



Gísla saga and Classical Icelandic

Summer Course 2012
Háskóla­setur Vestfjarða

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Skaldic Metre: *dróttkvætt*

Metrical features of the *dróttkvætt*:

- four lines, eight half-lines
- syllable counting metre: six syllables in each half-line
- each line has three stresses, the last one invariably occurs in a trochee (´˘)
- two alliterative syllables in the odd half-line, and one in the even half-line. The latter must fall on the first syllable of the even line, which is always accented.
- internal rhyme in the form of *skothending* (= half rhyme) in the odd half-line
- internal rhyme in the form of *aðalhending* (= full rhyme) in the even half-line



Skaldic Diction: *kenningar* and *heiti*

- diction:
 - *kenning* (*kent heiti*): poetic periphrasis, a base word – a proper or common noun – is given definition by another noun which is linked to it in a genitival relationship
 - e.g. *unnar hestr* – „horse of the waves“ = SHIP
(metaphorical quality: analogy between the horse as „vehicle“ on land and the ship a vehicle of the sea)
 - augu Þjáza* – „eyes of Þjáza“ = STARS
(mythological quality: mythological knowledge is essential)
 - elaborate *kenningar*: Haka dýrs blikis dynr
Haki („sea-king“), Haki's dýr (=SHIP), blik („glitter/glamour“) of the ship (=SHIELD), dynr („noise/bluster“) of the shield (=BATTLE)
 - *heiti*: (*ókennt heiti*): poetical synonyms
 - e.g. *mækir* = *sverð* = „sword“



Skáldskaparmál: Introduction

En þetta er nú at segja ungum skáldum þeim er girnask at nema skáldskapar ok heyja sér orðfjölda með fornum *heitum* eða girnask at nema þeir at kunna skilja þat er hult er kveðit: þá skili hann þessa bók til fróðleiks ok skemtunar.

En ekki er at gleyma eða ósanna svá þessar sögur at takar skáldskapinum fornar *kenningar* þær er höfuðskáld hafa sér líka látit. En eigi skulu kristnir menn trú á heiðin goð ok eigi á sannyndi þessar sagnar annan veg en svá sem hér finnsk í upphafi bókar er sagt er frá atburðum þeim er mannfólkit viltisk frá rétri trú, ok þá næst frá Tyrkjum, hvernig Asiamenn þeir er Æsir eru kallaðir folsuðu frásagnir þær frá þeim tíðindum er gerðusk á Troju til þess at landfólkit skyldi trú þá guð vera.

But these things have now to be told to young poets who desire to learn the language of poetry and to furnish themselves with a wide vocabulary using traditional terms; or else they desire to be able to understand what is expressed obscurely. Then let such a one take this book as scholarly inquiry and entertainment.

But these stories are not to be consigned to oblivion or demonstrated to be false, so as to deprive poetry of ancient kennings which major poets have been happy to use. Yet Christian people must not believe in heathen gods, nor in the truth of this account in any other way than that in which it is presented at the beginning of this book, where it is told what happened when mankind went astray from the true faith, and after that about the Turks, how the people of Asia, known as Æsir, distorted the accounts of the events that took place in Troy so that the people of the country would believe that they were gods.



Skáldskaparmál: Kenningar for Þórr

Hvernig skal kenna Þór?

Svá at kalla hann son Óðins ok Jarðar,
faðir Magna ok Móða ok Þrúðar, verr
Sifjar, stjúpfaðir Ullar, stýrandi ok
eigandi Mjöllnis ok megingjarða,
Bilskirnis, verjandi Ásgarðs, Miðgarðs,
dólgr ok bani jotna ok tröllkvinna,
vegandi Hrunnis, Geirrøðar, Þrivalda,
dróttinn Þjálfar ok Røsku, dólgr
Miðgarðsorms, fóstri Vingnis ok
Hlóru.

Svá kvað Bragi skáld:

Vaðr lá Viðris arfa
vilgi slakr, er rakðisk,
á Eynæfis qndri,
Jormundgandr at sandi.

How shall Thor be referred to?

By calling him son of Odin and Iord, father of
Magni and Modi and Thrud, husband of Sif,
stepfather of Ull, ruler and owner of Miollnir
and the girdle of might, of Bilskirnir,
defender of Asgard, Midgard, enemy and
slayer of giants and troll-wives, killer of
Hrungnir, Geirrod, Thrivaldi, lord of Thialfi
and Roskva, enemy of the Midgard serpent,
foster-son of Vingnir and Hlora.

The poet Bragi said this:

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



Skáldskaparmál: Kenningar for gold

Hvernig skal kenna gull?

Svá at kalla þat eld Ægis ok barr Glasis,
haddr Sifjar, höfuðband Fullu, grátr
Freyju, munntal ok rödd ok orð
jötna, dropa Draupnis ok regn eða skúr
Draupnis eða augna Freyju,
otrgjöld, slöggjald Ásanna, sáð
Fýrisvalla, haugþak Hólga,
eldr allra vatna ok handar, grjót ok sker
eða blik handar.

Fyrir hví er gull kallat eldr Ægis? ...

How shall gold be referred to?

By calling it Egir's fire and Glasir's foliage,
Sif's hair, Fulla's snood, Freyia's weeping,
mouth-Count and voice and words of
giants, dripping from Draupnir and rain or
shower from Draupnir or from Freyia's
eyes, otterpayment, Esir's forced payment,
seed of Fyri plains, Holgi's mound-roof,
fire of all kinds of waters and of the arm,
stones and rocks or gleam of the arm.

