

Seeing things in the shield poems and other skaldic ekphrases

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I. Introduction: the Auffälligkeit of skaldic ekphrasis

Three canonical texts usually referred to as the ‘shield poems’ are at the centre of discussions of ekphrasis in Old Norse: *Ragnarsdrápa*, ‘poem about (or for) Ragnarr’, by Bragi inn gamli, which describes a shield; *Haustlǫng*, ‘Autumn-long’, also with a shield as subject; and *Húsdrápa*, ‘house-poem’, describing decorations on wall-panels.¹ According to the conventional datings, *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Haustlǫng* were composed in the second half of the ninth century, and *Húsdrápa* at the beginning of the eleventh.² The ‘shield poems’ form the grand portal of every skaldic corpus edition, as a rare witness to Viking Age sensibility, and play a key part in debates about the origins of the skaldic poetic.

As is usually the case in Old Norse studies, the datings of these poems are in fact far from certain.³ What we can be sure of is that all three are transmitted to us in a mid-thirteenth-century Icelandic handbook of poetics, the *Edda* of Snorri Sturluson. This text quotes stanzas or blocks of stanzas as examples of the mythological narratives and metaphors under discussion. Thanks to this piecemeal mode of citation, we cannot be sure if any of the three poems is complete. *Ragnarsdrápa*, 19 verses long in the standard edition, presents four narratives: the botched revenge of the legendary brothers Hamðir and Sǫrli on Jǫrmunrekkr (the historical Ermanaric), which results in the brothers’ deaths; the battle incited by Hildir between her father King Hǫgni and her lover Heðinn; the god Thor’s attempt to fish up the World Serpent; and how Gefjun creates the island of Sjælland by ploughing it up from Lake Mälaren. *Haustlǫng*’s twenty verses tell of Thor’s fights with the giants Þjazi and

¹ *Ragnarsdrápa*: *Skj* AI, 1-4; BI, 1-4; *Haustlǫng*: *Skj* AI, 16-20; BI, 14-18; *Húsdrápa*: *Skj* AI, 136-38; BI, 128-30; cf. Lie 1952, 1957, Høst 1960.

² Finnur Jónsson 1895, cf. *RGA* 14 (1999), 82-5: ‘Haustlǫng’; 15 (2000), 280-87: ‘Húsdrápa’. For a contrary view on *Ragnarsdrápa*, see Bugge 1894, Marold 1986, *RGA* 24 (2003), 112-16: ‘Ragnarsdrápa’.

³ Worth noting is that according to this dating the phrase *Danmarkar auka* ‘Danmark’s addition’, referring to the island of Sjælland in the Gefjun-stanza in *Rdr*, predates the next attestations of the proper name *Danmörk* (on the runestones of Karlevi and Jelling) by at least 100 years. The idea of Denmark/Denmark as a named territorial entity whose boundaries its ruler seeks to extend has struck some researchers as a little out of place in the mid ninth century (Marold 1986, 448-9).

Hrungnir. And *Húsdrápa*, of which 12 verses survive, describes the funeral of Odin's son Baldr in addition to the World Serpent story.

As both *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Haustlǫng* name a patron as the giver of the shield, the virtually unanimous assumption in research on these poems has been that the poet originally performed his poem "live", in the presence not only of his patron, but also of the shield the poem describes. Theories about the appearance and function of these shields occupy much space in research on the poems, from pioneer works such as Gísli Brynjúlfsson's 1860 article on *Ragnarsdrápa* to a collection of papers bearing the title 'Approaches to Skaldic Ekphrasis' which appeared under the sign of interdisciplinary collaboration between literary studies and archaeology in the journal *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* in 2007. But while figural art based on Norse myth and legend survives on such objects as runic monuments, rock engravings, and textiles,⁴ no shields with figural decorations survive from the Viking Age. Viking shields were made of leather-covered wooden boards, and only the rims and bosses were metal, so they would of course have been subject to decay. It is nevertheless suggestive that the surviving *images* of shields from the Viking Age, in the form of shield-amulets, and arms borne by figures on the Gotland picture stones, are without exception geometrically, rather than figurally, decorated.⁵ When I add that the putative donor of the shield in *Ragnarsdrápa* is King Ragnarr loðbrók, who recent researchers generally take to be a legendary rather than historical figure,⁶ it may seem surprising that, as Edith Marold observes, 'sehr wenige Forscher ... zu der Annahme gefunden [haben], daß die Schildbeschreibung eine Fiktion sein könnte' (1976, 452).

