heralding of *ragna rœc* by the cocks of each world. The past tense is used to flash back to events of the past which are now germane to the
phase of history being narrated. In R the nurturing activities of the old woman are seen as a detail that is relevant to the mechanics of destruction at *ragna róð*, whereas in H. (and possibly in Snorri's source poem, which preserves the same tense construction) the rearing of the wolf functions as an emblem of nascent and ineluctable destruction. In keeping with the attenuated focus on *ragna róð* in H, it is not only the refrain that comes earlier in the series of stanzas, but also the crowing of cocks in the three worlds (group E).

The different order of stanzas in H amounts to more than a keener focus on the pervasive nature of *ragna róð*. The sequence of visions in the *spá* assumes narrative shape, even though chronological precedence may not inhere in the events of one vision as opposed to another as they are described in other mythological sources. The inversion of the sequence of events set out in groups A and B in H implies a different emphasis in the mythological scheme by the positioning of the stanzas which allusively refer to the chronic problems posed by Loki and the giants prior to the group of stanzas describing the Vanir's threat to Æsir sovereignty. In H, the bargain struck with the giants over "Öös mey", and Þórr's subsequent annulment of the deal occur before the first war of the world, before the Æsir stronghold is destroyed. This representation is at variance with the received interpretation of the Norse master-builder story, which is dependent on the order of stanzas in the R text (see Harris: 1976 and Dronke: 1979). The order in H may also imply a different interpretation of the chain of causation leading to the destruction of Æsir society. In H there is no direct reference to Loki until the onslaught of *ragna róð*, and no reference to Baldr until the description of the new world after *ragna róð*. The vision of Sigyn sitting joyless by her bound husband follows directly on from the stanzas describing the first war of the world (A) and leads to the first announcement of the "Geyr Garmr mioc" refrain. The sequence of three stanzas (H29 - 31) therefore describes three broad periods in world history: infiltration by the Vanir, controlled stasis and final destruction. The middle state is characterised in terms of the extremely powerful bonds the Áss Váli makes to contain and isolate the threat of destruction personified by Loki.

A different compositional practice appears to be at work in the second half of the poem (group F), in which the events of *ragna róð* are narrated, where variations in the order of stanzas only involve single stanzas, and those stanzas - or at least their first lines - appear to have a primarily rhetorical function. We have already noted the more frequent appearance of the "Geyr
nú Garmr mioc" refrain in H. As well, st. 48, which begins with the rhetorical question "Hvat er með ásom, hvat er með álfom?", appears to have been moveable within the series of stanzas describing the events of ragna róg. The formulation, which is also found in Prymsvíaða, occurs in the section of the poem where the volva anticipates the eclipse of one heimr by another. At Prymsvíaða 7, the line functions thematically to draw attention to the central concern of that poem - the vulnerable physical and psycho-social state of the Æsir bereft of Þórr's hammer, as well as occurring at that point in the narrative where there is a transition from one world to another. (For an analysis of this kind of compositional phenomenon see Lónnroth: 1981, 323). In R it is placed in the middle of the group of stanzas describing the sequence of military onslaughts from other worlds. In H, however, it precedes this group and follows directly on from the vivid picture of the terrified hordes on hell's road.

To sum up then, two types of variations in the order of stanzas are apparent in the R and H texts. First are the various combinations of blocks of stanzas that appear to have been memorised as units. Although the spá is structured as a narrative sequence the visions which constitute it are not always narrative in nature (for example st. 19) and even when they are, they are not necessarily related chronologically to other constituent visions. Second is the existence of single stanzas which have a primarily rhetorical function and which can be moved for dramatic effect within a particular section of the poem. It is also apparent that half stanzas occur in different combinations across versions of the poem, although they generally seem to belong to a particular movement of the text (for example sts. 46-7 in R, H and SnE, and sts. 34-5 in R and H).

Both the R and H versions of Voluspá preserve stanzas found only in one version of the poem. For the purposes of this analysis I will refer to this material as additional, since the stages of transmission which might reveal the more complex processes of oral or written revision and influence between versions are now not recoverable. In both texts additions appear to be amplifications of the concerns particular to the version as a whole. For instance the concern in the H text with presenting the events of ragna róg as immediate is intensified by the detailed imagining of the stages of destruction, where the speaker pauses at the moment of engulfment:

Gínn lopt yfir línd í arðar
Gapa ýgs kiaptar orms í hæðorn;
An additional half stanza earlier in the poem also focuses on the emotions of men at the point when total destruction is inevitable - when the ash tree shakes and the giants are loosed on the world: "hraedaz allir á helvegóm, ádhr Surtar þann sefi of gleypir." (475-8). In both texts of the poem the speaker draws attention to the implications of ragna roc for men by direct reference as well as in asides. Among the four events described in the second half of st. 52, halir are included in the sweep of description from the clashing of the stony mountains to the cleaving of the heavens. Men's fate at ragna roc also appears to be the focus of an aside made in st. 56: "muno halir allir heimstof ryðia". While both versions point up the relevance of ragna roc for men, additional attention is paid to the immanence of the apocalypse for all mankind in the H version. At another point in the text, though, it is R which reiterates the powers of fate over men, while H emphasises the power of the norms to declare men's fate:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{R} & \quad \text{Urō héto eina, adra Verðandi} \\
& \quad -scáro á sciði - Sculd ina þriðio; \\
& \quad þær log logðo, þær lif kuro \\
& \quad alda bornom, ærlög seggia. \\
\text{H} & \quad \text{Urō héto eina, adra Verðandi} \\
& \quad -scáro á sciði - Sculd ina þriðio; \\
& \quad þær log logðo, þær lif kuro \\
& \quad alda bornom, ærlög at segia.
\end{align*}
\]

Vsp 205-12

The most extensive additions to either version of the poem occur in the middle of R, where a series of stanzas include the amplification of the dramatic frame and narrative elaboration on the death of Baldr. In the H text the narrative frame of the poem as a whole is sketched in the first and last stanzas and in the "vituð þér enn eða hvat?" refrain. In addition to these the R text preserves a dramatisation of an encounter between Óðinn and a völva, which provides a more particularised context for the spá, and develops the dramatic relationship between the speaker and her addressee. The narrative frame, as it exists in the opening and closing stanzas of the poem, is less developed in Völuspá than it is in Baldrs Draumar or Hyndluljóð, two other eddic mythological poems spoken by a völva and apparently belonging to a common poetic genre. In these two poems, the völva assumes the position of an impersonal, extradiegetic narrator, one who does not participate in the story she relates (Clunies Ross: 1990a, 222). Her focalization of events is panchronic (Rimmon-Kenan: 1983, 78), her knowledge apparently extending throughout 'known' time. The construction of the speaking subject of Völuspá is more complex than in
these two poems, for in addition to these qualities, she is also a participant in the history she relates. Having been reared by the giants she remembers furthest back in time (st. 2), the volva is in a position to take a more active role in the dialogic between gods and giants, a position she is seen taking advantage of in st. 28.

The move towards the frame narrative of the poem in R appears to be prompted by the cryptic reference to “veð Valfoðrs” (st. 27), the pledge of Óðinn’s eye in return for a drink from the well of Mimir, where, according to Snorri, wisdom and intelligence are hidden (Gylfaginning ch 8). The digression begins and ends with lines of third person narrative describing events at the level of the frame narrative rather than at the subordinate level of the speech act:

Ein sat hon úti, þá er inn aldmi kom
Yggiungr ása, oc þa augo leit:
“Hvers fregnit mic, hví frestío mín?
altr veit ec, Óðinn, hvar þú auga falt:
i inom mjóra Mímis brunní.”
Dreccr mið Mímir morgín hverian
af veði Valfoðrs - vitoð är enn eða hvat? (R28)
Valði henni Herfoðr hringa oc men,
fecc spioll spaclig oc spáganda;
þá hon vítt oc um vítt of verold hvería. (R29)

Óðinn’s thirst for knowledge functions in Völuspá at a narrative level, providing the stimulus for the recitation by the volva, as well as at a thematic level, informing and preparing the Æsir for their eventual encounter with doom. By moving towards the context of the spá at this point, the narrative and thematic levels are consolidated, and the dramatic dimension of their encounter is brought to life. The implied dialogue between the volva and Óðinn (“hvers fregnit mic”) is used to represent their relationship, which is further elaborated in the three-line stanza where the terms of their agreement are narrated. The diction used by the volva in st. 28 bears some resemblance to that in wisdom trial poems (see de Vries: 1934). The volva is cast as a competitor who is being tried by Óðinn, despite her confidence that her knowledge is unmatched: “Hvers fregnit mic, hví frestío mín?/alt veit ec Óðinn hvar þú auga falt.” The last half stanza unit of this stanza (2811-13) seems to function in the text as an answer to an unstated question by Óðinn. These correspondences suggest that in filling out the frame story of the poem, the R text has drawn on aspects of the volva
genre and the wisdom trial genre because the status of this spá (as a specific prophecy and as a recitation of complete knowledge) falls between the two.

The R text of *Völuspá* also preserves a substantial narrative account of the death of Baldr (sts. 31-3) which appears to relate to the narrative account formulated in *Baldr's Draumar*. The style of the Baldr episode in *Völuspá* is different from that of the surrounding parts of the poem, mainly because the causal relationship between events is articulated. The question and answer form of *Baldr's Draumar* produces a concise and straightforward narrative which, when incorporated into the monologue of *Völuspá* is expressed using a relational process ("varð"), pronouns to link the stanzas ("þéim", "sá" and "hann") as well as adverbs of concession and time ("þó" and "áðr"). The monologue form of *Völuspá*, however, usually produces condensed and allusive stanzas given chronological and causal significance through their position in the poem as a whole, or, in the narration of events at *ragna roc*, a series of stanzas implicitly linked to form a sequence. This difference in style can be most clearly seen by comparing the stanzas of the Baldr episode with the stanza which follows it in the R text, the second half of which is also found in the H text:

**R**

Ec sá Baldri, blöðgóm tívor,
Óðins barni erlog fólgin;
stóð um vaxinn, völlom hæri,
mír oc micr fagr, mistilteinn.

Varð af þéim meiði, er mær sýndiz,
harmflaug haettlig, Hoðr nam sciöta;
Baldr's bróðir var of borinn snemma
sá nam Óðins sonr einætt vega.

Þó hann æva hendr né hofuð kembði,
áðr á bil um bar Baldr's andscota;
enn Frigg um grét í Fenóslom
vá Valhallar - vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?

Hapt sá hon liggia undir hvera lundi,
lægiarn Ílí Loca ápeccian;
þar sitr Sigyn þeygi um sínom
ver velglýiuð - vitoð ér enn eða hvat?

**BD**

Rindr berr Vála í vestrósplom,
sá man Óðins sonr einætt vega;
hönd um þævar né hofuð kembir,
áðr á bil um berr Baldr's andscota.

Nauðug segðac, nú mun ec þegia.

**H**

Pá kná Vála vígþond núa,
holdr vóro harðgor höpt, ór þörmom.
þar sitr Sigyn þeygi um sínom
ver vel glýjut, vitoð þér enn eða hvat?

The texts of both the R and H versions of the last stanza begin with formulations which signal a new vision within the spá. In neither text is the capture of Loki narrated, but references are made to his confinement in both first half stanzas. The significance of this vision of Loki therefore rests on its
position relative to the series. The order of stanzas in R implies that Loki's capture and punishment comes as a consequence of the murder of Baldr. As John Lindow (1985, 31) has noted, in R the Baldr episode is the central point around which mythic history pivots. In H, this stanza follows st. 24, where the Vanir are described using their battle magic to overrun the Æsir at the end of the first war of the world, and it is followed by the refrain "Geyr Garmr mioe". As I noted earlier, the vision of Loki in H is emblematic of Æsir activity aimed at containing the threat of destruction which Loki and his giant-kin pose.

There is a keener focus on Óðinn in the R text of the poem, both in the elaboration of his part in the recitation of the völva, and in the attention paid to the tragic death of his son. This may perhaps be explained by the manuscript context of the R text, where Völuspá precedes the Óðinn group of poems, Hávamál, Vafðrúðnismál and Grímnismál. The R text of Völuspá highlights Óðinn's role in the history of the world, and in the transmission of knowledge about the world.

A comparison of the R and H texts of Völuspá suggests that it is the monologue form of the poem which provides the scope for this kind of narrative extension and elaboration. The state of two other monologue poems, Hyndluljóð and Hávamál, bears out this observation. It is significant that it is in monologue poems that we characteristically find shifts between discursive modes - most prominent in Hávamál but also apparent in the incorporation of lists in Völuspá and Grímnismál. The potential for digression of this kind would appear to be curtailed in sennur and wisdom trials because of their dialogue form. Elaboration in these poems would presumably have to be cast in dialogue form according to the style of the genre, or to take another discursive form - see §6.6. It is also noteworthy that the majority of additional stanzas in R occur as one series following the modification to the frame of the poem, perhaps indicating that once the remembered sequence of the speech act has been altered, the way is open for more extensive revision than one finds in other sections of the poem (compare with Lónnroth's findings 1971, 18, and 1978, 38).

