

Eddic Listing Techniques and the Coherence of “Rúnatal”

Listing was a fundamental activity of early poets, having its roots in the need for the efficient organization of information that had to be stored in the memory, as well as in the mnemonic requirements of oral delivery. Of the many lists in the Edda, some seem to have been composed for purely rhetorical purposes (for instance, Gunnarr’s proud list of his own magnificent wealth in answer to Atli’s messenger in *Atlaqviða in grænlenzca* 7). Most, however, even when they are employed for rhetorical purposes, have as their primary function the transmission of information, experience, or advice: the passing on of a culture. Such lists, and they are the ones with which this article is concerned, may be called traditional lists. An example is the lengthy catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn (*Grímnismál* 46–54), which is so skilfully used by the *Grímnismál* poet to bring his poem to its climax, but which has as its primary function the storing and transmission of mythological information. Such information features prominently in the eddic lists, and there are other informative lists concerned with genealogies or practical lore. Equally prominent are lists with a didactic function, such as ordering or direct admonition. Such lists are likely to have been deliberately composed and learned, rather than recreated with each telling as oral narrative may have been. Listing of this sort is, in fact, quite distinct from poetical activities such as narrative. It tends towards greater density and concentration, and is organized, not by such stratagems as a sequence of events, but by a principle which is individual to each list and by which all its items are related to one another. An identifiable organizing principle of this sort, and a minimum of three items, define the term *list* as it will be used in this article. The term *catalogue* will be used to distinguish either a series of structurally independent lists sharing the same topic, such as the *Vǫlospá* catalogue of dwarfs (strophes 10–16), or a list in which the items are not just identified but expanded with additional information, such as the *Hávamál* catalogue of charms (“Ljóðatal,” strophes 146–63). Whether the many lists of the traditional type in the poems of the Codex Regius were originally composed orally or in writing is not at issue here. Whatever the answer to that question, it seems

safe to say that the techniques used were inherited from an oral tradition and had been developed with the needs of a reciter and a listening audience in mind. These techniques are readily identifiable in the eddic lists, some of which are more complex and more carefully constructed than others, but all of which show a keen awareness of the principles of list construction.

Among the various problems the lists have posed for editors of the eddic poems is the fact that they frequently display metrical irregularity and are consequently difficult to group into conventional strophes. An example is the *Hávamál* list of things not to be trusted (strophes 85–89), which Neckel and Kuhn (1983) print as two and a half run-together *málaháttr* strophes followed by two normal strophes, one *ljóðaháttr* and one *málaháttr*. If the structure of the list itself were followed, it would be divided into sections, only the last of which comprises a regular strophe: namely, a first section (85–86.2) of ten items in which a pattern of “present participle + dative noun” predominates, a second section (86.3–88) of ten more varied items followed by a closing device incorporating items 21 and 22, and a third, more loosely structured concluding section (89). (For further discussion of this list, see Jackson 1991, 132–34.) Metrical irregularity has sometimes contributed to editorial judgements about the textual reliability of some of the lists in the Codex Regius. An example is the series of lists in “Rúnatal” which have to do with the origin and use of runes. These lists (*Hávamál* 142–45) are very mixed metricaly and, at first sight, they seem to have little direct connection with the strophes which precede them, or even with each other. Consequently they have often been regarded as a collection of miscellaneous fragments, probably resulting from muddled transmission or unskilled interpolation. Gering and Sijmons, for instance, regard them as clearly fragments of longer poems, inserted here by an editor who put the whole *Hávamál* collection together (1927, 152). In particular, they believe (153) that strophes 144–45 could not have belonged together originally because they employ three different metres: in 144, six-lift long lines; in 145.1–5, *ljóðaháttr*; and in 145.6–9, *fornyrðislag*. Boer also regards the strophes as interpolation, adding the further reason that strophes 138–41 are spoken by Óðinn, but 142–45 cannot be because they refer to him in the third person (1922, 47–48). These arguments have prevailed, and the most recent editor of *Hávamál* concludes that the four strophes of “Rúnatal” which contain the lists are “very miscellaneous (not least metricaly) and are plainly a jumble of fragments” (Evans 1986, 34). His view is shared by another recent commentator, who describes the whole of “Rúnatal” (*Hávamál* 138–45) as “an island of incoherence” in the poem (North 1991, 127). This article will attempt a reassessment of these judgements and argue that, if the lists in “Rúnatal” are looked at as lists and not as strophes, and if they are analysed according to listing techniques rather than according to metrical criteria, they are in fact well structured and coherent, and they show no evidence of fragmentation. It is hoped that, besides defending the integrity of “Rúnatal,” the following argument will show the relevance of listing techniques to

the study of the poems in the Edda and their usefulness as a supplement to metrical criteria when the integrity of the text is in question.

I am very aware that when, in the following discussion, I mention transitional strophes and parallel couplets which act as transition signals, closing devices, and so on, I am often actually referring to the eddic metre *galdragalag*, and that when I refer to the function of alliteration in linking items and item pairs, what I am actually talking about is the normal alliterative pattern that underlies all eddic metres. However, by switching the focus from the metrical function of these features to their function as listing devices, I hope to demonstrate that, at least as far as lists are concerned, regularity of metre is not an overriding goal; rather, metre is a tool that may be used by the list-maker to achieve other objectives. That mixed metres may be deliberately used for stylistic effects in narrative has been cogently argued by Ursula Dronke in her discussion of the mixed metres in *Atlaqviða* (1969, 20–22), and I have suggested elsewhere that a change in metre contributes to a rhetorical effect in one eddic list (see the discussion of *Hávamál* 88, Jackson 1991, 132–33). Another approach is adopted by Quinn who suggests that changes in metrical form may signal to the audience a change in a speaker’s discursive stance (1992, 101). If metre is indeed employed in these ways in eddic poems, then metrical irregularity in a list need not, in itself, be a cause for concern about the accuracy of the transmission of the text. I begin with an analysis of three typical eddic lists which illustrate both the basic principles of list-making and some of the techniques to be discussed in the subsequent analysis of the lists in “Rúnatal.” The first two examples are, respectively, the initial and final lists in the *Grímnismál* catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn. Each is complete in itself, in spite of being part of the larger catalogue. Their primary function is to store and transmit information.

Grímnismál 46–48: The First *heiti* List

The first *heiti* list begins in strophe 46, after a regular *galdragalag* strophe (45) which prepares the way:

- 45 Svipom hefi ec nú ypt fyr sigtíva sonom,
við þat scal vilbiorg vaca;
- 4 ollom ásom þat scal inn koma,
Ægis becci á,
Ægis drecco at.
- 46 Hétomc Grímr, hétomc Gangleri,
Herian oc Hiálmberi,
- 4 Þeccr oc Þriði, Þundr oc Uðr,
Helblindi oc Hár.
- 47 Saðr oc Svipall oc Sanngettall,
Herteitr oc Hnicarr,
- 4 Bileygr, Báleygr, Bolvercr, Fiolnir,
Grímr oc Grímnir, Glapsviðr oc Fiolsviðr.

- 48 Síðhotttr, Síðsceggr, Sigföðr, Hnicuðr,
 Alföðr, Valföðr, Atríðr oc Farmatýr;
 5 einu nafni hétomc aldregi,
 síz ec með fólcom fór.

(Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 66–67)

[Now I have raised my countenance before the sons of the victory-gods; with that shall the wished-for rescue waken; that shall bring in all the Æsir to Ægir's benches, to Ægir's drink-gathering. I named myself Grímr, I named myself Gangleri, Herjan and Hjálmbéri, Þekkr and Þriði, Þundr and Uðr, Helblindi and Hár, Saðr and Svipall and Sanngetall, Herteitr and Hnikarr. Bileygr, Báleygr, Bqlverkr, Fjolvnr, Grímr and Grímnir, Glapsviðr and Fjolsviðr, Síðhotttr, Síðsceggr, Sigföðr, Hnikuðr, Alföðr, Valföðr, Atríðr, and Farmatýr. Never, since I have been going about among warrior-bands, have I named myself with one name.]

