Ship of Volition, Seabed of Desire: Vernacular Models of the Breast in Skaldic Diction

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The skaldic corpus presents exciting opportunities from a history of emotions perspective in that it comprises a continuous poetic tradition spanning five centuries, much of which can be confidently ascribed to named authors, and can be situated, sometimes very precisely, in a particular time-period and cultural context. Dating from the ninth to the fourteenth century, the era of skaldic poetry broadly coincides with the rise and fall of the medieval kingdom of Norway (*c.* 900-1397), and most of the skalds whose names have been recorded, enjoyed the patronage of a Norwegian king or earl, whose heroic deeds and exploits they immortalized for posterity. However, skaldic poetry was also composed and performed in many other circumstances outside the courtly milieu, including well-defined learned and ecclesiastical contexts, so that the corpus bears witness to the major historical and cultural events of the high to late medieval period in Norway and its territories, encompassing the Viking Age and settlement of Iceland, Christianization, the Sturlung Era, and so on. Furthermore, due to the strict metrical rules according to which skaldic verse was composed, the content has remained relatively intact over centuries of oral and written transmission; it is difficult to change a word or phrase in a *dróttkvætt* line for instance, without destabilizing the metre. Thus, skaldic compositions have traditionally been considered to be less vulnerable to the kind of rewriting, rewording, and paraphrasing that can occur in the transmission of prose narratives.

Despite the obvious potential skaldic poetry presents for the diachronic analysis of emotions in Old Norse, to date this body of material has remained rather unexploited,

and, apart from a few notable exceptions,[1] emotions research has so far focused almost entirely on eddic poetry, as well as prose genres such as the sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendingasögur*) and the translated romances (*riddarasögur*). This is no doubt partly due to an assumption that skaldic elegiac and eulogistic poems are formulaic, impersonal, and therefore largely unemotional. However, the difficulty of the source material has certainly also been a factor. Unlike eddic poetry, the skaldic corpus is not neatly collected in one codex,[2] but is most often preserved embedded as individual stanzas in prose contexts scattered across hundreds of different manuscripts, as well as a few fragments in runic inscriptions on stone and wood. Some extended poems have also been preserved in the form of appendices to sagas and religious anthologies, but in the main, the panegyric poems are reconstructions by modern editors. Until recently, the principal edition of the entire corpus was Finnur Jónsson's *Den norske-islandske skjaldedigtning* ('Norse-Icelandic Skaldic Poetry', hereafter *Skj*),[3] which, along with his revised edition of Sveinbjörn Egilsson's Old Norse-Latin dictionary, the *Lexicon poeticum* (also in Danish), and other reference tools such as Rudolf Meissner's taxonomical study of kennings, remained the standard works in skaldic research for over a hundred years.[4] Since the early 2000s, however, the entire corpus is being re-edited under the auspices of 'The Skaldic Project' (or, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, hereafter *SkP*), and to date, five of the proposed eight volumes covering over 75% of the almost 6,000 stanzas in existence, have been published both in print and digital format. Unfortunately, volumes 4 and 5, *Poetry on Icelandic History* and *Poetry in Sagas of Icelanders*, are as yet in production, so that the verse contained in *Gísla saga*, *Egils saga*, *Kormáks saga*, *Njáls saga*, *Landnámabók* etc., is only accessible in *Skj*, and other printed editions of the sagas of Icelanders such as those published in the 'Íslenzk fornrit' series (hereafter *ÍF*).[5]

[1] Such as Sif Rikhardsdottir's analysis of Egill Skalla-Grímsson's *Sonatorrek*, in *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, pp. 85-97, and Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, 'The Head, the Heart, and the Breast: Bodily Conceptions of Emotion and Cognition in Old Norse Skaldic Poetry'.
[2] The greater part of the surviving eddic poetry is preserved in the so-called *Codex Regius* (*CR*), *c.* 1270.
[3] The edition is presented in two parts, each covered by an 'A' volume giving manuscript text and selected variants, and a 'B' volume with edited and normalised text, text re-ordered in prose, and Danish translations; part one covers poetry from 800 to 1200, and part two from 1200 to 1400.
[4] Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden*. See also Ernst Albin Kock's revised Swedish edition of Finnur's work, *Den norsk-isländska Skaldediktningen*, his *Notationes Norrœne: Anteckningar till Edda och Skaldediktning*, which consisted in a series of twenty-eight volumes of detailed notes and commentary on skaldic and Eddic poetry.
[5] Since this chapter was written, volume 5, 'Poetry in Sagas of Icelanders' has been published in print format.

Furthermore, while *SkP* is also currently developing a range of online resources, including a new *Lexicon Poeticum*, and a 'Kenning Lexicon', which greatly facilitate the work of the skaldic scholar, there is currently neither a complete concordance, nor a fully searchable database of the complete corpus of Old Norse poetry, which means that any type of corpus analysis still depends on manual searching and is therefore a painstaking and complex process. Nonetheless, in one such study, by cross-referencing the available print and online resources, Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir has produced a comprehensive list of kennings for heart and breast, which she analyses to conclusively demonstrate that cognitive and emotional qualities are exclusively associated with the breast, rather than the head, in skaldic diction:

> Cognitive and emotional qualities seem to be portrayed as analogous and are depicted as originating from the same place: the chest area. This pectoral model of the mind holds true for kennings in poems that are attributed to both early and later skalds as well as poems with either pre-Christian or Christian themes. Furthermore, in *Egils saga*, poetic powers are placed in the breast and the creation of poetry is firmly associated with emotions. From this, it can be deduced that the depiction of the heart and the breast as the seat of emotions and cognitive abilities is a deeply ingrained frame of knowledge in skaldic poetry across the entire period of its composition.[6]

However, while the model outlined here may hold true for later works, a diachronic analysis of the corpus actually shows significant variance in the conceptualization of the breast and associated qualities. It is primarily in works produced after the eleventh century (especially in religious and devotional poetry) that the breast is mentioned in the context of an emotionally charged activity; in earlier poetry the chest is almost exclusively referenced in the context of poetic composition, or simply as part of the physical anatomy. Furthermore, chest and heart kennings are not evenly distributed throughout the corpus, but mostly concentrated in a small number of extended works attributable to individual poets operating in specific cultural and social milieux.

Already in the late 1970s, in his study of literal and figurative expressions for the heart in eddic and skaldic poetry, Klaus von See had argued that it was possible to make

[6] Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, 'The Head, the Heart, and the Breast', p. 64.

a diachronic distinction between an 'older group', in which the heart is principally conceived of in terms of its anatomical constitution and as the source of bravery or cowardice, and a 'younger group' which conceived of the heart in an 'incorporeal sense' and as the 'seat' of emotions such as sorrow, joy, love, and goodness. Von See argued, rather controversially in the case of examples from poems such as *Hávamál*, that the figurative language in the younger group drew on metaphors and formulaic language in the Bible and other sacred texts, and was also highly influenced by developments in the twelfth century such as the rise in devotion to the Sacred Heart as a symbol of Divine Love, as well as the *aetas Ovidiana*.[7]

Guðrún Nordal has also discussed the way in which metaphors from classical and religious ideologies circulating in twelfth-century Europe contributed to the presentation of body imagery in skaldic diction, the two main models being the analogy in Plato's *Timaeus* between the microcosmos of the human body and the macrocosmos of the world-body, as well as the Christian concept of the body as a 'house' or dwelling-place of the soul or Holy Spirit. Indeed, for Nordal, the parallels between metaphorical models used in breast and other body kennings in verse attributed to the era pre-1100, and poetry grounded in twelfth- and thirteenth-century ideologies, are so striking as to lead her to question the authenticity of the former, especially in the case of poetry preserved in thirteenth-century prose works, such as the sagas of Icelanders.[8]

While it is beyond the scope of the present study to analyse breast-kennings in the poetry of the sagas of Icelanders, this chapter will examine one such supposedly tenth-century stanza, preserved in the thirteenth-century poetical treatise *Skáldskaparmál*, whose conceptual model for breast shows all the signs of having have been generated in the twelfth century or later. Furthermore, although kenning types for breast might superficially appear to be stable and unchanging across the skaldic corpus, this study aims to show how, upon closer scrutiny of context and diction, it is possible to identify significant variation in the conceptual models in pre- and post-Christian verse, and even to track their evolution from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries.

Sources

[7] Klaus von See, 'Das Herz in Edda und Skaldendichtung', p. 83. More recently, Theodore Anderson has also argued for a distinction between an older 'emotionally understated' layer and a later one 'focused on sentiment and melancholy.' See Theodore Anderson, 'Is there a History of Emotions in Eddic Heroic Poetry?'.
[8] Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, p. 307.

As noted above, the majority of poetry attributed to ninth and tenth-century skalds is preserved in thirteenth-century prose genres which were the literary products of a closely connected learned elite active in the 'golden age' of the Icelandic Commonwealth, including monastic and scholastic communities, and powerful political families such as the Sturlung clan.[9] Indeed, in the case of three of the most celebrated examples of the sagas of Icelanders, kings' sagas, and poetical treatises, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, *Heimskringla* and *Skáldskaparmál*, the author may well have been one and the same. Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), the most famous member of the Sturlung family, is widely recognised as the writer of *Heimskringla* and *Skáldskaparmál*, and, if he did not write *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* himself, it is generally accepted that the author must have been another member of his family or a person from the same cultural-political milieu.

For the writers of these prose genres, skaldic verse was employed in various ways. In the case of historiographical texts, individual stanzas (or extended poems) attributed to named poets were generally cited as the authority for events portrayed in the prose narrative, or as sources of history and legend.[10] The redactors of poetical and grammatical treatises primarily used skaldic stanzas as *exempla* for their vernacular *artes grammaticae*, where their native poets took the place of the *auctores* of classical models.[11] As Jonas Wellendorf has shown, the increased 'academicization' of skaldic poetry from the twelfth century onwards 'led to the formation of a clearly demarcated school canon of exemplary skalds',[12] so that it is the work of these 'chief poets' (*hǫfuðskǫld*), which is mostly preserved in the grammatical and poetical treatises.

In the sagas of Icelanders, the relationship between verse and prose is more complex. Unlike the poetry in the kings' sagas, in general these stanzas or half-stanzas are not presented as historical 'footnotes', but are woven into the narrative as direct speech, and often function as a means to allow the explicit expression of emotions and an insight into a character's inner life, which is not usually afforded by the

[9] Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, pp. 9-11.
[10] For an overview of the role of verse in Old Norse historiographical works see O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative*, pp. 10-77.
[11] See Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*.
[12] Wellendorf, 'The Formation of an Old Norse Skaldic School Canon in the Early Thirteenth Century', pp. 126-27.

characteristically detached and impersonal style of the prose.[13] Indeed, the apparent objective reality presented by the prose narrative contrasts starkly with the utterly unrealistic depiction of its characters going around speaking spontaneously in verse to each other, so that, although of course recitations of poems in a more plausible context are also recorded, the highly literary pretext of many of the skaldic utterances in sagas has inevitably raised questions about their authenticity, authorship, and origin. Stanzas attributed to ghosts and other supernatural creatures are obvious examples of pseudonymous verse, as are those stanzas attributed to different characters in different sagas. Thirteenth-century saga authors were not averse either to composing fictitious verse for their works, which they sometimes tried to archaize by using antiquated metrical forms or diction.[14] However, as shall be demonstrated in the discussion of breast kennings below, the presence of conceptual models which appear to have been imported with Christianization can also give grounds for bringing into question the authenticity and attribution of stanzas ostensibly composed by tenth-century characters in the sagas of Icelanders.