Another kind of variation between texts of Völuspá, which I mentioned earlier, is in the relationship between the speaking subject and the putative audience of the poem. One area of modulation implicit in the form of a monologue is the target of the speaker's address. A dual audience is implied in the opening stanza of both texts of Völuspá: "Hliðr's bíd ec allar helgar
kindir/meiri oc minni mogo Heimdalar;/vildo, at ec, Valfödr, vel fyrtelia/forn spill fira, þau er fremst um man.” The recitation is described by the völva as taking place in the presence of an audience, although the apparent instigator of the delivery, Valfödr, is the direct addressee of the poem (see Lönnroth: 1978, 40-1). Throughout the R text the plural form of the second person pronoun is used by the völva in the refrain “vitoð ér enn eða hvat?”, probably indicating that it is to the broader audience, those whom the völva has asked for a hearing, that the spá is addressed. Even after the singular pronoun has been used in the direct confrontation between Öðinn and the völva in st. 28, the refrain is cast with a plural addressee (though it is heavily abbreviated). In the H text of the poem the usual form of the refrain is “vito þér enn eða hvat” but at st. 41 (only the second occurrence of the refrain in H) the line reads “vitu þér eim eða hvat?” Öðinn is presumably singled out here since the prophetic vision preceding the refrain describes the awful consequences of the rearing of Fenrir’s kin, a matter close to Öðinn’s heart. Other references in H clearly have the larger audience in mind. The description of this audience as “allar helgar kindir/meiri oc minni mogo Heimdalar”, if we follow the identification of the progenitor of the human race Rigr as the god Heimdalr (prose preface to Rigspulal seems to imply men as well as gods. As well, it is the “forn spill fira” that the völva intends to relate, and the word “fira” can refer to either men or gods, depending on the context.

Another modulation in the relationship between the speaking subject and her addressee/s is the shifts between first person narration of “ek” and the external narration of “hon” (Gutenbrunner: 1957 and Clunies Ross: 1990a, 224). In the first stanzas of the poem, the first person singular nominative pronoun “ek” is used to establish the speaking subject (11), her relationship to her addressee (15), and her credentials as seer (21-4). During the course of the recitation, as the audience is drawn into the vision, the pronoun “hon” replaces “ek”, and as the subjective voice of the völva fades, she functions in the text as a medium between the substance of the vision and its audience. By the end of the poem her subjectivity, as it is inscribed in the first person pronoun “ek”, has disappeared altogether, and the text ends with the words “nú mun hon soçqvaz”. For the greater part of the vision the audience has been drawn to identify with the point of view of the völva and participates in the revelation of what she remembers, knows and sees. The shifting of grammatical perspective in oral recitations in other cultures has been noted by Ong (1982, 46), although the example he cites, The Mwindo Epic, preserves a shift from the third person
into the first when the narrator describes the actions of the hero. The process of audience identification works the other way round in Völuspá where the audience is admitted into the fiction related by the völva at Öðinn's behest. The immediate dramatic context of the delivery to Öðinn is overwhelmed by the substance of the spá, and thus in Völuspá, in contrast with other monologues like Grímnismál, there is only a cursory end frame, and a perfunctory resolution of the mythological narrative situation: Öðinn has been effectively silenced by the description of his own death.

In the H text of the poem, the shift between “ek” and “hon” occurs only once at st. 27: “Veit hon Heimdalr. .”, with “ek” not appearing again in the introductory half lines of the remaining stanzas of the poem. “Ek” does appear, however, a further three times in the second half stanza of the “Geyr nú Garmr mioc” refrain, where attention is drawn to the speaking voice in the act of prophesying: “fram sé ec lengr, fioðló kann ec segla/um ragna röc, römm, sigtýva” (H). In R, both the pronouns “ek” and “hon” are found in this refrain, indicating that at these points in the text a subtle distinction is upheld between the medium of knowledge - “fioðló veit hon fræða” and the experiencing subject - “fram sé ec lengra”. The shift in pronominal use within the same line highlights the ease with which the audience could adapt to a change in perspective on the part of the speaking subject.

In R the pronoun “hon” also first appears in the stanza “Veit hon Heimdalr”, although within the block of additional stanzas (sts. 28-33) “ek” is used to introduce the vision of Baldr’s death. The next stanza in the R text to begin with the formulation [subj] [verb of perception] [obj] is st. 34 which, as I noted previously, seems to conform to the compositional mode of the poem as a whole, in contradistinction to the Baldr series of stanzas. Stanza 34 accordingly reverts to the use of the third person pronoun “hon” (“Hapt sá hon liggja. . .”). The appearance of “ek” in the Baldr series might either be a by-product of the amalgamation of additional material into the structure of the spá, or it might constitute an emphatic return to the eye-witness speaker at this point in the performance. Theoretically at least, the deictic and pronominal shifts in point of view may have been part of the reciter’s art, drawing the audience close to the matter of the poem and building up suspense.

Spatially, the speaker in Völuspá is constructed as the observer of a panorama (Rimmon-Kenan: 1983, 77), where the world is transformed into an
arena, and world history into a series of comings and goings. Thus the use of the deictic pair of verbs koma and ganga is essential to the construction of the point of view of the volva, and, where their use differs, the variations provide an example of the way in which perspective might have been constructed within the situation of a recitation. The speaking subject is positioned within the cultural space of the Æsir, to which giants and valkyries (and in H "inn ríki") koma. In keeping with the panoramic quality of the prophecy, the specific directions from which they come are often stated, for example, "Hrymr ecr austan" or "Surtr ferr sunnan". The use of the verb koma indicates movement towards the speaker, with the corollary that whatever comes towards the völva is perceived within the context of the poem as immanent for mankind, for example: "Sér hon upp koma óðro sínni/tórð ór ægt . . ." (st. 59). The perspective of the speaker in relation to an audience of men is most clearly shown by the deictic redefinition of the speaker's position in st. 17: "Unz rífr qvómo ór því líðr/ofgír oc ástgír, æsir, at húsi", where she speaks from the location at which humans are found and inspired with life and "völög". In st. 22 she again speaks from within the world of menn: "Heiði hana héto, hvars til húsa kom". In two later stanzas, the adverbial "par" is used to describe the unknown territories of Náströnd and Ígotunheimr, which are alien territories to both gods and men ("Sá hon þar vaða." (st. 39) and "Sat þar á haugi . . ." (st. 42). At certain points in the poem, then, the perspective of the völva is aligned with that of men through particular deictic usages, although in the poem as a whole the völva is conceived of as a speaker from another world, identified most closely with giants. (In st. 2 the völva declares she has been reared by giants - "Ec man iotna, ár um borna,/ pá er forðom mic, fædda hófðo.")

The perspective of the völva only varies across texts at the point of conflict between the gods and the alien forces, who by now have all arrived on the scene (sts. 55-6). In describing the encounters between Völarr and Fenrir, and Þórr and the Miðgarðsormr, the texts of R, H and SnE differ in the perspective the speaking subject takes up. In Snorri's text of these stanzas the directional verb is ganga, which is used to describe the action of the god protagonists: "Gengr Óðins sonr við úlf vegu . . . Gengr inn mæri mogr Hlóðyniar. . ." That is, this text represents the scene of conflict at some remove from the völva and therefore from men. This might indicate that in Snorri's source poem the proximity of threat was controlled and the realisation of conflict was distanced from the audience to some extent. It may also have been the case
that the use of either *koma* or *ganga* was affected by the context in which a stanza was quoted.

The R version however, continues to regard the events as arrivals: "Pá kómr inn micl mogr Sigfoður" (st. 55) and "Pá kómr inn mæri mogr Hlöðyniar" (st. 56). The perspective in both R and H seems to continue to be anchored to the gods' (and by extension men's) point of view, with the god heroes coming to fight off the invaders. In the R text, the use of the verb pair *koma* and *ganga* is complicated by the remainder of st. 56. The verb *ganga* is used in the second long line, in what appears to be an extension of the first line: "Pá kómr inn mæri mogr Hlöðyniar;/gengr Öðins sonr víð úlf vega;" This shifting of perspective - viewing the fight from the point at the centre of the stage to which the *volva* has drawn us, as well as from the distant standpoint from which future events and the actions of the gods are habitually regarded - demonstrates the complexity in point of view that could be maintained in eddic composition, and which was probably susceptible to change during oral transmission (see Wood: 1959, 260).

It may be inferred from the evidence of the two extant texts of *Volsuspa* that variations were generated during oral transmission in three identifiable areas of the poem:

1) At the level of the speech act itself - in the matter of the *spá* - variations are apparent in both the arrangement of the parts of the prophecy and in the amplification of elements within it. Elements generated in this area conform, at least initially, to the structural patterns already established in earlier stanzas: "Sá hon. . ." et cetera.

2) At the superordinate level of the frame narrative variations occur in the working out of the situation between speaker and addressee, that is, in the degree to which the dramatic context of the speech act has been elaborated. The R text also indicates that elaboration can be generated in the middle of the delivery and is not confined to the framing stanzas at the beginning and end of the poem.

3) Aside from these two levels of the text, variations could also be generated in the dimension of the poem created by the relationship of the
speaking subject with her putative audience. Variation in this dimension is manifested in grammatical choices, such as pronominal, deictic and tense usage.

To return briefly to Albert Lord's description of the "more or less stable core of verses" identifiable in some oral poetic traditions, the evidence of textual variation in Voluspá suggests that the 'core' would need to be understood as a basic configuration of generative elements - the event, the speakers, the kind of speech act, the dramatic situation - rather than a succession of particular verses. Without more extensive data on eddic transmission, it is not possible to assign particular verses to the 'stable core' of a poem, and others to a pool of optional additions. What appears to be stable across both texts of Voluspá is the topic of the speech act - the history of the mythological world from beginning to end - and the mythological setting of the spá, though it is elaborated to different degrees in R and H.

In eddic poems where only one text has been preserved, we can only speculate about variability at the level of the speech act, or variability generated in the dimension of the speaker's relationship with the poem's putative audience. But in a large number of eddic poems observations can be made regarding the shifts between the superordinate level of the frame narrative (see Klingenberg: 1983, 135) and the speech act or acts making up the body of the poem, which, while telling us nothing conclusive about the possible oral variability of any particular text of a poem, reveal interesting aspects of the compositional mode of eddic verse in general.

§6.3 Speech acts and 'frames'

In the study of Voluspá I described the prophecy of the volva as a speech act, which, in the conventions of eddic composition as they may be deduced from extant texts, may be defined as a formalised discourse with recurrent syntactic forms (such as "ek sæ") and other structural devices (such as the refrain) spoken by a particular kind of speaker (in this case a volva, but in Gripiaspá, the prophet is a wise king). I have also referred to the frame narrative, though as it is evident in the middle of the speech act as well as at its beginning and end, it is perhaps more appropriate to refer to it as a superordinate level of discourse, at which the dramatic context of the speech act is elucidated.
The eddic mode of composition appears to have allowed for shifts both between different kinds of speech acts involving the same speaker or speakers (and occasionally an entirely new set), and shifts back and forth between speech acts and the dramatic context of the encounter. As I suggested in §6.1, the course of eddic poems often depends on a kind of linear logic, which follows the changing relationship between speakers while they negotiate different discourses, and play out various aspects of their dramatic situation. Their verbal exchanges are sometimes framed by a narrative prologue and coda, but often the dramatic context of their speech is expressed in other speech acts preceding or following (or intervening in) their main exchange, and it is for this reason that eddic form need to be viewed as a dynamic model. As Bakhtin pointed out in an early formulation of his theory of utterance, the situation of speakers "does not work from outside like a mechanical force. On the contrary, the situation enters into the utterance as a necessary constitutive element of its semantic structure" (quoted by Todorov: 1984, 41-2).

Before looking at the more complicated structures of poems involving different speech acts, I want to look briefly at the way eddic poems typically open and close, and the way the narrator is implicitly or explicitly inscribed in the verse. A number of poems (especially in the second half of the Regius collection) open with the voice of a narrator constructing a temporal space in the distant past for the action of the poem:

Ár valtívar, veiðar námo
Ár var alda, þat er arar gullo
Ár var, þat Sigurð, sótti Giuca
Atli sendi ár til Gunnars
Vara þat nú nē í gær/þat hefir langt líðit síðan.

This formulation is also used within other kinds of speech-acts, such as the spá, when the speaker wishes to signal that a narrative set in the distant past is beginning: "Ár var alda, þat er Ymir bygði" (Vsp 3). Some of the poems listed above end with a direct statement of closure by the narrator, while others, as we shall see in a moment, move beyond the frame of external narration into another kind of discourse which affords its own mode of closure. Atlakviða ends with a statement of completion, which reiterates the temporal distance between the events and the telling of the tale:

Fullrøtt er um þetta; fær engi svá síðan
brúðr í byrnio þrœðra at hefna;

-A260-
The speaker of the opening and closing words of these narrative poems (that is, poems that through a combination of narrative and dialogue tell a story) is typically uninvolved in the action of the poem, and does not usually speak of him or herself in the first person. To use the terminology of narratology, the “speaking agent” of the text is an “external narrator” (Bal: 1985, 121-2), and the direct speech of the characters is embedded within this narrative. Modifications of this discursive stance are found where the speaking agent of the poem constructs itself as the transmitter of old stories, drawing attention to their continued transmission at the close of the story:

Pa fra ec senno  slfrfengligsta,
trað mála, talìð  af trega stórom,
er harðhugð hvattì at vigi
grimom orðom  Guðrún sono

Iorðom þíllom  óðal batni,
snóðom þíllom  sorg at minni,
at þetta tregróí  um talìð væri.

