UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Universitet i Oslo, Fall 2013

Exploring the Emotive versus the Scholarly: an Investigation of the Kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Øxarflokkr*

By Sydney A. Krell

Guidance:

Mikael Males

Master Thesis in Nordic Viking and Medieval Culture

Summary

The poetry of Bragi inn Gamli and Einarr Skúlason has been thoroughly studied by many Old Norse scholars, but never directly in comparison to one another. This paper will investigate the nuances of each author's verse, specifically regarding the way in which they utilize kennings, and draw conclusions based upon their similarities and differences.

Both Bragi and Einarr composed within the same language, geographical area, and poetic tradition; they used similar kenning types that evolve from pagan imagery; and each describes a precious weapon given to them by a ruler whom they praise via a traditional skaldic long style poem. However, they could not be more different. This is due to the fact that Einarr's kennings are meant to show his scholastic prowess, and Bragi's are meant to affect his audience and move his plot based verse forward.

The poetry of Bragi Boddason makes use of pagan mythology, ekphrasis, *nýgerving*, *ofljóst* and metaphors in the form of kennings, just as the poetry of Einarr Skúlason does. And yet the poems differ so greatly. Bragi's kennings are meant to affect his audience on an emotional level, whereas Einarr's are meant to impress on a scholarly level. Each author accomplishes magnificent prose, but with different expectations and outcomes achieved.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor Mikael Males for his support, useful comments, encouragement and guidance throughout the process of writing my master thesis.

I would also like to thank my loved ones, who have supported me throughout this endeavor .

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

a. Hypothesis

Skaldic poetry was the primary form of artistic linguistic expression in western Scandinavia beginning in the ninth century AD and lasting into the fourteenth century[1] as a crucial and prevalent form of literature. The birth of skaldic poetry is credited to Bragi the old, who is widely accepted to be "the earliest skald whose poetry has been preserved." [2] While skaldic poetry grew and evolved between the ninth and eleventh centuries, it underwent significant change once it entered the eleventh and twelfth due to the introduction of Christian learning, and thus Latin grammatical culture. A quintessential example of this change in style is the poetry of Einarr Skúlason. He was a court poet, a priest, and often called the greatest poet of the twelfth century. His poetry is a perfect example of the "exciting fusion between the oral tradition of skaldic verse-making and Latin textual culture" occurring in the twelfth century and evident in Einarr's (and other contemporary skalds') poetry. [3]

The aim of my thesis is to test the hypothesis that different attitudes to poetic language come to the fore in Bragi's and Einarr's work, specifically in their utilization of kennings in their poetry. Kennings are essential in a skaldic poem, and the way in which Bragi and Einarr employ them reveals broader themes about the differences in their work as a whole. Bragi's poetry and use of kennings represents the artistic style of the early Norwegian skald, whose work was based more on evoking feeling from his audience and less on scholasticism. Einarr's poetic kennings reveal his learned approach to the art form, a feat in which he was so successful that scholars have called him "the great rejuvenator of skaldic verse in the twelfth century, and perhaps as the first scholar of the study of skaldic verse." [4]

---

[1] Nordal, Guðrún. *Skaldic versifying and social discrimination in medieval Iceland*. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2003, page 3.
[2] Clunies Ross, Margaret. *A history of old Norse poetry and poetics*. Cambridge, U.K.: D.S. Brewer, 2005, page 34.
[3] Nordal, Guðrún. *Tools of literacy the role of skaldic verse in Icelandic textual culture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
[4] Nordal, Tools, pages 232-3.

b. Sources

i. Primary

My primary sources are the poems *Ragnarsdrápa* by Bragi Boddason and *Øxarflokkr* by Einarr Skúlason as presented within Snorri Sturluson's *Skáldskaparmál*. I am using the version edited by Anthony Faulkes and will also consult Ernst Albin Kock's *Skjaldedigtning* regarding relevant variants. *Skáldskaparmál* was composed between 1220 and 1241 according to Faulkes "*Háttatal* must have been written soon after Snorri Sturluson's first visit to Norway in 1218–20; *Skáldskaparmál* may have been begun shortly afterwards and is likely to have been in process of compilation for some time." [5]

ii. Secondary

Due to the nature of this thesis, an in depth study of the two Old Norse poems *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Øxarflokkr*, it was not necessary for me to utilize vast amount of scholarly literature. Additionally, no scholar has ever compared these two poems side by side, and therefore no literature on that specific topic exists.

Old Norse scholars have researched and written about kennings within skaldic poetry at great length. The most influential works and of greatest aid to my study, are the books entitled *Tools of Literacy* and *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* authored by Guðrún Nordal and Margaret Clunies Ross, respectively.

Nordal's book investigates twelfth and century skaldic verse composed by poets who were immersed in the learning culture of the Latin *ars grammatica.* Of particular interest to this paper is Nordal's investigation of the textual atmosphere in which Einarr Skúlason lived and worked, as well as the prominent family he was a part of and how their versifying served as a class symbol. It is impossible to fully comprehend and analyze the compositions of skaldic poets from this time without understanding their relationship to

[5] Faulkes, Anthony and Snorri Sturluson. Edda: Skáldskaparmál. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998, page xi.

the grammatical curriculum surrounding them. *Tools of Literacy* is an invaluable resource for appreciating this interaction.

A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics is Margaret Clunies Ross's investigation of the relationship between early Scandinavia's oral poetic culture and the poetic composition of the mid-twelfth to fourteenth century Scandinavia (with an emphasis on Iceland). This paper's focus on the poetry of both Bragi, who composed with an entirely illiterate culture, apart from brief runic inscriptions, as well as Einarr who was a literate priest and well versed in the teachings of *ars grammatica*, was greatly aided by Clunies Ross's work which analyzed both Viking Age poetry and that of the Christian intellectuals of three hundred years later and the social constructs which nurtured their verse.

Nordal authored the article "Skaldic Versifying and Social Discrimination in Medieval Iceland" regarding poetry composed in Iceland from the ninth to the fourteenth century with particular focus on Einarr Skúlason. The article delves into the innate contradiction regarding the staying power of skaldic verse which remained prevalent and well established after Iceland's conversion to Christianity, despite being firmly rooted in an oral pagan culture. Nordal discusses the "relationship between formal school learning and skaldic verse in Iceland"[6] and believes poetry based on pagan mythology prevailed among a Christian learned society due to the study of Latin classical poetry.

The article "Kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa*" authored by Rolf Stavnem at the University of Copenhagen discusses Bragi's usage of kennings, which he believes were meant to "establish correlation between carvings and language."[7] While my thesis regarding Bragi's kenning utilization investigates entirely different questions, Stavnem's article analyzes kennings in great detail and thus proved to be a useful model for my own work. Several themes Stavnem describes within the poem were of great interest to me and are discussed within this paper. While Stavnem's focus is on the ekphrastic nature of Bragi's kennings and how the poet's vivid imagery evokes the vision of a literal shield, my thesis investigates a different possible intent and achievement of Bragi's rich and expressive kennings. While the goal of my work was to study different aspects of the

[6] Nordal, Skaldic Versifying, page 3.
[7] Stavnem, Rolf. "The Kennings in Ragnarsdrápa." Mediaeval Scandinavia 14 (2004): 161-184, page163.

poem than Stavnem did, his article inspired a great deal of thought regarding Bragi and led to deductions that proved vital to my thesis.

While Stavnem's work gave me great insight into Bragi's work, Martin Chase's article entitled "The Christian Background of Einarr Skúlason's Geisli" provided invaluable information regarding Einarr's life as a priest, and thus gave a necessary context regarding the composition of *Øxarflokkr*. Chase identifies Einarr Skúlason as the most important skald of his time, specifically referring to his ability to integrate the Latin *ars grammatica* and rhetorics with skaldic poetry. Chase gives background to Einarr's life (as extensively as possible given what is available to us) and discusses the extent of his knowledge of "the twelfth-century European intellectual tradition"[8] in which Einarr composed his poetry. It is important to note that Chase's focus is on Einarr's poem *Geisli*, not *Øxarflokkr*, and the information I gleaned from the article relates to that of Einarr's life and composition style, not characteristics specific to *Geisli*.

Nordal notes that the "theoretical framework for the construction of a kenning"[9] has been the object of many studies and references the following: "Bjarne Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*; Margaret Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál*; Roberta Frank, *Court Poetry*; Edith Marold, *Kenningkunst*; and Thomas Krölmmelbein *Skaldische Metaphorik*…Hallvard Lie, '*Natur' og 'unatur'* and '*Skaldestil-studier*.' "[10]

I relied upon the unpublished work of Mikael Males especially regarding my discussion of *nýgerving*. His article examines the relationship between the study of *ars grammatica* and the composition of poetry in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries with an emphasis on *ofljóst* and *nýgerving* as proof of their ability and desire to "grammaticize" skaldic poetry. Males' article also aided my discussion of *nykrat*, and makes use of studies by Hallvard Lie (*Natur og unatur i skaldekunsten*) and Bergsveinn Birgisson (*Inn i skaldens sinn. Kognitive, estetiske og historiske skatter i den norrøne skaldediktningen*).

When translating *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Øxarflokkr* I relied primarily on Anthony Faulkes' edition of Snorri Sturluson's *Skáldskaparmál*. Volume 1 provided me with the stanzas of the poems in Old Norse situated within Snorri's *Edda*, and volume 2 served as my glossary and name index for defining every word of both poems. Faulkes often

[8] Chase, Martin. "The Christian Background of Einarr Skulason's Geisli" *Til Heidurs og Hugbotar* ed. by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Anna Guðmundsdóttir (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2003), page 31.
[9] Nordal, Tools, page 200.
[10] Nordal, Tools, pages 373-4.

identifies discrepancies between his word definitions and those of other editors and refers the reader to a differing translation provided by Ernst Albin Kock. The work he references by Kock is the many volumed *Notationes norrœnæ*. These alternative translations from Kock, provided by Faulkes aided my ability to determine which translation is most likely to reflect Bragi and Einarr's intentions. In addition to Faulkes and Kock, I used the dictionary entitled *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic* by Geir T. Zoëga when I required further clarification of a word. While Zoëga's translations are not specifically geared toward poetry (as Faulkes's are in the glossary to his edition of Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál*), they proved beneficial in numerous instances.

c. Theory and Method

This thesis is not written within a specific theoretical framework. Theoretical assumptions that are of importance for this thesis are mostly of a source critical character and are therefore incorporated within the discussion of method. However, there is one fundamental theoretical assumption upon which the thesis is dependant and warrants specific mention. The choice of metaphors and periphrasis by the two poets serves as a guide to their respective intellectual outlook. This assumption is based on the observation that stylistics is the main vehicle for artistic expression with skaldic poetry, where as narrative content was often relatively concentional and scarce. Therefor, it seems likely that the unique style of each poet will display itself most obviously through his individual stylistic choices.

My use of Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* as my all-encompassing source is coupled with the knowledge that the only surviving verse accredited to Bragi is hundreds of years younger than when he actually composed. However, this question has been examined and researched at great length, and while it cannot be proven completely, I believe the verses studied here by Bragi and Einarr are authentic. Snorri believed them authentic enough to serve as examples of the excellence of Old Norse poetry, and Clunies Ross writes that he recognized "the psychodynamics of speech acts" [11] which allowed him to mete out which verse was authentic and which was not. He knew which verse was trustworthy due to "his

[11] Clunies Ross, A History, page 77.

awareness of the social norms that goverened illocutionary acts in early medieval Scandinavia." [12] Furthermore, *Skáldskaparmál* demands authenticity of the verse within it, perhaps more than any other work of Old Norse literature. This authenticity is essential since the aim of the work is that the student should learn to compose like the old masters of the art.

My method of research is a comparative study of two poems, and specifically the kennings within them. Einarr's kennings appear to be scholastic in nature, and function almost as a literary exercise for him, while Bragi's seem aimed at evoking emotion. My method must uncover the reasons for why the kennings differ in this way. What are the actual, textual differences in them that lead me to this "feeling" or conclusion? I translated both poems with Anthony Faulkes' translation as a guide. I studied each kenning within each poem at length, and defined and analyzed each word within each kenning.

I chose to use *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Øxarflokkr* for several reasons. First of all, the poems have distinct similarities which allow me to more accurately view and analyze their differences. *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Øxarflokkr* are both long praise poems which describe a weapon given to them by a ruler through the use of ekphrasis. I chose Bragi because he displays a considerable amount of artistic freedom compared to most other praise poetry of his time. Since his kennings are rich and varied, not stock motif like some later poetry, I am able to access the specific stylistics of Bragi, not merely those common to his time period. I chose *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Øxarflokkr* because they are praise poetry, but neither is mainstream but more creative (in very different ways). Contrary to Bragi, Einarr is significant for his time period not due to his artistic freedom, but his scholastic prowess when composing his hightly stylized kennings in *Øxarflokkr*. The choice of these specific authors and poems allows me to highlight how each author acts as a composer unique to his time period while operating under the cultural standards of his textual environment.

[12] Clunies Ross, A History, page 77.

d. Key Terms

It is necessary that I identify and define certain key terms I will be using throughout the paper. These are straightforward definitions that include specific information regarding how they are to be interpreted for the purpose of this paper.

A kenning is a literary device employed by authors of Old Norse, Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon poetry that utilizes a periphrastic phrase as a substitution for a specific concept. This concept that descriptive expression is meant to evoke without actually mentioning is called the referent of the kenning. A kenning may be only two words, like Bragi's *Reifnis marr* which is a straightforward and simple kenning translated as "Reifnir's (the sea king's) horse" and taken as a metaphor for "ship" or may be much more complicated as in the case of Einarr's kenning *glæðr Gautreks svana brautar* meaning "red hot embers of Gautrekr's swan road" and is trickier to decode. Clunies Ross says in the case of a complicated kenning we must "unpack the meaning of each element before we can understand the meaning of the whole extended kenning…like opening a series of boxes, each one nested inside another."[13] We must "unpack" the kenning's multiple meanings. Gautrekr's swan is a ship, and the ship's road is the sea, and the red hot embers of the aforementioned sea are taken as a metaphor for the ultimate kenning referent "gold."

The word pagan is difficult to define in general, but within the confines of this paper it is used when referring to the pre-Christian stories regarding Old Norse mythology and deities (primarily gods, monstrous animals, dwarves and giants). The word encapsulates much more than a "religious" preference. When Einarr is writing (after Christianity has been adopted by Scandinavia) his pagan metaphors are chosen with deliberate means of conveying some reminder of the "old world" via mention of gods and monsters. Bragi, on the other hand, makes mention of Old Norse mythology in his kennings as a sort of default, with no agenda for instilling his kennings with more significance by exploiting the bygone nostalgia of pagan mythology. When an author is referred to as using "pagan imagery" in this paper, that includes any kenning that makes mention of an Old Norse mythological story containing one of the gods (Freyja or Óðinn

[13] Clunies Ross, A History, page 108.

for instance), a giant (for instance Hrungnir), an Old Norse monster (like the Midgard serpent) or mythological elves (via the Old Norse word álfr, for instance).

Both *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Øxarflokkr* can be classified as "ekphrastic" poems. The word ekphrasis is defined as an illustrative verbal description of a real or imaginary work of visual art. This literary device was a favorite of classical literature, and Clunies Ross states that scholars have wondered about this Latin literary device having had any impact on the early Viking Age poets. She says this hypothesis is "very plausible, [but] cannot be proved."[14] Regardless, the literary mechanism is employed by Bragi in his description of a four paneled shield containing four different myths, and also exploited by Einarr in his description of an axe outfitted with silver and gold.

The terms *flokkr* and *drápa* I will define together, as their definitions are quite similar. A *flokkr* (from the Old Norse word meaning 'herd' or 'group')[15] is a long poem that does not have a refrain (called a *stef*). A *drápa* on the other hand, is a long poem that does contain a *stef*. Clunies Ross identifies the *drápa* as the "most highly valued of the skaldic kinds, because of its formality and elaborate construction" and writes that it is derived "from the phrase *kvæði drepit stefjum* ('a poem set with refrains')."[16] The identifications of *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Øxarflokkr* as a *drápa* and a *flokkr*, respectively, do not set them apart. *Øxarflokkr* is a name given to the poem by modern editors, and may very well have been a *drápa* to which we have lost the *stef*, without which it must be called a *flokkr*.

Nýgerving is an extended metaphor and is used to "refer to metaphoric extension of meaning in extended kennings."[17] This is a term I will go into in great depth within my analysis section, as well as the next key term, which is *nykrat*. *Nykrat* is when an author mixes metaphors, and the term usually has a negative connotation. If the author goes from using one type of comparison, and leaves off to use another, it can be considered a defective literary device.

The final key term I will define is *ofljóst*. *Ofljóst* is a literary device in which the author obscures his intended meaning beneath two layers: the listener must obtain the correct name for the referent of the kenning, replace it with a like sounding word, and

[14] Clunies Ross, A History, page 55.
[15] Clunies Ross, A History, page 36.
[16] Clunies Ross, A History, page 36-7.
[17] Clunies Ross, A History, page 109.

interchange the similar word with the definition the author originally intended. The primary example of *ofljóst* that one encounters again and again within *Øxarflokkr* seeks the final meaning “precious/decorated weapon/heirloom.” Einarr refers to the weapon as Freyja’s daughter, the referent being Hnoss, which the listener must liken to the noun *hnoss* to obtain the intended final definition (“precious/decorated weapon/heirloom”).

