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"Scáro á scíði ørlǫg seggia": The Composition of *Vǫlospá* 20 and the Implications of the Hauksbók Variant

*V*ǫlospá 20 has two particular features which have occasioned comment from scholars. They are its extended length and two peculiarities in its phrasing: the interruption made by line 7 *scáro á scíði* [they incised the slip of wood] and the phrase in line 12, *ørlǫg seggia* [men's destinies], which seems to be lacking a verb. The text of the strophe, as it appears in the Codex Regius (R; Gks 2365 4°), is given here from the edition by Neckel and Kuhn (1983, 5) and the English translation by Ursula Dronke (1997, 12):

> Þaðan koma meyiar,   margs vitandi,
> þriár, ór þeim sæ,   er und þolli stendr;
> 5   Urð héto eina,   aðra Verðandi
>   — scáro á scíði —,   Sculd ina þriðio;
> 9   þær lǫg lǫgðo,   þær líf kuro
>   alda bornom,   ørlǫg seggia.

> [From there come maidens
> deep in knowledge,
> three, from the lake
> that lies under the tree.
> (5)   Urðr they called one, 'Had to be',
> the second Verðandi, 'Coming to be'
> — they incised the slip of wood —
> Skuld the third, 'Has to be'.
> (9)   They laid down laws,
> they chose out lives
> for mankind's children,
> men's destinies.]

Some scholars have explained line 7 as simply a parenthetical comment (see Nordal 1952, 77, and the punctuation provided by Nordal, by Neckel and Kuhn, and by other editors; Detter and Heinzel [1903, 29] compare the parenthetical comment in strophe 12, see below p. 81), or as introduced only for the sake of alliteration with the following line (Thorpe 1866, 6). Others (e.g., Gering 1927, 24; Schach 1983, 98) have regarded lines 5–8 as in any case an interpolation, so

dealing with the problem of the overlong strophe. Three different solutions have been offered for the problem of line 12. Older translations of the poem into English have usually supplied a third verb, for example:

> Laws they established
> life allotted
> to the sons of men;
> destinies <u>pronounced</u>.
>> (Thorpe 1866, 6)

> Laws they made there,   and life allotted
> to the sons of men,   and <u>set</u> their fates.
>> (Bellows 1923, 9)

> they laws did make,   they lives did choose:
> for the children of men   they <u>marked</u> their fates.
>> (Hollander 1962, 4)

In this they are following a very early precedent: the Hauksbók version of the poem (H; in AM 544 4°), a lost precursor of which Dronke suggests diverged from the youngest common ancestor of H and R in about 1225 (1997, 63–65). In the Hauksbók version the noun *seggia* [of men] is replaced by the verb *at segia* [to declare] (see Bugge 1867, 21), so supplying a third verb and giving the following translation for the last four lines of the strophe (see Dronke 1997, 77):

> They laid down laws,
> they chose out lives
> for mankind's children,
> to declare their fates.

In her own translation of the poem Dronke has rejected this approach, keeping the two verbs of the R text and reading *ørlǫg seggia,* alongside *líf,* as the grammatical object of *kuro: "líf* and *ørlǫg* are syntactically parallel: when the wise maidens choose life for men they choose also their fate" (1997, 77). This solution is also adopted by most translations into modern German, for example:

> Sie legten Lose,   das Leben bestimmten sie
> Den Menschenkindern,   der Männer Schicksal.
>> (Kuhn 1947, 17)

> Lose lenkten sie,
> Leben koren sie
> Menschenkindern,
> Männergeschick.
>> (Diederichs 1984, 28; trans. Felix Genzmer)

Sigurður Nordal (1952, 79) suggests the third solution: that line 12 belongs with line 9, sharing its verb *(lǫgðu).* Concerning lines 9–12, he writes: "Taka verður upp: þær lögðu lög, örlög seggja, þær kuru alda börnum líf." This view is shared by Hermann Pálsson (1994, 58) and by Paul Schach, who translates the lines: "They established laws and the fates of men and determined the length of their lives" (Schach 1983, 98).

As regards the extended length of the strophe, Nordal remarks: "Þessum fjórum vísuorðum er ofaukið í venjulega vísulengd, en fremur ber að álíta, að hér vanti eitthvað í, en kasta burt af því, sem til er" [These four lines make the stanza too long, but we should rather assume that something is missing here than throw out some of the existing text] (1952, 79; 1978, 41). Schach however disagrees, excluding lines 5–8 on the grounds that they "are clearly a later interpolation, modeled on the classical *parcae*" (1983, 98). Dronke makes no comment on the length of *Vǫlospá* 20, but elsewhere she argues convincingly that eddic poets manipulated strophe length for their own purposes, and her argument will be considered in more detail below (86–87).

The present article will argue, first, that the verb for line 12 is provided in line 7 and that its displacement is a device for linking together the list containing the norns' names and the following list concerning their activities; and second, that the strophe is complete as it stands with nothing either added or taken away. This second argument will provide practical evidence to support Dronke's conclusions about the acceptability of irregular strophe length. Finally, I will consider the implications of the H variant of line 12 with regard to editorial practices in Iceland in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.