Like so many other eddic lists, this one displays metrical irregularity if we try to make it fit into normal strophes. Neckel and Kuhn's text divides it into three: strophe 46 is an acceptable *ljóðahátttr* strophe; strophe 47 begins in the same way, but diverges in the second half, where a long line (47.6–7) in the final position replaces the expected full line; strophe 48 reverses this pattern, having a long line (48.3–4) in the first half in place of the first expected full line and then ending with the normal *ljóðahátttr* pattern. For the purposes of analysing the list, I will rearrange it according to its list structure. The numbers in the left-hand column are item numbers.

TRANSITION SIGNAL

Ægis becci á,
 Ægis drecco at.

a couplet formed by near-repetition closes the transitional strophe.

PART ONE

- 1–2 Hétohc Grímr, hétomc Gangleri,
 3–4 Herian oc Híálmberi,
 5–6 Þeccr oc Þriði,
 7–8 Þundr oc Uðr,
 9–10 Helblindi oc Hár.
 11–13 Saðr oc Svipall oc Sanngetall,
 14–15 Herteitr oc Hnicarr,

a distinctive opening item pair signals the beginning of a list,
 the first pattern comprises item pairs joined by *oc*,

a change to a triplet signals the approaching midpoint and a return to the former pattern closes part one,

PART TWO

- 16–17 Bileygr, Báleygr,
 18–19 Bqlvercr, Fjolvnr,
 20–21 Grímr oc Grímnir,
 22–23 Glapsviðr oc Fjolsviðr.
 24–25 Síðhotttr, Síðsceggr,
 26–27 Sigföðr, Hnicuðr,
 28–29 Alföðr, Valföðr,
 30–31 Atríðr oc Farmatýr;

a new pattern of item pairs without a conjunction distinguishes part two,
 two pairs return to the pattern of part one and providing a link,
 return to the new pattern,

a closing pair adds an extra item and returns to the first pattern,

CONCLUSION

eino nafni hétomc aldregi,
 síz ec með fólcom fór.

a concluding comment refers back to item 1 and repeats *hétomc*, providing a frame.

Understanding of the form of this list, and of the other lists to be discussed, will be enhanced by regarding it as composed with two recipients in mind: a listening audience and a reciter who needs to be able to memorize it accurately. For both, but especially for the reciter, a list is more difficult and requires greater concentration than a narrative. If the list content is important, and the prominence given to the eddic lists suggests that in their case it was, accuracy of transmission is especially necessary. The maker of such a list will have two major objectives before him when organizing his material: he must make it intelligible to the audience and he must aid as much as possible the memory of the reciter. He can do this in the following ways.

(1) By signalling to the audience that a transition has arrived and that they are about to hear a list rather than a narrative. If they are prepared, they will follow more easily, especially if the list is long and dense, and they will be alerted to listen for the organizing principle of the list and the reason why they are hearing it. As a signal the list-maker can choose between a number of introductory and opening devices, sometimes using either one type or the other, sometimes using both.

(a) *Introductory Devices.* These are separate from the list itself and may consist of an obvious introductory statement or a less blatant signal of some kind. An example of the former is the announcement that a list will follow found before the final list in the *Vǫlospá* catalogue of dwarfs (“Mál er, dverga í Dvalins liði . . . telia” [It is time to list the dwarfs in Dvalinn’s company] [14.1–4]).¹ The *heiti* list-maker has chosen one of the latter: a transitional strophe ending in an emphatic couplet in which the second element is a slightly varied repetition of the first (“Ægis becci á, Ægis drecco at” [45.6–7]). In this case, the couplet ends a regular *galdralag* strophe (although this is not always the case with transitional couplets, as will be seen below). In the case of the first *heiti* list, the *galdralag* strophe makes a transition between the lists of mythological lore which have made up the bulk of the poem so far, and the new catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn which will bring the poem to its climax. The same device is used by the *Hávamál* poet in strophe 111 to make the transition between the narrative Gunnlǫð episode and the admonitory list, “Loddfáfnismál.” There, the couplet “Háva hǫllo at, Háva hǫllo í” [at Hávi’s hall, in Hávi’s hall] (111.9–10) is separated from the beginning of the list by an additional full line, “heyrða ec segia svá” [this is what I heard them say] (111.11), but it is a line which provides a direct link between the introductory strophe and the list which follows. In both cases the couplet signals to the audience that a transition has arrived, and that very likely a list will follow. In these two examples, the couplets stand out particularly because the second half-line is a repeat, with one element varied, of the first. Sometimes the device

1. All citations from eddic poems are taken from Neckel and Kuhn 1983.

is less obvious, and the couplet may be formed by two half-lines which are structurally parallel (that is, they have the same grammatical elements in the same order), but have less repetition. Examples are *Vǫlospá* 9.7–8 (“ór Brimís blóði oc ór Bláinn’s leggiom” [out of Brimir’s blood and out of Bláinn’s thigh-bones]), which stands before the catalogue of dwarfs, and *Hávamál* 145.8–9 (“þar hann upp um reis, er hann aprt of kom” [there he rose up, when he came back]) which stands before the catalogue of charms (“Ljóðatal”), neither of which forms part of a *galdragalag* strophe.

(b) *Opening Devices*. Unlike introductory devices, opening devices are part of the list itself and they incorporate at least one of its items. A common opening device, comparable in its straightforward approach to the announcement used as an introduction in the catalogue of dwarfs, is to begin explicit enumeration: for example, “Urð héto eina” [one was named Urðr] (*Vǫlospá* 20.5), “hiálp heitir eitt” [one is named “help”] (*Hávamál* 146.4). In longer catalogues this enumeration may be incorporated into a formula which acts as a refrain, as in these examples: “Segðu þat íþ eina, ef . . . þú, Vafðrúðnir, vitir” [Tell this first, if . . . you, Vafðrúðnir, know the answer] (*Vafðrúðnismál* 20.1–3); “Þat ræð ec þér íþ fyrsta, at þú . . .” [This I advise you first, that you . . .] (*Sigrdrífomál* 22.1–2). Again the *heiti* list-maker has chosen a less obvious method, one corresponding, in fact, to his introductory device: a distinctive opening item pair (“Hétomc Grímr, hétomc Gangleri,” 46.1–2). Like the introductory couplet, this item pair employs near-repetition. The same device is used to begin lists (or list sections) in *Sigrdrífomál*: “Þær ro með ásom, þær ro með álfom” [These are with the Æsir, these are with the elves] (18.5–6); “Þat ero bócrúnar, þat ero biargrúnar” [Those are book-runes, those are birth-runes] (19.1–2). Like the couplets employed as introductory devices in the first *heiti* list and in *Hávamál* 111, these opening item pairs stand out particularly because of the near repetition in their two halves. Sometimes, however, again as with the corresponding introductory device, the opening pairs are less obvious and are formed either by two half-lines which are structurally parallel, but which have less repetition (for example: *Vǫlospá* 18.1–2, “Qnd þau né átto, óð þau né hǫfðo” [They had no breath, they had no soul], which opens the list of the attributes of Askr and Embla) or by replacing repetition with rhyme (for example: *Hávamál* 85.1–2, “Brestanda boga, brennanda loga” [In a breaking bow, in a burning flame], which opens the list of things not to be trusted). Rhyming opening pairs are popular with the *Grímnismál* list-maker, and he employs them to open short lists of names in strophes 27 (“Síð oc Víð”), 29 (“Kǫrmt oc Qrmt”), 34 (“Góinn oc Móinn”), and 36 (“Hrist oc Mist”). The same device is used to open the second list in the *Vǫlospá* catalogue of dwarfs (“Fíli, Kíli,” 13.1). All of these distinctive item pairs signal to the audience that a list is beginning.

(2) By arranging the items in a logical order and ensuring that the audience knows what the list is about. A logical order and a clear organizing principle are also clearly helpful to the reciter. The *heiti* list-maker has chosen for his first list one of the simplest organizing techniques: an initial statement of the organizing principle (“hétomc” [I named myself]) on which all the items which follow are grammatically dependent. The same technique is used to open the list of superlatives in *Grímnismál* 44 (“Ascr Yggdrasils, hann er cæztr viðā” [Yggdrasill Ash, it is the most eminent of trees]) and the rune-location list in *Sigrdrífomál* 15–17 (“á scildi qvað ristnar” [he said they were carved on a shield]). When placed at the beginning of a list, such a statement acts as either an introductory or an opening device. Sometimes, however, it is deferred until later in the list (e.g., *Grímnismál* 27.8), or even to the end (e.g., *Grímnismál* 28.11–12), in which case it becomes a concluding or a closing device (see below), and sometimes it is not made explicit at all. In the first *heiti* list, however, the audience knows straight away what they are listening to. The repetition in item two emphasizes the point, as well as signalling that this is indeed the beginning of a list and not just a passing remark.

