FROG

Alvíssmál and Orality I

Formula, Alliteration and Categories of Mythic Being

In an article written in 1975, Joseph Harris observed that "[i]t is usual to take the orality of Eddic poetry for granted" (Harris 1983 [2008]: 189). In spite of the intervening three and a half decades of innovative research on oral-poetic traditions around the world, Harris's statement remains generally true. Old Norse poetry – eddic, skaldic or otherwise – is not generally contested in terms of whether or not it was oral except in the cases of individual documented texts (cf. Gunnell 1995: 182). However, accepting orality does not inform us about how the poetic system functioned, and discussions of whether poems were 'improvized' or 'memorized' have tended to oversimplify, obfuscate or ignore relationships between poetry, poet and production as practice.

Abstract: This paper presents a case study on formula selection and variation in eddic poetry. It analyzes the thirteen formulaic stanzas in *Alvíssmál* which ascribe poetic synonyms to different types of mythic being. The formula is approached through linguistics rather than directly from Oral-Formulaic Theory. Meter and alliteration are discussed as conditioning and determinant factors. The 'alliterative rank' of terms is correlated with their formulaic use to accomplish alliteration. An inclination to non-variation is demonstrated. Binary models of 'improvization'–'memorization' are shown to be insufficient to describe actual variation. 'Crystallization' is proposed as an alternative. Comparison with stanzas quoted in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* suggest that a formula and its variable element were inclined to crystallize as a whole-line unit in memory, and that constraints of alliteration, semantics and syllabic rhythm within a line limited variation as a process of social negotiation in transmission. The hypothesis of whole-line crystallization is tested elsewhere in the eddic corpus, drawing examples from *Vǫluspá*, *Skírnismál* and *Þrymskviða*, where it offers an explanation for grammatical peculiarities or inconsistencies associated with repeating lines.

Keywords: *Alvíssmál*, eddic poetry, formula, alliteration, composition, variation.

This paper will concentrate on the composition, production and variation of metrical lines. This will provide a general foundation for approaching the stanza as a compositional unit in a later study. Taking one poem as a point of departure follows Albert Lord's (1960: 49) proposal that the analysis of an oral poetic tradition must begin with one singer, and only thereafter attempt to assess local communities, regional traditions and then a broad cultural tradition as a whole. *Alvíssmál* has been selected for analysis because it presents thirteen repetitions of a basic compositional stanza of six lines, each of which consists of a regular formula and a variable element (hence this discussion will not attempt to treat *all* eddic formulae, but focus on formulae of a particular type). These stanzas and their formulae provide excellent material for examining variation and non-variation (cf. Acker 1998: 61–66), particularly as variation appears to have led to exact transcription of lines rather than heavy or complete abbreviation (see below). The role of meter and alliteration as determinants in the use of formulae and their accompanying variable elements will be discussed with attention to regularity in variation and non-variation. This analysis will be extremely detailed because the thirteen stanzas, presenting a total of 78 formulaic lines, provides a particularly small data set. It therefore requires a much more cautious account of consistencies and variations in order for any generalizations to hold validity. Lexical use within the eddic idiom and strategies for meeting metrical demands or accomplishing alliteration will be addressed (including statistical evidence of poetic synonyms which function to meet alliteration). Discussion will turn to the relationship between formula use and memory, looking at correlations between frequency and stability on the one hand, and the probability that the formula and its variable element may become bound in memory on the other. This will provide a context for comparing *Alvíssmál* to related stanzas independently documented in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, and the evidence they provide of particular rhythmic-melodic templates associated with each line. The paper will argue that the inclination to non-variation exhibited in *Alvíssmál* suggests that a formula of this type and its associated variable element could become fixed wholes in which constituents lacked independent semantic weight. The final discussion recontextualizes this hypothesis in the broader corpus as an explanation for grammatical peculiarities or inconsistencies associated with repeating lines, drawing examples from *Vǫluspá*, *Skírnismál* and *Þrymskviða*.

Before embarking on this analysis, it is first necessary to address some issues which have an established foothold in Old Norse scholarship, and

then outline the approach to the formula which is employed in this discussion. My approach in this study has been informed by research on compositional strategies, synchronic variation and historical change in Finno-Karelian kalevalaic poetry, where I have used computer-assisted statistically based analyses. In that corpus, one mythological poem may be documented in several hundred examples and fragments, with the possibility to examine synchronic variation at the level of an individual performer or across regions within the broader North Finnic linguistic-cultural area. Diachronic variation can similarly be traced through extended kin-groups or more hypothetically through the interpretation of synchronic variation across diverse communities as the outcome of diachronic processes. Experience with this corpus makes it possible to observe certain problematic tendencies in approaches to orality in Old Norse scholarship. These tendencies are rooted in a long history of discourse in the field. It is necessary to devote some space to opening those tendencies for discussion in order to negotiate a context for the present analysis which might otherwise be viewed from a very different frame of reference. Three issues in particular are relevant: *a*) the riddle of 'improvization' versus 'memorization'; *b*) the presumption of a unified and coherent poetic system; and *c*) approaches to the 'formula'. These are all issues which are being combated and broken down by different scholars in the field. It is nonetheless necessary to open them because they are so deeply entrenched in the discourse that they are not infrequently at the foundations of how we think about the corpus or individual texts at an implicit level. Once these have been addressed, the approach to the formula advocated here will be outlined. Brief excurses will be employed for illustrations employing examples relevant for later discussion. Excurses will also be used when analyzing or explaining specific points within the overall argument of the paper. Excurses are numbered for easy reference throughout the text.

Some Issues in Research on the Orality of Eddic Poetry

Research on the orality of eddic poetry has been sporadic, uneven, and "less than satisfying" (Haymes 2004: 49; for surveys, see Acker 1998: 85–110; Thorvaldsen 2006b: 19–34). Early research emphasized eddic poetry as the Old Norse reflex of a common Germanic epic poetic tradi-

tion (e.g. Meyer 1889; Sievers 1893; Heusler 1941). It had difficulty rec-
onciling analyses of the poetic system with text-centered approaches to
preserved poetry. Recorded textual products were generally approached
as *textual entities*[1] to which orality was incidental. These poetic texts
were presumed to be the same sort of inviolable and ideal heritage ob-
jects that they became for scholars in the wake of Romanticism. These
poetic textual entities were approached according to manuscript stemma
models, sifting out corruptions and interpolations, identifying lacunae,
and reconstructing as nearly as possible the textual entity's 'original'
form – recovering the *ur*-text which had been bastardized by generation
on generation of poet, just as manuscripts had been bastardized by the
copying of scribe after scribe. An increasing interest in the functioning of
oral-poetic systems developed across the twentieth century, to which be-
longed Milman Parry's (1928a; 1928b; 1971) development of Oral-For-
mulaic Theory. This theory took a central place in this discourse with the
publication of Albert Lord's *Singer of Tales* (1960) and the study of oral-
poetic systems as functioning systems rapidly evolved into a distinct dis-
cipline (see Foley 1988). Research on Old Norse poetries had difficulty
engaging in this emerging discourse. Although awareness of orality rose
in its wake (cf. Lönnroth 1971: 2), many scholars continue to think of the
tradition behind a given poem in terms of a single, concrete verbal text in
line with the underlying paradigm of early text-based approaches.

   Eddic poems "are considerably shorter and more tightly structured"
(Lönnroth 1971: 2) than the South Slavic and Homeric epics from which
Oral-Formulaic Theory emerged. The eddic tradition developed away
from the Germanic long epic form (Heusler 1941; Lehmann 1956) into a
short epic tradition more similar to other epic traditions in the Circum-
Baltic region (cf. Honko 1998: 36; Frog 2010a: 230), where the short epic
form exhibits a cross-cultural isogloss.[2] The difference in length has
significant implications for improvisation in production (Holoka 1976:
572; Lord 1981; 1995; Arant 1990; Harvilahti 1992a; 1992b). Eddic verse
exhibits composition in stanza-like units which show strong or even ver-
batim correspondence across independently documented stanzas and

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   [1] This term is used to refer to a conventionalized and socially recognizable 'text' as dis-
tinguishable from its communicated content which might be equally recognizable in other
modes of expression (e.g. the same narrative in nameable eddic and skaldic poems) (see
further Frog 2011a).
   [2] Cultural adjacence has been suggested to be historically relevant to the persistence and
development of a number of cultural phenomena, such as epic singing (Bailey & Ivanova
1998: xxxvii) or alliteration (Roper 2009: 90–92). A more general hypothesis on cultural
adjacence is still being developed (cf. Frog & Stepanova 2011: 209–211; Frog 2011c).

poems (see e.g. Jón Helgason 1953: 26–31). Eddic diction exhibits a relatively low density of formulae found across different poems and repeating formulae often appear restricted to a single poem (Hymes 2004; cf. Acker 1998: 93). These have been described as, for example, "ornamental" and "poetic padding" (Lönnroth 1971: 2) with aesthetic or structural functions specific to a poem (e.g. Taylor 1963). Rather than tools for rapid composition, these have been regarded as "traces of an improvising past" (Bowra 1952: 246) derivative of the Germanic long epic heritage (although cf. Kellogg 1991). Variability of the "improvising past" is frequently reduced to "memorized" poems by the thirteenth century in scholarship (e.g. Gunnell 2005: 93). The long-term continuities of the oral-poetic system into relatively recent periods (recently reviewed in Haukur Þorgeirsson 2010) tends to stand outside the discourse (cf. e.g. Quinn 2000). The inclination to approach eddic poetry as 'memorized' poetry does not resolve the question of how the poetic system functioned and circulated in oral culture, particularly when 'memorized' textual entities are juxtaposed with 'improvisation' in a chimeric hybrid tradition where "a certain *element* of oral-formulaic improvisation sometimes entered the performance when the performer's memorization was less than perfect" (Lönnroth 1971: 18).

Whereas research on Old English poetries became one of the most productive fields in the research and development of Oral-Formulaic Theory (Foley 1988: 65–74), certain factors inhibited its establishment in Old Norse. First, there was no early influential champion and advocate within the field to establish the argument in the academic discourse (cf. Magoun 1953: 459n). Second, the earliest major studies were not accessible – initial doctorial dissertations went unpublished (Kellogg 1958, published 1988 without the relevant introduction; Taylor 1961) and Eleazar Moiseevič Meletinskij's (1968) Russian monograph remained long linguistically inaccessible (translated 1998). Little followed in their wake (see Acker 1998: 91–96). Third, and more significantly, Old Norse poetries were not comparable to the South Slavic and Homeric epic traditions. The theory was clearly not applicable to the fixity of skaldic verse, and eddic poetry lacked the formulaic density which Oral-Formulaic Theory emphasized (see e.g. Lönnroth 1971; Thorvaldsen 2006b). Fourth, the prominence of Oral-Formulaic Theory in the broader discourse on oral poetries has made it difficult to see beyond. It has consequently been treated as universal (e.g. Gísli Sigurðsson 1990: 246) or as the only possible relevant model for comparison (Mellor 1999 [2008]: 154). Finally, because Oral-Formulaic Theory did not become estab-

lished in the discourse on Old Norse poetries at an early stage, it was not infrequently treated as though it must be simply accepted or rejected, and often in specific terms of the form outlined in Lord's *Singer of Tales* (Acker 1998: 90, 106). The challenge of coming to terms with Oral-Formulaic Theory (or overcoming it) has also been faced by other northern traditions of short epic forms (on North Finnic kalevalaic poetry, see Harvilahti 1992a; Tarkka 2005: 65–67; on Slavic *bylina*-epics, cf. Vesterholt 1973; Harvilahti 1985: 88–132; Arant 1990). These traditions have the advantage of significantly larger corpora in which processes of production and transmission can be more readily analyzed. The discourse on eddic orality lacks such a corpus and has never fully made the transition from focus on the applicability and relevance of Oral-Formulaic Theory to discussing how eddic poetry functioned as an oral-poetic system on its own terms (cf. Acker 1998; Mellor 1999 [2008]; Haymes 2004; Thorvaldsen 2006b). Although Oral-Formulaic Theory benefitted the discourse by emphasizing the orality of the tradition, its prominence coupled with its limitations (cf. Finnegan 1976; Honko 1998: 103–105) simultaneously handicapped research on the orality of eddic verse.

There has been a broad range of research done on eddic poetry as oral poetry, offering diverse insights into the preformativity of eddic poetry (Lönnorth 1971; 1978; Harris 1981: 115–119; Gunnell 1995), the connotative significance of different meters (Quinn 1992), relationships between eddic and skaldic verse (e.g. Clunies Ross 2005: 21–28; Thorvaldsen 2006a), studies in variation between two poems or independently documented texts of a single poem (e.g. Lönnroth 1971; Harris 1986 [2002]; Quinn 1990; Mundal 2008) and reassessments of text-loan theories (Thorvaldsen 2008; cf. Harris 1983 [2002]; 1985: 121). Outside of surveys in doctoral dissertations and monographs (e.g. Acker 1998; Mellor 1999 [2008]; Thorvaldsen 2006b), there have also been investigations of individual specific structural types of formulae (e.g. Gurevič 1986), function-specific formulae (e.g. Pàrole 1974), their long-term continuity (e.g. Schulte 2009) and significance (e.g. Lönnroth 1981), as well as on underlying conceptual models (e.g. Quinn 2010). However, these diverse insights have not been synthesized into a coherent working model of how the poetic system functioned. In addition, the history of discourse is entrenched with certain problematic fundamental conceptions which periodically surface, but more often implicitly underlie discussion. Their persistence is related to limitations of the corpus and the absence of alternative modelling systems for approaching certain phenomena.

