

- Gade, Kari Ellen, et al. (eds.). 2009. *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 2: From c.1035–c.1300*. 2 vols. Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 2. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Goddard, Cliff. 1998. *Semantic Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Guðbrandur Vigfússon & Frederick York Powell. 1883. *Corpus Poeticum Boreale: The Poetry of the Old Northern Tongue from the Earliest Times to the Thirteenth Century II: Court Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gurevich, Elena. 2002. "Skaldic Variation and Evolution of Kenning Patterns". *Skandinavistik* 32: 31–38.
- Gurevich, Elena. 1992. "Þulur in Skáldskaparmál: An Attempt at Skaldic Lexicology". *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 103: 35–52.
- Haukur Þorgeirsson. 2008. "'Hinn fagri foldar son': Þáttur úr handrita- og viðtökusögu *Snorra-Eddu*". *Gripla* 19: 159–168.
- Holland, Gary. 2005. "Kennings, Metaphors, and Semantic Formulae in Norse *dróttkvætt*". *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 120: 123–147.
- Jesch, Judith. 2009. "The Sea-Kings of *Litla Skálda*". In Ney, Williams & Ljungqvist 2009: 443–451
- Krömmelbein, Thomas. 1983. *Skaldische Metaphorik: Studien zur Funktion der Kenningsprache in skaldischen Dichtungen des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts*. Kirzarten: Burg-Verlag.
- Lie, Hallvard. 1952. "Skaldestil-studier". *Maal og Minne* 1952: 1–92
- Lindblad, Gustaf. 1976. "Den rätta läsningen av Isländska homilieböken". *Scripta Islandica* 26: 25–45.
- Lindow, John. 1975. "Riddles, Kennings, and the Complexity of Skaldic Poetry". *Scandinavian Studies* 47: 311–327.
- Lindow, John. 1982. "Narrative and the Nature of Skaldic Poetry". *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 97: 94–121.
- Loescher, Gerhard. 1981. "Raudulfs Þáttur". *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 110(4): 253–266.
- Louis-Jensen, Jonna. 1981. "Vöndr er Mária mynduð". In *Specvlvm Norroenvm: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*. Ed. Ursula Dronke et al. Odense: Odense University Press. Pp. 328–336.
- Marold, Edith. 1983. *Kenningkunst: Ein Beitrag zu einer Poetik der Skaidendichtung*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Meissner, Rudolph. 1921. *Die Kenningar der Skalden: Ein Beitrag zur skaldischen Poetik*. Bonn, Leipzig: Kurt Schroeder.
- Merwe-Scholtz, Herik van der. 1927. *The Kenning in Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Poetry*. Utrecht: N.V. Dekker & Van de Vegt.
- Ney, Agneta, Henrik Williams & Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist (eds.). 2009. *Á austrvega: Saga and East Scandinavia: Preprint Papers of The 14th International Saga Conference Uppsala, 9th–15th August 2009*. Gävle: Gävle University Press.
- Nordal, Guðrún. 2001. *Tools of Literacy: The Role of Skaldic Verse in Icelandic Textual Culture of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Orton, Peter. 2007. "Spouting Poetry: Cognitive Metaphor and Conceptual Blending in the Old Norse Myth of the Poetic Mead". In *Constructing Nations, Reconstructing Myth*. Ed. Andrew Wawn. Making the Middle Ages 9. Turnhout: Brepols. Pp. 277–300.
- Petruck, Miriam. 1996. "Frame Semantics". In *Handbook of Pragmatics*. Ed. J. Verschueren, J.-O. Östman, J. Blommaert, & C. Bulcaen. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Pp: 1–13.
- Quinn, Judy. 1994. "*Eddu list*: The Emergence of Skaldic Pedagogy in Medieval Iceland". *alvissmál* 4: 69–92.
- Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Skaldic Database*. 2001–2012. Available at: <http://skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au/db.php?if=default&ta ble=home&view>.
- Skj* = Finnur Jónsson 1912–1915.
- Sullivan, Karen. 2008. "Genre-Dependent Metonymy in Norse Skaldic Poetry". *Language and Literature* 17: 21–36.
- Sveinbjörn Egilsson & Finnur Jónsson. 1931. *Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguæ septentrionalis*. 2nd edn. Copenhagen: Møller.
- Sverdlöv, Ilya. 2003. "Extra Elements in Kennings, or Different Ways to Feed the Wolf Single-Wordedly". *Skandinavistik* 33(2): 101–113.

Poetic Formulas in Late Medieval Icelandic Folk Poetry: The Case of *Vambarljóð*

Haukur Þorgeirsson, University of Iceland

A group of alliterative poems recorded from oral tradition in late 17th century Iceland share textual similarities or poetic formulas with each other and with older poetry in similar meters, including poems in the *Poetic Edda*. The present article contains a survey of the

poetic formulas in one such poem, *Vambarljóð*. Using a simple comparative method, I attempt to identify which poems share the greatest formulaic affinity with the poem under study. The article explores the reason why *Vambarljóð* shares formulas with

older poetry and argues in favor of a continuous oral tradition rather than learned borrowings.

The sagnakvæði

In the second half of the 17th century there was a new development in the history of Icelandic poetry. Starting in the Western Fjords, members of the intellectual elite came to be interested in collecting folk poetry and committing it to writing. The collectors classified the poems they were writing down as *fornkvæði* [‘old poems’]. These were poems of unknown authorship, circulating in an oral tradition as entertainment for the common people. Most of the poems in the *fornkvæði* collections are ballads, usually translated from Scandinavian ballads which are still otherwise extant in some form. Many of the ballads must have reached Iceland no later than the 15th century and then spent a couple of centuries circulating in the oral tradition (Vésteinn Ólason 1982).

The Icelandic ballad collections, however, also contain poems with no parallel on the continent, namely poems in the eddic *fornyrðislag* meter. These poems, referred to as *sagnakvæði* [‘folktale poems’], share with the ballads proper a certain feminine sensibility and taste and seem to have co-existed with them in the oral tradition.

There are only eight¹ preserved *sagnakvæði*, all published in 1898 but little studied since then. In previous articles I have examined two *sagnakvæði* in some detail; *Gullkársljóð* and *Þórujljóð* (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2010; 2011). On the basis of metrical and linguistic criteria, I argued that these two poems are relatively early, perhaps originally composed in the 14th century. This is not to say that the 17th century versions we now have are 14th century texts in pristine condition; allowances must be made for changes in the process of oral transmission.

One striking aspect of the *sagnakvæði*, which I have until now not examined in any detail, is the prevalence of textual similarities or formulas within and between individual poems. As a start to coming to grips with this, I would like to examine the potential use of formulas in one poem, *Vambarljóð*.

Vambarljóð and Its Manuscripts

Vambarljóð tells a fairy-tale about a princess named Signý. She is cursed by her stepmother and transformed into a cow’s stomach. To break the curse she uses magic and cunning to force a prince into marrying her.

The poem is published in Ólafur Davíðsson’s 1898 collection of folk poetry but the edition is not reliable (Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 1997) so I have made a new study of the manuscripts.

The manuscripts NKS 1141 fol (=V₁) and JS 405 4¹⁰ (=V₂) are faithful copies of the same lost manuscript, referred to by Jón Helgason as V (Jón Helgason 1960: 39–41). The V manuscript was written in 1699–1700. It is not clear whether the scribe of V recorded *Vambarljóð* directly from oral tradition or whether he followed a written source. In the V version, the poem consists of 62 stanzas. There is a copy of the V₁ text of *Vambarljóð* in JS 406 4¹⁰.

The manuscript Thott 489 8^{vo} (=T) contains a copy of the first three strophes of *Vambarljóð* (=T₁) and then a full copy of the poem (=T₂), consisting of 70 strophes. What seems to have happened here is that the scribe had access to two versions of the poem. He began to write down one but after three strophes he decided that the other version was more suitable for his purposes and started over. The text he now decided to use as his base seems to have been derived from V. But on several occasions he referred back to his first source and took additional strophes and some variants from there, thus producing a hybrid text.