II. The skalds and their poems

a. Bragi Boddason

Bragi himself has been called the *fons et origo* (a Latin phrase meaning the "source and origin") for the form of *dróttkvætt* poetry, but the metre of *Ragnarsdrápa* is so highly evolved, that McTurk calls this notion misguided and a romantic supposition.[18] While Bragi may not be the very first composer of *dróttkvætt*, he is undoubtedly one of the earliest skaldic poets, and *Ragnarsdrápa* “is the oldest existing skaldic poem in Norse literature.”[19] McTurk refers to the *drápa* as one with “confident panache” and for this reason believes an abundance of lost poetry went before it.[20]

Little is known of Bragi’s life. We do not know precisely when or where he was born, although he undoubtedly lived in Norway during the first half of the ninth century. It is unknown exactly how, or if, he was trained, but we know that during this period a *skáld* with a great penchant for composing verse was recognized as exceptional and remarkable. As an early poet in the skaldic tradition, Bragi would not have made poetry his full time occupation. He was undoubtedly a trader, farmer, or fighter in addition to his task as composer of verse for a patron ruler who rewarded him for his efforts.[21]

As a skald, Bragi’s task was to compose poetry regarding his ruler and the monumental things he accomplished. His ultimate goal was to be compensated for these notorious poems with either land or gifts, both of great value. “Alongside the skald’s celebration of his patron, however, he was usually ensuring his own fame, because ‘viking poems were often as much affirmations of the importance of the poet and his own control

[18] McTurk, Rory. *A companion to Old Norse-Icelandic literature and culture*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005, page 277.
[19] Stavnem, page 161.
[20] McTurk, page 479.
[21] McTurk, page 479.

of words as of the importance of the king who was the ostensible subject' (Faulkes 1993a; 12)."[22]

McTurk is quick to point out that although Bragi's poetry is the oldest surviving skaldic verse, his work is far too proficient to be that of the first poet in the skaldic tradition. However, even Snorri uses the authority of Bragi for the very definition of poetry in his exchange between a troll-wife and Bragi:

Skáld kalla mik	They call me skald,
skapsmið Viðurs,	thoughtsmith of Viðurr <Óðinn> [POET],gift-getter
Gauts gjafrötuð,	of Gautr <Óðinn> [POET],
grepp óhneppan,	un-scant poet,
Yggs ölbera	Yggr's <Óðinn's> ale-bearer[POET]
óðs skap-Móða,	inspired poetry's creating-Móði <son of Þórr>
hagsmið bragar.	[POET],
Hvat er skáld nema	skilful smith of verse [POET].
þat?	What is a poet other than that?"[23]

Margaret Clunies Ross uses this passage to define a skaldic poet on the very first page of her book *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*.[24] She refers to "Bragi Boddason the Old, [as] an archetypal figure of semi-divine status and the earliest named poet whose verses have survived in written form."

Clunies Ross has a lengthy explanation behind her reasoning of equating the god of skaldic poetry named Bragi with the actual man Bragi Boddason inn gamli who lived in the ninth century. She says that skaldic poetry must be considered in terms of the poet as a "skilled word-smith and a beneficiary of the divine gift of the poetic mead" and this endorses the idea of a strong association between the skalds and the Viking Age warrior representative of "the god Óðinn." Clunies Ross goes on to say that "but probably fairly

[22] Clunies Ross, A History, page 44.
[23] Clunies Ross, A History, page 1-2.
[24] Clunies Ross, A History, page 1.

early in the Viking Age" another god joined Óðinn in his association with skaldic literature, and this was Bragi, "whom Snorri Sturluson presents as the chief authority on the art of skaldic poetry in the frame narrative to *Skáldskaparmál*." Bragi as a god appears not only in *Skáldskaparmál* but also in *Gylfaginning* where it is mentioned that he is married to the goddess Iðunn. Clunies Ross believes that there is an association between the rise of skaldic poetry as the principal form of Norwegian poetry and the appearance of Bragi as a god, or demi-god. "Most scholars who have written about this subject have come to the conclusion that Bragi, the god of skaldic poetry, is a deified form of Bragi Boddason inn gamli ('the old'), the earliest skald whose poetry has survived in the written record (see Clunies Ross 1993a)." [25]

This implication that Bragi the old, composer of *Ragnarsdrápa*, possibly had the status of a god during the Viking Age only solidifies the significance of his poetry. Snorri Sturluson considered him exceptional, and Einarr Skúlason (the avid student) undoubtedly studied his poetry as well. Bragi's place in the canon of skaldic literature ensures the impossibility of Einarr not having studied his work. Clunies Ross writes that Einarr chose to write ekphrastically with the specific purpose of indicating how acquainted he was with this literary trope he was recalling.[26] Coupled with the knowledge that *Ragnarsdrápa* is one of the most quintessentially ekphrastic poems of Viking Age skaldic poetry, we can conclude that Einarr was familiar with Bragi's poetry, and probably *Ragnarsdrápa* in particular.

It is unclear and can not be proven whether or not Einarr consciously thought of *Ragnarsdrápa* while composing his own poetry, but it cannot be denied that the entire corpus of early skaldic poetry served as the building block for his own knowledge, and Bragi was a revered and necessary figure in this study.

[25] Clunies Ross, A History, pages 104-105.
[26] Clunies Ross, A History, page 129.

b. *Ragnarsdrápa*

Bragi Boddason composed *Ragnarsdrápa* "for a patron named Ragnarr, possibly the legendary ninth-century Viking leader Ragnarr loðbrók."[27] In *Skáldatal*, Snorri gave the poem its name, which is translated into English as 'Long Poem with a Refrain for Ragnarr.' The poem is an ekphrasis ("a verbal rendering of a visual piece of art") that describes a wooden shield containing a series of mythological events. [28] *Ragnarsdrápa* is one of the most heavily studied poems in skaldic literature. This is not only because it is the oldest surviving skaldic poem, but also due to Bragi's skill in composing such nuanced verse and complicated kennings.

Ragnarsdrápa contains twenty verses which describe four different stories. Bragi describes the four stories as if he is viewing them upon a wooden shield given to him by his benefactor Ragnarr. All but one stanza of the poem occur in fragments within Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál*, but all twenty stanzas are believed to be from the same *drápa*. The four myths Bragi recounts are: Hamðir and Sörli's attack on King Jörmunrekkr (five stanzas), Heðinn and Hǫgni's everlasting battle (five stanzas), Þórr's fishing for Jörmungandr (six stanzas) and the ploughing of Zealand by Gefjún (one stanza). Recently, there has been some debate about whether or not Þórr's fishing belongs in the poem as a part of *Ragnarsdrápa*[29] but for this study those stanzas will remain a part of the *drápa*. I mention the ploughing by Gefjún as a part of the poem, but due to the fact that it does not occur within my primary source of research *Skáldskaparmál* (it is recounted in Snorri's *Edda* as part of the prologue of *Gylfaginning*), I will not be studying this stanza in depth or investigating any kennings that may appear there.

Ragnarsdrápa is characterized as a *drápa* with a *stef* that occurs only twice (it may have occurred more often, but those instances have been lost). Each *stef* occurs within a *helmingr* (half stanza of only four lines), "and in each case the first two lines of the *helmingr* draw attention, in different wording, to the fact that heroic narrative Bragi tells is represented on a decorated shield his patron has given him." [30] The *stef* mentions the name

[27] Clunies Ross, A History, page 34.
[28] Stavnem, page 161.
[29] "Þórr's Fishing - Bragi Inn Gamli Boddason (Bragi)." Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages. The Skaldic Poetry Project. 2013. Web. 27 Sept. 2013. https://www.abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/db.php?id=3094&if=default&table=text&val=&view=.
[30] Clunies Ross, A History, page 37.

of the patron in order to flatter him, and also mentions the many stories that the shield contains. The parameters of a successful *stef* dictate that it mention the name of the ruler or patron, possibly by name, and be highly memorable. [31]

The *stef* of *Ragnarsdrápa* is:

Ræs gáfumk reiðar mána	Ragnar gave me the Ræ's chariot's [ship] moon
Ragnarr ok fjölð sagna.	[shield] and a multitude of stories with it.

Ragnarsdrápa is undoubtedly a prime example of the literary achievement known as ekphrasis. Lie claims that "the drottkvaett style has been developed in close contact with the ornamental art of the period" but Margaret Clunies Ross does not agree. [32] Stavnem, whose article deals heavily with the relationship between Bragi's kennings and his thesis regarding their specific impact on the ekphrastic nature of the poem, believes that this is especially true for *Ragnarsdrápa*. Stavnem believes the poem is literally a poetic and written version of a carving, and notes that the "difference between kennings and carvings is that kennings as a rule must be construed in accordance with complex conventions and cognitive processes, while signs in a carving like those mentioned above work in a much simpler way." [33] Stavnem writes that we are "dealing with a skald who is trying to transfer the symbolic power of the carvings, with their fixing of situations and objects, to the style of skaldic poetry." [34] Stavnem goes on to say that it is not important if there is an actual shield that Bragi used to compose his *drápa*, his aim is only to prove the "correspondence between carvings and language." [35]

Stavnem's article goes to great lengths to prove that the kennings of *Ragnarsdrápa* are the literal rendering of pictorial carvings as rhetorical poetry. I find the article very convincing, but is not what I aim to explore or prove. The kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa* describe pagan myths, as many kennings do, but they do so within a larger narrative. Bragi uses the pagan imagery in his kennings to advance his story line, rather than using a mythological kenning merely to evoke the referent.

[31] Clunies Ross, A History, page 37.
[32] Stavnem, page 162.
[33] Stavnem, page 162.
[34] Stavnem, 163
[35] Stavnem, 163

Stavnem notes that it is not important if Bragi is even "familiar with a conventional rhetorical strategy [of ekphrasis]" [36] and it is only important that he does in fact achieve this literary trope, whether intentionally or not. I think this highlights an important fact about Bragi's skill as a poet versus Einarr's. Bragi is doing things despite being unaware of their generic affiliations, as a pure gifted artist. Einarr uses ekphrasis purposely, and his awareness arises not necessarily by way of his knowledge of its use within classical (ancient Greek and Latin) literature, but certainly from its utilization in skaldic poetry. It is possible then that Einarr uses ekphrasis to harken back to early skaldic poetry and infuse his own work with more credibility and status. This is the fundamental difference of the two authors: one achieves literary prowess through the sheer innate talent, the other uses his remarkable aptitude for composing in combination with extensive learning, and both achieve remarkable works while one is illiterate and one is on par with the best scholars of his time throughout Europe and England.[37]

c. Einarr Skúlason

Einarr Skúlason lived during the first half of the twelfth century probably in the area of Iceland called Borgarfjörður.[38] He lived and worked during a pivotal time in medieval Iceland, when Latin grammatical culture had been introduced and was actively influencing the skaldic tradition. According to Martin Chase, "Einarr Skúlason was the most important skald of this period and a leader in the integration of the two cultures." [39] Gudrun Nordal calls Einarr "the greatest poet of the twelfth century, a priest and a court poet, successfully employed pagan metaphors in his skaldic diction." [40]

Regarding his notoriety, Einarr Skúlason is mentioned thirty-five times in Skáldskaparmál which is significantly more than any other poet. Nordal refers to Einarr as "the most popoular poet" for which reason he is "placed at the head of the skaldic canon" in *Skáldskaparmál*. Einarr is mentioned three times in the third grammatical treatise, is one of only eight poets cited in the fourth grammatical treatise, and even appears in the

[36] Stavnem, 163
[37] Chase, page 20
[38] Chase, page 12.
[39] Chase, page 11.
[40] Nordal, Tools, page 8.

very short fragment of a treatise that "has tentatively been named the Fifth Grammatical Treatise." [41]

Einarr was a member of the Kveld-Úlfr family and thus descended from Skalla-Grímr, kinsman of Óláfr Þórðarson, Snorri Sturluson and Egill Skallagrímsson.[42] Einarr Skúlason lived three hundred years after Bragi, and was a member of the "kin-group, the Mýrarmenn: sumir váru ok skáldmenn miklir í þeiri ætt: Björn Hítdœlakappi, Einarr prestr Skúlason, Snorri Sturluson ok margir aðrir (Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson 1938: 51, note 3), 'Some of that kin-group were also great poets: Björn Hítdœlakappi, Einarr Skúlason, Snorri Sturluson and many others." [43]

As a court poet in Norway, Einarr composed verse for the Haraldssons. Based on the level of skill his poetry contains, we know that he received an education that was "extensive and thorough" although we do not know exactly where he received it. Chase believes he may have travelled to Germany, France or England as other distinguished Icelanders of his time did, or he may have studied at one of the Icelandic schools of the time: Skalaholt, Haukadalr or Oddi. [44] We cannot know for certain where he received his comprehensive education, but it is clear that the amount of education he had received was very high.

d. *Øxarflokkr*

Øxarflokkr is the name (chosen by Finnur Jónsson) of a collection of eleven stanzas or half stanzas, ten of which exist in Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál*. The eleventh stanza of Finnur Jónsson's arrangement of the poem is not found in *Skáldskaparmál*, but the Third Grammatical Treatise. As with the thirteenth stanza of *Ragnarsdrápa*, I will not be discussing the thirteenth stanza of *Øxarflokkr* due to its absence from *Skáldskaparmál.* I do agree with Jónsson's arrangement, but the study of poetry outside of *Skáldskaparmál* is not within the scope of this paper.

The poem in full has never been found, but the arrangement of the verses in Snorri's *Edda* "indicates that they may have belonged together at an earlier stage" since

[41] Nordal, Tools, page 88.
[42] Chase, page 12.
[43] Clunies Ross, A History, page 159.
[44] Chase, page 14.

Snorri "rarely cites a sequence of stanzas by the same poet, and when he does the verses are most often drawn from the same poem." [45]The poem is characterized as a *flokkr* because it is a long praise poem without a *stef.* However, it is absolutely plausible that it once contained a *stef* that has since been lost and thus would have been named *Øxardrápa* or the like, especially when considering the fact that it was the *drápa* form traditionally used when praising a ruler.

In the study of *Geisli,* Chase notes that Einarr purposely included a brief introductory summary before beginning the main portion of his poem. In this sense, Chase says that "the structure of the *drápa* reflects the guidelines for composition found in works like the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*" and thus Einarr could have been intentionally exploiting a Latin literary characteristic.[46] I believe Einarr used this same line of thought for his choice of writing *Øxarflokkr* as an ekphrasis. If he is not aware of the use of ekphrasis in classical literature, he certainly is familiar with its use within the skaldic corpus. He may have chosen to compose *Øxarflokkr* as an ekphrasis not to mimic Latin *grammatica*, but to harken back to the early skalds, which would also give his poetry more legitimacy.

Einarr Skulason was a well-educated priest, and yet he still chooses to employ pagan imagery in his kennings. Nordal writes that he is doing this to link "his verses generically to earlier mythological poems in the context of gold kennings such as *Haustlöng* and *Ragnarsdrápa*, and producing an inventive and imaginative amalgamation of old and new poetic traditions."[47] Einarr is also affirming the value of pagan myths as an instructional tool for other poets.

Øxarflokkr was deliberately chosen as the counter comparison to *Ragnarsdrápa* for multiple reasons. Firstly, it is easy to compare the two due to their similarities as they are both ekphrastic praise poems with pagan imagery and complicated kennings. Additionally, the scholastic nature of *Øxarflokkr* provides an illuminating difference between the cultures in which Bragi and Einarr were composing, one based upon learning the trade of versifying, and the other rooted in the learning of much more.

While my conjecture is that *Øxarflokkr* is indeed ekphrastic, it must be mentioned that Clunies Ross has doubts concerning whether or not *Øxarflokkr* can be classified as

[45] Nordal, Skaldic, pages 9-10. Regarding the eleventh stanza, Nordal writes that it is "impossible to say whether…the anonymous stanza from the Third Grammatical Treatise belonged to the same poem" but for the purpose of this paper the conclusion is irrelevant, as I will only focus on the first ten.
[46] Chase, page 17.
[47] Nordal, Skaldic, pages 10-11.

ekphrastic. She writes that a pictoral poem "is the subgenre of skaldic verse in which mythic and legendary narrative is paramount, and thus it is not surprising to discover that it had virtually no place in the skaldic repertoire after the conversion to Christianity."[48] It is apparent by this statement that she does not believe the skaldic poets of Einarr's time would engage in the use of ekphrasis, and thus she does not consider *Øxarflokkr* to belong to this "pictoral poem sub genre" at all.

However Clunies Ross does admit that new literary trends emerged during the twelfth century in skaldic literature and because authors were "secure in a Christian ideology" there existed an allowance for "some pagan references to be incorporated typologically into a clearly Christian discourse."[49] She writes that by including mythological elements to their poetry, skaldic poets of the twelfth century and onward in some instances invoked pagan references to "lend grandeur and occasion to a poem, as in Einarr Skúlason's *Øxarflokkr* ('Axe Poem') about an axe he had received as a gift, that was 'packed with mythological kenningar' (Gade 2000:74), doubtless to indicate how aware he was of the ekphrastic tradition that he was continuing." [50] It seems somewhat contradictory when regarding Clunies Ross's earlier statement, but perhaps she does not regard the poem as a true ekphrasis due to the fact that it lacks some of the graphic description an ekphrasis requires, but it can still be seen as a nod to the earlier tradition.

The final mention I will make of Clunies Ross' discussion on *Øxarflokkr* as an ekphrasis occurs in a journal article published in 2007, two years after *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics.* In this case, Clunies Ross calls *Øxarflokkr* "a clever and self-conscious repositioning of the tradition of ekphrasis…with some highly significant differences from the earlier manifestations of the genre."[51] The only difference she goes on to reference is the fact that the vibrantly embellished axe Einarr describes does not have figural images on it. She praises Einarr's "clever post-modern strategy" of using his very pagan gold kennings relating to Freyja for praise of a Christian ruler. I do not believe the "lack of figural images" Clunies Ross mentions is enough to de-classify *Øxarflokkr* as ekphrastic. Perhaps it is more plausible to surmise that Einarr was not intent on describing

[48] Clunies Ross, A History, page 55.
[49] Clunies Ross, A History, page 129.
[50] Clunies Ross, A History, page 129.
[51] Clunies Ross, Margaret. "Stylistic and Generic Definers of the Old Norse Skaldic Ekphrasis." Viking and Medieval Scandinavia, 3, 2007, page 165.

an actual axe covered in pictoral embellishments, but merely emulating the genre by using ekphrastic elements.