In an earlier article, in which I used *Vǫlospá* 20.7 as an example of an interrupting comment employed to give a close signal,[1] I suggested that the strophe contained a single six-item list, on the topic of the norns, which was divided into two parts by the signal-and-return device in lines 7–8 (Jackson 1995a, 89). Further study of lists has suggested that this interpretation of the strophe's structure was only partly right and that, rather than one list in two parts, the strophe actually contains two separate lists linked together. The reasoning behind this change of view is based on the definition of the term "list" which has proved itself repeatedly in my analyses of verse lists in both Old Icelandic and Old English texts. According to this definition, a list is an independent series of at least three items related to one another by a common organizing principle, the organizing principle being either explicitly stated in the text or implied in the phrasing of the opening item(s) and then clarified and confirmed as the list proceeds and each subsequent item provides a further example. Lists may be adjacent to one another and may share the same topic, but if they have different organizing principles they are different lists. This can be illustrated by consideration of the list section in "Rúnatal" (*Hávamál* 142–45). There two adjacent lists share the same topic (*Rúnar* 142.1) but have different organizing principles: the identities of the rune-makers in

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1.   I use the term "close signal" for an interruption or a change in the established item length or phrasing pattern, near the end of a list or list section, which signals the approaching end and is followed by a resumption of the item sequence, or a return to the former pattern, for the final item (or items). The whole constitutes a signal-and-return closing device. For explanations (and other examples) of the listing techniques and devices referred to in this article and of the system of analysis employed here, see Jackson 1995a, 83–94; 1998, 342–44.

strophes 142–43 and appropriate actions connected with runes and rituals in strophes 144–45. This change in organizing principle is reflected in the independent structuring of the two lists, each of which falls into two parts and is provided with its own opening and closing devices.[2]

In considering the structure of *Vǫlospá* 20 it seems that the organizing principle of the first three items is "the names of the norns." This principle is implied in the opening item (20.5) by means of a naming formula, i.e., "name + *heita* [to call/be called] + numeral." Similar formulae are used to give or confirm the organizing principle in other eddic naming lists: for example, the catalogue of the homes of the gods (*Grímnismál* 4–17: the formulae occur at 5.1, 6.4, 7.1, 8.1, 11.1, 12.1, 13.1, 14.1, 15.1, and 16.1); the catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn (*Grímnismál* 46–54 at 46.1–2, 49.1, and 54.1–3); and the name-lists in *Rígsþula* of the children of Þræll and Þír (12.1–9 at 12.3 and 13 at 13.1), of Karl and Snør (24 at 24.3 and 25 at 25.1–2), and of Jarl and Erna (41 at lines 1, 9, and 10). Some of these formulae substitute a form of *vera* [to be] for *heita* (*Grímnismál* 12–16; *Rígsþula* 13.1, 41.1, and 41.10), and some dispense with the numeral or substitute an alternative ordering system such as "eldest–youngest" (*Rígsþula* 41.1 and 41.10) or "now–formerly–before that" (*Grímnismál* 54.1–3).

The opening item in *Vǫlospá* 20.5, then, conforms to a method of giving the organizing principle which is common among eddic naming lists. However, the last four lines of the strophe present a problem. The items they contain have to do, not with the names, but with the activities of the norns. And are there two items or three? It seems (as the older English translations quoted above suggest) that lines 9–12 should contain three items, but the final "item" is missing the verb which is crucial if it is to share in the new "activities" organizing principle. If there are only two items, then they cannot constitute a separate list according to the definition given above, but neither can they form part of the naming list as they do not share its organizing principle. My first attempt to deal with this problem was to enlarge the organizing principle of the whole series of items to "significant information about the norns." This was unsatisfactory as, besides ignoring the clear signal given by the naming formula, it did not explain the odd phrasing of line 12. More important, such an organizing principle is not reflected, as it should be, in the wording of the text. A study of the lists in *Rígsþula* has now suggested a more satisfactory solution.

Rígsþula contains two examples of list sequences where a naming list is followed by items concerning activities, but in each of these examples the activities series has more than two items and so can be regarded as a separate list. The first example is strophe 12, which contains the first two lists of a short-item catalogue[3]

2.   For analysis of these lists and discussion of their structure see Jackson 1995a, 95–106.

3.   I define a short-item catalogue as a linked series of three short-item lists sharing the same topic. This definition is a corrected version of the one given in Jackson 1995b, 9.

concerning the children of Þræll and Þír. (The third list, in strophe 13, names their daughters; it is not included here as it has no features directly relevant to *Vǫlospá* 20.)

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Born ólo þau, biuggo oc unðo;
hygg ec, at héti Hreimr oc Fiósnir,
5 Klúrr oc Kleggi, Kefsir, Fúlnir,
Drumbr, Digraldi, Drǫttr oc Hǫsvir,
9 Lútr oc Leggialdi; lǫgðo garða,
acra tǫddo, unno at svínom,
13 geita gætto, grófo torf.