It is this possibility, that the shield poems are fictional, or more precisely, that they are an instance of 'notional ekphrasis', as John Hollander terms it (1988, 209), which is the point of departure for the following remarks. The relevance of the shield poems to the theme of our workshop, *Mediale Auffälligkeit*, is twofold. For one, discussion of these poems is one of the few places in research on Old Norse literature where problems of medium have been noticed: where the medial has become conspicuous. However, this discussion has been constrained by the belief that the texts describe real objects and that the appropriate mode of reading is therefore referential. The contrast between

⁴ Cf. Fuglesang 2002, 2007, Norrman 2005.

⁵ On decorated shields in the Viking Age, see Clunies Ross (2007, 161-2); on the Gotland stones Holtmark (1949, 1-7), more recent?); on shield amulets Hines (2007, 234, 234 n.8). I have found two mentions of shields with figural decorations in the sagas about the settlement of western Scandinavia. *Egils saga* reports a shield *skrifaðr fornsögum, en allt milli skriptanna váru lagðar spengr af gulli, ok settr steinum* 'inscribed with old stories, and between all the pictures were gold inlays, and it was studded with precious stones', and *Færeyinga saga* a red shield with *mannfái* 'a painting of a man' (*Færeyinga saga* 2006, 105) on it.

⁶ E. A. Rowe pers. comm. (cf. Rowe forthcoming); *RGA* 'Ragnarsdrápa'.

visual and verbal representation is thematised in this research, but with disappointing results. Puzzling moments in the poems are explained away as being due to the exigencies of visual depiction, and lost stanzas are proposed based on ideas about symmetry, suitable numbers of images per shield, and so on.⁷ A mediality perspective, alert to relationships and potentials of media other than the referential, surely has something to offer here. Moreover, the focus of the research on an imagined scene of performance, where the poet presents his poem before both his patron and the shield, flattens the rhetoric and elides the textuality of these poems. And the assumption that the shield poems describe real, present visual artefacts means that no deeper rationale for their existence has needed to be proposed than the gift of a shield eliciting a counter-gift of maximally elaborate and splendid description from the poet.⁸ Abandoning this aetiological story confronts us head-on with Simon Goldhill's question, 'what is ekphrasis for?' (Goldhill 2007, 1).

The second point of contact between the shield poems and the theme of our workshop is the concept of ekphrasis, which we may provisionally define with James Heffernan as 'the verbal representation of graphic representation' (1991, 299). This phenomenon has attracted intense interest in recent years, with a large number of publications on ekphrasis in the literature of antiquity⁹ and a more modest but growing number of works on medieval ekphrasis, among which I would especially mention Haiko Wandhoff's 2003 book *Ekphrasis. Kunstbeschreibungen und virtuelle Räume in der Literatur des Mittelalters*.¹⁰ Ekphrasis is interesting from the point of view of *mediale Auffälligkeit* because it necessarily involves a disjunction between (at least) two spaces: that of the text, and that of the object the text purports to describe, giving rise to effects of framing and reflecting. As Bartsch and Elsner write, ekphrasis 'signal[s] a space for a further and different play of fictions' (2007, iv). In classic examples from antiquity such as Achilles' shield in Book 18 of the *Iliad* and the paintings of the Trojan war in the Temple of Juno and the shield of Aeneas in Books 1 and 8 of the *Aeneid*, the ekphrasis functions as a microcosm to the epic text's macrocosm, or as a *textinterne Projektionsfläche* in Wandhoff's words (2003, 42), reflecting and concentrating the epic narrative in

⁷ This tendency is particularly marked in the older research, e.g. Gísli Brynjúlfsson 1860, Vogt 1930-31, Rosenfeld 1936, but also persists in several more recent studies: cf. e.g. North (1997, xxiii-xxiv), Hines (2007, 233-35).

