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Composition Transmission Performance: The First Ten *lausavísur* in *Kormáks saga*

In the ensuing paper I shall investigate poetic composition, transmission, and performance as three aspects of the continuing elaboration of Kormákr story material.[1] Before I proceed to detailed discussion, I subjoin a text and translation of the ten *lausavísur* to be investigated, along with two other verses that appear to be more or less closely related.[2]

Group 1

1. Nú varð mér í mínu
(menreið) jǫtuns leiði
(réttumk risti) snótar
ramma-ǫ́st, fyr skǫmmu;
þeir munu fœtr at fári
fal*d*-Gerðar mér verða
(alls ekki veitk ella)
optarr an nú (svarra).

[Now a mighty love came about for me in my mind ("favourable wind of the giant's wife") — the woman ("wagon of the necklace") stretched out her instep toward me — a short while ago. Those feet of the woman ("giantess's daughter of the ?head-dress") will mean jeopardy for me more often than now: otherwise I do not know the woman at all.]

2. Brunnu beggja kinna
bjǫrt ljós á mik drósar
(oss hlœgir þat eigi)
eldhúss of við felldan;

1. I should like to thank Theodore Andersson, Kari Gade, and John Lindow, organizers of a colloquium on *skáldasögur* (Stanford University, May 1995), at which an earlier version of this paper was presented. I am also grateful to participants of the colloquium for their comments on the paper.

2. The *lausavísur* are preserved in Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.), verses 6–9 also in AM 162 F fol. Verses are numbered here according to Sveinsson 1939, 207–15, 233–34, 277–78; see also Jónsson 1912–15, A1:80–82 and B1:70–72 (verses 1–10), A1:84 and B1:75 (verse 24), A1:178 and B1:168 (the anonymous *níðvísa*). Normalized orthography is used, and pertinent conjectural readings are italicized.

enn til ǫkkla svanna
ítrvaxins gatk líta
(þrǫ́ muna oss of ævi
eldask) hjá þreskeldi.

[The bright eyes ("lights of both cheeks") of the woman blazed upon me over the felled timber of the hall ("fire-house"): that does not bring me exultation; once more I looked at the ankles of the nobly-grown woman — the longing will never grow old for me — by the threshold.]

3. Brámáni skein brúna
brims und ljósum himni
Hristar hǫrvi glæstrar
haukfránn á mik lauka;
en sá geisli sýslir
síðan gullmens Fríðar
hvarmatungls ok hringa
Hlínar óþurft mína.

[The hawk-keen eye ("the eye-lash-moon") of the linen-draped woman ("valkyrie of the sea of herbs", i.e., "valkyrie of the drink") shone on me from under the bright forehead ("sky of the brows"); but since then that beam of the eye ("sun of the eye-lids") of the woman ("goddess of the gold necklace") brings about injury for her ("goddess of rings") and me.]

4. Hófat lind (né ek leynda)
líð*s* hyrjar (því stríði) —
bands mank beið*i*-Rindi —
baugsœm af mér augu,
þás húnknarrar hjarra
happþægi-Bil krapta
helsisœm á halsi
Hagbarð*s* á mik starði.

[The ring-resplendent woman ("lime-tree of the fire of the drink," i.e., "lime-tree of gold") did not lift her eyes from me, nor did I conceal that anguish — I remember the woman ("demanding goddess of the band") — when she ("luck-receiving goddess of the ship of the board-game-piece," i.e., "of the board-game"), neck-resplendent, stared at me at the neck of the Hagbarðr of the doorpost ("ship's timber of hinges": for the second helmingr see Bugge 1889, 40–41).]

Group 2

5. Eitt lýti kvazk *Á*ta
eldbekks á mér þekkja
Eir of aptanskœrur
allhvít, ok þó lítit:
haukmœrar kvað hári
Hlín velborin mínu
(þat skyldak kyn kvinna
kenna) sveip*t* í enni.

[The woman ("goddess of the fire of the sea-king's bench," i.e., "goddess of gold"), completely fair-skinned, said that she detected one blemish on me in the evening shadows, and yet a small one; the well-born woman ("the goddess of the ?glove") said that there is a ?wave? to my hair — I ought to know that type of woman — on my forehead."

10. Saurfirrðum kom sv*a*rðar
sefþeys at mér Freyja
(grepps reiðu mank góða)
geirteins skarar beina;
þó vǫ́rum vér þeiri
þǫll hyl*t*inga vallar
(minnumk Eir at unna
unnfúrs) meðalkunnir.

[The woman ("goddess of the melt-water of the sedge of the scalp," i.e., "goddess of water for hair-washing") provided me, once I was free of dust — I remember the good reception of the poet —, with the hospitality of a comb ("spear-stick of the hair," i.e., "a stick furnished with spears [the teeth of the comb]"); and yet I was not really known to that woman ("fir-tree of the plain of snakes," i.e., "fir-tree of gold"): I remember to love her ("goddess of the wave-fire").]

Group 3

6. Svǫrt augu berk s*vei*ga
snyrtigrund til fundar
(þykkik erma Ilmi
allfǫlr) ok lǫ́ sǫlva;
þó hefk mér hjá meyjum,
mengrund, komit stundum
hrings við Hǫrn at manga
hagr sem drengr enn fagri.

[I bring dark eyes to the meeting with the woman ("tidying-land of the [head-dress]") — I seem quite pale to her ("goddess of sleeves") — and a sallow appearance. Yet on occasion, lady ("land of the necklace"), I have acquitted myself with maidens, to drive a bargain with a woman ("goddess of the ring"), like a handsome warrior.]

7. Ǫl-Sǫ́gu metk auga
annat, beðjar Nǫnnu
þats í ljósu líki
liggr, hundraða þriggja;
þann metk hadd, e*r* (hodda)
hǫrbeiði-Sif greiðir,
(dýr verðr fægi-Freyja)
fimm hundraða (snimma).

[I appraise one eye of the woman ("ale-goddess"), which lies in her ("bed-goddess's") bright body, at three long hundreds. I appraise the hair (which) she ("linen-demanding goddess") combs — she ("polishing goddess of treasures") rapidly becomes expensive — at five long hundreds.]

8. Alls metk auðar þellu
Íslands, þás mér grandar,
Húnalands ok handan
hugstarkr sem Danmarkar;
verð es Engla jarðar
Eir há*þ*yrnis geira
(sól-Gunni metk svinna
sunds) ok Íra grundar.

[In all I boldly appraise the woman (“pine-tree of riches”), who causes me harm, as equal to Iceland and — across the sea — the land of the Huns, as well as Denmark. She (“the goddess of the spears of the thorn-bush of the skin,” i.e., “the goddess of the comb/hairpins”) is worth the land of the English — I appraise the shrewd woman (“valkyrie of the sun of the sound,” i.e., “valkyrie of gold”) — and the territory of the Irish.]

Group 4

9. Léttfœran skalt láta
(ljóst vendi mar, Tósti)
móðr of miklar heiðar
minn hest und þér rinna;
makara’s mér at mæla,
an mórauða sauði
umb afréttu elta,
orð margt við Steingerði.