A further challenge in the study of skaldic verse is the complexity of its form and diction.[15] In stanzas composed in the *dróttkvætt* metre in particular, the syntax is often so highly distorted as to stretch the limits of comprehensibilty to all but the expert reader, so that in modern editions the practice has traditionally been to present the text re-ordered in prose beneath the original, with kennings explained in the notes.[16] Furthermore, ambiguities as a result of corrupt text, manuscript illegibilty, manuscript variants, apparent incongruities, or simply lost knowledge, can lead to widely differing interpretations, as editors attempt to make sense of a stanza or kenning.

Nevertheless, despite these manifold challenges, I believe that skaldic poetry comprises our most important verbal witness to Old Norse-Icelandic culture in the ninth and tenth centuries before Christianity and the arrival of Latin learning had a chance to take root. As such, it has significant value as a resource for the study of indigenous

[13] O'Donoghue, for example, describes the verse in *Gísla saga* as 'a window into Gísli's inner feelings', *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative*, p. 139.
[14] Males, *The Poetic Genesis of Old Icelandic Literature*, pp. 219-73.
[15] For a detailed description of the genre see Whaley, 'Skaldic Poetry'.
[16] As this chapter includes many quotations, in the interest of economy and simplicity, I have chosen to mostly cite the stanzas according to the prose word order in the relevant edition, and for coherency I have modified the use of parenthesis in *SkP*. For similar reasons, unless it is relevant to the argument, I do not cite the Danish or Modern Icelandic translations given in *Skj* and *ÍF*, and the translations of stanzas cited from these editions are my own. In some cases, I have adapted the English translations in *SkP* in order to provide a more nuanced reading of terms related to cognition and emotion.

concepts of emotions, thought processes, and their relationship to the human body in Old Norse. Through a detailed investigation of both literal and figurative references to breast in the skaldic corpus, the following analysis attempts to identify two principal vernacular models, and trace their evolution in different literary and cultural contexts, from the earliest recorded poetry onwards.

THE BREAST IS A SHIP

The earliest treatment of the conceptualisation of heart and breast in skaldic diction is to be found in the thirteenth-century poetical treatise *Skáldskaparmál* (Poetic Diction),[17] which explains how kennings for the breast envisage it as the 'land' or 'house' of cognitive processes such as thinking, desiring, feeling, and so on, or of the heart, which itself often represented as a round, hard object such as a stone or apple:

> The heart (*hjarta*) is called bosom (*negg*). It shall be referred to by calling it corn (i. e. grain) or stone or apple or nut or ball or the like, and referring to it in terms of breast (*brjóst*) or thought (*hugr*). It can also be called house or ground or mountain of the thought (*hugr*). The breast (*brjóst*) shall be referred to by calling it house or enclosure or ship of heart (*hjarta*), spirit (*ǫnd*) or liver, land of energy (*eljun*), thought (*hugr*) and memory (*minni*). Thought (*hugr*) is called mind (*sefi*) and tenderness (*siafni*), love (*ást*) affection (*elskugi*), desire (*vili*), pleasure (*munr*). Thought (*huginn*) shall be referred to by calling it wind of troll-wives and it is normal for this purpose to use the name of whichever one you like, and also to use the names of giants, and then refer to it in terms of his wife or mother or daughter. These names form a special group. *Hugr* is also called disposition (*geð*), attitude (*þokki*), energy (*eljun*), fortitude (*þrekr*), liking (*nenning*), memory (*minni*), wit (*vit*), temper (*skap*), character (*lund*), troth (*tryggð*). *Hugr* can also be called anger (*reiði*), enmity (*fjándskapr*), hostility (*fár*), ferocity (*grimð*), evil (*bǫl*), grief (*harmr*), sorrow (*tregi*), bad temper (*óskap*), wrath

[17] *Skáldskaparmál* is one of three sections in the so-called *Prose Edda* (*c.* 1220–1240), a kind of poet's handbook detailing aspects of Old Norse mythology, poetic diction, and metre. This work is usually attributed to Snorri Sturluson, and hence often called Snorri's *Edda*. Another poetical treatise which explains body kennings in a similar way is *Litla Skálda*. For a discussion, see Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, pp. 237-68.

(*grellskap*), duplicity (*lausung*), insincerity (*ótryggð*), inconstancy (*geðleysi)*, frivolity (*þunngeði*), brashness (*gessni*), impulsiveness (*hraðgeði*), impetuousness (*óþveri*).[18]

However, as Guðrún Nordal notes, the treatment of heart and breast kennings (as well as those of other body parts), differs from the presentation of other kenning types in *Skáldskaparmál*, in that it is situated at the end of the treatise (indicating that it may have been a later addition) and also in that no lines of verse are cited as authorities for the kenning patterns listed.[19] Nordal suggests that this may be because body-kennings were rare in early verse and that Snorri might not have considered them 'as part of the classical vocabulary of the early skalds'.[20] However, Snorri did not limit his examples to the work of early skalds, and he was certainly not opposed to using these models in his own poetical compositions; his *Háttatal* (Enumeration of Verse Forms),[21] for example, contains six breast kennings. Also, while it is true that kennings for body parts are far more common in skaldic poetry from the twelfth century on, there are a number of important exceptions, many of which were certainly known to Snorri.

One of these, the earliest reference to breast in the skaldic corpus, occurs in *Ynglingatal* (Enumeration of the Ynglingar), a poem attributed to Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, a Norwegian poet of the ninth and early tenth centuries.[22] The extant verses of *Ynglingatal* are preserved in *Ynglingasaga*, the first saga in *Heimskringla*, where the stanzas are distributed across consecutive chapters. Reconstructed, the poem consists in an account of ancient and legendary Swedish and Norwegian kings and their undignified deaths. Stanza 4, for example, describes how the Swedish King Vísburr is burned alive in his house by his sons:

Ok Vísburs
vilja byrði

[18] Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, trans. by Anthony Faulkes, p. 154. Old Norse terms supplied from Snorri Sturluson, *Edda I*: *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Faulkes, p. 108.
[19] Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, p. 237. The kennings and *heiti* for the different body parts are placed in the concluding chapters in all versions of *Skáldskaparmál* (chaps. 86 and 87), except in the *Codex Upsaliensis*.
[20] Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, p. 238.
[21] *Háttatal*, a *clavis metrica* and praise-poem in honour of King Hákon and Earl Skúli Bárðarson, was probably the first part of the *Edda* composed by Snorri on his return from Norway in 1221, see Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, pp. 80-82 and p. 200, note 2.
[22] An early date (late ninth/early tenth century) for *Ynglingtal* is now generally accepted. See, for example, Goeres, *Poetics of Commemoration*, p. 55.

sævar niðr
svelgja knátti,
þás meinþjóf
markar ǫttu
setrs verjendr
á sinn fǫður.
Ok allvald
í arinkjóli
glóða garmr
glymjandi beit.

Prose word order
Ok niðr sævar knátti svelgja **byrði vilja** Vísburs, þás verjendr setrs ǫttu meinþjóf markar á fǫður sinn. Ok glymjandi garmr glóða beit allvald í arinkjóli.

(And the kinsman of the sea [FIRE] swallowed the **ship of the will** [BREAST] of Vísburr when the defenders of the seat [RULERS] incited the harmful thief of the forest [FIRE] against their father. And the roaring dog of embers [fire] bit the sovereign within the hearth-keel [HOUSE].)[23]

Here the kenning for 'breast' comprises the 'base-word' *byrði* (a poetic synonym for 'ship', literally 'board' or 'plank'),[24] which is qualified by the 'determinant' *vili* (will, desire), and would seem to fit the 'ship of spirit (*ǫnd*)' pattern outlined by Snorri above.[25] In *SkP*, the kenning is explained as being 'based on the idea that feelings and

[23] Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, *Ynglingatal* 4 (*SkP* I, p. 14).
[24] A manuscript variant *byrgi* (rampart), is also attested, and 'fortress of will' would work as a chest-kenning here, but *SkP* prefers *byrði* 'since the kenning pattern "ship of the will" is attested as early as the C10th and normally refers to the physical breast, whereas *borg* "fortress" is not attested in such kennings until the C13th-14th and refers predominantly to the breast in the metaphorical sense of "soul" or "inner self"'. *Ynglingatal* 4 (*SkP* I, p. 14), n. 2.
[25] The most basic kenning format consists either of two nouns, one of them in the genitive case, or of two nouns combined to form a compound word. These two elements are called the 'base-word' (German *Grundwort*, Mod. Icelandic *stofnorð*) and the 'determinant' (*Bestimmung*, *kenniorð*). In the case of a two-noun kenning it is the noun in its genitive case that constitutes the determinant; in the case of a compound-word kenning, it is the first element in the compound that does so. See Whaley, 'Skaldic Poetry', pp. 486-88.

will-power reside in the breast',[26] but if this were correct, it would pose problems for the traditional dating of *Ynglingatal*, as the metaphor of the body as a building or human abode within which the spirit or the mind resides is an idea indebted to Christian doctrine, first evidenced in Old Norse writings of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.[27] In fact, even though Snorri's conceptualisation of breast kennings may well have been influenced by Christian and classical concepts of mind, spirit and soul as dwelling in the body, it is interesting to note that even in later Christian poetry, with the possible exception of the kenning 'bygð samvizkunnar' (settlement of conscience) in the fourteenth-century religious poem *Lilja*,[28] there are no extant examples of kennings which allude to *ǫnd* (spirit), *sál* (soul), or related concepts 'residing' in the breast at all, and literal references to the breast as a container of the soul or spirit are equally rare.

Indeed, one thirteenth-century religious poem, seems to actively avoid such an idea. As Einar Ólafur Sveinsson has demonstrated, stanzas 11-16 of the anonymous *Heilags anda drápa* (Praise-poem for the Holy Spirit) comprise a translation of the well-known ninth-century Latin hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*.[29] The opening stanza of the hymn, which is the source for Stanza 11, calls on the Holy Spirit to 'visit minds' and 'fill breasts' with heavenly grace:

> Veni, Creator Spiritus,
> **mentes** tuorum **visita**,
> **imple** superna gratia,
> quae tu creasti **pectora**.
>
> (Come, creator Spirit, **visit** the **minds** of your own, **fill** with heavenly grace the **breasts** that you have created.)

As the Old Norse text is a verse translation, it is not surprising that it does not follow the source text word-for-word; however, it is noteworthy that although the poet has maintained a distinction between *mentes* (mind) and *pectora* (breast), in the form of

[26] *Ynglingatal* 4 (*SkP* I, p. 14), n. 2.
[27] Both in the *Elucidarius* (Eluc III, 102): 'Líkamr er hús andar' (The body is the house of the spirit), and in the *Homiliu-Bók* (Horn 193): 'líkamir yðrir eru musteri anda heilags þess er í yðr byggvir' (your bodies are the temple of the holy spirit which resides within you), quoted in Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, p. 266.
[28] Anonymous, *Lilja* 84 (*SkP* VII, 656-57).
[29] Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, 'Íslenzk sálmaþýðing frá 13. öld. *Heilags anda vísur*'.

hugr and *brjóst*, the two Latin verbal forms *visita* (visit) and *imple* (fill) in the translation are conflated to one - ON *fremja* (to further, promote) - removing the concept of the mind as a place that can be visited, or of the breast as a 'container' of *gratia* (grace):

> Kom nú, hreinskapaðr himna,
> hlutvandr föður andi;
> yðvarra **frem**, errinn,
> alsælan **hug** þræla.
> Himneskrar **fremr** háska
> hjálp unnin* miskunnar
> gumna **brjóst** í grimmum
> guðs kraptr, þau er þú skaptir.[30]
>
> (Come now, pure Creator of the Heavens, upright Spirit of the Father; Powerful One, **further** the altogether-blessed **minds** [lit. mind] of your servants. God's power, help of heavenly mercy, won in terrible danger, **strengthen** the **breasts** [lit. breast] of men, which you created.)

The reason for this may well have been that for the poet it would have been incongruous in the vernacular model to talk about a *hugr* being visited, or of a breast being filled by some kind of spiritual enrichment; the idea of strengthening the resolve of the *hugr* or breast in the face of danger would have been more consistent with traditional conceptualizations.