(*Rígsþula* 12; Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 281–82)

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[Children they bred, / had a home and were happy. / I think they were called / Bawler and Byreboy, / (5) Clump and Clegg, / Bedmate, Stinker, / Stump, Stout, / Sluggish and Grizzled, / (9) Stooper and Longleg. / They fixed fences, / dunged fields, / worked at the pigs, / (13) watched over the goats, / dug the peat.] (Dronke 1997, 164–65)

These lists may be analysed as follows:

INTRODUCTION

Born ólo þau,	*Bǫrn* [children/sons] states the topic, both for the
biuggo oc unðo;	catalogue as a whole and for the first two lists,
hygg ec, at héti	a naming formula gives the organizing principle for
	list A as well as an implicit list signal.

LIST A: The Name List of the Sons of Þræll and Þír

PART ONE

1–2	Hreimr oc Fiósnir,	Items 1–4 establish the dominant phrasing pattern,
3–4	Klúrr oc Kleggi,	a change in word ending *(-i)* gives a close signal,
5–6	Kefsir, Fúlnir,	a return with variation closes part one.

	PART TWO	Three-syllabled names distinguish part two,
7–8	Drumbr, Digraldi,	omission of *oc* creates a link with items 5–6,
9–10	Drǫttr oc Hǫsvir,	a change in word ending *(-vir)* gives a close signal,
11–12	Lútr oc Leggialdi;	a return with variation closes part two.

LIST B: The Activities List of the Sons of Þræll and Þír

1	lǫgðo garða,	Item 1 implies the organizing principle,
2	acra tǫddo,	an alternating phrasing pattern gives variety and unity,
3	unno at svínom,	unique phrasing marks the central item,
4	geita gætto,	
5	grófo torf.	pattern changes in the final item provide closure.

The first word of the introduction (*bǫrn* [children/sons]) is the topic word, and the poet exploits its two meanings to state both the sub-topic of the two immediately following lists (sons) and the wider topic of the whole catalogue (children).[4] When the sub-topic changes for the final list, list C in *Rígsþula* 13, a new topic word is introduced: *dœtr* [daughters], 13.1.

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4. Comparable exploitation of polysemy in topic words has been suggested with reference to *land* [geographical region/personal domain] *Grímnismál* 4 (see Jackson 1995b, 10) and *iǫrð* [the world/dry land] in *Grímnismál* 40.2 (Jackson 1998, 363).

The organizing principle for list A (the names of the sons) is directly stated in the introduction by means of a naming formula which also gives an implicit list signal. Item pairs 1–2 and 3–4 establish the dominant phrasing pattern for part one — i.e., "one-syllabled name + *oc* + two-syllabled name." In the penultimate pair (3–4) a change in the ending of the second name (from *-nir* to *-i*) gives a close signal, and a return (to *-nir*) in the final pair (5–6) completes a signal-and-return closing device. Closure for part one is reinforced by a phrasing pattern change in the final pair (*oc* is omitted; both names have two syllables). The inclusion of three-syllabled names, which do not occur in part one, distinguishes part two. Omission of *oc* in the opening pair of part two creates a link with part one. Closure for part two is similar to that for part one: a change of ending in the penultimate pair (from *-aldi* to *-vir*) gives a close signal, and a return (to *-aldi*) completes a signal-and-return device. Again this is reinforced by a phrasing pattern change in the final pair: in this case *oc* is retained, but there is a change from four syllables per item pair (or per line) to five.

This pattern change in the final item from four syllables to five applies not only to part two, but also to the whole list and so provides closure at that level as well. Also at the level of the whole list, unity is provided by an alternating pattern of line endings *(-ir, -i, -ir, -i, -ir, -i)*. The alternating patterns in this list are comparable to those used in structuring the lists in *Grímnismál* 44 and *Solomon and Saturn* 444–50, and the closing devices used are very similar to those employed in the Old English list *Maxims I* 129–31.[5] It should be noted, however, that in the present case linked pairs of Type 1 short items are employed in listing devices as if they were single Type 2 short items.[6]

List B is distinguished from list A by a switch from Type 1 short items arranged in pairs to unpaired Type 2 short items. Whereas the organizing principle for list A is directly stated in the naming formula, the organizing principle for list B is given by the alternative and equally common method of implication and clarification. List B is structured by an alternating pattern employing word order: the position of verb and noun is reversed in each alternate line. The effect of the alternation is to add variety and, through the regular return to a previous pattern, unity to the list (cp. the alternation in *Grímnismál* 44 and *Solomon and Saturn* 444–50 mentioned above). Further structuring is provided by unique phrasing of the central item which has three words as opposed to two and employs a preposition with dative ("at svínom") instead of a genitive noun object (*garða, acra, geita;* for *torf* see below). This phrasing pattern means that the five items are not, like most lists, divided into two parts; instead, they pivot around the uniquely phrased central

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5.   For analysis of these lists see Jackson 1998, 351–52 and 355–58.