The manuscript NKS 1894 4¹⁰ (=N) preserves a recording of the poem from oral tradition made for Árni Magnússon. The informant was *afgömul kerling, móðir Guðmundar Bergþórssonar* [‘an ancient woman, the mother of Guðmundur Bergþórsson’] (NKS 1894 4¹⁰, p. 154). Guðmundur Bergþórsson (1657–1705) was a major *rímur* poet. His mother appears in the Icelandic census of 1703 under the name Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir, born in 1636. According to the scant sources available, she was a poor woman and a lover of poetry. Her son spoke kindly of her in his poetry (Finnur Sigmundsson 1947).

The recording of the poem in N consists of only 27 strophes. It is introduced with a few sentences in prose and has some rather abrupt transitions compared to the more extensive recordings in V and T. Nevertheless, it is recognizably the same poem. The manuscripts JS 581 4^{to} and Lbs 202 8^{vo} contain the same text and are probably derived from N.

According to Jón Þorkelsson (1888: 208), the manuscript JS 398 4^{to} contains a version of *Vambarljóð* whose first few verses he cites. Those are similar (but not identical) to the text in T₁. Ólafur Davíðsson also lists this manuscript as containing a copy of *Vambarljóð*. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any trace of the poem here. Nor is the manuscript listed as containing the poem in the manuscript catalogue (Páll Eggert Ólason 1935–1937: 411). A possible explanation is that Jón got JS 398 4^{to} confused with T and then quoted T₁ somewhat imprecisely. The catalogue does list Lbs 2033 4^{to}, a collection of materials belonging to Jón Þorkelsson, as containing *Vambarljóð* but the relevant part of the collection is on loan abroad and I have not been able to access it yet.

There is another, longer, poem called *Vambarljóð* preserved in Lbs 985 4^{to} and AM 154 8^{vo} (there is a copy of the latter in NKS 1894 4^{to}). Both manuscripts are defective. This poem tells the same story as the previous one and in the same meter but there are almost no textual similarities. I regard it as a separate work and will not discuss it further here. There are two 18th century *rímur* cycles based on this version, one by Þórður Pálsson (ÍB 895 8^{vo} and Lbs 2324 4^{to}) and one by Helgi Bjarnason (Lbs 985 4^{to} and JS 579 4^{to}).

It is not my objective here to date *Vambarljóð* but it is worth noting that linguistically and metrically the poem, as it has come down to us, seems less archaic than either *Gullkársljóð* or *Þóruljóð*. As we shall see, however, it does have a significant number of textual similarities to old poetry.

I use the complete text of *Vambarljóð* in T₂ as a basis for my investigation below. Variants from V, N and T₁ are mentioned as occasions seem to warrant. For convenience, I normalize the spelling but I make no attempt to archaize it.

Formulas and Other Textual Similarities

In what follows I will seek to list instances of textual similarities between verses in *Vambarljóð* and other texts. In cases where two poems have a similar choice of words there are, generally speaking, several possibilities. Some of them are:

1. The choice of words originated with the first poem. The poet who composed the second poem knew the first poem and borrowed the phrasing from it, whether consciously or unconsciously.
2. The choice of words originated with a poem that is now lost. Both the extant poems borrowed from that lost poem.
3. The phrasing was in wide circulation but only the two instances in question happen to be preserved.
4. Two poets coincidentally hit upon the same phrasing.

Generally speaking, I do not think there are any effective methods available for distinguishing between possibilities (1), (2) and (3). For my purposes here, I think such a distinction is not necessary and for convenience, I will refer to all non-coincidental textual similarities between two strophes as poetic formulas.

I agree with Joseph Harris that traditionally:

Eddic scholarship seems to have overestimated the individual borrowings and undervalued the force of collective tradition, especially at the level of lexical choice and phrasing. (Harris 2008: 211.)

A research program that puts its main focus on supposed borrowings and allusions, as if we were working with modern written literature, will quickly find itself on tenuous ground. Bernt Øyvind Thorvaldsen (2008) shows this convincingly for the case of *Þrymskviða*.

Oral-formulaic theory offers a counterbalance to the traditional focus on borrowings and allusions but I am not attempting to apply oral theory to the Icelandic material (for work in that vein see Gísli Sigurðsson 1990, for a recent overview of the study of orality in Old Norse verse, see Frog 2011). The present survey is concerned with relationships of verbal elements across

texts and the relevance of these relationships for the composition in and continuities of the poetic idiom rather than flexibility and variation of that idiom in the process of reproduction by a single performer or as a historical process of transmission from one performer to the next.²

For my purposes here, I define a formula operationally as ‘a combination of words found at least twice in texts using a poetic register but not elsewhere’. I sometimes relax this to require only one identical word if the semantic or structural context is otherwise similar. I have thus cast a fairly wide net and included some textual similarities which could be coincidental. My definition would allow many kennings to be included as formulas but I will nevertheless consider kennings in a separate section.

When searching for formulas in *Vambarljóð*, I read the poem through line by line and searched for phrases and individual words in an electronic concordance which I have assembled containing most Icelandic poetry prior to 1550 and a selection of younger poems. When I found similarities that seemed interesting I typically followed up the words involved in dictionaries and commentaries. *The Dictionary of Old Norse Prose (ONP)* and *Ritmálssafn Orðabókar Háskólans* were particularly useful. I also used Google and Google Books, as a quick way to find possible prose occurrences.

Formulas in Multiple Texts

In what follows, I will list the possible formulas that I have been able to find in *Vambarljóð*. We will start with formulas that occur in more than two texts; I will label those formulas with the prefix M.

Formula M1

Vambarljóð 67.3–4 (*Þulur* 54):³
en eg mun skunda / til skipa ofan
[‘and I will hurry down to the ships’]

Orvar-Odds saga IX.13.1–2 (*Skj B_{II}*: 327):
Réðum skunda / til skipa ofan
[‘we hurried down to the ships’]

Gullkársljóð 31.3–4 (*Þulur* 79):⁴
verð eg að skunda / til skipa ofan
[‘I must hurry down to the ships’]

Kringilneffjukvæði 18.3–4 (*Þulur* 41):
þú skalt skunda / til skipa ofan
[‘you shall hurry down to the ships’]

Kringilneffjukvæði 19.1–2 (*Þulur* 41):
skunda eg ekki / til skipa ofan
[‘I will not hurry down to the ships’]

Kringilneffjukvæði 22.1–2 (*Þulur* 42):
skundar hún síðan / til skipa ofan
[‘then she hurries down to the ships’]

Bryngerðarljóð 37.3–4 (*Þulur* 88):
skundað hefir skjöldungur / til skipa sinna
[‘the king has hurried to his ships’]

Hervararkviða 15.7–8 (*Skj B_{II}*: 266):
skynt mær ef mátt / til skipa þinna
[‘hurry, maiden, if you can, to your ships’]

This formula (previously discussed in Haukur Þorgeirsson 2010: 320–321) occurs in four of the *sagnakvæði* and also in two poems in the legendary sagas. The word *skunda* is common in the *rímur* but it rarely alliterates with *skip* and the instances which I am aware of do not appear to be a part of this formulaic system. The instances are:

Úlfhams rímur V.21.3 (*Rímnasafn* II: 158):⁵
skunda af hafinu skip svó fríð
[‘the ships so fair hurry from the sea’]

Pontus rímur I.59.3 (Magnús Jónsson et al. 1961: 11):
af skipunum tólf þeir skunda hratt
[‘they hurry quickly from the twelve ships’]

Formula M2

Vambarljóð 57.3 (*Þulur* 52),
Kötludraumur 44.3 (*Þulur* 10),
Bryngerðarljóð 9.2 (*Þulur* 85),
Bryngerðarljóð 10.2 (*Þulur* 85),
Bryngerðarljóð 57.3 (*Þulur* 90):
svinn seima Bil
[‘the wise Bil of gold’]

The kenning *seima Bil* occurs in a strophe in *Vqlsa þáttur* (*Skj B_{II}*: 237) and some 15 times in the medieval *rímur*. In three of those fifteen cases it is combined with the adjective *svinnr*:

Ölvis rímur III.58.3 (*Ölvis rímur*):
svinna seima Bil
[‘the wise Bil of gold’]

Konráðs rímur II.52.1 (Wisén 1881: 110):
svinnust seima Bil
[‘the wisest Bil of gold’]

Landrís rímur II.70.3 (*Rímnasafn* II: 407):
svinnri gef eg það seima Bil
[‘I will give it to the wise Bil of gold’]

Although these could be regarded as instances of the same formula, it should be kept in mind that the word *svinnur* is very common in the *rímur* and alliterates conveniently with kennings including the common *seima* element. Instances can be found of:

svinnur + *seima þöll*
svinnur + *seima grund*
svinnur + *seima Ná*
svinnur + *seima brú*
svinnur + *seima rjóðr*
svinnur + *seima Týr* – etc.

