Recontextualising the Echoing Retorts of *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna* [*]

In the opening lines of *Hárbarðsljóð*, Þórr calls across a fjord to a ferryman (Hárbarðr or 'Grey Beard', a disguised form of Óðinn), only to encounter his own words altered and returned:

> […] Þórr kallaði:
> "Hverr er sá sveinn sveina,
> er stendr fyr sundit handan?"
>
> Hann svaraði:
> "Hverr er sá karl karla,
> er kallar um váginn?"[1] (sts 1–2)
>
> Þórr called: 'Who is that boy of boys who stands on the other side of the strait?' He answered: 'Who is that peasant of peasants who calls over the bay?'

Finnur Jónsson (1920, I.151) describes Hárbarðr's reply here as a 'gækkende ekko' [mocking echo], choosing a vocabulary of rebounding sound which draws attention to the spatial gulf separating the two interlocutors: the *sund* [strait] or *vágr* [bay] invoked in these lines.

For all that this turn of phrase is apt given the poem's imagined geography, the concept of 'ekko' has relevance across all those eddic poems that are cast wholly or mainly in dialogue form, which number at least ten according to Terry Gunnell's classification (1994, 191–2). In these texts, words, phrases and syntactic structures are often repeated, in part or wholesale, and

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[1] All quotations from Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason's edition (2014), with punctuation occasionally modified; all translations my own, after consultation of Larrington's translation (2014) and Orchard's (2011). Hárbarðr is named as an alias of Óðinn in *Grímnismál* (st. 49.10).

reframed across different speakers' utterances. From one perspective, this is not a phenomenon specific to the dialogue poems: across the eddic corpus as a whole, from single-voiced poems to multi-speaker dialogues, devices of repetition and parallelism are present in a 'restrained' but recurrent way, manifesting in refrains as well as shorter anaphoric or epistrophic motifs (Meletinsky 1998, 17).[2] Such repeated structures and motifs can nonetheless be seen to form a distinct phenomenon when employed within a context of two or more speakers; in such situations, the continuity of the reused language is interrupted by clear disjunctions of voice, and interpersonally significant applications for repetition are made available, including affirmatory, persuasive, competitive or subversive quotation of others.

Previously, scholars have tended to contextualise the echo-replies of *Hárbarðsljóð* with reference to the wider tradition of organised competitive speech known as flyting, defined by Antje G. Frotscher as 'an antagonistic, person-oriented, in some way formalized verbal contest' (2003, 4). *Hárbarðsljóð* has been categorised as a mixture of the Old Norse-Icelandic flyting genres of *senna*, consisting of sequenced provocations, and *mannjafnaðr* [man-equalling], sequenced boasts.[3] In her account of the poem, Carol J. Clover (1979, 127, 136) quotes Finnur Jónsson on the opening 'gækkende ekko' and goes on to reflect that flyting in general operates according to a metaphorical understanding of 'language as ammunition', such that verbal repetition is comparable to 'firing back the enemy's own spear or arrow'.[4] Marcel Bax and Tineke Padmos similarly identify *Hárbarðsljóð*'s 'strategies of mirroring and surpassing' as 'normal procedures in flyting matches' (1983, 153). Indeed, Earl R. Anderson, with reference to *The Battle of Maldon*, observes that 'ironic verbal echoes are a conventional feature of heroic flyting' (1970, 199) and builds on Edward B. Irving Jr.'s declaration that in such battles, words 'are deftly caught, ironically accepted, and sent back in a notable display of heroic wit' (1961, 460).

The repetitious nature of medieval flyting itself has occasionally been contextualised amid wider landscapes of language use. Parallels have sometimes usefully been drawn between the repetitive style of eddic flytings and eddic wisdom contests; in both, 'speakers must not only answer to the substance' of the question or insult, but 'also prove their rhetorical skill by mirroring and surpassing the language and form of the initial volley'.[5] Reaching beyond medieval contexts altogether, the repetitious dialogue of medieval flyting has also been compared to what is sometimes seen a modern reflex of the same practice of verbal duelling: 'sounding' among groups of inner-city African-American teenagers in the 1960s and 70s,

[2] Meletinsky offers a taxonomy of eddic repetitions, and parallelisms at 21–57; see also Meletinsky (1986, 28–31). On refrains, see Schorn (2016b, 281–2). Forms of verbal parallelism, more broadly conceived, have long attracted attention as characteristic of poetic traditions with links to orality and performance; summarising previous scholarship, see Frog (2017, 583), arguing for a concept of parallelism which extends beyond the verbal.
[3] See Swenson (1991, especially 25–6; Clover (1979, 97–8); most exhaustively, Bax and Padmos (1983, 149–74).
[4] Clover sees this as a skill mastered distinctively by Hárbarðr. Bax and Padmos disagree that Hárbarðr is obviously superior to Þórr as an opponent (1983); Arnold (2014) considers the merits of both arguments and ultimately supports Clover on this point. Parks (1986; 1990) develops a more wide-ranging account of flyting as parallel to physical fighting.
[5] Schorn (2016b, 280; see further 2016a, 240–1). See also Davidson (1983) on continuity between insult and riddle contests. Between 'exchange of threats' and 'tests of knowledge' (including *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Alvíssmál*), Davidson (1983, 32) situates 'answers wrung by a questioner from some reluctant expert', citing *Fáfnismál* and *Hyndluljóð* among other poems. Meletinsky (1998, 24–5) has observed a tendency for repetition to occur in question and answer contexts.

defined as ‘the game of exchanging ritualised insults’ and influentially analysed by William Labov (1972, 306).[6] Comparisons across these contexts are often illuminating, including with regard to the shared importance of ‘speech-linking’ in medieval flyting and in modern insult games (Parks 1990, 114–5). Labov discusses how an initial sound ‘opens a *field*’ and subsequent replies ‘must build upon the specific model offered’, whether through adopting ‘the substance’ (the attribute discussed) or ‘the same surface form’—optimally successful sounds will then bring about ‘striking semantic shifts with minimal changes of form’ (1972, 344–7, 349). Such principles have much in common with the kind of ‘mirroring and surpassing’ critics have observed in *Hárbarðsljóð* (Bax and Padmos 1983, 153; Schorn 2016b, 280), and modern traditions of stylised competitive speech thus offer a helpful context for understanding certain features of *Hárbarðsljóð* and other eddic flytings.

At the same time, it has also been noted that if medieval flyting and modern sounding can be spoken of as part of the same history, ‘it is at best discontinuous and disjunctive’—Leslie K. Arnovick argues for an intimate connection between ‘orality’ and ‘the agonistic’, to the extent that ‘[b]oth flyting and sounding prove independent reflexes of something that may well be a linguistic universal’ (2000, 38). Arnovick mentions ‘verbal echoes (e.g. “mirroring” and “surpassing”)’ as distinctive of flyting, but is more generally concerned with the history of the ‘English agonistic insult’ (2000, 30, 38). Her concept of the ‘agonistic’ is here inherited from Walter Ong, who sees it as kind of ‘adversativeness’ present across human societies in diverse forms, including as play or contest (1981).[7]

No claim for universal agonistic tendencies is made by the present paper, but I intend here to widen the lens with which we view the ‘verbal echoes’ of *Hárbarðsljóð*, as well as those of another eddic flyting, *Lokasenna*, in a manner that to some degree complements Arnovick’s project. A great number of linguistic studies in recent years have tackled the phenomenon of cross-speaker echo in a variety of speech contexts. Eddic poems are, of course, highly wrought literary creations, metrically and formally complex, and not spoken extemporaneously as conversational discourse. Nonetheless, the field of speech pragmatics has much to offer in its demonstration of the sheer versatility of cross-speaker echo as a feature of dialogue, and the wide range of effects it can have. Certainly, verbal echoes can be understood as especially distinctive of the stylised antagonistic exchanges of flyting matches, but their potential implications extend beyond antagonism, and beyond even agonism, into a complex range of adversative, collaborative and cooperative stances.