(3) By breaking up the contents of the list, especially if it is a long one, into units which can be easily digested by the audience and controlled by the reciter. A long series of names like those in the first *heiti* list would, if there were no internal structure, be difficult to listen to and difficult to remember. A common solution to this problem is to group the items in pairs, or sometimes triplets, using a repeated conjunction, alliteration, repetition, rhyme, and so on. The *heiti* list-maker has employed all of these strategies: items 3 and 4 are paired using a conjunction and alliteration, items 1 and 2 by repetition, items 22 and 23 by rhyme (for other examples see the short lists in *Grímnismál* 27, 28, 36, and 44, and the longer one in *Vǫlospá* 10–12). He has also adopted another common device, and that is the division of his list into sections, in this case into halves (see also, for instance, *Hávamál* 68 and 82). This enables the reciter to work towards, and then away from, a midpoint. If the sections are balanced in some way, as they are here by having an equal number of items (the final, thirty-first, item is a legitimate addition as will be explained below), that helps to prompt his memory and to reduce the chance that he will leave something out. Balance, both in its smaller structures and in its larger ones, is an essential feature of a well-constructed list. Some long lists are divided into more than two sections (as is the full catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn, which falls into three distinct parts) but then the sections themselves may be divided in halves.

(4) By maintaining the unity of his list. The *raison d'être* of a list is to give some form of unity to a quantity of disparate items, and breaking up a list in such a way that unity is lost would defeat the list-maker's primary objective. He must therefore make sure that the internal divisions he makes in his material, whether at the level

of an item pair or of a larger unit, remain clearly linked to one another. The *heiti* list-maker has employed unifying strategies at several different levels. The most important, at the level of the whole list, are the grammatical dependence of all the items on the initial phrase (pointed out above) and the framing device which will be discussed below. At the level of the list section, in this case the list halves, a link is provided by the return in part two (i.e., in items 20–23) to the predominant pattern of part one (an item pair joined by *oc*). At the level of item pairs, one pair is linked to the next in much the same way as the pairs themselves are joined, for instance by alliteration (item pairs 1–2 to 3–4, 5–6 to 7–8, 16–17 to 18–19, and so on), or by rhyme (26–27 to 28–29).

(5) By adding variety to the list. This helps the audience and the reciter, both of whom might forget the point, or even go to sleep, if the list were an endless enumeration of undifferentiated items. Giving a list internal structure, besides helping to make it more manageable, also helps to provide variety. An example in the first *heiti* list is the triplet of items joined by *oc* and by an alliterating *s* in items 11–13. This triplet breaks the established pattern of the first part of the list before it has a chance to get boring. Another example is the new pattern introduced in the second half of the list. It is denser and more compact than the earlier pattern, doing without conjunctions and relying more heavily on alliteration, assonance, and rhyme. It is at this point (*Grímnismál* 47.4–7) in the first *heiti* list, when a new pattern is introduced, that regularity of metre is sacrificed. The new pattern is itself broken in items 20–23, which have the double function of providing variety for part two and at the same time linking it with part one. In a long list variety may be provided by using very different listing techniques (and sometimes different metres) in different sections as, for example, in the complete catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn from which this list is taken, where the section which follows this one employs longer, more informative items. Or the list may be interrupted to allow for a comment or an advance in the narrative, as also happens in the complete catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn (*Grímnismál* 51–53). Another example of each of these techniques, though on a smaller scale, can be found in the *Hávamál* list of things not to be trusted, where the interruption (which is accompanied by a change in metre) occurs in 88.4–6, and the switch to longer items in strophe 89. Sometimes an interruption which breaks the monotony of a list also functions, as will be shown below, to mark the midpoint or to signal the approaching end.

(6) By bringing the whole list to a close so that the relationship of its items to one another is clear and they can be seen together in the light of the list's organizing principle. It is of the nature of lists to be infinitely expandable; the audience needs to know when a particular one has ended. It is also common for list sections to be independently closed, providing valuable stage markers for both audience and reciter. As with introductory and opening devices, a list-maker can choose from a variety of devices to signal the end of his list, sometimes (especially in the case of

list sections) employing just one, and sometimes (especially for the whole list) a combination.

(a) *Concluding Devices*. Like introductory devices, concluding devices are separate from the list itself and they do not include any of its items. The simplest is a statement that the list is finished, corresponding to the introductory announcement that one is about to begin, such as we saw in the *Vǫlospá* catalogue of dwarfs. An example, also from *Vǫlospá*, is “nú ero talðar nǫnnor Herians” [Now Herjann’s women have been listed] (30.9–10). Another method is to end with a concluding statement or comment related to the list’s content. This may be the deferred statement of the organizing principle, as in *Grímnismál* 28.11–12 and 30.6–9, or it may be an addition to or refinement of that principle. The *heiti* list-maker has chosen the latter device, employing a conclusion (48.5–7) which expands on the initial statement of the organizing principle. The initial statement told us what is common to all the items which follow: they are all *heiti* of Óðinn. The concluding statement comments on the diversity which makes the list necessary. It also includes a repetition of the opening phrase (“hétomc”), thus providing a verbal echo. Together, the comment and the echo frame the list. The same arrangement, both comment and verbal echo, is used by the list-maker in *Vǫlospá* 14–16. Concluding devices may not always come right at the end of the list. Sometimes the comment or statement interrupts it near the end and is followed by a brief resumption of the listing. In this case it acts as a signal of the approaching end of the list or list section, rather than as an actual conclusion. An example occurs in the *Vǫlospá* norms list (strophe 20), where a comment (“scáro á scíði” [they cut on a stick]) which interrupts the three-item list section giving the norms’ names is followed by a return to the numerical pattern for the third, closing item. Some of the examples mentioned above as devices to provide variety also function in this way. For instance, the interruption in the complete catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn breaks the monotony of the listing, brings the narrative to a climax, and signals the approaching end of the catalogue, which concludes with a brief resumption of the listing in strophe 54. Another example occurs in the curse in *For Scírnis* 26–36. There the listing of the awful things that will happen to Gerðr is interrupted in strophes 32–34 by comment, invocation, and direct malediction, before briefly resuming in strophe 35. As in the case of a concluding comment, an interruption which signals the approaching end of the list may also be a deferred statement of the organizing principle. An example is *Grímnismál* 27, where seven regular item pairs are interrupted by the statement “þær hverfa um hodd goða” [these stream over the treasure of the gods], and the listing then resumes for a further three pairs. An interesting combination of concluding devices occurs at the end of the first list in the *Vǫlospá* catalogue of dwarfs (12.5–8), where a concluding statement announcing the closure of the list is split in two, so that the first half interrupts the listing

and provides a signal of the approaching end, while the second half forms the actual conclusion:

Nár oc Nýráðr — nú hefi ec dverga
— Reginn oc Ráðsviðr — rétt um talða.

[Nár and Nýráðr — now I have correctly — Reginn and Ráðsviðr — listed the dwarfs.]