Improvization versus Memorization – A False Opposition

Old Norse scholarship tends to address eddic orality in terms of a binary oppositional model of 'improvization' and 'memorization', sometimes arranged in complex relationships (e.g. Lönnroth 1971; Harris 1983 [2008]: 191–192; Mellor 1999 [2008]: 124–131). This is a false dichotomy. Improvisation is a strategy of production within a rule-governed system (see e.g. Sykäri 2011). Memorization is a strategy of internalizing a single objectively identifiable and unchanging exemplar. These are not comparable processes.

Memorization is commonly identified with skaldic verse, and thus established in discussions of Old Norse poetry. This category is derivative of text-oriented studies which presumed that poems were textual entities that individuals necessarily sought to realize in an ideal form. It suggests structured pedagogical strategies rather than experience-based learning through social participation in cultural practices. The term and category is problematic because: *a*) it implies uniform and ideal fixity (although cf. Lönnroth 1971) and *b*) purely sequential production in which *c*) variation through the presence, omission and organization of elements is ignored, justified or corrected, but only explained in terms of errors or corruptions (cf. Krohn 1918) or attributed to a "conscious reviser" (Harris 1985: 117; cf. Quinn 1990). It does not recognize *d*) that all oral poetry exhibits variation (cf. Frank 1985: 162, 174–175; Johnson 2002) or consider *e*) how the textual entity is acquired in memory as a social process which involves *f*) the negotiation of actual variation in cultural practice; nor *g*) the relationship between memory and production as a conscious and active process (see e.g. Rubin 1995), *h*) what constituted 'verbatim' reproduction (cf. Harris 1983 [2008]: 195–196), or *i*) how 'memorization' and production relate to the poetic system and interact with it (see e.g. Harvilahti 2000). Lord (1995: 62) observes that even with conservative traditions "which are erroneously thought to have a fixed text kept verbatim in the memory, the concept of a fixed text needs to be modified. The larger the sample with which one works, the less adequate is the concept of word-for-word memorization as a means of song transmission."

Improvization gets placed in structural opposition to memorization and thus becomes approached as an extreme of flexibility and variation (e.g. Gísli Sigurðsson 1990; 1998) or a supplement to faulty memory (Lönnroth 1971: 18). As a description of production in practice, improvization has not been brought into alignment with memory in treatments

of eddic orality. It remains ambiguous (e.g. Mellor 1999 [2008]) or unaddressed (e.g. Acker 1998) in descriptive treatments of formulae that may survey structural, semantic or compositional functions (cf. Quinn 1990) without advancing to processes of production. The emphasis of Oral-Formulaic Theory on metrical lines on the one hand and broad content themes on the other has left the so-called stanzas of eddic verse without significant address as compositional units. Lord observed that "[i]n general the smaller the unit the greater the degree of fixity" (Lord 1981: 459–460), whether whole songs or stanzas of which they are composed, yet Old Norse scholarship has situated flexibility and fixity in opposition rather than as extremes along a spectrum. Comparisons between independently documented examples of such eddic passages have not been compared with models for verbal fixity, flexibility and variation in the production of multi-line units, such as Lord's (1960: 58–60) "runs" in epic or his (1995: 22–62) "blocks of lines" in other traditions, the *säejaksot* 'line-series' of kalevalaic poetry (e.g. Krohn 1918; Harvilahti 1992a; 1992b), ballad stanzas (e.g. McCarthy 1990; Lord 1995: 167–186: Rubin 1995: 257–298; cf. Lönnroth 1971: 18) or what Lauri and Anneli Honko termed epic "multiforms" (Honko & Honko 1998; Honko 1998; 2003; Frog 2010b; 2011b). These units appear structurally very important to the process of eddic production and transmission, in which memory played a significant role (cf. Lönnroth 1971; Harris 1983 [2008]), and will become the focus of the next article in this series.

   "Preformed genres reinforce each other" (Shaw 2011: 24), and therefore when considering flexibility and variation in eddic poetry, it is necessary to remember that it existed in a coherent tradition with the extremely conservative skaldic poetries. Working models for the orality of eddic verse cannot be constructed without consideration of skaldic poetries nor vice versa. These shared common meters, and the conservatism exhibited in skaldic verse may have reciprocally impacted the circulation of eddic poetry. (Frank 1985: esp.160; Clunies Ross 2005: 21–28; Thorvaldsen 2006a.) What is required is the development of a more dynamic model of relative degrees of fixity in relation to the length of compositional units (cf. Holoka 1976: 572; Lord 1981: 459–460) and compositional complexity (Mellor 1999 [2008]: 156–160; cf. Reichl 2007: 87), conditioned by conventions of genre – particularly in cases where different genres share the same meters (cf. Turville-Petre 1978: xii–xvi) – and the social identity of the compositional unit as a textual entity (cf. Frog 2010a: 197–203; 2011a). These long-term objectives inform the present discussion.

The Presumption of a Unified Tradition

The diachronic focus of early text-based approaches sought to resolve variation and reconstruct ideal forms rather than to consider realities of synchronic variability and diversity (cf. Dronke 1997). The awareness of synchronic variation in eddic poetry has significantly increased (cf. Gade 2000: 65; Gunnell 2005: 93). The Reykholt Project on Pre-Christian Religions in the North is now dealing with approaches to synchronic variation and diachronic change in Norse mythology (cf. also e.g. McKinnell 1994). However, no strategy for considering what that variation might mean for the poetic traditions has been offered and the paucity of sources has not incited opening this question and disturbing its long slumber through the history of discourse.

The settlement of Iceland by families from across Scandinavia implicitly suggests a confluence of traditions from diverse cultural regions. This can be compared to the stimulation of mythological and epic poetry in Viena Karelia caused by earlier migrations from other regions, bringing diverse forms of the same traditions into close contact (Siikala 2002: 41–42; Frog 2010a: 234–235; cf. Kuusi 1949; Pöllä 1999). Viena proved simultaneously the richest, most conservative and most diversified region in which these poems were collected. Kaarle Krohn (1918 I: 38) observed that each village (usually a few houses and one or possibly two kin-groups) "has its own particular way of singing". The conservative traditions varied "from village to village and from family to family" (Tarkka 2005: 163), circulating around the centers of social and ritual life of small-group communities. Similar observations in South Slavic traditions led Albert Lord (1960: 49–50) to assert that a tradition must be approached on those terms, ideally beginning with a single singer. I have approached these variations found between different groups in close contact and proximity as *dialects of singing* (not to be confused with dialects of language) (Frog 2010a: 202–203; 2011b). This comparison is relevant to the settlement patterns of Iceland. Physically remote households were united through local social networks and extended kin-groups rather than socially centralized village communities where social activities are organized differently (and presumably also the social practices in which poetry is used and communicated) (see e.g. Siikala 2002). It is necessary to acknowledge that there may have been great diversity in the traditions as they were maintained in small-group communities of Iceland, where verbal competence seems to have been exceptionally prized.

Acknowledgement of variation across these communities problema-

tizes comparisons made across texts. For examples, Joseph Harris's (1983 [2008]: 211–225) argument that *HH II* is a conscious skaldic revision of *HH I* assumes that *HH I* represents the main tradition, although this may itself have only been one among diverse forms. Similarly, Lars Lönnroth's (1971) suggestion that oral-formulaic patches have been deployed to cover lapses in memory assumes that the two compared versions of one poem are (more or less) variations on a basic ideal text. This does not consider that both may have been equally representative of established, socially circulating forms. Without basic models for reproduction and variation in society, there is no reason to assume that independent examples of a single poem can offer indications of synchronic variation in production. It is not yet clear to what degree it will be possible to estimate how closely or distantly related independently documented texts may be, whether from the same individual, family, kin-group, region, or perhaps one example being recorded from a wintering merchant from York. Different versions of a common song may be characterized by different conventional representations of the same content, or even by alternative content (cf. Kuusi 1949; Frog 2010a). They are often associated with different dialects of singing (although they can cross these thresholds), while dialects of singing are characterized by the verbal level of representation (Frog 2010b; 2011b). I have shown that inclinations to non-variation in kalevalaic poetry are relevant to dialects of singing, and thus a single singer may exhibit knowledge of alternative forms of a single formula but will use the form which identifies his singing with the dialect of singing of his kin-group (Frog 2011b: 53–55; cf. Sapir 1986: 16). This problematizes investigations of formulae and uses of the poetic idiom. For example, corresponding formulae may be identifiable and analyzable across different poems, but it may not be possible to reduce them to a common paradigm (cf. Acker 1998: 67–71) because they may not be representative of a unified and common idiom but rather reflexes of different dialects of singing which maintained contrastive distinguishing features in relation to one another (cf. Frog 2011b). Comparisons both of different versions of the same poem or diverse uses of rudimentary formulae nonetheless show that the eddic idiom was verbally much more conservative than South Slavic or Homeric epic traditions. This degree of conservatism is particularly prominent in the two versions of *Vǫluspá* and quotations in Snorri's *Edda* (cf. Quinn 1990; Mundal 2008). At the same time, the degree of variation in the corpus raises the question of how this tradition would appear to us if we had a larger corpus. For example, we would have a markedly different perspective on *Vǫluspá* if

we had a corpus comparable to that analyzed by Matti Kuusi (1949) in his study of the Finno-Karelian mythological Sampo-Cycle, examining 744 poetic texts totalling 41,762 lines of verse.

Parry–Lord Models of Formula Assessment

Milman Parry (1928a: 16) defined the formula as "une expression qui est régulièrement employée, dans les mêmes conditions métriques, pour exprimer une certaine idée essentielle" 'an expression which is regularly used, under the same metrical conditions, to express a particular essential idea' (repeated by Lord 1960: 4). Oral-Formulaic Theory – and Parry's definition of the formula – developed out of frequency-based analyses seeking to statistically demonstrate the orality of Homeric (and later other) epics. Frequency was falsely believed to present evidence of the functionality of formulae in rapid oral composition (cf. Russo 1976), leading to an assumption that poetry should be improvised formulaically to qualify as oral (see. e.g. Finnegan 1976). This definition proved overly limited for Homeric epic (Hainsworth 1968), problematic for application in other poetries without adaptation (Foley 1990 [1993]; Honko 1998: 100–125), and its priorities were more generally criticized for leading to an overly mechanical model of composition (see Foley 1988 for a historical survey of the theory and its development). Research on eddic formulae has remained attached to frequency-based analysis and never shaken free of the Parry–Lord model. It remains primarily structurally descriptive and oriented toward compositional function (e.g. Acker 1998; Mellor 1999 [2008]; Thorvaldsen 2006b). Formulae which fall outside the Parry–Lord framework are overlooked. For example, kennings have been too verbally variable for consideration (Holland 2005) while formulae in skaldic verse have been overlooked because they occur in a 'memorized' rather than 'improvized' poetry (Frog 2009). Little or no consideration is given to meanings and significance outside of purely structural paradigms (although cf. Lönnroth 1981; Quinn 1992; Thorvaldsen 2008), although some consideration has been given to the semantic implications of formula-use to complete alliteration in a line or impacts of alliteration on lexical choice (e.g. Mellor 1999 [2008]; Lönnroth 2002). Statistical emphasis has resulted in lines and expressions encountered across poems or repeated within a poem being addressed as formulae, while lines and expressions found only once in a poem but recorded independently in different documentations of that poem are evidence of memorization. Formulae are not necessarily frequent, nor do they neces-

sarily occur outside of potentially very specific contexts (see Wray 2002: 25–31), whereas "[t]he larger the sample with which one works, the less adequate is the concept of word-for-word memorization as a means of song [read: formula] transmission" (Lord 1995: 62; cf. examples from kalevalaic poetry in Frog 2010a: 365–376, 400–405). Significant consequences of the continued dependence on the Parry–Lord model are *a*) the limited scope of expressions regarded as formulae; *b*) the lack of an approach to formulae adapted to tradition-dependent features of Old Norse poetries (cf. Foley 1990 [1993]), with the consequence that *c*) 'formula' remains a fuzzy category (cf. Hainsworth 1968: 1–22); and *d*) there has been no development toward a more general account of semantic functions of language within the poetic system.

Approaching the Formula

When reviewing Oral-Formulaic Theory in relation to Ingrian kalevalaic poetry, Lauri Harvilahti reached the conclusion that "[i]n the production of epic poems [...] such a multidimensional system of linguistic and poetic means determined by memory-based production of tradition is used that the unambiguous definition of the 'formula' is an impossible task" (Harvilahti 1992a: 143, translation Honko 1998: 114). This problem emerges from the diversity of definitions which have been produced in descriptions of Oral-Formulaic Theory on the one hand, and the inclination to attempt to account for all related data according to a single paradigm on the other (cf. Acker 1998: 67–71). Rather than beginning with Milman Parry's definition of the formula (and the library of discussion surrounding it), the formula will be approached here first as a linguistic phenomenon and secondarily as that phenomenon's manifestation in an oral-poetic system (cf. Kiparsky 1976).