In contrast, *seima Bil* occurs nowhere in the *sagnakvæði* apart from the instances listed above and in all five instances the phrase *svinn seima Bil* covers a single verse. This seems sufficient to regard it as a formula rather than coincidence.

Formula M3

Vambarljóð 7.1–4 (*Þulur* 47):

Hér sit eg hjá þér / og sjá þykjunst
að munir, siklingur, / fyrir svikum verða.
[‘I sit here by you and I seem to see that
you, king, will be afflicted by deception’]

Helgakviða Hundingsbana II 40.1–2 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 159):

Hvárt ero þat svic ein, / er ec síá þiccíomz ... ?
[‘Is that only a deception, which I seem to
see?’]

Helgakviða Hundingsbana II 41.1–2 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 159):

Era þat svic ein, / er þú síá þicciz
[‘It is not only a deception which you seem
to see’]

Bryngerðarljóð 11.1–2 (*Þulur* 85):

Hér sit eg hjá þér / og sjá þykjunst
[‘I sit here by you and I seem to see’]

Bryngerðarljóð 60.5–6 (*Þulur* 91):

Segðu hið sanna til / því eg sjá þykist
[‘Tell the truth about this because I seem to
see’]

Grípisspá 8.1–4 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 165):

Segðu, gegn konungr, / gerr, enn ec spyria,
snotr, Sigurði, / ef þú síá þicciz

[‘Virtuous and wise king, tell in more detail
than I can ask to Sigurðr, if you seem to
see’]

Grípisspá 30.3–4 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 168):

segðu, Grípir, þat, / ef þú síá þicciz
[‘Tell this, Grípir, if you seem to see’]

In this case we seem to have three related formula systems:

1. segðu + sjá þykjast (*Bryngerðarljóð* 60, *Grípisspá* 8, 30)
2. svik + sjá þykjast (*Vambarljóð* 7, *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II 40, 41)
3. hér sit eg hjá þér / og sjá þykjunst (*Vambarljóð* 7, *Bryngerðarljóð* 11)

Vambarljóð 7 instantiates type 2 and 3 together. The *sjá þykjast* element can be regarded as a base formula within the system. It always occurs in a line with the same metrical structure (type C in Sievers’ system).

Mellor makes some more general points about the formulaic use of *segðu* in the *Poetic Edda*. He concludes that certain peculiarities in the use of *segðu* phrases in *Grípisspá* indicate that “the poet of *Grípisspá* [sic] is a lesser poet and, perhaps, a poet not working within the tradition” (Mellor 2008: 122). This seems an overly bold conclusion. While its aesthetic merits can of course be debated, *Grípisspá* has its share of traditional formulas. A poor poem can still be a traditional poem and I am not convinced that *Grípisspá* is a poor poem.

Formula M4

Vambarljóð 34.5–8 (*Þulur* 50):

spurði á móti / margs fróðlega,
‘eða er hér nokkuð / nýtt í fréttum?’

Vambarljóð 64.5–8 (*Þulur* 53):

spurði á móti / margs fróðlega,
‘eða er hér nokkuð / nýtt í fréttum?’
[‘He asked many knowledgeable
questions in turn, “or is there anything
new to report?”’]

Kötludraumur 32.5–6 (*Þulur* 9):

Hvort er nokkuð / nýtt í fréttum
[‘Is there anything new to report?’]

Bryngerðarljóð 37.5–6 (*Þulur* 88):

Vera mun nokkuð / nýtt í fréttum
[‘There will be something new to
report’]

Formula M5

Vambarljóð 14.7–8 (*Þulur* 48):

því að mart við þig / mæla eg vildi
[‘because I would like to say many things to you’]

Bryngerðarljóð 51.3–4 (*Þulur* 90):

kvaðst hún mart við þig / mæla vilja
[‘she said that she would like to say many things to you’]

Merlínússpá I 41.7–8 (*Skj* B_{II}: 18):

kvezk mart við svín / mæla vilja
[‘he says that he would like to say many things to the pig’]

Formula M6

Vambarljóð 33.1–2 (*Þulur* 50):

Heim kom að hausti / horskur stillir
[‘the wise leader came home in the autumn’]

Vambarljóð 45.5–6 (*Þulur* 51):

hélt heim þaðan / horskur stillir
[‘the wise leader went home from there’]

Gullkársljóð 37.1–2 (*Þulur* 80):

Heim kom að hausti / herjar [v.l. horskur]
stillir
[‘the leader of the host [v.l. the wise leader]
came home in the autumn’]

Orvar-Odds saga IX.46.1–2 (*Skj* B_{II}: 333):

Fóru heim þaðan / horskir drengir
[‘the wise and valiant men went home from there’]

Formula M7

Vambarljóð 16.1–4 (*Þulur* 48):

Gakk í öndvegi / æðra að sitja,
eig svo við mig / át og drykkju
[‘Come to the nobler high-seat and sit down,
then have food and drink with me’]

Þórljóð 19.5–8 (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2011: 215):

Gakktu í öndugi / og æðra sæti
eigðu ung við mig / át og drykkju [v.l. ‘ung’
omitted]
[‘Come to the high-seat, and the nobler seat.
Have food and drink with me.’]

Orvar-Odds saga prose (Boer 1888: 171):

Stíg upp, Oddr, í hásetit hjá oss ok eig við oss
át ok drykkju!
[‘Step up, Oddr, into the high-seat with us and
have food and drink with us’]

As I suggested on a previous occasion (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2011: 220), one might

suspect that *Orvar-Odds saga* paraphrases a poetic formula similar to the one preserved in the two *sagnakvæði*.

Formula M8

Vambarljóð 5.1–2 (*Þulur* 46):

Fagurvaxin gekk / við föður að mæla
[‘the shapely one went to speak with her
father’]

Grípisspá 2.3–4 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 164):

mun sá gramr við mic / ganga at mæla?
[‘Will that king go to speak with me?’]

Skírnismál 2.3 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 69):

ef ec geng at mæla við mög
[‘if I go to speak with my son’]

Formula M8 is a borderline case; the similarity could be coincidental. I include it here because *ganga at mæla* is an unusual turn of phrase in Icelandic; I have not found it elsewhere in poetry or prose. Nevertheless, it is not flagged as a formula by Thorvaldsen (2006: 224) or the *Kommentar* (II: 71) and that may turn out to be correct.

Formula M9

Vambarljóð 62.3–4 (*Þulur* 53):

og þig, mæ, / við mundi kaupa
[‘and buy you, maiden, with a bridal
payment’]

Kringilnefjukvæði 32.3–4 (*Þulur* 43):

Eg vil meyjuna / mundi kaupa
[‘I want to buy the maiden with a bridal
payment’]

Grípisspá 30.5–6 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 168):

mun ec meyna / mundi kaupa
[‘I will buy the maiden with a bridal
payment’]

Hálfs saga IX.9.5–6 (*Skj* B_{II}: 288):

mey það hverja / mundi kaupa
[‘He asked that every maiden be bought with a
bridal payment’]

See *Kommentar* (V: 187) for some notes on this expression.

