

- e.g. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (2003: 87–88), Jón Helgason (1953: 167), Einar G. Pétursson (1998: 100, 383–384), Böðvar Guðmundsson (1993: 483–485) and Hughes (2002: 100–101).
10. *Vambarljóð* was also the topic of a BA-thesis in Folkloristics at the University of Iceland, where Nanna Halldóra Imsland, under my supervision, compared the different versions of *Vambarljóð* to corresponding fairy tales from the collection of Jón Árnason (see Nanna Halldóra Imsland 2012).
11. This survey is based on my research from 2012, which was translated into English by David Nickel.

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How Can You Tell Who’s Talking? – Transitions between Direct Speech and Narration in *Vambarljóð*

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Vambarljóð is an Icelandic poem recorded from oral tradition in the 17th century but composed somewhat earlier – perhaps in the 15th century. It is one of a group of alliterative

poems, the *sagnakvæði*, that, in my view, form a direct continuation of the eddic *fornryðislag* tradition (see also Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, this volume). *Vambarljóð*

tells a fairytale about a princess named Signý. She is cursed by her stepmother and transformed into a cow's stomach. With her cunning and magical prowess, Signý forces a prince into marrying her. This breaks the curse and restores her to human form. Following its first publication (Ólafur Davíðsson 1898), *Vambarljóð* lay mostly undisturbed by scholarly attention until 2012, when three articles (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2012; Frog 2012a; 2012b) and a BA thesis (Nanna Halldóra Imsland 2012) were devoted to it.

In my previous article, I was concerned with identifying formulaic language in the poem and tracing which other poems – mostly other *sagnakvæði* and eddic poems – share those formulas. In his extensive and stimulating set of responses, Frog raises a number of issues which could be explored further. The present article is the result of following up on one such clue. Frog writes:

[I]nquit formulae are conspicuously absent from the material surveyed. Although some formulae may have been too fine for Þorgeirsson's sieve, sifting for formulaic strings, it seems remarkable that such formulae do not even emerge as repeating through *Vambarljóð* itself. (Frog 2012b: 51.)

Indeed, my previous article paid little attention to what Frog calls “the fundamentals of narration” (Frog 2012b: 51), a fault which I would like to remedy.

Vambarljóð is preserved in three versions: V, N and T (see further Haukur Þorgeirsson 2012: 182–183). The V text is 62 strophes while N is a fragmentary version consisting of 27 strophes. The N version is the V version interpolated, somewhat clumsily, with 8 additional strophes from a lost source. The present analysis of narrative mechanics is based on V since it is the most coherent text.

Direct Speech by the Numbers

Our text is a total of 62 *fornyrðislag* strophes or 496 verses. They are distributed between narration and individual speakers as shown in Table 1. If we count by strophes rather than verses, we get the result presented in Table 2. We can then compare those results with the eddic poems which Terry Gunnell (1995:

Table 1. Distribution of verses of third person narration and direct speech by speakers.

Third person narration	250 verses (50%)
Princess Signý, the heroine	94 verses (19%)
King Ásmundr, Signý's love-interest	44 verses (9%)
King Hringr, Signý's father	40 verses (8%)
Queen Yrsa, Signý's evil step-mother	30 verses (6%)
Minor characters	38 verses (8%)

Table 2. Distribution of third person narration and direct speech by strophes.

Narrative strophes	23 strophes (37%)
Pure speech strophes	26 strophes (42%)
Blended strophes	13 strophes (21%)

Table 3. Proportion of strophes of direct speech in *Vambarljóð* compared with the eddic poems classified as epic-dramatic poems by Terry Gunnell (1995: 188–189).

Poem	Pure speech strophes
<i>Þrymskviða</i>	20%
<i>Hymiskviða</i>	35%
<i>Atlakviða</i>	36%
<i>Guðrúnarkviða I</i>	37%
<i>Brot af Sigurðarkviðu</i>	40%
<i>Vambarljóð</i>	42%
<i>Helgakviða Hundingsbana I</i>	43%
<i>Völundarkviða</i>	46%
<i>Atlamál</i>	48%
<i>Sigurðarkviða in skamma</i>	60%
<i>Guðrúnarkviða III</i>	65%
<i>Grottasöngur</i>	69%

188–189) classifies without reservation as epic-dramatic poems, as seen in Table 3.