Alison Wray (2002) defines a verbal formula in terms of morpheme-equivalence – a coherent unit of meaning – and a formulaic sequence as "a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar" (Wray 2002: 9). This definition corresponds semantically to Parry's (1928a: 16) "certaine idée essentielle" and Lord's (1960: 35–36) description of formulae as units manipulated according to the poetic grammar. Although the definition is

extremely broad, it also excludes so-called purely metrical formulae (Foley 1976), structural formulae (cf. Foley 1988: 63, 69, 87) and syntactic formulae (cf. Foley 1988: 69; Mellor 1999 [2008]: 166–168). These are better regarded as preferential models for the shape, placement and flexibility of verbal formulae within the poetry (see also Hainsworth 1968), or "determinants" on language use (cf. Halliday 1978: 61–70, 111). The usefulness of this definition as a tool extends to its ability to delineate when a formula *is no longer a formula*: the formulaic co-occurrence of terms as a unit of meaning can be distinguished from collocative co-occurrence to accomplish formal (e.g. metrical) requirements distributed across units of meaning. This can be briefly illustrated with a relevant example:

> *Excursus 1*. The alliterating collocation *vísir vanir* 'wise *vanir*' is a metrically bound noun-epithet formula according to Parry's classic definition (see Frog & Roper 2011). Outside of *Alvíssmál*, this formula accounts for all examples of the term *vanir* in the eddic *ljóðaháttr* meter, with the exception of *Vafþrúðnismál* 39.1–2: *Í Vana-heimi / scópo hann vís regin* 'In *Vanir*'s-Realm created him, the *wise* gods'. *Víss–vanir* appears here as a collocation accomplishing the metrical demand of alliteration (cf. *Þkv* 15.3–4). However, the adjective modifies a different noun. This is the only example of *víss* used as an adjectival epithet for another term for gods or other category of anthropomorphic being (following Gering 1903: 1155–1156; although cf. *HHv* 25.4–5: *hund-víss jǫtunn* 'hound-wise giant'). This suggests "the persistence of formulaic [word-] groups once they have been formed" (Hainsworth 1968: 106). However, it is not 'formulaic' according to the above definition. It can be described as an adaptation of a conventional formula for the accomplishment of metrical demands like the collocative use of preferred rhyme-pairs which are semantically independent (cf. Buchan 1972; Frog 2009: 236–242).

Wray takes a usage-based approach to language acquisition. She describes formula acquisition according to a process of "needs only analysis", arguing that an individual internalizes multiword strings and breaks them down rather than beginning with lexical items and building up (Wray 2002: 130–132; cf. Saussure 1916 [1967]: esp. 146). This does not mean that formulae cannot be interpreted compositionally, but rather that multiword strings are not compositionally interpreted when it is unnecessary. According to Wray's model, larger, complex units which are

bound to particular functions and meanings develop refined or special-
ized values (morpheme-equivalence) (cf. Foley 1995). Her broad inclu-
sive definition of the formula can account for the significance of, for ex-
ample, proverbs as morpheme-equivalent units (e.g. 'a bird in hand is
worth two in the bush') or the cosmogonic/apocalyptic significance of
the Germanic formula (ON) *jǫrð* (*ok*) *upp-himinn* (Lönnroth 1981),
structurally described by Paul Acker (1998: 3–33) as a *syndetic formula*
(two terms joined by a conjunction – e.g. 'X and Y'). Moreover, it allows
the differentiation of a formula as a meaning-based unit from the struc-
tural model in which it may most commonly occur. It also allows the
development of potential hierarchical relationships between a formula
and specialized structural realizations. This can be illustrated by another
relevant example:

> *Excursus 2.* Although excursus 1 illustrated the non-formulaic use
> of a collocative pair to accomplish alliteration, collocative pairs
> which meet alliteration requirements can also be formulaic. For
> example, the *æsir–álfar* collocation is found fifteen times in lines
> of eddic verse, or eleven times with repetitions within individual
> poems (*Vsp* 48.1–2; *Hv* 143.1–2, 159.4–5, 160. 4–5; *Gm* 4.3; *Skm*
> 7.4–5, 17.1–2, 18.1–2, *Ls* 2.4–5, 13.4–5, 30.4–5; *Þkv* 7.1–2, 5–6; *Fm*
> 13.4–5; *Sd* 18.4–5). The *æsir–álfar* collocation presents a rhetorical
> figure called a *merism*, a figure of two or more elements "which
> makes reference to the totality of a single higher concept" (Wat-
> kins 1995: 9). A merism is therefore a morpheme-equivalent unit
> (e.g. 'land and sea' = 'everywhere traversable'). Merisms are found
> across Indo-European and other cultures (Watkins 1995: 28–49).
> Like the merism *jǫrð–upphiminn*, *æsir–álfar* appears to be an
> ordered pair (cf. Acker 1998: 3–33): *álfar* only precedes *æsir* in
> *Skírnismál* 17.1–2 and its repetition in 18.1–2 (cf. *Ls* 64.1–2), but
> this inversion does not appear to impact the merism's semantics.
> The ordered pair hypothesis is supported by Anglo-Saxon evi-
> dence (Hall 2007: 35). In six eddic cases, the merism is realized as
> the basic syndetic short-line formula *æsir ok álfar* 'gods and elves'
> (Giurevič 1986: 35); in others the syndetic formula extends flexi-
> bly across a long line (uniting two short lines with alliteration). It
> may be structurally conditioned by context, capable of assuming
> an ordered three-part structure of *æsir–álfar–vanir* in certain met-
> rical contexts (Meletinsky 1998: 35). It may also be distributed
> across parallel syntactic expressions without a conjunction, as in
> the question, *Hvat er með ásum, hvat er með álfum?* 'How is it

with the *æsir*, how is it with the elves?' (*Vsp* 48.1–2), where it maintains semantic integrity outside of the syndetic structure (Giurevič 1986: 46). This *æsir–álfar* merism does not refer specifically to 'gods and elves' (cf. excursus 4 below), but rather to the broad in-group community associated with the gods, inclusive rather than exclusive of *vanir*, women and giantesses (cf. *Ls* 2.4–5). This morpheme-equivalent merism is related hierarchically to its repeated use in a basic syndetic formula ('X and Y') as well as its use in the three-part structure *æsir–álfar–vanir*, both of which may be approached as (potentially) distinct entries in the poetic lexicon (i.e. distinct formulae: see excursus 18), whether they are compositionally and semantically equivalent to the basic merism or have semantic, functional or associative nuances connected to the use of a distinct and recognizable form.

Wray's approach to the formula is complemented by a register-based approach to language, such as John Miles Foley (1995) has developed for addressing oral-poetic traditions. Register is originally a linguistic term for language as it is used in a particular communicative context, shaping its forms and meanings (Halliday 1978). A poetic mode of expression presents prescriptive determinants for verbal expression such as metrical requirements, syntax and vocabulary which characterize a code of communication (Halliday 1978: esp. 61–70, 111). These shape how the register functions in communication, conditioning the formation, maintenance and flexibility of formulae within the poetic lexicon. Foley has emphasized that the refined mode of communication allows specialized connotative, denotative and associative significance to develop according to the degree of regular patterns of use within that poetic system. This is as relevant for individual words as for more complex expressions. Literal interpretations which do not take this into account may therefore be misleading or fail to recognize dimensions of significance (see also Foley 2002). Metrical requirements may consequently also lead to bending or lightening the semantics of a term within a poetic lexicon or inside particular formulae. This can be briefly illustrated through relevant examples of *a*) bending a term into the service of another meaning or function (excursus 3); *b*) subordination of a term's semantics to a formula as a morpheme-equivalent whole (excursus 4); *c*) semantically light or void usage to accomplish formal requirements (excursus 5); and *d*) semantically light or void variation within a formula as a recognizable morpheme-equivalent unit (excursus 6):

Excursus 3. The terms *þurs* 'ogre' and *jǫtunn* 'giant' had different semantic fields and contexts of usage (cf. on *þurs*, see Hall 2009: esp. 198–201; on *jǫtunn*, see Harris 2009: 488–493). In eddic verse however, *þurs* and *hrímþurs* 'frost ogre' are used synonymically for *jǫtunn* (e.g. *Vm* 33.2, 5; cf. *Beowulf* 426 and 761, following Hall 2009: 200–201). Unlike *jǫtunn*, these carry alliteration in /þ/ and /h/ respectively, in every eddic use. This presents the possibility that the semantic fields of these terms have been bent into the service of *jǫtunn* as synonyms for their functional capacity to accomplish different patterns of alliteration (cf. Roper 2011).

Excursus 4. As a category of mythic being, *álfar* appear to have a long history in Germanic cultures (Hall 2007; Tolley 2009 I: 217–221). Old Norse sources present a range of inconsistent information which suggests that conceptions were not unified, but rather reflect a long and stratified history across Scandinavia (Gunnell 2007). The use of *álfar* in eddic poetry has been central to this discussion (see Gunnell 2007: 121–122 and works there cited), without considering that the relationship of the formula *as a formula* to the semantics of *álfar*. This category of being was almost never referred to in eddic verse outside of the *æsir–álfar* formula (*Alv* x11, on which see excursus 13; *Vkv* 10.3, 13.4, 32.2, *Hm* 1.3) (Gering 1903: 25–26). Anglo-Saxon evidence (Hall 2007: 35) presents the possibility that the collocation may have already been established in the Migration Period or earlier. This would be consistent with Elena A. Giurevič's findings on the stability of the oppositional category to which the formula belongs (1986: 41–43), and which was no longer a generative model for new formulae (1986: 52–53, cf. 46). If the *æsir–álfar* collocation is an archaic formula that had been maintained for centuries in the poetic register, it could reflect archaic conceptions about the relationship between *æsir* (as understood at that time) and 'elves' as categories of being. However, following Wray's theory of needs-only analysis, the formula could be interpreted as a morpheme-equivalent whole (excursus 2) without requiring the resolution of its elements, thus the specific semantics of *álfar* may have been completely subordinated to the merism and suspended in the formula without requiring resolution as a particular category of being (cf. Hall 2007: 34–39). Much as poetic uses of *þurs* and *hrímþurs* for *jǫtunn* may not be consistent with non-poetic usage (excursus 3), caution is required when comparing this formulaic and poetic usage of *álfar* with thirteenth century popular beliefs.

Excursus 5. In 1929, Francis P. Magoun examined compounds in eddic verse and *Beowulf*, suggesting that "the tendency to make recurrent use of the same first compounding elements no doubt arose in seeking alliterative words" (quoted Foley 1988: 67), of which Acker (1998: 50–51) has presented unequivocal examples. A corresponding strategy appears to have been used for synonyms of 'gods' in eddic poetry, among which compounds formed with *regin* 'gods' in eddic verse always alliterate (Frog & Roper 2011: 30–31). In *Alvíssmál*, this is true of the prefixed forms *upp-regin* (*Alv* 10.6) and *ginn-regin* (*Alv* 20.3, 30.3). Both terms appear in the open-slot formula *kalla X Y-regin* 'the Y-gods call [it] X', in which X = a poetic synonym according to the theme of the stanza and Y = a prefix alliterating with X. This appears to be a formulaic construction in which *upp-* and *ginn-* fill formal functions with nothing to suggest they carried any semantic weight. This can be directly compared with the unique use of *víss* as an epithet with *regin* carrying alliteration (excursus 1). Like Parry's noun-epithet formulae, *víss* appears to have been metrically/structurally (and potentially æsthetically) significant rather than carrying semantic weight. Adjectival modifiers of terms for 'gods' carry alliteration in a significant number of cases (Frog & Roper 2011: 31), and the use of general epithets and affixes may reflect basic compositional strategies for accomplishing metrically required alliteration.[3] Within the register, individual terms could have functions which left them semantically light or void in the interpretation of a formula, line or passage.

Excursus 6. A formula requires recognition to function as a morpheme-equivalent unit. This must be considered when approaching variation in the formula and its potentials for significance. As an example, a hypothetically full or ideal formula **en kalla (þann) X dvergar* 'and dwarves call (it) X' can be suggested for the *Alvíssmál* tradition. This presents a word order of $CV(O_1)O_2S$. Theoretically, this word order should be able to vary without impacting the sense (cf. excursus 2). This should allow, for example, **en dvergar kalla (þann) X* = $CSV(O_1)O_2$, as well as e.g. $C(O_1)SVO_2$,

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[3] The less frequent use of fixed epithets in eddic verse and Anglo-Saxon poetry in contrast to South Slavic and Homeric epic (cf. Acker 1998: 90) may be a practical consequence of the constraints a fixed epithet would place on metrically required alliteration (cf. Kristján Árnason 1991: 79).

$C(O_1)O_2VS$, $C(O_1)VO_2S$, $CVS(O_1)O_2$, without varying the formula's morpheme-equivalent value. In a context which supports recognisability, such as the repeating and parallel structures of the stanzas of *Alvíssmál*, a minimal number of elements can still allow a formula to be recognizable. In *Alvíssmál*, the first object (O_1) is always implicit and omitted from the clause. Poetic syntax also allows the omission of the conjunction (C) between adjacent clauses as well as the omission of the verb (V) in all but the first of a series of parallel constructions, leading to a minimal realization of the formula as SO_2 or O_2S. According to the (oversimplified) generative model described here, variation in word order and omissions alone allows 20 alternative realizations of the formula which could be employed (e.g. owing to metrical prescriptions) without impacting its morpheme-equivalent significance – variations which might hypothetically not even be perceived in performance (cf. Harris 1983 [2008]: 195–196). This is a useful exercise because actual variation occurs in relation to the range of possibilities allowed by the system. This therefore offers a point of reference when considering whether genre-conventions are inclined to challenge this spectrum of potentialities or to restrict itself to a narrow range of realizations within it.