[Worn-out (as you are), you shall let my nimbly-stepping horse run beneath you, across the wide moors; hit the beast with a stick, Tósti: it is more congenial for me to speak many a word with Steingerðr than to muster the tawny sheep over the mountain pastures.]

For comparison:

26. Þú telr, ljós, of logna,
lín-Gefn, við þik stefnu,
en ek gørða mjǫk móðan
minn fák of sǫk þína;
heldr vilda ek hǫlfu,
hring-Eir, at marr spryngi
(sparðak jó þanns ǫ́ttum
alllítt) an þik grá*t*na.

[You say, bright woman (“linen-goddess”), that the tryst with you was broken, but I made my horse quite worn out for your sake; I would far rather, woman (“ring-goddess”), that the horse collapsed than you [should be] brought to tears; in no way did I spare the mount that I had.]

64. Vildak hitt, at væri
vald-Eir gǫmul jalda
stœrilǭt í stóði
Steingerðr, en ek reini:

værak þráða Þrúði
þeiri's stǫðvar geira
gunnǫrðigra garða
gaup*n*elds á bak hlaupinn.

[I wished that the woman ("goddess of ?power/guarding [a piece in chess]") were an old mare, Steingerðr, proud amid the stud, and I the stallion: I would have leapt on the back of the woman ("goddess of threads of the fire of the hand," i.e., "of gold threads") who stops the battle-upright spears of bandages (i.e. "stops the stallion's erect penis": for the second helmingr cf. Gade 1989).]

It would be tempting to take Jón Helgason's advice, which is to enjoy saga verses as we have them (if they are good) without bothering ourselves excessively about their possible deep history (1953, 145). But it is also tempting — and for me the greater temptation — to investigate the verses as a possible clue to the compositional, transmissional, and performance processes obtaining in the cultivation of sagas.

Kormáks saga is of course particularly rich in verses, which in turn exist in an interesting variety of relationships with the prose in which they are embedded. Theodore Andersson has called for "a more careful and exacting consideration of the relationship between verse and prose" in this saga, with "rigorous answers" to basic questions about that relationship (1969, 10). Here I would seek to place an investigation of the relationship between the various verses, seen as singletons or as more extended subsets of the total extant canon, on the same footing. I shall begin by considering the authenticity of the verses, then turn to the question as to how far the prose represents an authentic tradition, and finally analyse the grouping of the first ten *lausavísur*.

The incidence of verses in sagas is a complex phenomenon whose motivation is still not fully understood despite much detailed analysis. How far the verses enjoyed an existence independent of the prose with which we nowadays find them associated is a moot point. Starting from first principles, we might note that it would be very difficult to substantiate an originary state where any poem whatever was totally independent of prose narration or commentary. Associated with any poetic composition is a degree of dependence upon a prose paratext: notorious cases are Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" and Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* but in principle any poem will carry its paratext with it, just as surely as a novel carries its publisher's blurb. This tendency manifests itself nowadays in poetry readings and other live performances, where the poet-performer often expatiates on the purported circumstances of composition or persons to whom the piece is supposedly indebted. Naturally the precise content of the paratext will vary from performance to performance and at different phases in the transmission of the poem. The paratext (like narrative, for some critics) can be seen as a Derridean supplement which asserts its presence even as we attempt to isolate a purely lyric moment. Nevertheless, if we are trying to recon-

struct the circumstances in which a given individual *dróttkvætt* strophe was first composed and performed, we may validly elicit evidence from our sources for differential degrees of dependence on prose. At one end of the spectrum is the strophe that appears to have been composed as a freestanding artifact or part of a unitary extended poem, at the other end is the strophe that appears to have been composed as part of a prosimetrum.

To take each of these cases in turn. Certain strophes seem most likely to be freestanding, that is to have had only very meagre links with a prose narrative. Often such strophes represent occasional compositions. In the case of Kormákr, there is no reason in principle to doubt his historicity or that he might have composed verses as a response to particular occasions or events. The existence and possibility of occasional poems as a genre is testified to by runic inscriptions, the legal codification Grágás, and the *konungasögur.* Two major genres in *Kormáks saga* and other *skáldsögur,* namely *mansǫngr* and *níð,* are vouched for in these comparatively external sources. Such occasional poems might be quite brief, perhaps no more than a strophe or two. Sometimes, though, the verses we find embedded in sagas can be shown to represent excerpts from pre-existing extended poems. The treatment of Sigvatr's *Bersǫglisvísur* in *Ágrip* is a salient example: just one verse is cited, and it is treated as an individual speech act in a crucial episode. From other sources, however, it is evident that *Bersǫglisvísur* comprised upwards of a dozen strophes, though the precise number is unknown (Poole 1991, 8–10 and references there given). Sometimes too an evidently integral set of verses may be split up for insertion at discrete points in the prose narrative. Forms of this process seem to have operated with the well-known set of verses attributed to Torf-Einarr (See 1960; Poole 1991, 161–72). The general processes involved in this process of splitting up have been sketched out by Klaus von See (1977, 58–59).

Turning now to the opposite end of the spectrum, originary prosimetra, it seems that some skalds (notably Sigvatr) composed certain longer poems in a loose format: a well-known example is *Austrfararvísur,* a poetic sequence describing his vicissitudes while on a diplomatic mission. Such compositions are sometimes referred to as *flokkar,* sometimes as *vísur,* but whether they were ever performed as pure verse, i.e., in a through-composed metrical form, is doubtful. Quite possibly the constituent verses were customarily linked together in performance by a prose narration. In turn, the prosimetra seen in the sagas may represent an expanded version of these hypothesized originary prosimetric narratives.

To avoid oversimplifying the processes we should envisage all these compositional and performance strategies as potentially coexisting throughout the period of accretion and transmission of saga material, down to perhaps the fifteenth century. The methods of handling verses that we can deduce from the extant redactions are pretty consistent over this time-span, regardless of the date of the individual redaction (Poole 1991, 197). Recent publications on the *Íslendingasögur* tend to validate the notion of a very extended process of composition, reception,

and transmission, in which orality and literacy interacted. Among recent scholars to consider the question, Richard Perkins has commented that in the Iceland of the literary period "there existed a vigorous and dynamic oral tradition which consisted not only in *metrical* compositions but also found its expression in *prose*" (1989, 241; author's emphases). To oral tradition can be ascribed the framing and preservation of the sagas' particulars (Clover 1984, 617). Correspondingly, as a specifically literary development we can identify the organization of particular subsets of story material into the large, convoluted wholes that constitute the classic saga format (Clover 1984, 617). The persons who compiled these comprehensive redactions in all likelihood based their texts not on "some monumental recital of tradition but rather on the collection and comparison of episodic materials" (Andersson and Miller 1989, 95). This hypothesis, combined with the assumption that sometimes the collecting project was less than exhaustive, would provide one means of explaining the absence from *Kormáks saga* of any mention of Kormákr's praise-poems for Sigurðr or other Norwegian leaders (cf. Sveinsson 1939, xcvi) and likewise the presence of a dubious and evidently inferential account of the poet's ancestors. Equally, the existence of a fragment attributed to Kormákr in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* but not extant in *Kormáks saga* has customarily been treated as an indication, if not a totally unequivocal one, that the Kormákr canon in some respects led a separate existence from the saga prose (Sveinsson 1939, lxxxiii–iv; cf. Jónsson 1931, 202). Cases of inconsistency between prose and verse in *Kormáks saga* can be accounted for if we posit not merely different prose realizations of the story material, oral and written, but also a variety of verse realizations, sometimes perhaps composed in a variety of verse-forms and metres and covering different portions of the total story material. Thus Heather O'Donoghue has quite reasonably, though on slight evidence, postulated the existence of an "eddaic," perhaps *málaháttr*, version of the dialogue in chapter 3 (1991, 29, 33).