(b) *Closing Devices*. Like opening devices, closing devices are part of the list and incorporate at least one item. Further, like concluding devices, they may be placed at the end of the list or they may act as signals, interrupting it near the end. A common closing device is a change in the established listing pattern, a change which may be relatively slight or quite obtrusive. An example of the former is the switch from pairs to a triplet for the final items in the *Grímnismál* valkyries list (strophe 36). In this example the change occurs at the end. The first *heiti* list provides an example of the same device used as an interruption: part one closes with a triplet formed by items 11–13 which signals the approaching midpoint of the list and is followed by a brief return to the former listing pattern. An example of a more obtrusive use of this device is the completely different item structure of the sixth item (“heiptom scal mána qveðia” [for hatreds one should invoke the moon]) in the *Hávamál* list of remedies (137.7–15). It seems to be a general rule, when a list is interrupted in this way by either a concluding or a closing signal, that the signal is followed by not more than three items or item pairs.² A different closing strategy is exemplified in part two of the first *heiti* list, where closure is provided by the addition of an extra item (31) forming a pair which returns to the dominant pattern of part one of the list. The extra item, “Farmatýr,” is isolated from the series which precedes it by its completely different form. The preceding series, although still organized into pairs, has built up a heavy linking pattern of alliteration, assonance, repetition, and rhyme, the most pronounced part of which is shown by the following underlined segments:

Glapsviðr oc Fiolsviðr,
Síðhottr, Síðsceggr,
Sigföðr, Hnicuðr,
Alföðr, Valföðr,
Atríðr oc Farmatýr,

and in which the final item in no way participates. *Farmatýr* also stands out as the only three-syllabled name in the series of two-syllabled names that makes up part two of the list. A similar arrangement closes the second list in the *Völuspá* catalogue of dwarfs. There a single, four-syllabled name (*Eikin-*

2. The only exception I have found so far is after the three-strophe interruption (*Grímnismál* 51–53) in the complete catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn. There the interruption is followed by a triplet and four item pairs which, in effect, constitute a third list section. This exception may be due to the great length of the catalogue, the interruption itself being of more than usual length and dramatic importance.

scialdi, strophe 13.8), comprising the fifteenth item, closes a series of seven, one- to three-syllabled name pairs. The *Hávamál* list of things not to be trusted has an interesting use of this technique in a complex combination of concluding and closing devices. It has two extra items, one (the twenty-first) which follows the pattern of all the others (“acri ársánom” [in an early-sown field], 88.1) and then another (the twenty-second), a specially differentiated item (“né til snemma syni” [nor too soon in a son], 88.3) which, like *Farmatýr*, is longer than, and has a different structure from, all the others.

The first *heiti* list, at thirty-one items, is one of the longest single list sections in the Edda and employs a number of listing techniques. Many eddic lists are relatively short, but the principles of list construction are still carefully observed, and short lists may use as many techniques as longer ones. My second example employs some of the same devices as the first *heiti* list and some that are rather different.

Grímnismál 54: The Third *heiti* List

Óðinn ec nú heiti, Yggr ec áðan hét,
 hétomc Þundr fyrir þat,
 Vacr oc Scilfingr, Váfuðr oc Hroptatýr,
 Gautr oc Iálcr með goðom,
 Ofnir oc Sváfnir, er ec hygg at orðnir sé
 allir af einom mér.

[Óðinn I am named now. Yggr I was named earlier. I named myself Þundr before that, Vacr and Skilfingr, Váfuðr and Hroptatýr, Gautr and Iálcr among the gods, Ofnir and Sváfnir, which, I think, are all sprung from one — me.]

PART ONE

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| 1 | Óðinn ec nú heiti, | an opening statement gives the organizing principle, |
| 2 | Yggr ec áðan hét, | a distinctive pair with parallel structure gives the list |
| 3 | hétomc Þundr fyrir þat, | signal and a pattern change (word order) in the final |
| | | item closes part one, |

PART TWO

- | | | |
|-------|---------------------------|---|
| 4–5 | Vacr oc Scilfingr, | a new pattern comprising item pairs joined by <i>oc</i> |
| 6–7 | Váfuðr oc Hroptatýr, | distinguishes part two, |
| 8–9 | Gautr oc Iálcr með goðom, | a pattern change (phrase added) signals the |
| 10–11 | Ofnir oc Sváfnir, | approaching end and a return to the former pattern |
| | | closes part two, |

CONCLUSION

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| er ec hygg at orðnir sé | a summing-up comment provides the conclusion, |
| allir af einom mér. | the repetition of <i>ec</i> closes an inner frame, <i>mér</i> , |
| | referring back to <i>Óðinn</i> , closes an outer frame. |

This list has no transitional or introductory device, being already part of a catalogue, but it does employ the same opening devices as the first *heiti* list: an

initial statement of the organizing principle (“ec . . . heiti” [I am named]) and a distinctive opening pair (“Óðinn ec nú heiti, Yggr ec áðan hét”) which signals the beginning of a list. In this case, the first two items are contained, like the item pair which opens the *Vǫlospá* list of the attributes of Askr and Embla, in two half-lines which are structurally parallel but which have less repetition than those which opened the first *heiti* list. Like the first *heiti* list, the third one is divided into two parts, but here, instead of two halves containing an equal number of items plus an extra item for a closing device, the list-maker has employed a triplet of standard short items in part one and a series of four minimal short item pairs in part two.³ A similar arrangement is found in some other eddic lists which are contained, like this one, in a single strophe. One example is the second list of river names in *Grímnismál* (strophe 28) where the triplet in part one is marked by the numbering of its items and part two is, as here, a series of pairs joined by *oc*. Other examples will be discussed below (99).

In the first *heiti* list, it will be remembered, unity is given to the whole list by a framing device and by the grammatical dependence of all the items on the opening statement of the organizing principle. For the third list the *heiti* list-maker has again employed two unifying devices at the level of the whole list, but this time they are both framing devices. First, he has repeated the device he employed in the first list: *ec* in the concluding segment echoes the *ec* of the opening couplet, as did *hétomc* in the first *heiti* list. Second, he has provided another, outer, frame through the noun-pronoun relationship between the first word in the list, *Óðinn*, and the last one, *mér*. In fact, *mér* also relates to all of the items in the list in that they are all names of Óðinn, but it relates more particularly to the name *Óðinn* as that is the god’s central identity, the name he is called by now (“ec nú heiti”), and the one he uses to identify himself in the preceding strophe (53). At the level of list sections, unity is given to part two, as it was to the whole of the first *heiti* list, by the dependence of all the items on the subject/verb combination, *hétomc*, here placed in the final item of part one. This relationship also provides the link between the two sections. Part one itself employs a different unifying strategy. Its three items are each independent sentences, but they are linked into a triplet by the restatement, in each one, of the list’s organizing principle. The result is to build a strong emphasis on *ec . . . heiti / hétomc* particularly appropriate at this point in the poem, which has reached its dramatic climax with Óðinn’s announcement of his identity in the preceding strophe. At the level of item pairs the third *heiti* list,

3. The following definitions apply: *short item*, a list item which occupies up to one metrical long line (as opposed to a *long item*, found in catalogues such as “Ljóðatal,” which occupies half a strophe or more); *minimal short item*, a list item comprising just one word, which may or may not be accompanied by a conjunction, and which does not by itself constitute a metrical half-line; *standard short item*, a list item which consists of a word, phrase or short sentence which occupies a metrical half- or full line; *extended short item*, a list item which occupies a metrical long line. In well-balanced short-item lists two minimal short items are equivalent to one standard short item, and four minimal short items (or two standard short items) are equivalent to one extended short item.

like the first one, employs alliterative linking (“Vacr . . . Váfuðr, Jálcr . . . Ofnir”). Variety is provided by the change to a new listing pattern in part two, by the word order change in item 3, and by the informative tag which expands the penultimate item pair 8–9.

Like the first *heiti* list, the third one has closing devices for each section and then a concluding device for the whole list. Closure is provided for part one by a pattern change in the final item and for part two by a signal and return device. As in part one of the first *heiti* list, the signal here is provided by an expansion of the penultimate item pair, but this time the expansion results from the addition of an informative tag (“með goðom”) rather than from the addition of an item to make a triplet. In both cases the signal is followed by a return to the former pattern in the final item pair. The concluding comment, which incidentally also closes the complete catalogue, gathers up all the items (“allir”) and relates them to the organizing principle.

My third example is a brief list from the first, gnomic, section of *Hávamál*. One of a series of short-item lists, it is also complete in itself, but its function is different from that of the *heiti* lists. It is an ordering list, openly didactic and concerned with giving advice on personal behaviour.

Hávamál 81: The Premature-Praise List

At qveldi scal dag leyfa, kono, er brend er,
 mæki, er reyndr er, mey, er gefin er,
 ís, er yfir kømr, ql, er druccit er.

[At evening should one praise a day; a wife, when she is burned; a sword, when it is tested; a maid, when she is married; ice, when one gets across; ale, when it is drunk.]