⁸ A rare exception to this tendency is Edith Marold 1986. Not coincidentally, she is also one of the only researchers to express serious doubts about the existence of the shield (Marold 1976, 1986). Anne Holtsmark's careful close reading of *Haustlǫng* (1949) liberates her from shield mania (she notices, for example, that many events depicted in the poem do not lend themselves to visual representation) but she also concludes that the poem reproduces a pre-existing artwork, here a cult drama.

⁹ Cf. e.g. Zanker 1981, DuBois 1982, Fowler 1991, two collections on Greek and Roman ekphrasis respectively (Goldhill and Osborne 1994 and Elsner 1996), Simon 1995, Putnam 1998, Penwill 2005, and special issues of the journals *Ramus* (vol. 31, 2002) and *Classical Philology* (vol. 102, 2007).

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. Ratkowitsch 1991, Lutz 1996, Carruthers 2000, Fuglesang 2002, Clunies Ross 2006 and 2009, and the 2007 issue of *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* mentioned above.

a smaller compass. The materiality of the object of ekphrasis is of course important – reference to it is in some sense constitutive of the genre, as without some gesture in its direction, the ekphrasis would simply be an inset narrative. In the final analysis, however, the regularity with which ekphraseis cite and refer to one another and to other narratives, and the very minimal visual information they often present, leads me to conclude (in common with many researchers outside the Old Norse field) that *virtual*, *textual* and *memory* spaces play at least as important a role in the shield poems as halls, shields, or long-lost gift exchanges.

Armed with a willingness to consider ‘notional ekphrasis’ as a legitimate ekphrastic form, the scope of Old Norse ekphrasis broadens considerably out from the shield poems. I will first discuss *Ragnarsdrápa* before going on in the third and fourth parts of my talk to analyse passages from two further poems which are not part of the canonical group, *Øxarflokkur* and *Líknarbraut*, and explore how the medial and representational tensions of ekphrasis play out in these high medieval works.

II. Round things in Ragnarsdrápa

It has been observed that ekphraseis tend to describe round objects, such as shields and Grecian urns, and this is also true of the Old Norse variety.¹¹ That shields are round is a banal observation. Nonetheless it is a feature Bragi chooses to emphasise in most of his shield-*kenningar*, such as *hjól meyjar Högna* ‘wheel of Hildir’ (*Rdr* 2), *máni reiðar Ræs* ‘moon of the chariot of Rær’ (*Rdr* 7, 12), or *Svölnis salpenningr* ‘Odin’s hall-penny’ (*Rdr* 12).¹² Another kenning compares the shield to a leaf, *hreingróit steini* ‘brightly planted with colour’ (*Rdr* 1), referring to the brightly-coloured painted decoration. These metaphors evoke the round surface, animated (*gróit*) with colour, of the shield. More surprising, perhaps, is the fact that key objects in all four of the poem’s narratives are also denoted by kennings which emphasise the quality of roundness. In the case of the ring that Hildir offers Hogni, this is representationally appropriate: Bragi calls the ring *halsbaug* (*Rdr* 8), *men* (*Rdr* 9) and *svíra hringa* (*Rdr* 10), all of which mean literally ‘neck-ring’. In the other three examples, however, the circular form is less apt. The island Sjælland – not, incidentally, at all round – ploughed up by Gefjun is denoted by a kenning based on a word for a circular object, *djúpröðul öðla* ‘deep disk of inherited land’, where *röðull* means either ‘disk’ or ‘sundisk’ (*Rdr*

¹¹ Spitzer 1953, cited in Wandhoff (2003, 6). Cf. also the round room in *Rauðs þáttr* in Flateyjarbók.

¹² The texts and translations from *Ragnarsdrápa* which follow are taken from Margaret Clunies Ross’ text of these stanzas in a forthcoming volume of the new skaldic corpus edition, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* (2007-). Where her readings deviate from the standard edition of Finnur Jónsson (*Skj*), this is noted in the footnotes.