There exists a broad scholarly consensus that most of the verses attributed to Kormákr in the saga appear to be comparatively early and to originate as the production of one poet.[3] Indeed, Peter Hallberg declared that Kormákr's poetry is a unique witness to Scandinavian love in the tenth century (1962, 143). Closer to a conclusive investigation is the recent work of Gade (1995), which establishes individual predilections for certain types of metrical filler that would have been difficult or impossible for later skalds to mimic accurately. Among Kormákr's favoured types we might count the "heavy dips" in A^1-, A^2- and A^4-lines (1995, 56–59), as in 3.6 "síðan gullmens Fríðar" and 3.8 "Hlínar óþurft mína." While even lines of Type A^1 were not at all common among ninth- and tenth-century skalds in general, Kormákr attributions contain a sizable proportion of them (1995, 137). Even E3-lines were especially prominent in Kormákr, among a small group of poets

3. See Hallberg 1959, 38–40, and Hallberg 1962, 134–35, 138–39, 143, for statements that typify the views of many scholars.

(1995, 82): an example is 4.2 “líð*s* hyrjar því stríði.” Similarly, Kormákr is among a small group who favour Type XE3, where alliteration falls in positions 4 and 5, as in 5.7 “þat skyldak kyn kvinna” (1995, 85–87, 106). He likewise favours the more common Type D2 Even (1995, 113–17), as in 5.6 “Hlín velborin mínu.” Finally, he is evidently one of a small number of poets who use elision to accommodate an extra proclitic syllable (1995, 66), as possibly in 4.1 “Hófat lind (né ek leynda).” This concurrence of some key features offers a strong indication that, at least for the present, and pending systematic statistical examination of *dróttkvætt* from later periods, Kormákr *lausavísur* should be presumed genuine unless particular evidence can be adduced for the opposite viewpoint.

Various other grounds for authenticity had been adduced by earlier scholars. On the linguistic front, Finnur Jónsson catalogued most of the relevant features to be found in the saga verses (1912, 13). He also noted some stylistic features, such as the prevalence of kenning compounds with the verbal stem as the first element: “fægi-Freyja,” “-þægi-Bil,” “snyrtigrund,” “-beiði-Sif,” and (conjecturally) “beið*i*-Rindr” (1931, 127). Einar Ólafur Sveinsson regarded the “marks of antiquity” adduced by Finnur as indicating that the “greater part” of these verses dates “back to the tenth century” (1966–69, 37; cf. Kristjánsson 1988, 104).[4] While acknowledging shifts of mood, from humorous to serious, Einar affirmed that the great majority of the verses attributed to Kormákr in the saga do indeed originate with Kormákr himself, not least because they are comparable in formal and prosodic respects with the extant fragments of the acknowledged Kormákr attribution *Sigurðar drápa* (Sveinsson 1939, lxxxiii–iv). Approaching the question from a more literary angle, Roberta Frank observed that “when Kormákr’s stanzas are read in isolation from their saga-matrix (much as a sonnet-sequence),” various kenning-patterns “are seen to dominate the series . . . Encountered in sequence, these kennings merge to form a composite picture of a woman in a stone-necklace: a repeated onomastic leitmotif accompanying nearly every appearance or memory of Steingerðr” (1970, 14). Taking up a comment by Finnur Jónsson (1931, 130), Frank notes the unusual predilection in the Kormákr attributions for the goddesses Hlín and Eir and offers a thematic explanation (1970, 26).

Lexical commonalities with *Sigurðardrápa* can also be pointed out. They occur with particular density in the following fragment of the drápa (verse 3):

Eykr með *enni*dúki
jarðhljótr día fjarðar
breyti, *hún* sás *bein*an
bindr; seið Yggr til *Rindar*
(verse 3, from Kock 1923, §261; my emphases).[5]

4. For another brief summary of the specific linguistic and prosodic evidence see Sveinsson 1939, lxxxv, also xcii, on the Holmgǫngu-Bersi attributions.

5. A tentative translation would be “The gainer of territory honours the skald with a forehead-cloth, he who binds the ?standing bear-cub?; Óðinn won Rindr by magic.”

The near collocation of the items *hún-* and *Rindr,* reminiscent of *Kormáks saga* verse 4, seems especially noteworthy.

Naturally the consensus on authenticity is not total and does not extend to all the individual strophes. Bjarni Einarsson impugned the credentials of the first four verses on the grounds that a poet could not have spoken of falling in love at first sight (and a pretty limited first sight at that), let alone communicated intimations of the disasters to follow, had he not been the author of the saga prose and undergone the influence of the troubadours (1961, 69). In these views he was followed by de Vries, who accounted for the uniformity of diction in the kennings by postulating a talentless poetaster who replicated material from a few genuine verses: verses 1 and 2 are among the spurious attributions (1964–67, 2:392). More moderately than Bjarni and de Vries, Fredrik Paasche (1957, 215), Jónas Kristjánsson (1988, 228), and Vésteinn Ólason (1992, 254) have suggested that verses containing *adynata,* commercial appraisal of the lady, and other international motifs should be attributed to a learned author whose *floruit* fell after Kormákr's time but before the fixing of the saga in written prose. Against these doubts, Siegfried Gutenbrunner championed the authenticity of verses 7 and 8, with their "appraisal" topos, on the grounds that Kormákr in person might have been the borrower here, rather than a later poet (1955, 394). If anything, Gutenbrunner would exclude verse 3, contending that it merely restates things said in verse 2. He prefers the other extant affiliation of this verse, which is with Gunnlaugr in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* (verse 20). Gutenbrunner's proposal conflicts with evidence that the Gunnlaugr story material evolved in parasitism upon the Kormákr material and hence that the Kormákr affiliation of *Kormáks saga* verse 3 is older. It can also be argued that Gutenbrunner's proposal depends upon a hypercritical standard concerning repetitiousness and ignores the fact that in *Kormáks saga* verse 3 forms a step in a logical process that runs from verse 1 to verse 4 (Gíslason 1892, 82; cf. Einarsson 1961, 66).