6.   Type 1 (or minimal) short items have one stressed element and are usually paired, so that together they make up a regular metrical line; Type 2 (or standard) short items have two or three stresses and occupy a whole line; Type 3 (or extended) short items occupy more than one line but less than half a strophe. For a fuller explanation of this classification system see Jackson 1998, 339–41.

item. The double pattern change in the final item that provides closure for list B changes the case and number of the nouns, from genitive *(garða, acra, geita)* to accusative *(torf)* and from plural *(garða, acra, svínom, geita)* to singular *(torf)*.

The three sections (i.e., the introduction, list A, and list B) of the catalogue of the children of Þræll and Þír discussed here are linked together by two devices. The first employs grammatical relationships. The verb *héti* [they were called], which ends the introduction, acts as a copula for which the subject complement is the list of nominative names in list A; list A then provides the referent for the implied pronoun "they" which is the sentence subject for the items in list B. The second linking device is alliterative: the introduction is linked to list A by alliteration on *h,* and list A is linked to list B by alliteration on *l.* The latter device means that all fourteen lines must remain together, as Neckel and Kuhn print them: it is impossible to divide them into conventional strophes.

A similar, more complex pair of lists later in *Rígsþula* (strophes 41–42) seems to follow the same general pattern as the one just examined. These two lists are also part of a short-item catalogue, this one concerning the sons of Jarl and Erna. (The third list in this catalogue, in strophes 43–44, concerns only the youngest son, Konr. Again, it is not included here because it has no features directly relevant to *Vǫlospá* 20.)

> Burr var inn elzti,   enn Barn annat,
> Ióð oc Aðal,   Arfi, Mǫgr,
> 5   Niðr oc Niðiungr   — námo leica —,
> Sonr oc Sveinn   — sund oc tafl —;
> 9   Kundr hét einn,   Konr var inn yngsti.
>
> Upp óxo þar   Iarli bornir;
> hesta tǫmðo,   hlífar bendo,
> 5   sceyti scófo,   scelfðo asca.
>
>   (*Rígsþula* 41–42; Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 286)

[Boychild was the eldest / and Bairn the second, / Offspring and High Kind, / Heir, Scion, / (5) Kin and Kinsman / — they learned sports — / Son and Stripling / — swimming and chequers. / (9) Nearkin one was named, / Noblekin was the youngest.

There grew up / the sons born to Jarl — / broke in horses, / arched bucklers, / (5) smooth-planed arrow-shafts, / brandished spears of ash-wood.] (Dronke 1997, 171–72)

The two lists may be analysed, as they stand in the text, as follows:

LIST A: The Name List of the Sons of Jarl

	PART ONE (first half)	Part one is divided to form a structural frame,
1	Burr <u>var inn elzti,</u>	a naming formula gives the organizing principle,
2	enn Barn <u>annat,</u>	items 1–2 form an opening item pair,
		var inn elzti and *annat* open a second, antithetical frame.
	PART TWO	
3–4	Ióð oc Aðal	Part two is distinguished by changes in phrasing
5–6	Arfi, Mǫgr	pattern and in item length,
7–8	Niðr oc Niðiungr	

	— námo leica —	an interrupting comment gives a close signal,
9–10	Sonr oc Sveinn	a return to the item sequence begins closure,
	— sund oc tafl —	completion of the interrupting comment closes part two.

	PART ONE (second half)	Two naming formulae confirm the organizing principle,
11	Kundr hét einn	items 11–12 constitute a closing item pair,
12	Konr var inn yngsti.	completion of part one closes the structural frame, *einn* and *var inn yngsti* close the antithetical frame.

LIST B: The Activities List of the Sons of Jarl

	INTRODUCTION	
	Upp óxo þar	The introduction confirms the topic of the whole
	Iarli bornir;	catalogue (the sons of Jarl),
1	hesta tǫmðo,	two parallel items give a list signal and imply the
2	hlífar bendo,	organizing principle of list B (the activities of the sons),
3	sceyti scófo,	
4	scelfðo asca.	a syntactic reversal in the final item provides closure.

The topic of this catalogue is implied (*ættir ióco* [they increased their kindred], 40.7) in the preceding strophe, which tells of the marriage of Jarl and Erna, and confirmed (*Iarli bornir* [the sons of Jarl]) in the introduction to the second, central, list. Items 1–2 provide the organizing principle by means of two naming formulae, and they may also give the list signal for list A: their phrasing pattern, in which item 1 contains a statement about a named individual followed in item 2 by *"en + name + annarr"*, occurs in other eddic lists (e.g., *Vǫlospá* 10.1–4 and 30.5–6) and may represent a listing convention.

