

PSEUDO-EGILL, THE *VÍKINGR*-POET

More on the authenticity of the verse in Egils saga

Eyvindr skreyja in Prose and Poetry

In chapter 49 of *Egils saga*,¹ we are introduced to the characters of Eyvindr skreyja ('the weakling') and Álfr askmaðr ('the seafarer').² One of the saga's many pairs of brothers, these two are sons of Qzurr tóti and siblings of no less a personage than Queen Gunnhildr. In fact, their role in the saga plot is substantially that of the villain's henchmen: as soon as they appear, they are appointed by Gunnhildr to kill at least one of the sons of Skalla-

- 1 *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, *Íslenzk fornrit 2* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), 123–127.
- 2 The exact meaning of the nickname *skreyja* is disputed. See Margaret Clunies Ross *et al.* eds., *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007–), 1:218. Finnur Jónsson refers to the lemma *skrøya* meaning 'wretch, sickly, weak person' (Finnur Jónsson, "Tilnavne i den islandske oldlitteratur," *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie* (1907): 349). See also Hans Ross, *Norsk Ordbog. Tillæg til Norsk Ordbog af Ivar Aasen* (Universitetsforlaget, Oslo: Grøndahl & Søn, 1971), 691. Similarly, Eric Henrik Lind, *Norsk-isländska personbinamn från medeltiden: samlade ock utgivna med förklaringar* (Uppsala: Lundequist, 1920–1921), 333; *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 123–124, footnote 4; Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 2nd corrected edition (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 503. The etymology proposed by Torp, from **skrøya* 'coughing, clear one's throat' (*scil.* ON **skreyða*) is not phonetically straightforward; Alf Torp, *Nynorsk etymologisk ordbok* (Kristiania: Aschehoug & Co, 1919), 628. In any event, given the characterization of Eyvindr skreyja as a man of extraordinary stature and strength in *Ágrip*, the nickname could tentatively be interpreted as ironic (Finnur Jónsson, "Tilnavne i den islandske oldlitteratur," 364). Norwegian *skrøya* has also the meaning 'coward,' possibly the product of a semantic shift 'weakling, good-for-nothing, faint-hearted' (Ross, *Norsk Ordbog*, 691). This meaning seems supported by the occurrence of the term *skreyja* in a *lausavísa* attributed to Björn Hítðælakappi (*lv* 10, *Skaldic Poetry* vol. 5, 71–72). The nickname *skreyja* is sometimes alternatively interpreted as 'bragger,' possibly by assonance to *skreyta* and because of the character's personality in the kings' sagas, but this interpretation is linguistically unwarranted.

Grímr – and preferably both.³ Eyvindr and Álfr turn out to be rather lousy minions, however. Not only do they fail in their mission, but Eyvindr violates the sanctity of a sacred place by slaying one of Þórir hersir's men during a festivity and is therefore banned from Norway. He is sent to Denmark, where Haraldr Gormsson puts him in charge of the defense of the Danish coasts from piracy. The sons of Skalla-Grímr refuse to accept monetary compensation for the killing of their companion. The following spring, however, Egill intercepts Eyvindr skreyja off the shore of Jutland and attacks his longship as it lies at anchor. Taken by surprise, Eyvindr loses the ship, many men, and saves his life only by diving overboard and swimming to land. As customary, Egill comments on the outcome of the ambush in a stanza:

Egils saga, lausavísa 15

Gerðum hólzti harða
 hríð fyr Jótlands síðu;
 barðisk vel, sás varði
 víkingr, Dana ríki,
 áðr á sund fyr sandi
 snarfengr með lið drengja
 austr af unnar hesti
 Eyvindr of hljóp skreyja.

We made a very harsh battle off the coast of Jutland; the *víkingr* who guarded the Danish kingdom fought well, until the swift-acting one, Eyvindr skreyja, with a band of warriors, jumped from the wave-horse [SHIP] in the east, swimming by the shore.⁴

- 3 “Þat vil ek, at þit hagið svá til í fjölmenni þessu, at þit fáið drepit annanhvárn þeira sona Skalla-Gríms, ok bazt, at báðir væri” (*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 124).
- 4 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 190–191. See also *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 2 vols, A: *Tekst efter håndskrifterne*, B: *Rettet tekst* (København – Kristiania: Gyldendalske Boghandel / Nordisk Forlag, 1912–1915), vol. A 1, 50; vol. B 1, 44; *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 127. Translations from Old Norse are mine, unless otherwise stated.

The stanza has plain syntax and only one, very simple kenning (*unnar hestr* ‘horse of the wave’), while its content adds little to the events told in the preceding prose. Curiously enough, although Eyvindr skreyja was appointed by the king to defend the coasts from *vikingar* (*scil.* pirates), he is himself defined as a *víkingr* in Egill’s stanza.⁵ After this episode, Eyvindr skreya exits the scene, and the naval showdown with the queen’s brother is mentioned only once again in the saga, by Egill’s friend Arinbjörn.⁶ Álfr askmaðr Qzurarson will appear on another occasion, in chapter 56, where, at the instigation of Gunnhildr, he once again violates the sanctity of an assembly, this time disrupting the session at the Gulapíng concerning the inheritance of Egill’s wife.⁷

Álfr askmaðr is clearly a minor figure. Outside of *Egils saga*, he is named only in *Heimskringla*, where he is exclusively mentioned in connection to his brother.⁸ The case is different with Eyvindr skreyja. Unlike his brother, a character with the name Eyvindr skreyja appears also in earlier works, namely *Ágrip* and *Fagrskinna*, where he is the protagonist of a duel against king Hákon góði during his last battle at Fitjar (on the island of Stord) in 961. In these sources, however, he has no brother and is no relation of Queen Gunnhildr. In *Ágrip*, the description of Eyvindr skreyja seems to conform to the motif of the formidable champion who, overly confident in his strength, issues a challenge to single combat but is eventually humiliated by the virtuous hero, in this case Hákon góði. In *Ágrip*’s description, Eyvindr skreyja indeed gives the impression of a Goliath-like figure.

Þar var með þeim í því liði sá maðr, er hét Eyvindr skreyja. Hann var kappi mikill, meiri en aðrir menn ok bitu varla járn. Hann gekk svá umb daginn at ekki vétta helt við hönnum, því at engi hafði fong á í móti hönnum. Hann fór svá grenjandi ok emjandi⁹ ok ruddi svá at

5 “Síðan setti konungr Eyvind þar til landvarnar fyrir víkingum” (*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 126).

6 *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 150.

7 *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 157.

8 *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 123–125, 157; *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, vol. 1, *Íslenzk fornrit* 26 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1941), 185, 189–190.

9 The choice of the verbs *grenja* and *emja* that occur in the description of the *berserkir* and

hann hjó á báðar hendr ok spurði, hvar hann Norðmanna konungr væri, “hví leynisk hann nú?”¹⁰

In that army with them [the Eiríkssynir], there was a man called Eyvindr skreyja. He was a great champion, bigger than other men and [one that] weapons hardly affected. He fought in such a way that day, that nothing could stop him, since no one was able to stand against him. He went around howling and shrieking, as he cleared his way by hewing on both sides, and asking where the king of the Norwegians was, “Why is he hiding now?”

Against his followers’ advice, Hákon accepts the challenge. Whereas Eyvindr skreyja is described as heavily armored, Hákon faces the champion wearing only a silk-shirt, an apparent disadvantage which will prove decisive for the duel’s outcome. The detailed description of the duel is a rhetorical climax in *Ágrip*’s otherwise laconic style.

Síðan gekk konungrinn undan merkjunum fram í mót hónum kappanum, í silkiskyrtu ok hjálm á hofði, skjöld fyr sér, en sverð í hendi er Kvernbiti hét, ok sýndisk maðrinn svá búinn öllum haukligr. Þá óð kappinn at fram hjálmaðr ok brynjaðr í mót ok tvíhendi øxina ok hjó til konungs, en konungrinn hvak undan lítt þat, ok missti kappinn hans ok hjó í jörðina niðr ok steypðisk eptir nokkvut svá. En konungrinn hjó hann með sverðinu í miðju í sundr í brynjunni, svát sinn veg fell hvárr hlutrinn.¹¹

Then, under the standards, the king advanced towards the champion, in a silken shirt and with the helm on his head, the shield before him, and in his hand the sword called Kvernbiti [‘Millstone-biter’]; the man, so equipped, seemed to everyone to be hawk-like.¹²

the *ulfbæðnar* in *Haraldskvæði* st. 8 (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 102) suggests that the *Ágrip* author implied a similar connotation for Eyvindr skreyja.

