

Introduction to Old Norse Literature – Skaldic Verse

1. Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, I 338:

Opstod der som oftest et meget inderligt hengivenheds- og venskabsforhold, idet fyrsten på sin side ærede og agtede skjalden, ja gjorde ham til sin fortrolige rådgiver og mest betroede mand og tildelte ham de højeste hof-æreposter, medens skjalden på den anden side gav fyrsten venskabelige og oprigtige råd.

2. Glúmr Geirason, *Gráfeldardrápa* 1 (*Skj AI 75, BI 66*):

Hlýði, hapta beiðis,
hefk, mildingar, gildi;
því biðjum vér þagnar,
þegna tjón at fregnum.

Listen! I raise the banquet of the gods' ruler of princes
(Óðinn > mead of poetry > poem). We ask for silence, for
we hear of the loss of men.

3. Glúmr Geirason, *Gráfeldardrápa* 7 (*Skj AI 77, BI 67*):

Mælti, mætra hjalta
malm-Óðinn sá, blóði,
þróttar orð, es þorði
þjóðum völl at rjóða -
víðlendr of það vinda
verðung Haraldr sverðum,
frægt þótti þat flotnum
fylkis orð, at morði.

The metal-Óðinn of the valuable sword-guard (king) who
dared to redden the plain with blood for his people, spoke
words of courage. Ruler of broad lands, Haraldr bade the

troops to raise their swords to the slaughter; the king's
words seemed fair to the sea-farers.

4. Glúmr Geirason, *Gráfeldardrápa* 11 (*Skj AI 77-78, BI 68*):

Fellumk hölf, þás hilmis
hjörðrifa brá lífi
(réðat oss til auðar)
auðvön (Haralds dauði),
en ek veit, at hefr heitit
hans bróðir mér góðu
(súa getr þar til sælu
seggfjölð) hvaðarr tveggja.

Half my expectation of wealth fell from me when the
sword-storm (battle) broke off the life of the king.
Haraldr's death did not bring us riches. But I know that
both his two brothers have promised me good things.
There, the host of men gets happiness from them.

5. *Fagrskinna*, chapter 14 (ÍF, 1985), pg. 95:

En þá er Haraldr hafði tekit konungs nafn ok þeir bræðr,
gekk hirð Hákonar konungs til handa hónum, ok varð brátt
hirðin lítt samhuga, fyrir því at þeir er Hákon höfðu þjónat
ok þeir er áðr vǫru með sonum Gunnhildr, höfðu átt mörg

vandraeði áðr sín á milli, ok þótti hvárum sínir höfðingjar betri. Þat lýsisk í orðaskipti þessa tveggja skálda.

And when Haraldr and his brothers had taken the title of king, King Hákon's followers became his men and soon after there was little agreement among the retainers because those who had served Hákon and those who had earlier been with Gunnhildr's sons had had many difficulties between them before. This is shown by the exchange of words by these two skalds.

6. Glúmr Geirason, *lausavísa* 1 (*Skj* AI 78, BI 68):

Vel hefr hefnt, en (hafna
hjörs berdraugar fjörvi)
folkrakkr of vant fylkir
framligt, Haraldr Gamla,
es dökkvalir drekka
dolgbrands (fyr ver handan
roðin sák benja rauðra
reyr) Hökonar dreyra.

Well has Haraldr avenged Gamli! Sword-bearing logs (men > warriors) abandon life. Battle-bold king, you performed a great deed where the dark hawks of the battle-flame (sword > ravens) drink Hákon's blood. I saw the reed of red wounds (sword) redden beyond the sea.

7. Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *lausavísa* 6 (*Skj*, AI 72, BI 63):

Fyrr rauð Fenris varra
flugvarr konungr sparra
(malmhríðar svall meiðum
móðr) í Gamla blóði,
þás óstirfinn arfa

Eiríks of rak (geira
nú tregr gæti-Gauta
grams fall) á sæ alla.