The structure of list A is unusual in that the items seem to be divided into three rather than two separate parts. However, this can be explained as follows. It is usual for eddic lists with more than three items to be divided into two parts, and it is common for one or both parts to be further divided into halves. The *Grímnismál* catalogue of the homes of the gods (strophes 4–17) is an example: there the first three items constitute part one, and the remaining items, making up part two, are divided into halves having an equal number of strophes.[7] In the present case, items 1–2 of list A make up an opening pair set apart from the immediately following items by their length (Type 2) and linked by a conjunction (*enn* [and]). They are balanced by items 11–12, which constitute a closing item pair. However, the two pairs are themselves matched in length and phrasing pattern and so seem logically to belong together. If we read them as two halves of the same list section, we can see that inserting part two of the list between them enables the list-maker to make use of two framing devices, one structural and the other employing antithetical phrasing.

As well as the two frames and the closing item pair, the particularly emphatic closing strategy for this list includes a complex version of the signal-and-return

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7. The catalogue is analysed in Jackson 1995b; for other examples, where the division is into an equal number of items and an equal number of lines, see Jackson 1995a, 99, 103; 1995b, 26.

device, involving the divided comment "námo leica . . . sund oc tafl." There are two possible interpretations of this comment depending on whether *leica* is taken as a verb 'to play, perform' or as an accusative plural noun 'sports, games'. Dronke chooses the latter ("they learned sports . . . swimming and chequers"), making the phrase *sund oc tafl* an expansion of *leica*. The other possibility results in the translation "they learned to play/perform swimming and chequers" (cp. Larrington 1996, 251: "they played together — at swimming and chequers"). In both cases the first phrase, *námo leica,* interrupts the item sequence and signals that the list is about to end. The signal is followed by a return to the item sequence for items 9–10 and then by completion of the interrupting comment. The same technique is employed to close the first list in the *Vǫlospá* catalogue of dwarfs:

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	Veigr oc Gandálfr,	Vindálfr, Þráinn,
	Þeccr oc Þorinn,	Þrór, Vitr oc Litr,
5	Nár oc Nýráðr —	nú hefi ec dverga
	— Reginn oc Ráðsviðr —	rétt um talða.

(*Vǫlospá* 12; Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 3)
</div>

[Potion and Sprite Elf, / Wind Elf, Yearner, / Docile and Darer, / Thrive, Clever and Colour, / (5) Corpse and New Counsellor — / now I have the dwarfs / — Power and Plan-wise — / correctly counted.] (Dronke 1997, 10)

The fact that, in this example, one half of the divided comment provides a direct object for the verb in the other half lends some support for the second of the two options suggested above, that is for interpreting "námo leica . . . sund oc tafl" as "they learned to play/perform swimming and chequers." Whichever option is chosen, however, *Vǫlospá* 12.6-8 provides a precedent for a divided comment as part of a signal-and-return closing device.

Returning to the *Rígsþula* catalogue of the sons of Jarl, another look at the interrupting comment in list A shows that it, like the items in list B, is concerned with activities of the sons: in other words, it introduces the list which will follow. Further examination suggests that this divided comment would in fact make a very satisfactory opening item for list B. If we move it to that position we have two independent lists, as follows:

LIST A

	PART ONE (first half)	
1	Burr <u>var inn elzti</u>,	The opening devices remain the same,
2	enn Barn <u>annat</u>,	

	PART TWO	
3–4	Ióð oc Aðal	the changes distinguishing part two remain the same,
5–6	Arfi, Mǫgr	
7–8	Niðr oc Niðiungr	
9–10	Sonr oc Sveinn	there is no distinctive closure for part two,

	PART ONE (second half)	
11	Kundr hét <u>einn</u>	a closing item pair and closure of the two frames close
12	Konr <u>var inn yngsti</u>.	list A.

List B

> Introduction
>
> | | Upp óxo þar | The introductory device remains the same, |
> |---|---|---|
> | | Iarli bornir; | |
> | 1 | námo leica | the opening item implies the organizing principle for |
> | | sund oc tafl | list B (the activities of the sons), |
> | 2 | hesta tǫmðo, | the list signal remains the same, |
> | 3 | hlífar bendo, | |
> | 4 | sceyti scófo, | |
> | 5 | scelfðo asca. | the closing device remains the same. |

This arrangement results in a twelve-item name list followed by a five-item activities list, just like the first two lists in the catalogue of the children of Þræll and Þír. Further, like those lists, each of these has its own structure with its own opening and closing devices. List A has plenty of closure without the signal-and-return device provided by the interrupting comment. The list signal for list B remains the same, but the new first item takes over the function of implying the organizing principle. In addition, taking *leica* to mean "to perform," list B gains an extended opening item, set apart from the others by length (it is Type 3, they are Type 2) and phrasing pattern. The overall pattern of this list now closely resembles that of the premature-praise list in *Hávamál* 81. Other lists which open with an item set apart in this way include *Grímnismál* 40–41 and *Grímnismál* 44. Alternatively, if *leica* means "sports," then the opening item is set apart, not by length and phrasing, but by an interrupting comment *sund oc tafl* "swimming and chequers." This is also a device found elsewhere, notably at the beginning of the catalogue of dwarfs (*Vǫlospá* 10):