The Narrative Context and Dialogue Frame of *Alvíssmál*

The poem *Alvíssmál* is preserved in the Codex Regius manuscript of eddic poems (GKS 2365 4to). It presents a wisdom exchange between Þórr and a dwarf Alvíss 'All-Wise' (see Lindow 2007 for a discussion of the narrative and relevant bibliography). The poetic text consists exclusively of a dialogue exchange between these two figures. The confrontation emerges because Alvíss has apparently been promised Þórr's daughter in marriage during Þórr's absence, and the god challenges the dwarf to a wisdom competition in order to settle the matter. Stanzas 9–34 present an alternating sequence of Þórr's demand to know how each of thirteen nouns is referred to 'in each realm' and the dwarf's response as a lexical index of the relevant terms used by 5–6 categories of being. The exchange of stanzas 21 and 22 is a representative example:[4]

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4 All eddic poems are cited according to Neckel & Kuhn 1963 unless otherwise noted.

Segðu mér þat, Alvíss　　　– ǫll of rǫc fira
voromc, dvergr, at vitir –
hvé þat logn heitir,　　　er liggia scal,
heimi hveriom í.

Logn heitir með mǫnnom, enn lægi með goðom,
kalla vindslot vanir,
ofhlý iotnar,　　　　　álfar dagsefa,
kalla dvergar dags vero.

Say to me this, Alvíss　　　– all the fates of men
I foresee, dwarf, that you know –
how is calm called,　　　which shall lie,
in each realm.

Calm [it] is called among men, but berth among gods,
call [it] wind-lapse, *vanir*,
[call it] great-lee, giants,　　elves [call it] day-soothe,
dwarves call [it] day's essence.

The dwarf responds successfully to each of Þórr's questions. In the final stanza, Þórr declares that he has deceived the dwarf by keeping him occupied until sunrise, and the unsuspecting Alvíss will be turned to stone. The present paper is only concerned with the narrative framework of the poem insofar as this is relevant to formula use and variation (excurses 7 and 9).

The Meter of *Alvíssmál*

Alvíssmál uses the basic, regular form of the *ljóðaháttr* meter. Of Old Norse meters, this "is the most puzzling" (Turville-Petre 1978: xvi) and challenging to analyze. "[I]ndeed the rhythm seems to have been less regular here than in the other metres (or at least different)" (Kristján Árnason 1991: 52), and closer to common speech (Gunnell 1995: 193; cf. Quinn 1992). In *Alvíssmál*, the meter exhibits a regular stanzaic structure of alternating long lines and so-called *Vollzeilen* 'full lines', each alternation forming a half-stanza (see *Hávamál* for examples of the extremes of *ljóðaháttr* and related meters). The long line is a variation on

the basic Germanic long line of four metrical feet, but exhibits increased flexibility in the acceptable number of unstressed syllables in a line (Kristján Árnason 1991: 54–55). These lines are divided by a cesura, distinguishing two short lines each having a minimum of four syllables with two stressed positions. The short lines are united by alliteration. The first short line will be called the a-line, in which alliteration may fall on either metrically stressed position (**a x** or **x a**) or on both (**a a**). The following short line will be called the b-line, in which alliteration should fall on the first stressed position and be avoided in the second (**a x**). A *Vollzeile* 'full line' is an independent short line with self-contained alliteration (**a a**) (Sievers 1893: 24). In *ljóðaháttr*, it could have either two or three stressed positions, leading it to be described as "the least restrictive of all eddic line patterns" (Quinn 1992: 111). However, two of those two or three positions were required to carry alliteration, and these lines also conventionally ended either with a two-syllable word with a light first syllable (*va·nir*) or with a long monosyllable (with a statistical preference for light rather than heavy monosyllables: cf. Fidjestøl 1999: 269), other endings being infrequent and apparently rule-governed (see Kristján Árnason 1991: 53–54 and works there cited). These are all prescriptive conventions which are relevant to formula variation, and the prescriptive conventions vary between these different lines.[5] Acker's (1998: 40) term *equivalent site* will be used to describe the relative positions of types of formulae within a stanza, referring to 'a-lines', 'b-lines', and (for the sake of discussion) 'c-lines', while identifying the halves of the stanza as "I" and "II". Stanza 22 (translated above) can serve as an example. 'x' indicates metrical stress; '·' indicates a metrically unstressed syllable; alliterating syllables appear in bold.

<pre>
        x   · ·   ·   x   ·   ·   x ·   ·   x ·
Ia **Logn** heitir með mǫnnom,   Ib enn **læg**i með goðom,
        · ·   x   ·   x ·
Ic kalla **vind**slot **va**nir,
        x   · x   ·   x ·   x   · ·
IIa **of**hlý **iot**nar,   IIb **ál**far dagsefa,
        · ·   x   · x   · ·
IIc kalla **dver**gar **dags** vero.
</pre>

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5 Kristján Árnasson (1991: 58–59) observes that "about 75% of nouns, adjectives and verbs have heavy stems," which warrants consideration when approaching the limitations of the final position in a *Vollzeile*.

Each of Alvíss's lexical indices presents six open-slot formulae to realize Ia–IIc. The flexibility in the number of unstressed syllables in a line is significant to formula variation. For example, the various formulae could be realized with between two and six syllables before taking into account the slot-fillers (see table 2), which are themselves terms and kennings of between one and four syllables in length (see *KLE* II: 282–283). Hypothetically, this model could readily generate expressions of 3–10 syllables in length. At minimum, however, a short line requires at least four syllables, two metrically stressed and two off-beat positions. Although formulae may be contracted to as few as two words, if one of these is a monosyllable, a third word is metrically required, as in *en scín dvergar* 'and dwarves [call it] shine' (*Alv* 14.5).

Terms and Categories of Being in *Alvíssmál*

Each formula names a different category of being. Seven categories of being are identified employing a total of twelve different terms (the prepositional phrase *í helju* 'in Hel' or 'in the realm of death' will be here treated as functionally equivalent to 'the dead' or 'inhabitants of Hel' as a category of being for which an ethnonym is lacking), see table 1.

   The syllabic structure of the terms used impacts their placement in *Vollzeilen*. Of the terms in table 1, *ha·lir*, *re·gin*, *va·nir*, *sy·nir*, *goð* (or inflected *goðum*) can naturally appear in the final position of this line, whereas *dver·gar*, *jǫt·nar*, *ál·far*, *æ·sir*, *í hel·ju* and the name *Sut·tungr* should not (although *helju í*, with a long light syllable in the final position is acceptable). However, just as the formula *kalla X Y-regin* provided a solution for accomplishing different alliterations (excursus 5), the

Table 1. *Categories of being in Alvíss's lexical indices.*

Type	Terms (# of occurrences)				Total occurrences
men	*menn*	13	*halir* 1		= 14
gods	*goð*	10	*æsir* 3	*(Y-)regin* 3 *ása synir* 1	= 17
vanir	*vanir*	9			= 9
giants	*jǫtnar*	13	*Suttungs synir* 1		= 14
elves	*álfar*	11			= 11
dwarves	*dvergar*	7			= 7
the dead	*í helju*	6			= 6
Total					78

terms employed exhibit a solution for filling the metrical conditions of the end of a *Vollzeile*:

> *Excursus 7*. The expression *ása synir* 'sons of the gods' (*Alv*16.6) contains a redundancy when *æsir* is itself a (synonymic) term for 'gods'. This is a kenning, no less that *Suttungs synir* 'sons of Suttungr' = 'giants' (*Alv* 34.6) and constitutes a formula commonly encountered in both skaldic and eddic verse (see *LP*: 525; cf. examples in excursus 12 and 19; on kennings as formulae generally, see Holland 2005). In *Alvíssmál*, both these uses of this formula occur in the c-line formula *kalla X Y synir* 'call [it] X, the sons of Y', in which Y = a genitive which alliterates with X and forms a kenning for a type of being as a modifier of *synir*. The term *synir* fills the metrically constrained position in the line. Although the word order of the formula is potentially variable (cf. excursus 6), the slot-filler with *ása synir* is *al·skír* 'all-pure' = 'sun', which is also metrically unviable in the final position. The kenning *Y synir* appears to be a solution for including *al·skír* with (any) term for a category of being in table 1 that could carry vocalic alliteration. The slot-filler with *Suttungs synir* is the heavy monosyllable *sumbl* 'feasting' = 'beer'. This appears in the penultimate stanza, and John Lindow (2007: 299–300) interprets the employment of the name Suttungr as an intertextual reference to a mythological narrative about the mead of poetry (read 'beer') (addressed in Lindow 2007: 290–291), foreshadowing the dwarf's death. If Lindow is correct, the semantic priority of using the particular giant's name may underlie the use of the *X Y synir* formula in this case and *sumbl* may appear as a consequence of meeting /s/-alliteration (cf. excursus 9). The same formula may therefore have had structural functions in one use (allowing *æsir* and *alskír* to occur together in a *Vollzeile* without disrupting the rhythm of the line), and a contextual semantic function in another (allowing the referential introduction of a specific giant's name in relation to events in the broader narrative).

The Formulae

The formulae employed in Alvíss's lexical indices are very regular in contrast to the simple generative model outlined in excursus 6. Variation is sufficiently minimal that these formulae can be reasonably listed as fif-

teen ideal types according to their basic structure and relationship to alliteration. The fifteen reduce to eleven if 'echoes' with variation associated with site of occurrence are eliminated, as shown in table 2.

Verbal variation of a formula within an equivalent site only occurs at its first introduction. This is in the term for being once (*Alv* 10.2), verb omission twice (*Alv* 12.6, 16.6), and word order once (*Alv* 14.3) (table 5). Alliteration and metrical constraints appear to impact the realization of formulae appearing in both b-lines and c-lines:

> *Excursus 8.* Formulae with *dvergar* exhibit different word-order in b-lines ($C[V]O_X\mathbf{a}S_B\mathbf{x}$) and c-lines ($[C]VS_B\mathbf{a}O_X\mathbf{a}$). In b-lines, O_X rather than *dvergar* (S_B) participates in alliteration. In c-lines,

Table 2. *Formulae in Alvíss's lexical indices.*
Key: C = conjunction; V = verb (V_1 = *heita* 'to name', V_2 = *kalla* 'to call'); O = object; subscript X = open slot; S = subject; PP = prepositional phrase; subscript B = type of being (if V = V_1 then PP_B; if V = V_2 then S_B); **a** = alliteration; **x** = non-alliterating metrically stressed position (although see below).

Structure	Formula	Site	Occurrences #	Occurrences (%)	Echoes
$(C)O_X\mathbf{a}(V)PP_B\mathbf{x}$	*X heitir með mǫnnum*	Ia	13	(100%)	
$(C)O_X\mathbf{a}(V)S_B\mathbf{x}$	*[en] X [kalla] jǫtnar*	IIa	13	(100%)	
$(C)(V)O_X\mathbf{a}PP_B\mathbf{x}$	*en [heitir] X með goðum*	Ib	10	(77%)	
$(C)(V)O_X\mathbf{a}S_B\mathbf{x}$	*en [kalla] X dvergar*	IIb	2	(15%)	*
$(C)(V)PP_B\mathbf{a}O_X\mathbf{x}$	*en [heitir] með ásum X*	Ib	3	(23%)	
–variant–	–*en [heitir] með álfum X*)†–	–Ib–	–1–	–(8%)–	–**–
	en [kalla] í helju X	IIb	1	(8%)	***
$(C)(V)S_B\mathbf{a}O_X\mathbf{x}$	*[en] [kalla] álfar X*	IIb	10	(77%)	**
$(C)(V)O_X\mathbf{a}S_B\mathbf{a}$	*[en] kalla X vanir*	Ic + IIc	8 + 1 = 9	(62%, 8% = 69%)	
	[en] kalla X Y-regin	Ic + IIc	2 + 1 = 3	(15%, 8% = 23%)	
	[en] kalla X halir	Ic	1	(8%)	
$(C)(V)O_X\mathbf{a}PP_B\mathbf{a}$	*[en] kalla X helju í*	Ic	1	(8%)	***
	[en] (kalla) X Y synir	IIc	2	(15%)	
$(C)(V)S_B\mathbf{a}O_X\mathbf{a}$	*[en] (kalla) dvergar X*	Ic + IIc	1 + 4 = 5	(8%, 31% = 38%)	*
	[en] kalla álfar X	IIc	1	(8%)	**
$(C)(V)PP_B\mathbf{a}O_X\mathbf{a}$	*[en] kalla í helju X*	IIc	4	(31%)	***

† This formula appears in the place of the first use of the *en [heitir] með ásum X* formula (*Alv* 10.2). The transcription is clear and uncorrected with no indication of scribal error, while the repetition of *álfar* in IIb of the stanza makes this appear to be an unintended (oral) slip.

the initial syllable of *dver·gar* is not acceptable in the final troche of a *Vollzeile* and appears to result in varied word-order (cf. excursus 7). The *álfar* formula and the *í helju* formula maintain consistent word order in b-lines and c-lines (with the exception of their first introductions). The category of being (S_B) always carries alliteration in these two formulae, and alliteration is always carried by the first metrically stressed position in b-lines. Although this describes a relationship between word-order and alliteration in formula variation, it does not clarify why *álfar* and *í helju* always carry alliteration in *Alvíssmál* while *dvergar* does not.

The presence or omission of elements (C, V) in the ideal formula (cf. excursus 6) differs according to equivalent site, but within an equivalent site there is no variation in repetitions outside of that indicated above. The degree of regularity across all of these formulae makes it reasonable to approach alternate forms realized according to equivalent site as distinct formulae (e.g. two *dvergar* formulae and two *álfar* formulae) related hierarchically to a more abstract formula model (excursus 4).