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| 1 | At qveldi scal dag leyfa, | an opening statement gives the organizing principle, |
| 2 | kono, er brend er, | three items with parallel structure incorporate a list signal, |
| 3 | mæki, er reyndr er, | |
| 4 | mey, er gefin er, | |
| 5 | ís, er yfir kømr, | a pattern change gives variety and signals the approaching end, |
| 6 | ql, er druccit er. | a return to the former pattern provides closure. |

Again this list has no introductory device and is preceded by no transition signal, but it does employ versions of both of the *heiti* list-maker’s opening devices: an initial statement of the organizing principle and a signalling item pair. The organizing principle of the list (when praise should be given) is stated as part of the first item, as was the corresponding statement in both *heiti* lists. Besides making the list immediately intelligible to the audience, this opening statement provides both structural unity and logical order for the rest of the list: all the items are grammatically dependent on the first one, as all share its verb, *scal leyfa*. Further, as in the first *heiti* list (though in a more subtle and interesting way), the initial statement has been refined by the time the list ends. In the first *heiti* list, it will be remembered, the organizing principle is clearly stated in the opening phrase (“hétomc”),

and it is supplemented by a concluding statement which frames the list when its purpose, to give mythological information, is accomplished. Here, there is no frame; instead, the list-maker adds progressively to his statement as the list proceeds. Couched in positive terms, the first item tells us that a day should be praised at evening. Implicit in this observation is the warning that nothing should be praised prematurely. The warning, which fulfils the didactic purpose of this list, becomes clear only as the other items illustrate the point. The clarifying function of the rest of the items supplements the grammatical unity of the list.

The second opening device used in the premature-praise list is the same as in the third *heiti* list and the *Vǫlospá* list of the attributes of Askr and Embla: a structurally parallel item pair, “kono, er brend er, / mæki, er reyndr er.” Unlike the *heiti* list-maker, who incorporates the statements of the organizing principles of both his lists into items one and two, the maker of the premature-praise list has let the statement in item one stand in isolation, and has used items two and three to form his list-signalling device. It is true that items two and three will become part of a parallel series but, as the audience first hears them, they comprise a repetitive item pair and perform the same list-signalling function as the opening item pairs of both *heiti* lists. In the case of the premature-praise list, the signal is completed in the third item rather than the second. Deferral of the signal to the third item of a list is uncommon, but this example may be compared to the opening strategy of the *Grímnismál* catalogue of the homes of the gods (strophes 5–16). There the list-maker clearly signals his listing intention only in item three, when he begins explicit enumeration (“Bœr er sá inn þriði” [That homestead is the third one], 6.1).

Unlike that of the *heiti* lists, the primary arrangement of the premature-praise list is not the item pair or triplet, but a longer series of structurally parallel items with the dominant pattern “noun + *er* + past participle + *er*.” The same method is employed in the *Hávamál* list of things not to be trusted, where the first section (85–86.2) has as the dominant pattern “present participle + dative noun,” and in the *Sigrdrífomál* rune-location list (strophes 15–17), where the dominant pattern is “*á* + genitive noun + dative noun.” Although the premature-praise list has a series as its primary arrangement, unobtrusive pairing by alliteration is employed as a subsidiary arrangement, breaking the list into small, easily controlled units. The maker of the premature-praise list gives his list both variety and closure in the same way as the *heiti* list-maker does in part one of his first list and part two of his third one. A pattern change in the penultimate item (in this case to “noun + *er* + *yfir* + present tense verb”) provides variety and signals the approaching end of the list. A return to the former pattern in the final item brings the list to a close.

With these examples in mind, we can now turn to an analysis of the lists in “Rúnatal.”

Hávamál 142–43 : The Rune-Makers List

- 141 Þá nam ec frævaz oc fróðr vera
 oc vaxa oc vel hafaz;
4 orð mér af orði orðz leitaði,
 verc mér af verki vercs leitaði.
- 142 Rúnar munt þú finna oc ráðna stafi,
 miqc stóra stafi,
 miqc stinna stafi,
5 er fáði fimbulpulr
 oc gorðo ginregin
 oc reist hroptr royna,
- 143 Óðinn með ásom, enn fyr álfom Dáinn,
 Dvalinn dvergom fyrir,
 Ásviðr iotnom fyrir,
5 ec reist siálftr sumar.

[Then I began to be fecund and to be full of knowledge, and to grow and flourish. A word from a word sought out a word for me; an act from an act sought out an act for me. Runes you will find, and readable signs: very great signs, very strong signs, which the mighty sage coloured, and the potent powers made, and Hroptr of the gods carved; Óðinn among the Æsir and, for the elves, Dáinn; Dvalinn for the dwarfs, Ásviðr for the giants. I myself carved some.]

TRANSITION SIGNAL

- orð mér af orði orðz leitaði, a couplet formed by parallel structure and repetition
verc mér af verki vercs leitaði. closes the preceding narrative.

INTRODUCTION

- Rúnar munt þú finna *Rúnar* gives the topic of the following list,
oc ráðna stafi,
miqc stóra stafi, a couplet formed by near-repetition gives the list
miqc stinna stafi, signal,
er a relative particle provides a grammatical link,

PART ONE

- 1 fáði fimbulpulr an item triplet linked by *oc* makes up part one,
2 oc gorðo ginregin
3 oc reist hroptr royna, a pattern change (+ genitive noun) provides closure,

PART TWO

- 4 Óðinn með ásom, a new pattern employing names and prepositions
5 enn fyr álfom Dáinn, distinguishes part two; the first pair is linked by *enn*,
 midpoint,
6 Dvalinn dvergom fyrir, a further phrasing pattern change marks the second
7 Ásviðr iotnom fyrir, half of part two: the second pair is linked by parallel
 grammatical structure and repetition of *fyrir*,

either (depending on the interpretation of *ec*, see below)

FINAL ITEM

- 8 ec reist siálftr sumar. an extra, differentiated item provides closure,
 sumar, referring back to *rúnar*, provides a frame,

or

CONCLUSION

ec reist síalfr sumar.

a comment by the speaker provides a conclusion, *sumar*, referring back to *rúnar*, provides a frame.

Like the *Grímnismál* catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn, the rune-makers list is concerned with storing and transmitting mythological information, in this case specifically the identity of those responsible for making and distributing the runes, including the names of the individuals who carved them for, or among, the different races of rational beings. The list itself begins in strophe 142 but, as with the first *heiti* list, the preceding strophe ends with a couplet (141.4–7) that signals a transition. In this case the couplet closes the narrative of Óðinn’s acquisition of the runes (138–41), preparing the way for the opening of the rune lore lists which follow. It differs from the *Grímnismál* example in that it is a couplet of long lines employing structural and some verbal repetition, rather than of full lines employing near-repetition, but its function is the same. The transition signal is followed by an introductory section, which, like the beginning of the first *heiti* list, includes another couplet (“miðc stóra stafi, miðc stinna stafi”). This couplet, like “Hétomc Grímr, hétomc Gangleri,” is formed by near-repetition and signals the beginning of a list. However, as it incorporates no items, it is an introductory rather than an opening device. The introductory section of the rune-makers list resembles the version of the same device used in *Hávamál* 111, particularly in its structure:

of rúnar heyrða ec dœma,
né um ráðom þogðo,
Háva hǫllo at,
Háva hǫllo í;
heyrða ec segia svá:

Hávamál 111.7–11

Rúnar munt þú finna
oc ráðna stafi,
miðc stóra stafi
miðc stinna stafi,
er . . .

Hávamál 142.1–5

[*Háv.* 111.7–11: I heard runes discussed, nor about counsel were they silent, at Hávi’s hall, in Hávi’s hall. This is what I heard them say:]

As the final line of 111 provides a link with the following “Loddfáfnismál,” so the relative particle *er* in 142.5 provides a link with part one of the rune-makers list. In both cases the link is placed between the list signal and the first item.

Like both the first *heiti* list and the premature-praise list, the rune-makers list begins with a statement (“Rúnar . . . oc ráðna stafi”) on which all the items which follow are dependent. This statement provides the grammatical object of all the verbs in part one, the understood object in part two, and the referent for the pronoun *sumar* in the final item or concluding comment. It also states the topic of the whole list: the runes which the addressee, *þú*, will find. The organizing principle (the identity of those who made and distributed the runes) is implied in the first item and clarified as the list progresses and each item expands the opening statement. The three items in part one identify those who coloured, made, and carved the runes; the items in part two name the individuals who were responsible for carving (*reist*) the runes for or among the different races. The unity that the grammatical interdependence of the sections and the unfolding statement of the

organizational principle give to this list is supplemented by a framing device. In this case the list-maker has chosen the arrangement used by the *heiti* list-maker for the outer frame of his third list: a noun-pronoun relationship between the first word, *rúnar*, and the last one, *sumar*. The framing function of these two words is subtly stressed by the assonance between them, which substitutes for the exact verbal echoes employed in framing both *heiti* lists.