Verbal mirroring in flyting can, in particular, be understood as a conspicuously formalised version of a much more ubiquitous linguistic phenomenon, one which has been found to underlie practices of speech exchange far more widely, including in casual and conversational contexts. This is what John W. Du Bois (2014) calls ‘dialogic syntax’ and it is notably a collaborative enterprise between speakers. Dialogic syntax comprises ‘the linguistic, cognitive, and interactional processes involved when speakers selectively reproduce aspects of prior utterances, and when recipients recognize the resulting parallelisms and draw inferences

[6] Comparison (including contrast) with sounding practices are encouraged by Harris (1979, 69–71); Bax and Padmos (1983, 153, 165–6); Parks (1986, 293, 296), and (1990, at 42–3, 111–2, 114, etc).

[7] Parks refers to Ong while wondering if ‘the insistent need […] to prove self-worth and manhood’ is ‘perhaps biologically determined’ (1986, 303, see also 294). On Ong’s ‘noobiology’ contrasted with the cultural and psychological approach to male aggression set out by Kramer (1997) see Giles (2006, 94–5).

from them' (Du Bois 2014, 366). 'Diagraph' is his proposed term for counterpart structures which are shared across utterances, extending beyond the unit of the sentence, and demonstrating the connected nature of conversational discourse. The following example of a diagraph, organised into columns to highlight parallelisms, is selected by Du Bois; this exchange follows a critical remark that the first speaker, Joanne, has just made about her mother:

JOANNE;	it	's	kind of	like	^you	Ken	.
KEN;	that	's	not at ^all	like	me	Joanne	.[8]

Rather than choosing from any one of a number of other options for formulating his reply (such as simply 'No', for instance, or 'I disagree'), Ken produces a response which selectively reproduces features of Joanne's utterance. As identified by Du Bois, these include pronouns ('it': 'that', 'you': 'me'), proper names, adverbial modifiers ('kind of': 'not at all'), and morphologically identical units ('like': 'like', ''s': ''s'), as well as co-reference ('you' and 'me' referring to Ken, 'it' and 'that' to the quality associated with Joanne's mother), and the copular predicative construction (*X is Y*) at the phrasal level. Despite all these points of consistency, Ken makes a diametrically opposed claim. Structural parallelism here enables subversion, and this is particularly clear in Joanne and Ken's respective uses of the vocative: Joanne's use of Ken's name is necessary to specify her addressee (the conversation included a third participant), but Ken's use of Joanne's name serves no such clarifying function: 'vocative *Joanne* takes cover as tit for tat, while actually dripping with irony' (Du Bois 2014, 363). In such ways, parallelism can shape utterances in which 'the second speaker's meaning is parallel, opposed, or even orthogonal to that of the first' (2014, 360), explored at length by Du Bois in his work on 'stance-taking' in conversation (2007).

Paralleled structures for speech thus enable and support a spectrum of many possible implied stances. The theory of dialogic syntax offers a way to approach the patterned dialogues of the Poetic Edda in a manner which both encompasses and exceeds the kind of speech-linking previously understood to characterise flyting. As will be seen, competitive or confrontational frameworks for speech do not preclude the implication of other kinds of stance: parallel, askance, or 'orthogonal'. Appeals to shared knowledge, the seeking of information, and attempts to persuade or coerce may all be implied through verbal echoes within the broadly antagonistic framework of eddic flyting.

Other recent research into cross-speaker repetitions in conversational contexts has light to shine on the possible workings of echo in *Hárbarðsljóð* and other eddic dialogues. Some researchers have focused specifically on the effects of echo-answers and echo-questions. In a study spanning fourteen languages, Enfield et al. have recently observed that echoing (or 'repetition-type') answers, in response to polar (yes-no) questions, may 'be better suited to contexts in which the answerer aims not only to confirm the proposition that has just been put on the table by the questioner, but to claim a degree of thematic agency, or independent interest over that proposition'; this could be because the domain of the proposition falls within the

[8] Modified from Du Bois (2014, 362 [numbering omitted]). Frog (2017, 585) discusses Du Bois' theory, and this example, as part of his theory of multimedial parallelism in ritual performance.

second speaker's 'special realm of knowledge' (2019, 286, 292; after Heritage and Raymond 2005, 2012). Repeating parts of the question may thus enable Person B to '[push] back against the implicit claim by the questioner to primary interest in thematizing this proposition' (Enfield 2019, 286).

This complements previous research into the opposite dynamic, 'echo questions', when a questioner repeats all or part of their interlocutor's previous utterance. Scholars have focused on the ambivalence of the device, and the potential challenges it poses: echo questions 'are not used only for confirmation of the words or sounds of an utterance, but may also draw attention to the absurdity of an underlying proposition' (Channon, Foulkes and Walker 2018, 158, after Blakemore 1994). This phenomenon has serious implications for contexts such as Language Analysis for the Determination of Origin (LADO) interviews with asylum seekers, as 'echoes may also be treated as repair indicators indicating a problem with the content of prior talk' (Channon, Foulkes and Walker 2018, 162). Highly subtle inferences can therefore be drawn from verbal echoes in conversational contexts. Although the implying of 'a problem' and the need for 'repair' can be understood as broadly antagonistic, reducing it to such would obscure a great deal of nuance. The same would be true of the suggestion of a 'special realm' of knowledge—such a claim may signal antagonism and a kind of competitive impulse, but that is not all it does. As will be seen, expanding the vocabulary with which we describe the echoes of *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna* has the potential to elevate scholarly discussion away from the 'mirror and surpass' device understood as pure verbal competition and/ or the assertion of a hostile stance, and towards appreciation of potentially more complex dynamics of speech exchange captured in these texts.

Given that these poems may have been designed for embodied performance, the complex implicational opportunities presented by devices of echo could conceivably have been taken up by oral performers. Arguments for the dramatic nature of the Poetic Edda have most influentially been advanced by Bertha Phillpotts (1920) and Terry Gunnell (1994). Other scholars perceive the poems as 'literary fictions of a human poetic voice', such that 'a human audience for these fictions completed the locutionary circle' (Clunies Ross 2016, 20).[9] In either scenario, the poems' use of echo between speakers creates opportunities for a range of intonational possibilities, whether actualised or imagined. As understood by Du Bois, prosody plays a crucial role in the development of connected conversational discourse. Stress and intonation provide a rich source of parallels and contrasts between utterances and between the implied stances of speakers; in the Joanne/ Ken example above, both utterances consist of a single intonation unit, and this basic similarity is accompanied by both other prosodic affinities (such as in the use of final intonation) and differences (such as the placement of the primary accent, marked with ^) (2014, 362).[10] Du Bois's diagraphs are intended to capture 'an index of

[9] Clunies Ross stresses that no contemporary evidence survives to support the hypotheses of Phillpotts and Gunnell. See also Harris (2016, 37), on ideas of performance in the Poetic Edda '[b]eyond the literal level'. Judy Quinn has described how 'the self-effacing poet assumes the role of a hidden microphone, relaying the conversations most interesting to hear because they have occurred in places that are accessible only through a feat of imagination' (quoted in Schorn 2016b, 285); on modes of direct speech and dialogue in the Poetic Edda see further Schorn (2016b, 284–6). Summarising recent work treating eddic poetry as more literally performed texts see Gunnell (2016).