A similar frame is found in Atlamal, though the speaker in this case does not draw attention to itself by using the high profile of a first person voice:

Frétt hefír qld ófo,  pá er endr um gorðo
lifa mun þat eptir  á landi hverio
þeira þrámael,  hvargi er þóð heyrir.

At the end of the last chapter, I quoted stanza 35 of Hymisqviða where the external narrator makes a direct address to the audience, reminding them of a story mentioned only in passing in the poem, and, in an aside, inviting anyone better versed in tales of the gods to tell that story.

In Oddrúnargrátr the poem begins with the same kind of speaking agent inscribed in these poems, one who also briefly intervenes during the narration of the actors’ speech:

Heyrða ec segia  í sogom fornorn,
hvé mær um kom  til Mornalanz;

Pær hycc mælto  þvígit fleira,

But the poem moves out of this ‘frame’ and turns into a monologue spoken by Oddrún - who is the ‘focalizer’ of the narrative (Bal: 1985, 104). Oddrún’s story is formally opened by the narrator but closed by Oddrún.
Pá nam at setiaaz sorgmóð kona,
at telia bol af trega stórom:  

Saztu oc hlýddir, meðan ec sagðac þér 
morg ill um scop mín oc þeira; 
maðr hverr lifir at munom sfnom - 
nú er um genginn grátr Oddrúnar. 

Guðrún's lament in Guðrúnarhvót is also signalled in this way by the narrator:

Guðrún gráandi, Gúía dóttir, 
gecc hon tregliga á tí sítia, 
oc at telia táruchlyra 
móðug spiloll á margan veg;

But the identity of the speaker of the closing lines of both Oddrúnargrátr (347-8) and Guðrúnarhvót (21) is ambiguous since the speaker is not indicated by the Regius scribe. Most editors assign the close of Guðrúnarhvót to the narrator but the last words of Oddrúnargrátr to Oddrún, the speaker of the speech act. Without entering into this textual debate, the observation might be ventured that it was along the seams of poems - where speech acts were sewn into larger wholes, or where discursive modes slipped from one to another - that 'creative remembering' led to differing re-constructions of oral poems. Where there were shifts from one narrative level to another, between the level of the focalizer's report, to the level of the narrator's report, options were generated regarding the level at which the poem could finish. In Hávamál, for instance, where the entire poem is constructed as the monologue of a speaker sporadically identified as Óðinn, the poem ends with a salutation constructed from the point of view of an external narrator: "Nú er Háva mál queðin, Hávo hóllo í". Yet in the context of the very complicated construction of the speaking persona of the poem, who is adept at first-person narration and gnomic delivery as well as self-narration (Clunies Ross: 1990a, 227-9), the resolution of the complex speech-act probably operates at the level of the focalizer: Óðinn declares his own delivery over.

Many other poems in the eddic corpus are composed apparently without such an external narrator, and are constituted entirely of the direct speech of one or more actors. Völuspá and Grimnismál are very clear examples of this mode of composition, both spoken directly by a mythological figure to an addressee inscribed within their address. Leaving aside the prose introductions which preface some but not all poems which begin as unmediated direct speech, it is worthy of note that poems constructed as dialogue characteristically begin
with a challenge to the addressee to identify him or herself, followed by the addressee’s statement of his or her name and pedigree (Harris: 1983, 219-220).

Sometimes the opening question is a request for information, which inscribes the addressee’s identity and establishes the dramatic context of the exchange:

Vaki, mær meyja, vaki, mín vina, Hyndla systir . . .       HI 1

This discursive mechanism for opening a poem could be developed in different ways, to enhance the dramatic situation between the speakers. In Alvíssmál, for instance, Þorr’s disdainful enquiry about his interlocutor’s identity (Hvat er þat fira, hví ertu svá fóið um nasar? st. 2) comes after a stanza in which an unidentified, but clearly gleeful speaker declares his intention to carry home his bride to a wedding feast. That is, the questioner interrupts an actor who is effectively caught (and quoted) in the act. The layers of elaboration are more numerous in another dialogue poem, Vafnósñismál, where the giant Vafnósñir’s challenge to his interlocutor to identify himself (“Hvat er þat manna, er í mínorn sal verpomc orði á?”) is preceded by six stanzas. Immediately before Vafnósñir’s question, Óðinn has announced his arrival at the giant’s hall and the purpose of his mission (to test which of them is the wiser), in a declaration structurally analagous to Alvíss’s declaration of intention (Vín 6). In the block of stanzas preceding st. 6, there is a four stanza dialogue between Óðinn and his wife Frigg and a single stanza constructed as external narration: “Fór þá Óðinn . . . in gecc Yggr þegar.” (st. 5). The dialogue stanzas establish this quest as a significant test of Óðinn’s wisdom (“forvíttni mícla qveð ec mér á fornorn stófom við þann alsvinna iotun”) as well as an extremely dangerous mission (“þvíat engi iotun ec hugða iafnamman sem Vafnósñi vera”).

-263-
What is interesting in the context of the openings of poems is the way in which different speech acts are utilised as preambles to the chief speech act of the poem. Óðinn's first words function to establish an advice session ("Ráð þú mér nú Frigg"), a particular discursive act that is known in various permutations in the eddic corpus: the series of advice stanzas delivered by Óðinn to Loddfáfnir in Hávamál ("Ráðomc þér Loddfáfnir . . . "), and by Sigdrífa to Sigurðr in Sigdríframál ("Patt ræð ec þér íf fyrsta . . "), the attempt by Fáfnir to advise Sigurðr in Fáfnismál ("Ræð ec þér nú, Sigurðr . . . ") and by Pörr in Hárbarðzliðið ("Ráð mun ec þér nú ráða. . . "). While these pieces of advice are thematically very different - frequently they are subversive attempts to trick an interlocutor - in Vafóruðnismál the dialogue works to establish the critical nature of Óðinn's quest.

In Vafóruðnismál, the dramatic context of the chief speech act (the wisdom contest) is elaborated by a prior speech act involving a different pair of speakers, one member of which is shared by the following speech act. This contrasts with Vǫluspá, where the elaboration involves the principal speaker and her addressee, although it too takes the form of a different kind of speech act from the chief one (see above §6.2). Depending on the level of narrativity of the 'frame' of a poem, the chief speech act may be followed by another kind of discourse between a different set of speakers. In Vafóruðnismál, Óðinn's defeat of Vafóruðnir apparently provides sufficient closure to the dramatic situation outlined in stanzas 1-6, as does Pörr's declaration of victory after his trial of Alviss's knowledge and wit. Skírnismál is an example of a poem where the central speech act - Skírnir's cursing tirade against Gerðr - is embedded within a narrative that precedes and follows it. As Freyr's proxy, Skírnir is given instructions before the journey and reports back after it. Their initial conversation is itself prefaced by a dialogue between Scáth and Skírnir placing the wooing narrative in a still broader narrative context.

Of the dialogue poems listed above, which open with an identification challenge, Hárbarðzliðið and Gripisspá end at the same discursive level - with the speakers winding up their conversations (though not on very amicable terms in the case of Hárbarðzliðið). As we shall see in §6.5, Regínsmál, Fáfnismál and Sigdríframál represent more complex discursive wholes and close on rather different discursive notes because of the higher degree of narrativity in these poems (that is, the number of linked events, and different dramatic encounters covered by the poem).
Poems that begin as external narration are not bound to stay in that discursive mode, and often incorporate different kinds of speech acts of various lengths. For instance, Helgaqviða Hundingsbana in fyrri shifts briefly to the embedded dialogue of ravens at st. 5 and Guðrúnarqviða in fyrsta shifts to the embedded dialogue of actors in the narrative at st. 4. As I noted in §6.1, even within dialogue, the speakers' dramatic situation is not static, and the discursive patterns of the poem shadow the dramatic development of the 'event/s' that the poem represents. To demonstrate how narrative frames and speech acts work in a dynamic way in eddic praxis, the poem Baldrs Draumar serves as a fairly straightforward example.

The central series of stanzas of Baldrs Draumar is structured as an interrogation by Óðinn of a reluctant völva (sts. 6-12), in which the second half of each stanza spoken by Óðinn poses a question, and the last line spoken by the völva reiterates her reluctance to engage in the exchange of information: “Nauðug sagðac, nú mun ec þegia.” In each case, Óðinn counters this with a bullying protest: “Þegiattu, völva, þic vil ec fregna/unz alkunna, vil ec enn vita.” If this formalised mode of verbal interaction is regarded as the chief speech act of the poem, the stanzas surrounding it can be viewed as the discursive negotiation by the speakers to both enter into and retreat from the interview. Establishing the identity of the two speakers and the dramatic context of their exchange is a series of four stanzas (sts. 1-4), told from the point of view of an external narrator. The direct speech of the two characters is embedded within this narrative. The point at which the text shifts to direct speech is not with the first words of one of the characters, but, like Voluspá, with the words of the völva:

Pa reið Óðinn fyr austan dýrr,  
þar er hann vissi völö leiði;  
nam hann vittugri valgldr qveða,  
unz nauðig reis, nás orð um qvað:

‘Hvat er manna þat, mér ökunnra,  
er mér hefir aukíð erfti sinni?  
var ec snivin sníði oc slegin regni  
oc drífin doggo, dauð var ec lengi.’

‘Vegtamr ec heiti, sonr em ec Valtams;  
segðu mér ór helio – ec man ór heimi –:  
hveim ero beccir baugorn sánir,  
flet fagr líga flóð gulli?’

BD 4-6
The exchange characteristically begins with a request for identification followed by a statement of the speaker's name and lineage. Öðinn begins his questioning immediately after stating his purpose ("segðu mér ór helio - ec man ór heimi"). In his fourth question, Öðinn changes the discursive mode by posing a riddle (Clunies Ross: 1990a, 225), rather than a request for information "ór helio", and in doing so he is evidently unmasked before the volva, who declares his real identity:

'Ertattu Vegtamr, sem ec hugða, heldr ertu Öðinn, alðinn gautr.'
'Ertattu volva, né vis kona, heldr ertu þriggja þursa módir.'

'Heim ríð þú, Öðinn, oc ver hróðigr!
Svá komit manna meirr aprt á vit, er lauss Loki lífðr ór þöndom oc ragna roc riðfendr koma. BD 13-14

By denying both the identity and competence of the volva ("Ertattu volva, né vis kona") and insulting her instead, Öðinn forces the degeneration of their dialogue into an insult exchange. The volva responds in the mode of a senna, despatching her interlocutor (cf. Hrbíl 60, Ls 63) but covertly reminding him of the inevitability of his own destruction at ragna roc. The narrative 'frame' of the speech act/s is not taken up again at the end, because Öðinn's success in achieving his mission (as in Valdrðnsmál) implies his safe restoration to Ásgard.

A similar shift between the formal discursive mode of the spá and the senna is evident in Hynduljóð, both before the delivery of Óttarr's genealogy and after it. Angered by Freyja's dissembling, Hyndla challenges her interlocutor in the manner of a senna - "Flá ertu, Freyja, er þú freista mín" (st. 61-2) - only to be rebuked in similar style; "Dulín ertu, Hyndla, draums æstlig þér" (st. 71-2). (A similar phase of discursive negotiation occurs within Oddrún's narrative in Oddrnaragráttr, when Borgny declares: "Œr ertu Oddrún, oc ørvita,er þú mér af fári flest orð of qvað" Od 111-2). After Freyja requests that Hyndla provide Óttarr with a minnisól, so that he can reproduce his genealogy (st. 45), Hyndla sends them away, and abuses Freyja, using stock insults of promiscuity familiar from the senna convention:

Snúðu burt heðan! sofa lystir mic, fær þú fát af mér fríðra costa; hleypr þú, eðlvina, uti á náttom, sem með hofrom Heiðrún fari.
Rannt at CEði ey freyandi,
scutuz þér fleiri und fyrirs Cyrto;

hleypr þú, eðlrina, útti á náttom,
sem með hofrorn Heiðrún far.

Ec slæ eði af íviðlo,
svá at þú ei kemz á burt heðan
hleypr þú, eðlrina, útti á náttom,
sem með hofrorn Heiðrún far. Hdl 46-48

Stanza 48 has been attributed in the Helgason and Neckel-Kuhn editions to a
new speaker (Freyja), even though the manuscript text reiterates the second
half stanza insult of Hyndla's previous two stanzas (and reads "af" not "of"). As
it stands, the text implies that Hyndla threatens to cast fire from herself
(towards Freyja), to prevent them getting away and enjoying the genealogical
information they have prized from her. In the following stanza Hyndla taunts
Ottarr with a drink of poison ale, and curses him:

Hyr sé ec branna enn hauðr loga,
verða flestir fiorlausn ðola;
ber þú Ottari þú at hendi,
eitri blandinn mioc, illo heil!! Hdl 49

The poem ends with Freyja's response to this torrent of threats, a
response that somehow transcends the immediate problems of conflagration by
widening the context of hostility to include all the gods on her and Ottarr's side:

Orðheill þín scal engo ráða,
póttu, brúðr iotuns, þölu heitr;
hann scal drecca dýrar veigar,
bíð ec Ottari ðill gosð duga. Hdl 50

The ending of Hynduljóð is therefore fairly perfunctory: the completion of the
story, its 'closure' (Rimmon-Kenan: 1983, 18 and Zumthor: 1984) is left implicit,
to an even greater extent than in Vafþrúðnismál or Alvissmál. In §6.6 I shall
look again at the question of closure in dialogue poems that represent a
relatively high degree of narrativity. If the mechanism of recall in eddic
transmission depended on the reconstitution of a mythological event or events,
as I have argued, it is possible, in theory, that the degree to which narrative
closure was made explicit might vary between versions of the same poem.