Judging by Table 3, *Vambarljóð* is an epic-dramatic poem with a fairly typical mix of speech and narration. With this established, we will look at how the poem accomplishes transitions between speakers.

The Mechanics of Dialogue Changes

I contend that a well-made epic-dramatic poem needs to transition from one speaker to another without overly taxing either the performer or the listener of the poem. In *Vambarljóð*, there are 22 instances of dialogue changes – i.e. cases where the poem

“passes directly from one speaker to another without an intervening narrative introduction to the new speaker” (Gunnell 1995:191). We can again take a look at how our poem fares in the comparison group of epic-dramatic eddic poems according to Gunnell, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Proportion of strophes of direct speech in Vambarljóð compared with the eddic poems classified as epic-dramatic poems by Terry Gunnell (1995: 191–192).

Poem	Dialogue changes
<i>Guðrúnarkviða I</i>	1
<i>Guðrúnarkviða III</i>	1
<i>Hymiskviða</i>	2
<i>Brot af Sigurðarkviðu</i>	2
<i>Sigurðarkviða in skamma</i>	2
<i>Atlakviða</i>	3
<i>Grottasöngur</i>	3
<i>Brymskviða</i>	4
<i>Völundarkviða</i>	8
<i>Helgakviða Hundingsbana I</i>	10
<i>Vambarljóð</i>	<u>22</u>
<i>Atlamál</i>	29

It turns out that *Vambarljóð* shows a high preference for direct transitions between speakers. We may ask how these transitions are accomplished without the listener (or reader) becoming confused as to when one character stops speaking and another one starts. A key mechanism here is that in 21 out of 22 dialogue changes, the new speaker begins at the start of a new strophe. It is very rare for a speaker to go on talking after the end of a strophe; this only happens twice in the poem. So, when we are following a dialogue, our default expectation might be that a stanza boundary indicates a change in speaker. According to this view, it is the rare exceptions to the rule which require particular consideration. It is instructive to look at the two cases where Signý talks for two strophes in a row. In strophe 44,¹ she continues what she was saying in strophe 43:

Után þú biðjir mín, / bauga deilir
(*Vambarljóð* 44.1–2.)

Unless you propose to me, divider of rings

There are two facts here which alert us that there has not been a change in speakers. First, it would be unnatural for a new speaker to start with the word *után* [‘unless’]. Secondly,

Signý renews her address of her interlocutor with the vocative *bauga deilir* [‘divider of rings’].

Strophes 53–54 are the second case in which Signý continues talking, and again we see the same mechanism of addressing the interlocutor to clarify who is speaking and who is not:

Hér máttu, bragning, sjá / brúði þína
(*Vambarljóð* 54.1–2)

Here you can, king, see your bride

Having seen how the exceptional cases are not likely to cause confusion, we can appreciate how the strophe boundaries are usually a sufficiently strong signal for the indication of a change in speaker. Of course, it is also frequently the case that some additional hint is provided. For example, one character may have asked a question, made a request or directly commanded the other character to speak.

Transitions from Direct Speech to Narration

The poem transitions 16 times from direct speech to narration. Again, we see that strophe divisions play a role in alerting the audience: in 13 cases the transition occurs at strophe boundaries. Apart from this, the most significant marker is probably seeing a verb form in third person past tense – the dialogue strophes mostly contain verbs in first and second person present tense. Frequently the third person verb is a verb of movement which propels us into a new scene, such as the verbs *dreif* [‘rushed’] and *gekk* [‘walked’]:

Dreif drengja lið (*Vambarljóð* 68.1–2)

A host of valiant men rushed

Gekk ung meyja (*Vambarljóð* 8.1–2)

The young maiden walked

This sort of transition seems largely unproblematic. The narrative voice is pervasive and a return to it is never likely to be surprising.

Transitions from Narration to Direct Speech

There are 16 transitions from narration to direct speech and only 4 of those are at strophe boundaries. The other 12 transitions

are accomplished with blended strophes – something also typical of the eddic epic-dramatic poems. The most favored device in *Vambarljóð* with which to transition from third person narration to direct speech is to have one character address another with an imperative verb form. This is the case in 11 out of 16 such transitions. Some examples:

Drack af kálki
kóngr viðrisinn
að til Alþrúðar
ekkert mundi,
‘sezt niðr hjá mér
og seg tíðindi
því að margt við þig
mæla eg vildi.’
(*Vambarljóð* 14.)