> | Þar [var] Mótsognir | mæztr um orðinn |
> |---|---|
> | dverga allra, | enn Durinn annarr |
> | þeir manlícon | mǫrg um gorðo, |
> | dvergar, ór iorðo, | sem Durinn sagði. |
>
> | Nýi oc Niði, | Norðri oc Suðri, |
> |---|---|
> | | (*Vǫlospá* 10.1–11.2; Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 3) |

> [There did Mootsucker / become most esteemed / of all dwarfs, / and Doorward next. / They fashioned many / figurines, / these dwarfs, out of the earth, / as Doorward told: / "New Moon and No Moon, / North and South, etc."] (Dronke 1997, 9)

Here the comment in 10.5–8 interrupts the first list of dwarf names and separates the opening pair from the rest of the items. Furthermore, if *leica* is a noun, then the closure of list B is enhanced by a return in the final item to the word order used in the first item, i.e., verb-noun as opposed to noun-verb in all the other items. This return constitutes a syntactic echo analogous to the verbal echoes employed as framing devices in other eddic lists. Whichever interpretation of *leica* is chosen, however, the opening item of list B is further set apart from the others in the focus of its content. This item, as Dronke points out (1997, 212), refers to peaceful activities of the sons, whereas the other items in list B relate to their

preparation for war. Such a change in the focus of item content is used elsewhere, especially in Old English verse lists, as part of a pattern change in the final item (for examples, see Jackson 1998, 346, 347, 349, etc.), but this is the only example I have found so far of its use to set apart the opening item. One further feature of the new arrangement is that now each list contains eight lines of verse, and the two parts of list A are equally divided with four lines in each. This satisfies the requirement for balance between list and catalogue sections, which seems to be a particular concern of eddic list-makers.

However, I am not suggesting that the two lists in *Rígsþula* 41–42 should in fact be separated in this way. The displacement of the opening item of list B, which becomes simultaneously part of a complex closing strategy for list A, results in an interlocking device linking the two lists. Such a linking device, which also signals in advance the organizing principle of the second list, is wholly consistent with the complex patterning becoming evident in eddic lists. The displacement of the item is surely deliberate and part of the list-maker's original plan. This is confirmed by consideration of the metre. Like strophe 12, strophes 41 and 42 are of irregular length and, although separation of the two lists in the way suggested above would set matters right, again the alliterative pattern prohibits this and confirms the extant text. In both catalogues the poet has been careful to retain regular alliteration but has given list structures precedence over regular strophe length.

There is another reason supporting this arrangement. Eddic list-makers seem to be concerned with providing distinct opening and closing devices not only for complete lists but also for list sections. In the catalogue of the homes of the gods (*Grímnismál* 4–17), for example, the poet provides separate closing devices for part one, the first half of part two, the second half of part two, and the catalogue as a whole. If the lists in *Rígsþula* 41–42 are separated, then part one of list A has closure (provided by an antithetical frame in its first and last lines) but part two, the sequence of paired Type 1 items in the middle, does not. The list-maker has corrected this with his interlocking device: besides its function in linking the two lists together, the divided comment also provides a signal-and-return closing device for part two of list A.

In *Rígsþula* 12 we saw two devices linking list A and list B. One involved grammatical relationships and the other alliterative linking between the three sections. The two lists in *Rígsþula* 41–42 lack both of these linking devices: they are grammatically independent, and there is no alliterative link between them. Instead the list-maker has employed a displaced and divided item as an interlocking device. The same technique might explain both the structure and the length of *Vǫlospá* 20.

The item sequence in *Vǫlospá* 20 may be separated into two lists as follows:

INTRODUCTION
Þaðan koma meyiar,   *meyiar* gives the topic for both lists (cp. *Rúnar* [runes],
margs vitandi,   *Hávamál* 142.1, see above 75–76),

þriár, ór þeim sæ,   *þriár* gives the list signal for list A.
er und þolli stendr;

LIST A: The Name List of the Norns

1	Urð héto eina,	A naming formula gives the organizing principle,
2	aðra Verðandi,	pattern changes in the penultimate item give a close signal,
3	Sculd ina þriðio;	a return with variation in the final item and completion of the promised number of items provide closure.

LIST B: The Activities List of the Norns

1	þær lǫg lǫgðo,	the opening item implies the organizing principle,
2	þær líf kuro alda bornom,	a parallel couplet (lines 9–10) gives a list signal,
3	scáro á scíði ørlǫg seggia.	a partially matched item pair and a pattern change in the final item provide closure.