13).¹³ The World Serpent which Thor fishes up is also denoted by *kenningar* emphasising its round, encircling shape: *endiseiðr allra landa* ‘boundary-saithe of all lands’ (*Rdr* 15) and *hringr brautar borðróins barða* ‘ring of the road of the side-rowed ship’ (*Rdr* 17).¹⁴ Finally, in the attack on King Jǫrmunrekkr, his warriors stand around his bed in an attempt to defend him from his would-be killers, Hamðir and Sǫrli (*Rdr* 5). Bragi refers to the warriors as ‘encircling’ (the verb used is *gyrða*, ‘gird with a band or hoop’) *sár gólfhǫlkvis* ‘the vat of the floor-steed’, or the bed. Here the baseword of the kenning, *sár*, meaning ‘vessel, tub, vat’, is otherwise unattested in the skaldic corpus. The oddness of this word confirms that the pattern identified here is no mere random side-effect of *Ragnarsdrápa*’s narratives happening to include a number of round things. Rather, roundness links the frame (the shield) and its contents (the narratives), via an identification between the shield and the figurative language used to describe it. This may seem as if the text is making a totalizing claim of identity; of perfect, natural aptness of representation. However, this is not necessarily so. Equivalences based on shape are important means of generating likenesses within the figurative system of the *kenningar*, so coordinating the shield and its narratives by this means in fact draws attention to the *variation* which is a key feature of the skaldic metaphorical system

The *textinterne Projektionsfläche* is an apt metaphor here, although we lack an ‘epic context’ within which *Ragnarsdrápa*’s shield functions as microcosm. The four narratives flash up one after another on the shield, which is now a ring, now an island, now a serpent. Refrain stanzas between the narrative sections remind us of the shield’s shape and draw our attention to various parts of it: the boss (*baugr*) in st. 2, and the base (*botn*) in st. 7. The imagination is thus encouraged to wander across the shield’s imagined surface. The similarity of this to the idea of a memorial space or memory-theatre is, I think, not coincidental, and is a point which I will now turn to.

III. ‘Decorated with moving speech’: *ekphrasis* as memorial space

The other aspect all the canonical skaldic *ekphraseis* emphasise about the material objects they describe is that they are bearers of narrative. This claim is usually made in the refrain. The refrain of *Ragnarsdrápa* (*Rdr* 7, 12) says Ragnarr gave the poet a shield *ok fjöld sagna* ‘and a multitude of stories’ (*sagna* here is the genitive plural form of *saga*, ‘narrative’). *Húsdrápa*’s refrain runs *hlaut*

¹³ Finnur Jónsson (*Skj* BI) avails himself of a reading from a minor manuscript and construes the stanza differently to yield an adjectival phrase referring to Gefjun, *gløð djúprøðuls* ‘glad of the sun of the deep [GOLD]’.

¹⁴ Finnur Jónsson (*Skj* BI) again prefers a minority reading here, *þvengr* ‘thong’ rather than *hringr* ‘ring’.

innan svá minnum (*Húsdr* 6, 10), ‘within appeared these motifs’,¹⁵ where *minnum* is dative plural of *minni* ‘memory, thing to be remembered’. *Haustlǫng* has the most elaborate version: *Baugis þák bifum fáða / bifkleif at Þorleifi*, ‘I received the quivering-cliff of the shield-boss [i.e. the shield], decorated with moving speech, from Þorleifr’ (*Haust* 13, 20).¹⁶ *Minni*, *saga* and *bif* (or perhaps *bifa*: dative *bifum* does not enable us to decide between these two nominative forms) all describe the narratives on the shields as linguistically mediated, an implication clearest in *saga* but also present in *minni* and, probably, *bif/bifa*. I would not wish to press the point of *linguistic* mediation in particular too hard. In Old Norse texts as in other medieval literatures, textual and visual media are not consistently lexically differentiated from one another.¹⁷ All three terms do, however, imply that the material the poems recount has already undergone a medial process of some kind by the time the poets come by it. The images on the shield are not offered to the poet ‘immediately’, but already in the form of a narrative. But there are also significant differences in emphasis between the three words. *Saga* is rather neutral, whereas *bif/bifa* perhaps emphasises the narratives’ dynamic or protean quality, and *minni* calls attention to their memorial content.