10 *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum – Fagrskinna – Nóregskonunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, *Íslensk fornrit* 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), 9–10.

11 *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum – Fagrskinna – Nóregskonunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, 10.

12 The adjective *haukligr* ‘hawk-like,’ rare in prose, seems to mean ‘bold, resolute.’ See: *haukligr, hauklyndr, hauksnarr, hauksnjallr* in *Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguae septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog oprindeligt forfattet af Sveinbjörn Egilsson*, ed.

The champion advanced towards him, with helm and mail-coat, and wielded the axe with both hands; he aimed a blow at the king but the king drew back a little, so that the champion missed him and hew down in the soil, somewhat losing his balance in doing so. Then the king struck him with his sword, right down the middle and through the mail-coat, so that each of the two parts fell to either side.

And this is the end of Eyvindr skreyja in *Ágrip*. Since Hákon is himself doomed to die in the aftermath of the battle, the duel against the arrogant champion remains one of the king's last exploits. Although the literary details might raise doubts regarding the historicity of the episode, the presence of a leader named Eyvindr skreyja at Fitjar seems to be confirmed by poetic sources contemporary to the events. In telling the same episode, *Fagrskinna* does not add much to *Ágrip*'s story, but it does include many poetic quotations.¹³ Three *lausavísur*, all attributed to Hákon góði's Norwegian skald Eyvindr skáldaspillir, concern the king's encounter with Eyvindr skreyja. In the first half-stanza (*lv* 3) Skreyja is referred to as the leader of the enemy army.

Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, *lausavísa* 3

Lýtr fyr lǫngum spjótum
landsfolk; bifask randir;
kveðr oddviti oddum
Eyvindar lið skreyju.¹⁴

The land-army sinks before the long spears; shield-rims tremble; the leader [HÁKON] greets the following of Eyvindr skreyja ['Wretch'] with spear-points.

Finnur Jónsson, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: Møller, 1931). It is also possible that the comparison with the hawk implies a noble or heroic appearance; in *Þiðriks saga af Bern*, king Gunnarr is described as *kurteiss, sterkr ok allgóðr riddari ok haukligr, er han sat á sinum hesti* 'courteous, strong, an excellent knight, and hawk-like, when he sat on his horse'; *Þiðriks saga af Bern*, ed. Henrik Bertelsen (Copenhagen: S. L. Møllersbogtrykkeri, 1905), 342.

13 *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum – Fagrskinna – Nóregskonunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, 84, 87, 89–90, 93.

14 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 218 (Poole, ed. and trans.). See also Russell Poole, "The Cooperative Principle in Medieval Interpretations of Skaldic Verse: Snorri Sturluson, Þjóðólfr Arnórsson, and Eyvindr Skáldaspillir," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 87 (1988), 175.

The other two full stanzas are quoted as poetic sources for the duel scene itself. In the first (*lv* 4) Hákon góði, called out by Eyvindr skreyja, reveals his presence and accepts the challenge:

Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, *lausavísa* 4

Baðat valgrindar vinda
veðrheyjandi Skreyju
gumnum holtr né gulli
Gefnar sinni stefnu:
'Ef sökkspegni svinnan,
sigrminnigr, vilt finna,
framm halt, njótr, at nýtum
Norðmanna gram, hranna.'

The enacter of the storm of the Gefn [Freyja] of the slaughter-gate [(lit. 'storm-enacter of the Gefn of the slaughter-gate') SHIELD > VALKYRIE > BATTLE > WARRIOR = HÁKON], loyal to men, not to gold, did not bid [Eyvindr] Skreyja ['Wretch'] to alter his course: 'If, mindful of victory, you wish to meet a wise treasure-grasper [RULER], keep straight ahead to the capable king of the Norwegians [= HÁKON], user of the waves [SWIMMER = EYVINDR SKREYJA].¹⁵

In the second one (*lv* 5), Hákon is described as he splits his opponent's skull, a gruesome detail that is used to confirm the image, described in both *Ágrip* and *Fagrskinna*, of Hákon literally cutting Eyvindr into two halves with his sword.

Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, *lausavísa* 5

Veitk, at beit inn bitri
byggving meðaldyggran
bulka skíðs ór bóðum
benvöndr konungs höndum.

15 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 219–220 (Poole, ed. and trans.). The kennings in the stanza are complex and much discussed. I shall return in particular to the kenning *branna njótr* ('user of waves') later in this article.

Ófælinn klauf Ála
 éldraugr skarar hauga
 gollhjǫltuðum galtar
 grandaðr Dana brandi.

I know that the biting wound-wand [SWORD] bit the middling-valiant inhabitant of the ski of cargo [SHIP > SEAWARRIOR] from both the king's hands. The log of the storm of the boar of Áli [HELMET > BATTLE > WARRIOR = HÁKON], injurer of the Danes, cleft, unflinching, the burial-mounds of hair [HEADS] with his gold-hilted sword.¹⁶

Eyvindr's *lausavísur* are transmitted both in *Fagrskinna* and in *Heimskringla* and clearly served as poetic sources for both chronicles, as well as for *Ágrip*, although this work makes limited use of explicit poetic quotations. The stanzas are complex in both syntax and kenning style and their interpretation has raised much discussion.¹⁷ Interestingly, they substantially confirm the main elements of the story as it is told in the prose accounts, namely: Eyvindr skreyja's challenge to the king (*lv* 4), Hákon's response rendered in direct speech (*lv* 4) and, roughly, the dynamics of Eyvindr skreyja's killing (*lv* 5). Admittedly, the warrior in *lv* 5 is not mentioned by name and some of the motifs of this stanza are common to the general description of Hákon góði at Fitjar found elsewhere in Eyvindr skáldaspillir's poetry:

Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *Hákonarmál* st. 5:

Svá beit þá sverð	ór siklings hendi
váðir Váfaðar,	sem í vatn brygði.
Brøkuðu broddar,	brotnuðu skildir,
glumruðu gylfringar	í gotna hausum.

16 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 221 (Poole ed. and trans.). The kenning *Ála galtar éldraugr* ('the log of the storm of the boar of Áli') contains a reference to the mythical helmet Hildisvín owned by king Áli and inherited by king Aðils (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, 2 vols., ed. Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998), 1:58). More references to the Hrólfr kraki story are found in Eyvindr skáldaspillir's *lv* 8, quoted in *Skáldskaparmál*.

17 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 218–223.

Then the sword in the sovereign's hand bit the garments of Váfuðr [ARMOUR], as if it were cutting through water. Points clanged, shields burst, swords clattered in men's skulls.¹⁸

One element is of special interest with regard to our discussion of Egill's *lv* 15. In the direct speech of *lv* 4, Hákon góði apparently addresses Eyvindr skreyja with the kenning *branna njótr* ('user/enjoyer of waves'). The kenning is curious and unparalleled, and in the most recent edition it has been explained as a reference to the very episode of Eyvindr skreyja's encounter with Egill, as told in *Egils saga*.

[7, 8] *njótr branna* "user of the waves [SWIMMER = EYVINDR SKREYJA]": Another kenning that has caused difficulty. In this edition it is interpreted literally, since the poet may be alluding to the event described in Egill *Lv* 10V (Eg 15), where Eyvindr skreyja, worsted in battle, leaps from his ship to swim to safety.¹⁹

The expression is thus taken as a sort of *sannkenning* ('truthful description'), designating the referent by his actual properties.²⁰ This interpretation raises a fundamental question: for the kenning *branna njótr* to be based on Egill's *lausavísa*, the authenticity of the latter as well as the historical plausibility of an encounter between Eyvindr skreyja and Egill must be taken at face value. Poole observes that "given the likelihood that Hákon had conducted a previous naval campaign in Danish waters [...] some familiarity with Eyvindr skreyja on the part of the king's Norwegian supporters would not be surprising."²¹ As noted by Clunies Ross, however, according to the saga chronology, the naval battle described by Egill would antedate the duel at Fitjar by circa 25 years, a circumstance that already makes the case rather difficult.²² Moreover, the tradition connecting Eyvindr skreyja to Queen Gunnhildr clearly sets *Heimskringla* and *Egils saga* apart from previous historiographies and is generally regarded as

18 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 179.