[10] On the related phenomenon of self-repetition in speech, in relation to prosody, see Curl, Local and Walker (2006).

the voices heard, in all their prosodic particularity' (2014, 396). When speakers replicate parts of each other's utterances, these repeated features create space for significant discrepancies not only of lexis and syntax, but of potential voice quality and tone.

How precisely these opportunities for voicing might have unfolded in Old Norse-speaking contemporary contexts is up for debate, though largely irrecoverable. Introducing a survey of twenty languages, Daniel Hirst and Albert Di Cristo (1998b, 6) identify the phenomenon of intonation as pluriparametric, involving crucially, on a physical level, 'fundamental frequency, intensity, duration, and spectral characteristics', corresponding loosely to the auditory experience of 'pitch, loudness, length and timbre'; among these, fundamental frequency, or the perception of pitch, is generally acknowledged to be the primary parameter.[11] Rhythm, or 'aspects of temporal organisation', can then be understood as reflected in the metrics of intensity, duration, and spectral characteristics (Hirst and Di Cristo 1998b, 4, after Crystal, 1969). Old Norse is sometimes posited to have been a pitch accent (or tonal accent) language, in the manner of modern Norwegian or Swedish; in such languages, the use of pitch as a cue for emphasis or expressivity on the level of the phrase or sentence can interact with word stress in complex ways.[12] Previous questions regarding the role of pitch in early recitations of Old Norse poetry have been raised with reference to skaldic texts, especially as scholars have wondered how the poetry's characteristic parenthetic clauses might have been 'set off from the rest of the stanza' to aid the comprehension of listeners (Gade 1995, 189). Hollander suggests, rather than through the use of a 'different pitch', the parenthetic constructions could have been distinguished by 'a pause before and after' (1965, 636). No consensus exists in this area, and it seems likely that no consensus will be reached on how precisely the dialogue of eddic poetry was voiced, and what kind of intonation might have helped to pick out key parallels and divergences. I wish only to suggest here that the paralleled dialogic constructions of the written texts may have evoked possible variances of intonation, which could have been actualised in performance (or in the 'literary fiction' of an embodied voice) to signal different kinds of stance.

Hárbarðsljóð will here be considered alongside *Lokasenna*: another mythological eddic dialogue strongly combative in tone, with which *Hárbarðsljóð* is often compared.[13] *Lokasenna* differs from *Hárbarðsljóð* in several key regards, most strikingly in its number of speakers: while *Hárbarðsljóð* constitutes a two-person flyting, *Lokasenna* consists of a series of flyting-like exchanges between Loki and sixteen other speakers. Nonetheless, both share formal arrangements typical more generally of eddic dialogue. *Hárbarðsljóð* is highly metrically various but joins *Lokasenna* in making use of *ljóðaháttr* ('song metre'), common in the Poetic Edda when non-narrative direct speech is involved (Phillpotts 1920, 26; Poole 2005, 268–9;

[11] Cruttenden (1997, 2, 7) identifies the three primary prosodic features as 'pitch, length and loudness', and defines 'intonation' as involving 'the occurrence of recurring pitch patterns'. Crystal (1969, 5–6) similarly identifies prosody with the psychological attributes of 'pitch, loudness and duration', which have a primary relationship with 'fundamental frequency, amplitude, and time', then defines intonation as a 'conflation of different prosodic systems of pitch contrasts', and stress as 'variations in the loudness parameter'. See further Soper (2021).

[12] Raschellà (2007, 356) has recently concluded that 'the presence of distinctive tonal accents in medieval Icelandic appears theoretically possible and tenable but not safely demonstrable'. See also, e.g., Bruce and Hermans (1999, 605–6). For an account of focalising emphasis in Swedish, see Gårding (1998, 122–3).

[13] Both are attested the Codex Regius, Gml.kgl.saml.2365 4to, with *Hárbarðsljóð* sts 19.7– 60 also preserved in AM 748 I 4to. For a summary of scholarship on the organisation of the mythological poems of the Codex Regius and AM 748 I 4to, see Lindow (2016, 120–5, 125–8).

Gunnell 2016, 97–8; Schorn 2016b, 279) and largely employed in 'mythological and sententious' poems (Fulk 2016, 262). In the Codex Regius and AM 748 (in *Hárbarðsljóð*'s case) these two poems are also among those marked with marginal notation identifying different speakers (Gunnell 1994, 208–11), suggesting a possible connection with dramatic performance. As will be seen, while the conversations in *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna* are largely antagonistic in nature, echoing responses are often used to articulate something more 'orthogonal' than might be expected, with implications for both flyting and other verbal battles more widely. In their use of such echoes, *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna* may ultimately be understood as more continuous with other modes of eddic speech exchange than is often supposed.[14]

Additionally, each poem presents its abundance of interpersonal verbal echoes within a different set of 'reported circumstances', a dramatic quality noted by Ursula Dronke (1997, 395). Verbal exchanges in *Hárbarðsljóð* take place across a *sund*, and in *Lokasenna* during a *sumbl* ('feast, gathering'). The poets of these texts are notably interested in referencing these physical situations, including the way sound resonates within each; ultimately, they create a framework around their cross-speaker echo which draws attention to the movement of sound across space. Scholarly language used to describe competitive speech and dialogic syntax has already been found to invoke physical space in subtly metaphorical ways. Labov describes how an initial utterance 'opens a *field*' in sounding, while Du Bois argues that 'the diagraph frames syntactic affordances for the discovery of common ground between interlocutors' (Labov 1972, 344–7l, 349; Du Bois 2014, 397). As will be seen, the poets of *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna* are both alive to the ways in which attitudinal 'stance' feeds into and draws upon physical 'stance', in the sense of a 'standing-place, station, position' (*OED*, s.v. *stance*, n^2, 1.a).