So far, then, we emerge with the view that the verses are authentic Kormákr productions, or at least that the burden of proof rests with whoever would seek to falsify them. What, however, of the status of the saga prose? In particular, does the prose narrative seem to embody early traditions about the poet and his circle? Here we reach a second item of broad scholarly consensus. This consensus holds that the prose connecting the verses in *Kormáks saga* represents not a "deep" tradition but merely a perfunctory attempt to link the verses. Finnur Jónsson mentioned as one example the prose introducing verse 7, which he saw as derived from ideas and motifs present in the verse (1931, 126, 130). Hallberg regarded the prose in general as connective tissue linking the verses, an attempt to tie the verses to the "red thread" formed by the skald's love story (1962, 133–34). He showed by detailed analysis of the prose context of verse 26 that the composer of the prose probably fabricated the whole episode from the verse, using the available scraps of information with considerable inconsistency (1959, 38). He found the saga

account of certain other verses equally unsatisfactory (1959, 39; 1962, 134–36). De Vries posited a fairly scanty oral tradition, which in many episodes had to be filled out by sheer invention (1964–67, 2:391). Frank predicated her discussion "on the assumption that — aside from Kormákr's *lausavísur* — the historical tradition behind the saga was negligible," and that what little there was lent itself to "patterning along the lines of well-known narrative prototypes" (1970, 27 n37 and references there given). O'Donoghue has recently suggested that the construction of the dialogue in the prose was predetermined by the form of the verses incorporated into it. According to her analysis, the tenses and the point of view contained in the verses presented difficulties for a prose narrator who wanted to place a different slant on the story material. Likewise, the account of circumstantial details in the verses was not full or clear enough to enable the setting to be realized confidently in the prose (1991, 25–27). To conclude this sampling of opinion, we may note that Jónas Kristjánsson agrees with Hallberg and other earlier scholars in likening the prose passages in the saga to "ligaments attached in some process of reconstitution of the skeleton provided by the verse" (1988, 228–29).

Once again, the consensus is of course not total. Some scholars have felt rather more strongly that the prose is to be taken seriously as representing its own strand of tradition. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson contended that all the verses would have possessed an anecdotal prose accompaniment from the outset, though he acknowledged that the content of this accompaniment would have varied and fluctuated through time (Sveinsson 1939, XCII). Bjarni Einarsson envisaged the concerted composition of a full-fledged prose narrative containing lyrical effusions, under the influence of troubadour poetry and the stories of Tristan and Isolde (Einarsson 1961). As to this latter theory Andersson has convincingly observed that "after a patient reading the feeling still persists that the indicted stanzas are not lyrical inserts, as in some romantic novel, but the vertebrae of tradition. There are too many stanzas to be pure ornament, they are too bunched, repetitive and ill-placed to suggest purely artistic relevance, and the discrepancies are sometimes uncomfortably real" (Andersson 1969, 10).

With this discussion by way of preamble, let us turn to the first ten verses and consider them in detail. Although they have inspired much fine scholarship and criticism, discussions of their grouping and mutual relationships have on the whole been impressionistic rather than thorough. Finnur Jónsson attempted a grouping on the basis of whether an individual verse could have been composed on the occasion of Kormákr's first meeting with Steingerðr or not. On this criterion verses 1, 6, and 9 emerge as logically and therefore chronologically prior to the others, which, however, Finnur thought might have been composed after only a short interval (1931, 130). Gutenbrunner defended the saga account of the composition of the first ten verses, excepting verse 3, as historically correct and explicable against the background of the court of Haraldr hárfagri and its culture (1955, 388, 394, 409, 411). This *Steingerdlied,* as he called it, should in his opin-

ion be seen as based upon genuine extemporary verse-making. Von See argued that the first ten *lausavísur* of the saga originally constituted a unitary poem, though he advocated a restoration with verse 10 placed between verses 6 and 7; an especially striking effect, he thought, is the combination of a veiled allusion to Steingerðr (as "fal*d*-Gerðr") in verse 1 and an overt mention of her name in verse 9, which he regarded as possibly forming the close of the poem (See 1977, 62–63).

With closer analysis of the text, I shall argue for the groupings shown in my introductory text and translation. Let us start with Group 1, the first four verses. These verses exhibit a marked cohesion and logical progression. The fact that the stance is uniformly retrospective and the narrative tense uniformly preterite, whereas according to the saga Kormákr speaks his verses even as he glimpses Steingerðr for the first time, has been registered by many scholars.[6] Finnur Jónsson noted that the name Steingerðr appears to be already known to the speaker, who appears to allude to it as early as verse 1 in the kenning "fal*d*-Gerðar" (1931, 119). Frank's discussion of the emendation from "fall-" here leads to a proposal for an emendation to "f*j*all-", generating a clearer reference to Steingerðr's name (1970, 29). The stance of the speaker is further stylized since, as O'Donoghue has pointed out (1991, 21n3), he not merely divines her name but also foresees the future unhappiness that will result from his meeting with Steingerðr.

Linked to these forebodings and common to the first four verses is a scheme of allusions to the Hagbarðr story (cf. Ohlmarks 1957, 382; See 1977, 63), which we find in its fullest form in the *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo Grammaticus but which was also evidently a story in wide circulation in medieval Iceland (cf. Einarsson 1961, 66; Sørensen 1993, 81–82).[7] It will be recalled that according to Danish tradition Hagbarðr was a Viking hero with only a single blemish in personal appearance. I shall return to this blemish presently. A princess named Signý fell in love with Hagbarðr. When her father condemned him to hanging, she vowed to die at the same instant, setting her house on fire and perishing amid the flames. Hagbarðr saw the flames rising as he prepared to die and knew that she had kept her word. Verse 4 in *Kormáks saga* of course refers outright to Hagbarðr.[8] In addition, however, the four verses refer recurrently to fire, the means of Signy's death (Poole 1989, 171). This allusive scheme subsumes the paronomasia, partly phonological/graphological and partly lexical, on motifs of "burning" and "fire" and on the syllable -*eld*- noted by Frank (1970, 16n22).

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6. See inter alia Jónsson 1912, 14; Jónsson 1920, 531; Jónsson 1931, 122–23; Vries 1964–67, 1:187 and n196; Frank 1970, 16n22; See 1977, 62–63; and O'Donoghue 1991, 21–22, though with an important qualification, for which see 22n5.

7. For the sake of simplicity, I shall use normalized Old Icelandic forms of the names of personages in this story, regardless of which particular source I am citing.

8. For the possible forms taken by the Hagbarðr artwork in the woman's house see especially Axel Olrik's comments (1912, 193).