19 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 219–220 (Poole ed. and trans.); Poole, "The Cooperative Principle," 176–177.

20 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, lxxiii–lxxv.

21 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 219–220.

22 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 191.

suspect, casting more than a little doubt on the truthfulness of the episode described in *Egils saga* 49 in its entirety.²³ By contrast, the duel between Eyvindr skreyja and Hákon góði is common to *Ágrip*, *Fagrskinna*, and *Heimskringla* and seems to rely on verse attributed to Eyvindr skáldaspillir.

A viable method to evaluate the relationship between these two diverging traditions could be to assess the authenticity of the poetic sources in question. By ‘authentic,’ I here mean poetry datable to the time of the events narrated and that can plausibly be regarded as composed by the poet to whom it is traditionally attributed. By contrast, I call ‘inauthentic’ or ‘pseudonymous’ poetry attributed to the saga characters but likely forged by the saga-author. Thus, in order to answer the question, “Can the stanza of *Egils saga* have provided the basis for the kenning *hranna njótr* contained in Eyvindr’s *lv* 4?”, we must first evaluate the authenticity of both Egill’s and Eyvindr’s *lausavísur*.

The Authenticity of Eyvindr skáldaspillir’s *lausavísur* 3–5

Eyvindr’s *lv* 3–5 belong to a group of stanzas about Fitjar, all transmitted in historiographical sources: *Fagrskinna*, *Heimskringla* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar hin mesta* (ÓTM).²⁴ Since *Fagrskinna* was very likely a source to the first part of *Heimskringla*, which, in turn, was among the sources of the author of ÓTM, *Fagrskinna* is the earliest extant text containing Eyvindr’s *lausavísur*.²⁵ According to Gustav Indrebø, *Fagrskinna* relied on a variety of written sources, several of which are now lost, including a **Hákonar saga góða*, as well as on poetic material and possibly, but to a

23 *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 124; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 218.

24 Poole hypothesized that *lv* 4–5 belonged to a longer narrative poem about the battle of Fitjar, creatively re-worked into a dramatic prosimeton by the *Fagrskinna* author or by a previous source (Poole, “The Cooperative Principle,” 174–175).

25 Various scholars agree on the fact that Snorri used *Fagrskinna* as a source: Gustav Storm, *Snorre Sturlassøns Historiekrivning, en kritisk Undersøgelse* (Copenhagen, 1873), 44–48; Gustav Indrebø, *Fagrskinna*, Avhandlinger fra Universitetets historiske seminar 4 (Kristiania: Grøndahl & Søns Boktrykkeri, 1917); Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Om de norske kongers sagaer* (Oslo: Det norske videnskaps-akademi, 1937); Klaus Johan Myrvoll, “Skule jarl, Snorre og den historiske bakgrunnen åt Fagrskinna,” *Maal og Minne* (2023), 83, 124. Other scholars have also considered the hypothesis that both texts used one or several common sources: *Ágrip af Noregskonunga sögum – Fagrskinna – Noregs konunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, cxxv–cxxvi; *Fagrskinna: A Catalogue of the Kings of Norway. A Translation with Introduction and Notes*, ed. Alison Finlay (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 17–20.

limited extent, on Norwegian local traditions.²⁶ Kari E. Gade observed that

a peculiarity of *Fagrskinna* is that its compiler seems to have known many more stanzas than he chose to cite from some poems (e.g. Glúmr Geirason's *Gráfeldardápa*, Eyjólfur dáðaskáld's *Bandadrápa*). The focus on salient events favors the citation of encomiastic poetry over *lausavísur*, but *Fagrskinna* also preserves some more informal stanzas including several *lausavísur* by Eyvindr skáldaspillir.²⁷

This is precisely the case of the stanzas concerning the battle of Fitjar and the duel between Hákon góði and Eyvindr skreyja. Both *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* are generally regarded as trustworthy sources for what concerns the authenticity of their poetry. In very broad strokes, kings' sagas tend to quote skaldic stanzas for authenticating rather than situational purposes, and the occurrence of spurious verse in this genre is significantly rarer than in the family sagas.²⁸ There are of course exceptions to this rule of thumb: most notably, the now lost saga of St. Óláfr by Styrmir Kárason seems to have contained several inauthentic stanzas, which have been incorporated in the *Flateyjarbók* recension.²⁹ The extant *Morkinskinna* redaction, rich in *þættir* about the role of Icelandic skalds and other anecdotic content, is also generally regarded as a source of inauthentic poetic material.³⁰ Isolated cases of late, archaizing stanzas, for instance about Haraldr hárfagri, have entered the *Fagrskinna* tradition as well, but are only found in the A redaction, which contains clearly interpolated material.³¹ This is not the case for the stanzas in question, however, since they are attested in both branches of the *Fagrskinna* tradition. Formally, *lv* 3–5 present no decisive evidence of an early nor of a late date. The most conspicuous trait is a tendency towards extra ornamental use of rhyme, with *aðalhending* instead of *skothending* in odd lines (e.g. *lv* 3.3: *kveðr oddviti oddum*). The

26 Indrebø, *Fagrskinna*, 109–115, and *passim*.

27 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, clxi.

28 Mikael Males, *The Poetic Genesis of Old Icelandic Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 213–218.

29 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 72–75.

30 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 255–263.

31 Gustav Storm, “Om Indskuddene i *Fagrskinna*,” in *Forhandlinger i Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania Aar 1875* (Christiania: I Commission hos Jac. Dybwad, 1876), 81–108.

first *helmingr* of *lv* 4, for instance, has only *aðalhendingar* throughout (here and below, rhymes are rendered in italics):

Baðat valgrindar vinda
veðrheyjandi Skreyju
gumnum holtr né golli
Gefnar sinni stefnu.

This makes the occurrence of a rhyme $\varrho : a$ in an odd line (*lv* 5.7: *gollhjoltuðum galtar*) substantially moot as a dating criterion.³² *Lv* 5 is extreme in its over-ornamental use of *hendingar*, with several examples of extra rhyming syllables (cf. l. 1: *eit : eit : it*) and one interlinear rhyme pattern with *adhesive rhyme* (ll. 5–6: *æl : ál : él – aug : aug*).³³

Veitk, at beit inn bitri
byggving meðaldyggran
bulka skíðs ór bóðum
benvöndr konungs höndum.
Ófælinn klauf Ála
éldraugr skarar hauga
gollhjoltuðum galtar
grandaðr Dana brandi.

Such rhyme patterns are typical of late-ninth- and tenth-century poems and become rare after the turn of the millennium.³⁴ The use of extra rhyming elements, as well as that of complex kennings rich in specific references to mythical narratives is common to all the *lausavísur* by Eyvindr skáldaspillir.³⁵ Consider, for instance the first *helmingr* of *lv* 6 in which every couplet has retained rhymes.³⁶

32 For the use of *aðalhending* in $a : \varrho$ as a dating criterion, see Myrvoll (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, c–ci).

33 ‘Adhesive rhyme’ is when an extra-rhyming syllable extends the *skothending* to the first position of the even line, in addition to regular *aðalhending*. For a definition and for the use of interlinear rhyme patterns as a dating criterion, see Klaus Johan Myrvoll, ‘The Authenticity of Gíslí’s Verse,’ *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 119 (2020), 231 and *passim*.

34 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, cv.

35 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 213–234.

36 ‘Retained rhyme’ is when both the *skothendingar* and the *aðalhendingar* in a couplet share the same post-vocalic environment.

Fyrr rauð Fenris varra
 flugvarr konungr sparra
 — malmhríðar svall meiddum
 móðr — í Gamla blóði.