Alliteration as a Determinant

According to the model outlined in table 2, the first metrically stressed position in any site will carry alliteration. $\{PP_B/S_B\}$ does not carry primary alliteration except in cases where it participates in alliteration with an O_X. $\{PP_B/S_B\}$–O_X alliteration occurs in every c-line (**a a**), as a second alliteration in a-lines (**a a : a x** in Ia–b: 14.1, cf. 23.4 varied in 24.1; IIa–b: 10.4–5, 12.4–5, 16.4–5, 18.4–5, 20.4–5, 22.4–5, 24.4–5, 28.4–5, 30.4–5, 32.4–5), and only on the first stressed position of b-lines directly related to a $\{PP_B/S_B\}O_X$ word-order (**a x : a x** in Ia–b: *Alv* 10.1–2, 26.1–2, 34.1–2; **a a : a x** in IIa–b as above). A-line sites exhibit 100% consistency in the formulae appearing. Paul Acker (1998: 64–65) observes that when the slot-filler in Ia (normally repeating the term from Þórr's question) begins with a consonant, the formula *en X með goðum* is used in Ib, and the slot-filler rather than the term for 'gods' alliterates (CO_X**a**PP_B**x**). In the three cases when the Ia slot-filler begins with a vowel, the alternative formula *en með æsir X* appears, and the alternative term for 'gods' alliterates while the slot-filler does not (CPP_B**a**O_X**x**). The two Ib formulae are

semantically equivalent with inverted PP_BO_X/O_XPP_B word order. Formula use appears directly dependent on alliteration, although there is no metrical reason that a slot-filler could not carry alliteration in the *goð* formula. A corresponding pattern appears in the relationship between IIa *X jǫtnar* and IIb *álfar X*. when the IIa slot-filler initiated vowel alliteration, then *jǫtnar* and *álfar* also alliterate, whereas in cases of consonantal alliteration, *álfar X* is displaced by another formula. In both cases, the a-line slot-filler determines the pattern of alliteration, which is in turn a determinant on the choice of the b-line formula (Acker 1998: 65–66; Thorvaldsen 2006b: 116–117). *Dvergar* b-line formulae occur in the first two patterns of consonantal alliteration in IIa–b. This formula is the same type as the b-line *goð* formula ($O_X\mathbf{a}\{PP_B/S_B\}\mathbf{x}$ rather than $\{PP_B/S_B\}\mathbf{a}O_X\mathbf{x}$), but it lacks corresponding synonymic equivalence to the *álfar* formula. Unlike the *menn–goð/æsir* formulae, the *jǫtnar–álfar* formulae could carry alliteration in IIa–b without the participation of the a-line slot-filler (in an **x a : a x** pattern; cf. Acker 1998: 66). The *X jǫtnar* formula could also be inverted as *jǫtnar X* without impacting its significance if alliteration were preferred in the first foot (cf. excursus 6). Metrically, poetic synonyms are given emphasis over categories of being in a-lines and generally in Ib lines as well. Variation in IIb suggests that alliteration was given priority over the category of being named in the formula. The final variation in the IIb site deviates from the basic alternation between two formulae by introducing a third formula which carries alliteration, but this variation may be attributable to other factors rather than contradicting the model outlined here:

> *Excursus 9*. In the last of Alvíss's lexical indices, the *í helju* formula occurs in IIb (*Alv* 34.5). It does not invert $\{PP_B/S_B\}O_X$ word order from the *álfar* formula and carries alliteration (in /h/). This is the same stanza in which the *Suttungs synir* formula appears to have been employed intertextually in anticipation of the dwarf's imminent death (excursus 7). The reference to *hel* in this stanza may be a corresponding allusion to the dwarf's death in the next stanza. The otherwise regular pattern of alternation between a-lines and b-lines according to alliteration in their twenty-five preceding occurrences, increases the probability that the variation in the last of these b-lines was marked as deviation from that pattern and the mention of *hel* was particularly weighted for a sensitive audience. Rather than being purely metrical in significance, this variation may reflect a semantic relevance to the broader narrative context in which the dialogue occurs. It may therefore belong to a

different category of variation. In this case, the *í helju* formula would be a determinant on the slot-filler in IIa rather than vice versa. In IIa, alliteration falls on the adjectival modifier in the expression *hreinn lǫgr* 'pure brew' (*Alv* 34.4) (cf. excursus 5). This expression is not found elsewhere (Gering 1927–1931 I: 337), although *lǫgr* is not uncommon and could be combined with several other modifiers, including possibilities for vocalic alliteration (cf. *LP*: 389). The use of the adjectival modifier *hreinn* 'pure' may therefore be conditioned by the pattern of alliteration (excursus 5), consistent with a semantic use of *hel* in IIb determining the alliteration of the slot-filler in IIa.

Bernt Øyvind Thorvaldsen (2006b: 116–117) suggests a relationship between the role of alliteration as a determinant in b-lines to the formula choice in different c-lines. Differentiating alliteration versus other factors as a determinant in c-line formula selection is problematic because both {PP$_B$/S$_B$} and O$_X$ carry alliteration rather than the determinant on alliteration being realized outside the formula used (although cf. excurses 5 and 7). Table 3 shows that a significantly larger number of formulae occur in c-lines. This could be attributable to the slot-filler acting as a determinant on alliteration, but an explanation is then required for multiple formulae accomplishing the same pattern of alliteration in c-lines (vocalic x3; /h/ x2; /d/ x1; /g/ x1; /s/ x1; /v/ x1 – see table 2).

Excursus 10. Three formulae accomplish vocalic alliteration in c-lines (table 2). In stanza 14, a *dvergar* formula appears in IIb rather than an *álfar* formula and the *álfar* formula appears in IIc. In stanza 16, the *álfar* formula occurs in IIb and cannot appear in IIc without a repetition of the term; the *goð* formula appears in Ib and the *ása synir* formula occurs in IIc. In stanza 10, the *álfar* for-

Table 3. *Number of formulae occurring in each site.* The variant word order of the *í helju* formula in a c-line (see table 2) is not counted here a separate formula.

Site	I	II	Total	I&II
a-lines	1	1	2	0
b-lines	2	3	5	0
c-lines	5	7	8	4
Total	8	8	12	4

mula appears in IIb and the *æsir* formula appears in Ib. Neither term can occur in IIc without repetition, and a *Y-regin* formula carries vocalic alliteration in IIc. The threefold hierarchy of formulaic choice here looks surprisingly systematic, but it nevertheless suggests that variation between c-line formulae carrying vocalic alliteration was not random, and is suggestive of alliteration as a determinant in formula choice.

Excursus 11. Two formulae accomplish /h/-alliteration in c-lines (table 2). The variation in the word order of the *í helju* formula is one of four examples of variation in a formula at its first use in these stanzas (table 5). This suggests that it was an unintended variation from the ideal *kalla í helju X* (VPP$_B$**a**O$_X$**a**) formula encountered in repetitions (table 2). This would be metrically acceptable for the slot-filler and the emendation has been proposed (see Gering 1927–1931 I: 333). The alternative /h/-alliterating c-line formula is *kalla X halir* (VO$_X$**a**{PP$_B$/S$_B$}**a**) (*Alv* 28.3). The slot-filler in this formula is *hlíð-þang* 'slope-seaweed'. As a compound of two heavy syllables, this slot-filler should not be used at the end of a *Vollzeile* and therefore should not appear in the *í helju* c-line formula without varying the word-order. The *halir* formula may therefore be a functional equivalent to the *í helju* formula which could accommodate different metrical conditions for /h/-alliteration in relation to the slot-filler. This would be consistent with the variant word order in the *í helju* formula being an inadvertent deviation from an ideal. This explanation for the alternative /h/-alliteration formulae is, however, descriptive of an inverse relation but does not explain why these two formulae should alternate rather than a metrically acceptable variant word-order being employed in the *í helju* formula (i.e. *helju í*).

The significance of alliteration as a determinant is supported by the stanzas in which Þórr poses questions to the dwarf.

Excursus 12. The term *menn* appears (formulaically) only in b-lines where the term in the a-line slot-filler alliterates in /m/ (*Alv* 13.4–5, 23.4–5). The kenning *alda synir* 'sons of men' correspondingly occurs in all cases where the a-line slot-filler calls for vocalic alliteration (*Alv* 9.4–5, 25.4–5, 33.4–5). However, the *alda synir* formula is not exclusive to these stanzas, also occurring in two (*Alv* 15.4–5, 31.4–5) of the three (*Alv* 17.4–5) cases of alliteration in /s/, resulting in extra alliteration in the final foot, as well as one

occurrence where it does not alliterate at all (*Alv* 27.4–5). (Cf. Acker 1998: 63–64). The latter cases suggest formula selection for semantic emphasis or structural functions of filling the line rather than alliteration.

This survey presents a high probability that alliteration functioned as a determinant in formula selection except in cases where contextual semantic factors took precedence. This process appears remarkably systematic in Alvíss's lexical indices. However, these assessments remain primarily descriptive and do not explain *a*) why certain terms and not others always carry alliteration, or *b*) why formulae would alternate to accomplish a particular alliteration rather than one formula with variable word order.

Alliterative Rank

A series of twentieth century researchers of alliteration developed a method for identifying probable cases of semantic subordination resulting from these phonetic demands (Brink 1920; Borroff 1962; Cronan 1986). This is done by assessing the frequency with which a term fulfils those demands relative to its total number of occurrences, giving the term's *alliterative rank* as a percentage. Thus the alliterative rank of *þurs* and *hrímþurs* (excursus 2) are both 100% because all uses participate in alliteration, whereas *aldir* poetic 'men' (cf. excursus 12) has 20 occurrences of which 17 alliterate, giving an alliterative rank of 85%. The data sets for *þurs*, *hrímþurs* and *aldir* are very small, but their high alliterative rank nonetheless contrasts sharply with 69% as the overall alliterative rank of *jǫtunn*, and 50% as an overall alliterative rank for *maðr* (table 4). In table 4, the number of examples in each data set is uneven. The number of examples is therefore listed alongside the alliterative rank of each term. Uses in *Vollzeilen* exhibit significantly higher frequency of alliteration, and therefore corresponding totals are included which omit occurrences in *Vollzeilen*. Variations between use in *fornyrðislag* meters and *ljóðaháttr* meters do not sufficiently impact the overall data to warrant differentiation here. However, *Alvíssmál*'s systematic formulaic use of several of these terms across thirteen repetitions of the stanza in the dialogue is sufficient to impact some of these figures. Table 1 therefore offers calculations of alliterative rank in the eddic corpus generally (total 1) and corresponding figures when *Alvíssmál* is omitted (table 2).

Table 4. *Alliterative rank table.* Total 1 presents the total number of examples of the simplex noun in both singular and plural following Gering's 1903 concordance of eddic poetry. Total 2 does not include occurrences in *Alvíssmál.* Terms which present no examples of eddic use in a singular form are listed in plural.

Noun	Total 1		w/out *Vollzeilen*		Total 2		w/out *Vollzeilen*	
	#	Rank	#	Rank	#	Rank	#	Rank
*maðr**	176	50%	146	46%	163	53%	132	49%
halr	26	85%	15	80%	25	84%	15	80%
goð	59	47%	35	26%	49	57%	25	36%
*áss***	78	94%	68	94%	74	93%	64	94%
*regin****	39	77%	21	71%	39	77%	21	71%
Y-regin	6	100%	1	100%	3	100%	1	100%
vanir	24	100%	2	100%	15	100%	2	100%
álfar	29	90%	27	89%	18	83%	17	82%
*hel*****	31	94%	18	89%	25	92%	17	88%
jǫtunn	93	69%	68	60%	80	68%	55	56%
dvergr	31	45%	9	56%	9	78%	7	71%

* Totals for *maðr* do not include negations as indexed by Gering nor other uses of the (formulaic) expression *engi maðr* 'no one': the negation rather than the noun normally carries alliteration in these cases and would significantly skew statistics. *Hávamál* makes extensive non-alliterating use of *maðr/menn*; if *Hávamál* is removed from the data set, total 1 becomes 115 (57%) / 93 (54%) and total 2 becomes 102 (64%) / 80 (61%).
** Totals include feminine plural *ásynjur.*
*** Totals include the (defective) genitive plural *ragna.* N.B. when epithets of *regin* are included, alliterative rank in total 1 climbs to 92%.
**** These statistics do not differentiate between the noun *hel* and theonym Hel.

   High alliterative rank characterizes poetic synonyms with a central function of accomplishing alliteration, but does not itself demonstrate that a term was primarily a poetic synonym. The low alliterative rank of *maðr* and *goð* suggests that these were not poetic synonyms but rather unornamental nouns used for 'man' and 'god'. The alliterative rank of *halr* supports its function as a poetic synonym, although the attestations are too few for the statistics to be reliable. The term *áss / æsir* is better attested and exhibits a markedly high alliterative rank. This term otherwise seems associated with specialized contexts of language use (e.g.

oath-taking) and Snorri's works (with those dependent on it) (see *DONP*: s.v. 'áss 1', 'ásynjur'). It therefore appears to be one of the many synonyms for 'god' (see de Vries 1956–1957 I: 1–10; Simek 2011: 10–12) associated with special registers rather than designating a distinct class of being (Frog & Roper 2011: 36).[6] The alternation of *goð* and *æsir* in *Alvíssmál*'s Ib formulae according to alliteration is consistent with the general usage of *goð* and *æsir* within the poetic system.

In contrast to the *æsir–álfar* collocation (excurses 2 and 4), the terms *goð* and *æsir* do not otherwise appear collocated with *menn* in a line.[7] This may be a structural consequence of opening each lexical index with the repetition of the common noun (the term 'among men') from Þórr's question. In excursus 4, *álfar* were observed to have historically been a distinct class of being. In eddic verse, they exhibit a remarkable alliterative rank which cannot be simply attributed to synonymy.