In such a context a rationale can be posited for the irregular combination "líð*s* hyrjar" ("fire of the drink" = "gold"?) in verse 4. It apparently forms part of a woman kenning "líð*s* hyrjar lind" ("tree of the fire of the drink" = "tree of gold"? = "woman"). Nevertheless, the presence of the word "hyrjar" here is surprising, since the words "líð*s* lind" could form the necessary woman kenning (of the type "tree of drink") without further elaboration. To add "hyrjar" is tantamount to confounding two types, "tree of drink" and "tree of gold" (Ólsen 1888, 77; Jónsson 1931, 123). There has been no consensus as to how to resolve this problem, but an attractive possibility has been to look for ways of combining "hyrjar" with the words that follow, namely "því stríði," rather than the preceding word "líð*s*." To this end, Finnur Jónsson drastically and with insufficient warrant emended "hyrjar" to "hyggju," obtaining the phrase "hy*ggju* því stríði" [den sjælsvånde] (1912–15, 71).[9] Einar Ólafur Sveinsson equivocated oddly by keeping the manuscript reading while incorporating Finnur's conjecture into his translation ("hið logandi hugarstríð" [1939, 210]). Gutenbrunner translated "nicht leugn' ich Feuers Not," but without explaining what this might mean (1955, 389). O'Donoghue translates freely and with something of a Petrarchan flourish, "burning love's anguish" (1991, 23). Preferable is to accept the collocation "líð*s* hyrjar" with the latter word just as it stands in the manuscript, on the grounds that it is, as E. A. Kock maintained, close enough to the type "aquae ignis" to suggest "gold" (1923, § 264), yet also irregular enough to suggest that a definite foregrounding of the notion of "fire" is taking place. The close proximity of "hyrjar" and "stríði" adds to the foregrounding, by adding connotations of torment by fire. Altogether these figures of language contribute admirably to the program of Hagbarðr allusions seen in the whole set of four verses.

In thinking further about the function of this aberrant kenning, we may recall that the woman of the first four verses is represented as dangerous. The agentive "happþægi-," if the text here is correct, indicates someone who receives good fortune, presumably by defeating the opponent in a board game and hence, by implication, the speaker. Other possibly significant overtones are contributed by "bands" and "beið*i*-," the latter an emendation from "beiða" (Möbius 1886, 106; Ólsen 1888, 77), since both "fetters" (taking "bands" in one of its meanings) and "whetting, encouragement" (to an heroic death) are germane to the Hagbarðr story (Russom 1988, 181). The woman kenning involving beverages, "Hrist- lauka brims," may possibly also carry associations of death in such a context. We may note that in Saxo's story Signý gives her maidservants a cup of strong drink, in order to diminish their fear as they prepare for the dauntingly double death of hanging themselves and being burnt (Olrik and Ræder 1931, 197.25–31). From this and other evidence Geoffrey Russom has posited a so-called "drink of death," some kind of beverage designed to kill or render unconscious the prospective victim of a

9. See Bugge 1889, 39, for the desperate suggestion "horna."

ritual burning in Germanic societies (1988, 180). Possibly the woman-kenning "lind líðs hyrjar" may even carry associations with this pre-incineration beverage.

So far, then, I have confined myself to the first four verses in the saga, but here a typical problem arises. Does the cohesion we have been observing stop with the end of verse 4, or does it extend into still further verses? Do we possess adequate criteria to determine the boundaries of a particular set of verses? Could these boundaries have fluctuated as the composers and performers of the verses added to or subtracted from a set? O'Donoghue's discussion will serve to illustrate the difficulties. She comments that verses 1 to 5 are "similar in subject-matter, imagery, tense, and stance, and it seems possible that they originally belonged together in a free-standing sequence of love verses" (1991, 36). She finds them "relatively easy to arrange in a narrative sequence," whereas by contrast verses 6 to 10 "form a less uniform group." Likewise, reflecting on the composition of the saga, she remarks, "Less successful is the inclusion of verse 10, which is so different from the other strophes" (1991, 36). But later in the same monograph she seems to have formed a different sense of the grouping when she comments that six of the first ten verses (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 10) "are so similar in content, style, outlook, and stance — though without being at all repetitive — that they may be taken together as a group which could originally have come from a free-standing long poem in which Kormákr recounts how he fell in love with Steingerðr at first sight" (1991, 171).

In verse 5 two types of motif seem to be continued from verses 1 to 4. One of the woman kennings seems to take up the "fire" motif that has been so pronounced in the first four verses. This kenning should probably read "*Á*ta eldbekks Eir" (Bugge 1889, 42), though the manuscript has "íta" for "*Á*ta." It draws attention to itself in that the elements *bekkr* and *eldr* are linked associatively in two different ways. On the one hand, "bench" and "fire" are fixtures in the archetypal hall, and on the other "bekks eldr" (where *bekkr* would mean "stream") could form a standard kenning of the "aquae ignis" type. Such double associativeness makes the kenning conspicuous and gives it the potential to carry cohesion from the previous verses.

The second potentially cohesive element is the reference to "eitt lýti" [one defect]. The idea of the woman staring at the speaker, expressed in verses 2, 3, and 4, could be seen as continuing naturally to the idea of her detecting a blemish in his appearance in verse 5. Here again we could see a link to the story of Hagbarðr. In the version told by Saxo, we find an episode where Signý is comparing two of her previous suitors and states that "the flourishing soul of Haki compensated for the blemish on his face" (Davidson 1979–80, 1:213). The nature of the disfigurement is not made clear. The original Latin reads "in isto oris lituram animi flore pensari testata" (Holder 1886, 231.17–18), where literally "litura" means "correction, erasure, blotting out." When Signý goes on to sing a song on this topic, bystanders are led to believe that she is praising Hagbarðr under the name of Haki

(Davidson 1979–80, 1:213). Included in the song are the following sentiments: (1) "Nam damnum rigide redimit mens ardua forme / Mendamque vincit corporis," which I would translate: "For an elevated mind offsets the disadvantage of a rough appearance and triumphs over a blemish of the body." (2) "Ast illum capitis decor approbat et nitor oris / Vertexque crine fulgidus" [But the elegance of the head, together with the glow of the face and the crown of the head, lustrous with hair, recommend the other man] (Holder 1886, 231.30–31). These three sets of comments, taken together, suggest that the blemish is something to do with the face. They are broadly similar to the sentiments in verse 5, though we cannot claim a decisive match of motifs (cf. Poole 1989, 171). Verse 5 suggests a "blotting out" of the face, in this case by the "wave" in the hair, whatever exact form this wave might have taken. Perhaps it was what in English is called a "cow's lick." Here we might add the observation that, aside from general resemblances in style and prosody to the first four verses, which, as we saw, contained material in common with the *Sigurðardrápa,* the mention of the speaker's *enni* (forehead) is found also in *Sigurðardrápa* verse 3 and may represent an emulation of one of those individuating references to skaldic physiognomy and gesture prominent in various verses associated with Egill Skalla-Grímsson (cf. Byock 1993; Harðarson 1984). If these verses indeed arise from a largely pre-literate age (I here pass over the possibility of runic versions), one might see such physiognomical allusions as the oral counterpart of the poet's signature found in the Cynewulf canon and in other late antique and medieval European poetic traditions (on the general topic of medieval poetic signatures see Looze 1991).