An overall unifying strategy is particularly necessary for this list because it falls into such marked subdivisions. Besides the introductory section and the extra item or conclusion, the list itself is divided into two parts, the second of which further falls into two halves giving, as with the other lists that have been discussed, division to the level of item pairs/triplets. The list-maker has been at pains to counter this heavy subdivision with equally emphatic unifying strategies. As well as the overall strategy pointed out above, he has employed clear links between the sections. The link provided by *er* between the introductory section and part one has already been noted. Part two depends on the introductory section for its object and on part one for its verb (*reist*, see Gering and Sijmons 1927, 152). The latter arrangement is the same as is used in the third *heiti* list, where all the items in part two are dependent on *hétomc* in the final item of part one. In addition, if we understand *hroptr* in item 3 to be the name Hroptr, a known *heiti* of Óðinn (as, for example, does Evans [1986, 136]), then the first item of part two (“Óðinn með ásom”) becomes a repeat, with variation, of the last item in part one (“Hroptr roḡna”) using a different *heiti* of Óðinn and a different word for the gods. The two halves of part two are also firmly linked. In the other lists discussed so far, linking between item pairs is achieved mainly by the use of alliteration, but sometimes by repetition or rhyme. To link the two item pairs that make up part two of the rune-makers list, the list-maker has used all three of these devices: alliteration in “Dáinn, / Dvalinn dvergom,” repetition in “fyr . . . fyrir . . . fyrir,” and rhyme in the dative endings in *-om*. As in the case of the third *heiti* list, variety is given to the rune-makers list by the pattern variation in the third item which closes part one, as well as by the change to a new listing pattern in part two.

Like both *heiti* lists, the rune-makers list employs independent closure for each of its two sections. In part one, the first two items establish a common phrasing pattern (“verb + modifying prefix + nominative noun”) which the third item varies, substituting “verb + nominative noun + genitive noun.” This is an example of a pattern change in the final item and is similar to the version of this device used to close part one of the third *heiti* list. In part two of the rune-makers list, closure is provided by the last line, “ec reist siálfr sumar” (143.5). Whether this line is regarded as a closing device incorporating the final item, or as a concluding device which is separate from the list itself, depends on how one interprets it and, in particular, on how one identifies the first-person speaker *ec*. There is general agreement among critics that the speaker of the preceding narrative section (138–41) and of the following “Ljóðatal” is Óðinn. There is no indication in the text that the

speaker changes when the “Rúnatal” lists begin, as there is at the beginning of “Loddfáfnismál.” There a distinction is made between the *ec* of strophe 111, who addresses the *Hávamál* audience directly, and the *ec* of strophes 112–37 (Óðinn), whose speech he is reporting (“Heyrða *ec* segia svá” [111.11]). However, for the reasons given above (p. 82), and particularly because of the references to Óðinn in the third person, most critics believe strophes 142–45 to be spoken, wholly or in part, by someone else. Gering and Sijmons, for example, suggest a wandering *pulr* (1927, 152); Larrington believes the speaker to be “the poet, the *hroptr* for the race of men” (1993, 61). If this latter view is correct, then the final line does constitute an eighth item in the list and it would refer, as both Gering and Sijmons and Larrington suggest, to the acquisition of runes by men (who are not otherwise mentioned in the tally of rational beings). In this case, the line would be an example (like *Farmatýr* in the first *heiti* list and *Eikinskjaldi* in the second list in the catalogue of dwarfs) of an extra item, specially differentiated from the ones which precede it, used as a closing device.

If, on the other hand, the final line is spoken by Óðinn, it cannot be an item: Óðinn has already taken his place in this list. In this case, the line can be regarded as a concluding comment, perhaps a reflection on what has just been said. In support of this view, it may be said that in the preceding narrative, when Óðinn needs to refer to himself in the third person (strophe 138.5), he immediately draws attention to that fact (138.6). If in the rune-makers list he is reciting, for the benefit of a specific addressee (*þú*) on a specific occasion, a lore list in which he himself features in the third person, his final comment could be drawing attention to that fact in the same way as he did before. The sequence “Óðinn . . . *ec* . . . *siálfr*” [Óðinn . . . I . . . myself] in strophe 143 would correspond to the earlier sequence “Óðni, *siálfr* *siálfom* mér” [to Óðinn, myself to myself], and line 143.5 might be translated: “Yes, I did carve some myself.” If the *ec* of the final line is Óðinn, then the concluding comment (“*ec* *reist* *siálfr* *sumar*”) is a variation of the closing item of part one (“*oc* *reist* *Hroptr* *rogn*”) providing, along with the repetition of *reist* and the frame-closing function of *sumar*, a firm connection between this seemingly isolated line and the rest of the list.

It is unusual for such a short list to employ so many devices and to be so heavily subdivided, and perhaps these features, as well as the metrical irregularities, led critics to conclude that the rune-makers list is fragmented. After all, many lists of similar length (such as, for example, the premature-praise list) dispense with introductions and division into list sections. However, the divisions in the rune-makers list are all paralleled elsewhere. First, as we have seen, *Hávamál* 111 comprises a very similar introductory section. Second, if the final line is understood as an extra, differentiated item used as a closing device, it can be compared with the final items in both the first *heiti* list and the second list in the catalogue of dwarfs; if, on the other hand, it is understood as a concluding comment, it follows the practice used to close many eddic lists, including both *heiti* lists. Third, the

central arrangement of the rune-makers list is by no means unique. Its pattern of a triplet followed by four standard short items corresponds to that of the third *heiti* list, which has a triplet followed by four minimal short-item pairs. Further, its pattern is matched even more closely by the *Vǫlospá* initial void list (strophe 3) and the *Sigrdrífomál* rune-distribution list (strophe 18), as the following comparison illustrates:

Rune-Makers List	Initial Void List	Rune-Distribution List
INTRODUCTION		
Rúnar munt þú finna oc ráðna stafi, miȝc stóra stafi, miȝc stinna stafi, er	Ár var alda, þat er Ymir bygði, vara	
PART ONE		
1 fáði fimbulþulr	1 sandr	1 Allar vóro af scafnar, þær er vóro á ristnar,
2 oc gorðo ginregin	2 né sær	2 oc hverfðar við inn helga mioð,
3 oc reist hroþr roĝna,	3 né svalar unnir;	3 oc sendar á víða vega.
PART TWO		
4 Óðinn með ásom,	4 iorð fannz æva	4 Þær ro með ásom,
5 enn fyr álfom Dáinn,	5 né upphiminn,	5 þær ro með álfom,
6 Dvalinn dvergom fyrir,	6 gap var ginnunga,	6 sumar með vísom vȝnom,
7 Ásviðr iotnom fyrir,	7 enn gras hvergi.	7 sumar hafa mennzcir menn.
CONCLUSION/CLOSING DEVICE		
ec reist siálfr sumar.		

[*Vsp.* 3: It was at the dawn of time, when Ymir dwelt: there was no shore, nor sea, nor cold waves; earth did not exist at all, nor sky; the abyss was vast, and there was grass nowhere.]

[*Sđ.* 18: All those which had been carved on were scraped off, and mixed with the holy mead, and sent on distant paths. These are with the Æsir, these are with the elves, some with the wise Vanir, some men have.]

All three of these lists have a triplet linked by a repeated conjunction in part one followed by four standard short items, divided into pairs, in part two. Taken together with the third *heiti* list, they provide some evidence for a three-four pattern in eddic lists.⁴ To this basic arrangement the initial void list and the rune-makers list add an introductory segment. The rune-makers list also adds a final line which acts as either a closing or a concluding device. As we have seen, both kinds of addition are legitimate listing strategies.

4. This evidence for a three-four item pattern in eddic lists lends some support to the interpretation of “ec reist siálfr sumar” as a concluding comment rather than as an eighth item. However, it must be noted that not all lists which begin with a triplet have a four item/item-pair second section: in *Grímnismál* the second list of river-names (strophe 28) has a triplet in part one, but this is followed in part two by a series, not of four, but of seven item-pairs.