Because of the way in which one discourse unfolds into another in eddic
poetry, the notion of 'host' genres (Dubrow: 1982, 116) does not seem
particularly applicable, since a speech act such as we have in, say, *Balders Draumar* or *Hyndluljóð* could theoretically be set in motion by a variety of discourse types (cf. *Vafðrúðnismál*). As I mentioned in §4.1, the extant body of eddic texts does not enable us to define with any certainty the way in which genres and discourses interact in eddic praxis. The fragments of verse quoted by Snorri which are not preserved elsewhere provide evidence of a variety of speech acts, whose ‘frames’ we can only guess at. In *Gylfaginning* there are quotations from a verbal duel over living arrangements between husband and wife deities (24: 3-15), the beginnings of some kind of interrogation by members of the Vanir of the goddess Gna (30: 11-20) and a conversation between *sendimenn* and the giantess Þókk (48: 4-9). In *Skáldskaparmál*, Þórr’s stern warning to a river is quoted (106: 14-16), as is an exchange between the poet Bragi and a troll-woman, in which multiple names for troll-wife (in two manuscripts) and poet are traded (164: 20 – 165: 6).

Along with shifts in discursive mode, there are a number of poems that also exhibit shifts in the metrical pattern of lines and stanzas. In §6.5 I shall look at how these shifts work, and the conditions under which they seem to occur. Before doing that, however, a survey of eddic metres and the relationships between them is necessary, in order to assess what their different discursive significations might have been in the thirteenth century.

§6.4 Eddic metrics

As they are evidenced in the corpus of eddic poems, eddic metres are of basically two types –

I  - the continuous long-line rhythm of *fornyrðislag*, and
  - *málaháttr*, the ‘heavier’ variant of *fornyrðislag* (Frank: 1984, 384)

II - *ljóðaháttr*, where shorter self-alliterating lines alternate with long lines, and
  - *galdralag*, an augmented form of *ljóðaháttr*

The technical terms *fornyrðislag*, *málaháttr*, *ljóðaháttr* and *galdralag* are found in *Háttatal*, the section of Snorri’s *Edda* which deals with metrics. Although Snorri’s examples of verse forms are confined to illustrations of princely encomia, it is illuminating to compare the mode of expression he uses
for these traditional metres. Since the field of his expression is fixed throughout the poem (the poet's praise of his patron), and the mode is varied according to the metrical pattern being demonstrated, Snorri's examples provide a unique exhibition of the way in which tenor is related to mode in Norse poetics, that is, the characteristic voice that is invoked by composition in a particular measure. (A general discussion of field, tenor and mode in relation to genre is provided by Kress and Threadgold: 1988).

His examples of *fornyrðislag* (vv. 96 and 102) are distinguished by the lack of a first person speaker or agent of composition, found in the majority of the other verses of *Háttatal* which refer to composition (for example v. 5, 8, 21, 28, 30, 31, 67, 68, 69, 81, 92 and 95). This accords with the use of *fornyrðislag* in the extant corpus of eddic poems, where it is typically employed for external narration.

Ort er of ræsi þan er ryðr grænar\(^1\)
vars ok ylgiar ok vapnlitar
þat mnu æ lifa nema avld fariz
bräninga lof eþa bili heimari.   *Háttatal* 251: 12-15

Niota aldri ok avðsala
konvnr ok iar\(l\) þat er qvæpis lok
falli fy\(r\) fold lægi
steini stvd en stillis hof.   *Háttatal* 252: 10-13

The appellation *fornyrðislag* is first found in Snorri's work (von See: 1967. 56), and may be his coinage. If so, it reveals something of the contemporary attitude to traditional eddic poetry, picturing it as the composition of ancient times. By composing in this metre in his own time, as Snorri does for the sake of pedagogic thoroughness, an impersonal, 'age-old' voice is affected. Judging from Snorri's construction of the *fornyrðislag* stanzas, the metre is conventionally associated with narrative discourse, rather than direct first person address. In these two stanzas, Snorri also adopts the rhetorical device of binding the life of the thing expressed in verse (here it is praise of a prince) with the life of the world itself. The device is found at *Voluspá* 16 at the end of the list of dwarves' names: "þat mun uppi, meðan qld lifir". The concern with the transmission of the verse is not overtly considered in the preceding stanzas of *Háttatal*, although Snorri has previously referred to composition as a form of

\[^1\] Quotations of verses in eddic measure in this section and the next will be set out according to the conventions of eddic lay-out, with long lines kept to one line and short lines indented
memorial (v. 67). Perhaps it is a consideration conventionally (though not exclusively) associated with composition in fornyrðislag.

The other appellations for eddic metres used by Snorri - málahátttr, líðahátttr and galdralag - are compounds formed in a different way, taking a certain kind of speech act as their characterising determinant. All these speech acts crop up again in the titles of poems (for example, Atlamál, Hábarðziðið and Heimdalargaldr), though there is by no means a one-to-one correspondence between metre and title. The most elusive correspondence is between málahátttr and poems whose titles are formed with the word mál. This is partly because of the generality of the designation mál, which refers to speech in general, and partly because of the generic nature of -mál poems, which, along with -kviða poems, have been characterised by Harris (1990, 234) as 'independent poetic forms'.

In addition, there is some doubt about the applicability of málahátttr as a description of the metrical form of poems in the eddic corpus, since there is no proof that málahátttr and fornyrðislag metres were rigidly distinguished metres in early Norse (Dronke: 1969, 20). As syllabic regularity was not mandatory in eddic poetics, the distinction between a metre of mostly longer lines with some shorter lines and a metre of mainly shortish lines with some longer lines is probably not of generic significance. Snorri's example of málahátttr does not share any of the features of voice found in his fornyrðislag compositions, having more in common with the voice of traditional skaldic metres such as dróttkvætt:

Mvnda ec mildaingi
pa er Maera hilmi
flyttac fjorgyr qvaept
fimtne storgi safar
hvar viti aðr orta
med æpra hätti
maerð of menglotvð
maðr vnd himins skavtum.  

Hättatal 251: 6-10

Most probably under the influence of skaldic practice, some eddic verse shows signs of regulating the number of unstressed syllables in a line, and in these cases it is appropriate to describe metrical form according to Snorri's distinctions. For example, the eddic poem Atlamál is composed of lines of five or more syllables, conforming to Snorri's demonstration of málahátttr. No other eddic poems can be described as being composed in málahátttr, although stanzas of consistently longer lines are often designated as málahátttr stanzas.
Snorri’s demonstration of composition in *ljóðaháttr* metre also appears to inspire him to formulate his words according to the style of eddic verse in the same metre:

Gloøva grein  hef ec gert til bragar
sva er tirætt c. talit
hroþrs qrverþr  skala maþr heittIn vera
ef sva fær alla hattv ort.  

*Háttatal* 252: 2-4

The syntactic pattern of the second half stanza - "... skala maþr.../ ef..." - is frequently found in the gnomic verses of *Hávamál* (sts. 42, 43, and 30) as well as in the gnomic section of *Sigrdrífsumál* (st. 29). Moreover, the compositional device of deriving a general statement in the second half stanza from the particulars expressed in the first is paralleled in *Hávamál*. The particular experience admitted to by Óðinn and the concomitant moral expressed in the following stanza from *Hávamál* are not at all similar to Snorri’s, but the rhetorical procedure is the same:

Qir ec varð,  varð ofroþivi
at ins fróða Fialars;
því er óldr bazt,  at aprt uf heimtir
hvørr sitt geð gumí.

*Håv* 14

A further example is found in the following stanza, also from among the confessions of Óðinn in *Hávamál*, where personal experience is set out in the first half, and an aphorism, expressed in the third person, in the second:

Fullar grøndr  sa ec fyr Fitiungs sonom,
nú bera þeir vánar vól;
svá er auðr  sem augabragð,
hann er valtastr vina.

*Håv* 78

These correspondences are not close thematically, but it is hard to imagine how else Snorri could adopt the characteristic *ljóðaháttr* voice, which is omniscient and didactic, without giving offence to his primary addressees, King Hákon and Earl Skuli. For this reason he has probably chosen to direct the gnomes to his own position rather than to theirs. By the same token his composition in *galdralag* seems effete compared to the sinister words spoken by Skírnir in *Skírnismál*. Snorri again chooses to turn the incantation on himself, rather than on his patrons:

Sottac fremð  sotta ec fýnd konvngs
sottac ítran iarl

-271-
Lyðaðáttur is also the metre chosen to begin Hátatal, the twelfth century precursor to Hátatal composed by Earl Rognvaldr and Hallr Þórarinsson. This poem, whose title is a calcque on the Latin clavis metrica, or 'key to metres' (Holtsmark and Helgason: 1941) sets out a range of metres for the instruction of skalds, almost certainly in imitation of Latin models, though the metres it demonstrates, like those in Hátatal, are of the vernacular tradition. The voice constructed by the opening stanza is didactic, and echoes the admonition of Hávamál: "nóta mundo, ef þu nemr./þér muno göð, ef þu getr" (see §4.1). The subject of the delivery, forn fræði, denotes the area of instruction conventionally set forth in lýðaðáttur poems such as Grímnismál and Vafðurðnismál. These 'eddic' devices were probably brought into play by poets to connote the instructional tone of traditional poems of learning:

Skjald I 487

En hérf segir svá Vafðurðnir jóttunn
svá sem hér er sagt at Öðinn mælir sjálfr við þann Ás er Lóki heitr

(10. 26)

ok enn hefir hann nefnzk á fletri vega þá er hann var kominn til Geirrœðr konungs

(21. 19-20)

En er Njórðr kom aptr til Nóatuña af fjallinu þá kvað hann þetta

(24. 1-2)

Pá kvað Skaði þetta

(24. 9)

Ok enn segir hann sjálfr í Heimdalargaldri

(26. 8)

Pá mælti einn [af Vanum]

(30. 10)

Hon segir [Gnál]

(30. 14)

En er Skírnir sagði Frey sitt eyrindi þá kvað hann þetta

(31. 26)

Svá er hér sagt í orðum sjálfra Ásanna

(34. 15)

Hon segir [Þókk]

(48. 3)

Verse in fornyrðislag metre, on the other hand, is usually introduced by an impersonal formulation such as "svá sem hér segir . . ." (Table 2: no. 23). The
narrative accounts of events reported by the völva in Völuspá (and Völuspá in skamma) are cast in fornyrðislag and introduced by the formulation "svá sem segir i . . ." (Table 2: nos. 5, 6, 7, etc.). Although the identity of the speaking subject is inscribed in these introductions (see §4.3), as I noted in §6.2 above, the narrative of the völva is characteristically extradiegetic, and her report is discursively very similar to the narrative reports of 'unidentified' speaking subjects (or external narrators).

In the extant corpus of eddic poems, the determination of the metre in which an actor's speech is cast is subject to more complex constraints than the pattern of Snorri's citations suggests. For instance, in a poem such as Prymsvögiða, where dialogue is embedded within a narrative discourse cast in fornyrðislag, the words of the gods are subsumed within this metrical pattern, and they are quoted speaking in fornyrðislag rhythm. This seems to affect the style of their discourse, especially the degree to which it expresses dramatic interaction between them. At the dramatic climax of Prymsvögiða (st. 31), the discourse shifts to an external description of Pórr's emotions ("Hló Hlórríða hugr í bróstin") rather than allowing him to declaim his triumph. Often in fornyrðislag narratives, it seems direct speech is staged to maximise enjoyment of narrative development, rather than to bring to life the interaction of the poem's actors. Thus at the dramatic climax of Hymsvögiða, the giant does not admit his defeat directly to Pórr, but addresses the audience, and then, nostalgically addresses his beer:

'Morg veit ec mæti mér gengin frá,
er ec kálki sê yr kniám hrundit.'
Karl orð um vqað: "knácat ec segia
aptr ævagi, þú eft, glör, of heitt." Hym 32

Another illustration of this stylised form of direct speech is found in Helgaþvögiða Hóvarðasonar 40, where Helgi's address to Sváva sweeps forward to a future perspective (3-4) and then back through the present (5-6) to the past (7-8). It is only the greeting in the first line that is anchored in the immediate present of dramatic interaction:

'Heil verðu, Svával! Hug scaltu della,
stá mun í heimi hinztr fundr vera;
tíð buðulngi bleða undir,
mér hefír híorr komið hiarta íp næsta. HHv 40

The kind of speech act that is uttered also appears to influence metrical form: the prophecies in eddic poems are always delivered in fornyrðislag
(Voluspá, Baldrs Draumar, Gripisspá, and Hyndluljóð), presumably because the discursive mode of the prophecy is so closely related to extradiegetic narrative. In both Voluspá and Hyndluljóð there is some overlap between history and prophecy, the latter poem blending genealogy with a prophecy of future events, and Voluspá beginning with ancient history and moving forwards to prophecy. A permutation of the spá genre is found in Helreið Brynhildar, where the delivery consists of a narrative history authorised and spoken in the first person. In the encounter between Brynhildr and the giantess on the road to hell, it is not Brynhildr who seeks a prophetic narrative from the gýgr (as Öðinn does in Baldrs Draumar and Freyja does in Hyndluljóð), but the giantess who challenges Brynhildr's conduct: “betr semði þér borða at rekia/heldr enn vitia vers annarrar” (Hr 15-8). Nevertheless, Brynhildr's journey is treated as a kind of quest (“Hvat scaltu vitia af Vallandi, . . . húsa minna?”) and she takes on her interrogator in the spirit of a verbal duel: “ec mun occar òðri þiccia,/hvars menn eðli occart kunno” (35-8). Following the giantess's statement of Brynhildr's ‘history’ (st. 4), Brynhildr takes the offensive, and delivers her own account: “Ec mun segia þér, svinn, ör reiðo/vitlaussi mioc, ef þic vita lystir” (st. 51-4).