III. Full Text[52]

a. *Ragnarsdrápa*

i. Old Norse text and translation

1. Vilið, Hrafnketill, heyra hvé hreingróit steini Þrúðar skal ek ok þengil þjófs ilja blað leyfa?	Will you hear, Hrafnketil, how I shall praise the leaf of the foot of the theif of Þrúðr [Hrungnir], with bright colour planted on it, and the prince?
2. Nema svá at góð ins gjalla gjöld *baugnafaðs vildi meyjar hjóls inn mæri mögr Sigurðar Högna.	Unless it be that the good son of Sigurd should desire good recompense for the ringing wheel [shield] of Hogni's maiden, which is circle-hubbed.
3. Knátti eðr við illan Jörmunrekkr at vakna með dreyrfár dróttir draum í sverða flaumi. Rósta varð í ranni Randvés höfuðniðja, þá er hrafnbláir hefndu harma Erps of barmar.	And then Jörmunrekkr did was forced awake with a cruel dream in a torrent of swords among [his] blood-stained household. A tumult took place in Randver's chief kinsman's [Jörmunrekkr's] hall when Erp's raven-black brothers avenged their sorrow.
4. Flaut of set við sveita sóknar *álfs á gólfi	The dew of corpses [blood] flowed over the benches together with the congregation elf's

[52] The translations of *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Øxarflokkr* are my own but heavily guided by Anthony Faulkes, full citation: Sturluson, Snorri, and Anthony Faulkes. *Edda*. London: Everyman, 1996.

hræva dögg *þars höggnar
hendr sem fœtr of kendu.
Fell í blóði *blandinn
brunn ölskakki runna
- þat er á Leifa landa
laufi fátt - at haufði.

[Jörmunrekkr's] blood on the floor where severed hands and legs were recognized. The bushes' ale dispenser [king] fell head-first the pool having been mixed with blood. This is depicted on leaf of Leifi's lands [shield].

5. Þar svá at gerðu gyrðan
gólfhölkvis sá *fylkis
segls naglfara siglur
saums annvanar standa.
Urðu snemst ok Sörli
samráða þeir Hamðir
hörðum herðimýlum
Hergauts vinu barðir.

There, so that they caused the ruler's floor-horse [house] tub [bed] to be encircled, the rivet-lacking masts of the sails of the sword [warriors] stand. Very soon Hamðir and Sörli became pelted by everyone at once with Hergaut's [Óðinn's] female friend [Jorð's, earth's] hard lumps of her shoulder [stones].

6. Mjök lét stála støkkvir
styðja Gjúka niðja
flaums þá er fjörvi *næma
Foglhildar mun vildu,
ok *bláserkjar birkis
*ballfögr gátu allir
ennihögg ok eggjar
Jónakrs sonum launa.

The torrent of steel [battle] sprinkler [king] caused Giuki's grandsons to be hit hard when they tried to deprive Birdhildr's [swan-hildr's, Svanhildr's] loved one [husband, Jörmunrekkr] of life. And they all succeeded in repaying Jonakr's sons for the harshly shining blows on the forehead coming from the mail coated birch trees [warriors] and his sword-edge.

7. Þat segik fall á fögrum
flotna randar botni.
Ræs gáfumk reiðar mána
Ragnarr ok fjölð sagna.

I can see this fall of warriors on the fair base of the shield. Ragnar gave me the Ræ's chariot's [ship] moon [shield] and a multitude of stories with it.

8. Ok *ofþerris *æða

And the Ran who desires the very great

ósk-Rán at þat sínum
til fárhuga fœri
feðr veðr *boga hugði,
þá er hristi-Sif hringa
háls, *in böls of fylda
bar til byrjar drösla
baug ørlygis draugi.

drying of veins [Hildr] intended to bring this storm of bows [battle] against her father with evil thoughts, when the sword wielding Sif who shakes rings [Hildr], filled with malice, brought a neck-ring on to the sailing wind's horse [ship] to the trunk of battle [warrior].

9. Bauða sú til bleyði
bœti-Þrúðr at móti
málma mætum hilmi
men dre<y>rug<r>a benja.
Svá lét ey, þótt etti
sem *orrostu letti
jöfrum úlfs at sinna
með algífris lifru.

This Þrúðr, curer of bloody wounds, did not offer the worthy king (Högni) the neckring as an excuse for cowardice in the assembly of weapons [battle]. She always behaved as though she was against battle, although she was inciting princes to join the company with the most monstrous sister of the wolf [Hel].

10. Letrat lýða stillir
landa vanr á sandi
- þá svall heipt í Högna -
höð glamma *mun stöðva,
er þrymregin þremja
þróttig *Heðin s[óttu]
heldr en Hildar *svíra
hringa þeir of fingu.

The people ruler lacking lands [sea-king] does not resist the stopping of the wolf's desire by battle on the shore – hatred rose up in Högni- when indefatigable gods of the noise of sword-edges [warriors] attacked Heðinn instead of accepting Hildr's neck-rings.

11. Ok fyrir hönd í holmi
Hveðru brynju Viðris
fengeyðandi fljóða
fordæða nam ráða.
Allr gekk herr und hurðir
Hjarranda framm kyrrar

And on the island, instead of the Viðrir [warrior] of the enemy of the mail-coat [axe], the evil woman creature who prevents victory got her way. The ship elf's whole army advanced in anger under the unwavering doors of Hiarrandi (Óðinn)

reiðr *af Reifnis skeiði
*raðálfs *af mar bráðum.

[shields] from the swift-running horse of Reifnir [ship].

12. Þá má sókn á Svölnis
salpenningi kenna.
Ræs gáfumk reiðar mána
Ragnarr ok fjölð sagna.

This attack can be perceived on the penny [shield] of Svolnir's [Óðinn's] hall [Valhall]. Ragnar gave me the Ræ's chariot's [ship] moon [shield] and a multitude of stories with it.

13. Gefjun dró frá Gylfa
glöð djúpröðul öðla,
svá at af rennirauknum
rauk, Danmarkar auka;
Báru øxn ok átta
ennitungl þar er gengu
fyrir vineyjar víðri
valrauf, fjogur haufuð.

Gefjún drew from Gylfi, glad, a deep-ring of land [the island of Zealand] so that from the swift-pullers [oxen] steam rose: Denmark's extension. The oxen wore eight brow-stars [eyes] as they went hauling their plunder, the wide island of meadows, and four heads.

14. Þat erumk sent at snemma
sonr Aldaföð<r>s vildi
afls við úri þafðan
jarðar reist of freista.

It is conveyed to me that the son [Þórr] of the father of mankind [Óðinn] was determined soon to test his strength against the water-soaked earth-band [Midgard serpent].

15. Hamri fórsk í hœgri
hönd þar er allra landa
œgir Öflugbarða
*endiseiðs *of kendi.

Oflugbardi's terrifier [Þórr] lifted his hammer in his right hand when he recognized the coal-fish that bounds all lands [the Midgard's serpent].

16. Vaðr lá Viðris arfa
vilgi slakr er rakðisk,
á Eynæfis öndri,
Jörmungandr at sandi.

Vidrir's [Óðinn's] heir's [Þórr's] line lay by no means slack on Eynæfir's ski [boat] when Iormungand uncoiled on the sand.

17. Ok *borðróins barða brautar hringr inn ljóti <á hausprengi Hrungnis> harðgeðr neðan starði.	And the ugly ring [serpent] of the side-oared ship's road [sea] stared up spitefully at Hrungnir's skull-splitter.
18. Þá er forns Litar flotna á fangboða öngli hrøkkviáll of hrokkinn hekk Völsunga drekku.	When the hook of the old Lit's men [giants'] fight-challenger [Þórr] hung the ceiling eel [Midgard serpent] of the Volsungs' drink [poison] coiled.
19. Vildit röngum ofra vágs byrsendir œgi hinn er mjótygil máva Mœrar skar fyrir Þóri.	Breeze-sender [giant, Hymir], who cut the thin string [fishing-line] of gulls' Møre [the sea] for Þórr, did not want to life the twisted bay-menacer [Midgard serpent].
20. Hinn er varp á víða vinda öndurdísar yfir manna sjöt margra munnlaug föður augum.	He who threw into the wide winds' basin the ski-goddesses [Skadi's] father's eyes above the dwellings of the multitude of men.

ii. Full List of Kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa*

#	Stanza	ON kenning	Translation
1	1	Þrúðar þjófs ilja blað	thief of Þrúðr [Hrungnir]'s leaf →shield
2	2	Högna meyjar hjóls	the wheel of Hogni's maiden → the wheel of Hildr →shield
3	2	mögr Sigurðar	son of Sigurd → Hringr → ring, circle
4	2	mögr Högna	son of Hogni → Hildr → battle
5	3	sverða flaumi	sword torrent, flood → battle

6	4	sóknar álfr	congregation elf → war leader (Jörmunrekkr)
7	4	hræva dögg	corpse dew → blood
8	4	Leifa landa	land of the sea king → sea
9	4	ölskakki runna	ale dispensing tree → ruler
10	5	gólfhölkvis sá	floor horse's tub → bed
11	5	segls naglfara siglur	masts of the sails of the sword→ shield
12	5	Hergauts vina	Óðinn's female friend →Jörð i.e. jörð → earth
13	5	Hergauts vinu herðimýlum	the earth's shoulder lumps→ stones
14	6	stála flaums	steel torrent→ battle
15	6	støkkvir stála flaums	Impeller of battles → war leader (Jörmunrekkr)
16	6	Foglhildar mun	Foglhildar's loved one→ Jörmunrekkr
17	6	bláserkjar birkis	dark shirts' birch trees→ warriors (Hamðir and Sörli)
18	7	randar botni	bottom of the border (of a shield) →shield
19	7	Ræs reiðar mána	chariot of the sea king's moon → moon of the ship → shield
20	8	ofþerris æða ósk-Rán	Ran who desires very great drying of veins → hildr → battle
21	8	þat veðr boga	that storm of bows →arrows→ battle
22	8	hristi-Sif hringa	sword wielding Sif →Hildr Högnadóttir → the Sif who shakes rings
23	8	byrjar drösla	sailing wind horse → ship
24	8	ørlygis draugi	trunk of battle →warrior
25	9	at málma móti	in the assembly of weapons → battle
26	9	úlfs algífris lifra	Sister of the most monstrous wolf → Hel
27	10	lýða stillir landa vanr	people ruler lacking lands →sea king
28	10	þrymregin þremja	gods of the noise of sword-edges →gods of the battle→ warriors
29	11	Hveðru brynju	enemy of the mail-coat→axe
30	11	hurðir Hjarranda	door of Hiarrandi (Óðinn) → shield
31	11	Reifnis mar	Reifnir's horse →ship

32	11	Reifnis skeiði	Reifnir's stretch of ground→sea
33	12	Svölnis salpenningi	Óðinn's hall penny →shield
34	12	Ræs reiðar mána	chariot of the sea king's moon → moon of the ship → shield
35	14	reistr jarðar	snake of the earth→ Jörmungandr (the Midgard serpent)
36	15	ægir Öflugbarða	giant terrifier → Þórr
37	15	endiseiðs allra landa	boundary fish of all lands → Jörmungandr
38	16	Viaðr arfa	Viðrir's (Óðinn's) heir → Þórr
39	16	Eynæfis öndri	Eynæfir's (the sea king's) ski →ship
40	17	braut barða hringr	encircler of the path of the ship (ocean) → Jörmungandr
41	17	Hrungnis haussprengir	Hrungnir's head-splitter → Þórr
42	18	fangboða flotna forns Litar	the wrestling opponent of the mates of ancient Litr→ Þórr
43	18	drekku Völsunga	drink of the Volsung descendants→ poison
44	18	hrøkkviáll drekku Völsunga	writhing eel of the Völsung-drink→ Jörmungandr
45	19	vágs ægi	bay (or wave)terrifier → Jörmungandr
46	19	Byrsendir	breeze-sender → Hymir (reference to Hræsvelgr, father of the winds)
47	19	máva Mœrar	flat, marshy land OR the Møre-district in Norway of seagulls → ocean
48	19	mjótygill máva Mœrar	thin rope of the ocean → fishing line
49	20	vinda munnlaug	hand basin of wind →sky

b. *Øxarflokkr*

i. Old Norse text and translation

1. Þar er Mardallar milli meginhurðar liggr skurða Gauts berum galla þrútinn grátr dalreyðar látra.	I carry the axe in which gold lies between the grooves heavily ornamented with gold.
2. Eigi þverr fyrir augna Óðs beðvinu Róða ræfs - eignisk svá - regni *ramsvell - konungr elli.	The sword is not diminished because of the gold; may the king thus reach old age.
3. Hróðrbarni kná ek Hörnar - hlutum dýran grip - stýra, brandr þrymr gjálfr<s> á grandi gullvífiðu *hlífar ; -sáðs - berr sinnar móður - svans unni mér gunnar fóstr- gœðandi Fróða - Freys nipt brá driptir.	I am able to possess the decorated weapon, the gold wrapped precious object. Gold rests on the axe. The decorated weapon is covered with gold. The warrior granted me gold.
4. Nýt buðumk - Njarðar dóttur (*nálægt var þat skála) vel of hrósa ek því - vísa varn (sjávar) öll - barni.	The helpful protection of the ruler was given to me. This was close to the sea-hall. I am highly proud of the decorated weapon.
5. Gaf sá er erring ofrar ógnprúðr Vanabrúðar þing- Váfaðar -þrøngvir þróttöfl<g>a mér dóttur.	The battle gallant warrior who acheives valour gave me a mighty decorated weapon. The powerful warrior led the decorated weapon to the bed of the skald covered with

Ríkr leiddi mey mækis
mótvaldr á *beð *skaldi
Gefnar glóðum drifna
Gautreks svana brautar.

gold.

6. Frá ek at Fróða meyjar
fullgóliga mólu
- lætr stillir grið gulli -
Grafvitnis beð - slitna.
Mjúks - bera minnar øxar
meldr þann við hlyn *feldrar -
konungs dýrkar fé - Fenju
fögr hlýr - bragar stýri.

I heard that Frodi's maids ground gold with great energy. The king allows protection of gold to be broken [he is generous with it]. The fair side of the face of my axe, fitted from maple, is adorned with gold. The gracious king's treasure adorns this poetry controller (poet).

7. Blóðeisu liggr bæði
bjargs tveim megin geima
sjóðs - á ek søkkva stríði -
snær ok eldr - at mæra.

Both silver and gold are inlaid on both sides of the axehead. I must praise the ruler.

8. Dœgr þrymr hvert - [en hjarta
hlýrskildir ræðr mildu
Heita blakks - of hvítum
hafleygr digulskaf]li.
Aldri má fyrir eldi
áls hrynbrautar skála
- öll viðr fólka [fellir
framræði - snæ] bræða.

Every day, gold lies upon silver. The sea captain rules with a generous heart. Never must the bowl of snow melt at the fire of the ocean. The war leader achieves all the glorious exploits.

9. Ráðvöndum þá ek ra<u>ðra
randa ís at vísa
- grand berum hjálms í hendi -
hvarmþey drifinn Freyju.

I carry the axe covered with gold from that righteous ruler, the axe in hand.

10. Sjá megu rétt hvé Ræfils
ríðendr við brá Gríðar
fjörnis fagrt of skornir
foldviggs drekar liggja.

Sailors can see how beautifully engraved dragons lie just by the axeblade.

11. Hringtælir gaf hálu
hlýrsólar mér dýra
oss kom hrund til handa
hræpolls drifin golli
sút þá er Herjans hattar.

**This stanza is from 3GT, not Skaldskaparmal, and will not be discussed.*

ii. Full List of Kennings in Øxarflokkr

#	Stanza	ON kenning	Translation
1	1	Mardallar grátr	Mardöll's tears → Freyja's tears → gold
2	1	meginhurðar Gauts galla	damager of Óðinn's mighty door → damager of the shield→ axe
3	1	dalreyðar látra	lair of the trout of the valley → lair of the snake → gold
4	2	augna Óðs beðvinu regni	rain of the eyes of Od's bedfellow (Freyja) → gold
5	2	Róða ræfs ramsvell	strong ice of Rodi's roof → ice of the shield → sword
6	3	Hróðrbarni Hörnar	Freyja's glorious child →Hnoss →decorated weapon
7	3	brandr gjálfrs	firebrand of the sea → gold
8	3	svans gunnar gœðandi	feeder of the battle swan →eagle feeder → warrior
9	3	sáðs fóstr Fróða	seed of Frodi's servants→ Fenja and Menja's seed → gold
10	3	hlífar grandi	damager of shields → axe
11	3	Freys nipt	Freyr's niece → Hnoss → decorated weapon
12	3	móður brá driptir	[Hnoss's] mother's eyelash rain→ Freyja's tears → gold
13	4	því barni Njarðar dóttur	this child of Njord's daughter →Freyja's child → Hnoss

			→ decorated weapon
14	5	Vanabrúðar	bride of the Vanir → Freyja
15	5	Váfaðar	Óðinn
16	5	þing Váfaðar þrøngvir	energetic pursuer of the Óðinn thing (battle)→ warrior
17	5	Vanabrúðar dóttur	daughter of the bride of the Vanir → daughter of Freyja → Hnoss → decorated heirloom
18	5	mey Gefnar	girl of Gefnar →daughter of Freyja→ Hnoss → decorated heirloom
19	5	mækis mótvaldr	controller of sword meetings → warrior
20	5	Gautreks svana	roadway of the sea king's swans → ships' roadway → sea
21	5	glóðum Gautreks svana brautar	Red hot embers of the sea → gold
22	6	Grafvitnis beð	The lair of the snake (Grafvitnir) →Gold
23	6	meldr þann Fenju	this that is ground of Fenja → gold
24	6	bragar stýri	controller of poetry → poet
25	7	blóðeisu bjargs	blood ember's head → axehead
26	7	sjóðs snær	purse of snow → silver
27	7	eldr geima	fire of the sea→ gold
28	7	søkkva stríði	opponent destroyer, enemy punisher → ruler
29	8	hlýrskildir Heita blakks	he who decks the bows of Heiti's horse with shields → sea captain
30	8	of hvítum digulskafli	the snow of the scales → silver
31	8	Hafleygr	fire of the sea → gold
32	8	áls hrynbrautar	flowing road of eels → sea
33	8	fólka fellir	the people killer → war leader
34	9	rauðra randa ís	ice of red shields → axe
35	9	hvarmþey Freyju	eyelid thaw of Freyja → Freyja's tears → gold
36	9	grand hjálms	damage of the helmet → axe
37	10	ríðendr Ræfils foldviggs	riders of Ræfil's land horses → riders of the seaking's land horses → riders of the ships → sailors
38	10	brá Gríðar fjörnis	eyelash of the giantess of the helmet → eyelash of the axe

			→ axeblade
39	11	hrund hræpolls	valkyrie (giantess?) of blood [unusual] → axe

IV. Analysis

Ragnarsdrápa is made up of twenty stanzas that describe four different myths. This paper will utilize Finnur Jónsson's edition of *Ragnarsdrápa* and follow the order of stanzas from his edition, although this is not a statement regarding their original order. The stanzas originally appear in groups at different parts of *Skáldskaparmál* by Snorri Sturluson, with the exception of one stanza which only appears in Snorri Sturluson's *Gylfaginning*. I will only be discussing the stanzas found in Skáldskaparmál and therefor will not discuss the thirteenth stanza from *Gylfaginning*. The poem originally appears in Snorri's *Edda* as follows (verse numbers from Anthony Faulkes' edition): verses 237 through 238, verses 154 through 158, verses 250 through 252, verse 254, verse 253, verse one of *Gylfaginning*, verse twenty-four, verse forty-eight, verse forty-two, verse fifty-one, verse 153, verse 266, and verse 110.