Overall, although in Old Norse translated texts the breast is sometimes equated with Latin terms such as *cor* (heart), *mente* (mind), and *animus* (soul),[31] and there are references to the spirit as separate from the body,[32] the evidence for the breast as a container for the spirit, soul, or mind in skaldic poetry is negligible.[33] In skaldic diction

[30] Anonymous, *Heilags anda drápa* 11 (*SkP* VII, 460-61).
[31] See the lexical entry for *brjóst* in *ONP*.
[32] Such as: *Lilja* 11 (*SkP* VII, 573-75); *Máríuvísur II* 18 (*SkP* VII, 713-14); and *Heilagra meyja drápa* 56 (*SkP* VII, 926-27).
[33] One possible exception occurs in the thirteenth-century anonymous poem *Sólarljóð* (Song of the Sun), where the poet seems to describe his soul leaving his breast in the form of a star, *Sólarljóð* 46 (*SkP* VII, 327-28): 'Vánarstjarna fló burt frá brjósti mér; þá var ek fæddr' (A star of hope flew away from my breast; then I was born).

the breast is only ever conceptualized as the location of *hugr* (or one of its poetic synonyms), of poetry/poetic inspiration, and, from the twelfth century onwards, of *hjarta* (heart), although later poets showed some innovation in specifically referring to the intellectual aspects of *hugr* in breast-kennings such as 'salr vizkunnar' (hall of intellect)[34] and 'hverfi vizkunnar' (village of wisdom).[35]

The example from *Heilags anda drápa* illustrates how by the thirteenth century *hugr* was considered to be an appropriate equivalent for *mente*, but in other contexts it was also used to gloss *conscientia* (conscience), *cor* (heart), *desiderium* (desire), and most frequently *animus* (intellect/mind/soul).[36] As these glosses (as well as the list of synonyms, or partial synonyms, listed by Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* above) show, therefore, *hugr* is a polyvalent term for which there is no clear counterpart in English. Thus, although it is most often rendered as 'mind', or 'thought', particularly when it forms part of a kenning, these translations are quite reductive, obscuring the full range and scope of *hugr* in its vernacular sense as the entity not only responsible for thought, but also emotion, volition, and the character of a person. As Colin Mackenzie has defined it:

> [...] *hugr* is not merely a 'mind'-like concept, but a highly elaborated, complex personhood construct which represents a particular way of conceptualising what, in addition to the body, makes up a person.[37]

Furthermore, in the vernacular model *hugr* is not independent of the body and does not persist after death, and thus, unlike spirit or soul, has no associations with the afterlife.[38] In this sense the entity it perhaps most closely resembles is the human brain, but the physicality of *hugr* is never described, and it seems to have been perceived as an ethereal substance such as air.[39] Therefore, although *hugr* is clearly located in the thorax, it is incongruous to talk about it 'residing' in, or 'inhabiting' the breast, as such

[34] Anonymous, *Pétrsdrápa* 36 (*SkP* VII, 827-8).
[35] *Lausavísa from Fóstbræðra saga* 1 (*Skj* AII, 454). Cf. *Hugsvinnsmál* (Sayings of the Wise-minded One), a gnomic poem upon based the *Disticha Catonis*, st. 146 (*SkP* VII, 447): 'Nem þú horsklig ráð at hyggnum mönnum ok lát búa í brjósti þér' (Learn wise advice from intelligent men and let it live inside your breast).
[36] See the lexical entry for *hugr* in *ONP*.
[37] Mackenzie, 'Cardiocentric Psychology in Old Norse-Icelandic', p. [THIS VOLUME]
[38] Mackenzie, 'Cardiocentric Psychology in Old Norse-Icelandic', p. [THIS VOLUME]
[39] As we have seen above in the quotation from *Skáldskaparmál*: 'Thought (*huginn*) shall be referred to by calling it wind of troll-wives'. For a discussion of this kenning see Quinn, 'Wind of the Giantess', and Heide, *Gand, seid og åndevind*, pp. 196-204.

language implies *hugr* is a separate being which can enter and exit the body, and act independently of it. While the qualities of *hugr* obviously overlap to a certain degree with those of our modern (Anglo) concept of 'mind', the fundamental differences between the two become plain if we try to map some of the prevalent image schemata for our modern understanding of mind onto *hugr*, such as the prominent MIND IS A CONTAINER metaphor. As Lakoff and Johnson explain:

> We conceptualize the mind metaphorically in terms of a container image schema defining a space that is inside the body and separate from it. Via metaphor, the mind is given an inside and an outside. Ideas and concepts are internal, existing somewhere in the inner space of our minds, while what they refer to are things in the external, physical world. This metaphor is so deeply ingrained that it is hard to think about mind in any other way.[40]

In contrast, *hugr* is certainly not conceived of as having 'an inside and an outside' or comprising an 'defined inner space' which contains ideas or objects. Also, as mentioned above, although located internally in the body, *hugr* cannot be separated from it, nor can exist outside it. Arguably, it is the chest as it is conceptualized in kennings and skaldic poetry which corresponds more closely to the MIND IS A CONTAINER model, as it can be understood as having a finite, bounded space within which *hugr*, and its associates *vili*, *munr*, and so on, are located. However, unlike the intangible abstract concept 'mind', the chest is a physical, concrete structure, which leads us to a fundamental distinction between kennings and cognitive metaphors. While kennings are certainly underpinned by metaphorical thinking, unlike conceptual metaphors, their objective is not to make abstract or intangible concepts more comprehensible by refiguring them in concrete terms, but rather the reverse, to take a concrete tangible object and reconceive it (often using very obscure and convoluted figures) in terms of another concrete object.[41] Thus if the chest is conceived of as a container, it is so in a literal, not metaphorical, sense.

Returning to the kenning 'byrði vilja' it is clear from the context that the referent is not any abstract 'mind-like' concept, but Vísburr's literal anatomical thorax, which is consumed by fire thus resulting in his death. The underlying metaphor in this kenning is A BREAST IS A SHIP, which I believe is primarily grounded in the physical likeness

[40] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, p. 266.
[41] Bergsveinn Birgisson also makes this point, see 'Skaldic Blends Out of Joint', p. 286.

between the skeletal apparatus of the human thorax and a viking ship's hull, particularly the resemblance between structure of the ribcage and the curved frames of ship, but also the planks (or boards), keel, and prow.[42] This image is very clearly evoked in Eilífr Goðrúnarson's *Þórsdrápa* (*c.* 1000), for instance, where the backbone attached to the rib-cage is referred to as the 'kjǫl hlátrelliða' (keel of the laughter-ship [BREAST]).[43] *Háttalykill* 74 seems to refer to the same concept, where the image of the 'hard walls' (harða veggi) of the 'ship of thought' (knarrar hyggju), which are 'cut with swords', may allude to the ribs or sternum of the breast.[44] Furthermore, in the opening stanza of Egill Skalla-Grímsson's *Hǫfuðlausn* (*c.* 950),[45] the poet may be alluding to a physical correspondence between the breast and prow of a vessel when he describes how he has loaded the 'stern of my ship' (míns knarrar skut) > ?BREAST with a 'cargo of praise' (mærðar hlutr) > PRAISE-POEM.[46] In Hofgarða-Refr Gestsson's *Ferðavísur* this conceit is reversed, and the prow of the ship is twice referred to as a breast: 'But the spray-spattered Sleipnir (mythical horse) of the sea-peak [WAVE > SHIP] tears its breast (*brjóst*), covered with red paint, out of the mouth of white Rán (a sea-goddess)';[47] and 'The prow-carved world of ship-planks [SEA] strikes the breast (*brjóst*) of the steed of the prop [SHIP]'.[48] The breast in the sense of 'forefront' also occurs in a naval context in Þjóðólfr Arnórsson's *Sexstefja* (*c.* 1066): 'at the middle of the breast (*brjóst*) of the expeditionary fleet',[49] and in *Þórsdrápa* 18 in a kenning for hand: 'brjóst greipar' (breast of the grip).[50]

There are only two other kennings recorded in the corpus which follow the BREAST IS A SHIP pattern. The first, 'ship of prayer', occurs in the sense of anatomical breast in Hallvarðr háreksblesi's *Knútsdrápa* (*c.* 1029): 'Yngvi, bǫðrakkr nǫkkva bœnar bark rjóðr, ræðr einn Englandi ok Danmǫrku' (The king, the battle-bold reddener of the

[42] These analogies between body parts and components of viking ships are still current as, for example, on the website of the viking ship museum in Roskilde, Denmark: 'If a keel is the spine of a boat, then the frames are the ribs which sit across the keel', 'The Ribs of the Boat: Frames and *biti*'.
[43] Eilífr Goðrúnarson, *Þórsdrápa* 15 (*SkP* III, 108).
[44] Rǫgnvaldr jarl and Hallr Þórarinsson, *Háttalykill* 74 (*SkP* III, 1084). This interpretation is conjectural, and the 'hard walls' have also been interpreted as referring to shields protecting the breast. See editor's note.
[45] In *Skj* Finnur Jónsson dates this poem to 936 AD, but Margaret Clunies Ross suggests a later dating is more realistic. Clunies Ross and Wills, 'The Skaldic Editing Project', p. 101.
[46] Egill Skalla-Grímsson, *Hǫfuðlausn* 1 (*ÍF* 2, p. 185). This is Sigurður Nordal's interpretation, but other editors suggest alternative readings.
[47] Hofgarða-Refr Gestsson, *Ferðavísur* 3 (*SkP* III, 246).
[48] *Ferðavísur* 3 (*SkP* III, 247).
[49] Þjóðólfr Arnórsson, *Sexstefja* 13 (*SkP* II, 125).
[50] *Þórsdrápa* 18 (*SkP* III, 115).

bark of the ship of prayer [BREAST > MAIL-SHIRT > WARRIOR], alone rules England and Denmark).[51] Finally, over two centuries later, in *Hákonarkviða* (*c.* 1263), Snorri Sturluson's nephew Sturla Þórðarson, used *knörr* (ship) in a breast kenning signifying the location of poetic inspiration: 'hunangsbára fell glymjandi í geðknörr hirð hilmis' (the honey-wave [POETIC MEAD] fell foaming into the disposition-ship [BREAST] of the ruler's retinue.[52]

Whether or not mind-body dualism is reflected in conceptualizations of breast in later skaldic verse, in the case of *byrði vilja*, this cannot be the case. And although the determinant *vili* implies cognitive activity located in the chest, the context in which the kenning occurs is not related to any mental or emotional activity, but to the chest as the vital region of the physical body. As in this example, most other references to the anatomical breast in skaldic diction occur in the context of violence, e.g., 'sverð bitu fjǫrrǫnn feigra fyrða' (swords bit life-halls [BREASTS] of fated men),[53] and 'ræstr rægagarr rendi at brjóstum gumna' (drawn corpse-hound [SWORD] ran at the breasts of men).[54] It also is a recurring motif in Snorri Sturluson's *Háttatal* (*c.* 1221): 'rýfr tjǫld móðsefa ǫld' (([sword] rips the tents of the mood-perceiver [CHESTS] of people); 'Svífr [...] glugga glæs geðveggjar' ([sword] flashes through the windows of the clear disposition-wall [BREAST > WOUNDS]); and 'grár vargr klífr vígsára borg vilja' (the grey wolf climbs the battle-wounded stronghold of the will [BREAST].[55] All of these kennings allude to the protective covering of the chest being pierced or cut by swords, and, although a tent may not have the rib-like structure of the rafters of a hall, it seems to be a consistent pattern, even in later poetry, that breast-kennings of this type almost exclusively refer to the anatomical breast. When referred to in terms of cognitive or emotional activity, the pattern 'breast is the land of *hugr*'or 'breast is the hall of heart' is preferred.