Brynhildr's discursive stance here is not unlike that of the volva in Voluspá - “vito/ér enn eða hvat? - (de Vries: 1967, 146. n. 173), though Brynhildr's is an active rather than reactive delivery. Brynhildr's dismissal of her interlocutor with the words “sæcstu, gýgiarkyn!” signals the defeat of the giantess and the successful 'publication' of her version of events. While aspects of the dramatic interaction between the actors and the discursive style of their speech find parallels in Hyndluljóð, Baldrs Draumar and Voluspá, the identities of the speakers and the location of this 'event' in the larger context of legendary history produces an inversion of discursive practices as they are manifested in the spá poems. The delivery of a narrative account - whether it pertains to the future or past, to others' or to the speaker's own life - appears to have conventionally been cast in fornyrðislag.

Ljóðaháttur rhythm, on the other hand, is mostly found in dialogue poems where the exchange of words forms the basis of the narrative interaction, that is, where utterance constitutes an illocutionary act (Austin: 1962). It is the metre used in knowledge trials (Vafðruðnismál and Alvismál), where, in Ohmann's phrase (1972, 51), the speech acts have a 'contractual character', and it is the metre in which relative status is debated, in sennur (Locasenna), where interpersonal effect is of the utmost importance. It is also the metre used to
impart knowledge, in the form of gnomes, runar, lóðar or rāð (Hávamál and Sigdrífumál). In monologues which function as catechisms of mythological or other lore (such as Hávamál and Grímnismál, even if the interlocutor does not himself speak, he is inscribed in the formulation of advice. The following stanza from Hávamál, the first instance of the use of the second person pronoun “þú”, exemplifies this:

Haldtt maðr á keri, drecci þó at höfi mið, mæli parft eða þegi; ókynniss þess vár þic engi maðr, at þú gangir snemma at sof. Háv 19

As ljóðahátt appears to connote a very attentive relationship between speaker and addressee, it is the appropriate form for vital cultural knowledge to be delivered in. In this sense, every utterance of gnomes, or traditional wisdom, amounts to a re-enactment of a teaching situation, where the listener is provided with advice by a wise speaker. It is the association of the ljóðahátt rhythm with interpersonal effect which also makes it the appropriate vehicle for insults (in þennur) and curses (in the latter half of Skírnismál).

The type of speech act that constitutes the main ‘event’ or dramatic encounter of a poem appears to determine the metre not only of the speech act, but of the surrounding discourse as well. In a wisdom trial poem such as Vafðruðnismál the stanzas that frame the speech-act proper (sts. 1 - 10) are cast in ljóðahátt even though their function is narrative. Only one stanza is actually expressed in the third person (st. 5); in the remainder the narrative is expressed through the dialogue exchanges between Óðinn and Frigg and then Gagnáðr and Vafðruðnir (see §6.3). At stanza 10, before the commencement of the knowledge trial itself, the discursive mode shifts to another ljóðahátt style, that of gnomic counsel. Although there is a significant difference in analytical terms between the conversation of Gagnáðr and Vafðruðnir on the one hand and the voice of impersonal advice on the other, the two discursive modes are closely affiliated in the eddic grammar. Both styles express axioms related to the traditional procedure of attaining wisdom, the first half stanza in a fully dramatised way –

Út þú né komir órom hóllom frá, nema þú inn snotrari sér. Vm 74-6

and the second using a conventional, generalised model of an omniscient speaker addressing a pupil in need of advice.
Sometimes, however, the metrical form of a poem is not homogeneous, and a change in discursive stance by a particular speaker is highlighted by a change in metrical form. A particularly clear example of this is found in *Hamðismál*, where, within a speech directed towards his brother Hamðir, Sóri adopts the gnomic mode and the rhythm of his utterance changes (Dronke: 1969, 176):

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Af væru nú haufuð, ef Erpr lifði,} \\
&\text{bróðir occarr inn þóðfrægni, er við á braut vágom,} \\
&\text{verr inn vígfrægni - hvöttomac at dísir -} \\
&\text{gumi inn gunnhelgi - gorgörm at víg-} \\
&\text{Ecði hygg ec ocr vera úlfa dønm,} \\
&\text{at vit myñim sálfir um sacaz,} \\
&\text{sem grey norna, þau er gráðug ero} \\
&\text{f auðn um aalin.} \\
&\text{Vel hófum við vegit; stóndom á val Gotna,} \\
&\text{ofan, eggmódum, sem ernir á qvisti; . . .} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Hm 28-30

56.5 Shifts between metres

The parameters of verse rhythm - the pattern of syllables in the line and the pattern of lines in a stanza - are in fact frequently varied within eddic poems. Shifts between metres (as defined at the beginning of §6.4) are evidenced in a considerable number of poems in the extant corpus. At the next level of rhythm, the means by which the stanzaic unit could be constructed are many and varied. Accordingly, a profile of eddic measures needs to accommodate the rhythmic variability characteristic of much of the corpus. While it is no longer fashionable to attempt to iron out irregularities to produce a metrically smooth poetic surface, editors still regard metrical variation as a sign of disorder (Evans: 1986, 4), without recognising that this assessment is premised on a notion of metrical regularity which does not seem to have been inherent in eddic verse-forms themselves.

The corpus as a whole presents ample evidence of a differentiation of metres according to speech-act and speaker. The catechism poems *Hávamál*, *Vafðrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* are all in *Íjóðaháttr*, and so are the catechism
sections of Sigdrífumál, Fáfnismál and Reginsmál. Moreover, when the con-
stitution of the duelling pair of a senna does not include a mythological being, as in the two sennur between warriors in the Helgaqvitða Hundingsbana poems (HHI 32-46 and HHII 19-24), the metre is not ljóðaháttur but fornyrðislag. If a hero engages in a senna with a giantess (HIV 12-30), however, the exchange is cast in ljóðaháttur.

In the majority of cases, the varied metrical texture of eddic verse can be shown to have its own rationale. The relationship between the dominant metre of a poem and a subordinate metre is most often one of modulation, brought about by a change in the discursive position of the speaker. For instance in Reginsmál the metre changes from fornyrðislag to ljóðaháttur between stanzas 18 and 19, as the discursive mode changes from narrative (here carried forward by dialogue) to a form of catechism, as Hnicarr (Öðinn) counsels Sigurðr and Reginn on the propitious signs for battle:

'Hverir ríða þar Rævils hestom
hávar unnir, haf glymianda?
segvigg ero sveita stoccin,
munat vágmarar vind um standaz.'

Reginn svarði:
'Hér ero vér Sigurðr á sætriáum,
er oss byrr gefinn við bana síðfan;
fellr brattr breki bröndum hæri,
hlunnvigg hrapa; hverr spyrri at því?

'Hnicar héto mic, þá er Hugin gladdi
Volsungr ungi oc vegit hafði.
Nú máttu kalla karl af bergi,
Feng eða Fiolni; far vil ec þiggia.'

Þeir vico at landi, oc gecc karl á scip, oc lægði þá veðrit.

'Segðu mér þat, Hnicarr, alz þú hvárttveggia veit,
goða heill oc guma:
hver boðt ero, ef beriaz scal
heill at sverða svipon?

Hnicarr quvði:
Morg ero göð, ef guðmar vissi,
heill at sverða svipon;
dyggia fylgio hygg ec ins döcqva vera
at hrottameði hrafns.'

Rm 16-20
The shift in metre also involves a change in the relationship between the speakers, and a change in the field of their discourse. In stanzas 16 - 18 the speakers' dialogue establishes their relative positions. Sigurðr's address at st. 191-3 attributes Hnícarr with superior status because of his knowledge, and Sigurðr and Reginn accordingly submit to the role of recipients of knowledge. By the same token, whereas the dialogue of sts. 16-18 concerns the speakers' identities, the field of discourse from st. 19 on is specialised, numinous knowledge, designated in the poem as bót, or 'signs'. The stereotyped character of Hnícarr, as well as his names (Hnícarr and Fjolnir are both given as Öðinn's names in Grímnismál 47), establish the speaker as an authority with knowledge superior to men's. By st. 25, the field of specialised knowledge has been extended to gnomes, linked thematically to the preceding series of propitious signs by the common concern for the warrior to be as well prepared as possible for battle:

Kemðr oc þveginn scal kænna hværr
oc at morni mettr;
þvát osýnt er, hvar at apni kæmr;
till er fyr heill at hræpa.' Rm 25

The syntactic style of st. 25 is paralleled in many of the gnomic verses of Hávamál (for example sts. 6 and 38), a poem which exemplifies par excellence shifts in metre and discursive mode. Within the series of signs expounded by Hnícarr there is a further modulation in the metrical pattern at st. 23, where the third half line of each half stanza is extended to a long line:

Engr scal gumna í gogn veiga
síð skíndandi systor mána;
þæir sigr hafa, er sía kunno,
hiorleics hvatir, eða hamalt fylkia. Rm 23

The discursive mode of this stanza is also gnomic, prescribing a particular kind of behaviour and valourising those who practice it. The bare bones of a ljóðaháttur half stanza are discernible in the second half stanza, the extension being a phrase in apposition with the alliteratively self-sufficient line "hiorleics hvatir". This kind of extension is also found among ljóðaháttur stanzas in Hávamál (st. 146) and Skírnismál (st. 28). The metrical pattern of the first half stanza, however, is indistinguishable from a fornyrðislag half stanza. The ljóðaháttur full-line is the least restrictive of all eddic line patterns, since it may carry either two or three stressed syllables (Lie. 1965). It therefore represents a metrical environment where there was a considerable amount of compositional freedom. The form of the first half stanza of Regínsmál 23 may simply be an
expression of this freedom. Unlike certain other shifts between metrical styles, st. 23 does not carry with it an altered discursive stance.

Within catechisms, which are always cast in ljóðaháttur metre, the change of metre to uniform long lines (fornyrðislag or málaháttur) is usually at a point where an aggregate of items is presented. This aggregation occurs at Hávamál 81-3, 85-7, 137, and 144; Grímnismál 28, 47-8; and Sigrdrífumál 15-17. In all these cases it represents an economical means of presenting a mass of detail within the framework of the catechism. In Hávamál, málaháttur stanzas are sometimes syntactically dependent on the ljóðaháttur super-structure: for instance, the three-stanza list beginning “Brestanda boga, brennanda loga” is syntactically in apposition with “Meylar orðom” as the object of “scylli mangi trúa” (st. 84). In this example, the scribe does not even indicate the beginning of a new stanza as the metre shifts back into ljóðaháttur (“acri ársánom . . 881). Because the pace of the long line quickens the delivery of material, it was sometimes preferred to continue the more solemn ljóðaháttur rhythm of the catechism. Such is the case in Grímnismál where the catalogue of Óðinn’s names constitutes the dramatic climax of his address to Geirrøðr (sts. 46-50). Even here, the middle portion of the list is cast in fornyrðislag, the pace slowing again as Óðinn produces his noms de guerre in various triumphant martial encounters (sts 49-50), thus signalling Geirrøðr’s imminent humiliation.

Galdralag metre also functions as a modulated form of ljóðaháttur rhythm, being employed at dramatically crucial points within catechisms. In both Hávamál and Sigrdrífumál the incantatory rhythm is linked to the transfer of runic knowledge from an otherworldly being to an initiate. In Hávamál, knowledge is transferred from Óðinn to his addressee, who is identified as Lóddfáfnir in one segment of the poem, but who otherwise is implicitly defined as an astute human listener (Clunies Ross: 1990a, 227). Like Sigrurðr in Sigrdrífumál, the addressee is guided through a series of gnomes before being initiated into runic wisdom, the forms of instructions functioning as a rite of passage for the addressee.