The first stanza is an introduction and does not correspond to a known myth. Bragi calls upon Hrafnketill and asks if he will listen as he praises the shield. This appeal to the audience has a long tradition in skaldic poetry, a subject described at length by Cecil Wood. [53] "This identical appeal is a recurrent skaldic formula…is peculiar to skaldic tradition…[and] requests the silence necessary for actual oral delivery." [54]

Stanzas two through six tell the story of Hamðir and Sörli, the brothers who seek vengeance on behalf of their sister, but kill their third brother in the process and consequently cause their own murders. After this story is the first appearance of the *stef* in which Bragi tells his audience that he sees the warriors falling on the shield, and that Ragnar has given him this gift with the multitude of stories upon it. Stanzas eight through eleven tell the story of Hildr and her father Högni. When Hildr is abducted by Heðinn, her father Högni pursues him until they meet at Háey. Despite any wishes of Heðinn and Högni (Snorri's prose version leads us to believe they both would prefer to reconcile), Hildr encourages the two to fight one another, and makes sure that the battle is long and costly. The next stanza is the second appearance of the *stef* where Bragi again says the attack can be seen on the shield given to him by Ragnar (he uses a different kenning for the word shield than he did in the seventh stanza). The thirteenth stanza is the telling of

[53] Wood, Cecil. "The Skald's Bid for a Hearing." The Journal of English and Germanic Philology 59.2 (1960): 240-54, page 24.
[54] Wood, page 24.

Gefjún's ploughing of Zealand from the soil of Sweden (this does not appear in *Skáldskaparmál*, only in *Gylfaginning*. I will not be discussing it). And finally, stanzas fourteen through nineteen tell the story of Þórr's fishing the Midgard serpent. This myth is one of many examples where Þórr tests his strength against a monster (or giant) and proves victorious. The final stanza is a fragment without a known correlating myth. It tells of someone who threw stars into the sky above "the dwellings of the multitude of men" [55] (earth).

In contrast to this rich and complex poem full of familial murder, horrendous snake wrestling and undead armies battling one another, *Øxarflokkr* is a praise poem of eleven stanzas that does not engage in any plot based narrative, but describes to the audience an axe as covered in gold, over and over again. Einarr's poem does not tell a story, and *Øxarflokkr* is so dependent on the merit of its kennings, that without them the poem is basically nonsense. The kennings give it a remarkable amount of technical merit, but when referents are replaced for full kennings the poem reads as follows (my translation):

"I carry the axe. It is not diminished by the gold, thus may the king reach old age. I possess the precious object covered with gold granted to me by the warrior. The ruler gave me protection at the sea hall and I am proud of the weapon. The warrior who achieves valour gave me the axe. He led the axe to the bed of the skald covered in gold. I heard that Frodi's maids ground the gold. The king is generous with gold. The axe is made with maple and gold. The king's treasure adorns me (the poet). Silver and gold are on each side, I praise the ruler. Every day, gold lies on silver. The ruler is generous. Never must snow melt fire. The leader achieves glorious exploits. I carry the axe with gold from the ruler. Sailors see the beautifully engraved dragons on the axeblade."

Guðrún Nordal writes that "… the art of skaldic verse is dependent on the versatility of the poets in substituting heiti for the base words instead of slavishly repeating the same nouns." [56] When operating under this maxim, Einarr is the superior poet. However, if the art of skaldic verse were dependent on the affectation of the listener based on the visual imagery and the intention of invoking an emotion from the listener via kenning, Bragi would be the better of the two. Einarr does not even begin to approach Bragi's genius in his vivid kennings and *ekphrastic* descriptions of the shield. The stories

[55] Faulkes, page 34.
[56] Nordal, Tools, page 243.

Bragi weaves are evocative and intriguing, while Einarr's use of pagan imagery is merely a mode for creating more diverse kennings. Einarr displays a truly impressive and unique ability to describe one referent with twelve different kennings and not a single word in common (in a mere eleven stanazas), a feat Bragi did not achieve, and in all likelihood would never aim for.

In short, these two poets composed in the same language, geographical area, and poetic tradition; they used similar kenning types that evolve from pagan imagery; and each describes a precious weapon given to them by a ruler whom they praise via a traditional skaldic long style poem. However, they could not be more different. This is due to the fact that Einarr's kennings are meant to show his scholastic prowess, and Bragi's are meant to affect his audience and move his plot based verse forward.

I will now give examples of the kennings from each poem that most fittingly illustrate their differences.

a. Significant Kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa*

The fourth stanza of *Ragnarsdrápa* is the third stanza of the Hamðir and Sörli myth. At this point in the narrative, the brothers have forced the man who murdered their sister, Jörmunrekkr, awake by cutting off his four limbs, and a fight has broken out between Jörmunrekkr's kinsmen and the two avenging brothers. Bragi opens this stanza with *Flaut of set við sveita / sóknar *álfs á gólfi / hræva dögg…* "Blood flowed over the benches together with the war elf's blood on the floor…". These three lines contain two kennings, and two mentions of blood, one via kenning and one directly (*sveita*). The kenning I find most interesting is *hræva dögg*, "corpse dew." The phrase is followed by the verb *flaut* which is the past tense of *fljóta* meaning"flowed" or "streamed." I believe this kenning is used not just to evoke the word "blood" but to imply that blood is literally everywhere. The word dew implies a sheen of wet liquid as far as one can see. Translated slightly differently, taking *hræva* as "dead bodies" *dögg* as simply "water" means that Bragi wanted his listener to picture Jörmunrekkr awakening to the water of dead bodies flowing over the benches of his hall. This implies an even larger amount of Jörmunrekkr's mens' blood coursing everywhere and mixing with his own from the recent loss of his arms and legs. I believe Bragi has achieved in two words what would otherwise take

sentences to evoke. The audience is immediately struck with the imagery of grotesque and awful amounts of blood, without the author explicitly stating this.

In the stanza before this, the third, Bragi describes the tumult occurring in the hall upon Jörmunrekkr awakening from a dream. Besides the vivid kenning *sverða flaumi* found in this stanza, Bragi's semantic play here exhibits his aim at garnering an emotional effect from his audience in the phrase *vakna við illan draum.* The phrase in English is "[Jörmunrekkr was forced] to awake with a cruel dream" and refers to Hamðir and Sörli having just cut off Jörmunrekkr's arms and legs as he slept. Faulkes says, his definition of *vakna* "wake in response to an evil dream, ironically, meaning awake to something that seemed an evil dream, i. e. awake to cruel reality."[57] The double meaning of *illam vakna* allows Bragi to convey two messages within one word, for Jörmunrekkr awakens not only from dream (he was asleep and assumedly dreaming), but also *into* a nightmare as he sees the tumult in his hall, and the stream of blood pouring from the wounds where he previously had arms and legs.

A kenning of special interest appears in the third stanza. Bragi conveys that Jörmunrekkr *at vakna / með dreyrfár dróttir draum / í sverða flaumi,* "awakened among blood stained troops in [waging] a battle." The kenning *sverða flaumi* means "torrent of swords" from the words *sverða* which means sword, and *flaumr* which Faulkes describes as a torrent, but Zoëga describes as a "violent stream". The adjective *violent* in Zoëga's definition is notable, as is Bragi's choice of the word *flaumr*.

There are many ways to imply the referent "battle" using the word *sverða*. The most common way was to convey a sense that the swords made a song, and this "song of swords" was a kenning for battle.[58] Similar to the image of a sword's song conveying the kenning referent "battle", is the kenning type that refers to a different kind of noise that a sword makes in battle, one with a pejorative connotation. This type is the tumult, din, or racket of swords that is a kenning for battle. [59] And finally, there is a type that refers to a meeting of swords as a kenning for battle. In fact, even stanza nine of *Ragnarsdrápa*

[57] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* glossary, definition of *vakna*.
[58] This kenning type appears in *Liðsmannaflokkr* (*sǫng sverða*), *Jómsvíkingadrápa* (*Sǫngr snarpra sverða*), *Vellekla* (*sverða sǫng*), *Óláfsdrápa* (*sverða sǫng*) and with the slight variation of "a chant of swords" in *Hákonarkviða* (*seið sverða*). Skaldic Poetry Database, Kenning Database, "Battle" Referent, Accessed October 17, 2013,
[59] This occurs in EValg Lv1 (*dynr sverða*, "tumult of swords"), *Eiríksflokkr* (*Gnýr sverða*, "din of swords"), *Ingadrápa* (*Sverða glaum*, "racket of swords") and *Nesjavísur* (*gnýs sverða*, "for the din of swords"). Skaldic Poetry Database, Kenning Database, "Battle" Referent, Accessed October 17, 2013.

contains the kenning at *móti málma*, "the assembly of weapons" with the intended referent of battle. [60]

Bragi's unique choice of the word *flaumr* as a conveyance for battle is notable for two reasons. First, while it was generally accepted that a sword's noise (upon meeting other swords) is the proper kenning for battle, or even a sword's meeting of another (which also makes a noise), Bragi chose to imply that the swords were streaming, as a violent eddy would. This conveys the sense of a whirling, chaotic, harsh scene with innumerable swords crashing all around, as the water of an eddy would. By employing the word *flaumr* Bragi achieved a second feat: the image of water in the minds of his audience. Four lines later appears a second water associated kenning, *hræva dögg*. The violent stream of swords ties into the image of battle, certainly, but more importantly a very bloody battle, which four lines later is described as containing so much blood that "corpse water" covers the benches and mixes with Jörmunrekkr's own *sveita*.

Flaumr is used at least one other time within a kenning for battle in the skaldic poetic tradition, but there is a striking difference. In the fifth stanza of *Kátrínardrápa*, Kálfr Hallsson composed the kenning *flaums odda* meaning "of the stream of spear points" with the intended referent of "battle." The kenning *flaums odda* is not notable, but Bragi's choice of *flaumr* in a kenning for the battle is. This is because Hallsson is describing the movement of spears, and Bragi is describing that of swords. The key here is that spears are thrown, and thus cascade in a way that reminds one of water. The battle that Jörmunrekkr was awakening to was within one hall, and the swords Bragi refers to were not being thrown. Rather, there were so many, and moving at such a chaotic pace, that the image he chose to evoke was that of a swirling eddy of water. Hallsson does not continue the water imagery past her kenning *flaumr odda*, but Bragi does, which makes a stronger argument for his deliberate word choice.

When discussing the interesting nature of *sverða flaumr*, it should be mentioned that Stavnem believes this kenning can be interpreted two ways, and the translations are "equally relevant."[61] Stavnem writes that "sword torrent" can be taken as a kenning for

[60] This occurs in *Bandadrápa* specifically with *sverða, hǫrðu móti sverða*, "the hard meeting of swords", but also appears often when using the word weapon instead of sword. Skaldic Poetry Database, Kenning Database, "Battle" Referent, Accessed October 17, 2013.
[61] Stavnem, page 169.

battle or blood.[62] Meissner believes it to be a blood-kenning due to its weapon or battle determinant (*sverða*), and its liquid base-word (*flaumr*). It is not necessary to choose one meaning for the kenning, due to the fact that both enhance the meaning of the stanza. "The ruler awakes to a violent fight inside his hall and at the same time he awakes to a stream of blood, that may well be his own. This is just one of several kennings in the *drapa* where more than one sense is not only possible but probably also intended." [63]

In the fifth stanza Bragi recounts the portion of the myth where Hamðir and Sörli are surrounded by Jörmunrekkr's men and stoned to death. To describe the brothers, Bragi composed the kenning *segls naglfara siglur* which is one entire line of the eight line stanza, and also contains internal rhyme in each word with *egl*, *agl* and *igl*. The phrase means "masts of the sail of the swords" and refers to the proper noun *Naglfari*, which is a sword that is "rivetted, decorated with nails or studs." [64] The usage of three nautical terms within one kenning may also be an example of *nýgerving*, and I will discuss in the section of this paper regarding this literary device.

This kenning is interesting for multiple reasons. Firstly, according to Rolf Stavnem, Naglfar is not only the name of a sword, but also a ship. *Gylfaginning* says the ship is made of the toenails of dead people, and once it is completed Ragnarök will begin. In that case, the kenning can either read "masts of the sails of the sword" or "masts of the sails of the ship." A kenning referring to two brothers as masts of a ship made up of the clipped toenails of corpses, is grotesque image the resonates more with an audience than the two brothers perceived as two masts of a sword (which seems to be more allusive than logical).[65]

A second interesting thing about this kenning is Jón Helgason's observation that the word *styðja* "indicates that the weapons are pressed against the brothers in such a way that they are unable to fall, and thus the brothers are dying but still standing due to the pressure of enemy weapons." [66] This is another powerful image, of dying men literally stuck to the ground standing due to the number of swords and other weapons holding them upright.

---

[62] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* glossary, "*flaumr* m. torrent; in kennings for battle (or flood of blood)"
[63] Stavnem, page 170.
[64] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* glossary, definition of *naglfara*.
[65] Stavnem, page 172.
[66] Stavnem, page 172.

An additional kenning of note from this fifth stanza is *Hergauts vinu herðimýlum* meaning "the earth's shoulder lumps > stones." Faulkes translates *herðimýll* as shoulder-lump or hardness-lump, but Zoëga defines the prefix *herða* as "(1) tempering (of steel), steeling; (2) hardness, severity." The situation being described is the stoning of Hamðir and Sörli after they tried to murder Jörmunrekkr in his sleep. *Urðu snemst ok Sörli / samráða þeir Hamðir / hörðum herðimýlum / Hergauts vinu barðir.* "Very soon Hamðir and Sörli came to be struck by everyone at once with Hergaut's [Óðinn's] woman-friend [Jorð's, earth's] hard shoulder-lumps [stones]." I believe that the word *herða* meaning "severe" parallels the severity of the punishment Hamðir and Sörli are receiving, as well as the severity of the atrocity they tried to commit against Jörmunrekkr, and earlier in the myth committed against their own brother. The family murders occurring in this myth, as well as the grotesque imagery of lumps of Jorð being hurled at the brothers until they are dead where they stand, are all sharp and severe images, and I believe Bragi chose *herða* to depict this.

In the sixth stanza, the fifth and final stanza of the myth of Hamðir and Sörli, Bragi uses the kenning *Foglhildar mun* which means "Foghildar's loved one" with the implied meaning of the kenning being "Jörmunrekkr." By using the kenning *Foglhildar mun*, he employs the word *munr* which means "joy, love, loved one" [67] and the proper noun *Foglhildar* which is a compound word that when broken apart literally means bird-Hildr (employing the Old Norse word *fugl* meaning "bird"). Since the proper noun Svanhildr translates as swan-Hildr, Bragi is using the general word bird, for the part of a proper noun that means swan. Thus, bird-Hildr refers to Svanhildr, the wife of Jörmunrekkr.

By choosing this kenning, Bragi is reminding his audience that the Jörmunrekkr who Hamðir and Sörli are trying to kill, has already committed a murder himself, and thus his guilt is implied by a kenning, rather than composed in the actual verse. Jörmunrekkr appears in the poem with other kennings as well (*sóknar álfr* "congregation elf", *ölskakki runna* "ale-dispensing tree", and *støkkvir stála flaums* "impeller[68] of battles"), but this kenning was specifically chosen to advance the storyline of his poem. Bragi also took the kenning a step further by using the term *Foglhildar*. He could have composed the verse

[67] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* glossary, definition of *munr*.

[68] Note that a literal translation of *støkkvir* is "sprinkler" and will be discussed later in the paper.

using the kenning *Svanhildar mun* and achieved the same meaning, but he took the analogy a step further by using *fugl* and thus added complexity to his work.

I have previously discussed *flaumr* but return to it now due to its appearance in the sixth stanza of *Ragnarsdrápa*, the stanza which concludes the story of Hamðir and Sörli. The stanza reads *Mjök lét stála støkkvir / styðja Gjúka niðja / flaums þá er fjörvi *næma / Foglhildar mun vildu*, "The steel-torrent [battle] impeller [king] caused Giuki's descendants to be hit hard when they tried to deprive Birdhild's [swan-hild's, Svanhild's] delight [husband] of life." The kenning *støkkvir stála flaums* means literally "impeller of torrents of steel > impeller of battles > war leader (Jörmunrekkr)". This is the second usage of the same word within the same narrative sequence (the story of Hamðir and Sörli). Why would Bragi choose to repeat a word when his Old Norse choices to convey a stream of water were many? By reusing a word, and once again within a kenning, Bragi is asking his audience to remember the first usage while absorbing the meaning of the second. When he refers to Jörmunrekkr as the one who impels a violent stream of steel, his audience understands that this stanza is about Giuki's descendants, Hamðir and Sörli, losing their lives because they tried to kill the one *who* loved Swanhild, but are simultaneously brought back, via the second usage of the word flaumr, to the powerful imagery of the whirling eddy of swords from the third stanza. Thus they remember how Jörmunrekkr was awakened in a tub of his own blood, and perhaps the stanza is more powerful now that the vengeance he kills the brothers with is just.