To what extent the ninth-century skaldic corpus is representative of the cardiocentric model of emotions in Old Norse is impossible to determine; the corpus is relatively small, and we must be cautious about any conclusions we draw from such a limited sample. But it is certainly noteworthy that out of approximately 900 lines of verse attributed to skalds from the ninth century, 'byrði vilja' is the only reference,

[51] Hallvarðr háreksblesi, *Knútsdrápa* 6 (*SkP* III, 237).
[52] Sturla Þórðarson, *Hákonarkviða* 29 (*SkP* II, 721).
[53] Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson, *Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar* 15 (*SkP* I, 421).
[54] Anonymous, *Krákumál* 6 (*SkP* VIII, 728).
[55] *Háttatal* 51 (*SkP* III, 1159, 60).

either literal or figurative, to the breast, and the almost entire absence of references to heart, breast, and indeed *hugr*, in this period suggest that question of the interior self was not a topic that greatly concerned the poets of the period.[56]

The Breast is the Location of Poetical Inspiration

The richest source for chest kennings in tenth-century poetry is certainly the work of Egill Skalla-Grímmsson. All of these occur in his extended poems and in the context of poetic composition.[57] The following example appears in the first 'helming' of the opening stanza of *Hǫfuðlausn* (Ransom of the Head), which, according to *Egils saga*, was a poem composed by Egill in praise of King Eírikr in an attempt to save his own life.[58] In *Skáldskaparmál* these four lines are quoted in the section listing poetic synonyms for sea:

> Sem Egill kvað, ver:
>
> Vestr fer ek of ver
> en ek Viðris ber
> **munstrandar** mar,
> svá er mitt of far.[59]
>
> (As Egill said, 'fishing-ground'
>
> I went westwards over fishing-ground (i.e. sea), and I bear the sea of the **desire-coast** [BREAST] of Viðrir (Óðinn) [POETRY]. Such is my situation.)

[56] I have found only two references to the heart in ninth-century poetry, both occurring in *Ynglingatal* and neither in the context of feeling or emotion, see *Ynglingatal* 14 (*SkP* I, 31) and *Ynglingatal* 18 (*SkP* I, 40).
[57] The extended poems attributed to Egill are *Aðalsteinsdrápa, Hǫfuðlausn, Sonatorrek, Arinbjarnarkviða*, and *Berudrápa*, of which only *Arinbjarnarkviða*, *Hǫfuðlausn*, and *Sonatorrek*, are recorded in full (although very corrupt in parts). A number of stanzas or half-stanzas from these poems are also cited in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* and *Snorra Edda*, such as the example quoted above. The authenticity of these works has been much debated, although a strong case has been made for an early dating of *Sonatorrek* and *Arinbjarnarkviða* on metrical grounds, see Gade, 'The Syntax of Old Norse *Kviðuháttr* Meter', and also for *Hǫfuðlausn* in Myrvoll, *Kronologi i skaldekvæde*.
[58] *ÍF* 2, Chapter 60.
[59] *Edda: Skáldskaparmál I*, ed. by Faulkes, p. 94.

The breast kenning *munstrǫnd* (above in the genitive case), takes the form of a compound word, where the base-word is *strǫnd* (beach, strand), and the determinant is *munr* (pleasure, desire, will). It forms part of a larger kenning for poetry, which, like all poetry kennings, alludes to the origin myth of the poetic mead. The fullest account of this myth is supplied by Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál*.[60] According to his version, the mead was brewed by dwarves by mixing the blood of Kvasir (the wisest of all beings) with honey, [61] and then stored in two vats called Són, and Boðn, and a pot called Óðrœrir. This drink was first stolen by the giant Suttungr, and afterwards from Suttungr by Óðinn, who managed to get three draughts of the mead by seducing Suttungr's daughter, Gunnlǫð. Hotly pursued by Suttungr, Óðinn escaped from Giantland in the form of an eagle, and once in Asgard spat the precious liquid into three vats, although the stress of the chase caused him to excrete some of the mead 'out backwards'. This 'shit' mead is called the 'rhymester's share', but the 'good stuff', Suttungr's mead, was given by Óðinn to the gods and skilled poets, giving the power of poetic inspiration to anyone who drinks it. This is why, as Snorri explains, poetry can be called 'Óðinn's drink', 'Suttungr's mead', 'dwarves' drink', and so on. Because in the kenning system any lexical item can be substituted by another from the same conceptual category, in the pattern 'Óðinn's drink' the drink can be any liquid, including the sea, and Óðinn can be referred to by any one of his numerous aliases, such as Viðrir.

Thus, according to Snorri's description of poetry-kenning types, *Viðris mar* (Óðinn's sea) in *Hǫfuðlausn* 1 above, could perfectly well stand alone, which would make the second determinant, *munstrandar* (of the desire-coast), technically redundant.[62] Snorri does not make any comment on *munstrǫnd* or how it relates to *Viðris mar* here, which is perhaps not surprising as his focus is on the sea *heiti*. However, it is somewhat remarkable that in the section of *Skaldskaparmál* dedicated to the discussion of kennings related to poetry, no explanation is offered for the kenning type 'poetry is the liquid of Óðinn's breast', despite the fact that in list of exemplary citations, Snorri cites two tenth-century stanzas containing this same pattern. The first is from Vǫlu-Steinn's *Ǫgmundardrápa* (*c*. 1000):

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[60] *Edda: Skáldskaparmál I*, ed. by Faulkes, pp. 3-5.
[61] According to Snorri, Kvasir was created by the gods from the spittle of reconciliation, the symbol of a truce between the Æsir and the Vanir.
[62] The same base-word having two determinants is generally considered to be a defect in skaldic verse, but as Males points out, so-called 'overdetermined' kennings 'might not have been avoided to the same degree by skalds as they are by modern editors', *Poetic Genesis of Old Icelandic Literature*, pp. 153-56.

> Egill, heyr mína strauma **glaumbergs** vinar Míms glymja við sker góma; fundr Þundar [e]s gefinn mér.
>
> (Egill, hear my currents of the **merriment-cliff** [BREAST] of the friend of Mímr (Óðinn) [POEM] resound against the skerries of gums [TEETH]; the discovery of Þundr (Óðinn) [POETRY] is given to me.)[63]

and the second from Úlfr Uggason's *Húsdrápa* (*c.* 983):

> Telk hugreifum Óleifi lá **geðfjarðar** Hildar hjaldrgegnis; vilk kveðja hann at gjǫf Grímnis.
>
> (I recite the surf of the **disposition-fjord** [BREAST] of the promoter of the noise of Hildr (a valkyrie) [BATTLE > [ÓÐINN] > [POEM] for the glad-hearted Óláfr; I want to summon him to the gift of Grímnir (Óðinn) > [POEM].)[64]

A variation on this kenning pattern occurs in another stanza cited by Snorri in the same section, attributed to Hofgarða-Refr Gestsson (*c.* 1035), where the mead is located not in the breast of Óðinn, but in that of the giants:

> Ték Þórsteini gildi **geðreinar** grjótaldar; bára berg-Mœra glymr; biðk kyn lýða hlýða.
>
> (I offer Þorsteinn the banquet of the **disposition-ridge** [BREAST] of the rock-people [GIANTS] > [POEM]; the wave of the mountain-Mœrir [GIANTS] > [POEM] resounds; I ask the kindred of men [PEOPLE] to listen.)[65]

[63] Vǫlu-Steinn, *Ǫgmundardrápa* 1 (*SkP* III, p. 428). Translation adapted.
[64] Úlfr Uggason, *Húsdrápa* 1 (*SkP* III, p. 405). Although some manuscript variants give a version of the first line that does not generate a poem-kenning (see editor's note).
[65] Hofgarða-Refr Gestsson, *From a poem about Þorsteinn* 1 (*SkP* III, 250). Translation adapted.

Nevertheless, a stanza by the same poet quoted in the section in *Skáldskaparmál* on kennings for man, does define poetry as being of Oðinn's breast:

> Alls hefk einráðit bjóða Þórsteini ægi **ógnstǫðvar** bǫðgœðis bǫrr hjǫrva
> ræðr til þess.
>
> (Since I have decided to offer Þorsteinn the ocean of the **terror-harbour** [BREAST] of the battle-promoter [ÓÐINN] > [POEM]; the tree of swords [WARRIOR] [I] begins to work on this.)[66]

Finally, while not cited in the *Snorra Edda*, one of the closing stanzas of *Hǫfuðlausn* which sustains the seacape imagery of *Hǫfuðlausn* 1, can also be included in this group, although in this case the poet refers to the source of the mead as coming from his own breast as opposed to Oðinn's.

> hrœrðak munni
> af **munar grunni**
> Óðins ægi
> of jǫru fægi.[67]
>
> (I stirred up with my mouth, from the **sea-bed of desire** [BREAST] sea of Óðinn [POETRY] about the promotor of battle [WARRIOR].)

As Edith Marold has noted, these early kennings in which the place where a poem is made, the breast or 'inner space', is 'paraphrased as marine scenery', 'form a special group' to be distinguished from later Christian poetry employing the 'landscape of emotion/mental agility' pattern for physical breast/mind.[68] This is certainly true of the examples listed above. With the exception of 'gildi geðreinar grjótǫld' (banquet of the breast of giants) in *From a poem about Þorsteinn* 1, the principal analogy underpinning all of these poetry kennings involves a comparison between the relationship of the

[66] *From a poem about Þorsteinn* 2 (*SkP* III, p. 251). Translation adapted.
[67] Egill Skalla-Grímsson, *Hǫfuðlausn* 1 (*ÍF* 2, p. 185). The base-word *grunni* in the chest-kenning can be read as either masculine *grunnr* (sea-bed, bottom of the sea), or the neuter *grunn* (shoal, shallows).
[68] Marold, 'Mythical and Metaphorical Landscapes in Skaldic Poetry', p. 223.

poetic mead and the breast, with that of the sea and its topographical context. The 'mead' is consistently referred to in terms of poetic synonyms for sea (*marr*, *straumr*, *lǫgr*, *bara*, *ægir*), determined by a kenning in form of a compound noun where the base-word is a feature of the coastline (*strǫnd*, *berg*, *fjǫrð*, *stǫð*), and the determinant is a term related to cognition, emotion, or volition (*munr*, *glaumr*, *geð*, *ógn*), further determined by a name or kenning for Óðinn (*Viðrir*, *vinar Mímr*, *Hildar hjaldrgegnir*, *bǫðgæðir*).

The 'land of *hugr*' kenning pattern for breast is only listed (with variants) in the section on body-parts in *Skáldskaparmál*, although it is not associated with poetic composition there. In the poetry kennings section, even though this pattern is exclusively linked to the composition/performance of poetry in all of Snorri's examples, it is neither identified as a kenning for breast, nor is its relationship to the poetic origin myth explained. Snorri does not specify that poetry is called 'liquid of Óðinn's *hugr*-terrain' because 'land of *hugr*' is the breast, and the breast is where Óðinn stored the mead as he flew back to Asgard in the form of an eagle. Whether or not this is the basis for the kenning,[69] it is how most scholars who have written about the myth appear to understand it, and along with other related imagery, has led to the view that the story of the poetic mead and the conceptualization of oral poetry in Old Norse are manifestations of the so-called 'conduit' metaphor.[70] Based on Kövesces's formulation of this complex metaphor in relation to the concept IDEAS ARE FOOD, Peter Orton proposes the following model for the myth of the poetic mead:[71]

THE MIND IS A CONTAINER

AN ORAL POEM IS A LIQUID SUBSTANCE (SPECIFICALLY AN ALCOHOLIC DRINK)

[69] There may be an allusion to this detail in Egill's poetry-kenning 'mín góð ǫrð arnar kjapta' (my good harvest of eagle's jaw) in the opening stanza of *Berudrápa*. *Egils saga*, *Lausavísur* 56: *ÍF* 2, pp. 275-76. That Óðinn bore the mead out of Giantland in the form of a bird is corroborated in Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson's late tenth-century poem *Háleygjatal* 1 (*SkP* I, p. 197): 'í hverlegi farms galga, hinn es farmǫgnuðr bar fljúgandi ór søkkdǫlum Surts' (in the cauldron-liquid [DRINK] of the burden of the gallows [ÓÐINN > POETRY], that which the travel-furtherer [Óðinn] carried flying from the treasure-valleys of Surtr [giant].) In another stanza recorded in *Egils saga*, Egill describes himself performing what appears to be a distastefully literal re-enactment of Óðinn's regurgitating of the mead in the context of poetic composition, *Egils saga*, *Lausavísur* 10 (*ÍF* 2, p. 110).