The question, in summary, is whether the hints of common authorship and the shared material (the motifs of "fire" and "facial blemish" as probable borrowings from the Hagbarðr story) amount to adequate evidence of an intrinsic cohesion between the first four verses and verse 5. An important counter-indication is that in verses 1 to 4 the speaker regards the attraction between himself and the woman as baleful or ill-omened in some way, whereas in verse 5 he appears, more frivolously, to welcome the opportunity of cultivating her acquaintance: "þat skyldak kyn kvinna / kenna" [I ought to know that type of woman]. The speaker evidently sees in this meeting a prospect of (to borrow from *Hárbarðsljóð* 31) "góð mankynni," where Hermann Pálsson defines *kynni* as "acquaintance, intercourse, friendly relations" (Pálsson 1990–93, 497) and Felix Genzmer translates the complete phrase as "gute Weiberbekanntschaften" (Genzmer 1920, 68).

On the showing of the above analysis, the evidence concerning cohesiveness pulls in opposite directions. Verses 1 to 4 and verse 5 (possibly in association with verse 10, which has yet to be canvassed) can therefore best be seen as forming separate but related groups or sequences. They might, for instance, have occupied near-neighbour positions in a prosimetrum realization of the Kormákr story material where the sequence of verses 1 to 4 was as yet not internally demarcated by prose narration and dialogue.

Now let's turn to verse 6. Here the speaker candidly (perhaps self-deprecatingly) avows that he brings dark eyes and a sallow appearance to his meeting with the woman and that she finds him very pale. The cohesion between verses 5 and 6 appears at first sight to be good, because the general topic of fault-finding is continued and there is even a verbal link between "allhvít" in verse 5 and "allfǫlr" in verse 6, with symmetrical placement of these two words. Similarly, "lýti" in verse 5, if interpreted as a legal/commercial term, would cohere well with "manga" in verse 6,[10] a word that will be discussed presently. It might therefore be tempting to conclude that verses 5 and 6 constituted a separate set of verses. But closer inspection demonstrates that the fault of dark eyes, sallow complexion, and general pallor in verse 6 is distinct from the fault of hair-style which formed the topic of verse 5 (cf. O'Donoghue 1991, 28). Comparison with a verse incorporated into Sigvatr's *Austrfararvísur* by modern editors (Aðalbjarnarson 1945, 140 v. 73), where a dark-eyed Icelander accosts a woman, suggests that verse 6 belongs to a recognizably standard characterization of a dark-eyed womanizer, who must compete against the stereotypical "drengr."[11] The Kormákr and Sigvatr verses correspond quite closely in lexis: "svartr," "auga," and "drengr." This characterization of the speaker and his female interlocutor seems to be distinct from that seen in verses 1 to 4 and verse 5. It would, admittedly, be easy to play the over-zealous neo-Analyst here. When O'Donoghue detects a shift of stance *within* verse 6 and even ventures a suggestion that the two helmingar of this verse "did not originally belong together," we may note the contradiction of her observation in the previous footnote, where she points out that shifts between second-person (vocative) and third-person reference occur elsewhere in skaldic stanzas (1991, 29). On the other hand, her observations that the adjacent prose is discrepant with the verse and that the two kennings in verse 6, "erma Ilmr" and "mengrund," are both entirely typical of Steingerðr (1991, 28–29), though not conclusive, might encourage us to conjecture that the addressee originally envisaged for the verse was the desired woman herself (Steingerðr or similar) and not the maidservant.

So far, then, I have argued that verse 6 was independent of verse 5 at some earlier stage of compositional endeavour. The resemblances between these two verses, noted above, must, if this conclusion is correct, be accounted for as due to chance or alternatively to the skill of a prose compiler, who might have contrived a degree of cohesiveness between verses when selecting (or possibly even adapting) them for incorporation into a particular realization of the story material. We should also envisage that compilers were capable of bringing together verses which originally did not belong together, having been composed for separate occasions or as parts of separate poems. Whether fortuitously or not, such accretions

10. Theodore M. Andersson, conversation with author, Stanford, California, May 1995.

11. For suggested definitions of the tricky and in a Bakhtinian sense probably highly "contestable" word *drengr* see Jesch 1993.

of verses sometimes hang together with reasonable coherence. Thus Holmgǫngu-Bersi's verses on his old age in *Kormáks saga* seem to cohere thematically within an elegiac format, but have been shown convincingly by O'Donoghue to contain discrepant elements (1991, 99–109).

What of the relationship of verse 6 to the ensuing verses? First we should observe that verses 7 and 8 seem to form a classic verse pair of the kind systematically analysed by Bjarne Fidjestøl (1982, 61–70). The content is complementary. In verse 7 the lady's eyes and hair are praised, in verse 8 her total person. The lexical and alliterative commonalities between these two verses will be the subject of more extended analysis presently. The rich associations and resonances evoked by the kenning base-words in verse 7, pointed out by Frank (1970, 26), carry over into verse 8, most notable being the references to hair. The prose is not integral to the meaning and cohesion of the verses. Verse 8 does not require a prompt from the maid, such as the saga supplies, since verse 7 has already shown us the speaker thinking ahead to his aggregate assessment. There seems no obstacle, then, to assuming that verses 7 and 8 represent a single compositional and performance endeavour. To be sure, O'Donoghue has argued that they differ in tone and register, with verse 7 being "playfully pedantic" and "unromantic" where verse 8 is "expansive and grandiose" (1991, 32): elsewhere O'Donoghue adds that "in comparison with verse 8, with its grandiose evaluation of Steingerðr, the bantering tone of verse 7 — setting a price in terms of woollen cloth — is evident" (1991, 177). In reality, though, this distinction rests upon particular, highly selective analogies with other literatures and upon a dubious rhetorical point: where the law was concerned, limbs and lives routinely and without incongruity carried a price assessable in terms of "woollen cloth." O'Donoghue herself comments that although verses 7 and 8 may embody "responses to the material" from different poets, the speaker's "apparent shift in mood from playfulness to passion is effective and convincing" (1991, 36).

Assuming that verses 7 and 8 represent a single unit we may enquire further as to whether they belong with other verses in a wider grouping or (alternatively) constitute a closed set. Andersson has classified these two verses with six other love verses in the saga, as giving no hint about a situation, carrying no tradition, and sitting awkwardly in a scene with which they have no apparent connection and which was clearly suggested to the saga writer by other more concrete stanzas. The more concrete stanza in question, according to Andersson, is verse 10, which evidently suggested Steingerðr's loan of a comb to Kormákr. Verses 7 and 8 were "attracted to this scene because of the praise of Steingerðr's hair in stanza 7, but the link is weak and the scene dull" (1969, 25). In considering where verses 7 and 8 might have been grouped before this process of attraction took place, we might look at the first four verses, but we would note that the iconography is different: in verses 1 to 4 the woman is characteristically staring, whereas here she is combing her hair. Of course none of these considerations rules out a more general

connection between the verses, which may originate in related realizations of the basic story material, but they do seem to militate against immediate cohesion in one larger unit.