The next notable kenning appears in the opening stanza of the Hildr and Högni myth. Bragi composed *Ok *ofþerris *æða / ósk-Rán at þat sínum / til fárhuga færi / feðr veðr *boga hugði*, "And the Ran who wishes too great drying of veins [Hild] planned to bring this bow-storm against her father with hostile intention." The notable kenning here is *ofþerris æða ósk-Rán* meaning "Ran who desires very great drying of veins." Bragi conveys this image of the sea goddess Ran to evoke the image of Hildr, and his description of her here is dramatic and unambiguous. He wants his audience to know that she is so evil she literally wishes to open up mens' veins and bleed them until they are "too dry" and therefor dead. Bragi uses a compound word here and places the prefix *ósk* to impart how greatly she wishes for this to happen. Hildr is not just the goddess Ran, but she is the wish-goddess, the one whose desire (for the dried up veins of men) is her most notable characteristic.

Bragi's choice of Ran as the goddess in the kennings for the referent Hildr is interesting. Ran is a goddess of the sea, and thus a tension is noticeable here between the sea goddess (a goddess of water) who wishes for things to be dry. This antithetical tension is counteracted by the fact that she wishes for her victims to bleed out, and in actuality she desires a great amount of blood, another instance of water imagery. Ultimately, it is striking that Bragi chose a water goddess who specifically desires the *ofþerris* "too great drying" of veins.

Zoëga defines five words in his dictionary that begin with *ósk* as part of a compound word. They are: *óska-byrr* m. a fair wind to ones hearts content, *óska-vel* adv. Just as one wishes, exceedingly well, *ósk-barn* n. adopted child, *ósk-mær* f. chosen maid, *ósk-mögr* m. beloved son. [69] It is striking that each compound word is something positive. Zoëga cites the fair wind until one's heart is done wishing, the adverb that means something went exactly how one had wished it would, the wished for (adopted) child, the wanted and gotten maid, the beloved son. Is it possible that *ósk* usually had a positive connotation, and Bragi used it oppositely? If so, this could have been done to make the image even more dramatic. If an audience hears a word and expects something lovely, a perfect wind, a sought after child, and instead hears of a sea goddess whose one wish in life is that veins be opened until they are parched and brittle, the reaction to such a kenning would be that much more effective. Furthermore, in these compounds *ósk* determines the latter part of the compound. The "lovely" adjective implied by the other compound words containing *ósk* would apply here and cause the audience to interpret *ósk-Rán* as "lovely Ran." Once hearing the deeds of the "lovely Ran" the listener realizes she is not just the opposite, but horribly so. This is another example of the dramatic tension Bragi achieves with *ósk-Rán.* The "lovely" goddess of the sea, is a horrible monster obsessed with drying veins.

The second half of stanza eight contains a kenning of interest due to a secondary definition by Zoëga that Faulkes does not write about. The poem reads: *þá er hristi-Sif hringa háls, *in böls of fylda bar til byrjar drösla baug ørlygis draugi,* "when ring (-sword) shaking Sif [Hild], filled with malice, brought a neck-ring on to the wind's horse [ship] to the battle-trunk [warrior]." The notable kenning here is *ørlygis draugi* meaning

[69] Zoëga, Geir T. *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004, page 325.

"the tree trunk of battle" as a kenning for "warrior." Faulkes defines *ørlygi* as simply "battle" and *draugr* as "m. trunk (of a tree)". However, when using definitions by Zoëga, the kenning gains importance. Zoëga says that the plural of *ørlygis* is "fate, doom, fortunes" and does not define *draugr* as "tree" at all, but "draugr (-s, -ar), m. the dead inhabitant of a cairn, ghost, spirit." Thus, instead of Bragi refering to Hildr bringing a neck ring to the warrior, she is bringing a neck ring to the dead inhabitants, ghosts of battle, and uses a word for battle which harkens to one's mind the thought of fate and doom.

Hildr is bringing her father the neck ring to feign interest in reconciliation between Högni and Heðinn, but in actuality she is spurring him onto war, and later raises his dead army just to see their blood spilled anew. If Bragi intentionally used the word meaning "dead inhabitant of a cairn, ghost, spirit" to describe Hildr's still living father, as well as paired it with a word that in its plural form means "fate, doom, fortunes" then his kenning is layered with meaning. This is the first stanza of the myth, and the audience knows the myth, but not exactly how Bragi intends to tell it. In fact, Stavnem writes that "the unusual meaning could be perceived as a foreshadowing of the mythic conditions of the Hjaðnings' battle," [70] and he also believes that Hildr is much more malicious in Bragi's eyes than the prose form of this myth that Snorri tells in *Skáldskaparmál*. Stavnem believes Hildr's interest in Snorri's prose version of the myth is "slight…compared with the stanzas" Bragi gives us. In the prose, Hildr's actions are observed, but in *Ragnarsdrápa* she is the main focus, the "primadonna…denoted with spectacular kennings." [71]

In addition to focusing on Hildr, Bragi's portrayal of the myth focuses specifically on the doom that will befall Högni and Heðinn (and their armies) as soon as Hildr arrives with the neck-ring with her false pretense of peace. Bragi's version of the myth puts a lot of focus on the fate of the warriors and leaders, as well as Hildr's knowledge of all that is to come. Surely the fact that Bragi chose to use a word for battle *ørlygi* that in its plural form means "fate, doom, fortunes" was no accident.

The kenning *hristi-Sif hringa*, meaning "sword wielding Sif who shakes rings," is another example of Bragi infusing one kenning with multiple meanings. The word *hringr* refers to not only the neck ring Hildr offers her father, but also a sword. This duel

[70] Stavnem, pages 177-178.
[71] Stavnem, pages 176.

definition is due to the fact that *hringr* takes on separate meanings depending on its word pairing. When *hringr* is paired with *Sif*, it is a straight forward woman-kenning meaning "ornament of the goddess (Sif, Þórr's wife)". However, when *hringr* refers directly to Hildr, the listener can infer that Hildr means "battle" through the literary trope of *ofljóst*, and the meaning becomes "the goddess who makes the weapon shake." Stavnem writes that this gives the kenning "extra dimension" because Hildr goes to her father with the neck-ring, which is "a symbol of deceit" and thus the double meaning of the kenning parallels the "double dealing" of Hildr. [72]

In the tenth stanza, Bragi tells of Högni happily providing dead warriors to Hildr, which causes hatred to rise up in Heðinn who does not accept her neck rings. The most notable kenning here is *glamma munr* meaning "the wolf/the howler's hunger/pleasure" and can be further simplified to just "manslaughter". Bragi is explaining that Högni does not wish to stop the "howler's pleasure" but instead he feeds the howler "with fallen warriors". Bragi has chosen to invoke the image of a wolf, giving his audience a possible association with the violent Fenrir, and alludes to the pleasure the wolf receives by eating human flesh to sate his hunger.

The connection to Fenrir occurred originally in the ninth stanza within the kenning *úlfs algífris lifra* meaning "the wolf's most monstrous sister" implying the referent "Hel." Faulkes defines algífri as "compelte monster" but goes on to say it is a descriptive genitive with úlfs: that complete monster of a wolf (i. e. Fenrir)" [73] I believe the two kennings are related, and both refer to Fenrir. If the statement "the wolf's most monstrous sister, Hel" is supposed to refer to Fenrir, then the kenning *glamma munr* "the wolf's pleasure" in the very next stanza may be an allusion to Fenrir.

In the same way that Bragi used *flaumr* twice to invoke the meaning of his first usage via the second and create a mental connection for his listeners, he has reused *munr* in this instance, as its first appearance was in a kenning in stanza six. The difference in this case, is how his repitition aims to affect his listener. With *flaumr* Bragi reminded the audience that Hamðir and Sörli were engaged in a violent stream of swords while trying to murder Jörmunrekkr, and then received their punishment when Jörmunrekkr impelled a violent stream of steel upon them. The double usage of *munr* is a stark contrast to this. The

[72] Stavnem, page 178.
[73] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* glossary, definition of *algífri.*

word first appears in the third stanza, in the kenning for Jörmunrekkr, *Foglhildar mun* meaning "Foglhildar's loved one." The first time his audience heard the word it meant Svanhildr, who is in fact absent in the actual poem, but is the impetus for everything that occurs in the myth. She truly is the "loved one" as the beloved wife of Jörmunrekkr, and the sister of two men who died for her.

When the audience hears *munr* five stanzas later, it is in a violent kenning regarding the mounstrous wolf Fenrir and the delight he finds in dead bodies he eats. The two kennings could not be more different. In this case, he did not reuse a word to harken back the first one and bring a myth full circle, but he used the same word in two different kennings referring to two different motifs, in an effort to juxtapose the two meanings and thus enhance each kenning by contrasting it so starkly to the other.

The fifteenth stanza is the second stanza of six that make up the myth of Þórr fishing for and defeating the Midgard serpent. The stanza reads *Hamri fórsk í hægri / hönd þar er allra landa / ægir Öflugbarða / *endiseiðs *of kendi*, "Oflugbardi's terrifier [Þórr] lifted his hammer in his right hand when he recognized the coal-fish that bounds all lands [the Midgard's serpent]." There are two kennings within the stanza, and I will discuss the first. Bragi uses the following kenning for the referent Þórr, *ægir Öflugbarða*, which means "terrifier of the giant (whose name is Oflugbardi)."

There are two things to note here. First, Bragi's choice of the word *ægir* is marked. The prefix *æg* is used very often in Old Norse literature to mean terrible things. Zoëga gives at least four examples of this: *ægi-liga*, an adverb meaning "terribly, threateningly"; *ægis-hjálmr,* "helmet of terror"; *ægi –hjálm,* "to have a terror striking glance"; *ægja*, a verb meaning "to make terrible, to exaggerate, to threaten (with torture)". The common usage of this word meaning so many horrible things stands out to me as an intensifier of the kenning. Not only is Þórr the one who frightens Öflugbarða, but does something akin to terrorizing or even threatening with torture. The word choice here seems purposeful and used to intensify the strength of Þórr who is about to murder the world serpent.

The second thing to note is that *ægir* is reused four stanzas later, and may or may not be a kenning. The stanza reads *Vildit röngum ofra / vágs byrsendir ægi / hinn er mjótygil máva / Mærar skar fyrir Þóri,* "Breeze-sender [giant, Hymir], who cut the thin string [fishing-line] of gulls' Møre [the sea] for Þórr, did not want to lift the twisted bay-menacer [Midgard serpent]." The Midgard serpent is referenced by the kenning *[v]röngum*

vágs ægir "twisted bay menacer" but Kock argues that *vágs byrsendir* could be a kenning for "Hymir ('sender of sea-storms') and leaves *ægir* as a term for the serpent on its own." [74] This leaves the stanza virtually unchanged due to the fact that *byrsendir* now is translated with *vágs* to mean Hymir, while *ægi* is left on its own to mean "serpent." Essentially, *vágs* has moved from being associated with one word to another, but the meaning of the two phrases remains the same. While Einarr has several kennings of a single compound word, Bragi has only one, *byrsendir*, from this very stanza. If we take Kock's translation to be the correct one, we still only have a single one word kenning, because instead of *byrsendir*, he takes *ægir* as the one word kenning for the Midgard serpent.

I agree with Kock's translation over Faulkes' and I believe it enhances the meaning of the stanza, and more accurately characterizes both Þórr and the serpent. The words *byrsendir* and *ægir*, according to Faulkes, mean Hymir and Þórr, respectively. According to Kock, they are defined as Hymir and the Midgard serpent, respectively. This means that Kock and Faulkes disagree on one word, and believe it could mean either Þórr, benevolent hammer wielding protector of mankind against any and all enemies, or the world's most terrifying serpent Jörmungandr who intends to let go his hold of the earth one day and literally cause the end of the world. The reason I believe Kock is correct in translating *ægir* as simply "terrifier" and thus a one word kenning for Jörmungandr, is because the word appears to be inherently evil and malicious (see earlier translation by Zoëga), and thus I believe it was an intentional choice by Bragi to describe the repulsive and terrifying snake, and not the beloved protector god Þórr.

The eighteenth stanza requires a closer investigation due to Bragi's use of the word *hrøkkviáll.* This four line stanza describes Þórr's hook (of his fishing line) piercing the Midgard serpent, at which point he coils. The full kenning to describe Jörmungandr here is *hrøkkviáll drekku Völsunga,* "writhing eel of the Völsung-drink" which is furtherd simplified as "poison". Faulkes defines *hrøkkviáll* as "writhing eel", but Zoëga defines the prefix *hrøkkva* as "(hrøkk; hrökk, hrukkum; hrokkinn), v. (1) to fall back, recoil, be repelled." The examples Zoëga gives after his definition are: "h. frá, to shrink back; h. fyrir e-m, to give way before one (gekk konungr svá hart fram, at allt hrökk fyrir honum); h. undan, to give way, draw back, retreat (hrukku Baglar þá undan)…." It is notable that

[74] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* glossary, definition of *ægir*

hrøkkva can mean both “writhing” or “coiled” (both apt adjectives for a snake), but also may refer to someone who is “repelled”, “shrinking back”, “giving way before” or “retreating”. The repellant nature of the Midgard serpent seems evident in Bragi’s word choice for this kenning, as the examples Zoëga gives imply that the verb *hrøkk* is used to describe the motion one takes away from something that is repulsive and from which one should “recoil”. If Bragi had chosen an alternate word to imply “writhing”, I would not infer a secondary meaning, but the association with the verb *hrøkk* clearly exhibits an example of two inherent meanings within one kenning. *hrøkkviáll drekku Völsunga* refers to the “eel of the Völsung-drink” as not only “writhing” but also “repellant” or a snake from which one should retreat.

Bragi’s kenning *vágs ægi* from stanza nineteen is yet another example of his ability to impart a kenning with multiple effects due to word choice. The phrase *vágs ægi* may be defined with *vágr* as “bay; wave” and *ægir* as “terrifier” in a straightforward kenning for the Midgard serpent. Zoëga also defines *vágr* as “(1) wave, sea; (2) creek, bay,” so there is nothing notable there. However, the third definition Zoëga gives for *vágr*, immediately after wave, sea, creek and bay, is “(3) matter from a sore.” I cannot think of a more revolting image than “matter from a sore” and the implied associations included in this definition (the sight of pus, the smell of an infection, and even the word “matter” when describing an open wound which occurs on one’s body). Surely *vágr* was selected by Bragi for this repulsive connotation. He may intend to refer to the slippery, slithering serpeant who exists in a bay of poison, with a word that subtly causes the audience to be frightened doubly by the secondary definition which evokes the image of puss-filled matter from a sore. While the Midgard serpent implies death at the hands of a mythological monster, matter from a sore does the same in a time of relatively primitive medical knowledge, where an infected sore may also imply death.

The final kenning that I believe proves the fact that Bragi chose his words extraordinarily carefully to affect his audience in the most persuasive way possible, occurs in stanza seventeen. *Ok *borðróins barða / brautar hringr inn ljóti / <á hausprengi Hrungnis> / harðgeðr neðan starði,* “And the ugly ring [serpent] of the side-oared ship’s road [sea] stared up spitefully at Hrungnir’s skull-splitter.” The relevant kenning here (of two), is *Hrungnis hausprengir* meaning “the skull splitter of Hrungnir” a kenning for Þórr. I find this kenning noteworthy for two reasons.

Firstly, the word *haussprengir* is extremely vivid on its own. He could have called Þórr "the killer of the giant" as many other kennings do. But the compound word *haussprengir* from *hauss*, "skull" and *sprengja* the verb that means "to make burst" leaves nothing to the imagination regarding the way in which Þórr absolutely demolished the giant Hrungnir.

Secondly, the choice of this myth to describe Þórr (who has killed so many giants, this exact same kenning type could have been used with a multitude of proper nouns other than Hrungnir), is extremely relevant for the poem. The story Bragi is mentioning, and undoubtedly all of his audience is well aware of, is that of Þórr's slaying of the giant Hrungnir. A version of the myth exists in *Skáldskaparmál*. Snorri writes:

> *Þá rann Þjálfi fram at, þar er Hrungnir stóð, ok mælti til hans: "Þú stendr óvarliga, jötunn, hefir skjöldinn fyrir þér, en Þórr hefir sét þik, ok ferr hann it neðra í jörðu, ok mun hann koma neðan at þér." Þá skaut Hrungnir skildinum undir fætr sér ok stóð á, en tvíhendi heinina.* [75]

> "Thor traveled to the duel and with him Þjálfi. Then Þjálfi ran up to where Hrungnir was standing and said to him: "You stand unwisely, giant, you have your shield in front of you, but Thor has seen you and is traveling the underground route through the earth, and he will come at you from underneath. Then Hrungnir thrust his shield under his feet and stood on it, and grabbed the hone with two hands. [76]

Hrungnir stood on his shield, expecting Þórr to come from below, a foolish action as Lindow says "he misused ordinary weaponry… [a shield] would be held up in the air with the hands, not stood upon with the feet… Hrungnir is culturally clueless… he cannot properly use the culture's tools, any more than he can adhere to its other norms." [77] Because of his idiocy, Hrungnir is unprepared when Þórr arrives not from below, but from above, with his hammer outstretched, which he promptly throws at Hrungnir. *En*

[75] Faulkes, page 21.
[76] Lindow, John. "Thor's Duel with Hrungnir." Alvíssmál 6 (1996): 3-20, page 14.
[77] Lindow, page 7.

hamarrinn Mjöllnir kom í mitt höfuð Hrungni ok lamði hausinn í smán mola, [78] *ok fell hann fram yfir Þór, svá at fótr hans lá of háls Þór.* "But the hammer Mjöllnir struck Hrungnir in the middle of the head, and smashed his skull into small crumbs, and he fell forward upon Þórr, so that his foot lay over Þórr's neck." [79]

Bragi used the kenning *Hrungnis haussprengir* not just to alert his audience to the fact that Þórr is a giant killer, a fact they know well, but specifically because of the intrical role that Hrungnir's shield plays in this myth. Bragi is writing an ekphrastic poem describing a shield, what better way to subtly harken back to the fact that he is praising his benefactor for the gift, than to use a kenning for Þórr which calls to mind for his audience a mythological event where a shield was of the utmost importance, but used incorrectly and ended a giant's life tragically.