[70] As first formulated by Michael Reddy, the major framework for this metaphor conceptualizes human language as functioning like a conduit 'transferring thoughts bodily from one person to another'. Accordingly, thoughts or feelings are 'inserted' by people into words, the words convey this information to others, who then extract the thoughts or feelings from the words. It is this metaphor, which is behind statements such as 'Try to get your thoughts across better'. Reddy, 'The Conduit Metaphor', p. 290.

[71] Orton, 'Spouting Poetry'. On the conceptualisation of poetry as mead and a detailed analysis of the myth and knowledge as liquid, see Quinn, 'Liquid Knowledge', and Burrows, 'The Mead of Poetry'.

However, while Orton cites examples of verbs evidencing the 'pouring' of the mead over the audience in a metaphorical poetical peformance, as he acknowledges, in other cases, including some of the quotations above, this is not the case. As to the metaphor THE MIND IS A CONTAINER in Orton's schema, he is not explicit as to whether this 'container' refers to the physical body or an abstract concept of mind, although he appears to understand it as the body, with the poet's mouth as the opening from which the mead is poured.[72] However, this container metaphor does not map well onto the imagery of the composition process as represented in the tenth-century examples above, where the liquid is located in a landscape.

In their discussion of container metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson extend the definition of 'container' to include land areas, 'including spaces in the natural environment which have no natural physical boundary',[73] but as Barnden notes, a bounded region is not the same as a physical container like a box. He argues instead that MIND IS A CONTAINER should be considered as a special case, or subtype, of the broader metaphor MIND AS PHYSICAL SPACE:

> Under this metaphor a person's mind is a physical region within which ideas, thinkings, hopings, etc. can lie at various positions and such entities can move in and out of the region [...]. The person is not within the space rather the space is at least partially within the person.[74]

Furthermore, as Reddy explains, although the 'major' framework of the conduit metaphor sees thoughts and emotions as contained within human heads or in linguistic expressions uttered by humans, '[t]he "minor" framework overlooks words as containers and allows ideas and feelings to flow, unfettered and completely disembodied, into a kind of ambient space between human heads'.[75] For Barnden, this permeable and unsealed space is one in which an agent can be alongside some of his/her own ideas, so that the ideas are 'viewed as external to the agent'. Thus, IDEAS AS

[72] Orton, 'Spouting Poetry', pp. 287-88, 294.
[73] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 43-44.
[74] Barnden, 'Consciousness and Common-Sense Metaphors of Mind', p. 317.
[75] Reddy, 'The Conduit Metaphor', p. 291.

EXTERNAL ENTITIES (a special case of IDEAS AS PHYSICAL OBJECTS when the external entities are physical objects) 'can move around, or be active in other ways, and the person can move relative to the ideas, or physically manipulate an idea'.[76] Against this framework, the poetic mead can be read as the 'idea', a concrete physical object (i.e., the sea), which moves around and is active, both under its own steam (evidenced by the 'gushing' verbs) and under the influence of the agent (the poet), who can 'stir it up' or 'drag it out'. Once the mead exits the body the idea/content transforms from a liquid object to a sonorous event, the recital of poetic language, and is now in a space external to the agent. Thus an alternative metaphorical structuring for the concept of poetical composition as represented in tenth-century skaldic verse can be suggested, whereby:

> THE CHEST IS THE PHYSICAL SPACE (THE SEASHORE) OF *HUGR*
> POETIC INSPIRATION IS A LIQUID SUBSTANCE (THE SEA)
> THE UTTERANCE/COMPOSITION OF A POEM IS THE SEA CRASHING AGAINST THE SHORE

Ultimately, the metaphor of the sea crashing against the shore would appear to have been an innovation by Egill Skalla-Grímmson, representing the physiological responses of his body to the emotions he experiences as he composes. Inspired by his physical environment, the geography and climate of the dramatic north-European Atlantic coastline, and the intense energy and sheer force of nature of the Atlantic Ocean itself, the swelling and surging of the waves represent the intense corporeal sensation, the wave or surge of adrenalin the artist feels in the breast during the poetic process. However, although the emotional experience is represented in terms of a fluid, there is no sense of containment of this liquid, or of a pressurized container in the sense of the 'hydraulic model' as evidenced in Old English.[77] The liquid surges forth due to the power of nature, not due to artificial restriction and release, so that these kennings should be understood as manifestations of the metaphor EMOTION IS A NATURAL FORCE.[78]

While the representation of poetic composition in *Hǫfuðlausn* may represent a

[76] Barnden, 'Consciousness and Common-Sense Metaphors of Mind', p. 316.
[77] Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, Chapter 3 'The Hydraulic Model, Embodiment, and Emergent Metaphoricity'.
[78] Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion*, p. 37.

conceptual metaphor grounded in a fundamental bodily experience and the maritime environment, the pattern 'poetic mead is the sea of the *hugr*-shore of Óðinn' is also a logical extension of the use of sea-terms for the poetic mead, based on the poetry-kenning pattern 'Óðinn's sea', drawing on the mythological motif of Óðinn carrying the mead back to Asgard in his breast, and existing models where land was used in base-words for other body-part kennings.[79]

Egill's new model would appear to have first been imitated by Úlfr Uggason in *Húsdrápa* (*c.* 983),[80] and then in Vǫlu-Steinn's *Ǫgmundardrápa*, a poem whose parallels with Egill's work, such as the circumstances of the composition, as well as the poetic diction, have long been noted.[81] Of course, 'mína strauma glaumbergs vinar Míms' is a variation on 'marr munstrandar Viðris' in *Hǫfuðlausn* 1 above, but Vǫlu-Steinn's kenning extends Egill's metaphor to add an additional element, namely that the mead/sea 'resounds' (*glymja*) against the 'skerries of the gums' (við sker góma). As Bianca Patria has shown, this 'verbal harmonization' was an innovation introduced by Einarr Skálaglamm,[82] best illustrated in stanza 3 of his *Vellekla* (*c.* 986):

> Vágr Rǫgnis eisar fyr vísa; verk mér hagna; alda ǫldrhafs Óðrœris þýtr við fles galdra.
>
> (The wave of Rǫgnir (Óðinn) [POEM] roars before the ruler, the works are successful for me; the wave of the ale-sea of Óðrœrir (mythical vat) [POEM] booms against the skerry of incantations [TEETH]).[83]

The poetry kennings in Hofgarða-Refr's *Poem about Þorsteinn* (*c.* 1035) are also

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[79] At least one such kenning pre-dates Egill's work in Þjóðólfr ór Hvini's *Haustlǫng* 20: 'ór hneigihliðum hárs' (from inclined slopes of the hair [HEAD]). In his own work Egill refers to body parts a number of times in terms of landscape features e.g., *Egils saga lausavísur* 20 (*ÍF* 2, p. 145): 'Hvarms hnúpgnípur knáttu drúpa mér af harmi' (My eyelid's projecting crags [EYEBROWS] did droop from grief).

[80] According to *Laxdoela saga* (ch. 29), Úlfr Uggason, a guest at the wedding of Óláfr's pái's daughter Þuríðr, recited a poem that he had composed about Óláfr and the images depicted on the walls and ceiling of the hall, hence the poem's name 'House-*drápa*'. Based on this anecdote the poem has been dated to *c.* 983 or 985.

[81] Like *Sonatorrek*, *Ǫgmundardrápa* was composed by a father as a lament on the death of his son, see *Egils saga*, *ÍF* 2, pp. 243-45 and *Landnámabók*, *ÍF* 1, pp. 159-60. The kennings 'fundr Þundar' (discovery of Þundr) echo 'fagnafundr niðja Friggjar' (joyful find of Frigg's kinsmen (i. e. the *Æsir*) [POETIC MEAD] in *Sonatorrek* 2 (*ÍF* 2, pp. 246-47); 'vinr Míms' (friend of Mímr) appears in *Sonatorrek* 23 (*ÍF* 2, p. 255).

[82] Patria, *Kenning Variation and Lexical Selection in Early Skaldic Verse*, p. 215.

[83] Einarr 'skálaglamm' Helgason, *Vellekla* 3 (*SkP* I, 285).

clearly modelled on these patterns, and contain lexical echoes such as *glymja*, used to describe the sound of the 'wave of the giants' in *Þorsteinn* 1. However, in this stanza the poet seems to have blended two poetry kenning-types 'drink of Óðinn's breast' and 'drink of giants', suggesting that he was not fully cognizant of the background story of either.[84] Another slight difference in *Þorsteinn* 1 is the use of *ǫgn* ('fear' or 'battle') as the cognitive determinant in the breast kenning instead of one of the more typical *hugr* synonyms. This may be an indirect allusion to the heart as the organ of fear/bravery, which is first mentioned in this sense in *Þórsdrápa* (*c.* 1000),[85] and is a motif which gains prominence in skaldic royal panegyrics of the eleventh century after the death of St Ólafr in 1030.[86] Otherwise, the breast is not directly associated with fear in skaldic poetry until the thirteenth century,[87] nor are there any other examples from the period 850-1030 which imply a belief that any of the basic emotions (fear, anger, sadness, love, happiness, etc.), in their abstract sense, are contained within or seated in the chest.

Nevertheless, in the opening stanzas of *Sonatorrek*, a poem whose theme is the overwhelming grief Egill experiences on the death of his son, the emotion of sorrow, or at least a physical response to the emotion of sorrow, is depicted as hindering the flow of the poetic mead from the chest. In stanza 1 the poet describes how difficult it is for him to move his tongue, and how 'Viðurr's theft' (i.e. poetry/poetic inspiration), will not be 'easily dragged' out of 'hiding-place(s) of *hugr*' (*hugar fylgsni*) [BREAST].[88] The second stanza continues:

> Esa auðþeystr,
> þvít ekki veldr
> hǫfugligr,
> ór **hyggju stað**
> fagnafundr

[84] Patria, *Kenning Variation and Lexical Selection in Early Skaldic Verse*, p. 218.
[85] *Þórsdrápa* 11 (*SkP* III, 99): 'Né drápu stall djúpakǫrn dolgs stríðkviðjǫndum firum vamms stǫðvar glamma við falli rastar' (Nor did the sea-acorns [STONES] of animosity [HEARTS] of the attack-prohibitors of the disgraceful men of the place of wolves [MOUNTAINS > GIANTS] falter when facing the torrent of the river); 'steinn þróttar Þórs né Þjalfa skalfa við ótta' (the stone of valour [HEART] of neither Þórr nor Þjálfi shook with fear).
[86] Such as Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga* (Memorial *drápa* for Óláfr inn helgi) 7 and 24 (*SkP* I, 673; 693).
[87] e. g., *Líknarbraut* 30 (*SkP* VII, 260-61): 'Með öllu óttafullr innan brjósts krýp ek til kross frá þjósti, en bönd glæpa' (Wholly fearful within my breast, I creep to the cross away from anger, and the bonds of sin).
[88] Egill Skalla-Grímsson, *Sonatorrek* 1 (*ÍF* 2, p. 246).