This memorial function is at issue in the first of my ‘non-canonical’ examples of ekphrasis, the so-called ‘*Øxarflokkur*’ or ‘verses about an axe’ by the prolific twelfth-century poet Einarr Skúlason.¹⁸ This poem is also assembled from verses transmitted in Snorri’s *Edda*, and its title is editorial (hence the quotation marks). It consists of eleven verses describing an inlaid axe which the poet has been given as a gift. The focus of the description is on the three-dimensional form and materiality of the axe – its various parts *skurðr*, ‘channel’, v. 1; *hlynr*, ‘handle’, *hlýr*, ‘cheek’, v. 6; *tveim megin blóðeisu bjargs*, ‘both sides of the axe’s hammer’, v. 7), the finely worked gold and silver inlays with which it is decorated, and how it lies in the poet’s hand (*grand berum hjalms í hendi*, ‘I bear the helmet-damager in my hand’, v. 9). Apart from a single brief reference to a decoration comprising ‘beautifully carved dragons’ (*fagrt of skornir ... drekar*, v. 10), the poem does not refer to any figural decoration appearing on the axe.

¹⁵ Translation from Faulkes (1987, 74).

¹⁶ Translation and interpretation from Margaret Clunies Ross’ text of *Haustlǫng* in a forthcoming volume of the new skaldic corpus edition, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* (2007-).

¹⁷ The usual verbs are *skrifa*, *marka* (these two, relatively abstract, terms are often used interchangeably), *rista*, *grafa* (both of which primarily refer to engraving or carving), *fá*, *penta* (both referring to colouring or painting); *Guðrúnarkviða II* 13-16 presents a scene of women embroidering pictorial tapestries in which *skript* and *bóka* (vb.) feature prominently.

¹⁸ *Skj* AI, 477-9; BI, 449-51.

For this reason, as well as its late date, it has consistently been excluded from the canon of skaldic ekphrasis.¹⁹ But not only do *Øxarflokkr*'s emphasis on three-dimensional, space-filling form and costly materials have numerous parallels in medieval ekphrastic practice, as the examples assembled by Wandhoff show, but narrative is not in fact entirely absent. Einarr generates all his gold-*kenningar*, as Guðrún Nordal has noted (2001, 336), from two narratives about the origin of gold, the story of Freyja's golden tears and of the magical gold-producing mill Grotti. *Øxarflokkr* is thus a memorial structure, in which the kennings generated from this narrative material are 'placed' on the various parts of the axe, which the audience imaginatively experiences, not only visually, but also tactilely (*berum* v. 1, *berum í hendi*, v. 9). Rather than a *Projektionsfläche* for a narrative-within-the-narrative, Einarr's axe is an awkwardly-shaped bearer of narrative fragments in the form of *kenningar*. As the poet says, thanks to his poem men *megu séa ... rétt*, 'may see correctly' (v. 10) the axe and its decorations, that is, they may bring it in the proper fashion before their inner eye. The explicitness of this normative claim strikes a new note, which persists in my final example.

IV. Hjarta sjónir: *The inner eye*

This concern with text-internal observers and what Simon Goldhill has called the 'produc[tion] of the viewing subject' (2007, 2) is echoed in my last example, from the thirteenth-century poem *Liknarbraut*.²⁰ This poem is transmitted as a complete work in a collection of poetry on Christian subjects in one manuscript of – again – Snorri's *Edda*. It is anonymous, and consists of 52 stanzas. Unlike the previous examples, it is written out in the manuscript as a single long poem. Its subject matter comprises salvific history – the incarnation, passion, harrowing of hell, resurrection, and last judgement – and an *adoratio crucis*. The passage I will be reading today as an ekphrastic interlude occurs in a series of stanzas in which the passion of Christ is described in vividly sensual terms, starting with hearing (*Glymr varð hár af hömrum heyrðr* 'High clanging was heard from hammers', st. 16) and touch (*Víst bar víf it hæsta vátar kiðr af gráti* 'Certainly the highest woman [Mary] bore cheeks wet from weeping', st 18).