Formula M10

Vambarljóð 6.5–6 (*Þulur* 47):

Mey veit eg öngva / né manns konu
[‘I know of no maiden, nor a man’s wife’]

Lokasenna 37.4–5 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 104):
mey hann né grætir / né mannz kono
[‘he does not bring a maiden to tears, nor a
man’s wife’]

Sigrdrífumál 32.4–5 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 196):
mey þú teygjat / né mannz kono
[‘do not seduce a maiden, nor a man’s wife’]

Hávamál 163.3 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 44):
mey né mannz kono
[‘a maiden nor a man’s wife’]

Formula M10 is listed by Thorvaldsen along
with some further examples of *mær–maðr*
collocations (Thorvaldsen 2006: 271).

Formula M11

Vambarljóð 9.7–8 (*Þulur* 47):
Sit þú, hilmir, heill / með huga glöðum
[‘Sit hail, king, in glad spirits’]

Vambarljóð 39.7–8 (*Þulur* 50):
Vertu hilmir heill / með huga glöðum
[‘Be hail, king, in glad spirits’]

Hymiskviða 11.1–2 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 90):
Ver þú heill, Hymir, / í hugom góðom!
[‘Be hail, Hymir, in good spirits!’]

Runic inscription N B380 from Bergen:⁶
Heill sé þú / ok í hugum góðum
[‘Be hail and in good spirits’]

Hervarar saga III.20.3–4 (*Skj* B_{II}: 269):
nú er hilmis mæ / í hugum góðum
[‘Now the king’s maiden is in good spirits’]

Thorvaldsen (2006: 273) regards the *heill–hugr* collocation as a formula and lists some additional examples. *Vambarljóð* and *Hervararkviða* suggest *hilmir–hugr* as another possible formula.

The N manuscript has this alternative version:

Sittu heill, kóngur, / með hirð glöðu
[‘Sit hail, king, with the glad court’]

Formula M12

Vambarljóð 37.1–2 (*Þulur* 50):
Þið eruð dælskir / og dulberir
[‘You are foolish and conceited’]

Hávamál 57.6 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 26):
enn til dælskr af dul
[‘but too foolish from conceit’]

Breta sögur alliterative prose (*ONP*: s.v. ‘dölska’):
gnægri hafi þér Bretar dul ok dælsku, hól ok
hræsni, heldr en harðleik ok hyggendi
[‘you Britons have more conceit and
foolishness, self-flattery and vanity rather
than toughness and wisdom’]

The *Hávamál* phrase is not flagged by Thorvaldsen (2006: 191) as a formula, presumably because of the obscurity of the other sources containing it. The alliteration between *dælskr* and *dul* seems to make formula M12 a reasonably clear case. The word *dælskr* is very rare in Icelandic.

Formula M13

Vambarljóð 2.1–2 (*Þulur* 46):
Ól sér döglingur / dóttur eina
[‘the king begat one daughter’]

Gullkársljóð 2.3–4 (*Þulur* 76):
þó átti döglingur / dóttur eina
[‘yet the king had one daughter’]

These two cases may be coincidental. The following two occurrences in the *rímur* are, however, so similar that a connection seems likely:

Geðraunir I.11.1–2 (*Rímnasafn* II: 173):
Dögling ól við dúka Fríð / dóttur eina væna
[‘the king begat one fine daughter with the
Fríðr of cloth’]

Sigurðar rímur þögla I.28.1–2 (Þorvaldur Sigurðsson 1986: 70):
Dögling ól við dúka Gná / dóttur eina ríka
[‘the king begat one great daughter with the
Gná of cloth’]

Formulas in Two Texts

We will now look at formulas which occur in *Vambarljóð* and only one other text; I will label those with the prefix T.

Formula T1

Vambarljóð 2.5–6 (*Þulur* 46):
hafði hverja / hannyrð numið
[‘she had learned every sort of needlework’]

Gullkársljóð 4.7–8 (*Þulur* 77):
og á hvern veg / hannyrð nema
[‘and in every way learn needlework’]

Formula T2

Vambarljóð 11.5–8 (*Pulur* 47):
 spurt hef eg allfitt / öðling heilan
 og mun eg brátt á því / bætur vinna
 [‘I have heard that the king is not at all well
 and I will soon improve upon that’]

Gullkársljóð 51.5–8 (*Pulur* 82):
 Spurt hef eg Æsu / allfitt heila,
 mun eg brátt á því / bætr vinna
 [‘I have heard that Æsa is not at all well, I
 will soon improve upon that’]

Formula T3

Vambarljóð 34.1–4 (*Pulur* 50):
 Illt er undrum / eptir að fréttu
 og þó er enn verra / að vita af sýnum.
 [‘It is bad to ask about wonders and yet it is
 worse still to know beyond doubt’]

Vambarljóð 48.1–4 (*Pulur* 51):
 Illt er undrum / eptir að fréttu
 þó enn verra / vita að sýnum
 [‘It is bad to ask about wonders, yet worse
 still to know beyond doubt’]

Gullkársljóð 66.1–4 (*Pulur* 83):
 Illt er undrum / eptir að fréttu
 þó er enn verra / að vita sýnna
 [‘It is bad to ask about wonders, yet it is
 worse still to know more clearly’]

Formula T4

Vambarljóð 56.3–4 (*Pulur* 52):
 vertu fljóð komið / með fagnaði
 [‘be welcome, girl, with good cheer’]

Gullkársljóð 71.3–4 (*Pulur* 84):
 og þótti fljóð komið / með fagnaði
 [‘and felt the girl had come with good cheer’]

Formula T5

Vambarljóð 60.6 (*Pulur* 53):
 úr ánaud þegið
 [‘delivered from oppression’]

Gullkársljóð 22.4 (*Pulur* 78):
 úr nauðum þegin
 [‘delivered from distress’]

The resemblance here may seem weak at first glance, but this use of the word *þiggja* [normally ‘accept’] is unusual and distinctive. The words *ánaud* and *nauðir* share a root morpheme and have a similar meaning.

Formula T6

Vambarljóð 67.1–2 (*Pulur* 54):
 Það skulu aðrir / ýtar þjóna
 [‘other men will serve’]

Gullkársljóð 21.5–6 (*Pulur* 78):
 Þér skulu allir / ýtar þjóna
 [‘other men will serve you’]

Formula T7

Vambarljóð 68.1–2 (*Pulur* 54):
 Dreif drengjalið / á dreka gylltan

Bryngerðarljóð 35.1–2 (*Pulur* 88):
 Dreif drengjalið / á dreka gylltan
 [‘a host of valiant men rushed onto the golden
 dragon-ship’]

Formula T8

Vambarljóð 30.5–8 (*Pulur* 49):
 eg skal hvern dag / hjarðar gæta
 en þið sæl megið / sitja heima
 [‘I will watch the herd every day but you
 two can sit happy at home’]

Bryngerðarljóð 14.5–8 (*Pulur* 86):
 Þig bað hann heima / hjarðar gæta
 en mig ganga / hvert gaman þætti.
 [‘He asked you to watch the herd at home
 but me to go where I would enjoy myself’]

Examples of formula T8 share only one identical line but there are clear thematic similarities.

Formula T9

Vambarljóð 1.5–6 (*Pulur* 46):
 konu átti sér / kynstórrar ættar
 [‘he had a wife from a noble family’]

Kringilnefjukvæði 1.5–6 (*Pulur* 39):
 konu átti hann sér / af kyni góðu
 [‘he had a wife from a good family’]

The textual variants are worth presenting here. The half-stanza has the following form in T₁:

Konu átti sér, / kænna að afli,
 kappsamur konungur, / af kyni góðu.
 [‘That energetic king, keen in might, had a
 wife from a good family’]

The form in V is as follows:

Konu átti hann sér / kynstórrar ættar,
 kappsamur konungur / kænna að flestu.