Friggjar niðja,
ár borinn
ór Jǫtunheimum,[89]

(It does not easily gush forth – heavy grief (a 'convulsive sobbing') prevails – out of **place of thought** [BREAST], [that] joyful find of Frigg's kinsmen (the Æsir) [POETIC MEAD], borne of yore out of Jǫtunheimar (Giantlands).)

As in stanzas 19 and 20 of *Hǫfuðlausn*, in the poetry kennings here it is the chest of the poet, as opposed to that of Óðinn, which is the source of the poetic mead. However, unlike the examples from *Hǫfuðlausn* these poetry kennings do not feature any aspect of the sea-imagery; in fact, the base-words of chest-kennings *staðr* and *fylgsni* do not refer to any specific landscape feature at all. Nevertheless the concept of poetic mead as a natural force of water is implied by the phrase 'esa auðþeystr' (does not/cannot be made to easily gush forth), which is impeded by 'hǫfugligr ekki', a 'heavy' sorrow, most likely in the form of convulsive sobbing or possibly the globus sensation.[90] Thus, Egill is describing how the somatic manifestation of his grief, possibly in the form of a bout of uncontrollable crying, which would cause agitation and heaving of the thorax, constriction of the throat etc., is physically preventing him from drawing out the mead. Such descriptions of the breast being agitated by emotion are rare in this period, and indeed in skaldic poetry in general, although there is a similar example in a verse by Sigvatr Þórðarson (*c.* 1030): 'ekki þróask í brjósti mér emk bleikr sem bast' (sobbing grows/increases in my breast, I am as pale as bast),[91] as well as some instances in fourteenth-century Christian poetry.[92]

Although triggered by quite different stimuli, spontaneous laughter is very similar to sobbing in that it is an involuntary somatic response involving a convulsion of the diaphragm, a heaving of the thoracic cavity, a difficulty in breathing, as well as a

[89] *Sonatorrek* 2 (*ÍF* 2, p. 246-47).
[90] The feeling of having a 'lump' in the throat.
[91] Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Lausavísur* 22 (*SkP* I, p. 727).
[92] 14th century: *Drápa af Máríugrát* 40 (*SkP* VII, p. 787): 'bekkr iðranar ór brjósti klökku bragna* laugi kinnr og augu' (may the brook of repentance [TEARS] from the agitated (*klökku*) breast wash the cheeks and eyes of men); *Pétrsdrápa* 45 (*SkP* VII, p. 836): 'Gegn, smurðr regni brásteina af garði greina (The upright man, anointed with rain of eyelash-stones' [EYES > TEARS] from the enclosure of wits [BREAST]; *Lilja 54*' (*SkP* VII, p. 624): 'Brjóst þrútnar, en hjartað hristiz; hold er klökt, en öndin snöktir; augun tóku að drukna drjúgum, döpr og móð í flóði tára' (The breast swells, and the heart trembles; the flesh is weak, and the spirit sobs; the eyes began to drown terribly, sad and weary in a flood of tears).

vocal sounds and sometimes even tears. As indicated above, the localization of laughter in the chest is evidenced in skaldic diction by the kenning 'laughter-ship' (*hlátrelliði*) in *Þórsdrápa,*[93] and also in the final stanza of *Hǫfuðlausn* where again in the context of poetic composition, Egill refers to the chest as 'hamr hlátra' (covering of laughter) out of which he bore praise (i.e. poetry).[94] *Hamr* (covering, skin) here must refer to the literal outward physical appearance of the chest within which laughter is located, so that no metaphorical understanding is necessary. The kenning *glaumberg* in Vǫlu-Steinn's *Ǫgmundardrápa* may also refer to this idea. Although translated as 'joy-cliff' in *SkP*, *glaumr* properly speaking, refers to noise/tumult or a racket, often in the context of merriment or revelry,[95] which when located in the chest can hardly mean anything other than laughter.

Whether as a seashore, or ship, or covering of *hugr*, in the extant corpus Egill is consistent in only ever referring to the breast in the context of poetic composition.[96] There may be one further example of this association in a stanza attributed to Egill cited in the 'Third Grammatical Treatise', authored by the scholar and skald Óláfr Þórðarson, a nephew of Snorri Sturluson. Traditionally, this stanza has been assumed to be a missing part of Egill's *Arinbjarnarkviða*, and modern editions usually include it as the final strophe of the longer poem.[97]

Var ek árvakr,
bar ek orð saman
með málþjóns
morginverkum,
hlóð ek lofkǫst
þann er lengi stendr
óbrotgjarn
í **bragar túni.**[98]

[93] *Þórsdrápa* 15 (*SkP* III, 108).
[94] *Hǫfuðlausn* 20 (*ÍF* 2, p. 192).
[95] *ONP*: 'racket caused by merry-making, noisy good cheer'.
[96] With the possible exception of the kenning 'rýnnis reið' in *Sonatorrek*. See Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir 'The Head, the Heart, and the Breast', pp. 34-36.
[97] However, based on his analysis of *Arinbjarnarkviða* in *Möðruvallabók*, Þorgeir Sigurðsson argues that there is insufficient justification for this. Þorgeir Sigurðsson, *The Unreadable Poem of Arinbjǫrn*, pp. 83-84.
[98] *Óláfr Þórðarson: Málhljóða- og málskrúðsrit. Grammatisk-retorisk afhandling*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson), p. 82.

(I was early awake, I piled up words as part of the morning's chores of the speech-servant [TONGUE]. I piled up a praise-stack in **poetry's home-field** [?BREAST], which [will] stand long, unwilling to break apart.)

This stanza clearly refers to the process of poetic composition, specifically the composition of a praise-poem, although the precise meaning of the figurative imagery in the second helming is debatable. Sigurður Nordal construes 'bragar tún', the field, or 'bounded sanctuary' of poetry, as a metaphor for poetry itself, within which the *lofkǫstr* (pile of praise) stands like a *hörgur* (pagan sacrificial stone altars, burial cairns).[99] More recently Kate Heslop has offered a slightly different interpretation, reading *kǫstr* as a memorial cairn which will not break because it will be maintained by many hands, i.e., in group memory.[100] However, *kǫstr* (stack, pile) is not associated with funerary or pagan stone monuments elsewhere in Old Norse. In prose texts it is most often used to refer to a pile of firewood, or wood gathered for fuel, and in skaldic poetry, more sinisterly, to a pile of corpses intended for burning. Furthermore, the imagery in the first four lines of the stanza of the servant at his morning chores, clearly suggests a domestic environment, not a heathen sanctuary. Here I believe Egill is making an analogy between the assembly of a wood-pile in the home-field of a domestic dwelling, and the process of poetic composition in the chest, imagery which has parallels in *Hǫfuðlausn* 1: 'hlóðk mærðar hlut | míns knarrar skut' (I loaded/piled up the stern of my ship [BREAST] with a cargo of praise),[101] and *Sonatorrek* 5, where Egill also refers to a poem as a wooden structure, a 'mærðar timbr' (timber of praise) which is borne out of his *orðhofi* (temple of words [BREAST/MOUTH]).[102] Egill's boast that the 'praise-pile' will 'stand long' and is 'unwilling to break apart' conceptualises a well-composed poem as a robust construction, thus representing a manifestation of the metaphors THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS and PERSISTING IS REMAINING ERECT.[103] If indeed 'bragar tún' is a breast kenning, unlike the other examples from Egill analysed above, in which the baseword is

[99] (*ÍF* 2, pp. 267-68), note to stanza 25. Nordal believes this is corroborated by *Arinbjarnarkviða* 14 (*ÍF* 2, p. 263), where Egill says that his praise-poem should be put where it will be seen by many.
[100] Heslop, *Viking Mediologies*, p. 3.
[101] *Hǫfuðlausn* 1 (*ÍF* 2, p. 185).
[102] *Sonatorrek* 5 (*ÍF* 2, p. 248).
[103] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, pp. 95-96. The concept of the skald as a 'smith' of poetry is not unique to Egill, the semi-legendary ninth-century Norwegian poet Bragi Boddason, for instance, refers to himself as a 'hagsmið bragar' (skilled smith of poetry), Bragi 'inn gamli' Boddason, *An Exchange of Verses between Bragi and a Troll-woman* 1 (*SkP* III, 64).

a landscape-feature determined by a poetic synonym of *hugr*, here 'poetic craft' itself is the determinant, a pattern which is not witnessed again until later Christian verse, for example: 'stóll bragar' (seat of poetry),[104] *óðborg* (poetry-fortress),[105] *óðrann* (poetry-hall),[106] 'mælsku tún' (field of eloquence),[107] and perhaps also 'hús mærðar' (house of encomium).[108]

The Breast is the Land upon which Poetry Sprouts?

The final example to be analysed which sources poetic inspiration in the breast occurs in a half-stanza cited in *Skáldskaparmál* attributed to the tenth-century poet Eilífr Goðrúnarson. It is listed in the series of authenticating citations of kennings based on the myth of the poetic mead, and is quoted directly after the two examples from Einarr Skálaglamm's *Vellekla* that contain the kenning pattern, 'poetry is the liquid (wave) of the mythical vat (Óðrœrir/Boðn)':[109]

> Verðið ér, alls orða
> oss grœr of kon mœrar
> á sefreinu Sónar
> sáð, vingjǫfum ráða.
>
> Ér verðið ráða vingjǫfum, alls sáð orða Sónar of kon mœrar grœr oss á **sefreinu**.
>
> (You must decide the gifts of friendship, as the seed of the words of Són [POETRY] about the descendant of the land (Jǫrð) [Þórr] grows for us [me] in the **mind-land** [BREAST].)[110]

As seen above, according to Snorri's account, Són, along with Óðrœrir and Boðn, is the

[104] Einarr Skúlason, *Geisli* 67 (*SkP* VII, 61-62).
[105] Gamli kanóki, *Harmsól* 1 (*SkP* VII, 73-74).
[106] *Líknarbraut* 1 (*SkP* VII, 230).
[107] *Líknarbraut* 4 (*SkP* VII, 233-34).
[108] Kálfr Hallsson, *Kátrínardrápa* 1(*SkP* VII, 932-33).
[109] Einarr 'skálaglamm' Helgason, *Vellekla* 2 (*SkP* I, 284): 'Now it happens that the wave (*bára*) of Boðn (mythical vat) [POEM] grows (*vaxa*)'; *Vellekla* 3 (*SkP* I, 285): 'the wave of the ale-sea of Óðrœrir (mythical vat) [POEM] booms against the skerry of incantations [TEETH]'.
[110] Eilífr Goðrúnarson, *Þórsdrápa* 23 (*SkP* III, 124).

name of one of three vessels in which the poetic mead was stored when it was brewed by the dwarves. Presumably, Snorri has cited these three poetic quotations in a row as evidence for the names of the three mythical vats. However, unlike the poetry kennings referencing Óðrœrir and Boðn, what comes from Són here, is not a surging wave of poetic mead, but a seed, or rather 'seed of words' which grows on the 'mind-land' (literally 'feeling-ridge') > BREAST. This apparent discrepancy or incongruency has led scholars to suggest many different explanations.[111] Roberta Frank, for example, interprets Són not as a proper name at all, but as the common noun 'blood' or 'reconciliation' and construes it with *sefrein*, obtaining the kenning 'sónar sefrein*'* (mind-land of reconciliation).[112] Thus, according to Frank, 'Eilífr is saying: "The seed of the word grows....on the spiritual soil of reconciliation" - verse is sprouting in my breast'. She argues out that the image of the artist planting words in fertile minds is an ancient one, and that there is nothing strange in Eilífr, a Christian, avoiding mythological kennings for poetry.[113]

Not very much is known about the life of Eilífr Goðrúnarson. *Skáldatal* lists him, amongst others such as Einarr Skálaglamm, as one of nine poets at the court of Hákon jarl whose rule over Norway extended from 975 to 995. The only works attributed to him are *Þórsdrápa* (Praise-poem about Þórr), a fragment of a poem which references Christ, as well as the stanza above which some editions (such as *SkP*) include as part of *Þórsdrápa.* Thematically, however, this half-stanza does not have much in common with *Þórsdrápa*, which concerns itself with the exploits of Þórr and his encounters with giants. Whether or not Eilífr was a Christian, it seems unlikely that he would include such a kenning as 'mind-land of reconciliation' for breast, in a poem otherwise replete with mythological kennings, and even if this were the case, as a breast kenning it does not follow the models for the breast in the context of poetic composition in the period before 1035. As to Frank's suggested analogue in Plato's *Phaedrus*, leaving aside the question of how a tenth-century poet in Iceland could have had access to such knowledge, it is clear in this stanza that the poet is not referring to planting seeds of poetry in the minds of others, but to the 'growth' of poetic inspiration or

[111] See notes to *Þórsdrápa* 23 (*SkP* III, 124). Faulkes reads *sefrein* as a kenning for tongue: 'Son's seed [the mead of poetry] grows on our word meadow [tongue]', *Edda: Skáldskaparmál I*, ed. by Faulkes, p. 71.
[112] Roberta Frank, 'Snorri and the Mead of Poetry', p. 163.
[113] Frank's explanation forms part of a larger argument in which she maintains that Snorri's account of the poetic myth was mostly a fabrication based on his misinterpretation of poetry kennings. For a discussion see Males, *Poetic Genesis of Old Icelandic Literature*, pp. 148-59.

eloquence in his own breast.