Lindow also points out that from the very first stanza of *Ragnarsdrápa*, Bragi intends to use this myth in his description of the shield. He references the kenning discussed earlier from the first stanza, *blað ilja Þrúðar þjófs,* and writes "That what Hrungnir stood on was his shield is verified by the kenning in the opening stanza of Bragi's *Ragnarsdrápa*…which can hardly refer to anything but the shield he is praising and describing. [80] Lindow uses the translation "leaf of the soles of the thief of Þrúðr." Leaf here means something that you stand upon, and soles are feet, thus someone standing on something is Hrungnir standing upon his shield.

Bragi's use of kennings conveys an old-worldly feeling of pagan images that are emotionally gripping. They add to the drama of the poem, as well as the theme and its overall feel. They are evocative and intriguing and dark. Perhaps he needs his poetry to be this persuasive, so that he might adequately convince his listeners of the greatness of his patron and ruler. After all, Bragi was reliant on his benefactor for his livelihood.

Einarr on the other hand, constructs his kennings in a scholarly way and uses them to illustrate his grammatical prowess. His writing is learned, new, structured, grammar-based and impresses the listener in a much different way than Bragi's poetry does. Einarr's mastery of kennings is scholastic, as opposed to Bragi's which is evocative. They are both writing in the skaldic tradition, both using the *drápa/flokkr* form of a long praise poem and

[78] The description *lamði hausinn í smán mola* may have been written by Snorri with Bragi's kenning in mind (*Hrungnis haussprengir*).
[79] Brodeur, Arthur Gilchrist. "The Prose Edda." Sacred Texts. Sacred-texts, n.d. Web. 20 Sept. 2013.
[80] Lindow, page 7.

both describing a weapon given to them as a gift. They each make an abundant use of kennings and compose ekphrasically, and yet with all of these similarities, their achieved poetry is fundamentally and distinctly different.

b. Significant Kennings in *Øxarflokkr*

Einarr's use of gold kennings in *Øxarflokkr* is practically a scholastic exercise for him. His intention is not so much to describe a gorgeous axe with evocative kennings, as to invoke "gold" as many times as possible, through a thematically ordered array of kennings. He refers to gold twelve times, never using the actual word for gold, never using an Old Norse word twice, and never referring to gold with a certain myth that is not revisited. Four times he uses the myth of Freyja's tears, four times he refers to gold as the fire of the sea, twice he employs the Fenja and Menja myth and twice refers to gold as the bed of the snake.

Bragi does not use a kenning for the same referent anywhere near this many times, and when he does refer to the same referent, he uses different kenning types. Although Bragi uses kennings to describe certain words multiple times (eight kennings for shield, six for battle, five for Jörmungandr, four for ruler, and four for Þórr), he does not use any sort of methodical scholastic model as Einarr does. Bragi reuses kenning referents, but his aim is to drive his plot forward, he does not wish to showcase his talent for utilizing the largest variety of kenning types for describing a single referent.

Nordal says that in Old Norse poetry, "Pagan gold kennings make use of five images…"[81] but only one of the five is something Einarr uses in *Øxarflokkr*, "the tears of Freyja."[82] Nordal's use of the word "pagan" here refers to the "legends for gold" listed by Snorri in Skáldskaparmál. She is using the definition of pagan as referring to the mythical stories that included deities worshipped before Christianity was accepted in Iceland and Norway. The five gold kennings Nordal cites each mention some aspect of the old world religion, or pagan religion, of Norse mythology': gods (Freyja, Ægir), dwarves or giants. [83]

[81] Nordal, Tools, 329.
[82] Nordal, Tools, 329.
[83] Nordal cites five gold kenning types from Skáldskaparmál: "1. The fire of Ægir, 2. The *barr* of Glasir, 3. The objects of the dwarfs, such as the *haddr* of Sif, the ring Draupnir, Fulla's headband, 4. The tears of Freyja and 5. The words or voice of giants," Nordal, Tools, page 329.

Øxarflokkr contains seventeen separate kennings that all mean gold or precious object, in a mere sixty lines. That is an average of one kenning for gold every three and a half lines. Of the twelve gold kennings, one is a single word, six are two words, three are three words, and two are four words. Four of them have the exact same meaning (Freyja's tears), but they do not share a single word in common. I will discuss the kennings meaning "precious object" afterward.

The gold kennings begin in the very first stanza. The first one of the entire poem appears in line one and four, *Mardöll grátr* "Mardöll's <Freyja's> tears [GOLD]". This is another aspect of Einarr's kennings that differs from Bragi's and I will discuss in greater detail below. The words that make up Bragi's kennings are overwhelmingly more likely to be next to one another than Einarr's. This adds a complexity to Einarr's verse, since the audience must hear the word *Mardallar* as the third word in the poem, and wait for three more lines to put it together with *grátr* to understand that Einarr is referencing the tears of Mardöll, a pseudonym for the goddess associated with gold, and thus, her tears are gold.

The second stanza contains another kenning that means Freyja's tears, but is four words, spread out over three different lines, and using none of the same words as the kenning for gold in the previous stanza. The phrase is *augna Óðs beðvinu regni* "rain of the eyes of Od's bedfellow <Freyja> [GOLD]". Instead of calling Freyja by a pseudonym here, as in the first stanza, Einarr refers to her by way of connecting her to her husband Oðr.

The third stanza brings about our third kenning for "Freyja's tears" and thus "gold". Einarr has described Freyja with another name, as well as by her association with her husband Oðr, but in the third stanza he explores another way to express Freyja and her tears, *móður brá driptir* "(Hnoss's) mother's eyelash rain <tears> [GOLD]". This time he refers to her via her daughter, Hnoss, and instead of mentioning simply "tears" or "the rain of her eyes" he specifically mentions her eyelash rain and employs *driptir* for "rain" instead of *regni* as in the previous stanza.

And finally, Einarr calls Freyja by her actual name in the ninth stanza, *hvarmþey Freyju* "eyelid thaw <tears> of Freyja [GOLD]". He does not, however, use an actual word for rain here. Instead, he creatively calls her tears the thaw of her eyelids, a very clever way of escaping the banality of reusing the word "rain", or "tear." Einarr has referenced Freyja eight times and mentioned her by name only once.

Einarr describes gold in eight different ways, and never reuses a word within these kennings. Two of these gold kennings relate to the place where a snake lies, implying a place heaped with gold. The reference here is to the myth of Fafnir (found in full in Volsunga Saga), who lies upon more gold than anyone has ever seen "heaped together in one place." [84]

In the first stanza Einarr composed *dalreyðar látra* "lair of the trout of the valley<snake> [GOLD]", and in the sixth he used the words, *Grafvitnis beð* "[GOLD]". These kennings are relatively conventional, and each kenning's two words appear side by side within their stanza with adds to their lack of complexity. Despite them being "value neutral" [85], they do portray two more ways to say gold with four different words.

Four of Einarr's gold kennings describe the "fire of the sea." There is an impressive example of *nýgerving* here, which I will discuss later. Stanza three contains the kenning *brandr gjálfr* "firebrand of the sea [GOLD]", stanza five has *glóðum Gautreks svana brautar* "red hot embers of the sea [GOLD]", in stanza seven he composed the kenning *eldr geima* "fire of the sea [GOLD]" and finally he used a one word kenning in the eighth stanza, *hafleygr* "sea flame" as a kenning for gold.

And finally, Einarr composed two kennings for gold by employing the myth of the the seed of Fróði's servants Fenja and Menja, told by Snorri in verses 159 through 182 of *Skáldskaparmál*.[86] Snorri writes *Hví er gull kallat mjöl Fróða?* and begins with some prose regarding the myth: "In that time two mill-stones were found in Denmark, so great that no one was so strong that he could turn them: the nature of the mill was such that whatsoever he who turned asked for, was ground out by the mill-stones." *Fróði konungr lét leiða ambáttirnar til kvernarinnar ok /bað flær mala gull ok frið ok sælu Fróða.* "King Fródi had the maid-servants led to the mill, and bade them grind gold; and they did so." [87]

The sixth stanza of *Øxarflokkr* is verse 183 of *Skáldskaparmál* and occurs directly after Snorri's twenty four stanza transcription of the myth from *Grottasöngr* describing Fenja and Menja grounding seed into gold. Thus, Snorri believes Einarr's kenning

[84] The English text from Volsunga Saga, as translated by William Morris and Eirikr Magnusson (1888), "Regin answered, 'Fafnir is his name, and but a little way hence he lies, on the waste of Gnita-heath; and when thou comest there thou mayst well say that thou hast never seen more gold heaped together in one place, and that none might desire more treasure, though he were the most ancient and famed of all kings.' " Morris, William, and Eirikr Magnusson. "The Volsunga Saga with Excerpts from the Poetic Edda." 1888. Psu.Edu. Penn State, n.d. Web. 1 Nov. 2013.
[85] Males, Mikael. Unpublished Work. Fall 2013.
[86] Faulkes, pages 52-57.
[87] Brodeur, Arthur Gilchrist. "The Prose Edda."

regarding the myth to be the quintessential example of the myth itself. Snorri has already quoted Einarr in verse 147 of *Skáldskaparmál*, the third stanza of *Øxarflokkr,* when listing different types of gold kennings. These kennings are: *sáðs fóstr Fróða* "Frodi's servants' < Fenia and Menja's seed" and *meldr þann Fenju* "this that is ground of Fenju."

Einarr has accomplished something truly remarkable here, he has mentioned gold twelve times, never using the actual word for gold, never using an Old Norse word twice, and never referring to gold with a certain myth that is not revisited.

Einarr uses *ofljóst* in his poem, something that is not notable for his time of writing. What is noteworthy is that he summons the same *ofljóst* image five times, and uses five different phrases to stand for the same word, Hnoss, and each time employs the goddess Hnoss to stand as a replacement for the phrase "precious" or "decorated weapon". Even though Einarr alludes to her five separate times within eleven stanzas, he never actually uses her name. This is another scholastic achievement, much like he aimed for with twelve separate gold kennings and never reusing a word, or four different mentions of Freyja and each time using a different phrase to call her to mind (Mardoll, Ods wife, Hnoss's mother, and finally Freyja).[88]

The first mention of Hnoss occurs in stanza three, *Hróðrbarni Hörnar* "Freyja's glorious child" but the full phrase *Hróðrbarni kná ek Hörnar, - hlutum dýran grip - stýra,brandr þrymr gjálfr<s> á grandi gullvífiðu *hlífar,* "I am able to possess Horn's [Freyia's] gold-wrapped glorious child [Hnoss; hnoss=treasure]. Ocean's fire [gold] rests on shield's damager [axe]" only makes sense if we conceive of the "glorious child" as an *ofljóst* for the decorated weapon, the axe that the poem is based on and about which Einarr gives praise to his ruler for having received. If we do not replace the kenning with *ofljóst,* the stanza reads "I am able to possess Hnoss, gold rests on the axe" which is nonsensical. It is obvious that Einarr wishes the audience to interpret *Hróðrbarni Hörnar,* Freyja's most glorious child, as the axe. Notable here as well is that Einarr mentions Freyja yet again, this time in a kenning for the axe instead of a kenning for gold, and still does not use her name, but instead the pseudonym Hörn. Word variety is obviously of the utmost importance to him.

[88] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* glossary, definition of *Hnoss*, "Hnoss f. Freyja's daughter … (she, or her sister Gersimi, is referred to in kennings for gold or treasure or a precious weapon (ofljóst); cf. hnoss f. 'treasure, jewel'."

In the second half of the third stanza, Hnoss is referred to again and instead of reusing the tactic of calling her Freyja's daughter, or invoking yet another pseudonym for Freyja, Einarr calls Hnoss *Freys nipt* or "Freyr's niece." The full four lines read *-sáðs -berr sinnar móður -svans unni mér gunnar, fóstr- gæðandi Fróða -, Freys nipt brá driptir,* "Freyr's niece [Hnoss] bears her mother's eyelash-rain [tears]. Battle-swan's [raven's] feeder [warrior] granted me Frodi's servants' [Fenia and Menia's] seed [gold]" and again it is obvious that Einarr wishes the audience to replace Hnoss with the decorated weapon, in that he means to say the precious heirloom bears the weight of the gold.

In the fourth stanza, Hnoss is called *því barni Njarðar dóttur*, "this child of Njord's daughter" and Einarr displays his penchant, as well as his prowess, for inventing as many ways as possible to describe Freyja. This time he calls her Njord's daughter. In the next stanza he describes Hnoss as *Vanabrúðar dóttur* "daughter of the bride of the Vanir <Freyja>" and thus Einarr has described Freyja by different familial connections. In a few short stanzas we know that she is Od's wife, Freyjus sister, Hnoss's mother, Njord's daughter, and the bride of the Vanir. We essentially have Freyja's entirely family tree through Einarr's description of a decorated weapon covered in gold.

And finally, Einarr calls Hnoss *mey Gefnar* "girl of Gefnar" in stanza five, and uses the third synonym for Freyja. In total, Einarr refers to either Freyja or her daughter Hnoss ten times within only ten stanzas: Mardöll, Od's bedfellow, *Hörnar*, [Hnoss's] *móður*, Freyr's niece, [Hnoss's] mother, Njord's *dóttur*, bride of the Vanir, Gefn, and *hvarmþey Freyju.*

It is obvious that one of Einarr's main objectives in *Øxarflokkr* is to craft kennings that are as diverse as possible, and thus his choice to reuse certain Old Norse words within the kennings of a single poem is conspicuous. As previously discussed, Bragi reused the words *flaumr, munr* and *ægir* within kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa.* If Bragi did this because diverse language was not a goal of his or because he was trying to achieve some sort of harkening back to the first definition and infuse the second with more meaning and a multi-faceted definition, then what is Einarr doing?

The word *brá* is used in two kennings in *Øxarflokkr*. It occurs first in the third stanza as part of the kenning *móður brá driptir* "[Hnoss's] mother's eyelash rain> Freyja's tears > gold" and is employed again in the tenth stanza in the kenning *brá Gríðar fjörnis*, "eyelash of the giantess of the helmet > eyelash of the axe > axeblade." Einarr uses the

word first to describe gold, and a second time to refer to the axeblade. I believe he is purposely reusing the word "eyelash" (a rather specific word) to remind his audience of the image of gold he conjured with his first use of *brá*. Thus, he is implying that the axeblade is gold yet again, a thirteenth time, without actually using a kenning or any words to mean gold.

c. *Nýgerving*

Several times I have mentioned Bragi or Einarr composing *nýgerving*, a concept defined by Snorri in *Háttatal*:

> "Þat eru nýgjörvingar at kalla sverðit orm ok kenna rétt, en slíðrirnar götur hans, en fetlana ok umgjörð hams hans. fiat heldr til ormsins nátturu at hann skríðr ór hamsi svá at hann skríðr mjök til vatns. Hér er svá sett nýgjörving at hann ferr leita blóðs bekkjar at þar er hann skríðr hugar stígu, þat eru brjóst manna. fiá þykkja nýgjörvingar vel kveðnar ef þat mál er upp er tekit haldi of alla vísulengð. *En *ef *sverð *er ormr kallaðr, < en síðan> fiskr eða vöndr eða annan veg breytt, þat kalla menn *nykrat*, ok þykkir þat spilla.
>
> It is extended metaphor to call a sword a snake and use an appropriate determinant and the scabbard his path, and the straps and fitting his slough. It is in the nature of the snake that it glides out of its slough so that it glides towards water. Here, the metaphor is extended in such a way that it [the snake] goes to seek the brooke of blood in the place where it glides on the path of the mind, i.e. the breast of men. Extended metaphors are thought to be well performed if the chosen subject is retained throughout the stanza. But if a sword is called a snake and then fish or a wand, or changed in some other way, that is called a monstrosity, and it is seen as a flaw." [89]

[89] Males, Mikael. Unpublished Work. Fall 2013.

Thus, *nýgerving* is a skaldic poet's way of extending a metaphor throughout a stanza, or even into the next stanza. The author maintains the image he has created beyond one word, or even one kenning, into a second or third image. Snorri also mentions a literary caveat called *nykrat*, a metaphor that is incoherent and does not maintain the image. Snorri considers this to be a flaw, and something skaldic poets should avoid.[90]

Snorri has placed a meritous connotation upon *nýgerving* and a pejorative one on *nykrat*, two ideas he has taken from the *Ars Poetica* by Horace. Snorri writes that the use of *nykrat* is acceptable for a poet of old, but not for modern authors. Horace writes:

> Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
> iungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas,
> undique conlatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
> desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,
> spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?

"If a painter chose to join a human head to the neck of a horse, and to spread feathers of many a hue over limbs plucked up now here now there, so that what at the top is a lovely woman ends below in a black and ugly fish, could you, my friends, if favoured with a private view, refrain from laughing?" [91]

The Old Norse word *nykrat* originates from Horace's description of a painter joining a "lovely woman" to the bottom half of a "black and ugly fish" which is, of course, a mermaid. Males says that since this was the "main text on poetics" during Snorri's time, "the correspondence between mermaid and the human water monster *nykrat* can hardly be coincidence." I agree. Snorri, or someone before, has equated this monstrous mixing Horace speaks of, with a new Old Norse term *nykrat*, based on some medieval Nordic equivalent of a mermaid, or merman.

[90] Males, Mikael. Unpublished Work. Fall 2013.
[91] Males, Mikael. Unpublished Work. Fall 2013, Males quotes *Horace: Satires. Epistles. Ars Poetica*, ed. and trans. H. R. Fairclough (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1929), pp. 450-51.

Einarr would never engage in *nykrat*, but strives to create examples of *nýgerving*, while Bragi does both. He is unaware of the pejorative connotation of the former and the praiseworthy-ness of the latter. I will investigate Bragi's kennings that prove this below.

A quintessential example of *nýgerving* occurs in the eleventh stanza of *Grettis saga* via the two kennings *hamartroll* and *gunnar Griðar*. The *hamartroll,* "hammer-troll, axe", ran briskly to its victim and later the same troll is called *gunnar Griðar,* "battle's Griðr, trollwoman > axe." [92] The second half of the stanza describes Griðr as *sú gein harðmynnt sparði lítt vígtenn,* "she grinned with a hard mouth and spared but little her battle-teeth [edge]." [93]

A second impressive example occurs later in the saga, stanza sixty, within the kenning *veltiflug steina gein úrsvölum munni,* "the stonecarrying waterfall grinned with its wet and cold mouth." [94] "An unexpressed allusion to the teeth of that mouth may perhaps be found in the whiteness of foam and the hardness of stones." [95] This *nýgerving* describes a waterfall both in terms that can describe a literal waterfall which occurs in nature (full of stones, wet and cold), but also terms that can only be understood metaphorically (grinning and having a mouth). The literal aspects of the waterfall are intertwined expertly with the metaphorical ones; both waterfalls and mouths can be described as cold and wet, but only a mouth contains white teeth and foamy saliva, and only a waterfall contains hard stones and foam created by the rush of water.