[‘That energetic king, keen in most things,
had a wife from a noble family’]

The T₂ instance is identical to the one in V except that the word *hann* is missing. The stanza is not in N, which has a short prose introduction instead of the first five stanzas of V and T.

Formula T10

Vambarljóð 18.5–6 (*Pulur* 48):
ein á skógi

Kringilnefjukvæði 6.5–6 (*Pulur* 39):
ein á skógi
[‘alone in the woods’]

This seems like it might be a common phrase, but I have not found it anywhere else, in poetry or prose.

Formula T11

Vambarljóð 19.3–4 (*Pulur* 48):
að þú fegri ert / fljóði hverju
[‘that you are fairer than every girl’]

Kringilnefjukvæði 11.7–8 (*Pulur* 40):
að þú fegri ert / en fljóð önnur
[‘that you are fairer than other girls’]

Formula T12

Vambarljóð 40.2 (*Pulur* 50):
ljótvoxin mær
[‘misshapen maiden’]

Kringilnefjukvæði 12.2 (*Pulur* 40):
velvoxin mær
[‘shapely maiden’]

Formula T13

Vambarljóð 59.5–6 (*Pulur* 53):
nú mun eldslitnum / öllum linna
[‘now all the ? will come to an end’]

Kringilnefjukvæði 31.5–6 (*Pulur* 43):
Nú mun álögum / öllum linna
[‘now all the enchantments will come to an end’]

The *Vambarljóð* instance also refers to an enchantment but the word *eldslitnum* is obscure.

Formula T14

Vambarljóð 39.1–2 (*Pulur* 50):
Reiður gekk þaðan / rekka drottinn

Hyndluljóð yngri 23.1–2 (*Pulur* 67):
Reiður gekk þaðan / rekka drottinn
[‘The lord of men walked angry from there’]

Vambarljóð 41.1–2 (*Pulur* 50):
Þá réð að reiðast / rekka drottinn
[‘Then the lord of men grew angry’]

Hyndluljóð is one of the *sagnakvæði*. To distinguish it from the poem of the same name preserved in *Flateyjarbók* I refer to it here as *Hyndluljóð yngri* [‘the younger *Hyndluljóð*’].

A stanza in the 17th century *Hyndlu rímur* paraphrases *Hyndluljóð yngri*:

Hyndlu rímur III.40.1 (Steinunn Finnsdóttir 1950: 26):
Reiður þaðan rekka drottinn réð burt vitja
[‘The lord of men went angry from there’]

In this case, it seems safe to assume that we have a direct textual borrowing (Bergljót Kristjánsdóttir 1996: 214). The *rímur* are clearly based on the *fornyrðislag* poem and the kenning *rekka drottinn* is found nowhere else.

Formula T15

Vambarljóð 23 (*Pulur* 48):
Látum við hvorugt / haldast þetta
sem eg mær við þig / mælti af fólsku
það mun hvorttveggja / haldast verða
þó með meinum / minn sé aldur.
[“Neither of us two should make those things endure which I, maiden, spoke to you out of foolishness.” “Both of those things will have to endure though my life will be a harsh one.”]

Hyndluljóð yngri 46 (*Pulur* 69):
Við skulum þetta / hvorigt haldast láta
þó eg við meyna / mælt hafi af fólsku.
Aldrei skal eg það / aptur taka
þó með meinum / að minn sé aldur.
[“We two should make neither of those things endure though I have spoken out of foolishness to the maiden.” “I will never take it back, though my life will be a harsh one.”]

Formula T16

Vambarljóð 25.5–8 (*Þulur* 49):

Ýtum þótti / hann Ásmundur vera
í fornum sið / frægur snemmindis.
[‘In the time of the old religion, men thought
Ásmundur quickly famous.’]

Þóruhjól 3.5–8 (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2011: 213):

þótti þjóðum / Þorkell vera
í fornum sið / frægur snemmindis
[‘In the time of the old religion people
thought Þorkell quickly famous.’]

Here we see the poems making use of synonyms for alliteration purposes. The formula accommodates vowel alliteration in *Vambarljóð* by using *ýtar* [‘men’] and alliteration on ‘þ’ in *Þóruhjól* by using *þjóðir* [‘people’].

Formula T17

Vambarljóð 5.3–4 (*Þulur* 46):

og um háls gramí / hendur lagði
[‘and laid her hands around the neck of the
king’]

Sigurðarkviða in skamma 42.3–4 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 214):

oc um háls kono / hendr um lagði
[‘and laid his hands around the neck of the
woman’]

Formula T18

Vambarljóð 7.7–8 (*Þulur* 47):

þó má skjöldungur ei / við sköpum vinna
[‘yet the king cannot win out against fate’]

Helgakviða Hundingsbana II 29.3 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 155):

vinnat scioldungar scöpom
[‘the kings cannot win out against fate’]

Kommentar (IV: 720) cites several parallels to the *Helgakviða* line but none as close as *Vambarljóð*.

Formula T19

Vambarljóð 10.1 (*Þulur* 47):

leyfður konungur
[‘the praised king’]

Sigurðarbálkr 23.1 (*Skj B₁*: 471):

leyfður konungur
[‘the praised king’]

This resemblance could be coincidental.

Formula T20

Vambarljóð 13.7–8 (*Þulur* 47):

þá gaf hún honum / horn fullt mjaðar
[‘then she gave him a horn full of mead’]

Sigrdrífumál prose: (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 189):

Hon tók þá horn, fult mjaðar, ok gaf hánom
minnisveig.
[‘then she took a horn full of mead and gave
him a memory-drink’]

It is possible that the *Sigrdrífumál* prose paraphrases what is originally a metrical text. The noun phrase *horn fullt mjaðar* [‘a horn full of mead’] forms the metrical A2k pattern.

The drink in *Vambarljóð* causes forgetfulness while the one in *Sigrdrífumál* causes remembrance. Drinks affecting memory also occur in *Guðrúnarkviða* II 21, *Dráp Niflunga*, *Hyndluljóð* 45 and *Bryngerðarljóð* 34 (cf. *Kommentar* V: 540–541).

Formula T21

Vambarljóð 14.2 (*Þulur* 47):

kóngur víðrisinn
[‘the king who gained renown from [?]’]

Grípisspá 13.8 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 166):

gramr vígrisinn
[‘the king who gained renown from battle’]

The word *víðrisinn* (thus in all manuscripts containing the strophe) is of unclear meaning, occurs nowhere else and appears to be an oral corruption of *vígrisinn*. The adjective is not found outside *Grípisspá* (*Kommentar* V: 165).

The words *kóngur* [‘king’] and *gramr* [‘king’] carry the alliteration in each case. If it is correct to regard T21 as some sort of formula, then the synonym usage is the same strategy to accommodate alliteration as found in T16.

Formula T22

Vambarljóð 1.7 (*Þulur* 46):

kappsamr konungur
[‘the energetic king’]

Nórgskonunga tal 4.1–2 (*Skj B₁*: 575):

Tók kappsamr / við konungs nafni
[‘the energetic one took on the name of king’]

Nórekskonunga tal 14.1–2 (*Skj B₁*: 577):

Réð kappsamr / fyr konungdómi

[‘the energetic one held the kingship’]

Formula T23

Vambarljóð 4 (*Þulur* 4):

Gekk á hávan / haug Alþrúðar
morgin hverjan / mætur landreki.
En fyrir hilmi / á margan veg
tignarmenn hans / telja fóru.
[‘Every morning the worthy ruler of the land
went upon the high mound of Alþrúður. But
the nobles went to recount in many ways
before the king.’]