Sounding out the *sund* in *Hárbarðsljóð*

Highly metrically irregular, this text has long been something of a 'puzzle' to critics (Arnold 2014; see also Swenson 1991, 25–6). Recent critical attention has focused almost exclusively on the dialogue's identity as a flyting, but the details of how exactly the text participates in this genre have been the cause of considerable disagreement. Clover (1979, 135) sees it as a comic genre parody, loaded with a 'superabundance of flyting clichés' and committed to subverting generic conventions, particularly through the interventions of Hárbarðr as he boasts about unconventional topics and runs circles around Þórr's 'intellectual inadequacy'.[15] Bax and Padmos (1983, 18) have disagreed that the poem is parodic, seeing it instead as centring on 'two competent language users' co-producing a relatively sophisticated piece of antagonistic dialogue. Arnold (2014, 7) argues that a 'critical stalemate' has been produced by these two accounts, and proposes a new interpretation which incorporates much of Clover's sense of the

[14] See note 5 above. For a complementary study of the functioning of echoing replies in *Skírnismál*, see a forthcoming paper from the present author (2021). Challenging the boundaries of the *sennur* in the Codex Regius, Schorn (2016a, 241) has observed that the 'basic elements that link [*Hárbarðsljóð*] to the other *sennur* […] also have parallels among the exchanges in the *mál* poems', such as the exchange of names, attested also in *Vafþrúðnismál* (sts 7–8), *Baldrsdraumar* (sts 5–6), and the opening of *Fáfnismál* (sts 1–4).

[15] It could be the case that Hárbarðr prevails rhetorically in this regard, but given the 'murky, sexually charged, and ethically questionable' nature of the claims Hárbarðr makes for himself in the poem, on a deeper level 'Þórr emerges the winner' (Lindow 2016, 123).

poem's comic tone, supplements this with Bax and Padmos's sustained distinction between the use of *senna* and *mannjafnaðr*, and notes that ritual verbal battles may typically possess a kind of comedy. Arnold then reunites these more recent forays into *Hárbarðsljóð* scholarship with the previous centre of scholarly discussion around the poem: the socio-politically charged identities of Þórr and Óðinn. Dating the poem late, after the conversion period, and possibly from Norway, Arnold contends that it engages with the relative status of Þórr and Óðinn worship in the late Viking Age: the poem's references to social rank (especially in st. 24), and its 'apparent preference for the intellectually sophisticated Óðinn', could then be understood as reacting to the persistent popularity of Þórr worship amid certain groups in western Scandinavia in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, problematic from the perspective of newly Christian aristocrats and monarchs, many of whom either previously worshipped Óðinn, or were descended from those who did (2014, 18). Elsewhere in eddic mythology, Þórr and Óðinn appear as complementary figures, happy to collaborate as part of wider strategies: *Hárbarðsljóð* can be therefore found to dramatize, at points, 'the breakdown of their relationship' (Arnold 2014, 22).

This theme of interpersonal and symbolic distance between Þórr and Óðinn can be newly appreciated as accentuated and underpinned by inter-speaker repetition and parallelism. We have already seen an example of these devices serving such a function in the opening lines of the poem, as Hárbarðr replicates Þórr's syntax, but categorises him as a 'karl karla' [peasant of peasants]. Repeated syntax and lexis is here used to measure out social difference. Moments of echoed speech occur elsewhere in *Hárbarðsljóð* in conjunction with sensitive issues of identity. These sometimes involve issues of rank, and sometimes make oblique reference to shared personal history and the (thwarted) possibility of collaboration. The latter tensions surface, for instance, in the central *mannjafnaðr* section of the poem, following a salacious description by Hárbarðr of his womanising exploits, typical of his own particular mode of self-aggrandisement:[16]

> Hárbarðr kvað:
> "Liðs þíns væra ek þá þurfi, Þórr,
> at ek helda þeiri inni línhvítu mey."
>
> Þórr kvað:
> "Ek mynda þér þá þat veita,
> ef ek viðr of kœmisk."
>
> Hárbarðr kvað:
> "Ek mynda þér þá trúa,
> nema þú mik í tryggð véltir." (sts 32–34)
>
> Hárbarðr said: 'Your help I'd have needed then, Þórr, to hold the linen-white girl.' Þórr said: 'I'd have helped you with that, if I could have.' Hárbarðr said: 'I'd have trusted you then, had you not betrayed my trust.'

[16] Bax and Padmos (1983, 151) divide the poem into sts 1–14 (*senna*), sts 15–46 (*mannjafnaðr*) and sts 47–60 ('an aftermath'). See also Arnold (2014, 7).

In his second utterance here, Hárbarðr closely adopts Þórr's syntax ('Ek mynda þér þá […]'), which itself reproduces the conditional mood of Hárbarðr's first statement. Clover (1979, 135) describes these lines starkly as 'interstitial verbal byplay'. Bax and Padmos (1983, 163) see the exchange as continuing to follow flyting conventions in an unremarkable way: Hárbarðr 'jestingly […] admits that the help of Þórr would have been useful then'; Þórr, 'trying to top his opponent, continues the joke by stating a precondition of his helpfulness (being present at the moment)', thus providing a 'pseudo-excuse'; Hárbarðr then reacts to this 'clever stroke' with a '*senna*-like insult'. Arnold acknowledges, however that it is difficult to work out what precisely is being communicated here, and contemplates whether Óðinn's mask is slipping slightly, such that the audience witnesses a 'moment of father-son intimacy and verbal negotiation', quickly punctured by an 'unexplained cause for recrimination' (2014, 14). Given that the tone initially seems jocular, Arnold suggests that, if a framework from pragmatics were to be utilised to interpret these lines, H. P. Grice's Co-operative Principle would be more appropriate than that of a Face Threatening Act (Arnold 2014, 14; Grice 1975).

These lines demonstrate the capacity of repetitious dialogic syntax to frame other kinds of utterance, in addition to and alongside competitive speech acts, which are not straightforwardly hostile, competitive or intimidatory. The third stanza (st. 34) has layers beyond simple antagonism. Although Hárbarðr's echo does not turn a full or partial echo into a question, thus differing from the echo responses described by Channon, Foulkes and Walker (2018), his utterance can nonetheless be understood as a different kind of 'repair indicator', in that it signals a latent absurdity underlying Þórr's offer of hypothetical help: Þórr cannot be relied upon and this has become clear, Óðinn asserts, alluding to an unspecified betrayal. Similarly, the ability of echo to signal 'a degree of thematic agency, or independent interest over [a] proposition' in answers to polar questions (as described by Enfield et al., 2019, 292) may also be of relevance here. Óðinn uses close lexical and syntactic parallelism to centre his experience of Þórr's help, or lack of it, asserting an independent interest over the idea, born of bitter experience. It has been observed that traditions of verbal duelling often rely on fictitious claims (Parks 1990, 114), a convention observable in *Hárbarðsljóð* (Bax and Padmos 1983, 154–55, on sts 4–5 particularly), but this exchange shows the poem's echoing replies to also be capable of shading into hypothetical, wished-for or conditional claims, imagining different possible pasts and futures. A more wide-ranging concept of verbal echo as a device that can comfortably facilitate different kinds of stance is therefore helpful here. In a statement from which inferences of reprimand, disappointment, anger and melancholy could all be drawn, Óðinn draws this moment of possible intimacy to a close with a re-assertion of the interpersonal distance between himself and Þórr.