However, there is a striking parallel to the image of the breast as fertile land for seeds of eloquence in the anonymous late thirteenth-century devotional poem *Líknarbraut* (Way of Grace):

> Lífstýrir láðs ok lofða, kendr leyfðar, dreifðu mér í **lyndis láð** dýru himnesku **sáði**, svá at færak ár, sannan ávöxt af yðru óþornuðu korni, kannandi alls, elsku kuðr.
>
> (Ruler of land and the life of men [(*lit.* 'life-ruler of land and men') = God], acknowledged in praise, sprinkle my **land of temperament** [BREAST] with precious heavenly **seed**, so that I may bring forth an abundance, true fruit from your unwithered seed, tester of all [= God], renowned for love.)[114]

As the *SkP* editor notes, the main theme of this stanza centres on the metaphor of God as a sower, sowing the seed of his word in the 'land' of a person, as illustrated in the 'The Sower and the Seed' parable in Mark 4. 3-20 and Luke 8. 11-15, for example, and also the Spring Ember Days sermon in the *Old Icelandic Homily Book* (*IHB*). This sermon, which may have originated as early as the first half of the twelfth century,[115] counsels that in the same way that God's help is invoked on the ember days to remove the frost from the earth so that the seed can be sown, so should these days also be a time to pray for the removal of the 'frost of sin' from our breasts so that 'vér náem andlego áre í hiortom o̧rom [...] Þa keomr orþa sáþ hans i hugscoz iorþ óra' (we might receive a spiritual abundance in our hearts [...] Then the seed of His word will come into our mind's ground).[116]

In his study of agrarian metaphors in the Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian Homily Books, David McDougall shows that the image of God as the spiritual farmer who cultivates 'the field' of the soul by planting 'seeds' of virtue is a common theme in the tradition of Embertide sermons, going back at least as far as Pope Leo the Great.[117] Metaphors for the heart as the earth such as 'pectoris terrain' (chest land) and 'cordis

[114] Anonymous, *Líknarbraut* 5 (*SkP* VII, 234-35).
[115] Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 'Prose of Christian Instruction', p. 338.
[116] *Homiliu-bók*, ed. by Wisén, p. 36.
[117] McDougall, *Studies in the Prose Style of the Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian Homily Books*, II, 399.

ager' (field of the heart), are equally commonplace in early homiletic and exegetical literature, and undoubtedly the phrase 'hugskots jǫrð' (land of *hugr*'s recess [HEART/MIND] > ?BREAST) in *IHB*, is based on these or similar Latin expressions.[118] As to 'orþa sáþ', the Ember Days sermon provides the only example of the phrase in *IHB*, although other versions appear in later ON texts, and it must ultimately derive from Luke 8. 1: 'semen est verbum Dei' (the seed is the word of God).[119]

Curiously, although McDougall and Frank both noted the resemblance of the imagery and vocabulary in the homily to the Eilífr Goðrúnarson stanza, neither seem to have considered the possibility that the imagery in the stanza was inspired by the homily, although McDougall suggests that as a Christian, Eilífr may have been familiar with the seed metaphor. In this case, perhaps Eilífr created a new kenning for poetic inspiration modelled on poetry and breast kenning patterns in the work of his native contemporaries, but using a metaphor from Christian scripture. If this is so, then Frank's interpretion makes more sense than reading Són as a mythical container full of mead, although the pattern 'mind-land of reconciliation' would be an absolute anomaly in skaldic diction. To my mind, however, a more likely explanation is that the stanza was a much later creation, and the figurative language to decribe poetic inspiration in the breast was devised from the wording of the Ember Days homily. As can be observed in a comparison of the two texts below, the clauses regarding the 'orþa sáþ' phrase match almost word for word, and the phrasing of the concept of the seed growing on the mind-land is also so close, that it seems unlikely to be a coincidence.

> *IHB*: orþa sáþ Hans (seed of His word) keomr i hugscoz iorþ óra (will come in the earth of our mind)[120]
>
> Stanza: sáð orða Sónar (seed of Són's word) [...] grœr oss á sefreinu (grows for us in the feeling-ridge [BREAST])

Using the patterns discussed above as a model, a skald composing in the twelfth century

[118] McDougall, *Studies in the Prose Style of the Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian Homily Books*, II, 403-04, 427.
[119] McDougall, *Studies in the Prose Style of the Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian Homily Books*, II, 406.
[120] *Homiliu-bók*, ed. by Wisén, p. 36.

could have replaced the seascape imagery of the tenth-century poetry with the agrarian metaphor of the homily substituting the reference to the Christian God with a pagan name. What exactly the poet understood Són to refer to is not clear, but he must have associated it with the poetic mead myth, and thought of it as a source for poetry. It is unlikely that Snorri himself composed this stanza, otherwise he would surely have followed the 'wave of the vat' pattern in the preceding quotations from *Vellekla*, and despite its singular phrasing he presumably thought it to be authentic. How this half-stanza came to be attributed to Eilífr Goðrúnarson is a matter for speculation, but as the material of the *IHB* may have been circulating as early as the mid-twelfth century, and Snorri wrote *Skáldskaparmál* shortly after his return from Norway in 1221, it must have been composed at some point between *c.* 1150-1220, coinciding with the period when mythological kennings came back into vogue, and the use of breast-kennings in the context of poetical composition was revived.

After the acceptance of Christianity in Iceland and Scandinavia, specific mythological references in skaldic poetry went into decline,[121] which probably accounts for the fact that the 'poetry is the liquid of Óðinn's breast' type did not survive beyond the 1030s. Two breast-kennings that occur in poetry towards the end of this period reflect the changing associations by using determinants with Christian connotations: 'nǫkkva bœnar' (ship of prayer) in Hallvarðr háreksblesi's *Knútsdrápa* (*c.* 1029),[122] and also 'bœnar smiðju' (smithy of prayer), in a stanza cited in *Kristni saga*, *Olafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, and *Njáls saga* ,[123] possibly also composed by a skald in Knútr's retinue.[124]

By the mid twelfth century, traditional court poets faced new challenges to their roles as entertainers and panegyrists due to the growing popularity of jesters and jugglers, and the increased use of writing (both in the vernacular and Latin) to record the historical and heroic deeds of kings.[125] While one response was to compose praise-poetry in more accessible language, the general trend among twelfth-century skalds, especially those educated in a formal or clerical environment, was rather to make their poetry even more elitist and artificial using a learned style which reflected their formal

[121] Males, *Poetic Genesis of Old Icelandic Literature*, p. 75.
[122] *Knútsdrápa* 6 (*SkP* III, 237).
[123] *Skj*, BI, p. 166.
[124] The author of this stanza is named as 'Ljóðarkeptur' in the saga, but he may be the 'Óðarkeftr' listed among Knútr the Great's retinue in *Skáldatal*. Sveinbjom Rafnsson, 'Um Kristinboðsþættina', p. 26.
[125] Wellendorf, 'The Formation of an Old Norse Skaldic School Canon', p. 126.

schooling. The subject matter of these 'academic' poets began to branch out from the customary function of praising rulers and leaders, towards composing on historical and Christian themes, for which they drew on a number of sources including pre-Christian skaldic diction and Latin religious poetry. As Wellendorf notes, 'the foremost twelfth-century practitioner of this new learned style was the priest Einarr Skúlason',[126] and the first recorded use of breast in the context of poetic composition after Hofgarða-Refr, can be found in his masterpiece, *Geisli* (Ray of Light, *c.* 1153-55): 'ber orð koma frá órum stóli bragar' (clear words come from our [my] seat of poetry [BREAST]).[127] Einarr was a descendent of Egill Skalla-Grímsson, and therefore was surely familiar with the works of his ancestor, such as *Hǫfuðlausn* and *Sonatorrek,* which prominently feature the kenning pattern 'breast is the location of poetical inspiration'. Einarr's recovery of this type of breast kenning, although by this time disassociated from its Odinic connotations, was imitated in another of the group of Christian *drápur*, Gamli kanóki's *Harmsól* (Sun of Sorrow, *c.* 1180-1200), as part of a prayer to God for eloquence: 'Hár stillir hreggtjalda, þús skaptir allar aldar, lúk mér upp hlið óðborgar góðu heilli, svát mættik auka mjúk mál mín' (open up for me the gate of the fortress of poetry [BREAST > MOUTH] with good grace, so that I might augment my soft words),[128] and becomes a recurring motif in *Líknarbraut*,[129] as well as devotional poems from the fourteenth century.[130] The only example I have found in a secular context is in Sturla Þórðarson's

[126] Wellendorf, 'The Formation of an Old Norse Skaldic School Canon', p. 126.
[127] Einarr Skúlason, *Geisli* 67 (*SkP* VII, 61-62), although I have followed *LP* for the kenning referent 'breast', *SkP* has 'mouth'.
[128] Gamli kanóki, *Harmsól* 1 (*SkP* VII, 233-34).
[129] Cf. *Líknarbraut* 5 above, and *Líknarbraut* 1 (*SkP* VII, 230): 'Himins dróttinn [...] lúk upp óðrann, sem ek bæni, ok gef mér sanna orðgnótt' (Lord of Heaven [...] open up my poetry-house [BREAST], as I pray, and give me true word-abundance); *Líknarbraut* 4 (*SkP* VII, 233-4): '[...] ek æsti, þat er hrjóði vandliga myrkrum misverka ór mælsku túni' ([...] I entreat that which may clear away completely the darkness of misdeeds from my field of eloquence [BREAST]); *Líknarbraut* 7 (*SkP* VII, 237): 'Hildingr hauðrs mána hvéls, mannvandr, veit helgar ræður ok kenningar ór mínu ranni hugar' (King of the land of the moon's wheel [MOON > SKY/HEAVEN > = God], exacting of man, direct holy discourses and doctrines out of my house of thought [BREAST]).
[130] Kálfr Hallsson, *Kátrínardrápa* 1 (*SkP* VII, 932-33): 'Jésús Kristr, gief þú, að eg mætta sæma alhreinasta ambátt þína í hróðri af húsi mærðar' (Jesus Christ, grant that I might honour your very purest handmaid in praise from the house of encomium [BREAST]), see note 4: 'This kenning has been construed here as 'mouth', but it could equally well be 'breast'; *Máríuvísur* III 1 (*SkP* VII, 719): 'Guð, valdandi ástar um aldr, veittu fyrir vald þitt óttalausa nótt máls í opið brjóst' (God, ruler of love for eternity, lead by your might a fearless wealth of words into my open breast); *Máríuvísur* III 2 (*SkP* VII, 719-20): 'Heyrðu, æstr Andréas, svá að eg hitti hrein orð og gleði hugarland mitt fyrir best unað' (Hear, most worthy Andrew, so that I may find pure words and may please my *hugr*-land [BREAST] by the best bliss); and *Lilja* 2 (*SkP* VII, 563-65): 'Hreinsa brjóst og leið með listum, líflig orð í skorðum stuðla, steflig gjörð, að vísan verði vunnin yðr af þessum munni' (Cleanse my breast and lead with artistry lively words, within the supports of the *stuðlar*, a belt with refrains, so that a poem comes about, uttered for you from this mouth).