Before that, the flight-wary king reddened Fenrir's gag (his sword) in the stream of Gamli's blood. Anger swelled the poles of the weapon-storm (battle > warriors) when the steadfast man drove all the sons of Eiríkr into the sea. Now the lord's fall grieves the guarding-Gautar (Óðinns) of spears (warriors).

8. Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *lausavísa* 7 (*Skj*, AI 72-73, BI 63- 64.):

Lítt kvöðu þik láta
landvörðr, es brast, Hörða,
benja hagl á brynjum,
(bugusk almar) geð falma,
þás ófolgin ylgjar
endr ór þinni hendi
fetla svell til fyllar
fullegg, Haraldr, gullu.

They said, land-guardian of the Hordalanders, that you let your spirit hesitate little when the wound-hail broke on armour. Elm-bows curved when, earlier, icicles of the sword-belt (swords), very sharp, shrieked from your hand so that the she-wolf was sated.

9. Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *lausavísa* 10 (*Skj*, AI 73-74, BI 64):

Einn dróttin hefk áttan
jöfurr dyrr an þik fyrra
(bellir bragningr elli)
biðkat mér ens þriðja;

trúr vask tyggja dýrum,
tveim skjöldum lékk aldri,
fyllik flokk þinn stillir,
fellt á hendr mér elli.

--“áðr en ek týnda Hákon”. Eptir þat var Eyvindr með Gunnhildarsonum litla hríð; fór síðan til búa sinna, ok svá gørðr flestir Hákonar menn, at þeir þjónuðu skamma hríð Eiríkssonum ok settusk heima at búum sínum.

I have followed one lord before you, magnificent prince. I do not look for another. King, old age presses upon me. I was faithful to the dear king; I never played with two shields. I fall in with your troop, king. Old age falls upon me.

--“before I lost Hákon”. After that Eyvindr was with Gunnhildr’s sons for a short time; afterwards he returned to his properties and so did the majority of Hákon’s men, so that they served Eiríkr’s sons for a little while and then settled back home on their lands.

10. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla, Haralds saga gráfeldar*, chapter 1 (Íslenzk fornrit, Reykjavík, 1941), pg. 199:

En er þat spyrr Haraldr konungr, þá gaf hann Eyvindi þar fyrir dauðasök, allt til þess at vinir þeira saettu þá með því, at Eyvindr skyldi gerask skáld hans, svá sem hann hafði áðr verit Hákonar konungs. Var frændsemi milli þeira mikil.

But when King Haraldr heard about it, he threatened Eyvindr with a death-sentence until the friends of both reconciled them with each other, so that Eyvindr would

become his skald just as he had been King Hákon’s before. There was a close kinship between them.

11. Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *lausavísur* 8 and 9 (*Skj*, AI 73, BI 64):

Börum, Ullr, of alla,
ímunlauks, á hauka
fjöllum Fýrisvalla
fræ Hökonar ævi;
nú hefr folkstríðir Fróða
fáglýjaðra þýja
meldr í móður holdi
mellu dolgs of folginn.

Ullr of the war-leek (sword > warrior), we carried Fýrisvellir’s seed (gold) on the hills of the hawks (arms) all through Hákon’s lifetime. Now the people’s adversary has hidden the flour of Fróði’s joyless maid-servants (gold) in the flesh of the mother of the giantess’ enemy (Pórr > Jörð > earth).

Fullu skein á fjöllum
fallsól bráa vallar
Ullar kjóls of allan
aldr Hökonar sköldum;
nú's alfröðull elfar
jötna dolgs of folginn
(röð eru ramrar þjóðar
rík) í móður líki.

The setting sun of the field of Fulla’s brow (gold) shone on the hills of Ullr’s keel (shield > arm) for poets all through Hákon’s time. Now the elf-halo (sun) of the river (gold) is hidden in the body of the mother of the giants’ enemy (Pórr > Jörð > earth).