To sum up, the listing techniques used in the rune-makers list include: a transition signal and an introductory device incorporating a list signal; a unifying frame and grammatical interdependence of all sections and items; an unfolding statement of the organizing principle resulting in a logical order; division into sections and item pairs; linking between items, item pairs, and sections; variety; and separate closing or concluding devices for each section. This is a very tightly organized list. It does not fall into regular strophes; its craftsmanship is of another kind.

Hávamál 144–45: The Rune-Ritual List

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 144 | Veiztu, hvé rísta scal,
veiztu, hvé fá scal, | veiztu, hvé ráða scal?
veiztu, hvé freista scal? |
| 5 | veiztu, hvé <u>biðia</u> scal,
veiztu, hvé <u>senda</u> scal, | veiztu, hvé blóta scal?
veiztu, hvé sóa scal? |
| 145 | Betra er óbeðit,
ey sér til gildis giof; | enn sé ofblótið,
enn sé ofsóit. |
| 4 | betra er ósent,
Svá Þundr um reist
þar hann upp um reis, | fyr þjóða rǫc;
er hann aptr of kom. |

[Know how you should carve them. Know how you should interpret them. Know how you should colour them. Know how you should make trial of them. Know how you should make invocation. Know how you should sacrifice. Know how you should offer up. Know how you should slaughter.

It is better to make no invocation than to sacrifice too much — a gift always looks for repayment. It is better to make no offering than to slaughter too much.

So Þundr carved before mankind existed; there he rose up, when he came back.]

PART ONE

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Veiztu, hvé rísta scal | an opening pair employing near-repetition gives the |
| 2 | veiztu, hvé ráða scal | list signal, |
| 3 | veiztu, hvé fá scal | eight parallel, standard short items form a series, and |
| 4 | veiztu, hvé freista scal | are also paired by alliteration, |
| 5 | veiztu, hvé <u>biðia</u> scal | a new series of objectless verbs distinguishes the |
| 6 | veiztu, hvé <u>blóta</u> scal | second half of part one, |
| 7 | veiztu, hvé <u>senda</u> scal | the verbal infinitives (underlined) provide a link with |
| 8 | veiztu, hvé <u>sóa</u> scal | part two, |

PART TWO

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 9 | Betra er <u>óbeðit</u> ,
enn sé <u>ofblótið</u> , | a new pattern of extended short items employing
a comparative construction distinguishes part two, |
| | ey sér til gildis giof; | an interrupting comment marks the midpoint of part
two and signals the approaching end of the list, |
| 10 | betra er <u>ósent</u> ,
enn sé <u>ofsóit</u> . | a return to the pattern of item 9 provides closure, |

CONCLUSION

Svá Þundr um reist fyr þjóða rǫc; þar hann upp um reis, er hann aprtr of kom.	a summing-up comment looks back to the rune-makers list, a structurally parallel couplet closes “Rúnatal” and provides a transition signal for the next list (“Ljóðatal”).
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Before discussing the structure of the rune-ritual list, it is necessary to consider some grammatical and interpretative points concerning the eight parallel items in part one: specifically, the mood of *veiztu*, the significance of the verb auxiliary *scal*, and the grammatical references, if any, of the verbs. Most editors, including Neckel and Kuhn (1983) and Evans (1986), print these items as a series of questions, and the list makes good sense understood in this way. However, it is possible that *veiztu* here should be understood as used in an imperative sense. In its earlier occurrences in *Hávamál*, *veiztu* functions in this way (“Veiztu, ef þú vin átt . . . geði scaltu við þann blanda . . . fara at finna opt” [Know this, if you have a friend . . . you should share your mind with him . . . (and) go to visit him often] [44.1 and 119.5]) as it also does in *Locasenna* (4.1, 5.1, 23.1, etc.). I will suggest below that the effectiveness of the rune-ritual list is enhanced if *veiztu* here is also understood as an imperative. In its occurrence in *Hávamál* 44, *veiztu* is used in conjunction with *scal* and there *scal* seems to mean “should,” in the sense “it is advisable,” as it mostly does in Old Norse gnomic texts (for a discussion of the implications of gnomic *scal*, see Jackson 1991, 118–20). In the rune-ritual list, *scal* also seems to mean “should,” but in the alternative sense of “it is appropriate.” If the speaker were concerned only with the addressee’s practical skill in carving, interpreting, colouring, and so on, we would expect the infinitive alone (*rísta*, *ráða*, *fá*, etc.) to be sufficient. The addition of *scal* suggests that the speaker is in fact concerned with the addressee’s knowledge of how these skills *should* be applied, in other words, with his knowledge of how to perform them appropriately. That such a focus might be necessary is suggested by the story of Egill’s visit to Þorfinnr in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* (see Nordal 1933, 228–30), during which Egill cures his host’s daughter Helga of a serious illness caused by the ignorance of her would-be lover. In a later comment on the incident (see Nordal 1933, 238) the narrator specifically states that the man had intended to carve love runes (*manrúnar*, literally “girl-runes”) to attract Helga, but lacked the necessary skill (“en hann kunni þat eigi”) and so instead caused her to become ill. In a verse related to the same incident, Egill comments:

Skalat maðr rúnar rísta,
nema ráða vel kunni,
þat verðr mǫrgum manni,
es of myrkvan staf villisk.

(Nordal 1933, 230, verse 48)

[A man should not carve runic symbols, unless he knows how to interpret them well. It happens to many a man that he goes astray because of an obscure symbol.]

As regards the third point, the verbs, it seems that the first four have to do with runes and the last four with other ritual procedures probably involving sacrifice (for the possible meaning of *senda* here, see Gering and Sijmons 1927, 153; Evans 1986, 136–37). *Rísta*, *ráða*, and *fá* are used elsewhere (in particular, in the preceding rune-makers list) in connection with runes; *freista* ‘to make trial of’ is perhaps referring to a procedure like the one mentioned in *Hávamál* 80.2, “er þú at rúnom spyrr” [when you enquire about the runes], but in any case it seems to be more likely to refer to runes than to sacrifice. If so, all the verbs in the first four items would have runes as the understood object (see Evans 1986, 136). The verbs in the last four items have no apparent object. In the following analysis I assume that there is a change in topic at the midpoint of the item series from runes to other ritual procedures and a corresponding change from verbs used with an understood object to objectless verbs.

The rune-ritual list needs no introduction as it continues straight on from the preceding rune-makers list, sharing with it the personal address to *þú* and, in its first half, the topic of the runes which the addressee will find and which the individuals just named had carved. In fact, structurally, the two lists in “Rúnatal” could be regarded as one long list divided into linked sections. Thematically, however, they must be considered as two separate lists because they have different organizing principles: the identity of the rune-makers in the first list, and the appropriate performance of ritual procedures in the second. This division is reflected both in the change in purpose from the giving of information in the rune-makers list to admonition (or interrogation) and advice in the rune-ritual list, and in the topic change just mentioned that occurs halfway through part one of the rune-ritual list (item 5, *Hávamál* 144.5) when the speaker drops his concern specifically with runes and switches to a new concern with ritual procedures involving sacrifice.

To open the rune-ritual list the list-maker has chosen the same device as was used in the first *heiti* list: an emphatic item pair, where the second item is a near repeat of the first (“Veiztu, hvé rísta scal, veiztu, hvé ráða scal”). Like the corresponding pair in the premature-praise list, this one sets a pattern for a following series of items, but it still functions as a list signal and this time it comprises, as in the first *heiti* list, the first two items rather than the second and third. The rune-ritual list-maker also follows the *heiti* and premature-praise list-makers in their complementary opening device: an initial statement of the organizing principle (“know how you should . . .”). In this case, however, it is not a statement on which all the other items are grammatically dependent. Like the items in part one of the third *heiti* list, each of the items in part one of the rune-ritual list is an independent sentence and each restates the organizing principle, building up an insistent emphasis which resolves itself into a warning about inappropriate use in part two. In part two the method is the same: the comparative principle (“beta er . . . enn”) is stated straight away and repeated in each item. In this case the comparative principle imposes an internal order on the items.