Earlier the flight-reluctant king [HÁKON] reddened the prop of the lips of Fenrir [SWORD] in Gamli's blood; courage swelled in the trees of the metal-storm [BATTLE > WARRIORS].³⁷

This *helmingr*, containing the rare kenning pattern *Fenris varra sparri* ('the prop of the lips of Fenrir') is target of imitation by Einarr Skúlason in *Geisli* (c. 1153).³⁸ Thus, if formal criteria might not appear decisive, the poetic reception of Eyvindr's *lausavísur* instills confidence in their authenticity. In fact, several of them are either quoted or referred to in other sources, such as *Skáldskaparmál*, the *Third Grammatical Treatise*, and *Landnámabók*,³⁹ and some were imitated and alluded to by eleventh- and twelfth-century skalds, such as Þjóðólfr Arnórsson and Einarr Skúlason.⁴⁰ In sum, in lack of formal evidence to the contrary, and in light of their formal characteristics, reception, textual transmission, and quotation praxis within the *Fagrskinna* tradition, the case for authenticity seems strong. The rest of the article will concern, instead, the authenticity of Egill's *lv 15*.

Pseudonymous Stanzas in *Egils saga*

For the poetry in *Egils saga*, the situation is different. The debate about the authenticity of Egill's poetry goes as far back as to Finnur Jónsson's doctoral dissertation;⁴¹ it has engaged several scholars and featured supporters

37 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1 (Poole ed. and trans.), 223.

38 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 85.

39 Besides being transmitted in the kings' sagas, *lv 2* is quoted in *Landnámabók* (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 216); the first couplet of *lv 8* is quoted in *Skáldskaparmál* and (only the first couplet) in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 226); the second half of *lv 9* is quoted in *Skáldskaparmál* and in *Laufás-Edda* (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 228).

40 Bianca Patria, "Skalds against 'the System'. The Kennings of Þjóðólfr Arnórsson's Harvest Metaphor," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 137 (2022), 37–74.

41 Finnur Jónsson, *Kritiske studier over en del af de ældste norske og islandske skjaldekvad* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1884).

of all kinds of opinions, from fairly confident believers in Egill's authorship of most of the stanzas attributed to him (e.g. Finnur Jónsson),⁴² to strong sceptics (e.g. Jón Helgason),⁴³ via the "largely agnostic position" of the most recent edition.⁴⁴ In recent years, the most decisive contributions to the question of dating the poetry in the Icelandic family sagas were those of Kari Ellen Gade, Klaus Johan Myrvoll, and Mikael Males and the following discussion is methodologically based and draws extensively on the works of these scholars.⁴⁵ For what concerns *Egils saga* in particular, Males' analysis of the "poetic stratigraphy" of this text was a major breakthrough.⁴⁶ By correlating the distribution of internal rhymes to a variety of other criteria (e.g. archaic *vs* later linguistic forms, textual complexity in terms of syntax and kennings, the saga author's quotation praxis, and the circumstances of attestation), Males was able to employ rhyme patterns as a diagnostic criterion for isolating a number of pseudonymous stanzas in *Egils saga*. Males distinguishes three different patterns in the use of internal rhymes in the *lausavísur* of *Egils saga*:

- (a) a regular style (*skothendingar* in odd, *aðalhendingar* in even lines);
- (b) a style with interlinear rhyme patterns ('compensatory' and 'retained rhyme');⁴⁷

- 42 Finnur Jónsson, "Sagaernes lausavísur," *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1912), 1–57.
- 43 Jón Helgason, "Höfuðlausnarhjal," in *Einarsbók: Afmælisveðja til Einars Ól. Sveinssonar 12. desember 1969*, ed. Bjarni Guðnason, Halldór Halldórsson, and Jónas Kristjánsson (Reykjavík: Nokkrir vinir, 1969), 156–176.
- 44 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 159. Overviews of the debate and references can be found in Sigurður Nordal's introduction to the saga (*Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, v–xvi) and in Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 219–220.
- 45 Kari Ellen Gade, "The Dating and Attributions of Verses in the Skald Sagas," in *Skaldsagas. Text, Vocation, and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets*, ed. Russell Poole (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 50–74; Klaus Johan Myrvoll, *Samstöfur seinar eða skjótar. Ein etterrøknad av trykk- og kvantitetstilhøve i skaldeversemålet dróttkvætt* (master's thesis, Universitetet i Oslo, 2009); Klaus Johan Myrvoll, *Kronologi i skaldevæde. Distribusjon av metriske og språklege drag i høve til tradisjonell datering og attribuering* (PhD diss., Universitetet i Oslo, 2014); Myrvoll, "The Authenticity of Gisli's Verse"; Mikael Males, "Egill och Kormákr – trädning och nydiktning," *Maal og Minne* (2011), 115–146.
- 46 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 220–232.
- 47 'Compensatory rhyme' is when the odd line lacks regular *skothendingar* but contains a stressed syllable that has the same post-vocalic environment of one or more stressed syllables in the following verse: e.g. Egill *Skjalddr* 1.1–2: *Mál es lofs at ljýsa | ljósgarð, es þák, barða* (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, cv).

- (c) a style with an extremely irregular use of rhymes (total lack of rhyme, sparse resort to *skothendingar* in even lines).

From Males' analysis it emerges that, of these three poetic styles, the second and (very often) the first one appear to be products of historical Egill, whereas the third one – exhibiting very irregular rhymes – usually correlates with several other signs of late composition. Males thus argues that the saga author composed with very irregular *hendingar* and that he probably perceived this as an archaic trait. This finds a parallel in the odd rhyme patterns found in *Egils háttr* ('the style of Egill') as well as in the other *fornskálda hettir* reproduced by Snorri in *Háttatal*.⁴⁸

Males' conclusions constitute the point of departure for my own analysis of *lausavísa* 15. Notice, however, that this stanza does not exhibit the main diagnostic sign of late composition indicated by Males, namely the highly irregular rhyme scheme. Nonetheless, several other features speak against its authenticity. At this point, it is in order to specify that, while style (b), with interlinear rhyme patterns, is very likely to date to the tenth century, and style (c), with highly irregular rhyme patterns, is very likely to date to the thirteenth century, stanzas composed in style (a), with the regular alternation of *skot-* and *aðalhendingar*, do not always show a clear correlation with tenth-century features. This means that, in theory, stanzas in style (a) could be a product of both Egill and Pseudo-Egill, or, in other words, that Pseudo-Egill might have composed not only with highly irregular *hendingar* but also following the usual rules of *dróttkvætt*. This hypothesis, which is compatible with the linguistic evidence of the stanzas, can be tested against several parameters, as the following discussion will show.

For the sake of clarity, I will first provide a contrastive analysis of two stanzas quoted in the same chapter of *Egils saga* that clearly illustrate the differences between what Males has isolated as the style typical of the historical Egill, on the one hand, and that of Pseudo-Egill (or the saga author), on the other. The stanzas are quoted in rapid succession in the episode of Bárðr's feast, when Egill and his companion Ólvir are nearly poisoned by the host Bárðr. Egill manages to neutralize the poisonous drink by inscrib-

48 Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, ed. Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2007), 25.

ing runes on the drinking horn (*lv 9*). He then comments on the bad condition of his friend *Ǫlvir*, who is severely drunk (*lv 10*), before killing *Bárðr* and escaping. *Lv 10* is here taken as an example of the traits regarded as typical of historical Egill, while *lv 9* shows features typical of Pseudo-Egill.

Egils saga, lv 9 (Pseudo-Egill)

Rístum rún á horni,
rjóðum spjöll í dreyra,
þau velk orð til eyrna
óðs dýrs viðar róta.
Drekkum veig sem viljum,
vel glýjaðra þýja;
vita, hvé oss of eiri
ǫl þats Bárðr of signði.

We carve a rune on the horn;
we redden words in blood;
those words I choose for the tree of
the roots of ears of the furious animal
[AUROCH'S HEAD > HORN].
We drink as we please the strong drink
of the very cheerful servant maidens,
to find out how the ale that *Bárðr* con-
secrated agrees with us.

Egils saga, lv 10 (Egill)

Ǫlvar mik, því at Ǫlvi
ǫl gervir nú fǫlvan;
atgeira lætk úra
ýring of grǫn skýra.
Ǫllungis kant illa,
oddskýs, fyr þér nýsa,
(rigna getr at regni)
regnbjóðr (Hǫars þegna).