Compared with Þórr, Hárbarðr has often been credited as the more skilful appropriator of his opponent's speech, particularly when he seemingly ironically borrows the formula which Þórr uses to introduce his martial exploits ('Ek var austr', sts 23.1, 29.1) in order to introduce an account of sexual exploits (st. 30.1) (Clover 1979, 137).[17] Nonetheless, Þórr does also take

[17] Bax and Padmos (1983, 150–70) have argued that Clover overstates Hárbarðr's innovation and that Þórr exploits the same techniques as his opponent. Clover (1979, 99) does concede '[s]yntactic symmetry and verbal repetitions' are typical of flyting, available to all participants.'

up echo as a mode of retort, as when the pair discuss where Hárbarðr got his ‘hnœfiligu orð’ (st. 43.20) [taunting words]:

> Hárbarðr kvað:
>
> “Nam ek at mǫnnom þeim inum aldrœnum,
> er búa í heimis skógum.”
>
> Þórr kvað:
>
> “Þó gefr þú gott nafn dysjum,
> er þú kallar þat heimis skóga.’ (sts 44–45)
>
> Hárbarðr said: ‘I got them from those ancient men, who live in the woods of home.’ Þórr said: ‘You give a good name to burial-mounds, when you call them the woods of home.’

Hárbarðr’s reference to ‘the woods at home’ is fairly obscure: Orchard (2011, 291) believes it must have been a kenning for burial-mounds, given that Óðinn is known to gain knowledge from the dead; Larrington (2014, 273) also concludes the ‘ancient men’ are presumably the dead. The reference to ‘home’ may nonetheless be understood as another indication of potential intimacy and familiarity, again quickly punctured. This time, it is Þórr who scathingly reasserts the interpersonal distance, degrading the source of Hárbarðr’s words and simultaneously asserting his own understanding of the status and significance of that source.

Elsewhere, replicated features of speech enable other ambiguous reflections on the mysterious status of the pair’s relationship and their current disagreement. This is especially noticeable in the early stages of the poem when Þórr calls attention to the uncertain nature of the ‘dispute’ itself:

> Ferjukarlinn kvað:
>
> “Hárbarðr ek heiti,
> hylk um nafn sjaldan.”
>
> Þórr kvað:
>
> “Hvat skaltu of nafn hylja,
> nema þú sakar eigir?” (sts 10–11)
>
> The ferryman said: ‘Hárbarðr I’m called, I seldom hide my name.’ Þórr said: ‘Why should you hide your name, unless you have some disputes?’

This question can be interpreted as an aggressive piece of conjecture, assuming the ferryman’s quarrelsome intentions, or (more in keeping with what scholars such as Clover have interpreted as Þórr’s bewildered attitude) it can be taken at face value, as a genuine question. Hárbarðr responds with another mirroring reply, which, like Þórr’s, adopts the second clause of the preceding statement: ‘En þótt ek sakar eiga […]’ (st. 12.l) [Whether or not I have a dispute[...]]. Hárbarðr then announces he would nonetheless defend himself from people like Þórr (st. 12):

a pejorative stance is clearer at this stage. Later, however, Þórr's initial comment about the *sǫk* ('dispute') recurs in another less straightforwardly abusive context. This echo is triggered as Þórr threatens Hárbarðr for mentioning Skrýmir's glove (st. 26), which in turn is payback for Þórr's suggesting that Hárbarðr's power has its limits (st 25):

> Þórr kvað:
>
> "Hárbarðr inn ragi!
> ek mynda þik í hel drepa,
> ef ek mætta seilask um sund."
>
> Hárbarðr kvað:
>
> "Hvat skyldir þú um sund seilask,
> er sakir ro alls øngar?' (sts 27–28.2)
>
> 'Hárbarðr, you deviant! I'd beat you into Hel, if I could reach across the strait.' Hárbarðr said: 'Why should you reach across the strait, since there are no disputes at all?'

On one level, Hárbarðr wrong-foots Þórr with this playful reply, denying the by now evident disagreement. He creates another hinge-like structure by folding elements of the last part of Þórr's utterance into the beginning of his own, while calling back to Þórr's questioning syntax from 17 stanzas earlier. He thereby asserts his verbal skill. However, although irony and competitive adroitness are both clear, the implications of Hárbarðr's utterance do not necessarily end here. The strange status of the disagreement itself is here highlighted, obliquely, just as when Hárbarðr asserts Þórr's prior betrayal of his trust. The echo implicitly poses a set of questions, with implications reaching far beyond the assertion of verbal skill.

The real causes of the dispute between the two gods may have been partially unclear even to some contemporary audiences. As Arnold observes, 'a general view in Eddic mythology is that Óðinn and Þórr are complementary figures, both doing in their own way what best serves the gods' and mankind's interests'; the poet of *Hárbarðsljóð* may be drawing on contemporary religio-historical circumstances to re-interpret the contrasting identities of the two gods and craft 'a joke about old traditions' (2014, 22). Hárbarðr's game of toying with the idea of the dispute, itself then, may indirectly reference its strange ontology—possibly, to some degree, the creation of this poet. As Hárbarðr recycles Þórr's syntax and lexis, he may also indicate doubt around the logic of Þórr's anger and the status of the quarrel. Clarification is never reached, partly because of the circular and repetitious nature of this dialogue: discussion is limited to the repetition of forms of *sǫk*. As Louise Sundararajan remarks with reference to 'reflective listening' in modern therapeutic contexts, close repetition can constitute a kind of 'productive tautology' in that it 'points to' what has not been said, 'in other words, silence' (1995, 262).[18] As when Hárbarðr alludes to his loss of trust in Þórr, close verbal parallelism

[18] In this Sundararajan builds on Sallis's concept of hearing 'echo' as a phenomenon by which 'one then experiences silence, not as the mere opposite of speech or sound but as the open space of the voice' (1990, 5).

here conceals as much as it reveals; new information is limited, merely glimpsed between repeated words and structures.

Meanwhile, pervading the poem, the image of the dividing *sund* continues to complement the other kinds of distance which are building up between Óðinn and Þórr, including between the sets of characteristics that each identifies in the other. Þórr challenges Hárbarðr on the concealment of his name, characteristic of the highly verbally adept Óðinn (st. 11; see also st. 47), while Þórr's physical ability is referenced in Óðinn's allegation of strength without courage (st. 26) and subsequent playful references to Þórr's inability to reach across the strait (sts 27–8). In spatial terms, Þórr is persistently at a disadvantage, left on the shore, while Hárbarðr is able, if not willing, to move across the strait. This provides a physical index to Hárbarðr's claims that Þórr is intellectually, temperamentally, economically and socially limited (sts 4, 6, 8, 24, 26).

