



PhD Dissertation Projects

The Retrospective Methods Network

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Newsletter

RMN Newsletter 15–16 (2020–2021): 113

Kenning Variation and Lexical Selection in Early Skaldic Verse

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Research project undertaken for completion of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, University of Oslo; dissertation successfully defended on 21 May 2021.

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This thesis represents an attempt at developing and testing new methodologies for the study of diachronic trends in kenning use and skaldic stylistics in the early *dróttkvætt* production. The target of the analysis is the effect of lexical choice in kennings, and to what extent skalds would make a pointed use of this resource in their verse. The sampled corpus comprises 18 authorial skaldic poems in *dróttkvætt* verse, examined in their editorial reconstructed form, whose composition is dated to the pre-literate period of the skaldic genre (9th–11th centuries).

The survey has highlighted important dynamics concerning three aspects that are often treated as peripheral, marked, or exceptional to the functioning of the ‘kenning-system’, namely, the kenning’s contextual motivation, the stylistic exploitation of the

kenning’s inherent imagery and intertextual strategies such as borrowing, imitation and allusion. These three macro-phenomena are treated in the three analytical chapters of the thesis, devoted, respectively, to: (a) so-called ‘situational kennings’; (b) ‘sentence metaphor’ and similar stylistic figures; and (c) cases of borrowing, imitation and allusion.

Depending on the nature of the source, lexical and literary analysis was combined and supported by metrical, palaeographic and philological considerations. Positive results emerged, encouraging the adoption of a qualitative, diachronic analysis of skaldic diction alongside the most common systemic one, in order to fully appreciate the dynamics of early *dróttkvætt* composition.