Ale affects me, since ale is now making
Ǫlvir pale; I make the drizzle of the spear
of the aurochs [HORNS > ALE] shower
over my moustache.
You really cannot look out for yourself,
offerer of the rain of weapon-point's
clouds [SHIELD > BATTLE > WARRIOR];
it begins to rain with the rain of the
retainers of *Hǫarr* [ÓÐINN > POETS >
MEAD OF POETRY = POETRY].⁴⁹

The two stanzas exhibit a number of traits that are diagnostic of different times of composition and versification practices. I will first illustrate the ones already indicated by Males.

(a) Rhyme patterns

Internal rhymes are rendered in italics in the two stanzas above. *Lv 9* has nearly no *hendingar* throughout, the only exceptions being a *skothending* with uneven vowel length in l. 4 (*óðs* : *viðar*) and the regular vocalic *aðal-*

49 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 181.

hending in l. 6 (*glýjaðra : þýja*). By contrast, *lv* 10 has regular, although over-ornamental, use of rhymes. In particular, one can notice the frequent resort to retained rhymes in ll. 1–2 (the rhyming syllable being the very word *ól* ‘ale’), ll. 3–4 (*eir : úr : ýr : ýr*), and ll. 7–8 (*ign : egn : egn : egn*). This has a peculiar stylistic effect, highlighting the ‘drizzling’ and ‘raining’ of ale.⁵⁰

(b) Early vs. late linguistic forms

In *lv* 10, the hiatus form of the Óðinn name *Hóarr*, obliterated in textual transmission, needs to be restored to produce a metrical *dróttkvætt* line. This points unambiguously towards a date of composition prior to c. 1150.⁵¹ By contrast, *lv* 9 shows the later, monosyllabic form of the name *Bárðr*, as opposed to the etymological disyllabic form *Bárþóðr* attested in *lv* 8.⁵² Observe that Finnur Jónsson’s conjecture *ól þats Bárþóðr signdi* is not supported by the manuscripts and produces a heavy dip in position 4.⁵³

(c) Textual complexity

Lv 10 has a relatively high degree of textual complexity, with interlaced syntax and elaborated kennings construed in hyperbaton, such as *oddskýs regnbjóðr* (‘the one who offers the rain of the battle-cloud’) and *Hóars þegna regn* (‘the rain of Hóarr’s retainers’). The latter is a pointed reference to the mead of poetry myth, which is harmonized with the running metaphor on rain imagery that characterizes the stanza (cf. the kenning *úra atgeira ýring* ‘the drizzle of the spear of the aurochs’). This is further emphasized through the over-ornamental rhymes on the words participating in these kennings, see above. By contrast, *lv* 9 displays a plain syntax and only one kenning: *eyrna róta viðr* (‘tree of the roots of the ears’), a kenning for the drinking horn.

50 For stylistic analyses of this stanza, see Guðrún Nordal, “*Ars metrica* and the Composition of Egil’s Saga,” in *Egil, the Viking Poet: New Approaches to Egil’s Saga*, ed. Laurence de Looze et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 46–47; Bianca Patria, “Nýgerving and Skaldic Innovation. Towards an Intertextual Understanding of Skaldic Stylistics,” *Saga-Book* 46 (2022), 140–142.

51 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, xcvi.

52 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 224–225; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 177.

53 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 181. Heavy dips (*schwere Senkungen*) are not unattested, but strongly avoided in early *dróttkvætt*; their use gains ground first in the poetry of Sighvatr Þórðarson, is generalized after the mid-eleventh century and increases in the later skaldic production (Myrvoll, *Kronologi i skaldekvæde*, 239–266; Myrvoll, *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, ci).

To these formal features, Males added more circumstantial evidence, such as the fascination with runes, especially when employed for magic purposes, which seems typical of the saga-author as well as of several stanzas composed in Pseudo-Egill's style.⁵⁴ I will now add some further features found in Pseudo-Egill's stanzas that will turn out useful for the following discussion.

(d) Signs of active archaization

As observed above, Finnur Jónsson's emendation of the segment *Bárðr of signði* to *Bárðr signði* has no manuscript support and is generally considered an overzealous conjecture, due to the fact that Finnur considered this stanza authentic. However speculative, Finnur's conjecture is not an idle one. In fact, not only would the form *Bárðr* have been the one used by the historical Egill, but the presence of the Germanic preverb *of* in front of the verb *signa* (a Latin loanword in Old Norse) appears etymologically unlikely. Finnur probably attributed its origin to scribal intervention. In *lv* 9 the preverbs are in fact two, occurring in contiguous lines:

vita, hvé oss *of* eiri
 ǫl þats Bárðr *of* signði

As shown by Hans Kuhn, in very early poems the proclitic *of/um* occurs in etymologically plausible contexts, namely where comparative reconstruction indicates that the presence of a Germanic prefix such as **ga-* or **bi-* is semantically and morphologically plausible.⁵⁵ "Thus, both the frequency of the particle and its 'correctness' compared to the use of prefixes in other old Germanic languages may be applied as dating criteria."⁵⁶ The particle *of/um* does indeed occur in several poems by Egill, before both verbs and nouns. In this stanza, it occurs twice but, as observed above, the second occurrence in front of the Latin loanword *signa* is etymologically implausible. The first occurrence, in front of the verb *eira* 'to agree, to suit', is less

54 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 225.

55 Hans Kuhn, *Das Füllwort of-um im Altwestnordischen: Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte des germanischen Präfixe: Ein Beitrag zur altgermanischen Metrik*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1929 (Ergänzungshefte zur Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiet der indogermanischen Sprachen, 8), 9–44.

56 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, xcix.

straightforward.⁵⁷ This verb has indeed West Germanic cognates with a transitivizing pre-verb *ge-* (OE *ge-ārian*; OHG *ge-ēren*), but in those cases it generally has the specific meaning ‘to honour, to show respect’, and this is obviously not the required meaning here. Rather than actual archaic prefixes, these two occurrences seem to be attempts at active archaization on the part of a later poet, who would have managed to reproduce the occurrence of the particle in preverbal position but would have lost the ability to use it in its ‘correct’ context. I shall return to Pseudo-Egill’s capacity to use the metrical filler *of/um* as an archaizing device later in this article.

(e) Echoes of other poems

As observed above, *lv* 9 has highly irregular *hendingar* almost throughout. The only line with a regular rhyme pattern is line 6: *velglýjaðra þýja* (‘of the much-cheerful servant maidens’). This line is very similar to a line found in a stanza by Eyvindr skáldaspillir (*lv* 8.6): *fáglýjaðra þýja* (‘of the little-cheerful servant maidens’), here referring to the giantesses Fenja and Menja grinding gold for Fróði.⁵⁸ This appears to have been a well-known stanza in the thirteenth century, being quoted not only in *Fagrskinna* and in *Heimskringla*, but also in *Skáldskaparmál* and, partly, in the *Third Grammatical Treatise*. As we shall see below, echoes of tenth- and eleventh-century poems are another typical trait of Pseudo-Egill’s style.

The Word *víkingr* in Egill’s *lausavísur*

So far, we have observed that some features tend to cluster in a subgroup of probably pseudonymous stanzas in *Egils saga*, namely: (a) strong irregularity in the *hendingar*; (c) relatively simple syntax and few and simple kennings. Alongside these, other diagnostic features might occur, such as: (b) late linguistic or metrical forms; (d) signs of active archaization; (e) echoes of other poems. I will focus now on two stanzas in *Egils saga* that exhibit these traits, namely *lv* 7, attributed to the seven-year-old Egill, and *lv* 14, about a raid in Värmland, composed by Egill as a reply to Jarl Arnfiðr’s daughter who questioned his valor.⁵⁹

57 OE *ārian* “to spare”; OFr *ēria* “id.”; OS/OHG *ēren/ēron* “to be graceful” (de Vries, *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 97).

58 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 226.

59 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 175, 189.

Egils saga, lausavísa 7

Þat mælti mín móðir,
at mér skyldi kaupa
fley ok fagrar árar,
fara á braut með víkingum,⁶⁰
standa upp í stafni,
stýra dýrum knerri,
halda svá til hafnar
höggva mann ok annan.