The renowned king drank from the cup so that he remembered nothing of Alþrúðr: ‘Sit down with me and tell me tidings, for there are many things I would like to discuss with you.’

In this blended strophe, we know as soon as we hear the word *sezt* [‘sit!'] that direct speech has begun. Who is talking? We expect it to be the character whose actions are described in the first half of the strophe. This is conventional and clear within the poetry without requiring any additional explicit marker: it can be considered to be a function of the pragmatics of this poetic narrative form. Strophe 56 is slightly more challenging in that it transitions to direct speech and back again:

Þá tók drottning
við dýrri snót,
‘vertu, fljóð, komið
með fögnuði,’
lagði hún meyju
í miðja sæng
og sveipaði að utan
silkidúki.
(*Vambarljóð* 56.)

Then the queen received the precious girl: ‘Be welcome, lady, and happily received.’ She laid the maiden in the middle of the bed and wrapped her with a silken blanket.

Again we have a blended strophe where an imperative – *vertu* [‘be thou’] – signifies that the person whose actions are described has started to speak. But this time, we transition

back to narration with a third person verb in verse 5. These cases illustrate how word order and verb conjugation carry a pragmatic function of marking transitions from and to direct speech without requiring an inquit formula.

Inquit Formulas

We have seen that transitions to direct speech can be accomplished without the narration explicitly stating that a character is about to speak. But *Vambarljóð* does sometimes present an explicit inquit, and I classify 7 out of 16 narration-to-speech transitions in this way. I will review each of these cases with special attention to whether the inquit is formulaic.

Fagrvoxin geck
við föður að mæla
og um háls gramí
hendur lagði,
‘skunda til skemmu,
skatna drottinn,
mér er títt við þig
tafl að efla.’
(*Vambarljóð* 5.)

The fairly shaped one went to speak with her father and she laid her hands around the neck of the king: ‘Hurry to the outbuilding, lord of men, I would like to play *tafl* with you.’

The first half of this blended strophe contains two potential formulas (T17 and M8; codes for formulae are according to the survey in Haukur Þorgeirsson 2012). In addition to the explicit inquit, the imperative *skunda* signifies the start of direct speech. Finally, the address, *skatna drottinn*, [‘lord of men’] helps to remove any possible ambiguity.

In the next example, we again have both an imperative and an explicit inquit:

kvaddi hún öðling
með orðum blíðum,
‘sit þú, hilmir, heill
með huga glöðum.’
(*Vambarljóð* 9.5–8.)

she greeted the king with sweet words: ‘Sit hail, king, in glad spirits!’

The address itself is formulaic (M11), but I did not previously flag the inquit as a formula. Nevertheless, the collocation *blíð orð* [‘sweet

words'] is certainly conventional and occurs in *Hugsvinnsmál* 89, *Kötludraumr* 16 (some variants), *Gullkársljóð* 33 and in some *rímur*.

In *Vambarljóð* 52–53, the end of the first strophe has an inquit introducing direct speech in the second strophe:

mátti hún eigi allra / orðanna bindast:
(*Vambarljóð* 52.7–8.)

she could not restrain all her words:

The phrase *mega eigi orða bindast* ['to be unable to restrain words'] is conventional and appears, for example, in *Steins þáttur Skaftasonar* ['The Tale of Steinn Skaftason'], though I am not familiar with any other instance in poetry.

Strophes 34 and 64 have an identical second half:

spurði á móti
margs fróðlega,
'eða er hér nokkuð
nýtt í fréttum?'
(*Vambarljóð* 34.5–8; 64.5–8.)

He asked many knowledgeable questions in turn: 'Or is there anything new to report?'

Since this half-strophe occurs twice and the second pair of lines is attested more broadly as a formula, I classified it as a variation of the more widespread formula (M4). Certainly we can then regard the inquit part of it as formulaic, although it does not occur independently of the particular question in direct speech.