Guðrúnarhvöt 9 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 265):

Guðrún grátandi, / Giúca dóttir,
gecc hon tregliga / á tái sitia,
oc at telia, / táruchlýra,
móðug spioll / á margan veg:
[‘Weeping did Guðrún, Gjúki’s daughter, go
to sit sadly on the threshold and with tear-
stained cheeks she recounted her sorrows in
many ways.’]

The formula here is *telja á margan veg* [‘recount in many ways’] but it is worth quoting the strophes in full to show the thematic similarity of a grief-stricken person going somewhere to sit.

Formula T24

Vambarljóð 63.3–4 (*Þulur* 53):

mannviti / mestu
[‘most good sense’]

Hávamál 6.9, 10.3, 11.3 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 18):

manvit mikit
[‘much good sense’]

Formula T24 is a borderline case.

Formula T25

Vambarljóð 33.4 (*Þulur* 50),
Merlínússpá I 56.7–8 (*Skj* B_{II}: 21),
Blómsturvalla rímur IV.80.3 (Jón Eggertsson
1976: 62),

(several other *rímur*):

ýta mengi
[‘a multitude of men’]

In *Vambarljóð*, *Merlínússpá* and *Blómsturvalla rímur*, the context is that of drinking.

Formula T26

Vambarljóð 8.7–8 (*Þulur* 47):

með gulli rauðu / og gersemum
[‘with red gold and precious things’]

Völundarkviða 21.7–8 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 120):

at væri gull rautt / oc gorsimar
[‘that there was red gold and precious
things’]

The collocation *gull og gersemar* [‘gold and precious things’] appears in many poems and also in prose texts (*Kommentar* III: 209) even up to the present day. The adjective *rautt* [‘red’] is frequently applied to gold (*Kommentar* III: 153). *Vambarljóð* and *Völundarkviða* are the only texts I have found where those two expressions occur together. Formula T26 could be seen as a more specific type of the *gull og gersemar* collocation, or as a coincidence.

Formulas within Vambarljóð

The last five formulas I will look at are repetitions within *Vambarljóð*, not found, as far as I can tell, in other poems. I will mark these with the prefix V.

Formula VI

Vambarljóð 39.5–6 (*Þulur* 50):

valt að honum / Vömb óþvegin
[‘The unwashed Belly rolled towards him’]

Vambarljóð 42.1–2 (*Þulur* 51):

Valt óþvegin / Vömb til nauta
[‘The unwashed Belly rolled to the bulls’]

Vambarljóð 50.1–2⁷ (*Þulur* 52):

Valt að vagni / Vömb óþvegin
[‘The unwashed Belly rolled to the carriage’]

Vambarljóð 52.1–2 (*Þulur* 52):

Veltist um urðir / Vömb óþvegin
[‘The unwashed Belly tumbled over the scree’]

The adjective *óþvegin* [‘unwashed’] constitutes a fixed epithet for the heroine.

Formula V2

Vambarljóð 8.3–4 (*Þulur* 47):

var eigi lofðungs mæ / létt um drykkjur
[‘The king’s maiden did not have an easy
time drinking’]

Vambarljóð 45.7–8 (*Þulur* 51):

var eigi lofðungi / létt um drykkju

[‘The king did not have an easy time drinking’]

Formula V3

Vambarljóð 26.5–6 (*Pulur* 49):
hún stýrði löndum / og lýði víða
[‘She ruled widely over lands and people’]

Vambarljóð 54.5–6 (*Pulur* 52):
stýrðu vel löndum / og lýði víða
[‘Rule well and widely over lands and people’]

Formula V4

Vambarljóð 22.1–2 (*Pulur* 48):
Ef svo ólíklega / um verða mætti
[‘If such an unlikely thing were to happen’]

Vambarljóð 47 (*Pulur* 51):
Hvað er svo ólíklegt / orðið um þig
[‘What unlikely thing has happened to you’]

Formula V5

Vambarljóð 63.7–8 (*Pulur* 53):
unz til hallar kom / Hrings að kveldi
[‘until he came to the hall of Hringur in the evening’]

Vambarljóð 68.7–8 (*Pulur* 54):
unz til hallar kom / Ásmunds að kveldi
[‘until he came to the hall of Ásmundur in the evening’]

Kennings

We now turn to the kennings, which can be regarded as a special case of poetic formulas. Each kenning is not only a formulaic combination of particular words but an instantiation of a broader system of conventional base words, determinants and referents. For an up-to-date introduction to kennings see Osborne, this volume.

Kenning 1

Vambarljóð 44.2 (*Pulur* 51),
Bryngerðarljóð 20.8 (*Pulur* 86),
Bryngerðarljóð 23.2 (*Pulur* 87):
bauga deilir

Oddrúnargrátr 20.3 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 237):
bauga deili
[‘divider of rings’ = ruler]

Kenning 1 is only found in three poems. The kenning element *deilir* is not used in the *rímur*.

Kenning 2

Vambarljóð 5.6 (*Pulur* 47):
skatna drottinn

Grípisspá 5.2 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 165):
scatna dróttinn

Friðþjófs saga 26.2:
skatna dróttinn

Einarr Skúlason, *Geisli* 64.7:
skatna dróttinn
[‘lord of men’ = ruler]

Kenning 2 is another distinctive kenning, found only in a few poems. In this case, one of the poems is in *dróttkvætt*. This kenning is not used in the *rímur*.

Kenning 3

Vambarljóð 54.4 (*Pulur* 52):
gumna drottinn

Atlakviða 23.2 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 244):
gumna dróttinn

Þórbjörn skakkaskáld, *Erlingsdrápa* 2.1 (*Skj B*: 515):
gumna dróttinn

Beowulf 1824 (Klaeber 1941: 68; in other Old English poetry, see Whallon 1969: 137):
gumena dryhten
[‘lord of men’ = ruler]

Kenning 3 is a third distinctive kenning which I have not found in *rímur* or other young poetry.

Kenning 4

rekka drottinn
[‘lord of men’ = ruler]

On the four examples, see formula T14 above:

Kenning 5

seima Bil
[‘Bil of gold’ = woman]

On the eight examples and its much wider use, see formula M2 above.

Kenning 6

Vambarljóð 2.7 (*Pulur* 46):
auðar Bil (v.l. Lín)
[‘Bil/Lín of wealth’ = woman]

Both V₁ and V₂ have *Bil* while both T₁ and T₂ have *Lín*.

Both the *auðar Bil* and *auðar Lín* variants are common post-13th century kennings and *auðar Bil* occurs several times in *Gullkársljóð*.

Kenning 7

Vambarljóð 3.7 (*Þulur* 46):

hlaðsól

[‘sun of lace’ = woman]

Kenning 7 is also found in *Hjálmþérs rímur* I.38.3, XI.9.2 and in a *hálfhneppt* stanza in a late 16th century manuscript (Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2007: 76, 154–155).

Kenning 8

Vambarljóð 21.2 (*Þulur* 48):

língrundin

[‘the linen ground’ = woman]

I have not found this exact kenning elsewhere though many similar ones can be found (e.g. *hlaðgrund*, *línjörð*). The N manuscript has *línspöngin* [‘the linen spangle’], which is found already in the 13th century.

Kenning 9

Vambarljóð 26.3 (*Þulur* 49):

veiga þöll

[‘fir-tree of beverages’ = woman]

Kenning 9 occurs in some six medieval *rímur*.

Kenning 10

Vambarljóð 52.6 (*Þulur* 52):

herja stillir

Guðrúnarkviða III 4.2 (Neckel–Kuhn 1983: 232):

heria stilli

[‘the commander of hosts’ = ruler]

Gullkársljóð 37.2 (*Þulur* 80):

herjar stillir

[‘the commander of the host’ = ruler]

Kenning 11

Vambarljóð 69.2 (*Þulur* 54):

bauga þilju

Móðars rímur I.32.4 (Jón Helgason 1950: 6):

bauga þilja

Móðars rímur II.11.2 (Jón Helgason 1950: 10):

bauga þilja

Skógar-Krists rímur I.46 (Sólveig Ebba Ólafsdóttir 2006: 23):

bauga þilja

[‘the plank of rings’ = woman]

The word *þilja* is fairly frequent as a base word in women kennings in the *rímur*. This usage is also found in a stanza quoted in the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise*.