Comparison of verses 7 and 8 with the immediately preceding verse 6 opens up more definite possibilities. The speaker in verse 6 depicts himself as someone who in the past has successfully driven a bargain with a woman (or possibly women, depending on how we take "hjá meyjum") and who now brings himself and his dark features to a new encounter. The word "manga" in this verse is usually translated as "flirt, make love." But elsewhere *manga* normally carries a commercial meaning, in line with its ultimate source in medieval Latin *mangonare* (Vries 1962, s.v.). Accordingly, Vigfússon's main gloss is "to barter, chaffer," with only the present passage cited for the meaning "flirt, make love" (1874, s.v.). Fritzner does not cite the latter meaning, but includes among his illustrative quotations two involving the acquisition of women where clearly the primary sense is the pertinent one (1954, s.v.): "eigi er sá at fullu kurteiss, er mangar sér unnustu sem bœjarmaðr vǫru á stræti" [he is not fully chivalrous, who bargains for a lover for himself as a townsman does for wares on the street]; "ek skal þessa mey eiga, ef hon er ómǫnguð" [I shall have this maiden, if she has not been acquired]. Finnur Jónsson cites only the present passage in his revision of the *Lexicon poeticum,* offering (in English translation) the literal meaning "trade, deal," with the explanation "have dealings in love with" (Jónsson 1913–16, s.v.; similarly Jónsson 1931, 126). In Modern Icelandic *manga* equates to "bargain, haggle, deal, hawk, peddle," though with an additional specialized sense of courting or wooing (Böðvarsson 1983, s.v.; my translation). On balance it seems most probable that in the Kormákr verse it is the generic sense of bargaining or chaffering that dominates, and the Fritzner quotation about bargaining for a mistress seems particularly comparable. The speaker of verse 6 is an acquisitive male come to market. The valuation of the woman in verses 7 and 8 could be seen as a natural continuation of this mercantile approach. Further, the speaker's self-characterization in verse 6 as comparable to a "drengr" seems to lead on naturally to the self-applied epithet "hugstarkr" (verse 8), whose apparent irrelevance puzzled an older generation of investigators (cf. Bugge 1889, 44) but is in my opinion purely an artifact of a secondary separation of verse 6 from verses 7 and 8.

Once this evidence of an earlier cohesion has been observed, it also springs to the eye that verses 6, 7, and 8 have a number of lexical and prosodic features in common. Thus forms of the word *auga* appear in line 1 of verses 6 and 7, while forms of the word *grund* appear in lines 2 and 6 of verse 6 and line 8 of verse 8. Finnur Jónsson notes the highly unusual repetition of this word as a kenning baseword within a single stanza (verse 6), while recognizing that emendation would be inappropriate (1931, 126) and resisting attempts in that direction on the part of Björn Magnússon Ólsen (1888, 29). Each occurrence of the latter word figures in *aðalhending;* verse 7 lies outside this pattern but contains two occurrences of the

unrhymed, highly significant word “hundraða.” The choice of kennings also possesses a certain consistency. In verse 6 the woman is a “tidying land of [headdresses]” (for the emendation see Ólsen 1888, 28), a “goddess of sleeves,” a “necklace-goddess,” and a “goddess of rings.” In verse 7 she is a “goddess of ale,” a “goddess of the bed,” a “linen-craving goddess,” and a “polishing goddess of treasures.” Finally, in verse 8 she is a “pine-tree of riches,” a “goddess of hairpins or comb” (with some uncertainty about the exact interpretation of the kenning), and a “goddess of gold.” The nexus of ideas here can be identified as concern with personal appearance, hospitality, and a lucrative matrimonial transaction. The woman adorns herself and offers the hospitable ale in the hope of being bought for rings and adorned with the bridal linen.

These considerations enable us to reconstruct two stages in the transmission and accretion of the story material. At the earlier stage the valuation motif was treated in an evidently closed set of three verses (6, 7, and 8). The words “berk” and “manga” in verse 6 led naturally into the “appraisal” motif. In a later treatment the verses were performed as components in a prosimetrum. With the addition of this prose, the connexion carried by those two commercially suggestive words became obscured. As if to compensate, the prose appears to add a new prompt or cue for the idea of valuation, where the maid comments “þó myndir þú miklu kaupa, at kona þín hefði slíkt hár sem Steingerðr eða slík augu” [yet you would pay a high price that your wife had such hair as Steingerðr or such eyes] (Sveinsson 1939, 212). Another observation perhaps also tends in the same direction. The goddess-name “Sága” in verse 6 represents an unacceptable reading, as Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (1966–69, 37) and earlier scholars have noted, since it would presuppose an apposition with “snyrtigrund” foreign to *dróttkvætt* style. The emendation mentioned above to “s*vei*ga” is likely to be correct. The incorrect reading “Sága” might well have taken its origin from an anticipation of “Sǫ́gu” in verse 7 — an anticipation that would be all the more likely if at one time verse 7 had followed immediately upon verse 6, without the intervening prose.

The inclusion of verses 6 to 8 at this point in the saga may have been doubly motivated. There is, as pointed out by Andersson (1969, 25), the general relevance of a motif of attention to the hair of speaker and desired woman. Further to this, and more tentatively, I could suggest that the emphatic colour contrast — fair and dark, white and black — fits with the distinction between the pieces of the board game which, to judge from both verse 4 and the saga prose, evidently formed a prominent part of some realizations of the story material. Not merely the game of chess, which would not have reached Iceland so early as Kormákr’s time, but also the more local *hnefatafl* depended on a light/dark contrast (Holtsmark 1957; Turville-Petre 1956, 43).

Of the first ten verses which I undertook to survey, we are left with two, verses 9 and 10. Verse 9 seems clearly divergent in substance, style, and lexis from the others (Jónsson 1931, 129). Frank characterizes it as “anomalously simple and

childlike" (1970, 11 n12). O'Donoghue has suggested that its composition may be attributable to "an interesting sense of obligation on the part of some story-teller and verse-maker to maintain a realistic continuity," contriving a means by which Kormákr is freed to spend the day with Steingerðr (1991, 34). However this may be, verse 9 turns out to be closely reminiscent of verse 26 in various respects. We might postulate a small set of "loose" verses having to do with Steingerðr in various "horsy" associations and culminating most dubiously in the anonymous *níðvísa* (verse 64) recently explicated by Gade (1989). These verses would not, I think, ever have constituted a closed narrative sequence, independent of the prose: rather, they might represent a series of *kviðlingar* composed by or for the saga personages, similar in either case to the exchange between Kormákr and Narfi, which likewise centres upon a "country" set of motifs — scythe-handles and sausages.