In both poems the repetition of ideas expressed through parallel syntactic constructions, the hallmark of galdrlag, occurs in the the account of Óðinn’s initial assumption of the runes. The incantatory rhythm signals the move into a realm of knowledge that is both mystical and esoteric. It also conveys the sense that the internalisation of rune knowledge is a ritual which is
accomplished by incantation. The association of incantation with both the description of the gods' original creation of runes and with the initiate's subsequent assimilation of them is analogous to the parallel between Óðinn's initial ingestion and expression of the mead of poetry and the poet's subsequent metaphorical re-enactment of these processes during the act of creation. In both cases the initial act is invoked during subsequent acts as a way of empowering the subject:

Hugrúnar skaltu kunna, ef þú vilt hverlom vera geðsvinnari guma;
þær of rěð, þær of reist,
þær um hugði Hroptr,
aft þeim legi, er lekið hafði
ør hausti Heiddraupnis
oc þor horni Hoddrofnis.

Á biargi stöð með Brimir eggjar,
hafði sér á hofði hlálm.
þá mælti Míms höfuð
fróðlict íp fyrsa orð,
oc sagði sanna stafl.

Á scildi qvað ristnar, þeim er stendr fyrr scínandi goði,
á eyra Árvacs oc á Álsvinnz hóf
á því hvéli, er snýr úndir reið Runnis,
á Sleipnis tónnum oc á sleða fiotrom . . .

Pat er þá reynt, er þú at núnom spyrr,
inom reginkunnom,
þeim er góðo ginregin
oc fáði fimbulpurl,
þá hæfir hann bæzt, ef hann þegir.

At qveldi scal dag leyfa, kono, er brend er,
maðki, er reynd er, mey, er gefin er,
ís, er yfir kómr, qí, er druccit er.

In both Sigdrifumál and Hávamál the incantatory rhythm of ljóðaháttr gives way to a long line metre for the dense catalogue of prescriptions. It is as if the incantation has induced a state of heightened receptivity, the matter of the runes can be communicated. At a later point in Hávamál, when rune knowledge is again the subject of instruction, the metre undergoes another modulation through galdrlag to málaháttr as the discursive mode shifts from incantation to rhetorical inquisition. The málaháttr stanza, which is not unlike galdrlag in its use of repetitive syntax, aims to instill in the addressee the abilities and actions necessary for the acquisition of wisdom, the ability to
rista, ráða and fá in imitation of the acts of the gods, the ability to freista and biðja, according to the conventional practices of face-to-face learning, and the necessity to blóta, senda and söa in order to secure the co-operation of the gods in the transfer of knowledge:

Rúnar munt þú finna oc ráðna stafi,
miðc stóra stafi,
miðc stina stafi,
er fáði fimbulpulr
oc gorgō ginregin
oc reist hroþr rōgna

Óðinn með ásom, enn fyr álffom Dáinn,
Dvalinn dvergom fyrir,
Ásvidr lotnom fyrir,
oc reist siálfir sumar.

Veitzu, hvé rísta scal, veitzu, hvé ráða scal?
veitzu, hvé fá scal, veitzu, hvé freista scal?
veitzu, hvé biðja scal, veitzu, hvé blóta scal?
veitzu, hvé senda scal, veitzu, hvé söa scal?

Häu 142-44

The transfer of rune knowledge is represented as a more physical process in Sigrdrifumál, where the ancient runes are shaved off, mixed with mead to form a liquid, and distributed among Æsrir, elves, Vanir and men (Sd 18). The dialogue between Sigrdrífa and Sigurðr is of a different character from Óðinn’s address in Hávamál. The relationship in Hávamál is between master and initiate, and a great deal of emphasis is placed upon the interpersonal distance between the two. While the paradigmatic relationship of bestower of wisdom and receiver of wisdom still holds in Sigrdrifumál, the interpersonal distance between the speaker and addressee has undergone modification. As a valkyrie, Sigrdrífa mediates between the worlds of men and gods. But Sigrdrífa has become something of a renegade valkyrie, having disobeyed Óðinn’s instructions and attempted to subvert his activities, making the way open for her relationship with Sigurðr. The tone of her advice is personal and supportive - she provides her charge with ástráð (st. 21) - in contrast to Óðinn’s awe-inspiring pronouncements.

In both poems the incantatory rhythm of galdrlag is again invoked when the focus shifts to the addressee’s side of the wisdom transfer. The incantation aims to effect the listener’s apprehension of the runes, just as it was used to recall the atmosphere of the paradigmatic ritual.
Modulation between the *ljóðaháttr* and *galdralag* metres is also used in *Skírnismál* at the height of Skírnir's tirade of threats against the giantess Gerðr. Like the incantation sections in the catechism, the *galdralag* phases in *Skírnismál* are used to lend the utterance potency. Whereas the catechism aims to instill wisdom in the addressee, the curse delivered by Skírnir is aimed at enervating his addressee (see Lonnroth: 1977 and Mitchell: 1983). And it does just that - Gerðr capitulates at st. 37 after the curse has been formalised by an inscription in runes. The association of *galdralag* rhythm with efficacious utterance can be seen in the following stanzas, where Skírnir first pronounces Gerðr's fate, and then uses the chant rhythm to connote the ritual nature of his spell-binding. The emphatic nature of *galdralag* is used to articulate the cumulative curses (314-5) and the trance-like state of the speaker (323-4):

Með pursi þrístofðoðom þú scalt æ nara,
  eða verlaus vera;
  þitt geð griði,
  þic morn morni!
ver þú sem þistill, sá er var þrunginn
  í ǫnn ofanverða.

Til holtz ec gecc oc til hrás viðar,
  gambantein at geta,
  gambantein ec gat.       

The performative aspect of *ljóðaháttr* verse is especially clear in the stanza in which Skírnir is on the point of sealing Gerðr's fate:
In this phase of the poem, the discursive mode of *Skírnismál* is close to that of the catechism. Like the speakers of * Hávamál* and *Sigrdrífsamál*, Skírnir invokes Óðinn's mastery of rune magic to add force to his curse, attempting to bring down upon Gerðr the full weight of the gods' gambanreiði, or 'sorcerous wrath' (st. 33). In his call to frost giants and gods to bear witness to his curse (st. 34), Skírnir's style is similar to Sigrdrífa's, who, at the beginning of her counsel to Sigurðr, calls upon Day and Night to look kindly upon them, and gods and goddesses to grant them wisdom (sts. 3-4). The object of his delivery is of course the opposite of Sigrdrífa's, but the discursive mode of the curse is related to that of the catechism, as both use incantatory rhythm and invocation to render their communication more effective.

The title *Skírnismál*, which is found only in the A manuscript, presumably reflects the generic similarity between this poem and other *ljóðaháttr* dialogues, which are characteristically entitled "Xs mál" (*Valdrúðnismál*, *Grimnismál* and *Hávamál*) (see §5.8). The title in the R manuscript, *For Skírnis*, has more in common with the descriptive headings of narrative poems in the second part of the manuscript (*Dráp Niflunga* or *Brynhildr reið helveg*). The compiler of *R* (or whoever originally gave the poem this title) has presumably assessed its genre by comparison with other narrative poems that are constituted out of dialogue, such as *Helreið Brynhildar*, rather than using the criteria of metre and discursive style as a guide to typology. The variation in titles is partly due to the heterogenous nature of the discourse of the poem, which moves between the paradigm of the quest, which is fully articulated in the narrative, and the paradigm of the curse. It is significant in this regard that the whole poem is cast in *ljóðaháttr*, including the first movement of the poem which is similar to a typical narrative quest poem such as *Þrymsqviða*, which, by contrast, is cast entirely in *fornyrðislag*.

A different kind of modulation between metres is found in the *ljóðaháttr* poems *Hávamál* and *Sigrdrífsamál*, which contain brief sections in *fornyrðislag* outside the context of lists. In *Sigrdrífsamál*, the speech act of the catechism forms the kernel of the poem, but enclosing this there is a narrative shell, part of which is cast in *fornyrðislag*. Stanzas 1 and 5 provide the narrative context.
of Sigrdrífa’s counselling of Sigurðr. In stanza 1 the speakers are identified and located in a narrative framework:

‘Hvat belt brynio, hví brá ec svefní?  
hverr feldi af mér fólvar nauðír?’

Hann svaraði:  
‘Sigmundar burr, lengi ec sofnuð var,  
hrafnís hrælundir hiðr Sigurðar.’

Sd 1

Biór færi ec þér, bryntings apaldr,  
magni blandinn oc meintír;  
fullr er hann liðða oc línstafa,  
göðra galdra oc gamanrúna. Sd 5

Stanza 5 narrates her action of delivering counsel to Sigurðr (here metaphorically (Stephens: 1972) described as the offer of a draught of beer, full of spells and runes), and refers to the delivery which in fact takes the remainder of the poem to be played out. In contrast to those ljóðaháttur stanzas which describe actions at the moment they take place (such as Skírnir’s inscribing of magic runes), Sigrdrífa’s words describe her speech-act as a whole and foreshadow actions that have not yet happened. As I pointed out in §6.4, this style of self-narration from a standpoint in time outside the dramatic present is characteristic of narrative poems in fornyrðislag:

In Hávamál there is a similar movement from the perspective of the speaking subject to external narration between stanzas 145 and 146. The metre changes from ljóðaháttur to fornyrðislag for two lines, and adopts the characteristic syntactic patterns of fornyrðislag narration - the use of words such as svá and par - to situate the information in a sequence of events:

Betra er óbeðit, enn sé ofblótíð,  
ey sér til gíðis gíof;  
betra er ósent, enn sé ofsóit.

Svá Pundr um reist fyr þiðða roc;  
þar hann upp um reis, er hann áptr kom.

Liðð ec þau kann, er kannat þiððans kona  
oc mannzcís mógr;  
Háv 145-146

The move into the third person is not unfamiliar from the preceding ljóðaháttur series of stanzas, where for instance the Odinic voice has just declared:

Óðinn með ásom, enn fyr álfnom Dáinn,  
Dvalinn dvergom fyrir,
What is distinctive about the lines in fornyrðislag is the disengagement of the voice from the here and now of the discourse, referring instead to the "þar" and "svá". The emergence of an overt narrating voice at this point serves to tie off the section of verses on runes before the commencement of the series of ljóðar which follow (st. 144ff). The chronological placement of Óðinn's deed as "fyr þíoða roc" reveals the perspective of the speaker of the fornyrðislag lines as including that of humans. The lines therefore function to contextualise the subject of the foregoing stanzas in relation to mankind, and to place it within a more extensive mythological narrative.

It is interesting to note that when eddic conventions were employed in praise poems (see §4.2), constant shifts between metrical styles are also in evidence. Eiríksmál begins in málaháttur but switches to ljóðaháttur when dialogue between the gods is represented (st. 3). The gnomic cast of Óðinn's answers to questions, put to him by his retinue, accords with one of the conventional usages of ljóðaháttur in the eddic corpus, and reflects the same choice of diction ("óvist er at vita" occurs in gnomic pronouncements in Háv 15-7, 384-6, and Rm 254-6):

Óvíst's at vita, sér ulfr enn hǫsvi
[greypr] á sjon goða.  Eiríksmál 7 (Skjald I 165)

The final pair of ljóðaháttur stanzas of the poem work to elevate Eiríkr to the status of wise respondent in a dialogue with Óðinn (though the speaker of the question is not explicitly identified in the text). The representation of Eiríkr speaking in ljóðaháttur enhances the poet's tribute to him, associating him both with the wisdom to be able to answer the first question put to him on entering Óðinn's hall, and with the aplomb to answer in the appropriate mode:

... hins vilk ek fregna, hvat fylgir þér
jofra frá eggprimu.

Konungar ro fírm, kennik þér nafn allra,
ek em enn setti sjalfr.  Eiríksmál 8-9 (Skjald I 165-66)

In Hákonarmál, the modulation between metres seems to be determined not just by the identity of the speakers, but also by the locale in which they operate. The description of Óðinn sending his valkyries out on a mission, which opens the poem, is cast in ljóðaháttur, but the valkyries' ensuing observations of
battle (sts. 2-9) are in málaháttr. Mention of the warriors' translation from middle earth to Valhöll, however, is accompanied by a shift in metre:

Sótu på doglingar með sverði of togin,
með skardá skjoldu ok skotnar brynjur,
vasa só herra í hugum átti
til Valhallar vega. Hákonarmál 9 (Skjald I 58)

The remainder of the poem (which is set in Valhöll) is cast in ljóðaháttr, and represents the speech of valkyries, gods and Hákon, who demonstrates his facility with gnomic utterance (st. 17). As I noted in ch. 4, the poet too assumes the authoritative voice of eddic pronunciation at the end of the poem, apparently transcending with Hákon the limited world-view of men: in statements of mythological 'fact' and gnomic wisdom (sts. 20-1), he is able to comment on Hákon from the perspective usually reserved for Öðinn.