Results and Interpretation

It is readily apparent that the greatest textual similarities in *Vambarljóð* lie with the other *sagnakvæði*. Out of the 47 formulas (including kennings) which have here been identified as occurring in *Vambarljóð* and at least one other text, there are 27 that occur in other *sagnakvæði*. In a number of cases, these are textual similarities which reach across multiple verses. The poem with the largest number of textual affinities to *Vambarljóð* is *Gullkársljóð*, with 10 shared formulas. *Bryngerðarljóð* has 8 shared formulas, *Kringilnefjukvæði* 7 and *Kötludraumur*, *Þóruvæði* and *Hyndluljóð yngri* have 2 shared formulas each.⁸

The poetic language of *Vambarljóð* has some connection with that of the *rímur*, mostly in the kennings. Here we have identified 6 shared formulas. This is less than one might expect considering that both the *rímur* and the *sagnakvæði* are late-medieval secular poetry and that the corpus of *rímur* to compare with is vast. *Vambarljóð* has even less in common with pre-14th century poetry in *dróttkvætt* and related meters (‘skaldic’ poetry), the list above shows only a couple of examples.

There is clearly a tendency for poetic formulas to be limited to a particular type of poetry. To some extent this is explained by metrical reasons. A formulaic component like “né manns konu” would not fit into the trochaic rhythm of the *rímur*. It is also worth keeping in mind that the *rímur* were largely a literate enterprise while the *sagnakvæði* existed in oral tradition – this would certainly predict a difference in their use of formulas. The most prominent formulaic part of the *rímur* is the system of kennings and, indeed, that is where we encounter commonalities with the *sagnakvæði*. Even so, there are perfectly trochaic kennings such as *bauga*

deilir (kenning 1) and *skatna drottinn* (kenning 2) which are found in the *sagnakvæði* but do not occur in the *rímur*.

Vambarljóð shares a number of similarities with eddic poetry, some vague, some quite striking. How should these similarities be interpreted? Böðvar Guðmundsson (2006: 483) and Óskar Halldórsson (2004: 233–234) have hinted that they could be the result of Renaissance humanism in post-Reformation Iceland. If this were the case, we would have learned authors deliberately employing archaic expressions known to them from the *Poetic Edda*. But this explanation fails to fit the facts.

It was only in 1643 that the Codex Regius manuscript of the *Poetic Edda* came into Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson's possession and thus became known to the Icelandic cultural elite. *Vambarljóð* is recorded, in more than one version, some 60 years later. Its subject is not legendary history or high mythology but a simple fairytale, something the learned men of 17th century Iceland looked down upon. Icelandic Renaissance humanists certainly did try their hand at writing eddic poetry, but the results – the best known of which is *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* – were very different from the *sagnakvæði* in style, meter, subject, language and use of formulas (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2010; see also Lassen 2011). One would not expect deliberately archaic and obscure poetry to easily enter the popular tradition and, indeed, *Hrafnagaldur* shows no signs of oral transmission. It also has no formulas in common with the *sagnakvæði*, mostly restricting itself to borrowings from *Völuspá* and the so-called *Prose Edda* (or *Snorra Edda*).

Jón Helgason believed that the *sagnakvæði* were a continuation of the eddic tradition⁹ and this remains the best explanation for why they share formulas with the poems of the Codex Regius. The tradition of narrative *fornyrðislag* poetry retained an oral component long after the introduction of writing. In one of the two manuscripts of *Breta sögur*, we find the information that many people know *Merlínússpá* (a long poem in *fornyrðislag*) by heart and this seems to be the reason why the scribe felt it to be unnecessary to include it in the manuscript (*kunna margir menn þat kuæði*

[‘many people know that poem by heart’]) (Jón Sigurðsson 1849: 13; cf. discussion in Jón Helgason 1952: 99).

Vambarljóð shares 17 formulas with the *Poetic Edda* and 10 with other poems in *fornyrðislag* and related meters. The only poem that stands out here is *Grípisspá*, with 5 shared formulas. As I have previously discussed, *Grípisspá* also has formulas in common with other *sagnakvæði* (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2010; 2011). *Grípisspá* is universally considered to be among the youngest poems in the *Poetic Edda*, perhaps the very youngest. This might explain its comparatively greater affinity to late-medieval poetry.

Methodological Questions and Future Work

In the present text, I have sought to show how we might try to establish the relative degree of closeness or relatedness between poems within the same tradition by looking *en masse* at the formulaic textual elements they have in common. I think the preliminary results show some promise and that this is an avenue worth exploring further. But many questions remain open.

In this *Vambarljóð* investigation, I have simply counted every instance of possible formulas that I was able to identify and then added up the raw numbers for every related poem. But one might try to classify formulas depending on how certain or striking or extensive they are. For some purposes, we will certainly want to distinguish between formulas consisting of, say, one verse from those which cover a whole stanza. We may also want to distinguish between expressions that occur only in two poems and those that occur more widely. And what about formulaic expressions that also occur in prose? The *gull og gersemar* [‘gold and precious things’] example (T26) is a case in point. A collocation that can occur in any sort of poetry and also in prose is hardly distinctive enough to tell us much about stylistic affinity.

Another open question is whether it makes sense to treat kennings as a part of the wider array of formulaic expressions or whether they need any special provisions (cf. K8 above). Again, we may wish to distinguish between kennings which seem confined to a

few poems or a certain genre (e.g. K1, *bauga deilir*) and those that have a wide and general distribution (e.g. K5, *seima Bil*).

Finally, I have not dealt with individual poetic words but those are certainly an important part of the poetic diction. To take an example, the word *landreki* [‘ruler’]¹⁰ occurs three times in *Vambarljóð*. It does not occur in prose but is frequent in pre-1400 poetry, whether in *dróttkvætt* or eddic meters. I have not found it in *rímur* or in post-1400 religious poetry. Another example is the word *bölstafir* [‘staves of woe’] which is found in *Vambarljóð* and *Sigrdrífumál* and not in other sources familiar to me (*Kommentar V*: 608 calls it a *hapax legomenon*). Both of those examples are part of the archaic poetic language found in *Vambarljóð*.

An investigation of this sort will only ever be as good as its philological groundwork. As a basis for future investigation of the *sagnakvæði*, a new critical edition of every poem is a necessity. Such an edition will be a particularly interesting undertaking for *Kötludraumur*, which is preserved in numerous versions independently collected from oral tradition (Gísli Sigurðsson 1995). To a somewhat lesser extent, the same is true for *Snjáskvæði* and *Kringilnefjukvæði*. It remains to be seen whether research on the *fornyrðislag* oral tradition as it existed in the 17th century can throw light on the medieval tradition in the same meter.

Notes

1. The exact number can be argued over. In this paper, I regard the younger *Vambarljóð* as a completely separate poem, which would arguably bring the number up to nine. *Kötludraumur*, also, exists in versions so divergent that a case could be made that they constitute different poems.
2. I am indebted to Frog for this formulation.
3. For the readers’ convenience, I list citations to Ólafur Davíðsson’s published edition of *Vambarljóð*, despite basing my work on the manuscripts.
4. When using text from *Pulur* I have normalized the spelling.
5. I have normalized the spelling when referring to *rímur* texts or other texts published in diplomatic editions.
6. *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Skaldic Database*, available at: <http://skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au/db.php?table=mss&id=15079>.
7. This strophe is only preserved in T₂.