My mother said that people should buy
me a ship and fine oars,
to travel abroad with Vikings,
stand up in the prow, steer the costly
cargo ship, and so make for the
harbour, cut down a man and another.⁶¹

Egils saga, lausavísa 14

Farit hefk blóðgum brandi,
svát mér benþiðurr fylgði,
ok gjallanda geiri,
gangr vas harðr af víkingum.
Gerðum reiðir róstu;
rann eldr of sjöt manna;
létum blóðga búka
í borggliðum sæfask.

I have gone with bloody blade and with
screaming spear, so that the wound-
capercaillie [RAVEN/EAGLE] followed
me; the attack from the vikings was
tough. Angry, we caused tumult; fire ran
through men's houses; we made bloody
bodies fall dead in town-gates.⁶²

Both stanzas lack *hendingar* (in italics) in most lines, have a straightforward syntax and no or few and simple kennings. Moreover, *lv* 7.1 contains a heavy dip since position 4 is occupied by a trimoraic possessive pronoun (*mín*) with secondary stress. *Lv* 14, on the other hand, contains two lines that have close parallels in the skaldic corpus. Line 2: *mér benþiðurr fylgði* is similar to *fekk benþiðurr blakkan* | [*bjór*], in Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld's

60 The reference edition (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 175–176) chooses the metrically regular reading *fara braut* shared by *Wolfenbüttelbuch* (Herzog August Bibliothek, WolfAug 9 10 4to, 37r) and by the ζ Fragment (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, AM 162 A ζ fol, 2r), two witnesses belonging to the so-called B-redaction (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 154). The metrically irregular *fara á braut*, however, is attested in all three branches of the *Egils saga* tradition: *Möðruvallabók* (A-redaction), Fragment AM 162 δ (B-redaction) and the two *Ketilsbækur* (C-redaction). Since, as the discussion below will illustrate, the metrical irregularity seems to be a characteristic of this line (cf. the anomalous closing in *víkingum* in positions 4–6; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 176) and is thus not at odds with the stemmatic evidence, I have retained the reading of the majority of the mss.

61 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 175.

62 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 189.

lv 22.7–8.⁶³ Line 6: *rann eldr of sjöt manna* is plainly borrowed from the identical fire description in Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson's *Haraldsdrápa* 1.2.⁶⁴ The clustering of these features strengthens the hypothesis, already advanced by Males, that the stanzas were composed by the saga-author.⁶⁵ Finally, there is one more odd thing about this pair of stanzas: in both, the word *vikingr* is used as a self-descriptive term by Egill, and it occurs as an odd three-syllabic clausula in lines that appear hypermetrical:

lv 7.4: fara á braut með **víkingum** *lv* 14.4: gangr vas harðr af **víkingum**

In order to produce six metrical positions, the segments *fara á braut* and *gangr vas harðr* need to occupy two metrical positions. This can tentatively be achieved by positing a combination of resolution and elision, a solution that, as pointed out by Clunies Ross, “is possible but uncommon.”⁶⁶ Interestingly, the closest parallels to such metrical patterns are found in *Háttatal* st. 8, where Snorri stretches the capacity of *dróttkvætt* lines by “placing short syllables close to one another” and experimenting with extreme cases of resolution, neutralization, and elision.⁶⁷ In fact, the two cases in question take this ‘technique’ to even more extreme consequences than the *Háttatal* stanza, especially in the case of *lv* 14.4, where the segment *-ngr v's b-* produces an exacting consonantal cluster.

The word *vikingr* is thus common to *lv* 7 and 14 by Pseudo-Egill as well as to our *lv* 15, where it describes Eyvindr skreyja as *víkingr, sás varði Dana ríki* (‘the *víkingr* who guarded the Danish kingdom’). Regarding the stanza where young Egill daydreams about his viking activities, Judith Jesch observed that the use of the word *víkingr* as a self-descriptive term looks suspicious for an early tenth-century poem and suggested that the stanza was probably composed for the saga.⁶⁸ The first secure occurrences of the noun *víkingr* in skaldic poetry date to the last decades of the tenth century

63 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 837.

64 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 2, 261–262.

65 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 224.

66 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 176.

67 Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, 7–8; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 3, 1112.

68 Judith Jesch, “Skaldic Verse in Scandinavian England,” in *Vikings and the Danelaw. Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress*, ed. James Graham-Campbell et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 313–325.

and show an increase after the year 1000.⁶⁹ The term generally designates an external and foreign enemy, often engaging in piracy.

Table 1: Occurrence of the word vikingr in skaldic poetry (c. 980–1050)

Date	Source	Occurrence	Referring to	Ed.
c. 984	Þmáhl <i>Máv</i> 13.6	frön víkinga mána	Ambiguous	<i>SkP</i> 5, 435
c. 985	ÞHjalt <i>lv</i> 2.4	sveimr víkinga heiman	Swedes	<i>SkP</i> 1, 273
c. 986	Þskúm <i>lv</i> 1	vö víkinga vörn Hólkunar	Jómsvíkingar	<i>SkP</i> 1, 360
c. 987	Tindr <i>Hákr</i> 5.8	meiðr víkinga skeiðar	Jómsvíkingar	<i>SkP</i> 3, 347
c. 1000	Eil <i>Þdr</i> 9.3	setrs víkingar snotrir	Þórr and Þjálfi	<i>SkP</i> 3, 95
c. 1010	Edað <i>Bandr</i> 5.6	svorð víkinga hvarðu	Vinðland pirates	<i>SkP</i> 1, 463
c. 1015	Sigv <i>Vikv</i> 3.6	leið víkinga skeiðar	Finns (?)	<i>SkP</i> 1, 537
c. 1015	Sigv <i>Vikv</i> 6.6	víkingar þar díki	Óláfr's enemies	<i>SkP</i> 1, 541
c. 1040	Sigv <i>ErfÓl</i> 6.4	víkingum skor, ríkis	Óláfr's enemies	<i>SkP</i> 1, 672

The most notable exception here is the use of the term *víkingar* to describe Þórr and Þjálfi in Eilífr Guðrúnarson's *Þórsdrápa*. The poem, however, is experimental in its tendency to use non-mythological base-words for the description of mythological entities. Composed within the circle of Hákon jarl Sigurðarson, *Þórsdrápa* has been understood by a number of scholars as the product of a peculiar operation, combining mythological narrative and political praise.⁷⁰ As first suggested by Edith Marold, a parallel between Þórr's victorious expedition and Hákon jarl's military success is implied by the abundance of giant-kennings involving names of peoples subjected or defeated by Hákon.⁷¹ Similarly, Þórr and Þjálfi are described as warriors engaging in raids and ambushes to the halls of foreign enemies, and the choice of the kenning *eiðsvara víkingar setrs Gauta* ('oath-bound *víkingar* of the seat of Gauti [Óðinn]'), seems motivated by this characterization. In the course of the eleventh century, some other ambiguous instances of the word *víkingr*

69 *Lexicon poeticum*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 625. An overview is provided by the online edition, which is, however, not complete: <https://lexiconpoeticum.org/m.php?p=lemma&i=94043>.

70 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 3, 73–75.

71 Edith Marold, "Skaldendichtung und Mythologie," in *Atti del 12' Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 4-10 Settembre*, ed. Teresa Pároli (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1990), 107–130.

are found, although in most cases it continues to be used as a dismissive term for the ruler's enemies, often pirates or criminals of some sort.⁷²

Table 2: Occurrence of the word *vikingr* in skaldic poetry (c. 1050–1200)

Date	Source	Occurrence	Referring to	Ed.
c. 1060	Valg <i>Har</i> 3.2	brutu víkingar fíkjum	Ambiguous	<i>SkP</i> 2, 302
c. 1070	Steinn <i>Óldr</i> 3.4	blóð víkingar óðu	Norwegians	<i>SkP</i> 2, 370
c. 1100	Bkrepp <i>Magnr</i> 4.1	vikinga lætr vengis	Magnús' enemies	<i>SkP</i> 2, 399
c. 1165	Þskakk <i>Erlr</i> 3.2	Erlingr at víkingum	Pirates	<i>SkP</i> 2, 635
c. 1180	HSt <i>Rst</i> 8.8	víkingum hlut slíkan	Óláfr's enemies	<i>SkP</i> 1, 905
c. 1184	Hskv <i>Útdr</i> 1.4	víkingar gram ríkjum	Moors	<i>SkP</i> 2, 484

As observed by Gade, the term probably designates Norwegian troops in Steinn Herdísarson's *Óláfsdrápa* st. 3, but it is probably relevant that the term is used in the context of the battle of Fulford in Northumbria (1066), where the label 'viking' could possibly be claimed as an identifier against English enemies.⁷³ The first time the word occurs with a certainly positive connotation is in the mid-twelfth century (c. 1140), in Ívarr Ingimundarson's *Sigurðarbálkr* st. 42, where it refers to the poem's protagonist, Sigurðr slembidjárn Magnússon:

Varð á vatni víkingr tekinn
sás manna vas mestr fullhugi.