List A is now an independent three-item list similar in its structure to the root-dwellers list (*Grímnismál* 31) and the Old English matters-of-doubt list (*The Seafarer* 68–71). Both of these lists also employ a numeral in the introduction to give the list signal and completion of the promised number of items to contribute to closure. As we have seen, the organizing principle for list A is implied by the naming formula in item 1 and then confirmed by the wording of the other two items. As in a number of other lists (e.g., *Grímnismál* 44), the opening item is set apart by unique phrasing, here by the inclusion of *héto* [they called], which is omitted from (but understood for) the rest of the items. For closure, list A employs two devices in addition to the completion of the promised number of items. One is a signal-and-return device. A double pattern change in the penultimate item, comprising a syntactic reversal and a change in the number of words per item from three to two, gives the signal. It is followed in the final item by a return to the former word order and number of words. The other is a phrasing pattern change in the final item brought about by the introduction of the definite article: *ina þriðio* [the third]. The three items are linked together by explicit enumeration and dependence on *héto*.

List B employs a different set of techniques. The list signal is given by a repetitive parallel couplet "þær lǫg lǫgðo, þær líf kuro" [They laid down laws, they chose out lives] which also implies the organizing principle (cp. the activities list of the sons of Jarl above). Item 1 is set apart from items 2–3 by its length (it is Type 2; they are Type 3) which also matches the length of the items in list A, so providing a link between the two lists. List B is closed by means of a closing pair and a pattern change in the final item. The items making up the closing pair (items 2–3) are matched in length, linked by a shared sentence subject *þær* [they] in item 2, and partially matched in content in that both contain explicit references to mankind (*alda bornom* [for mankind's children]; *ørlǫg seggia* [men's destinies]). Similar partial matching in the content of a closing pair is found in a number of Old

English lists (see Jackson 1998, 357, 361, and 368). This is the first example I have identified so far in eddic lists, but the existence of this device lends support to the R version of the text (*seggia* [of men]), a point which will be discussed further below. The pattern change in the final item results from the omission of *þær* [they], the word which begins items 1–2. This pronoun nevertheless implicitly links the three items of list B and also provides a grammatical link with list A.

Like the two lists from the catalogue of the sons of Jarl, each of these lists is independently structured with its own opening devices (i.e., a list signal and a method of giving the organizing principle) and multiple closing strategy. When the two are put together to form strophe 20, the last item of list B is divided and the first half of it, the phrase containing the verb, is moved to list A to form an interlocking device. Precedents for such a division are provided by the division of the signalling comments in *Rígsþula* 41 and *Vǫlospá* 10. Like the displaced item from the B list in the catalogue of the sons of Jarl, the displaced item segment from the B list in *Vǫlospá* 20 is employed to interrupt the A list and provide it with an extra closing device. Again, as in the example from *Rígsþula*, the displaced item segment in *Vǫlospá* 20, which contains the crucial verb, gives advanced notice of the organizing principle of the second list.

This interpretation of the structure of the strophe reflects the interpretation of its content given in Dronke's introduction to the poem. She refers to the norns of strophe 20 as "the three lake-maidens . . . who come to cut upon the material of man himself — a piece of wood — *á skíði*, the lottery mark, the rune, that decides his fortune" (1997, 40). Her comment clearly links the act of cutting on a piece of wood in line 7 to "men's destinies" in line 12, an interpretation which is shared by both Neckel (1908, 461) and Nordal (1978, 40). Moreover, the interpretation suggested in this article accords more closely with the actual wording of the text. Dronke's translation, "they incised the slip of wood," bypasses the preposition *á* [on] and the dative case of *scíði*, treating the phrase *á scíði* as a direct object of the verb *scáro*. However, if the direct object is supplied by the phrase *ørlǫg seggia* then we can keep the preposition and translate "they incised *on* a slip of wood . . . men's destinies."

One further point to be made concerns the integrity of the text of *Vǫlospá* 20. Like the two lists concerning the sons of Þræll and Þír, the items concerning the norns are linked by grammatical relationships: the topic word *meyiar* is in apposition to the three personal names in list A which are in turn the referent for the repeated pronoun *þær* in list B. Further, like other eddic list-makers, the composer of the norns lists has taken care to maintain balance between the different parts of the strophe: each list contains an equal number of items and, at the same time, the displacement of *scáro á scíði* ensures that each section (i.e., the introduction, list A, and list B as they appear in the text) has an equal number of lines. This balance suggests that nothing is missing from the text and that nothing has been interpolated. Like the *Rígsþula* poet, the composer of *Vǫlospá* 20 has taken

care to preserve regular alliteration, but has not been concerned about regular strophe length.

In her introduction to *Rígsþula* Dronke considers the varying length of the strophes in that poem in some detail (1997, 211–14). She concludes that the poet manipulates strophe length for his own purposes, remarking that "the delight in observing the varying length of the stanzas is in the insight it gives into the poet's clarity of mind and swiftness of response to shifts in the detail of his material" (212) and that "excellent poetic reasons can be seen behind the 'irregularity' of stanza-length" (213–14). The analysis of the list structures in *Rígsþula* 12 and 40–41 given above provides added support for her position. She is concerned with the poet's elaboration of the content of his poem; I have been concerned with his expert adherence to strict principles of list construction, but I would suggest that the two approaches complement one another. Although Dronke makes no specific comment on the extended length of *Vǫlospá* 20, it seems likely that her argument could be applied there as well. Certainly she does not support Schach's view that lines 5–8 are interpolated, as she accepts only three interpolations in the R text of *Vǫlospá* (for details, see Dronke 1997, 66–68), and this is not among them. Nor does her commentary suggest that any lines are missing from the poem at this point, as Nordal believes.