Insofar as the modern practice of sounding, as observed by Labov, has been found analogous to the verbal duelling of *Hárbarðsljóð*, it is fitting that the word *sounding* has been associated since the early twentieth century with the investigation of space and depth through the use of sound waves, 'by means of echo' (*OED*, s.v. *sounding*, n^2, 1.a). This poem's motif of incrementally altered language, through which personal and social proximity is measured, works according to a similar principle of exploratory noise-making used to establish distance. Within this context, the frequency of *Hárbarðsljóð*'s references to the *sund*, the poem's preferred term for the inlet, are of note (sts 1.2, 3.1, 8.10, 13.7, 27.3, 28.1, 54.1). Clover (1979, 125) generalises the 'sundering flood' motif away from specificity to this poem, describing it as 'obviously stereotypical', present also in the three Helgi poems, *Ketils saga hængs* (chs 4 and 5), *The Battle of Maldon*, Âventiure 25 of the *Nibelungenlied*, and many other texts. However, when viewed alongside these analogues, the *sund* of *Hárbarðsljóð* is unusual in that it is not named or geographically localised, encouraging an interpretation as 'stereotypical', or even symbolic and abstract. The noun *sund* has a relatively wide semantic range, capable of signalling 'that which sunders, a sound, strait, narrow passage' (Cleasby-Vigfusson 1957, s.v. *sund*, n), 'a small space, interval' (Zoega 1910, s.v. *sund*, n.) as well as more generally 'distance'.[19] It is linked with the verb *sundra*, cognate with Modern English 'sunder' (as used by Clover in 'sundering flood') and adverb *sundr*, cognate with 'asunder' (*OED*, s.v. *sunder*, v.; *sunder*, adj. and adv; *asunder*, adv.). This emphasis on spatial distance, more loosely conceived, is initially signposted by the opening addresses, which play with the concept of an intervening space creating estranging echo (sts 1–2).[20] The spatial conceit thus complements the continued use of inter-speaker echo in the poem, as Hárbarðr and Þórr negotiate themes of their differing rank and status, as well as their fractured interpersonal relationship, through adapting their interlocutor's utterances. The image of the flood would of course be highly adaptable to staged performance, requiring only a piece of cloth or painted surface, of the kind used in medieval English drama (see, e.g., Meredith and Tailby, 1983, 123), but even without this visual representation, the idea of the *sund* offers a distinctive framework for the verbal

[19] *The Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* (*ONP*), s.v. *sund*, n., 5, provides the Danish gloss 'afstand' [distance] for a usage in *Grettis saga*.

[20] This acoustic phenomenon can be found celebrated in Modern Icelandic place-names, such as Hljóðaklettar ('Echo Cliffs', Jökulsárgljúfur), and Songhellir ('Singing Cave', Snaefellsnes). The cliff face at Þingvellir famously amplifies sound: see Pulsiano and Wolf (1993, 10).

performances of *Hárbarðsljóð*, creating a plausible physical arena for the sonic event of echo. Within the dialogue, echo is then used to draw attention to thwarted possibilities for connection, and, in various ways, assert distance.

Similitude and *sumbl* in *Lokasenna*

Largely structured according to *senna* principles (as its title in the Codex Regius reflects: this is the only eddic poem identified as a *senna*), the dialogue of *Lokasenna* has much in common with that of *Hárbarðsljóð*, and indeed at times seems to draw on it (sts 59.4–6, 60.6; see McKinnell, 2014, 191–4). However, as has been acknowledged by others, the stakes are different in this poem (Arnold 2014, 19; Sørensen 1988). The events referred to in *Lokasenna* have substantial consequences for the gods. The poem is situated late in the mythological timeline, closer towards Ragnarök, and after the death of Baldr. John McKinnell (2014, 176) has argued that Loki's motivation in *Lokasenna* is 'the desire to hurry Fate along by provoking a final breach between himself and the gods', which 'must happen before the gods bind him, and that must take place before Ragnarök can follow'. Loki's punishment, after he is expelled from the feast, is narrated in prose at the end of the poem in the Codex Regius.[21] Within the poem itself, speakers allude to Baldr's death (sts 27–9) and Ragnarök (most overtly in sts 39, 41, 42, 58; see McKinnell 2014, 175), while Skaði tells Loki of his future punishment, when he will be bound on a rock by his son's guts (st. 49).[22] At the same time, the poem seems to function as a 'catalogue' of sorts (Schorn 2016a, 249), 'a kind of dictionary of mythology, a compilation of a list of the gods and the major myths associated with each one', including a great deal of behaviour which would have been understood as shameful (Anderson 1981, 143). *Lokasenna* furthermore shows a consistent preoccupation with truth-value, as each accusation makes some claim to accuracy (Gurevich 1976, 131; McKinnell 2014, 172–5). Reflecting both the gravity and veracity of the events the poem refers to, as well as the ambitious breadth of the poet's coverage, the verbal discord between the gods works differently than in *Hárbarðsljóð.*

Although much of *Lokasenna*'s thematic concerns are conceivable, like *Hárbarðsljóð*'s, in terms of the negotiation of interpersonal distance, the dialogue is preoccupied to a far greater degree with dynamics of uncomfortable affiliation and regrettable involvement. Loki is of course, the prime mover here in reminding the gods of their previous regrettable entanglements—in many ways, he embodies them. He is 'an evil [the gods] have nurtured', such that 'they are tainted by his deeds'; they can punish him, but as 'the personification of their own failings, he drags the gods down with him' (Anderson 1981, 151). Near the beginning of the poem, Loki's opening remark to Óðinn announces his interest in enmeshed identity: 'Mantu þat, Óðinn, / er vit í árdaga/ blendum blóði saman?' (st. 9.1–3) [Do you remember Óðinn, in days long ago, when we two mingled our blood together?]. As Zoe Borovsky has noted, the verb *blanda* ('*to mix together*, of fellowship or association, but partic[ularly] used of carnal intercourse') and adjective *blandinn* ('mixed, mingled, bad') are

[21] Schorn (2016a, 249) describes the prose frame to *Lokasenna* as suggesting 'that [the poem] relates a crucial narrative episode within the larger story of the destruction of the gods, but the verse itself presents a catalogue', demonstrating how the 'situational nature of eddic dialogue lends itself to narrative expansion'.
[22] On this threat, see Anderson (1981, 148–9).

crucial in this poem in terms of signposting Loki's 'blended' identity', and dynamics of 'contamination or pollution of the group' (2002, 1, 3, 4).[23] Although the verb *blanda* is initially refers specifically to the mixing of blood in a blood-brotherhood rite (st. 9), it is congruent with the rest of the poem's concern for mingled states, particularly that of Loki.

It is within this context that the poem's verbal echoes unfold. Just as *Lokasenna* is distinct from *Hárbarðsljóð* in its structure and stakes, the close verbal parallelisms between speakers also work differently. As in *Hárbarðsljóð*, there are many of them—as Anderson (1981) has previously discussed, the poem makes extensive use of repeated words and passages.[24] These tend to underpin subtly different speech acts, however. The weight of truth-value attached to each accusation often leads the victims of Loki's verbal attacks to implicitly accept the allegation that has been directed at them, but then attempt to mitigate its seriousness through manoeuvres of comparison, which often simultaneously assert a superior claim to knowledge. As a result, verbal echoes appear repeatedly in contexts in which a speaker attempts to lessen the force of an allegation by making another parallel allegation or threat, and the effect is one of mutual compromise and degradation. The cross-speaker echoes thus ultimately reinforce the poet's overall concern with vexed and lamentable social and interpersonal association. They tend to elide, rather than assert, difference.

Dramatic setting remains key to this discursive situation. If *Hárbarðsljóð*'s imagined geography was organised according to a principle of spatial distance, explored by those speaking into it, then *Lokasenna* establishes a set of 'reported circumstances' in which speech is understood to resonate differently. From early in the poem, there are a 'striking number' (Sørensen 1988, 249) of references to the physical surroundings of Ægir's hall and what is correspondingly 'inni' (sts 1.4, 2.5, 13.5, 16.5, 19.2, 27.1; 30.5) [indoors], and 'út', 'útan' (prose preceding st. 1; sts 14.1, 64.5) [out; outside], or 'heðan' (st. 7.6) [hence].[25] This structural divide is reinforced by Loki's individual movement into the hall (between sts 5 and 6) and out (after st. 65). A general interest in community is obvious in the poem, but one particular label, *sumbl*, is used to denote the group as a whole: paralleling the workings of *sund* in *Hárbarðsljóð*, this word is introduced early by Loki and recurs through the utterances of others, beginning with Eldir:

Loki kvað:

> "Inn skal ganga
> Ægis hallir í
> á þat sumbl at sjá:
> jǫll ok áfu
> fœri ek ása sonum,
> ok blend ek þeim svá meini mjǫð."