The metrical shifts in Haraldskvæði appear to be determined by the discursive style of the actors' speech rather than by their identity or location. The report given by the raven to the valkyrie is cast mainly in málaháttr, and is not dissimilar in style to the reports of birds on the adventures of heroes in the Codex Regius collection (cf. Fm 31). At st. 18 of the poem, the valkyrie’s questions take on the tone of a knowledge trial, and the metrical pattern switches to a form of ljóðaháttr metre (a long line followed by a ljóðaháttr half stanza):

At skálda reiðu vilk spyrja, alls pykkisk skil vita;
greppa ferðir, þú mun spyrja kunna,
þeira’s með Haraldi hafask. Haraldskvæði 18 (Skjald I 24)

The more interactive nature of their exchange is signalled both by the change in diction and in rhythm. The raven’s answers are cast in a mixture of long lines and ljóðaháttr, with lists of items cast in the long line measure (st. 19). The apparent signification of ljóðaháttr rhythm is not limited to these tenth century praise poems: the discursive modes characteristic of ljóðaháttr verse and the kind of speaker the rhythm apparently encoded are also evidenced in sagas from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In Hrafn’s saga Sveinbjarnarsonar a hideous man appears to a dreamer, and proclaims his macabre interest in men's deaths:

Fárvaldr ek heiti, fer ek of aldar kyn,
emka ek sættir svika.
In one manuscript the speaker gives his name as “Faralldr” (Helgadóttir: 1987, 108), a name that seems to identify the speaker as Óðinn. In Ketils saga haengs, a number of verses cast in ljóðaháttr are spoken by actors in the saga, drawing on the conventions outlined above, in particular, the utterance appropriate for meetings with suspicious-looking men (Skjald II 303-7).

§6.6 The composition of Fáfnismál

In this analysis, I want to extend my examination of shifts between metrical styles within poems to look at the way in which the different discursive modes of Fáfnismál cohere, and how the dramatic and narrative dimensions of the poem are constructed. The narrative substratum of the poem - the physical action of slaying Fáfnir and Reginn - marks Sigurðr’s rite of passage from youth to maturity in the larger story of his life told in the sequence of poems of which Fáfnismál forms a part. Sigurðr is hereafter known as Sigurðr Fáfnisbaní. Narrative events underpin Fáfnismál, but they are by no means its focus. The story is assumed by the text: the mortal wounding of Fáfnir (which occurs prior to stanza 1), Sigurðr’s killing of Fáfnir’s brother Reginn, (which occurs between st. 39 and st. 40) and finally, in the prophetic last stanzas of the poem, the poem anticipates Sigurðr’s next adventure - his encounter with the valkyrie Sigrdrífa, who is really his future wife Brynhild. The poetic text consists entirely of dialogues between Sigurðr and usually one other figure, and the topics of their conversations constantly range away from narrative.

In §5.8, I noted that the only rubric in this part of the text occurs before the first stanza, and announces the narrative topic of the poetic text: “frá dauða Fáfnis”. What modern editors print as the prose coda to the poem is continuous with the prose introduction to the next poem, Sigdrífumál, which has no rubric either before the prose preface or the first stanza. In fact, we cannot be certain where one ‘poem’ ends and the next one begins. Snorri quotes a single stanza in Gylfaginning and a pair of stanzas in Skáldskaparmál which correspond to Fm 13, 32 and 33 in the Regius text, though he does not name his source on either occasion. As I noted in §4.1, we cannot deduce from this information whether Snorri knew Fáfnismál in the form we have it, or whether the poem in oral transmission was constituted in exactly the same way as the
single extant written text of it. Fáfnismál is a particularly interesting poem for the purposes of my enquiry into the recall structures of eddic verse, which, I have postulated, depended in part on the identification of narrative ‘events’ as they were expressed through dramatic encounters.

The principal function of the prose links in the text of Fáfnismál is to bring to the surface of the text the underlying narrative of the verse - a narrative usually already elliptically expressed in the verse, and most probably a narrative with which the poem’s audience was thoroughly familiar. The sequence of dialogues constituting the poem take place, as it were, in pauses in the narrative, pauses that have been created so that the problematic at each point in the narrative can be investigated. While the narrative sub-text follows Sigurðr’s physical rite of passage, the discourses of the poem itself map his intellectual rite of passage. The process of acquiring the wisdom and judgement appropriate to a king is revealed through Sigurðr’s interaction with a series of conventionalised figures of authority:

- First, in stanzas 1 to 22, with Fáfnir, who is called an ormr (sts. 26 and 28) but who is also identified with different types of otherworldly groups. After his death Fáfnir is described as inn aldni iotunn (st. 29) - the typical source in eddic poems of otherworldly knowledge. Fáfnir also has special status as a speaker because of his mortal wounding. In a number of Norse sources we meet the man doomed to die who, in the interval between mortal wounding and death, was thought to have intellectual possession of otherworldly knowledge, including information about the future. In the moments before he passes from this world to the next, he retains the ability to communicate this knowledge to other mortals.

- the otherworldly figure of Reginn, Fáfnir’s brother, who is described in the prose preface to Reginsmál as “dvergr of våxt; hann var vitr, grimmr oc fiolkunnigr”. He has another dwarfish attribute - the ability to craft superior weapons, like the sword he makes for Sigurðr, which is so sharp that when he plunged it into a river and let a strand of wool drift against it in the stream, it cut it in half. Just as he refers to Fáfnir as inn aldni iotunn the nut-hatches refer to Reginn as inn hári púr and inn hrímkaldi iotunn identifying him too with the category of beings who constitute the “other” for gods and men, the possessors of knowledge that is coveted by them.
- a group of birds, the nut-hatches, who like other female non-
human figures are invested with prescience and wisdom. The nut-hatch is
unlike the völva or seeress, who is compelled to reveal knowledge about future
events which she does with great reluctance. And she is unlike the valkyrie
who looks like a woman and speaks the same language as the hero. She takes a
special protective interest in her human interlocutor as she provides him with ástráð, 'loving counsel'. The nut-hatches also provide ástráð, but they are
removed from the hero both physically and linguistically: nut-hatches are non-
human and sit above the hero in trees, speaking a bird-language which can only
be understood by some fortuitous event - such as tasting the blood of the
serpent Fáfnir.

The formal characteristics of the poem have, in the past, led editors and
scholars to judge the text to be corrupt - a hotchpotch of styles - an unhappy
synthesis of fragments from disparate periods (for example Holtsmark: 1961c,
417). It is generally the abrupt transitions between types of discourse that
cause such consternation among critics, who find the shifts in metre and style
somehow discordant. I want to suggest that the parts of Fáfnismál are not
discordant, but that to appreciate the changes in key between sections of the
poem, and within the same section, we need to understand the tonality of eddic
poetics. The musical concept of tonality is a suggestive one for looking at the
poems of the Edda, in the light of the modulations between metres discussed in
§§6.4-5, and the range of discursive conventions associated with different kinds
of speakers and different types of dramatic encounters. These patterns of
modulation are of course more properly termed generic patterns in literature,
and another way of conceptualising the process of interpreting them that has
been articulated by Joseph Harris (1990, 238-9) is discovering the "principles
of code coherence in the matrix form" of each text. Rosalie Colie (1972) has
also analysed the problems posed for modern readers in discerning the generic
aesthetic constraining the composition of poetry, in the case of her study, the
poetry of John Donne.

The poem can be viewed as a series of different (though related)
discursive interactions. One of these groups is the mythodidactic series of
stanzas 12 - 15, where Sigurðr asks Fáfnir about the origin of the norns, the
female supernatural beings who determine each man's fate at birth, and the
name of the field where the final battle between the gods and the giants will
take place. This group has been the subject of a detailed study by Alv
Kragerud (1981) of the place and meaning of these stanzas in the poem, in the light of the poem’s theme, and in connection with the use of mythodidactic elements elsewhere in the eddic corpus. The generic conventions operating in the other groups of stanzas in the poem can also be teased out using the procedure adopted by Kragerud, and in the light of the study of Háhradarzílóð by Marcel Bax and Tineke Padmos (1983), in which they investigate the way speech acts and the conventions surrounding their performance interact in that poem.

Kragerud (1981, 23) views the heterogenous discourses in the first part of the poem as thematically integrated into the poem, but does not believe they can be read as integrated into its dramatic or psychological development: “Den psykologiske problemstillning hvorf or Sigurd spør og svarer som han gjør, er uforenlig med de formhistoriske tradisjoner som bestemmer dikt”. For instance he sees the various discursive forms deployed in the poem - gnomic aphorism, mythological catechism etcetera - as determined by each topic as it is raised in the dialogue. When the subject changes from moral philosophy to the mythological question of creation, the “mytodidaktisk form” comes in. The consequence of this view is his perception of the character Sigurbær as a vehicle for certain kinds of discourse rather than the speaker of them: he calls Sigurbær “et lydig redskap ved dikterens forrngivning” (Kragerud: 1981, 23) While at some points it is true, as Kragerud suggests, that the import of Fáfnir's barbed comments seem to elude Sigurbær, I think it is an overstatement to say, as Kragerud does, “den unge himmelstormer ikke er på høyde med den døendes intensionsnivå” (1981, 23). This interpretation seems unnecessarily restrictive.

The discursive forms deployed in Fáfnismál encode not only particular fields of experience, but also the interpersonal position of each speaker. In other words, to see the discursive style as determined principally by subject matter is to understand only part of the generic aesthetic that is at work in the text.

When viewed against the background of discursive styles throughout the eddic corpus the conversation between Fáfnir and Sigurbær is thoroughly dramatic. Whether or not the import of some of Fáfnir's speech goes over Sigurbær's head or not, he engages with the dying dragon in a series of exchanges that is tactically complex. To understand the strategies employed by both speakers it is necessary first to be familiar with the range of discursive positions taken up by them, and the rules of play coded in each type of discourse. The relationship between the speakers as the poem opens is
complicated. Sigurðr has already mortally wounded Fáfnir, who therefore is in a severely compromised position - physically and discursively. According to convention, however, he is a figure of authority, vested with specialised and highly coveted knowledge. In the opening stanzas of the poem Fáfnir initiates exchanges but Sigurðr is guarded in his responses. By the end of the fourth stanza, however, he has answered Fáfnir’s initial question, despite his prevarications, and Fáfnir has established himself as the dominant speaker. In his next answer to Fáfnir’s question about his motives for stabbing him, Sigurðr grows bold and completes his response with an aphorism - “fár er hvatr, er hróðaz trær/ef í barnæsco er blauðr.” Such impudence is not countenanced by Fáfnir, who takes up the topic of youthful promise in a direct taunt to Sigurðr in stanza 7:

Veit ec, ef þú vaxa næðir ʃyr þinna vina briðsti, ʃæf maðr þic vreiðan vega; ʃú ertu haptr oc hernuminn, ʃe qveða bandingla bifaz.

The syntax and diction of this stanza is similar to that used in the senna, where knowledge of another’s doom is exposed with a view to silencing him. Sigurðr’s response follows the senna pattern of denying the charge in the second half stanza, and commenting on it in the first:

Því bregðr þú nú mér, Fáfnir, at til firari siácn ʃminom feðr munom; ʃeigi em ec haptr, þótt ec væri hernumí, ʃú fannt, at ec lauss lifl. Fm 8

The last line of his retort turns the taunt back on Fáfnir, who is in no position to doubt Sigurðr’s bravery at arms.

At this point Fáfnir changes tactic slightly and uses another resource evidenced in the senna. As well as bringing up embarrassing stories from someone’s past, senna taunts can also disclose the details of someone’s death. So Fáfnir reveals Sigurðr’s doom - “iþ gialla gull oc iþ glóðrauða fé/þér verða þeir baugar at bana.” (st. 94-6). In the first half stanza Fáfnir attempts to realign the discursive relationship between them: whereas in the context of a senna the first half stanza of such a revelation would be aimed at silencing the opponent, Fáfnir instead scolds Sigurðr for interpreting his words within this convention - “Heiptyrði ein telr þú þér í hvívetna/enn ec þér satt eitt segic” (st. 91-3). Unable to counter this move, Sigurðr attempts to shrug off the
announcement of his fate by pronouncing platitudes, and trying to generalise
the situation beyond his own sorry prospects:

Fé råde scal fyrða hverr
æ til ins eina dags,
þvat einn sinni scal aida hverr
fara til heljar heðan.

Gnomic wisdom is conventionally associated with the voice of a wise master, not
a young student. Sigurðr’s lack of mastery of gnomic discourse prompts Fáfnir
to demonstrate how gnomes work in the mouth of a wise giant.

Norna dóm þú munt fyr nesiom hafa
oc ósvinnz apa;
i vatni þú drucnar, ef i vindi rær:
alt er feigs forð.

What is more, Fáfnir uses the diction of gnomic advice to insult Sigurðr again -
only a fool would mock such forebodings.

Sigurðr is effectively humbled by Fáfnir’s pronouncement, and rather than
carrying on with a senna he institutes a knowledge trial, where at least he can
pose the questions. Since Fáfnir apparently knows so much about his fate, he
may well learn something from him. His questions and Fáfnir’s answers are
linked thematically to the problematic of the poem - the nature and workings of
fate - or the judgement of the norns - in Sigurðr’s life. As Kragerud (1981, 30)
has shown, what appears at first to be a digression, is in fact the development
of an idea with the help of a mythological paradigm - here the nature of the
norns and the ultimate fate of all the gods.