It has been a habit of editors and other scholars to emend the text of the Codex Regius and frequently to assume that sections whose function seems unclear must be the result of some disturbance in the text. For example, R. C. Boer (1922), Nordal (1978), and Schach (1983) have all proposed drastic pruning and rearrangement of the R text of *Vǫluspá* in the belief that the poem suffered serious interference during the course of its early transmission. Boer's proposal divides *Vǫlospá* 20 in two, assigning lines 1–4 and lines 5–12 to two different poems (1922, 7). Others, as we saw above, have focused their objections to the strophe on its extended length, its naming of the norns, and the phrasing of its final line. With regard to anomalous strophe length, this feature is so common in eddic lists that it seems perverse to insist on corruption of the text to explain so many examples; it is preferable to acknowledge, as Dronke does, that eddic poets manipulated strophe length for their own purposes. With regard to the names of the norns, Schach believes these to be a later addition modelled on the classical *parcae*. However, Dronke shows in her excursus on the Christian elements in *Vǫlospá* that the poet was familiar with classical motifs (1997, 93–104). If he did borrow the norns from the classical *parcae*, that does not mean that the lines which name them were necessarily a later addition to his poem. Thirdly, it is hoped that the evidence from listing techniques presented in this article, and specifically the recognition of an interlocking list linking device, has fully explained the form of the final line. If the above analysis of the structure of *Vǫlospá* 20 is correct, it adds another piece to the growing pile of evidence in support of the integrity of the text, and the accuracy of the scribe, of the Codex Regius.

What then can be said of the H variant? It represents a version of the strophe which undermines the interlocking device and upsets the balance of the two lists. Jón Helgason, in his introduction to the facsimile edition of H, states that the H text of *Vǫlospá* "obviously represents an independent record based on oral tradition" (Helgason 1960, xv). This is a possibility, although one might expect that while oral tradition flourished, trained singers would take advantage of all the mnemonic devices available to them and would be unlikely to alter the careful structure of *Vǫlospá* 20 in such a clumsy way. It seems more probable that Dronke is right in her belief that the differences between H (which she dates to ca. 1340) and R are the result, not of independent oral records, but of changes to written versions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. She suggests that a precursor of R (*R II) was revised by "a copyist directed by Snorri, or possibly Snorri himself . . . in anticipation of the writing of *Gylfaginning*," and that "the principal aim of the revision . . . appears to have been to standardize, to cut out anomaly or irregularity, so that the verse text could be used by Snorri without incongruity in his prose context" (1997, 68). This revised text (*H I), she believes, later underwent further revision and suffered some damage, resulting in *H II which was the ancestor of H. There is no direct evidence as to when in this transmission history the change was made to the last line of *Vǫlospá* 20, but Dronke seems to favour the early-thirteenth-century *H I revision, as she includes this variant among her examples of places where "H differs significantly from R in a manner similar to that of the most notable H, SnE variants." She adds: "The logic of the new reading can hardly have seemed perfect even to its author, but the conventional association of the verb *segia* with *ørlǫg* . . . was evidently strong enough to make him alter the phrasing of R" (1997, 77–78).

In the light of the evidence presented in this article, there are two further possible implications of the H variant. Either the reviser who made the change was unaware of list-linking devices and was trying to correct a perceived awkwardness in the inherited text; he saw that a third verb was needed in list B and supplied an appropriate one from the conventional association mentioned by Dronke. Or he was aware of mnemonic list-linking devices but was deliberately "modernizing" the text for reception by a literate culture. In this latter activity, deliberate or not, he was joined by Snorri himself who, when quoting lists from the Elder Edda, sometimes strips them bare of their patterning and structure. An example is the catalogue of the *heiti* of Óðinn, *Grímnismál* 46–54.[8] In Snorri's version (see Faulkes 1982, 21–22) all the structure and variety provided by repetitions, comments, interruptions, inclusion or omission of conjunctions, and so on, are removed; only the alliterative links are retained. The result is a bare, "modern" list of names, easy for the eye to scan but hard for the memory to retain. Could it be that already in the thirteenth century, with more than two centuries of literacy behind them, Iceland's scholars had forgotten the function of oral listing devices?

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8.   For an analysis of two of the lists in this catalogue, as they appear in R, see Jackson 1995a, 83–93.

Did they see repetitions, for instance, as many modern scholars have done, as transmission errors or as evidence of interpolation? Or did they understand the techniques of the oral list-makers but feel that the devices they used, their mnemonic function now obsolete, could be consigned to history? It is to be hoped that further work on the texts of both the Eddas will help to resolve these questions.

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