The viking, who was the most high-mettled of men, was captured in the water.⁷⁴

It thus seems that the connotation of the term *vikingr* was gradually changing during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but its occurrence is extremely rare before the late tenth century. In fact, if we exclude the three stanzas of *Egils saga*, the word *vikingr* is found only once in a stanza

72 See Kari E. Gade's note to Halldórr skvaldri's *Útfarardrápa* 1 (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 2, 484–485) and Judith Jesch's about Sighvatr Þórðarson's *Víkingarvísur* 3.6 (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 537). According to Gade, the word *vikingr* is used in a positive connotation in Valg *Har* 3 (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 2, 302–303), but I find the occurrence rather ambiguous.

73 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 2, 370, 484–485.

74 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 2, 225–226.

attributed to the late-ninth-century poet Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, about the battle of Hafrsfjord (c. 890):

Leiddisk þá fyr Lúfu	lengr at haldask
hersa drótt	ok hofðingjum.
Flýði hverr,	sem fara mátti,
hraustra víkinga	ór Hafrsfirði.

The host of *hersar* and the chieftains grew tired then of holding out longer against *Lúfa* ('Shaggy-locks'); each of the valiant vikings who could go fled from Hafrsfjord.⁷⁵

As in Pseudo-Egill's stanzas, the word *víkingr* receives here a positive connotation and designates the noble chieftains abandoning Norway for Iceland after their defeat in Hafrsfjord. There are several reasons to assume that the poem is a late construction, however – Finnur Jónsson's editorial title is telling: *Et digt om Haraldr hárfagre, næppe egte*.⁷⁶ Stanzas 1–4 are transmitted only in *Flateyjarbók*, sts. 1–3 in the *Haralds þátrr hárfagra*. St. 5 is transmitted in the A-branch of the *Fagrskinna* tradition,⁷⁷ and contains the story of Haraldr's change of nickname from *lúfa* to *hárfagri*, famously a late construction.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the first line of this poem is identical to, and probably modeled on, Þorbjörn hornklofi's *Haraldskvæði* 10.1, an authentic source from the period in question attesting only the nickname *lúfa*:

Þorbjörn hornklofi, *Haraldskvæði* 10

Leiddisk þá fyr Lúfu	landi at halda
hilmi inum halsdigra;	holm lét sér at skjaldi.
Slógusk und sessþiljur,	es sárir vǫru;
létu upp stjolu stúpa;	stungu í kjól hofðum.

75 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 62.

76 *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning. A*, vol. I, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 20.

77 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 60.

78 Bjarne Fidjestøl, "Skaldekvad og Harald Hårfagre," *Rikssamlingen og Harald Hårfagre. Historisk seminar på Karmøy 10. og 11. Juni 1993*, ed. Bjørn Myhre (Karmøy kommune, 1993), 15–16; Judith Jesch, "Norse Historical Traditions and the *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*: Magnús Berfœttr and Haraldr Hårfagri," in *Gruffud ap Cynan. A Collaborative Biography*, ed. K. L. Maund (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1996), 143–144.

The fat-necked prince [KJǪTVI] grew tired then of holding the land against *Lúfa* ('Shaggy-locks') [HARALDR]; he let an islet be a shield to himself. They threw themselves under the bench-planks, those who were wounded; they let their rumps stick up; they plunged their heads into the bilge.⁷⁹

In the poem attributed to Þjóðólfr, the very motive of the unyielding chieftains fleeing after the battle of Hafrsfjord betrays an Icelandic perspective on the episode.⁸⁰ In fact, the entire stanza 4 appears to be a re-elaboration of the ludicrous description of the fleeing chieftains found in *Haraldskvæði* 10–12.⁸¹ In sum, when compared to the earliest occurrences of the term in skaldic verse, the use of 'vikingr' as self-descriptive seems implausible for an early tenth-century poet, the positive connotation attributed to the word reflecting rather thirteenth-century perceptions. This suggests that, like *lv* 7 and 14, *lv* 15 too should be regarded as a creation of Pseudo-Egill.

Lausavísa 15: A New Technique

With this new awareness, let us take a fresh look at the stanza. Internal rhymes are rendered in italics.

Egils saga, lausavísa 15
 Gerðum hólzti *harða*
 hríð fyr Jótlands síðu,
 barðisk vel, sá's *varði*
 vikingr, Dana *ríki*,
 áðr á *sund* fyr *sandi*
 snarfengr með lið *drengja*
austr af unnar *hesti*
 Eyvindr of hljóp *skreyja*.

79 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 105.

80 Theodore M. Andersson, *The Sagas of Norwegian Kings (1130–1265). An Introduction*, *Islandica* LIX (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 67.

81 St. 12.5–8: *Æstusk austkylfur | ok of Jaðar hljópu | heim ór Hafrsfirði | ok hugðu á mjöðdrykkju* 'The east-cudgels were stirred up and ran across Jæren, homewards from Hafrsfjorden, and concentrated on mead-drinking' (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1 (Fulk, ed. and trans.), 106).

We made a very harsh battle off the coast of Jutland; the *vikingr* who guarded the Danish kingdom fought well, until the swift-acting one, Eyvindr skreyja, with a band of warriors, jumped from the wave-horse [SHIP] in the east and took to swimming by the shore.

The stanza conforms to Pseudo-Egill's simple diction and style; the only kenning, *unnar hestr* ('the wave's horse' for SHIP) is as simple as it gets in skaldic poetry. The meter is relatively regular, with the notable occurrence of a heavy dip in l. 2: *Jótlands*. As observed above, this stanza lacks Pseudo-Egill's main trademark: irregular rhymes (the occurrence of an *aðalhending* in the odd l. 3 is not, strictly speaking, irregular). When it comes to another recurring feature of Pseudo-Egill's stanzas, however, namely echoes from other poems, the situation is quite remarkable.

Egill, <i>lausavísa</i> 15	Model-line	Poem
Gerðum hólzti harða	Gerðisk heldr við harðan	Hskv <i>Útfdr</i> 2.5 (<i>SkP</i> 2, 485)
hríð fyr Jótlands síðu	hríð við markar síðu	Tindr <i>Hákdr</i> 7.8 (<i>SkP</i> 3, 350)
barðisk vel, sá's varði	sú gerðisk vel varði	Hfr <i>ErfÓl</i> 14.7 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 420)
víkingr, Dana ríki,	víkingum skǫr, ríkis	Sigv <i>ErfÓl</i> 6.4 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 672)
áðr á sund fyr sandi	þars í sundr á sandi	Tindr <i>Hákdr</i> 3.5 (<i>SkP</i> 3, 343)
snarfengr með lið drengja	snarfengr með lið drengja	Þorm <i>Þorgdr</i> 10.2 (<i>SkP</i> 5, 505)
austr af unnar hesti	austr fyr unnar hesti	Gunnl <i>lv</i> 9.7 (<i>SkP</i> 5, 838)
Eyvindr of hljóp skreyja.	Eyvindar lið skreyju	Eyv <i>lv</i> 3.4 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 218)

In fact, every line of the stanza finds a relatively close match in the skaldic canon. Considering that Pseudo-Egill generally retains the rhyming words of the model lines, this explains why *lv* 15 has no irregular *hendingar*. The only exception to a regular alternation *skothending*–*aðalhending* in *lv* 15 is in v. 3, where the verb *gerðisk* in the pattern verse has been changed to *barðisk*, for semantic reasons, with the effect that the verse has *aðalhending* instead of the original *skothending*. I will now take a closer look at the line re-workings.