Eldir kvað:

> "Veiztu, ef þú inn gengr

[23] Borovsky here quotes Cleasby-Vigfusson's entry for *blanda* (1957). See also Swenson (1991, 73–9).
[24] Anderson sees these repetitions as functioning to 'emphasize particular points and give an indication of what the poet finds important about [each] speaker' (1981, 148).
[25] Sørensen (1988, 249–52) provides an extensive list of these references.

Ægis hallir í
á þat sumbl at sjá,
hrópi ok rógi
ef þú eyss á holl regin:
á þér muno þau þerra þat." (sts 3–4)

Loki said: 'I shall go into Ægir's halls to see that gathering; I'll bring trouble and quarrelling to the Æsir's sons, and so blend their mead with malice.' Eldir said: 'Know, if you go into Ægir's halls to see that feast, if you pour slander and strife onto the gracious gods, they will wipe it off on you.'

Appearing in the third half-line of each stanza, the word *sumbl* here is usually rendered 'feast' or 'drinking feast'.[26] Etymologically the noun appears connected with broader ideas of similitude and indistinction, related as it is to the verb *sum(b)la*, 'rugla saman, blanda saman' (Ásgeir Blöndal Magnusson, 1989, s.v. *sumbl, suml*) [to confuse together, blend together]. The place of drinking, specifically, at the communal gathering is highlighted in *Lokasenna*, with the presence of alcohol accruing symbolic significance. Loki and Eldir exploit a language of liquidity when describing the arguments which will take place. Loki will 'blend' malevolence into drink (st. 3.6), while Eldir warns that if Loki is to 'pour' his abuse on the gods, they will 'dry it off' on him (st. 4.5–6). This language recalls the concern for spilled words elsewhere in the Poetic Edda: hostile speech, in particular, can be found presented as an unruly substance which spreads unless restrained.[27] At the start of *Lokasenna*, Loki and Eldir offer a framework of interpretation for language which highlights this fluid association. The audience is therefore prepared for language to start to transfer itself from person to person within a group.

In the exchange quoted above, Eldir becomes the first speaker to closely echo his opponent as he formulates a cautionary message; he recycles Loki's first three lines of *ljóðaháttr* but incorporates a conditional framework: 'Veiztu, ef [...]' [Know, if [...]]. He then develops Loki's language of liquidity, shifting the context to warning and reprimand and, perhaps, signalling a superior understanding of the situation. Immediately after this, Loki imitates Eldir with a parallel use of 'Veiztu […] ef' (st. 5.1–2), explaining that if Eldir talks too much, Loki will be 'auðigr […] í andsvǫrom' (st. 5.4–5) [rich in replies]. This conditional acceptance and re-framing of a preceding claim is a highly productive rhetorical device in *Lokasenna*, allowing equivocation between different kinds of behaviour. Loki's fullest echo in the poem tellingly occurs in this kind of context:

Skaði kvað:
"Létt er þér, Loki,
munattu lengi svá
leika lausum hala,
þvíat þik á hjǫrvi skulu

[26] La Farge (1992) glosses *sumbl* as 'drinking feast', while Larrington (2014) and Orchard (2011) both translate 'feast'; the *ONP* offers *festlig sammenkomst, gilde* ('festive get-together, feast').
[27] See, for instance, in *Hamðismál*, when Hamðir chides Sǫrli for provoking Jǫrmunrekkr: 'þú þann belg leystir' (st. 26.4) [you loosened that bag].

ins hrímkalda magar
gǫrnom binda goð."

Loki kvað:

"Veiztu, ef mik á hjǫrvi skulu
ins hrímkalda magar
gǫrnom binda goð,
fyrstr ok øfstr
var ek at fjǫrlagi,
þars vér á Þjaza þrifum.' (sts 49–50)

Skaði said: 'You're cheerful, Loki, you won't play with your tail wagging for long; for on a rock edge, with your ice-cold son's guts, the gods shall bind you.' Loki said: 'Know, if on a rock edge, with my ice-cold son's guts, the gods shall bind me: first and foremost I was at the killing, when we grabbed Þiazi.'

Anderson (1981, 149) has interpreted these lines in a way which leaves space for their potential resonance beyond competitive verbal one-upmanship: although Loki was 'probably aware of this impending punishment before', he is shown 'reacting strongly to the threat, almost as if he were stunned, by repeating the passage almost word for word'. This is indeed an inference that may be drawn from this echo, although there are other possibilities: a speaking voice (actual or imagined) could for instance pick out *ef* and *var* in Loki's stanza, contrasting his hypothetical punishment with what has already come to pass: his participation in the murder of Skaði's father. Loki's echo-response here nonetheless resembles those of other, previous, speakers. He maintains the conditional framework, 'Know [...] if', replicating the pattern of conditional acceptance first seen in Eldir's response. Again, this might constitute an implicit recognition of a proposition (even an assertion of independent interest in that proposition), which is then paired with an attempt to lessen the force of the statement through the yoking of a conditional clause to a new assertion. Skaði, in the next stanza, in turn closely echoes Loki's reference to the part he played in Þjazi's death and, through another 'Veiztu, ef [...]', combines it with a new threat of 'kǫld ráð' (st. 51.6) [cold counsels] from the lands over which she has power. Here we see a continuation of *Lokasenna*'s privileged use of the echo-response: a manoeuvre of acceptance and contextualisation, whereby an allegation, warning or threat is acknowledged and reframed in a context which attempts to recast its significance. This perhaps accounts for the general absence of the device of echo in Loki's speech, though he delivers thirty-three of the poem's sixty-five stanzas; it is his attacks that must usually be met with comparative and relativizing responses.

As a further example, Loki accuses Óðinn of unjust attribution of victory in battle, which presumably allows the greatest warriors to join Óðinn's company (Larrington 2014, 295):

"[…] opt þú gaft,
þeim er þú gefa skyldira,
inum slævurum, sigr."

Óðinn kvað:

"Veiztu, ef ek gaf
þeim er ek gefa né skylda,
inum slævurum, sigr,
átta vetr
vartu fyr jǫrð neðan
kýr molkandi ok kona,
ok hefir þú þar bǫrn of borit,
ok hugða ek þat args aðal." (sts 22.4 –23)

'[...] often you've given what you should not have given, victory to the cowardly.' Óðinn said: 'Know, if I gave what I should not have given, victory to the cowardly: for eight winters you were under the earth, a milking cow and a woman, and there you gave birth to children, and that I thought was the behaviour of a pervert.'