> *Excursus 13*. Plural forms of the terms in table 4 generally exhibit higher alliterative rank than singular forms. This is more pronounced in terms with vocalic onsets. The difference is particularly sharp in the case of *jǫtnar*: the singular *jǫtunn* has an alliterative rank of 56% (50 examples; without *Vollzeilen*, 33 examples, rank 39%) whereas the plural has an alliterative rank of 84% (43 examples; without *Vollzeilen*, 35 examples, rank 80%), which is higher than that of *regin* (which alliterates in /r/). This difference in alliterative rank requires more detailed discussion than is possible here. However, observing that *álfar* is collocated with *æsir* or *jǫtnar* in 24 of its 26 alliterating occurrences, its high alliterative rank could potentially be a consequence of general patterns of the plural usage becoming increasingly formulaic as independent semantic usage became less frequent. In this case, the higher alliterative rank of a plural term for being with a vocalic onset would have gradually shifted from compositional use and a range of conventional formulae to increasingly narrow usage and suspension in a very limited number of formulae. As a historical process, this would result in a gradual change in the most familiar

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[6] The prominence of *æsir* may be a consequence of the fact that vocalic alliteration is more than twice as frequent as all but two other alliteration patterns, and 45% more frequent than the most common pattern of consonantal alliteration, according to Hollmérus's (1936: 34–35, 64) data on single alliteration patterns. This does not of course mean that *æsir* was never used outside of these contexts (cf. *DONP*: s.v. 'regin').

[7] Cf. alliterative combinations of *aldir–æsir* (*Ls* 8.5–6) and *æsir–álfar–engi maðr* (*Skm* 7.4–5) in which usage does not designate 'men' as a distinct category of being.

models for the range of uses of *álfar* in the eddic register.[8] *Álfar* is particularly collocated with *æsir* in the corpus (excurses 2 and 4) and the primary use of *álfr* in skaldic verse as a positive poetic synonym for 'man' (*LP*: 7) suggests a positive semantic value (see further Hall 2007: 26–34). Collocation with *jǫtnar*, the 'other' to the gods' in-group community (see Clunies Ross 1994), is found only here (cf. also Hall 2007: 132–134). This collocation is inconsistent with the semantics and associations of *álfar* in Old Norse poetry. In *Alvíssmál*, *álfar* occurs *a*) in an equivalent site (b-line), *b*) corresponding structure ($\{PP_B/S_B\}O_X$), *c*) use (vocalic alliteration), and *d*) systematic employment (inverse relation to consonantal alliteration) paralleling the *æsir* formula. The appearance of *álfar* in the first use of the *æsir* formula without correction suggests that the collocation was active in the mind of the informant or scribe (*Alv* 10.2; see table 2 and note). The parallel usage may be derivative of the *æsir–álfar* collocation, restructured owing to the use of 'men' in Ia as "the persistence of formulaic [word-]groups" (Hainsworth 1968: 106) (excursus 1). Its use in alliteration suggests that it has been applied in a primary function of alliteration corresponding to *æsir* as a poetic synonym rather than that there is any associative connection between *álfar* and *jǫtnar*. This is generally consistent with the priority given to alliteration as a determinant throughout the stanzas.

The accidental alliteration of *menn* and *jǫtnar* in a-line $O_X\mathbf{a}\{PP_B/S_B\}\mathbf{x}$ formulae is consistent with their broader use in eddic verse (as is *jǫtnar*'s alliterative rank at 77% in its 13 occurrences in the poem). The non-alliteration of *dvergar* in b-lines is also consistent with this term's low alliterative rank. Although other terms are found almost exclusively in *Vollzeilen*, their primary selection for alliteration (including *hel* in a IIb position) is consistent with their respective alliterative ranks. This offers a context of lexical usage in relation to alliteration. It reveals that patterns of 100% alliteration of certain terms in *Alvíssmál* (*álfar*, *æsir*, *halir*, *hel*, *vanir*) and not others (*dvergar*, *goð*, *jǫtnar*, *menn*) are not random, but are consistent with the preferential use of certain items of the register and not others for accomplishing alliteration.

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[8] Cf. Bybee & Torres Cacoullos 2009 and Wilson 2009 for examples of the historical development in individual formulae and formulaic usage (not bound by metrical constraints) over a period of eight or more centuries.

Inclination to Non-Variation

Acker (1998: 62) observes that Þórr's questions to the dwarf Alvíss open with the formulaic expression *hvé ARTICLE X heitir/heita)* 'How is/ are that/those X called', with the single variation in *Alv* 13.4 of *hverso* 'how so' for *hvé sá* 'how [is] that'. The manuscript transcription "hv^{r}so" is clearly distinct from "hve sa" etc. elsewhere. The phonetic variation is minimal and the semantic variation is nil. Acker (1998: 62) states that this is "the exception that proves the rule" regarding formulaic composition, "as the single instance in which the poet employed a minor variation." This pattern of non-variation is characteristic of the stanzas which are the focus here. The most frequently recurrent formulae do not exhibit even minimal variation.[9] Variation in an individual formula occurs only at its first introduction, and only in formulae occurring six times or less (see table 5).

Taken together, the minimal variations listed in table 5 have several significant implications. First, these variations are not randomly occurring, and their pattern of occurrence does not appear attributable to scribal error or scribal variation. Second, transcription appears to provide an accurate representation of semantically light or void elements realized in the formulae of each stanza. The regular omission of the conjunction (C) *en* from the *álfar X* lines can therefore be considered accurately representative of the realization. Third, the text aspires to non-variation in the use of formulae: variations occur only in less frequently occurring formulae and are eliminated in the recurrence of formulae in repetition. This suggests that these variations are related to memory rather than æsthetics or semantics (for a similar case related to dialects of

Table 5. *Variations in formulae in Alvíss's lexical index.*

Alv 10.2: The *æsir* formula exhibits the term *álfar* in its first of three uses (table 2 and note).

Alv 12.6: The *kalla dvergar X* formula omits the verb in the first of its five c-line uses, which is also the first of seven overall uses of *dvergar* formulae.

Alv 14.3: The first use of *í helju* appears in a c-line as *kalla X helju í* (VO_XaPP_Ba), whereafter the formula *kalla í helju X* (VPP_BaO_Xa) occurs four times in c-lines without variation.

Alv 16.6: The *kalla X Y synir* formula (excursus 7) omits the verb in the first of its two uses.

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9 Editorial alternations between the conjunction (C) *en* 'and/but' and *enn* 'yet' reflect scribal variation in transcription ("ē", "en", "eN") leaving oral variation opaque.

singing in kalevalaic epic, see Frog 2011b: 54–55). Fourth, verb omission in IIa–c does not impact the semantics of these formulae. These form a series of parallel expressions following the initial appearance of the verb in Ic. Poetic syntax allows verb deletion in parallel lines (excursus 6). In *Alvíssmál*, the regular reproduction of the verb in IIc results in non-variation in all c-line formulae which appear alternately in Ic and IIc positions, in contrast to formula variation between uses in b-lines and c-lines (table 2). Fifth, ideals of non-variation in formula production in equivalent sites would provide and explanation for why variation in the word order of the *í helju* formula would not provide an acceptable solution for /h/-alliteration in *Alv* 14.3 and an alternative formula naming a different type of being was employed (excursus 11). If this is correct, it would emphasize the role of alliteration as a determinant in formula choice over the type of being named in the formula. Finally, ideals of non-variation conform to basic structural and syntactic models. The variations listed in table 5 do not conform to those ideal models and therefore do not appear to be generative according to ideal types. Another factor must be proposed which proved more significant:

> *Excursus 14.* Verb omission in two IIc sites cannot be attributed to an ideal generative template of a formula *kalla X Y* in which Y = a term in table 1 alliterating with X, and in a *Vollzeile*, when Y is metrically unsuited for the final troche, X and Y are inverted. Verbs are deleted in IIa and IIb as parallel lines to Ic. Verb deletion in IIc appears to continue this pattern owing to contextual interference of analogy. Similarly, the initial variation in the *í helju* formula employs a common strategy of a postposition in the final metrical position of a *Vollzeile* (cf. Dewey 2009: 86–87). The structure is used in the IIc position of each stanza in which Þórr questions the dwarf in the *Vollzeile* formula *heimi hverjum í* 'in each realm'. This formula had been repeated three times before the first *í helju* formula. Rather than being a purely generative variation, this variation in the *í helju* formula may be attributable to interference from preceding repetitions of the structure. Contextual interference appears more significant to these variations than continuity with ideal models for the line-types associated with the *Vollzeilen*.

Non-variation appears to be an ideal in the production of lines in these stanzas, and their use appears very systematic. Aspects of the process of production are betrayed in the variations encountered. They suggest that

generative models were employed in production, but that these were proximate models in sequential production rather than ideal models for realizing different sites within the stanza's conventions. The relationship to proximate models is also revealed in the attainment of ideal forms in repetitions – correcting one's 'mistakes', as it were. The data also suggests a relationship exhibited between repetition and fixity. On the one hand, there is no variation in formulae which are most frequent, and on the other, the sequential context appears to allow the avoidance of variation in subsequent repetitions.

Circumstances of Production – An Unknowable Factor

Documented eddic poetry presents the problem that no information is available concerning the process of documentation, but it remains a point requiring consideration. It is not certain whether the poems were recited before a scribe or written from memory. What can be said is that transcription would almost certainly require more time than performance, and it is therefore unlikely that the preserved poems were documented from full-blown performances. In this case, the transcription of poems was probably slow, tedious and disruptive. The elocution of poetry is generally characterized by a perceptible distinction from unmarked speech (Tsur 1992), and in traditions of oral poetry, "verse is generally sung verse" (Banti & Giannattasio 2004: 290), meaning that performance is marked by rhythmic-melodic templates although these might be distinguished from 'song' and 'singing' within that culture. Dictation inevitably impacts production (cf. Salminen 1934: 200–203; Lord 1960; Honko 1998: 81–88), and, for example, the degree of regularity in the *Alvíssmál* stanzas might be more pronounced in dictation than in a fuller performance because the aesthetics of minor variations are not relevant to that context.

Although it is common to think of formulae in terms of lexical units, the social realities of formulae are much more dynamic even in unmarked spoken language. Formulae often include, for example, literal meanings, discourse functions, pragmatics and associations, phonology, melody and rhythm (cf. Pawley 2009: 6–7). Lord (1960) placed great emphasis on melody because melody is an essential part of the poetic tradition and assumes a significant relation to formulae. Melody aids verbal memory in reproduction (Rubin 1995: 289). This is significant when considering the

ljóðaháttr meter because of the flexibility in the syllabic structure of a line. Although the potential variation in actualizing formulae may not be metrically significant (excursus 6), it does affect the rhythms of the lines (cf. Golston 2009). The non-variation of formulae in these stanzas presents (to varying degrees) different syllabic patterns for different formulae, suggesting that the different formulae had different rhythms. The omission of the verb from *kalla dvergar X* in IIc leaves the formula with the same syllabic rhythm as *álfar X* in IIb. If the lines of *ljóðaháttr* were dictated, the mnemonic support of melody would be lacking, as would be the rhythmic-melodic template of the associated melodic phrase which supported the distribution of semantically void elements in the line. The variations in the first use of less frequent formulae in *Alvíssmál* may have been impacted by contextual interference *because* the process of reproduction was dictated and the melodic-rhythmic templates which would be realized in full performance were not active.

Internalization, Crystallization and Memory-Based Production

Traditions are not 'learned' so much as acquired and internalized through exposure to and social participation in cultural practices. Oral-poetic systems and the textual entities maintained within them do not exist outside of contexts, values and associations: they are inherently bound up with ideologies. The internalization of these systems aurally is a form of register acquisition. Although it is not a separate language, the acquisition process is comparable to language acquisition with the common result that "the learners do not have much insight into either the units and rules being learned or the processes underlying the learning" (Rubin 1995: 140; cf. Lord 1960: 35–37). Lord (1960) presented a basic model of this process for South Slavic epic, outlining a process in which one begins with aspirations to more exact reproduction and only gradually develops a competence allowing increasing flexibility. This parallels Wray's (2002) description of needs-only analysis and usage-based approaches to language acquisition (cf. Goldberg 2006) as well as the cognitive facility to develop competence within the verbal system allowing rapid recall of both textual entities and compositional elements and strategies in order to accomplish appropriate expression (Rubin 1995; Harvilahti 2000). Within a tradition of short epic, the poetic system is acquired across multiple songs and the degree of specialization is not as essential to per-

formance. Competence requires a broader knowledge-base in material circulating in the poetic system. The greater degree of fixity to which shorter compositions and compositional units are inclined also impacts the degree to which competence involves skills in versatile and flexible handling of formulae, particularly in traditions where variation is minimized rather than maximized in production.

The binary model of improvization versus memorization cannot effectively account for the range of fixity and variation in the formulae of Alvíss's lexical indices. When approaching degrees of verbal fixity and variation in the production of flexible prose narration, Anna-Leena Siikala proposed the term *crystallization* for the degree of relative fixity which verbal elements obtain in the memory of an individual through experience and practice (Siikala 1990; cf. Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1996). Crystallization is particularly valuable as a tool for approaching oral traditional systems in which crystallization interacts with the individual's competence in registers and schemas underlying performative practices relevant to the process of learning new material and the types of variation between performances (Harvilahti 2000). Thus in *Alvíssmál*, more frequently recurring lines in the stanza exhibit a higher degree of crystallization in the memory of the performer. The variation in the *í helju* formula (excursus 14) exhibits a flexible use of the formula which is potentially indicative of competence in the system in spite of general inclinations toward non-variation. Once the formula had been raised from long-term memory into short-term memory, the ideal template could be maintained in subsequent reproductions.