The appeal to sight is the climax of this series and occupies sts. 25-7, spanning the middle of the poem. The idiom in these stanzas is strikingly visual. Not only are they full of iconographic details

¹⁹ Cf. *KLNM* 'Billedbeskrivende dikt', Clunies Ross 2007.

²⁰ *Skj* AII, 150-59, BII, 160-74; *SkP* 7, 228-86. Quotations and translations in the following are from the latter edition.

familiar from the visual arts, but their rhetoric is one of seeing, so much so that it seems justified to regard them as an ekphrastic interlude. Christ is represented as Pantocrator in st. 25 (he *geypnir styrkliga sína skepnu alla saman* ‘holds in his hand mightily his creation all at once’), the general resurrection is depicted in st. 26 (*hverr meiðr hringmóts skal skunda hvatliga ór hauðri* ‘each tree of the sword-meeting [BATTLE > WARRIOR] shall hasten quickly from out of the ground’) and in st. 27, the cross and the *arma Christi* appear (*kross sýndr þjóðum með blóði ok saum* ‘the cross will be shown to the people with blood and nails’, *viðir Mistar sjá á móti sér svípur ok spjót* ‘trees of Mist [WARRIORS] see before them the whips and spear’). In st. 27, the climax of the ekphrasis, verbs of seeing cluster: *sýndr*, *sjá* and the direct statement in the first line of 27b: *Líta seggja sveitir* ‘Hosts of men look’.

The ‘produc[tion of] a viewing subject’ is clear in this stanza, the culmination of the ekphrasis:

*Kross mun á þingi þessu
þjóðum sýndr með blóði
– uggs fyllaz þá allir
aumir menn – ok saumir.
Líta seggja sveitir,
svípur ok spjót á móti
sér ok sjá með dreyra
sjálfs Krists viðir Mistar (27)*

At this assembly the Cross will be shown to the people with blood and nails; all wretched men will then be filled with terror.

Hosts of men look, and the trees of Mist [warriors] see before them the whips and spear with the blood of Christ himself.

The present-tense verb *líta* ‘look’ produces an identification or cross-over between the text-internal observers of the last judgement and the audience, who envision the scene the text describes. The intercalary clause in ll. 3-4 (‘all wretched men will then be filled with terror’), parallels similar parenthetical statements in sts. 26 (‘fear comes then’) and 28 (‘grace will not fail then’), and supplies an exemplary affective content for their visualization; ‘produces a viewing subject’ in Goldhill’s

words. Ekphrasis here is deployed as a tool for awakening compunction and faith in the souls of the audience.

Another significantly-placed stanza, the last one before the poem's formal conclusion, returns to this theme:

*Leiðum hörð á hauðri
hjarta várs með tárur,
systkin mín, fyr sjónir
siðgæti meinlæti. (46)*

My brothers and sisters, let us bring the hard torments of the faith-guardian [= God (= Christ)] on earth before our heart's eyes with tears.

Hjarta sjónir 'heart's eyes' here is a Norse translation of *ocula cordis* (or sometimes *mentis* 'mind's eyes'). To these internal organs of sight was attributed the power to summon up images of incorporeal things, and their sight was argued to be truer than that of the merely bodily eyes. It is noteworthy that it is the audience ('my brothers and sisters') who see with their heart's eyes – and this detail, I think, clarifies the situation in st. 27. The Last Judgement is after all the moment in which the saved see God not 'through a glass, darkly', but 'face to face' (1 Cor. 13:12). St. 27 perhaps depicts this eschatological moment of seeing – the perfect coincidence of the *ocula cordis* with the resurrected bodily eyes. The 'hosts of men' who look in that stanza, then, are the resurrected. The audience in the present moment of the poem will have to make do with their 'heart's eyes', nourished by the images in the text.