Why is gold called Egir's ...



Skáldskaparmál: Kenningar for men

Hvernig skal kenna mann? Hann skal kenna við verk sín, þat er hann veitir eða þiggr eða gerir. Hann má ok kenna til eignar sinnar þeirar er hann á ok svá ef hann gaf, svá ok við ættir þær er hann kom af, svá þær er frá honum komu. Hvernig skal hann kenna við þessa hluti? Svá at kalla hann vinnanda eða fremjanda til fara sinna eða athafnar, víga, eða sæfara eða veiða eða vápna eða skipa. Ok fyrir því at hann er reynir vápnanna ok viðr víganna – allt eitt ok vinnandi; viðr heitir ok tré, reynir heitir tré – af þessum heitum hafa skáldin kallat menn ask eða hlyn, lund eða oðrum viðar heitum karlkendum ok kent til víga eða skipa eða fjár. Mann er ok rétt at kenna til allra Ása heita. Kent er ok við jotna heiti, ok er þat flest háð eða lastmæli. Vel þykkir kent til álfa.

How shall a man be referred to? He shall be referred to by his actions, what he gives or receives or does. He can also be referred to by his property, what he owns and also if he gives it away; also by the family lines he is descended from, also those that have descended from him. How shall he be referred to by these things? By calling him achiever or performer of his expeditions or activities, of killings or voyages or huntings, or with weapons or ships. And because he is a trier (*reynir*) of the weapons and doer (*viðr*) of the killings, which is the same thing as achiever - *viðr* is also a word for tree, there is a tree called *reynir* [rowan] - on the basis of these terms poets have called men ash or maple, *lund* [grove, tree] or other masculine tree-names, and made reference to killings or ships or wealth. It is also normal to refer to a man using all the names of Æsir. Names of giants are also used, and this is mostly as satire or criticism. Using names of elves is thought complimentary.



Skáldskaparmál: Kenningar for women

Konu skal kenna til alls kvenbúnaðar, gulls ok gimsteina, ǫls eða víns eða annars drykkjar þess er hon selr eða gefr, svá ok til ǫlgagna ok til allra þeira hluta er henni samir at vinna eða veita.

Rétt er at kenna hana svá at kalla hana selju eða lóg þess er hon miðlar, en selja eða lag, þat eru tré. Fyrir því er kona kǫlluð til kenningar ǫllum kvenkendum viðar heitum. En fyrir því er kona kend til gimsteina eða glersteina, þat var i forneskju kvinna búnaðar er kallat var steinasørvi er þær hǫfðu á hálsi sér. Nu er svá fært til kenningar at konan er nú kend við stein eða við ǫll steins heiti.

Kona er ok kend við allar Ásynjur eða nornir eða dísir.

Konu er ok rétt at kenna við alla athöfn sína eða við eign sína eða ætt.

A woman shall be referred to by all female adornment, gold and jewels, ale or wine or other drink that she serves or gives, also by ale-vessels and by all those things that it is proper for her to do or provide.

It is proper to refer to her by calling her dealer (*selia*) or consumer (*log*) of what she hands out, but *selia* [willow] and *log* are trees. Hence woman is called in kennings by all feminine tree-names. And the reason a woman is referred to by gemstones or beads is that there was in antiquity a female adornment that was called 'stone-chain' that they wore round their necks. Now it is made into a kenning, so that woman is now referred to in terms of stone and all words for stone.

Woman is also referred to in terms of all Ásynjur or valkyries or norns or *disir* [(divine) ladies].

It is also normal to refer to a woman by any of her activities or by her possession or descent.



Lausavísur in *Gísla saga*

saga text	Martin S. Regal	George Johnston
Chapter 2:		
1. Gall Gunnlogi gaman vas Söxu.	War-flame sang Saxo is amused.	Warflame whistled, Wild sport for Saxa.
2. Hrökk hræfrakki hjók til Skeggja.	Spear swept I struck at Skeggi.	Hack went the halberd, Hewed down Skeggi.
Chapter 14:		
5. Betr hugþak þá, brigði biðkat draums ens þriðja slíks af svefni vökdum sárteina, Vésteini. þás vér í sal sátum Sigrhadds við mjöð gladdir komskat maðr á miðli mín né hans, at víni.	Better, I believed, to remember Vestein gladdened with mead where we sat drinking in Sigurhadd's hall, and none came between us, than to wake a third time from so dark a dream.	Fearful nor dark forethought For Vestein oppressed me, Now I ask no third such Nightmare, come to fright me. Sat we on the settles, Sigrhadd's, mead-gladdened; Menace of man's envy Marred not then our heart joy.



Lausavísur in Gísla saga

saga text	Martin S. Regal	George Johnston
<p>Chapter 14:</p> <p>6. Hylr á laun und líni linnvengis skap kvinna gríðar leggs ór góðum, Gefn, qlkera svefni; eik berr angri lauka, eirreks, bráa geira, bróður, dōgg í bæði blíð ɔndugi síðan.</p>	<p>In secret, bowed beneath the cover of her bonnet, she, goddess of gold, lacks solace of sound sleep. From both kindly eyes and down her cheeks flows the dew of distress for a brother lost forever.</p>	<p>Carried under kerchief Keeps she in sleep's cisterns Surly drops of sorrow, Storm of cheek in secret. Oak of herbs from aching Eyes, from grief's high places, Has felt the salt dewfall, For her brother mourning.</p>