The formulae described here have been approached as open-slot variable expressions. In *Alvíssmál*, a limited set of open-slot formulae are repeated 1–13 times. In each repetition, the slot-filler is semantically restricted to a synonym of the first term in the stanza. On average, five of the six synonyms in each stanza (64 out of 78 total lines) are associated with an alliteration constraint. Each slot-filler contains one metrically stressed position (or possibly two in *Vollzeilen*) with 0–3 unstressed syllables. The rhythmic-melodic template for the realization of these lines therefore varies even for a particular formula within a particular site. The intersection of these factors with the inclination to non-variation would support the crystallization of the formula+slot-filler combination within the memory of the individual – who, if following convention (cf. Harvilahti 1992b), would not pursue and develop potentialities for variation. The probability of the slot-fillers crystallizing in the open-slot formula is increased by the model of needs-only analysis, according to which whole lines as units of expression could be the verbal level at which a poem

began to be internalized. Whole-line formulae crystallizing in the memory of the individual may be reflected in the occurrence of whole lines in more than one of Alvíss's lexical indices:

Excursus 15. The IIb-line of stanza 24 is repeated in stanza 32. In stanzas 24 and 32, the semantically obscure *álfar laga-staf* 'elves [call it] (?)the stuff of drinks' is listed among terms for 'sea' and 'seed, grain', respectively. The form of repetition seen in the *álfar* formula is unlikely to emerge within the poem in other lines because the slot-filler carries a pattern of alliteration in all but b-lines realized with an *álfar*, *æsir* or *hel* formula (i.e. 14 out of 78 lines). If this term means something like 'the stuff of drinks', it would be appropriate for grain as that from which alcohol is made. The first element is connected with expressions for 'sea', and it may appear in stanza 24 owing to that association. (For discussion of *lagastaf*, see *KLE* III: 353–356, 367.) The line realized in IIb of stanza 24 may not have been the desired line, just as elsewhere lines were realized in other than their ideal form (table 5). Whatever the cause, the example shows that the formula and slot-filler were strongly enough associated to co-occur in alternative contexts although they were not connected by alliteration.

Excursus 16. The possibility addressed in excursus 15 is supported by evidence that there was a disruption or interruption before transcribing stanza 24. The scribe shifted to abbreviating *álfar* "al." in stanzas 18–22 and abbreviating *jǫtnar* "ia/" in 20 and "io" in 22, but returns to transcribing both in full in stanza 24. This is indicative of some sort of change in circumstances or attitude (cf. also the discontinuity between *Alv* 23.4 and 24.1). In addition to the *álfar lagastaf* line, the Ic-line *kalla vág vanir* 'the *vanir* call it wave' = 'sea' seems to be repeated as Ic in stanza 26, where it should refer to 'fire' (*KLE* III: 353, 357–358). Stanza 24 begins a new line with a large capital set into the margin and thus may have been a practical place to stop. The peculiarities of this stanza may simply be an outcome of picking up documentation in the middle of the poem after an interruption. Whatever the case, these features support the probability that there has been a jumbling not simply of open-slot formulae but of whole lines as compositional units following the disruption.

The crystallization of a slot-filler in an open-slot formula is not surprising when the slot-filler falls subject to multiple metrical and semantic constraints on the one hand (cf. Rubin 1995: 257–298) and the open-slot

formula in which it appears is not generally productive of new lines. These factors limit variation in repetition and invariance in repetition supports the process of crystallization in memory. This does not mean that all lines were equally crystallized, although the corpus does not allow statistical comparisons in that regard. However, conventions of non-variation in production are socially communicated, and the internalization of poems is based on production by individuals in social practice. Independently documented texts of a poem reflect the internalized understanding and knowledge of (presumably) different individuals, filtered through the processes of production and documentation. It is problematic to attempt to describe a direct relationship between two such independent realizations. However, both realizations can be approached as the outcome of social processes related to production and transmission (as well as documentation), and therefore can potentially offer insight into those processes.

Alvíssmál in the Codex Regius and Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*

Stanzas appearing as *Alvíssmál* 20 and 30 are also preserved in quotations in the *Skáldskaparmál* portion of Snorri's *Edda*. These will be referred to as *Sn* 332 and *Sn* 380 according to the numbering in Faulkes' (1998) edition. Snorri attributes these and three additional stanzas to "*Alsvinnsmál*" (Faulkes 1998: 89, 90, 99). This title suggests that the central figure in the knowledge exchange was known to Snorri as *Al-svinnr* 'All-Shrewd' rather than *Al-víss* 'All-Wise'. The three additional stanzas are a series and in a different meter (cf. Quinn 1992), presenting the possibility that Snorri may have known a much less regular and systematic exchange of question and answer. The stanzas are quoted here in parallel with variations (beyond orthographic) indicated in italic font:

Alv 20	*Sn* 332
Ia Vindr heitir með mǫnnom,	Vindr heitir með mǫnnum,
Ib enn [ms. "va/oþr"] með goðom,	en vǫnsuðr með goðum,
Ic kalla gneggiuð ginregin,	kalla gneggjuð ginnregin,
IIa opi iotnar,	œpi jǫtnar,
IIb álfar *dyn*fara,	*en* alfar *gný*fara,
IIc *kalla* í helio *hviðuð*.	*heitir* í helju *hlummuðr*.

Alv 30

Ia   Nótt heitir með mǫnnom,
Ib   enn niól *með goðom*,
Ic   kall*a* grím*o* ginregin,
IIa *óliós* iotnar,
IIb álfar svefngaman,
IIc *kalla* dvergar draumnio[r]un.

Sn 380

Nótt heitir með mǫnnum
en njól*a í helju*,
kall*uð er* grím*a með goðum*,
ósorg kalla jǫtnar,
álfar svefngaman,
dvergar draumnjǫrun.

Alv 20

Ia   Wind [it] is called among men,
Ib   but 'waerer' among gods,
Ic   call [it] neigher, the great-gods,
IIa howler, giants,
IIb elves, *din*-traveller,
IIc *call* [it] in Hel *sqauller*.

Sn 332

Wind [it] is called among men,
but (?)wa*nd*erer among gods,
call [it] neigher, the great-gods,
howler giants,
but elves, *roar*-traveller,
[it] *is called* in Hel *resounder*.

Alv 30

Ia   Night [it] is called among men,
Ib   but darkness *among gods*,
Ic   call [it] mask, *the great-gods*,
IIa without *light* [call it] giants,
IIb elves, sleep-enjoyment,
IIc dwarves *call* [it] dream-goddess.

Sn 380

Night [it] is called among men
but darkness *in Hel*,
[it] *is* call*ed* mask *among gods*,
without *care call* [it] giants,
elves, sleep-enjoyment,
dwarves [call it] dream-goddess.

Variations between poetic synonyms appear in *vǫuðr*[?]–*vǫnsuðr*, *dyn-fari*–*gnýfari*, *hlummuðr*–*hviðuðr*, *njól*–*njóla*, and *óljós*–*ósorg*. These variations look more significant than they are. The Codex Regius reading "va/oþr" appears to be missing a medial consonant or consonant cluster and may be a transcription or copying error for *vǫnsuðr* (the significance of which is unclear; cf. the absent "r" in "draumnioun" in *Alv* 20.6). Similarly, *njól*–*njóla* are variant forms of the same term 'darkness'. *Dyn-fari* 'din-traveller' and *gný-fari* 'roar-traveller' are compounds in which the first elements are very close poetic synonyms (cf. Frog 2009: 234–241) and the second element is consistent. *Hlummuðr* 'resounder' and *hviðuðr* 'squaller' are different terms, but they are semantically very similar. Both are deverbal nouns of the same type and only differ by the verb stem within the alliteration pattern. Only *ó-ljós* 'without light' and *ó-sorg* 'without care' exhibit semantic variation, although both maintain the strategy of alliterating on the prefix (excursus 5), and like all other terms only vary by one syllable. None of these variations impact the pattern of alliteration, and only *njól*–*njóla* (which are two forms of the same word) varies the number of syllables and thereby the rhythmic-melodic template. This suggests that variation between these terms was not free in

social transmission, but conditioned by alliteration, semantics and rhythm. The limitation of variation to a single syllable suggests that the "interrelated factors of sound and sense" (Nagler 1974: 1) may have extended to a more fundamental level of a phonemic sequence conjoined with a rhythmic-melodic template – what Michael N. Nagler (1974) described as a "preverbal Gestalt".

Formula use exhibits a broad range of variation, although never disrupting alliteration. The formula (?) *en X í helju* (CO_XPP_B) occurs in *Sn* 380.2. This is structurally equivalent to *en X með goðum* (CO_XPP_B). The latter has been adapted to a c-line where *Alv* 30.3 has the poetic synonym *ginn-regin* carry the /g/-alliteration. When *ginn-regin* appears in *Sn* 332, this variation may reflect a less rigorously structured handling of formulae rather than a lack of competence. Additional variation occurs in verbs. *Heita* 'to call' appears in a c-line in *Sn* 332.6 but in *Alvíssmál* only occurs in Ia (deleted in Ib). This variation in verb may be connected to alliteration. The use of the *með goðum* formula is not accompanied by *heita* but by *kalluð er* 'is called', never used in *Alvíssmál*. A consequence of using the *með goðum* formula in Ic is that the verb *kalla* cannot be deleted from the [*en*] *X* [*kalla*] *jǫtnar* formula in IIa (excursus 6), as is consistently done in *Alvíssmál*. This verb is subsequently deleted from both IIb and IIc. In contrast to the *álfar X* formula in *Alvíssmál*, the conjunction *en* appears in *Sn* 332.5. It is very difficult to assess the degree to which the many minor variations in the formulae may be related to the dislocation of production from the poem (cf. excursus 16), the mode of presentation, or the functional priority of documenting each stanza as a practical list of poetic synonyms.

> *Excursus 17*. Whether the two formulae used in exceptional positions in *Sn* 380 (one only replacing its synonym) were conventional to Snorri or an unintentional consequence of the context and process of production and documentation, it was noticed by copyists. In the AM 748b I 4to (A) manuscript of *Skáldskaparmál*, Snorri's title of the quoted poem *Alsvinnsmál* is changed to *Alvíssmál* when introducing *Sn* 332 and *Sn* 380, whereas it is changed to *Kálfsvísa* in the attribution of the other stanzas. Lines Ib–Ic of *Sn* 380 have been corrected to agree with the forms found in the Codex Regius version of *Alvíssmál*, although IIa has not, suggesting that these were recognized by the scribe as having a conventional form, and should be emended. This is only one of many revisions undertaken by (presumably) the same enthusiastic scribe. The change of title to *Alvíssmál* increases the probability that the scribe's familiarity with the poem may be related to a manuscript

tradition, with the possibility that *Alvíssmál* was among the poems in the now fragmentary AM 748 Ia 4to collection of eddic poems. In the AM 748 II version of *Skáldskaparmál*, these corrections also appear, and both the verb and slot-filler of IIc of *Sn 332* are also corrected to agree with a form corresponding to the Codex Regius version. These corrections may both be from the memory of the scribes. They do not inform us of the degree to which the manuscript versions were being cycled back into oral discourse, yet they do reveal that formula use was considered to have limited ranges of acceptable variation.

In spite of the questions surrounding these verses and the possibility that Snorri knew the poem in a much different form, the variation remains extremely limited across these texts. The same basic set of formulae is found and (for the most part) formulae are maintained in equivalent sites. Variation is primarily restricted to semantically light or void elements in formulae. Variation in slot-fillers suggests that the maintenance of the phonetic integrity of the line was significant and bound to its semantic integrity. This supports the hypothesis that lines were inclined to crystallization as compositional units and that the similarities and variations evident in these stanzas reflect the outcome of social processes of negotiation in transmission. Reproduction appears to have been characterized by an ideal of non-variation at the social level, and subject to crystallization in memory at the level of the individual. This is consistent with verbal correspondence between the two recorded versions of *Vǫluspá* and stanzas of that poem recorded in Snorri's *Edda*,[10] and appears to reflect social conventions of eddic production and transmission.

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[10] The two manuscript versions of *Vǫluspá* have divergent ordering of stanzas, differences in wording, word order, in what stanzas and lines do or do not appear, and yet maintain a very high degree of verbal correspondence. The question remains disputed whether the two main versions have been independently documented from the oral tradition or derive from a common manuscript stemma, and also whether the stanzas quoted by Snorri are independent or belong to the same stemma. I am inclined to view these verbal correspondences and variations as the result of independent transcriptions (as e.g. Lönnroth 1981: 310–311; Quinn 1990). The variation seems consistent with patterns of verbal correspondence and variation found in the corpus of kalevalaic mythological poetry. An opposing view can be found, for example, in Ursula Dronke's (1997: 61–88) Herculean effort to integrate both versions and Snorri's quotations into a single manuscript stemma (cf. Lindblad 1978). On the one hand, the problems surrounding this issue are complicated by questions of the degree to which reading and the voiced reading performance (with aural reception) of texts may have interacted with oral culture rather than literacy and orality being exclusive categories (cf. Coleman 1996). On the other, there is evidence of what appears to be text-dependent paraphrasing of manuscript prose which proves problematic to attribute to either copying or scribal revisions, defying traditional manuscript stemma models and requiring alternative explanations and exegeses (see e.g. Heimir Pálsson 2010).