8. The numbers add up to more than 27 because of formulas occurring in multiple *sagnakvæði*.
9. “Eddadigtingens tradition fortsættes i senmiddelalderen ved nogle anonyme digte i fornyrdislag med tilknytning til eventyr og folkesagn” [‘The tradition of eddic poetry continues in the late Middle Ages with some anonymous poems in *fornyrðislag* connected to fairy tales and folk tales’] (Jón Helgason 1952: 167).
10. This word is at the borderline between kenning and *heiti* (cf. Meissner 1921: 353).

Manuscripts

AM 154 8^{vo}
NKS 1141 fol
NKS 1894 4^{to}
JS 398 4^{to}
JS 405 4^{to}
JS 406 4^{to}
JS 579 4^{to}
JS 581 4^{to}
Thott 489 8^{vo}
Lbs 985 4^{to}
Lbs 2324 4^{to}
Lbs 202 8^{vo}
ÍB 895 8^{vo}

Works Cited

- Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir. 1997. “(Ó)Traustar heimildir. Um söfnun og útgáfu þjóðkvæði”. *Skáldskaparmál* 4: 210–226.
- Bergljót Kristjánsdóttir. 1996. “„Gunnlöð ekki gaf mér neitt af geymsludrykknum forðum...“ Um Steinunni Finnsdóttur, Hyndlurímur og Snækóngrímur”. In *Guðamjöldur og arnarleir. Safn ritgerða um eddulist*. Ed. Sverrir Tómasson. Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan. Pp. 165–219.
- Boer, R. C (ed.). 1888. *Qrvar-Odds saga*. Leiden.
- Böðvar Guðmundsson. 2006. “Nýir siðir og nýir lærdómar. Bókmenntir 1550–1750”. In *Íslensk bókmenntasaga II*. Ed. Vésteinn Ólason. Reykjavík: Mál og menning. Pp. 381–521.
- Finnur Sigmundsson. 1947. “Um Guðmund Bergþórsson”. In *Olgeirs rímur danska*. By Guðmundur Bergþórsson. Eds. Björn K. Þórólfsson & Finnur Sigmundsson. Reykjavík: Landsbókasafn Íslands. Pp. xi–xxiii.
- Frog. 2011. “Alvíssmál and Orality I”. *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 126: 17–71.
- Gísli Sigurðsson. 1990. “On the Classification of Eddic Heroic Poetry in View of the Oral Theory”. In *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages*. Ed. Teresa Pàroli. Spoleto: Presso la Sede del Centro Studi. Pp. 245–255.
- Gísli Sigurðsson. 1995. “Kötludraumur. Flökkuminni eða þjóðfélagsumræða?” *Gripla* 9: 189–217.
- Harris, J. 2008 [1983]. “Eddic Poetry as Oral Poetry: The Evidence of Parallel Passages in the Helgi Poems for Questions of Composition and

- Performance". In *"Speak Useful Words or Say Nothing": Old Norse Studies*. By J. Harris. *Islandica* 53. Ithaca: Cornell University Library. Pp. 189–225.
- Haukur Þorgeirsson. 2010. "Gullkársljóð og Hrafnagaldur: Framlag til sögu fornyrðislags". *Gripla* 21: 299–334.
- Haukur Þorgeirsson. 2011. "Þóruðljóð og Háu-Þóruleikur". *Gripla* 22: 211–227.
- Jón Eggertsson. 1976. *Blómsturvallarímur*. Eds. Grímur M. Helgason & Hallferður Örn Eiríksson. Rit Rímnafélagsins 11. Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið.
- Jón Helgason (ed.). 1950. *Móðars rímur og Móðars þáttur*. Íslensk rit síðari alda 5. Kaupmannahöfn: Hið íslenska fræðafélag.
- Jón Helgason. 1952. "Norges og Íslands digtning". Offprint from *Nordisk kultur VIII_B. Litteraturhistoria: Norge og Island*. Stockholm, Oslo, Köpenhamn.
- Jón Helgason. 1960. *Kvæðabók séra Gissurar Sveinssonar*. Kaupmannahöfn: Hið íslenska fræðafélag.
- Jón Sigurðsson. 1849. "Trójumanna saga ok Breta sögur". *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historier*. Pp. 3–145.
- Klaeber, Friedrich. 1941. *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*. 3rd edn., with supplement. Boston etc.: D. C. Heath.
- Kommentar* = von See, Klaus, et al. 1997–2006. *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda II–V*. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Lassen, Annette. 2011. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins (Forspjallsljóð)*. London: Viking Society for Northern Research.
- Magnús Jónsson, Pétur Einarsson and Ólafur Halldórsson. 1961. *Pontus rímur*. Rit Rímnafélagsins 10. Ed. Grímur M. Helgason. Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið.
- Meissner, Rudolf. 1921. *Die Kenningar der Skalden: Ein Beitrag zur skaldischen Poetik*. Bonn, Leipzig.
- Mellor, Scott A. 2008. *Analyzing Ten Poems from The Poetic Edda: Oral Formula and Mythic Patterns*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Neckel–Kuhn 1983 = Neckel, Gustav, & Hans Kuhn (eds.). 1983. *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern I: Text*. Germanische Bibliothek, 4th ser. 5th revised edn. Heidelberg: Carl Winter.
- ONP* = *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog. A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*. Available at: <http://www.onp.hum.ku.dk/>.
- Ólafur Davíðsson. 1898. *Íslenzkar þulur og þjóðkvæði*. Kaupmannahöfn: Hið íslenska bókmentafélag.
- Óskar Halldórsson. 2004. "Bókmenntir á lærdómsöld 1550–1770". In *Saga Íslands VII*. Ed. Sigurður Líndal. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, Sögufélag. Pp. 213–316.
- Rímnasafn* = Finnur Jónsson (ed.). 1905–1922. *Rímnasafn. Samling af de ældste islandske rimer I–II*. STUAGNL 35. København: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur.
- Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*. Available at <http://skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au>.
- Skj* = Finnur Jónsson (ed.). 1912–1915. *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning A–B*. København, Kristiania: Gyldendalske boghandel, Nordisk forlag.
- Sólveig Ebba Ólafsdóttir. 2006. "Rímur af Skógar-Kristi". *Són* 4: 9–31.
- Steinunn Finnsdóttir. 1950. *Hyndlu rímur og Snækóngrs rímur*. Ed. Bjarni Vilhjálmsson. Rit Rímnafélagsins 3. Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið.
- Thorvaldsen, Bernt Øyvind. 2006. *Svá er sagt í fornum vísindum: Tekstualiseringen av de mytologiske eddadikt*. Bergen: Senter for middelalderstudier.
- Thorvaldsen, Bernt Øyvind. 2008. "Om Þrymskviða, tekstlån og tradisjon". *Maal og Minne* 2008(2): 142–166.
- Vésteinn Ólason. 1982. *The Traditional Ballads of Iceland*. Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar.
- Whallon, William. 1969. *Formula, Character, and Context: Studies in Homeric, Old English, and Old Testament Poetry*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies.
- Wisén, Theodor. 1881. *Riddara-rímur*. STUAGNL 4. Köpenhamn: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur.
- Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir. 2007. *Lausavísur frá svartadauða til siðaskipta*. Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Þorvaldur Sigurðsson (ed.). 1986. *Sigurðar rímur þögl*. Unpublished cand. mag. dissertation, University of Iceland.
- Þulur* = Ólafur Davíðsson 1898.
- Ölvis rímur*. Unpublished transcript at Stofnun Árna Magnússonar.

A Method for Analyzing World-Models in Scandinavian Mythology

Mathias Nordvig, Aarhus University

This paper discusses how to construct a method for analyzing and interpreting world-models¹ in Scandinavian mythology² by adapting and developing Vladimir Propp's schema for the dramatis personae of folktales found in *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1968 [1928]) as a foundational method for

analyzing the world-models employed in a certain type of narratives about Scandinavian gods, which will be called *gods' journeys*. Gods' journeys comprise approximately 50% of the number of identifiable narratives about Scandinavian gods in the work called *Edda* by Snorri Sturluson (*Snorra Edda* hereafter), in