If we move to verse 10, it is to note that this verse lacks integration into any specific episode within the prose narrative (cf. Jónsson 1912, 14). A search for a suitable context within the extant story material reveals some reasonably clear commonalities with verse 5. Both verses allude to the speaker's hair and to his as yet slight acquaintance with the woman. Indeed, it can be seen that verses 5 and 10, whether in forward or in reverse order, would go together quite naturally as components in a little narrative. A comparable example occurs in *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, where verses 3 and 6 (Nordal and Jónsson 1938, 140–42), once separated from their integument of prose and juxtaposed, appear to tell a little story (Poole 1973). In the first helmingr of verse 5 in *Kormáks saga* the speaker reports the unnamed woman as pointing out a blemish. The time is evening, the point of the day when a traveller conventionally arrives at a house hoping for hospitality. The second helmingr of verse 5 clarifies that the woman's opinion relates to the speaker's hair and conveys an expression of his wish to further his acquaintance with the woman. He might well console himself by reflecting, with *Málsháttakvæði* 19, that "lýtin þykkja skammæ skarar" [faults in hair(-dressing) seem short-lived] (Jónsson 1912–15, B2:142). The first helmingr of verse 10 has the woman lending the speaker a comb after he has washed ("mér saurfirrðum"). The dirt he has washed off could be that of travel, which would fit with the scene evoked in verse 5. The words "reiða" and "beina" are both often used in contexts of hospitality but also suggest the woman's regard for the speaker. The second helmingr in verse 10 strengthens the notion of this regard as something unexpected, given the lack of any deeper acquaintance between the speaker and the woman at this stage. The two verses, whichever the order of their arrangement, display a chiastic symmetry in terms of the placement of the heiti "Eir" and the vocalic alliteration. The stanzas conclude on the same set of hendingar, carried across the last vísuorð. The general "goodness of fit" is sufficient to suggest that verses 5 and 10 at one phase in the development of the story material comprised a unit of composition and performance.

As such a unit, they appear to constitute a lighter-hearted, more optimistic echo of two verses spoken by Egill in *Egils saga* about a kinswoman called Ásgerðr.[12] Kormákr appears to allude to an aspect of the older poet's physiognomical "signature," namely his "enni." He also apparently picks up on the kenning elements "sef-," "Hlín," and "hauk-" (these latter two in association with each other in both poets). But, whereas Egill broods morbidly about the lack of recognition ("ókynni") the lady is receiving from him, Kormákr evinces confidence about the recognition he is receiving from his lady; indeed, cognates of the word "-kynni" occur in the final line of each Kormákr stanza, in an apparent etymological play.[13] We may add to this the possible identity of the women's names. Kormákr's lady is identified as Steingerðr in verse 9, in a few other verses later in the saga, and in the saga prose: the name, as Frank has pointed out, is most readily interpreted as an *ofljóst* (concealed *heiti*) on Ásgerðr or other closely related name, such as Hallgerðr (1970, 11–12 and 11 n12). Although there is not space to work out all the details or the implications of these allusions here, we begin to detect a pattern where the poet's account of his love is multiply stylized, with both Egill and Hagbarðr as elements in the construction.

I arrive, then, at the following conjectured groupings of verses within the saga's first series of ten. Verses 1 to 4 belong closely together, as if they had originated as a unitary poem. Related to them but in terms of implied context somewhat independent is a further pair of verses, namely 5 and 10. In style and substance markedly separate from both sets named so far is a third set consisting of verses 6, 7, and 8. Verse 9 does not connect closely with any other verse in the first ten, but may have stylistically and thematically related counterparts later in the saga, with which, however, it would share no particular narrative line. Simply to lump all ten of these verses together, as a compositional and performance unit, seems precluded by the weight of evidence for narrative and motivic heterogeneity.

What sort of raison d'être would the sets of verses, grouped together as I have conjectured in this paper, have had? Can we imagine them as freestanding poems — perhaps as situational lyrics or dramatic monologues? Or should we see them as forming units within a more extended loose sequence of verses and prose? Any answer to these questions will need to attach significance to the implied narrative element in these verses: they feel like metrical realizations of episodes in a more extensive body of story material rather than truly isolated lyrics in troubadour style (cf. Paasche 1957, 216). Margaret Clunies Ross has remarked that "many oral texts reveal only the tips of narrative icebergs, as it were, and assume the audience's knowledge of the main part of the story below the surface"

12. For the text and modern Icelandic translation see Nordal 1933, 148–49.

13. See Vries 1964–67, 1:188 n203, for other lexical correspondences between Egill and Kormákr compositions.

(Ross 1994, 25): the present groups of verses, with their cryptic allusions to settings and circumstances, may epitomize the phenomenon she is describing. These verses would later have been inherited by the person who compiled the total saga, as part of the mass of heterogeneous story materials. The compiler then dovetailed the verses together with prose, using the same skills as were evolving to cope with the dove-tailing of diverse prose elements. Part of the objective would have been the development of a more circumstantial, motivated narration. It is probable that in the first three chapters of *Kormáks saga* we can trace earlier and later stages in the assembling of story components.

Although Bjarni Einarsson pushed his Tristan hypothesis to excess, wrenching the available evidence for the dates of the saga, its verses, and the transmission of the matter of Tristan to Iceland, it is undoubtedly true that the process of falling in love is depicted in a stylized fashion in these verses. To the poet himself we may attribute an idealization of the immediacy of falling in love and composing lyrical effusions. In particular, the composition of verses 6, 7, and 8, along with 9, though represented as spontaneous within the verses themselves, might actually have occurred at a later time when the poet performed an autobiographical anecdote. A similar hypothesis was advanced by Sigurður Nordal to account for Egill's extreme juvenilia in *Egils saga* (1933, xi). Or we might opt for a theory of outright fictionalization, parallel to what we seem to see with later medieval poets such as Guillaume IX or Dafydd ap Gwilym.[14] We must certainly posit a treatment of love and courtship where the stylization includes the hero's self-identification with the legendary figure of Hagbarðr. His self-construction as a variation upon Egill can also be inferred. Then too, when Finnur Jónsson dismisses Steingerðr's claims to poetic prowess and argues that Kormákr must have versified the half-stanza attributed to her in the saga (1912, 11), we might feel suspicion concerning Finnur's gender politics and yet grant that here as well a certain fictionality is forcing its way in. It is troubling, for lovers of the strictly biographical, that Steingerðr's existence is nowhere vouched for outside *Kormáks saga* (Frank 1970, 11 n12 and references there given). For its part, the saga prose compounds the elements of stylization or fictionalization. It reinforces the presentation of the verses as performed spontaneously and without retrospection, applying this idealization incongruously to the first four verses of *Kormáks saga* even though they are clearly retrospective. The accounts of the circumstances purportedly prompting these and other *lausavísur* sometimes seem suspiciously ex post facto (O'Donoghue 1991 and references there given). We may reasonably conclude that as the story material evolved the elements of stylization and fictionalization became ever more prominent but that nevertheless they had been intrinsic to the material from the outset.

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14. Stephen G. Nichols, writing on Guillaume IX, notes for instance that "while the erotic register may catch the listeners' attention, it is more of a pseudometalepsis of pen to penis than an authentic glimpse into the boudoir" (1991, 155).

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