Einarr Skúlason creates four instances *nýgerving* in *Øxarflokkr*, of which one is exceptionally intricate and impressive. It occurs in the seventh and eighth stanzas. The seventh stanza reads: *Blóðeisu liggr bæði, bjargs tveim megin geima, sjóðs - á ek søkkva stríði - snær ok eldr - at mæra,* "Both purse snow and ocean fire lie on each side of the blood-ember's[axe's] head. I must praise the one that fights destroyers [vikings]." The noteworthy kennings here are *Blóðeisu bjargs,* "blood ember's crag > axe head", *sjóðs snær,* "purse of snow > silver" and *eldr geima,* "fire of the sea > gold."

Einarr is expressing the fact that the axehead, which is referred to in a compound word by the Old Norse word *eisa* meaning "glowing embers" [96], has two metals *liggr* "inlaid" on either side of it. He calls silver a "purse of snow" and gold the "fire of the sea".

[92] Males, Mikael. Unpublished Work. Fall 2013.
[93] Males, Mikael. Unpublished Work. Fall 2013.
[94] Males, Mikael. Unpublished Work. Fall 2013.
[95] Males, Mikael. Unpublished Work. Fall 2013.
[96] Zoëga, page 109.

The only *nýgerving* here is that the axe head is a glowing ember, and the gold upon it is fire upon the sea. The true *nýgerving* is revealed in the next stanza where he continues the metaphor.

The eighth stanza of *Øxarflokkr* is : *Dægr þrymr hvert - [en hjarta, hlýrskildir ræðr mildu / Heita blakks - of hvítum / hafleygr digulskaf]li / Aldri má fyrir eldi / áls hrynbrautar skála / - öll viðr fólka [fellir / framræði - snæ] bræða.* Faulkes translates this as, "Sea-flame rests every day on white crucible-snowdrift. He who adorns the sides of Heiti's steed [ship] with shield rules with generous heart. Never can the scales-snow be melted because of the fire of the eel's surging path [the sea; the gold is a fire that gives no heat]. The feller of hosts achieves all glorious exploits."

Of the five kennings in this stanza, two are especially notable: *of hvítum digulskaf]li,* "upon the white crucible-snowdrift > on silver" and *hafleygr,* a one word kenning meaning "sea flame" or "gold." Einarr is continuing his metaphor from earlier, again referring to silver as snow (using *digulskaf]li* instead of *snær* stanza seven) and describing the referent gold with a word for fire, *hafleygr,* as opposed to the fire he described in stanza seven using the word *eldr*.

The metaphor goes even further. Einarr tells his audience that this fire cannot melt the bowl of snow, an irrational statement when referring to actual fire and snow, since fire can absolutely melt snow, but a completely valid sentiment when referring to the referents, the gold does not melt the silver on the axe. When he uses *bræða,* he intends his listener to understand the word both as "melt" because the fire cannot melt the snow, but also the definition "diminish" because the gold intricately laden in the axe does not lessen the beauty of the weapon's silver inlaid upon the other side. By using the referents, he is telling us that gold is piled upon silver, and is referencing the generosity of the king for whom the poem is composed. Einarr's *nýgerving* continues through five kennings, and twelve lines.

I believe the absurdity of the statement "Never must the bowl of snow melt at the fire of the ocean" is meant to toy with the reader's understanding of how the silver and gold of the axe are interacting (gold does not give heat, and does not melt silver; gold is precious and of great value, and does not diminish the beauty and worth of the silver), but also works on another level. Stavnem writes that it was not important for his analysis of

Ragnarsdrápa "whether his skald has made his *drápa* with a specific shield in mind." [97]If I apply this same tenet to my analysis of *Øxarflokkr,* then we can imagine that Einarr is describing what one might see upon an axe that may or may not exist, despite the fact that it may be iconographically unlikely. The literal image would involve *skála snæ,* a bowl of snow directly before *fyrir* the fire of the *áls hrynbrautar* eel's flowing road, the former pictured on the axe in silver, and the latter in gold. The image of these two elements of nature interacting and fire being unable to melt snow, creates an uncomfortable unreality. The message here is that the axe is so exceptional, the laws of nature have been reversed, and surging fire cannot melt a bowl of snow.

The authors use kennings in fundamentally different ways. Einarr employs word play to enhance the diction of his poem and create a structured and technical monument to literary tropes and varietal kennings, while Bragi uses evocative kennings to enhance his storyline and impact his reader on an emotional level while moving his plot forward. This explains the fact that Einarr's kennings do not drive the plot of his poem forward; when the referents are exchanged for the kenning phrases, *Øxarflokkr* becomes a redundant list of the words "gold", "silver" and "weapon". Einarr's kennings are impressive in their variety and his prowess for naming a single referent several ways without a single word in common, not for the emotions they evoke in his listener.

Einarr also uses *nýgerving* in the second half of the fifth stanza of *Øxarflokkr* : *Ríkr leiddi mey mækis / mótvaldr á *beð *skaldi / Gefnar glóðum drifna / Gautreks svana brautar*, "The powerful controller of sword-meetings [battles] led Gefn's [Freyia's] maid to the poet's [my] bed covered with Gautrek's swan's [ships'] road [sea] embers [fire, gold]."

This stanza contains eight kennings (within eight lines, an impressive task), but I will focus on *mey Gefnar,* "Gefn's maiden > daughter of Freyja > Hnoss > decorated weapon" and *mækis mótvaldr,* "sword meeting controller > warrior". Einarr is using the *mey Gefnar* kenning to mean both the proper noun Hnoss and thus an actual female maiden, as well as the decorated weapon, the axe (via the literary device of *ofljóst*). The warrior *leiddi* "led" the maiden (and simultaneously the axe) *a beð skaldi* "to the bed of the poet." This imagery of a maiden being led to bed, as well as use of the word *leiddi* implies a marriage ceremony. The phrase *mækis mótvaldr* means both "controller of sword meetings" and thus describes the patron whom Einarr is praising, the one who has

[97] Stavnem, page163.

bequeathed the axe upon him, but the word *mótvaldr* can be used outside of this kenning to represent the meeting of Hnoss and the poet in marriage, and thus Einarr's benefactor is responsible for uniting him with his axe just as intimately as if he were married to the precious maiden daughter of Freyja, Hnoss. It has a sexual undertone and a literal overtone, this kind of technical unraveling is not something Bragi was attempting. When Bragi uses a kenning for the weapon he is describing, he refers to it through Hrungir because of the link the audience would make between Hrungnir and what Bragi is describing, a shield. Lindow says this is the crux of the myth, that Hrungnir was unable to employ simple weaponry of his time, specifically a shield, and that was his downfall. [98]

In contrast to Bragi's coherent usage of a mythical being to describe his shield, Einarr uses contrived references that have no association with the axe. He does this several times with Hnoss who is simply a vehicle for Einarr to display his command of skaldic diction. He does the same with Freyja and Froði, in kennings for the same referent, gold. Bragi uses a much larger variety of referents to advance the plot of each individual motif he describes, which presumably are evident on the four quadrants of the literal shield he is ekphrastically describing. Bragi and Einarr have a fundamentally different usage of mythology.

Two more instances of *nýgerving* in *Øxarflokkr* occur in the second half of the third stanza, s*áðs - berr sinnar móður - / svans unni mér gunnar / fóstr- gæðandi Fróða - / Freys nipt brá driptir*, "Freyr's niece [Hnoss] bears her mother's eyelash-rain [tears]. Battle-swan's [raven's] feeder [warrior] granted me Frodi's servants' [Fenia and Menia's] seed [gold]."

First, the kenning for Hnoss, *Freys nipt*, relates to the referent of the kenning for gold, *móður brá driptir* "mother's eyelash rain" because the precious weapon (Hnoss) bears the gold (Freyja's tears). However, the kennings work not only when their referents are implied, but also on a literal level, due to Einarr's usage of the word *berr.* The word can either mean "bear" or "be covered with" and Einarr utilizes both definitions. With regard to the referents, the precious weapon is covered with gold, but with regard to the actual words within the kennings, Hnoss can bear her mother's tears, as daughters often do when experiencing the shared pain their mother may feel. This analysis may be viewed as an overstatement or inflation of what Einarr was actually attempting to convey, but it is

[98] Lindow, page 7.

my feeling that shared familial pain is a universal truth, especially between mothers and daughters. Hnoss and Freyja are mentioned together so many times in these ten stanzas, I believe this coupling was intentional and the employment of the word *berr* to describe how Hnoss dealt with Freyja's tears struck me as a clear example of *nýgerving.*

The sentence that follows this is "Battle-swan's [raven's] feeder [warrior] granted me Frodi's servants' [Fenia and Menia's] seed [gold]" and is a second example of *nýgerving*. Regarding the referents, Einarr writes that the *svans gunnar gæðandi* "warrior" granted him *sáðs fóstr Fróða* "gold". In this sense, Einarr is speaking of the benefactor for whom he has composed *Øxarflokkr* in gratitude for the golden axe. When the referents are set aside, and we look at the words chosen within the kennings, Einarr says that the feeder of swans gave him seed. The connection between *gæðandi* "feeder" and *sáðs* "seed" cannot be ignored. Someone who feeds swans might indeed use seed, but here the swan feeder is a benevolent ruler and the seed is the gold which he bestows upon Einarr.

Males writes that "*nýgerving* most clearly betrays a grammatical background since it is based on a sense of order and propriety typical of medieval, prescriptive grammar." … "He [Snorri] contrasts *nýgerving* to incoherent metaphor or *nykrat*¸ which is to be avoided in poetry. What he does not say is that early skaldic poetry often displays what he terms *nykrat*, and that it was at that time probably used to create striking imagery, as has been shown in the studies of Hallvar Lie and Bersveinn Birgisson." [99]

Composing poetry in the ninth century, Bragi Boddason obviously had no knowledge of Latin *grammatica* or the rhetorical figures of *nýgerving* and *nykrat*. He did, however, compose poetry that included both.

The very first stanza of *Ragnarsdrápa* reads as follows: *Vilið, Hrafnketill, heyra, hvé hreingróit steini, Þrúðar skal ek ok þengil, þjófs ilja blað leyfa?* "Will you hear, Hrafnketill, how I shall praise the shield, with bright color growing on it, and the prince?" The stanza contains only one kenning, but it is four words long and therefor one of the most complex. (Only four of Bragi's thirty nine kennings contain our words, more on this below). *Þrúðar þjófs ilja blað* is translated "Þrúðr's theif's leaf > Hrungir's leaf > shield". The meaning behind this lies in a myth about the abduction of a goddess by a giant, but according to Faulkes we do not have the actual story necessary to fully understand this kenning. In any case, we know that the one who stole Þrúðr was Hrungnir, and when

[99] Males, Mikael. Unpublished Work. Fall 2013.

Hrungnir's leaf is mentioned, the referent is a shield. Bragi uses the word *hreingróit*, "with bright colors growing" from the word *hreingróinn*, "clearly, brightly (or beautifully?) grown (grown…with bright colours (or precious stones?) growing on it, covering it (of the shield conceived as a leaf)." [100]

This is a perfect example of Bragi displaying his ability, and desire, to use congruent kennings. The shield is conceived of as a leaf, and the colors (presumably gold and other pigments), are said to be growing on the leaf. This is maintaining the metaphor and avoiding the monstrous mixing Horace and Snorri warn against.

Where Bragi goes awry, and fails to continue his *nýgerving* and instead employs what I believe to be an example of *nykrat*, is in the word *ilja*. The kenning reads *Þrúðar þjófs ilja blað*, and *ilja*, according to Faulkes, is from the word *il* meaning "f. sole of the foot." Thus, the kenning reads the "the thief of Þrúðr's leaf of the sole of the foot> Hrungir's leaf of the foot> shield." A leaf and a foot obviously have nothing in common, so Bragi has almost perfect *nýgerving*, but in the end achieved also *nykrat*. This is not a failing, however, since he had no intent of achieving this. Had Einarr done the same, it would be monstrous, but Snorri and Horace both agree that the poets of old may do things that the l earned poets may not.

I discussed earlier Lindow's point that even in the first stanza of *Ragnarsdrápa* Bragi referenced the myth of Hrungnir as an apt kenning relating to the shield he is describing. Lindow's translation of the kenning *blað ilja Þrúðar þjófs* is "the leaf of the soles of the thief of Þrúðr." The observed *nykrat* just discussed "the leaf of the foot" meaning shield, makes a bit more sense here. Even though a leaf of a foot is a monstrous, the addition of *Þrúðar þjófs* helps the kenning appear less "monstrous" or "mixed". The audience's understanding that Hrungnir stood upon a shield gives an inherent understanding that *blað* is a shield. Thus *ilja* and *blað* are not a terrible mixing at all, but words that pair nicely when the kenning includes the giant Hrungnir. The "leaf of the soles of Hrungnir" takes leaf as "something you stand upon" which indeed one does (especially during autumn), and since Bragi is speaking of Hrungnir's feet, it is understood that the referent is a shield. Thus the *nykrat* is a bit less unsettling when investigated further.

A few stanzas later, Bragi uses another word for leaf, *lauf*, again to describe a shield, and this time uses a completely incongruent metaphor (without even a

[100] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* glossary, definition of *hreingróinn.*

complementary adjective as with *hreingróit* in the first *lauf* kenning). The second half of the fourth stanza reads: *Fell í blóði *blandinn / brunn ölskakki runna / - þat er á Leifa landa / laufi fátt - at haufði,* "The ruler fell into the pool having been mixed with blood. This is depicted on the leaf of the sea."

Bragi uses the kenning *Leifa landa laufi,* "the leaf of the land of the sea king Leifi < the leaf of the sea < shield." Whereas the first time Bragi conceived the shield as a leaf, he continued the metaphor by utilizing the word *hreingróit* to imply that colors grew upon it, here he has abandoned his metaphor once he says the leaf (shield) belongs in the sea. When Bragi refers to the shield in stanzas seven and twelve (within the stef) as *Ræs reiðar mána,* "chariot of the sea king's moon < the ship's moon < shield" he is using a congruent maritime kenning. Faulkes writes "the shield on the side of a ship looks like a moon" [101] and thus a shield conceived as a moon on a ship is not *nykrat.*

Bragi's attempt to create a shield kenning using a maritime association in *Leifa landa laufi* is much different than *Ræs reiðar mána.* Leaves come from trees, and while trees do grow upon land, they do not exist in *Leifi's* land, thus this kenning is *nykrat.*

Bragi achieves *nýgerving* in other kennings which I have previously discussed. The first of these is *segls naglfara siglur* from the fifth stanza. While Faulkes defines *naglfari* as a "sword-name, 'rivetted, decorated with nails or studs' " [102] Stavnem writes that *naglfari* can also mean "ship". If the meaning is ship, then the kenning includes three nautical words and the audience is to envision Hamðir and Sörli as "masts of the sail of the ship." The kenning is also modified by the word *saums* which means "rivet lacking" and modifies *segls,* "sail." Faulkes translates *saumr* as "(ship's) nails"[103] which brings this nautical *nýgerving* to four words total.

After a coherent kenning like this, Einarr would have maintained the image into the second half of the stanza. Bragi does not do this, but drops the illusion of people conceived of as nautical elements, and instead composes the second half of the fifth stanza with no water imagery whatsoever (in a poem fraught with this): *Urðu snemst ok Sörli/ samráða þeir Hamðir/ hörðum / Hergauts vinu barðir* "Very soon Hamðir and Sörli came to be struck by everyone at once with Hergaut's [Óðinn's] woman-friend [Jorð's, earth's] hard shoulder-lumps [stones]." The image Bragi has created here, of a woman's hard

[101] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* glossary, definition of *máni.*
[102] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* glossary, definition of *naglfari.*
[103] Faulkes, *Skáldskaparmál* glossary, definition of *saumr.*

shoulder lumps conceived of as the earth's hard lumps implying the referent "stones" has absolutely nothing to do with the masts of the sail of the ship. Bragi has dropped the image completely, and failed to create a *nýgerving* that Einarr would have avidly pursued.

I discussed at length Bragi's kenning *sverða flaumr* which means "torrent of swords." This kenning occurs in the third stanza of *Ragnarsdrápa* and could be construed as some sort of hypo-*nýgerving* when we take this kenning of blood imagery together with *dreyrfár* "blood-stained" which occurs in the line before it. However, no other words in the stanza are related to any sort of liquid, blood or otherwise.

This is not true of the fourth stanza. Of the eight lines in this stanza, five of them contain a word relating to blood or liquid. The stanza in full, with words related to blood and liquid bolded, is : ***Flaut*** *of set við* ***sveita*** */ sóknar *álfs á gólfi / hræva* ***dögg*** **þars höggnar / hendr sem fætr of kendu. / Fell í* ***blóði*** *****blandinn / brunn ölskakki*** *runna/ - þat er á* ***Leifa*** *landa / laufi fátt - at haufði.* "Corpse-dew [blood] flowed over the benches together with the attack-elf's [warrior's, Jörmunrekkr's] blood on the floor where severed arms and legs could be recognized. Men's ale-giver [king] fell head-first into the pool mixed with gore. This is depicted on leaf of Leifi's lands [sea; the sea's leaf is the decorated shield]." Bragi's choice of the words *flaut* "flowed", *sveita* "blood", *dögg* "dew", and *blóði* "blood" all refer to the incredibly bloody scenario Bragi is conveying to his audience. These are not necessarily *nýgerving,* but something notable is going on here when we take the four blood related words together with the three other liquid related words. Bragi carefully selects words in this stanza that relate to liquid when he could easily have chosen otherwise. He uses *brunn* which means "spring, well…pool, font" [104] when describing the king's descent into a tub of blood. When referring to Jörmunrekkr, he calls him *ölskakki runna,* a kenning for ruler meaning "bushes' (men's) ale dispenser." And finally, when referring to the shield, he uses a kenning previously discussed, *laufi Leifa landa* "the leaf of the sea (Leifi's land). These three words each represent an instance where Bragi chose a word related to water when his meaning could easily have been conveyed via another word. He used "spring, well, pool, font" to describe Jörmunrekkr falling into a fountain which usually contained water, only now it was *blandinn blóði* "mixed with gore." When Bragi wanted to convey "ruler" he used a kenning containing *ölskakki* "ale giver", a word associated with liquid. Finally, to describe

[104] Faulkes, Skáldskaparmál glossary, definition of *bruðr.*

the shield, he used a sea king, Leifi, yet another water-based image. What Bragi has achieved here is not traditional *nýgerving*, but is notable. By sticking to an image of "water" (although the image is not as congruent as a snake and his skin or a waterfall's wet and cold mouth and white teeth) he has displayed his penchant for maintaining a single theme throughout eight lines and several kennings.