Implications of Non-Variation as a Production Ideal

Crystallization provides a tool for approaching relative degrees of fixity and variation in production. Production emerges at the intersection of *a*) competence in the internalized poetic system, *b*) crystallization of the poetic text in the memory of the individual, *c*) that individual's orientation and objectives in reproduction (cf. Siikala 1990; Harvilahti 1992b), and *d*) the context and mode of production (e.g. full realization in established rhythmic-melodic templates to entertain an audience). Processual production impacts formula use through *a*) the interference of preceding uses of the same or associable formulae resulting in a less ideal form; and *b*) stabilization of ideals of non-variation through repetitions. If these principles are approximately correct, it could offer insights into some features of other texts which are exceptional according to the inclination to non-variation, particularly where a pattern of being 'consistently inconsistent' can be identified. This can be illustrated with an example of the inversion of an ordered-pair merism (excursus 18), and three examples of a slot-filler fixed in an open-slot formula (excurses 19–21). Three examples from different poems are presented for the latter in order to show that they belonging to a pattern of language use, whereas various arguments and interpretations have been attached to each of these independently.

> *Excursus 18*. *Skírnismál* 7.4 presents the short line syndetic formula *æsir ok álfar*, consistent with convention as an ordered pair (excursus 2). In stanza 17.1–3, the collocation is repeated in the tripartite *æsir–álfar–vanir* (excursus 4) structure distributed across three formulaic short lines, which are then repeated in 18.1–3 as a question and answer exchange.

> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Hvat er þat álfa, né ása sona, né víssa vana? (*Skm* 17.1–3) | What is that of the elves, nor of the gods' sons, nor of the wise *vanir*? |
> | Emcat ec álfa né ása sona né víssa vana; (*Skm* 18.1–3) | I am not of the elves, nor of the gods' sons nor of the wise *vanir*; |

These repetitions are the only example of an inversion of the *æsir–álfar* ordered pair (which does not seem to impact the semantics of the merism). The order does not vary in repetitions. It is not possible to determine whether this inversion were inadvert or a conventional feature of the poem in the particular dialect of sing-

ing. However, the example supports the hypothesis that the syndetic short-line realization of the merism functioned as a distinct formula from the *æsir–álfar–vanir* form, as proposed in excursus 2. Whether or not the variation was conventionally established in the dialect of singing, this example supports the hypothesis that performers preferred to avoid noticeable verbal variation in repetitions. The fact that it was not corrected in repetition could be evidence that this use was not accidental.

Excursus 19. The use of *né* 'nor' in *Skírnismál* 17 lacks a negation in 17.1, presenting an unusual construction. The context of Gerðr questioning the arriving Skírnir about his identity is not consistent with asking a (rhetorical) question to which she anticipates a negative answer (cf. Gering 1927–1931 I: 224). The interpretation that the negation applies only to parallel terms but not to *álfar*, to which a positive answer is expected (cf. von See et al. 177: 95–96) is inconsistent with uses of the *æsir–álfar* merism and corresponding use of *né* elsewhere (cf. *Hm* 13.5–8). The negating lines correspond verbatim in repetition. Rather than anticipating a negative answer on the part of the questioner, they could anticipate the negative answer on the part of the performer. More likely, the inclination to non-variation allowed *né ása* [?*álfa] *sona* and *né víssa vana* to crystallize into fixed formulae across repetitions rather than an open-slot formula in which *eða* 'or' and *né* 'nor' alternated. The dominance of *né* in the non-varying form of the formula would be attributable to the greater centrality of Skírnir's response in the exchange. In this case, the formula as a unit was subject to non-variation in its primary function of representing the *æsir–álfar*(*–vanir*) merism across parallel lines (excursus 4). This contextual use and the poetry's inclination to non-variation thereby suspended *né* in both uses of the formula without need for it to be analyzed as a compositional element. Non-variation in formulaic use may thus have levelled such grammatical incongruities.

Excursus 20. In the Codex Regius *Vǫluspá*, the a-line formula in *unz þriár qvómo / þursa meyiar* 'once three came, giant maidens' (*Vsp* 8.5–6) is repeated verbatim in the description of three male gods at the creation of human beings (*Vsp* 17.1–2: *Unz þriár qvómo / ór því liði*). The feminine *þrjár* 'three' in the repetition is consistently revised in published editions of the text to masculine *þrír* in

order to agree with masculine *æsir* in the following long line. This grammatical inconsistency cannot be satisfactorily explained as scribal error.[11] However, inconsistencies at the level of composi-

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11   Ursula Dronke's (1997: 65) assertion that "This must be a scribal error" is characteristic of approaching this passage, which she explains as occurring before the hypothetical interpolation of stanzas 10–16, proposing that after *Vsp* 8.7–8 and *Vsp* 9, the scribe "caught sight of, or remembered" *Vsp* 8.5 "as he wrote 17/1 [...] and has incorrectly written that." This does not consider it possible that the form could be orally based nor explain why such a simple grammatical error of gender agreement should be maintained uncorrected in manuscript transmission, nor does it consider that in the Codex Regius manuscript, the initial use of "III" is replaced by spelling out the feminine form in the repetition, eliminating potential ambiguity. (The suggestion that the scribe "remembered" the earlier line rather than forming it compositionally is, however, consistent with the hypothesis outlined here.). If the interpolation of stanzas 10–16 is accepted as occurring in manuscript transmission, line 17.1 would be consciously selected and considered as the opening line of a new section of text for copying. This makes a mechanical copying error of a grammatical inconsistency in the second word difficult to justify. This problem is accentuated in the comparison of the Codex Regius and Hauksbók texts, which situates this unvarying grammatical 'error' as an island between variation in the final lines of the proposed interpolation (which Dronke described as "very difficult to reconstruct: it seems to be a build-up of errors"), and the b-line which follows it. In Hauksbók, this b-line presents a variation on the *þursa meyjar* formula (*contra* Dronke (1997: 11), whose unique reading of the manuscript text is directly connected to her interpretation of the line being taken directly from *Vsp* 8.6 by a copyist (1997: 64–65)). This is either an indication of *a*) the a-line and b-line being sufficiently indexically associated that an inappropriate alternative was drawn up in oral presentation (cf. Lord 1960: 75–77), potentially as a consequence of the mode of presentation (e.g. disruptive dictation), or indicative of *b*) a scribe's awareness of the grammatical incongruity of gender in the a-line which requires correction (proposed by Dronke 1997: 88). The latter explanation is faced with the peculiarity of a scribal emendation based on the grammatical gender of *þrjár* to form a grammatically coherent and metrically well-formed long line contrasting with the semantic content of the stanza rather than simply emending *þrjár* to *þrír* according to the semantic content of that stanza. This b-line has been erased in Hauksbók and *þrjár* corrected, but the lack of a supplemented b-line suggests that these 'corrections' were made by someone who lacked knowledge of alternatives for the b-line (either from another version of the text or oral tradition) and did not generate one, in contrast to the scribe attributed with the revision. The later revision is thus potentially attributable to someone no more fluent in the eddic poetic idiom and its conventions than most of us are from reading eddic poetry today (cf. editorial convention of emending *þrjár* to **þrír*). Subscription to the manuscript stemma model faces the problem of why the inappropriate gender of the number should be the nexus of conscious attention and revisions in Hauksbók (even given priority over the semantics of the stanza in the supposed revision of the b-line) and yet be sustained uncorrected and presumably unobserved in earlier manuscript transmission. According to the interpretation proposed here, the occurrence of the feminine for a masculine form in repetition is simply a function of the poetic system rather than an 'error', and thus would not require 'correction' in either documentation or manuscript transmission. Rather than providing evidence for either independent documentation from the oral tradition or both versions belonging to a common manuscript stemma, this approach offers an explanation for why the feminine form would enter into transcription and survive in manuscript transmission, even in cases of proposed radical scribal revisions to

tional elements may have been subordinated to non-variation in repetition and unproblematic within the poetic grammar. The corresponding occurrence of *þrjár* found in the Hauksbók version of *Vǫluspá* supports the interpretation of this form as conventional and acceptable within the poetic grammar. Even if the relationships between these two versions of *Vǫluspá* remain obscure, together they support the probability that the repetition of the grammatical form *þrjár* employed in the first usage was consistent with the eddic tradition, both in the documentation of the poetry and allowing it to remain unrevised in manuscript transmission.

Excursus 21. In Þrymskviða, Þórr says to Freyja, *við scolom aca tvau / í iotunheima* 'we two shall drive / to Giantland' (*Þkv* 12.7–8). This alliterating long line is repeated verbatim by Loki to Þórr eight stanzas later (*Þkv* 20.5–6). The use of neuter *tvau* 'two' in the first case is grammatically correct in Old Norse when referring to a group containing both men and women. Its use in the repetition is not grammatically consistent with the group consisting of two men (requiring the masculine), or with reference to both men disguised as women (requiring the feminine). The repetition of the whole line belongs to an intratextual contrast between Þórr's unsuccessful command to Freyja and Loki's successful command to Þórr disguised as Freyja. The interpretation of *tvau* in the second use as referring to Þórr as effeminized and Loki as masculine[12] would place particular emphasis on the grammatical form in repetition which is not found elsewhere. The repetition of a number in the gender of its first use directly parallels the use of *þrjár* in *Vǫluspá*. This supports an interpretation according to a pattern of language use within the eddic register. This appears to belong to the inclination toward non-variation in repetitions where nothing promotes grammatical analysis of the formulae.

The inclination to non-variation exhibited in *Alvíssmál* as an individual example of the textual entity was compared with the corresponding passages documented in Snorri's *Edda* revealing that this inclination be-

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the overall text, only being 'corrected' later in the Hauksbók manuscript by someone less competent in or familiar with the poetic idiom – someone who read the text compositionally rather than formulaically.

[12] See the discussion in Heinrichs 1972: 505–507; see also list of works cited in McKinnell 2000: 17, note 39; cf. McKinnell's alternative interpretation that Loki has undergone physical transformation while Þórr is merely disguised (2000: 5).

longed to social processes of production and transmission. These comparisons also revealed that lines formed much tighter and complex units than would be expected, as particularly reflected in the maintenance of acoustic and rhythmic integrity of slot-fillers within a line. The preceding examples reveal that within a poem, unconventional uses of a formula could be subject to corresponding non-variation in repetition rather than being random (excursus 18). It also argued that when occasional grammatical peculiarities in eddic poems are taken together, they suggest that these are semantically void consequences of the crystallization of slot-fillers within lines repeated in the poem (excurses 19–21).

Overview

The preceding discussion has outlined a linguistic approach to the formula in eddic verse according to morpheme-equivalence. This differentiates the formula from other phenomena associated with meter, syntax, structure and collocative language use, even if the meaning of the morpheme is not resolved beyond acknowledgement as a coherent sign. This was illustrated through different examples of the relationship of the semantics of a lexical item to use within the poetic register generally, and to a formula as a morpheme-equivalent unit. Analysis of the open-slot formulae in the repeating stanzas of Alvíss's responses to Þórr revealed a strong inclination to non-variation in production, even in elements which were semantically light or void within the formula. It was proposed that particular rhythmic-melodic templates were associated with the realization of these formulae according to equivalent sites and may have been a significant factor in the non-variation of unstressed positions within a formula. Alliteration was shown to be a determinant on word choice and formula choice. Where narrative context became a dominant determinant on formula choice, alliteration remained a determinant on other elements (excursus 9). Relationships to alliteration and meter shaped the use of formulae into site-specific invariable forms which are best approached as discrete formulae most probably each internalized as a distinct verbal sequence within a distinct rhythmic-melodic template or corresponding set of templates. Formulae were shown to exhibit relative degrees of fixity in reproductive practice in relation to frequency of occurrence. Although this non-variation may have been highlighted and other (e.g. ornamental) variation levelled owing to the mode of presentation and documentation, the observation of relative frequency remains valid.

Crystallization was employed as a tool for approaching relative degrees of fixity and variation in production. Production was approached at the intersection of *a*) competence in the internalized poetic system, *b*) crystallization of the poetic text in the memory of the individual, *c*) that individual's orientation and objectives in reproduction, and *d*) the context and mode of production. Processual production was proposed to impact formula use through *a*) the interference of preceding uses of the same or associable formulae resulting in a less ideal form; and *b*) stabilization of ideals of non-variation through repetitions. Metrical and semantic constraints and inclinations to non-variation were hypothesized to incline toward the crystallization of open-slot formulae and contextually invariable slot-fillers into full line formulae maintained in part by a distinct rhythmic-melodic structure of the whole. Comparison with the stanzas preserved in Snorri's *Edda* supported the hypothesis that lines became highly crystallized in reproductive practice. It is not possible to estimate the degree to which crystallized repetition of formulae and associated rhythmic-melodic templates may have varied from individual to individual or from dialect to dialect. However, the maintenance of phonetic and syllabic structures in the wake of variation supports the probability that these functioned as whole-line compositional units in which slot-fillers had crystallized, minimizing potential ranges for variation. The models developed from this discussion were related to examples from other poems in the eddic corpus which suggested inclinations to non-variation in reproduction even when this contrasted with broader conventions of formula use or resulted in grammatical inconsistencies if analyzed compositionally rather than formulaically. The *Alvíssmál* stanzas exhibit remarkable rigour in the structuring, organization and deployment of formulae. It is unclear to what degree *Alvíssmál* may be exceptional in this regard or the degree to which it is impacted by the repeating series of stanzas within the poem. Detailed research on additional poems and types of formula are required in order to situate *Alvíssmál* in a broader context.

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