The end of strophe 27 offers this inquit introduction to strophe 28:

þá réð mæð við hann / margt að ræða
(*Vambarljóð* 27.7–8.)

then the maiden did discuss many things with him

This is reminiscent of what I previously identified as formula M5:

því að mart við þig / mæla eg vildi
(*Vambarljóð* 14.7–8.)

because I would like to say many things to you

kvaðst hún mart við þig / mæla vilja
(*Bryngerðarljóð* 51.3–4: Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 90.)

she said that she would like to say many things to you

kvezk mart við svín / mæla vilja
(*Merlínússpá* I 41.7–8: *Skj* B_{II}: 18.)

he says that he would like to say many things to the pig

An inquit beginning with *þá réð* ['then did'] as in *Vambarljóð* 27 above is also found in another *sagnakvæði*:

Þá réð að mæla / móðir hennar
(*Gullkársljóð* 4.1–2: Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 77.)

then her mother did say

Our final inquit is as follows:

hann í hlióði / henni sagði
(*Vambarljóð* 46.5–6.)

he told her quietly

This is a potential formula and it is only by oversight that I left it out of the earlier article, and may be identified as M14 following the earlier system. The verses have these parallels:

Már í hljóði / hana að spurði
(*Kötludraumur* 12.1–2: Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 6.)

Már asked her quietly

Már í hljóði / mælti við hana
(*Kötludraumur* 58.1–2: Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 13.)

Már spoke to her quietly

Hrafn í hljóði / hana að spurði
(*Snjaskvæði* 41.1–2: Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 36.)

Hrafn asked her quietly

Conclusions

Vambarljóð turns out to be similar to the epic-dramatic eddic poems in its overall mix of narrative and speech and also in the way it uses blended strophes to transition from narration to direct speech. What is dissimilar is that *Vambarljóð* has a high frequency of dialogue changes without intervening narrative introductions. This is enabled through the skilful use of certain mechanisms

– strophe boundaries in particular. Since multi-strophe monologues by individual characters are avoided, the strophe boundary becomes a useful signal of transition between speaking characters, and this is complemented with conventionalized pragmatics of the poetic system that can employ syntactic structures and grammatical cues to indicate changes to and from direct speech. This keeps the conversations moving smoothly and reduces the need for inquit formulas. Nevertheless, some narrative introductions do remain and those are at least somewhat formulaic.

If *Vambarljóð* gets more mileage out of strophe boundaries than the typical eddic poem, this may be connected to the fact that *Vambarljóð* (as the other *sagnakvæði*) is in a perfectly regular form of 8-verse strophes. The strophic form in eddic *fornyrðislag* is less consistent, with 8-verse strophes predominant but not alone on the stage. West Germanic alliterative poetry is stichic and the strophic form is thought to be a Norse innovation. It is therefore possible to suggest that, in the *sagnakvæði*, the strophic innovation has been carried through to a logical conclusion. Nevertheless, it is clear that already in the eddic poems, strophe boundaries are an important mechanism for enabling dialogue changes. This is particularly apparent in the dialogue-heavy *fornyrðislag* poems *Grípisspá* and *Baldrs draumar*.

In *Vambarljóð*, the transitions between narrative and direct speech and between individual characters are generally unambiguous and easy to follow, leaving us with no particular reason to expect a dramatic

performance. This stands in contrast with eddic *ljóðaháttir* poems where Gunnell (1995: 281 and *passim*) has convincingly argued that a dramatic performance is necessary for intelligibility.

In this case study, I have focused on one poem and the results must be seen as preliminary. A more general examination of narrative transition strategies in the eddic poems and the *sagnakvæði* would be a worthy undertaking.

Notes

1. I follow the strophe numbering in Ólafur Davíðsson 1898: 46–54 since this is the only published edition. The text of my quotes from the poem is based on the two V manuscripts with some spelling normalization.

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Remembering the Golden Past: Nostalgia as a Narrative Practice of Karelian Evacuees in Finland

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Retrospective methods are methods for “considering some aspect of culture in one period through evidence from another, later period” (Frog 2012: 5). Contributions to earlier issues of *RMN Newsletter* have illustrated that retrospective methods can be applied to research materials from any period, and many of the materials addressed are texts

which themselves look back to earlier periods, to a past from the perspective of a potentially anonymous author. The present paper turns attention to the interpretative force that the notion of nostalgia may have in informing and constructing such images of the past by individual writers. It examines nostalgia as a narrative and cultural practice in the case of