Óðinn makes no effort to deny Loki's accusation, reproducing it in his first three half-lines with yet another conditional 'Veiztu, ef [...]': if Óðinn has fallen short in a manner that affiliates him with the 'cowardly', apparently so has Loki, in his unstable gender identity and strange procreative ability, emphasised through a shift into *galdralag*.[28] Óðinn categorises Loki's conduct as 'args aðal' [the behaviour of a pervert], which leads Loki to repeat the phrase in his subsequent reply (st. 24), re-applying the label to Óðinn's practise of *seiðr*. One effect of verbal echo used in a manoeuvre of defence, as here, is that the terms of the dispute are closely contained: new information is brought in, but these additions are measured against previous statements, such as what constitutes 'the behaviour of a pervert.' A note of accord is therefore insistently struck in terms of mutually intelligible standards, while incriminating deeds are relativized through comparison to others in the group. This is seen again when Tyr responds to Loki's jibe about his hand (st. 38.4–6) with 'Handar em ek vanr,/ en þú Hróðrsvitnis' (st. 39.1–2) [I am missing a hand, but you the famous wolf]. Týr repeats Loki's words, but situates his sacrifice within the losses of those around him, lessening the force of the personal insult by comparing it with Loki's experience.

Lokasenna therefore articulates, through its repetitious dialogue, the complex issues of community which accompany the physical setting of *inni* and *út*. Concepts of group behaviour are of utmost pertinence to Loki, as a peripheral member of the Æsir, and in synecdoche his fluctuating communal involvement and exclusion are manifested in his participation in the *sumbl*.[29] The poem ends as Loki is ejected from the hall, accompanied by the culmination of the poem's most persistent echo, Þórr's four-time repetition of Loki's refrain 'Þegi þú' (sts 57.1, 59.1, 61.1, 63.1; previously 17.1, 20.1, 22.1, 26.1, 32.1, 34.1, 38.1, 40.1, 46.1, 48.1, 56.1) [Be silent]. The fluid use of language which Loki promised to provoke is finally stemmed, and with it the troubling implications of problematic affiliation and similitude. At the same time,

[28] See Anderson (1981, 151). On the close connection between *galdralag* and *ljóðaháttr* see, e.g., Youngberg (1967, 29) and Fulk (2016, 261).
[29] See Dumézil (1948), Frakes (2002), and with reference to the hall in *Lokasenna* as a microcosm, Sørensen (1988).

the ‘reported circumstances’ of the dramatic action continue to complement the way that the speech exchange itself is understood. In *Lokasenna*, the reported environment of a drinking-party, and the intimacy of the ‘inside’ space, provide a physical counterpart to words which are described as spread around the hall, transferring from speaker to speaker along with their fraught social and moral implications. As in *Hárbarðsljóð*, verbal echoes in *Lokasenna* cannot be understood simply in terms of antagonistic verbal one-upmanship—they allow the articulation of more ambivalent and ‘orthogonal’ kinds of stance, including independent interest, superior claims to knowledge, and the assertion of mutual degradation and destruction.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has aimed to demonstrate that the ‘mirror and surpass’ function of speech-linking in *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna*, and indeed in medieval flyting dialogues more generally, may helpfully be understood as part of a wider linguistic landscape of replicated words and structures in speech exchange. Comparisons may usefully be made between flyting and more contemporary forms of ritualised insult exchange, such as sounding practices in the twentieth century. Nonetheless, neither of these kinds of exchange need be considered fundamentally detached from the functioning of inter-speaker echo in a wide variety of other contexts, as traced in the diagraphs of Du Bois and in various other studies of conversational speech exchange. Linguists have found complex dynamics of stance-taking to play out through echoing responses, encompassing but extending beyond antagonism or competitive one-upmanship; echoes can signal a problem with prior talk and a need for ‘repair’ (Channon, Foulkes and Walker 2018), or the suggestion of a ‘special realm of understanding’ (Enfield et al., 2019, 286, 292). In the Poetic Edda, similarly complex stances may be implied by echoes, for instance when Óðinn remarks that he would have trusted Þórr, had Þórr not betrayed his trust (st. 34), or when Eldir warns Loki what will come of his disruption to the feast (st. 4). Echoed speech in these poems can thus be newly appreciated as a more versatile set of verbal strategies than has previously been acknowledged. Echo certainly has a key place in traditions of stylised, antagonistic verbal exchange, but within these contexts its uses and implications may be complex and plural. Inter-speaker repetition in flytings can implicate greater or lesser degrees of hostility or competitiveness, but as the poets of *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna* demonstrate, it can simultaneously facilitate the expression of subtler kinds of stance, whether persuasive, sceptical, apprehensive, reprimanding, censorious, or any number of others. This is entirely fitting, of course, for a mode of poetry at once playful and serious, comic and tragic, as Gurevich has argued of eddic poems (1976).

Although it is not the purview of this article to determine the nature of the connections between eddic poems, oral traditions and embodied performance, the intonational possibilities created by such an abundance of echoing retorts are certainly congruent with previous suggestions that eddic dialogues constitute dramas, designed for performance. Any single performer would have been able to select from a range of possible implied stances when articulating an echo-response, giving further cues on the level of gesture and intonation (on this, see further Soper 2021). Furthermore, the two dialogues under discussion in this study are both highly attentive to dramatic space, whether imagined or ready to be actualised in performance. *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna* each allow their dynamics of interlinked speech to

develop alongside different sets of 'reported circumstances', with these complementing, and to some extent organising, the repetitious speech of each text. The utterances which echo over the *sund* of *Hárbarðsljóð* tends to stress problems of difference, whether difference in rank, age or moral code. Those which echo around the *sumbl* of *Lokasenna*, meanwhile, tend to foreground problems of association, affiliation and comparable bad behaviour. These poems play with the physicality of sound, whether resonating around a packed-out mead hall (with language overtly compared to a kind of liquid) or across a clear spatial divide.

Given the complexity of their possible implications, the use of verbal echoes in these texts may profitably be examined alongside other eddic poems that are not usually understood as flytings, beyond the connections that have already been made with wisdom contests.[30] Elsewhere, I have examined how echoing responses in *Skírnismál* also replicate and recast the language of questions and commands (2021); the poet of this text is particularly interested in how individuals exert power over others (as has often been noted) and uses the ambiguities and nuances of inter-speaker repetitions to highlight negotiations of this power. Like those of *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna*, the poet of *Skírnismál* therefore shows a keen interest in the diverse and complex inferences that may be drawn from echo. As a device, interpersonal echo is present in eddic dialogues far more broadly, conspicuous, for instance, in Atli and Hrimgerðr's exchange in *Helgakviða Hjǫrvarðssonar* or Sigurðr and Fáfnir's in *Fáfnismál*. These texts would also benefit from analysis of their echoing replies, understood as potentially versatile, complex and wide-ranging in effect, in the manner of echoing replies in modern contexts of speech exchange. We may thereby secure a clearer picture of how, in all their intricate relation to other aspects of these texts, inter-speaker echoes constitute a powerful resource of eddic dialogue, fuelling its ability to 'mimetically […] recreate crucial moments and encounters, allowing the characters themselves to debate their choices and motivations, their wisdom and world-views, and to argue for the meaning of their lives and legacies' (Schorn 2016b, 271). Echoing replies may thus be more fully appreciated as symptomatic of the fascination with multi-voiced social space which characterises this body of poetry.

[30] See notes 5 and 14 above.

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