A second example of not quite *nýgerving*, but something approaching it, is Bragi's kenning for Jörmunrekkr in the sixth stanza, *støkkvir stála flaums*, "scatterer of the steel torrent." The two notable words here are *støkkvir* and *flaums*. While here *støkkvir* means the one who is scattering the battles, the word literally means "sprinkler." I have previously discussed the kenning *stála flaums* "steel torrent" which is a second unnecessarily water-associated word choice. In a three word kenning which has nothing to do with water, two of the three words Bragi chose are specifically water related. Calling a ruler "the sprinkler of torrents" was a deliberate play on words, and can be classified as a hypo- *nýgerving*

d. Kennings by the Numbers

Ragnarsdrápa is made up of eleven four line stanzas and nine eight line stanzas; four of these lines belong to stanza number thirteen which is not located in *Skáldskaparmál* and are not analyzed in this paper. The nineteen stanzas of *Ragnarsdrápa* that are found in *Skáldskaparmál* consist of a total of 112 lines which contain 49 kennings. The stanza with the most kennings is number eight, an eight line stanza containing five kennings. Also notable are stanzas eighteen and nineteen because they are relatively short (four lines each), but kenning heavy (containing three and four, respectively). Stanza number eighteen has only fourteen words and seven are them are within a kenning; nineteen has fourteen words as well, six of which are involved in a kenning. By contrast, stanzas one, three and fourteen contain only one kenning each, not especially notable for

stanzas one and fourteen, which are only four lines, but stanza number three is eight lines and contains only one kenning. This never happens in *Øxarflokkr*.

Øxarflokkr consists of eleven stanzas, but the final stanza is not considered for this paper as it is not found in *Skáldskaparmál*. Without the final stanza, *Øxarflokkr* is a total of fifty-four lines and thirty-eight kennings. Stanza number five is eight lines, and contains eight kennings, which tops Bragi's most kenning dense stanza by three, a substantial difference. Furthermore, a second stanza of Einarr's, number three, has seven kennings. The former is a thirty word stanza with sixteen of them engaged in a kenning. The latter is made up of twenty-seven words, thirteen of which lie within a kenning. Einarr has only one stanza with contains just one kenning (stanza number four), but in contrast to Bragi's one kenning stanza which is eight lines, Einarr's is only four, and there for these two stanzas are not comparable.

Ragnarsdrápa has 108 lines that I will discuss. Forty-nine kennings are contained within these lines. Forty-eight of these 108 lines lack a single word that makes up a kenning. Only one stanza of the nineteen being discussed contains a word that is part of a kenning within every line, the other eighteen stanzas have at least one line that contains no words that are part of a kenning. *Øxarflokkr* has fifty-four lines that I will be discussing which contain thirty-eight kennings. Only ten of the fifty-four lines contain no words that make up a part of a kenning. Of the ten stanzas, five of them contain a kenning word within every line of the stanza.

Ragnarsdrápa has one kenning that appears as one word, but is actually a compound made up of two separate words (*byrsendir*). The poem contains thirty-one kennings that are two words, thirteen kennings that are three words, and four kennings made up of four words. *Øxarflokkr* has three kennings that qualify as a compound word kenning (*Vanabrúðar*, *Váfaðar*, and *Hafleygr*) twenty which are comprised of two, twelve made of three words and three made of four words.

The word order of the *Øxarflokkr* kennings is different than the *Ragnarsdrápa* kennings in that they are further away from one another within the stanza and more intertwined with one another. Out of forty-nine kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa*, thirty-five of them have the words within the kenning side by side. Only fourteen contain at least one unrelated word between the words contained in the kenning. In stark contrast to this, twenty four of *Øxarflokkr*'s thirty-nine kennings are out of order within the stanza ("out of

order" in this sense means they contain an unrelated word between the words that make up the kenning). Thus, seventy-one percent of *Ragnarsdrápa*'s kennings have wording that is consecutive, only thirty-eight percent of *Øxarflokkr*.

The deductions made regarding the numerical attributes of these two poems are telling. *Øxarflokkr* employs kennings at a much higher rate than *Ragnarsdrápa*. Out of ten stanzas, five of them contain a word belonging to a kenning in every single line. By contrast, *Ragnarsdrápa* is almost twice as long, nineteen lines, and only one stanza has a kenning word in every line. A second illuminating figure is the number of lines per poem that do not contain any words from a kenning. Forty-eight of *Ragnarsdrápa*'s 108 lines contain not a single word involved in a kenning. That means forty-four percent of the poem's lines have no kenning words, where as only eighteen percent of *Øxarflokkr*'s lines lack a word from a kenning (ten of the fifty-four lines). A third important deduction is the amount of kennings each author chooses to place within a single eight line stanza. Einarr composed a stanza in *Øxarflokkr* with eight kennings in only eight lines, and a second with seven kennings in only eight lines. By stark contrast, Bragi's most kenning dense stanza is eight lines and contains only five kennings. Thus, in every instance Einarr employs more kennings, not only within the poem as a whole, but also per stanza and per line.

The inference regarding word order within each poem is simply that the style of *Øxarflokkr* is more complicated than that of *Ragnarsdrápa.* Bragi shows a penchant for straightforward kennings that allow his audience to hear each word of the kenning side by side, or at least near one another. The fact that thirty-five of Bragi's forty-nine kennings contain adjacent words is startling when transposed against *Øxarflokkr*'s only fifteen of thirty-nine "adjacently worded" kennings. Almost three quarters of Bragi's kennings are consecutively worded, while only about a third of Einarr's are.

V. Conclusion

Bragi Boddason's use of kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa* is fundamentally different from Einarr Skúlason's employment of kennings in *Øxarflokkr*. The kennings of *Ragnarsdrápa* are pagan in nature and composed with the purpose of evoking emotion and praise from an audience of primarily warriors. Einarr composed *Øxarflokkr* in the manner befitting someone with a solid foundation in the *ars grammatica* and the goal of impressing his audience of likeminded grammarians.

This study has compared the poetry of Bragi and Einarr by unraveling their poems kenning by kenning, word by word. While it is clear that both authors craft poetry, their professions differ greatly due to the different social milieus in which they compose. After analyzing their poetry in depth, a term can be selected that encompasses both authors as poets, but takes in to account their differences. Clearly Einarr is a grammarian, but the same cannot be said of Bragi. Should he be called "the craftsman?" The two cannot be examined as comparable in learning, since Bragi lived in almost an illiterate society (other than the erection of rune stones), and Einarr was well versed in Latin *grammatica*. What word encompasses both authors?

It is Bragi that is the more difficult to resolve. Snorri's definition of poetry in *Skáldskaparmál* is encapsulated in his description of an exchange between a troll-wife and "*Bragi hinn gamli*" that is basically a list of eight terms, five of which are kennings.[105] Snorri writes that a skald is (among other things) : the thoughtsmith of Óðinn, gift-getter of Óðinn, Óðinn's ale-bearer, inspired poetry's creating son of Þórr, and the skillful smith of verse. [106]

Each kenning is interesting in itself, especially when Snorri describes the poet as a *skapsmiðr* or *hagsmiðr*, a "thoughtsmith" and "skilful smith", respectively, as this likens the poet's work to that of a wood worker, metal worker or black smith. "the craft of the blacksmith or worker in wood or metal represented the peak of early medieval technology, so the analogy between creating clever craftwork and creating complicated, clever poetry, would have held a great deal of importance for early medieval people. The idea of the poet

[105] Faulkes, pages 83-84.
[106] Clunies Ross, A History, page 2.

as a clever song-smith further related to the role of the court poet (*skáld*) of Viking Age Scandinavia and later as the pleaser of princes and the entertainer of their courts." [107]

According to Snorri then, Bragi's poetry determined his niche in society by skillfully laboring over the demanding task that is composing verse. Bragi's craft is poetry, and he toils with words and verse, as his peers do with wood or metal. The word for craft in Latin is *ars*, which gives rise to the modern word artist. Einarr would have known the word *ars* well, as his entire career involved the study and mastery of the *ars grammatica*. The best way to compare these two poets is to identify them as artists. This encompasses both yet allows for the narrower definition of Bragi as the craftsman and Einarr as not only that, but also as the student of the theory of that craft.

It is important to remember each artist's audience when analyzing their poetry. Bragi's audience was members of the court of his Viking Age benefactor, possibly the legendary ninth-century Viking leader Ragnarr loðbrók, or at least some comparable chieftan. [108] The emotional nature of his kennings, as opposed to the more refined and delicate kennings Einarr created may be due to the fact that Bragi was composing for his warrior audience. While Bragi may have lived part time within a royal household, he may also have spent the rest of his life "travelling on viking expeditions…with their patrons on the latter's military campaigns and recorded details of the kings' battles and journeys and their generosity to their followers as well as their ruthless slaughter of the enemy."[109] This militaristic ethos of the warrior class for which he composed may have encouraged him to craft more vivid kennings, which are inherently more effective at evoking an emotion, as opposed to Einarr, whose audience was presumably made up of fellow priests and clerics, and dealt systematically with the possibilities inherent in kenning construction.

Many of the kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa* are inherently violent, much more so than Einarr's. The first kenning discussed in this paper, *hræva dögg*, is describing a vast amount of blood or "corpse water" covering Jörmunrekkr's hall. From there I discussed a torrent of swords (*sverða flaumr*) which can mean battle or blood, then brothers who are metaphorically envisioned as masts stuck fast to a ship by the weapons hurled at them. *Støkkvir stála flaums* is the next kenning dealt with, referring to a leader who sprinkles others with torrents of steel. The analysis then investigates Ran who wishes for the dried

[107] Clunies Ross, A History, page 2.
[108] Clunies Ross, A History, page 34.
[109] Clunies Ross, A History, page 44.

out veins of her undead victims (*ofþerris æða ósk-Rán*), then the dead inhabitants of battle (*ørlygis draugr*), and then Fenrir's ultimate pleasure in dead bodies (*glamma mun*). Regarding Þórr's fishing of the Midgard Serpent, Bragi utilizes kennings refering to the terrifier of the giant, the twisted menace of the bay, and the one who splits Hrungnir's head apart.

The violent nature of Bragi's kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa* leaves his audience affected emotionally, not only from the meanings gleaned from each kenning, but the individual words within the kennings as well as the over arching mythological stories the kennings help describe.

The first kenning analyzed from *Øxarflokkr* was *Mardallar grátr* or "Freyja's tears" meaning "gold." Einarr goes on to describe gold and the precious weapon with sixteen other kennings, utilizing words like rain, bedfellow, eyelash, bed, embers, sea, seed, glorious child, swan, daughter, bride and the poetic word for girl, *mær*. There is a marked difference in what the authors aim to evoke from their audience with their word choices. Bragi's violent images within his kennings are used to advance along an also violent plotline, while Einarr's placid talk of gold, daughters, bowls and snow are merely tools for conveying the many ways he has deviced for invoking the same referents.

Bragi's use of kennings conveys an old-worldly feeling of pagan images that are emotionally gripping. They add to the drama of the poem, as well as the theme and its overall character. They are evocative and intriguing and dark. Einarr uses pagan images as well, but in a much different way.

Two of the pagan myths Bragi evokes specifically via the use of kennings are: the murder of Svanhildr, wife of Jörmunrekkr (*Foglhildar munr*), and the myth of Þórr's defeat of Hrungnir (*Hrungnis haussprengir*). Each myth involves a death. *Foglhildar munr* refers to Svanhildr who "the old king Jörmunrekkr has killed" because she and his son "were suspected of being about to begin a love affair."[110] As previously discussed, *Hrungnis haussprengir* refers to the violent death Hrungnir met at the hand of Þórr and his hammer.

Pagan myths Einarr chooses to employ are: the maids who magically ground gold (*sáðs fóstr Fróða*), and the snake Fenrir who lies upon mounds of gold (*dalreyðar látra*).

[110] Stavnem, page 167.

Not only are the myths he chooses of a much milder nature, but their referenst are as well (both gold, in this case).

The pattern seen by their use of pagan myths sheds light on a broader theme regarding all of their kennings. Einarr employs word play to enhance the diction of his poem, while Bragi uses kennings to enhance his storyline. This explains the fact that Einarr's kennings do nothing to advance his storyline. When the kenning referent is used in the translation (as opposed to the entire phrase) *Øxarflokkr* becomes rather boring, a dogged repetition of the words "gold", "silver" and "weapon". It is the wordplay employed Einarr's kennings that makes them so impressive, not the meaning they evoke in their listener. When Bragi's kenning referents are replaced for their full kenning phrase, the poem still tells the stories of four exciting stories.

The authors both engage in *nýgerving*, but their different utilizations of this literary device are worthy of examination. Bragi's *nýgerving* examples are less straightforward than Einarr's because he lacks the technique Einarr has mastered through learning. Each of Bragi's *nýgerving* examples discussed earlier is missing the eloquence and finesse of Einarr's. For example, when Bragi conceives of the shield as a leaf in the kenning *Þrúðar þjófs ilja blað*, he describes the leaf as *hreingróinn* which successfully carries the image forward, but the word *ilja* foils his attempt as "the leaf of the foot" is an incongruent metaphor and certainly not an example of *nýgerving*.

A stark contrast to the "leaf of the foot" image is Einarr's exposition regarding silver and gold as conceived of as snow and fire. The multi-levelled comparisons he makes here regarding fire unable to melt snow, and thus gold unable to diminish the value of silver, are intricate and direct. Einarr leaves no room for confusion on the part of his audience, as Bragi's statement of "the leaf of the foot" might. The reason is that Bragi is more intent on evoking literal, visceral images for his audience, and Einarr is more focused on evoking similes in the minds of his listener. When Bragi composes *støkkvir stála flaums*, "sprinkler of the torrent of steel", the image conveyed to his listener is graphically imaginable. One can envision the power of the leader who is able to scatter steel. Einarr composes not just images, but similes. When he chose to phrase the instance of the benefactor giving him the axe as a maiden being *leiddi* "led" *a beð skaldi* "to the bed of the poet", his intention was to evoke a double image. The first is his reception of the actual axe (the *hnoss*), but simultaneously the girl is led as if in marriage to his bed.

Einarr's treatment of kennings for both "gold" and "precious weapon" is the most striking difference between the two authors. Einarr's dedication to discovering seventeen different kennings for the gift he has received is remarkable. He does not simply choose one myth to extrapolate gold kennings from, but instead uses four. Even though he references Freyja nine times, he only uses her actual name once. Similarly, he uses a kenning for the referent "Hnoss" five times, but the word *hnoss* never appears directly in the poem. Bragi is not attempting this structured exposition, but instead aims for vivid kennings that advance several pagan myths with enthralling plot-lines.

The poetry of Bragi Boddason makes use of pagan mythology, ekphrasis, *nýgerving*, *ofljóst* and metaphors in the form of kennings, just as the poetry of Einarr Skúlason does. And yet the poems differ so greatly. This is due to the fact that Bragi's kennings are meant to affect his audience on an emotional level, whereas Einarr's are meant to impress on a scholarly level. Each author achieves magnificent prose, but with different expectations and outcomes achieved.

VI. Bibliography

Brodeur, Arthur Gilchrist. “The Prose Edda.” *Sacred Texts*. Sacred-texts, n.d. Web. 20 Sept.
2013.

Chase, Martin. “The Christian Background of Einarr Skulason’s Geisli” *Til Heidurs og Hugbotar*
ed. by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Anna Guðmundsdóttir (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2003).

Clunies Ross, Margaret. *A history of Old Norse poetry and poetics*. Cambridge, U.K.: D.S. Brewer, 2005.

Clunies Ross, Margaret. “Stylistic and Generic Definers of the Old Norse Skaldic Ekphrasis.”
Viking and Medieval Scandinavia, 3, 2007.

Faulkes, Anthony and Snorri Sturluson. *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*. London: Viking Society for
Northern Research, 1998.

Lindow, John. "Thor’s Duel with Hrungnir." *Alvíssmál* 6 (1996): 3-20.

Males, Mikael. Unpublished Work. Fall 2013.

McTurk, Rory. *A companion to Old Norse-Icelandic literature and culture.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005.

Morris, William, and Eirikr Magnusson. “The Volsunga Saga with Excerpts from the Poetic
Edda.” 1888. *Psu.Edu*. Penn State, n.d. Web. 1 Nov. 2013.

Nordal, Guđrún. “Skaldic versifying and social discrimination in medieval Iceland.” London:
Viking Society for Northern Research, 2003.

Nordal, Guðrún. *Tools of literacy the role of skaldic verse in Icelandic textual culture of the*
twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

Sturluson, Snorri, and Anthony Faulkes. *Edda*. London: Everyman, 1996.

Stavnem, Rolf. “The Kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa*.” *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 14 (2004): 161-184.

Wood, Cecil. "The Skald's Bid for a Hearing." The Journal of English and Germanic Philology
59.2 (1960): 240-54.

Zoëga, Geir T. *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
2004.

“Þórr’s Fishing - Bragi Inn Gamli Boddason (Bragi).” Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages. The Skaldic Poetry Project. 2013. Web. 27 Sept. 2013. https://www.abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/db.php?id=3094&if=default&table=text&val=&view=.