Liknarbraut is certainly a boundary case of ekphrasis. The text does not claim to be describing an object; and the materiality of the medium, which I suggested in my introduction was a constitutive element even of notional ekphrasis, is for obvious reasons not a theme. But its emphasis on seeing, and the coincidence of the images the poem presents with such standard items of visual iconography as Christ as Pantocrator and the *arma Christi*, suggest that the paradox of the verbal representation of visual representation is in play here. I would suggest that ekphrasis here offers a means of staging visionary seeing. It is the disjunction between corporeal and spiritual, or between external and internal seeing, which is the point of this 'ekphrastic moment'.

V. Conclusion

In the foregoing remarks I have attempted to identify some strategies and functions of ekphrastic description in Old Norse skaldic poetry. I have shown how ekphrasis, rather than being a fossil remnant of Viking material and oral culture, remained a live option for poets into the High Middle Ages and beyond. To see this it is necessary to expand Heffernan's restrictive description of ekphrasis as 'verbal representation of visual representation'. As Haiko Wandhoff has shown, an account of medieval ekphrasis should include intermedial stagings of visual objects and experiences where cognitive processes, rather than representational tensions, are foregrounded. In *Øxarflokkur*, for example, the description of the axe supports memorial recall of the myths which generate gold-kennings. Calling attention to paradoxes of representation nevertheless remains an important potential of ekphrasis, used in the Christian-didactic frame of *Líknarbraut* to stage visionary seeing as an aspirational goal for the poem's audience, and in *Ragnarsdrápa* to display the logic of likeness and variation which structures the kenning system. The narratological functions Wandhoff identifies, such as the idea of ekphrasis as a *textinterne Projektionsfläche*, remain difficult to identify for the skaldic material, very little of which has been transmitted in an 'epic' context which would allow comparisons to be made between the narratives inside and outside the frame. A large and as-yet almost completely unstudied body of Old Norse prose ekphrasis awaits such an investigation.

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I was the only one who saw her for what she was—a freak! But for my mother and father, oh no, it was Lily this and Lily that, they were proud of having a witch in the family! She stopped to draw a deep breath and then went ranting on. It seemed she had been wanting to say all this for years. Something very painful was going on in Harry's mind. As Hagrid's story came to a close, he saw again the blinding flash of green light, more clearly than he had ever remembered it before—and he remembered something else, for the first time in his life: a high, cold, cruel laugh. Hagrid was watching him sadly. "Took yeh from the ruined house myself, on Dumbledore's orders. This is a deliberate omission of conjunctions or other connectors between parts of the sentence. It may be used in the 4! description of a group of events connected in time: taking place simultaneously or in succession; in this case the absence of a conjunction may correspond to the meaning of the conjunction 'and': There was peace among the nations; Unmolested roved the hunters, Built the birch-canoe for sailing, Caught the fish in lake and river, Shot the deer and trapped the beaver; Unmolested worked the women shilly-shally/to dilly-dally (= to waste time without taking action). Note also the use of alliteration in poetry: A fly and a flea in the flue were imprisoned. Said the fly, 'Let us flee', Said the flea, 'Let us fly' The Old Norse and Icelandic poets have left us vivid accounts of conflict and peace-making in the Viking Age. Russell G. Poole's editorial and critical analysis reveals much about the texts themselves, the events that they describe, and the culture from which they come. Poole attempts to put right many misunderstandings about the integrity of the texts and their narrative techniques. He traces the social roles played by violence in medieval Scandinavian society, and explores the many functions of the poet within that society. Arguing that these texts exhibit a mind-style so vastly different from our own present 'individualism,' Poole suggests that the mind-set of the medieval Scandinavian could be termed 'non-individualist.' In the poem, "Hope" is metaphorically transformed into a strong-willed bird that lives within the human soul—and sings its song no matter what. Essentially, the poem seeks to remind readers of the power of hope and how little it requires of people. The speaker makes it clear that hope has been helpful in times of difficulty and has never asked for anything in return. "Hope is the Thing with Feathers" is one of a number of poems by Dickinson that breathes new life into an abstract concept by using surprising imagery and figurative language. Read the full text of "Hope is the