Hákonarkviða (*c.* 1263): ‘Skaut gyltu borði vínfars á gómsker mönnum vísa, en hunangsbára fell glymjandi í geðknörr hirð hilmis’ (The gilded rim of the wine-vessel [CUP] thrust against the gum-skerries [TEETH] of the leader’s men, and the honey-wave [MEAD] fell foaming into the mind-ship [BREAST] of the ruler’s retinue), which is clearly influenced by poetry kennings in *Vellekla* 3 and Egill Skalla-Grímsson’s *Arinbjarnarkviða* 6.[131]

It is not surprising in a Christian context that the mythological allusions of the poetic mead to its Odinic origins have not been maintained in these references. One can hardly, in the same breath, pray to God for poetic inspiration and attribute the source of poetry to Óðinn. In *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, for example, the bishop of Orkney Bjarni Kolbeinsson (d. 1222), is very keen to deny any pagan associations with the acquisition of his poetic abilities: ‘Varkak […] und forsum | fórk aldrigi at gǫldrum | hefkak […] | Qllungis namk eigi | Yggjar feng und hanga [...]’[132] (I was not [...] under waterfalls; I was never involved with magic spells; I have not [...]; I certainly did not acquire Yggr’s (Óðinn) haul [POETRY] under the hanged one(s)). Thus, although skalds in the Christian era were happy to continue to use clichéd poetry kennings with pagan connotations, such as ‘Yggr’s booty’ and ‘Yggr’s beer’, the idea that poetic inspiration came from Óðinn’s breast or was directly inspired by Óðinn was no longer acceptable. This could be the reason for Snorri’s silence on the relationship between the breast and the poetic mead in his treatment of poetry kennings in *Skáldskaparmál*; he did not want to draw attention to a potentially offensive allusion, even in pre-Christian poetry.

Conclusions

From our survey of the conceptualization of the breast in early skaldic poetry, two principal models emerge. The first is that of the anatomical chest, consisting in the outer protective structure of the ribcage and the inner cavity within which the vital organs and the *hugr* of a person is located. In kennings, the aspect of the protecting ribcage is reflected in base-words such as ‘ship’ and ‘hall’, due to a perceived resemblance in structure, but not, initially at least, in the sense of a residence or container. As a general

[131] *Arinbjarnarkviða* 6: (*ÍF* 2, 259-60): ‘svát Yggs full kom ýranda at hvers manns hlustamunnum’ (so that Yggr’s cup [Óðinn’s drink, POETRY] came foaming to the mouths of the inner ears [EARS] of every man).
[132] Bjarni byskup Kolbeinsson, *Jómsvíkingadrápa* 4 (*SkP* I, 962).

rule, chest-kennings of this pattern occur in a violent context, most often where the chest is pierced by swords. Any allusions to emotion in the breast, such as sobbing, laughing or fear, are explicitly or implicitly linked to the body's physical experience of these emotions, be that heaving, muscular contraction or accelerated heartbeat, and are not conceived of as abstract entities 'seated' or 'residing' within a container.

The other principal model as represented in skaldic diction dating from the mid-tenth and early eleventh centuries also determines breast as a physical space where the 'personhood construct' *hugr* is located, and possibly conceives of the chest in a metaphorical sense as a mind-like concept, but only in the context of poetical composition. This association would seem to have been an innovation on the part of Egill Skalla-Grímsson, grounded in the origin myth of the poetic mead, and the way in which this was carried by Óðinn in his chest/crop, as he flew back to Asgard in the form of an eagle. Egill repeatedly refers to the chest as the source of poetical inspiration, using a number of different metaphorical schemata, most strikingly as that of the seashore against which the poetic mead surges as it comes forth. His pattern 'poetic composition is the sea/mead crashing against the shore/breast', an unconventional realization of the conventional metaphor EMOTION IS A NATURAL FORCE, was imitated and reworked by a number of other poets operating in the same or slightly later milieu, but falls out of use around *c.* 1035.

Between *c.* 1035-1150 there are almost no references to the breast in terms of emotional or cognitive activity in skaldic diction. During this period the main association between emotion and the pectoral region is evidenced by references to *hugr* and to the heart, in the context of bravery and cowardice. While brave hearts are conceived of as 'stones' as early as *Þórsdrápa* (*c.* 1000), the pattern 'heart is a stone/hard object in the breast' does not emerge until the second half of the twelfth century, around the same time that Einarr Skúlason revives the pattern 'breast is the source of poetic inspiration.' Devested of its pagan origins, it becomes a recurrent motif in Christian poetry of the twelfth century, and afterwards.

Both *Háttalykill* and the twelfth-century Christian *drápur* marked the beginning of a new turn in skaldic poetics, which was characterised by a highly ornate, learned style and an interest in the composition of skaldic verse as an academic exercise, using particularly convoluted syntax, repeated reformulations of kenning types, and experimentation with metrical forms. This trend continued into the thirteenth century, which is when formal studies of skaldic language began to emerge, as part of

grammatical treatises and of course, most notably in Snorri Sturluson's *Skáldskaparmál*. Although Snorri's treatment of breast and heart kennings in *Skáldskaparmál* is unusual due to its lack of citations and placement in the treatise, his own *clavis metrica*, *Háttatal*, is one of two poems in which the majority of thirteenth-century breast-kennings are concentrated, the other being the anonymous devotional poem *Líknarbraut*. A comparison of these poems illustrates a clear distinction (although not absolute) between two main kenning patterns for breast and their referents. While the breast-kennings in *Háttatal* follow the 'chest is the ship/hall of *hugr*' pattern where the referent is the anatomical chest, in *Líknarbraut* the patterns 'chest is the land of *hugr*' or 'hall of heart' refer to the cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the chest.

By the fourteenth-century such distinctions had largely collapsed and the conceptual models of heart and breast are in skaldic verse are often conflated. It is in this period that the influence of Christian and classical literature becomes much more marked, and the breast and heart are increasingly viewed the centres of emotional experience and as the seat of intelligence and cognitive faculties. The great sorrow the Virgin Mary feels on witnessing the crucifixion, for example, is repeatedly associated with the breast in Marian devotional poetry. Emotions associated with affective piety and compunction, such as love, compassion, sorrow, guilt, and shame are also located in the breast, which, when understood as a synonym for soul, is conceived of in terms of being dirtied by or cleansed of sin, or full of vice and depravity. Fourteenth-century skaldic verse shows a dramatic decline in the use of kennings in general, as poets of religious works in particular abandoned the complex style for a more accessible one. Therefore, although breast-kennings do still occur in fourteenth-century skaldic poetry, they are vastly outnumbered by literal references.

The poetry of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century *fornaldarsögur*, has not been the focus of this discussion, but deserves mention as the main source of secular verse in the later period. Unsurprisingly, given the heroic subject matter of these sagas, references in this poetry most commonly refer to the anatomical breast in a violent context, although it is also described as being the location of *hugr* (in the sense of courage), a resolute heart, deceit, knowledge, and swelling with romantic love. As is the case in late Christian verse, the distinctions between heart, breast and *hugr*, are blurred.

This analysis has shown that, despite the lack of certainty regarding the dating of early verse, it is possible to trace the evolution of conceptual models of breast throughout the corpus of skaldic poetry, and to assign them with relative accuracy to

specific periods and even to specific poets or poetic communities. Thus, while the prototypical vernacular model 'breast is the place of *hugr*' remained stable throughout all these periods, various trends can be identified as stemming from modifications and innovations on the part of individual skalds, whose conceits were then copied and recycled by other poets either operating within the same socio-cultural milieu, or, by poets centuries later, who wished to revive and rework traditional skaldic diction for both scholarly and artistic purposes. From the twelfth century onwards, the influence of imported ideas, especially the increasing prominence given to the heart and, by association, the breast as the location of heart, can clearly be observed in kennings in particular, but it is a reflection of the conservative nature of skaldic diction that the concepts of the chest as a temple of the soul or spirit and as the 'seat' of emotion, even though they were ideas well known in Iceland and Norway from the early twelfth century at least, were not incorporated into the conceptual model until the fourteenth century.

Having established a diachronic framework of the cultural models for breast in skaldic diction, we have seen how it can be used to determine the chronology and relationship of certain groupings of poems to each other, such as *Hǫfuðlausn*, *Húsdrápa, Ǫgmundardrápa*, *Vellekla,* and Hofgarða-Refr's *Poem about Þorsteinn,* or the twelfth-century Christian *drápur*. It can also be used (in conjunction with other methods) to assess the authenticity and dating of stanzas such as the 'seed of Són' strophe attributed to Eilífr Goðrúnarson in *Skáldskaparmál,* where it is clear that the conceptualization of the breast is not consistent with paradigms otherwise found in tenth-century poetry. An uncritical acceptance of Snorri's theories about breast and heart kennings, and the taking for granted that the concepts 'the breast is the seat of emotions' or 'the breast is the temple of the spirit' are coherent across the entire skaldic corpus, has sometimes resulted in interpretations where the content of ambiguous verse is rearranged or emended to fit the prescribed models, which are, after all, only metaphors, variations on MIND/BODY IS A CONTAINER, and based on the premise of belief in mind-body dualism, a concept first introduced to Old Norse with the advent of Christianity. However, in our modern society this metaphor is so deeply entrenched that it constrains our freedom to think about the mind in any other way. This is because, as Lakoff and Johnson warned in *Metaphors We Live By*, metaphors can construct social realities for us and may thus become 'a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make

experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can become self-fulfilling prophecies'.[133] Similarly, the problem of terminological ethnocentrism in modern translations of *hugr* and its poetic synonyms as 'mind', obscures the fact that in the pre-Christian period at least, the concept of mind as 'we' know it did not exist in Old Norse vernacular ideology, which had its own complex understanding of the cognitive, emotional and volitive faculties of a person. While of course *Skáldskaparmál* and other such treatises provide information and insights about kennings and the art of skaldic poetry which would not be available to us otherwise, we must remember that the selection and presentation of the poetry included in these works was carried out according to the values and criteria of a very specific 'emotional community', who wished to provide a coherent and consistent taxonomy of the kenning system and ideal examples of skaldic diction as a rubric for young poets to follow. Therefore, in order to attempt to ascertain the conceptual models underpinning poetry composed in previous generations, the starting point must be the poetry itself.

Of course, the extent to which the representations of the breast examined here reflect actual historical conceptualizations is questionable. Skaldic diction is a highly artificial, elitist language, far removed from everyday speech, and the continuous kenning innovations on the part of poets, as seen above in the case of Egill Skalla-Grímsson, often have an experiential basis that is personal. However, these conceits were obviously meaningful to, and well received by, the contemporary audience and the 'poetic community', or else they would not have been copied by later poets. They resonate with their target audience because they are based on recognizable vernacular model(s) grounded in the embodied experience of the interior and exterior thorax, and configured in familiar aspects of the cultural and physicial environment of Viking-age society in the North Atlantic region.

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