Like all the other lists discussed here, the rune-ritual list is divided up to make it more manageable for reciter and audience. Here the division is into list sections, section halves, item pairs, and even item halves. As with the rune-makers list, the division into sections is particularly marked because of the very different listing patterns in parts one and two. The pattern change to longer, slower-paced items in part two is achieved by a change in metre and is an example of the switch to a different listing mode noted above in relation to the complete catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn and the *Hávamál* list of things not to be trusted. It provides variety and allows for resolution of the emphasis built up in part one. Each part of the rune-ritual list is further divided into halves: in part one the division reflects the topic change, noted above, from runes to sacrificial procedures and the change from verbs with an understood object to objectless verbs; part two is divided by a proverbial tag in the middle, separating two exactly balanced halves. A proverbial tag is similarly employed to divide the brief list in *Hávamál* 82 (“morg ero dags augo” [the day has many eyes], 82.4). At the level of item pairs, part one has the same pairing by alliteration found in the premature-praise list, and the two items in part two are paired by repetition and by their common comparative construction. Further, to provide better balance, both within part two itself and with the standard short items in part one, the extended short items in part two themselves fall into halves which are linked by alliteration and the conjunction *enn*.

As far as unity is concerned, part one of the rune-ritual list dispenses with the linking of one item pair to another, found in both *heiti* lists, in favour of the near-repetition which links all eight items into a series. Part one is linked to part two by the association between the verbs in its second half and the participles in part two (underlined in the above *schema*). The two parts are further linked by the relationship between their themes. It was suggested above that the theme of part one, implied by the emphatic repetition of *scal*, is that it is not sufficient just to know the various procedures for rune use and sacrifice: the addressee must know how to perform them appropriately. Part two warns the addressee that it is better not to perform the procedures at all than to perform them inappropriately: that is, to perform them to excess. The rather cryptic comment, “ey sér til gildis giof,” that divides part two in half adds to this warning: as a gift always looks for repayment, so ritual always looks for response, and excess can invariably expect excessive (and therefore undesirable) results. Like the premature-praise list, the rune-ritual list has a didactic function. There the listener is advised against praising anything prematurely, here the addressee is advised to make quite sure that he knows how to exercise restraint in the performance of ritual procedures. If the items in part one are regarded as imperatives rather than questions, the didactic function is enhanced and the list becomes an emphatic warning.

There is no independent closure of the first part of the rune-ritual list, but to bring the whole list to a close, the list-maker has employed a concluding device. It takes the familiar form of an interruption signalling the approaching end, followed

by a brief resumption of the listing: in this case, by the final item. Here, the interrupting comment (“ey sér til gildis giof”), which corresponds to the interruptions in the first part of the *Vǫlospá* norms list, in the complete catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn, in the curse in *For Scírnis*, and in the *Hávamál* list of things not to be trusted, has a multiple function: it divides part two in half, it provides variety, and it signals the approaching end of the list. As with the other examples of such a signal, a return to the former listing pattern (in this case the pattern of item 9) brings the list to a close. To sum up: the rune-ritual list employs a repetitive opening item pair that acts as a list signal, an opening statement of the organizing principle, strategies for ensuring unity and logical order, division into list sections, half-sections and item pairs, linking between item pairs and sections, a change in listing pattern and an interruption to provide variety, and a concluding signal and return device. Like the rune-makers list it is carefully constructed, coherent, and complete.

The rune-ritual list is followed by a brief concluding segment (145.6–9). There has been some disagreement among critics about the interpretation of this segment, but no discussion, as far as I am aware, of its function as a list-concluding and transition device. Looked at in these terms, it functions as follows. The adverb *svá* would appear to refer to the immediately preceding rune-ritual list, but *reist*, which must in this context refer to the carving of runes, links the lines rather with the rune-makers list. So does the reference to Þundr, another *heiti* of Óðinn. The whole segment may be seen as a reflective summing-up comment which refers back to the rune-makers list, resuming its narrative tone after the sharply admonitory digression of the rune-ritual list, as well as its use of proper names, its references to Óðinn in the third person and by different *heiti*, and its repeated verb *reist*. This relationship is recognized by Boer, who suggests (1922, 48) that the concluding segment originally followed immediately after strophe 142, and by Auden and Taylor who, in their translation (1983, 165), move the segment to a position at the end of the rune-makers list (i.e., after strophe 143). However, moving the segment may be unnecessary. We have seen how the eddic poets employ an interruption and return device as a list closing technique. I suggest that here the rune-ritual list may itself be regarded as a comparable interruption between the rune-makers list and the end of the “Rúnatal” list section. The resumption of the style of the rune-makers list in the concluding segment is analogous to the return to a former pattern to close a list. If this is so, the metrical change (from *ljóðaháttur* to *fornyrðislag*) between part two of the rune-ritual list and the concluding segment is a reflection of the latter’s concluding function. It accords with the careful craftsmanship of this poet that *reist* in the concluding segment should echo *reist* in the concluding lines of both parts of the earlier list (142.7 and 143.5).

Boer (1922, 48; see also Larrington 1993, 62) states that the second half of the segment (“þar hann upp um reis, er hann aprt of kom”) relates to the events in strophe 139, where Óðinn tells how he took up the runes and “fell ec aprt þaðan”

[I fell back from there]. Evans cautiously suggests the same connection (1986, 137; see also North 1991, 134–35). A barrier to accepting this connection has been the voice change from first person in strophe 139 to third person in the concluding segment. In her discussion of the segment (1992, 117), Quinn plausibly explains the change from *ljóðaháttr* to *fornyrðislag* in terms of a “movement from the perspective of the speaking subject to external narration,” but she provides no explanation for the change in voice, merely commenting that it is “not unfamiliar from the preceding *ljóðaháttr* series of stanzas.” However, by going one step further than Quinn and seeing not only a change in perspective, but also a change in the role of the speaker, we can explain both the change in verse form and the change in voice: Óðinn is speaking in his own voice in the narrative strophes 138–41, in 143.5, and (very probably) in the rune-ritual list, but is reciting established lore in both the rune-makers list and the concluding segment. In all other respects, a connection between “fell ec aptr þaðan” and “þar hann upp um reis” makes good sense.⁵ If the segment does link back to the narrative strophes as well as to the rune-makers list, then it functions as a conclusion for the whole of “Rúnatal,” rather than just for the list section. In any case, the second part of the summing-up comment comprises a structurally parallel couplet which completes the closure of “Rúnatal.” Like the couplet which ended the earlier narrative section (141.4–7), this couplet also signals the transition to a list, in this case “Ljóðatal,” which follows immediately.

If the lists in “Rúnatal” are indeed as carefully constructed and linked together as I have argued, what are the implications for the interpretation of this section of *Hávamál*? Does it remain, as North has called it, “an island of incoherence” in the poem? This must be left for others to decide, but I would tentatively put forward the following suggestion. Taking the whole of “Rúnatal” into account it can be argued that the narrative strophes, 138–41, tell the listener⁶ not only how the runes were acquired, but also at what cost they were acquired. Their implied value is very great. Similarly, the rune-makers list tells the addressee not only who made the runes, but also how very powerful those runes are. The speaker states this both directly (“miðc stóra stafi, miðc stinna stafi”) and by implication, when he emphasizes the might of the rune-makers: *fimbulþulr*, *ginregin*, *hroptr rogná*. Like all powerful tools, and as the anecdote from *Egils saga* quoted above (101) illustrates, the runes will be dangerous in the hands of one who does not know how to use them properly. Hence the stress in the rune-ritual list on using them

5. If this connection and the connection between the concluding segment and the rune-makers list are accepted, then the following interpretation is possible: Óðinn carves the runes immediately on returning, or rising, from his ritual death on the tree; he carves them right there, where he returns. The fact that this initial carving and distribution of the runes happens before mankind exists explains the absence of a rune-carver for men from the rune-makers list.

6. Or the addressee. I have argued elsewhere that the whole of “Rúnatal,” like “Loddfáfnismál,” is addressed to Loddfáfnir and that it is to him that the pronoun *þú* in 142 and 144 refers (Jackson 1994).

properly and on correctly performing related rituals. So the whole of “Rúnatal” can be seen as a text concerned with the value and power of runes, and with the consequent need for skill and restraint in using them. The place of the rune-makers list is justified by the information it gives about the power and importance of the runes. The admonitory digression of the rune-ritual list is justified by the need to give the addressee a strong and direct warning against ignorant or excessive use of that power. Such an interpretation, which would fully endorse the integrity of the Codex Regius text, would also give the lists a legitimate and important place in the poem.

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