The brief knowledge trial ends with Fáfnir’s successful answer which
signifies his superior status in this kind of discourse. Having thus established
himself he switches to another of the discursive modes available to the wise
mythological informant - a first person narrative which has some bearing on the
preceding topic (st. 16). Like Óðinn in Hávamál he admits to his fallibility -
foolishly, he tells Sigurðr, he had thought the fear-helm made him invincible.
The sub-text here of course is that Sigurðr should not make the same mistake.
Although he has been soundly beaten in the senna and the knowledge trial,
Sigurðr doesn’t accept his inferior discursive position without a fight. He
interrupts what would according to convention become a monologue, and
assumes a position of equal authority in delivering gnomes back to Fáfnir: “þá
þat finnr, er með fleirom kórnr,/at engi er einna hvatastr.” (st 174-6).
At stanza 20 Fafnir makes a final bid to define their relative positions, and resorts to another of the discursive modes used by the teacher to the student - he offers Sigurðr advice: "Ræð ec þér nú, Sigurðr, enn þú ræð nemir/oc ríð heim heðan!", and reiterates his prophecy that possession of the gold hoard will mean his death (st. 94-6 and st. 204-6). Not only does Sigurðr reject Fafnir’s advice, he taunts him as he lies dying on the heath:

Ráð er þér ráðit, enn ec ríða mun til þess gullz, 
er í lýngvi liggr; 
enn þú, Fafnir, ligg í florbrotom, 
þar er þic Hel hafi!

With little to lose Fafnir offers a final word of warning to Sigurðr - not to be fooled by Reginn - and formally closes their dialogue according to the conventions of a wisdom contest, by commenting in the third person on his opponent’s superiority, just as Vafnirðiðiðr does when Óðinn has defeated him:

Reginn mic rúð, hann þic rúða mun, 
hann mun ocr verða báðom at bána; 
fír sitt láta þvíg ec at Fafnir myni, 
þitt varð nú metra megin.

Fafnir makes it clear however that Sigurðr has only won because of his superior physical strength, and not because of his superior wisdom. In his final volley Fafnir also puns on the verb ráða which means both to advise and to deceive, leaving Sigurðr with the decision about whose ráð to take - that offered by the wise serpent, or that offered to him by Reginn. The word is punned on in turn by Sigurðr in his conversation with Reginn at st. 26, and by the nut-hatches at st. 37. The potential for generic play in eddic composition is particularly clear in lexical elements such as this, as well as at other levels of poetic structure. Along these lines, Carol Clover (1979) has interpreted the eddic poem Hárbarðslóð as a generic farce.

In the second conversation of the poem, between Reginn and Sigurðr, Sigurðr again contends with his one-time advisor using the resources of the senna and gnomic counsel. Reginn’s attempted flattery in Stanza 23 is countered by Sigurðr’s sage comment: “Þat er óvíst at vita, þá er komon allir saman, sigtíva synir, hverr óblauðastr er alinn” (st. 241-4). He uses the diction and syntax of gnomic wisdom, using it to position himself above Reginn who by contrast seems glib and foolish. By broadening the scope of his comment beyond men to include all the gods as well, Sigurðr also positions himself in a
mythological context, where he is at least theoretically of equal status with Reginn, the cunning dwarf. In this stanza too he moves the emphasis away from valour through martial feats - the ground on which he was able to get the better of Fafnir - and attempts to redefine valour as dependent on wit as well as strength.

Reginn ignores his tactical move and continues in the same vein as his first address. In the second half of stanza 25 however, he makes a threatening reference to his kinship bond with Fafnir, which entitles him to atonement from Sigurðr or revenge on him. Sigurðr's cool demeanour evaporates as he resumes the position of Reginn's pupil: “Þú þvi rétt, er ec ríða scyldac/heiðg fioll hinig” (st. 261-4). In the final line of this stanza he refers to the senna exchange prior to the action of this poem, in which Reginn mocked Sigurðr's manliness as a means of goading him on to the murder of Fafnir (“nema þú fryðir mérv hvat hugar”). In stanza 27 Reginn has re-established his position of dominance and gives orders to Sigurðr. Sigurðr however responds with a stock senna insult to Reginn - “Fiarri þú gect, meðan ec á Fafnir raupc/minn inn hvassa hior . . . meðan þú í lyngvi lát” (st. 28) - a serious imputation of cowardice and unmanliness. Reginn tries to deflect this insult by redefining their relationship. Sigurðr would not have achieved his present intellectual status of winning a contest against a wise giant if Reginn had not favoured him by making him a superior weapon: “ef þú sverð né nytir, þess er ec sílfr gorða” (st. 294-5). That is, he attempts to make Sigurðr indebted to him, and restore his relationship of dependence. Sigurðr doesn't even bother to respond directly to this proposition, but assumes the position of wise speaker, and delivers two stanzas of gnomes:

Hugr er betr, enn sé hiors megin,  
  hvars vreiðr scolo vega;  
því at hvatan mann ec sel harliga vega  
  með slævo sverði sigr.

Hvótóm er betra, enn sé óhvótóm,  
  í hildileic hafaz;  
glöðom er betra, enn sé glúpnanda,  
  hvat sem at hendí korm.

By silencing Reginn he has thus won this round intellectually, prefiguring his physical victory over him a little later when he cuts off his head. In the second stanza of his gnomic pronouncement, he delivers a further insult to Reginn by
comparing the fierce fighter with the cowardly, down-cast man who is reduced to deceit and guile.

In this sequence as in the first, the interpersonal effects of each utterance are not explicit, but they are coded in the conventional types of discourse. In the final sequence of the poem taunts and gnomes are again the material of debate, but a further discursive style, the prophecy, is brought into play. Up to this point, the range of styles has all been interactive dialogue forms cast in ljóðaháttr. A different metre, fornyrðislag, is used at stanza 32, in the first speech of one of the nut-hatches. The nut-hatches discuss, apparently between themselves, Sigurðr's situation, in particular the best course of action for a hero to take. Although the dramatic situation between prophet and the subject of the prophecy is frequently highly charged, the prophecy is usually presented as an involuntary act - with the speaker constructed as a more or less reluctant medium for the transmission of a narrative of future time. In this situation there is of course the potential for the relationship between speakers to change - and this is indeed what happens in the poem Baldrs Draumar.

In Fáfnismál, where the dramatic situation of the prophet and the subject of the prophecy is highly particularised at a point in the narrative action, the prophecy gives way to incitement to action, to which the usually passive subject of the prophecy responds. The opening of stanza 32 is similar to the opening of stanzas in other prophecy poems - "Par sitr X" or "Par liggr Y". The second half stanza departs from this mode of impersonal observation by venturing the speaker's assessment of the best course of action for the observed to take:

Par sitr Sigurðr, sveita stocinn,
Fáfnis hiarta við funa steikr;
spacr þætti mér spillir bauga,
ef hann fiorsega fránan ætti.  

The more personal and interactive mode of this discourse is made evident in st. 34 when the imperative mood is used. In this stanza one of the nut-hatches goes near to inciting Sigurðr to action, and here for the first time the metre shifts to ljóðaháttr:

Hofði scemra láti hann inn hára pul
fara til heliær heðan!
þallo gulli þá kná hann einn ráða,
þiolð, því er un Fáfni la
Stanza 35 reverts to an impersonal mode using a conditional clause and an impersonal verb of perception again - “Horscr þættir mér ef hafa kynni/ástráð mikil yðrar systra” The nut-hatch speaker makes explicit the sympathetic relationship they are trying to construct between themselves and Sigurðr, characterising their discourse as ástráð. This is the term used by Sigurðr to describe the counsel offered him by the valkyrie Sigrdrífna (Sd 21), and it designates a discourse affiliated with ráð rather than a spá. In this stanza an aphorism is used by the nut-hatch in her counsel to Sigurðr: “þar er mér úlf út vón, er ec eyro sèc”.

In st. 37 the discursive mode turns fully to the gnomic mode - and the metre and syntactic patterns change to those found in other ráð poems such as Hávamál and Sigrdrífumál:

Mioc er ósvlår, ef hann enn sparir
fiánda inn fólscá,
þar er Reginn liggr, er hann ráðinn hefr;
kannat hann við sliðo at síá. Fm 37

The last line of stanza 37 offers a mild rebuke of Sigurðr’s intellectual ability to use the ráð that they provide. Stanza 38 reiterates the counsel given in stanza 34, but this time the second half stanza is cast in the second person, not the third: “þú mundu fiár, þess er Fáfnir ráð, einvaldi vera”. It is at this point that the interactive discourse adopted by this nut-hatch provokes a response from Sigurðr:

Verða svá ríc scóp, at Reginn scyli
mitt banord bera;
þvíat þeir báðir broðr scolo brálliga
fara til Heliar heðan. Fm 39

Following Sigurðr’s action of disposing of Reginn, the nut-hatches turn their attention to the next event in his story - his wooing of Sigrdrífna (sts. 40-44). Their prophecy is cast in fornyrðislag, and their discourse resembles the syntactic and lexical style of Völuspá “mey veit ec eina” (st. 40s), “Salr er á há” (st. 421), and “Veit ec á falli (st. 431). While this series of stanzas might be viewed as belonging equally as well to the preamble to Sigurðr’s encounter with Sigrdrífna (Sdm 1), the discourse of the nuthatches coheres thematically with earlier stages of Fáfnismál through their reference to Sigurðr’s fate set by the norns: “fyr scopom norna” (448).
In this analysis of Fáfnismál, I have aimed to show that different discursive styles are deployed not simply as a consequence of the historical association between particular discourses and particular poetic forms. Rather, different discursive styles are determined by the dialogic potential between speakers in a given narrative context. A generative model of composition (cf. Nagler: 1974) based on Fáfnismál might be formulated as follows. Given two speakers fixed to a greater or lesser extent in a narrative context (which may in fact be communicated through their verbal interaction), a range of discourses could be generated, a range apparently constrained by the types of discourses conventionally appropriate to each speaker, and to the discursive situation of the speakers. Each set of speakers may exploit the range of discursive possibilities available in the playing out of their narrative interaction, or their exchange may be very brief, depending on the degree of narrativity in the poem. After each exchange recourse is had to the story-line which, potentially, may throw up a new set of speakers, or a new interlocutor for one speaker, or the completion of one encounter may signal the closure of the poem.

As I showed in §6.3, the majority of non-narrative eddic poems cover only one or two narrative ‘events’, and usually involve a restricted set of speakers. In some poems, however, the open-endedness of narrative potential can be seen quite clearly in transitions between stanzas and in the ‘endings’ of extant texts. The open-ended nature of medieval narrative in general, and the place of ‘event’ in their analysis, has been investigated by Jonathan Evans (1986). In the poem Svipdagsmál, for instance, the first exchange is between Svipdag and his mother Gróa, during which she delivers a series of charms to protect her son on his mission to woo Menglöð. Their dialogue ends with Gróa wishing her son luck for the next stage of the narrative. Svipdag’s next encounter is with a giant guarding Menglöð’s house, whom he quickly engages in a knowledge trial. Fjölsviðr’s final answer - that Svipdag is the only acceptable husband for Menglöð - leads to the final dialogue of the poem between the elated lovers. A similar narrative movement is apparent in the final stanzas of the extant Rígsþula, where Rígr is drawn into conversation with a crow who points the way forward to his next adventure, a series of stanzas structurally analogous to Fáfnismál 40-44.

To conclude this study of the form of eddic poetry, I want to consider briefly two rather different descriptions of oral verbal art-forms and the way they express their protean nature. In an attempt to shift our focus on oral
poetry away from its apparent inconsistencies or absence of unity, and towards an understanding of its own mode of coherence, Walter Ong (1984, 10) has proposed that "an orally composed poem is less like a text than it is like a dance". This focus, like my own, is on the dynamic of poetry, rather than on its final, static shape. Although it is only a metaphor for the way oral poetry might operate, the comparison with choreography is suggestive. It is, at least, more provocative than the metaphor of "a more or less stable core" which in its solidity and gravity cannot help but generate analytic approaches that conceive of the poem as a material entity.

Another interesting perspective on the dynamic of orally transmitted verbal art-forms comes from the anthropologist William Stanner (1989, 84-5 and quoted by Goody: 1987, 297), who also uses the metaphor of a 'core', but qualifies it in important ways. In his study of different versions of an Aboriginal myth, he observed that speakers started and finished their accounts at different points, omitted or included details, varied the emphases, described events differently and attributed them to different causes and persons. While he noted that there is a "sort of standard nub or core" to the myth, that core "allows a wide field in which free imagination can play . . . [and] the elements of the core appear to be open to commutation." He also commented that what seemed to keep the myth alive was not only the intrinsic interest or relevance of its story and symbolism, but also the dramatic potential of the events and situations described in the myth. Being less than fully articulated in any one version, these are open to elucidation "in a formative way without any breach of tradition." While there may be a world of difference between an Aboriginal myth and an eddic poem, these observations on oral form and tradition appear to be very apposite to an enquiry into the nature of medieval Icelandic poetic transmission.

What might have constituted a breach of tradition in the transmission of eddic poetry will always remain a mystery to us, but the evidence of texts of Völuspá suggest that 'elements of the core' were indeed open to commutation, that the dramatic potential of the events and situation could be variously elucidated, and that causality and emphases were treated differently between versions of the same poem. In this study I have argued that the eddic tradition was still a productive poetic tradition in thirteenth century Iceland, and that its conventions were still 'alive', not only in the transmission and reinterpretation of old poems, but in the creation of new ones as well, and in the synthesising of ethnic poetic traditions and European compositional conventions.
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