[1. 1] *Gerðum hølzti harða*

The closest match to this line is *Gerðisk heldr við harðan* from Halldórr skvaldri's *Útfarardrápa* for Sigurðr Jórsalafari. As in Pseudo-Egill's stanza, the verb is fronted at the opening of a *helmingr*. This stanza is quoted by both *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*.

[1. 2] *hríð fyr Jótlands síðu*

The line has multiple possible models, as the collocation *hríð : síðu* is attested in at least three other poems: Tindr Hallkelsson's *Hákonardrápa* st. 7.8 is probably echoed in Halldórr ókristni's *Eiríksflokk* 3.8.⁸² The collocation occurs again in st. 5 of *Liðsmannaflokk*, with a place-name occupying positions 3–4, as in Pseudo-Egill's line. Despite incongruencies in its attribution, *Liðsmannaflokk* is attested in both the *Legendary Saga of Saint Óláfr* and Styrmir Kárason's *Lífssaga*, hence it is assumed to have been contained in the so-called *Oldest Saga of Saint Óláfr*, from the late twelfth century.⁸³ This poem seems thus to have belonged to the earliest kernel of skaldic sources associated to Óláfr Haraldsson.

Tindr *Hákr* 7.8⁸⁴

hríð við markar síðu

Hókr *Eirfl* 3.8⁸⁵

hríð – við Fáfnis síðu

Ólhelg *Liðs* 5.8⁸⁶

hríð á Tempsar síðu

Unlike the model lines, Pseudo-Egill's line has a heavy dip in position 4: *lands*. This is not in violation of Craigie's law, since position 4 carries only secondary stress, but, as noted above, the frequency of heavy dips increases in the later skaldic production. Again, a necessary change in wording (from *Tempsar síðu* to *Jótlands síðu*) is responsible for the unexpected metrical form, cf. the similar case of *aðalhending* for *skothending* in l. 3 mentioned above.

[1. 3] *barðisk vel sás varði*

The closest match to this line is found in Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld's *erfi-*

82 On *Eiríksflokk*'s tendency to contain frequent echoes of previous poems, see *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 470.

83 Bjarne Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, Universitet i Bergen Nordisk institutts skriftserie 11 (Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide, 1982), 21–22.

84 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 350.

85 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 475.

86 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 1022.

drápa for Óláfr Tryggvason, in the line *sú gerðisk vel — varði*.⁸⁷ The presence of the adverb *vel* alliterating with *varði* (metrically, an X-type) is also paralleled in Sighvatr's *Víkingarvísur* st. 4.3: *dýrð frákk, þeim vel varðisk*.⁸⁸

[l. 4] *víkingr Dana ríki*

The word *víkingr* does not occur often in positions 1–2 in *dróttkvætt* lines (cf. Tables 1 and 2 above). The first skald to use it in the opening of lines is Sighvatr Þórðarson, and his two lines are obvious candidates for possible models for l. 4 in Pseudo-Egill's stanza, especially the one from the *erfidrápa* for Saint Óláfr, with the collocation *víkingr — ríki*. All previous occurrences of the line, however, are D₄/E-type lines, whereas Pseudo-Egill creates an A_{2k}.

víkingr, Dana ríki,	víkingum skor, ríkis	Sigv <i>ErfÓl</i> 6.4 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 672)
	víkingar þar diki	Sigv <i>Vikv</i> 6.6 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 541)
	víkingar þar ríki	Óttarr, <i>Knútdr</i> 5.4 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 772)
	víkingum hlut slíkan	HSt <i>Rst</i> 8.8 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 905)

For what concerns the two central positions of the line, containing the ethnonym *Dana* (gen. pl.), the possible models are many, since this word, in a collocation with *skeiðar* ('warships'), occurs in several A_{2k} lines from tenth-century poems about rulers with strong 'anti-Danish' agendas.

Gsind <i>Hákd</i> 2.6	Tindr <i>Hákd</i> 9.4	Edað <i>Bandr</i> 7.6	ÞKolb <i>Eindr</i> 1.8
þás ellifu allar	þar vas lind fyr landi	Hrauð fúrgjafall fjórar	vangs á vatn of þrungit
allreiðr Dana skeiðar	leiðangr Dana skeiðar	folkmeiðr Dana skeiðar	viggmeiðr Dana skeiðum

Considering the evidence from ll. 2 and 5 (see below), Tindr's *Hákonardrápa* seems to have a strong case, but all these poems might have served as a model for Pseudo-Egill. Given the content of *lv* 15, also the similarity between another line from Tindr's *Hákonardrápa* and Eyvindr skáldaspillir's *lausavísa* 5, allegedly about Hákon góði and Eyvindr skreyja, is worthy of mention:

87 St. 14, l. 7, *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 420.

88 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 539.

Eyv *lv* 5.8
 gollhjoltuðum galtar
 grandaðr Dana brandi.

Tindr *Hákd* 6.4
 auði grimms at eyðask
 qll lqnd Dana brandi.

In sum, given the frequency of the ethnonym *Danir* in several late-tenth-century *drápur* about Hákon góði and the Hlaðajarlar, the occurrence of this name in positions 3–4 had acquired popularity in a section of the poetic corpus that appears to have been well-known to Pseudo-Egill.

[1. 5] *áðr á sund fyr sandi*

This line finds a close match once again in Tindr Hallkelsson's *Hákonardrápa*, this time in st. 3.5: *þars í sundr á sandi*, a stanza quoted in *Heimskringla*.⁸⁹ Like Halldórr ókristni's *Eiríksflokk*, Tindr's poem seems to have been the target of multiple echoes by Pseudo-Egill. This circumstance could be of text-critical interest, since, while parts of *Hákonardrápa* are quoted piecemeal in *Skáldskaparmál* and in *Heimskringla*, some stanzas (among which sts. 6, 7 and 9 mentioned above) are only transmitted in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, and their authenticity as historical sources has been sometimes questioned.⁹⁰

[1. 6] *snarfengr með lið drengja*

This line appears to be a plain loan from Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld's *Þorgeirsdrápa* st. 10, l. 2, quoted in *Fóstbræðra saga*.⁹¹

Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld's *Þorgeirsdrápa* st. 10.1–4

Gaut veitk at son Sleitu
 snarfengr með lið drengja
 hqlðr við harðar deilðir
 hjordjarfan nam fjörvi.

89 A similar line occurs also in Einarr Skúlason's *Geisli*, st. 59, l. 1: *lustu sundr á sandi* (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 7, 55).

90 On *Egils saga*'s dependence on *Jómsvíkinga saga*, see Bjarni Einarsson, *Litterære forudsætninger for Egils saga* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1975), 105–155.

91 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 505. The line has a variant reading *snarfengr meðal drengja* in the paper manuscript of skaldic poems redacted by Árni Magnússon (AM 761 b 4to), which is, however, unattested elsewhere. The line *snarfengr með lið drengja* occurs in a *lausavísa* spoken by Björn Hitdælakppi in the eponymous saga (*lv* 36, l. 8 in *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 116).

I know that the man [Þorgeirr], swift-acting, with a band of warriors, in hard conflicts, took the life of the sword-bold Gautr Sleituson.

Þorgeirsdrápa differs from the sources so far examined for being transmitted in the corpus of the Icelandic family sagas rather than in that of the kings' sagas and for being composed not about a ruler but as a memorial poem for Þormóðr's sworn brother Þorgeirr Hávarsson. Nonetheless, Þormóðr was a professional skald, and his *lausavísur* about Óláfr Haraldsson were already quoted within the earliest sagas about Saint Óláfr, three of them occurring in the fragments of the *Oldest Saga*.⁹² Furthermore, *Þorgeirsdrápa* is quoted in an authenticating rather than situational fashion in *Fóstbræðra saga*, and a number of formal features (hiatus forms, archaic forms, *aðalhendring* in a : ρ), spread evenly throughout the poem, instill confidence in its traditional dating to the late tenth or beginning of the eleventh century.⁹³ *Fóstbræðra saga* has been argued to be among the earliest *Íslendingasögur*, it might have been a source for the oldest saga about Saint Óláfr, and it appears to have served as a 'lateral' source for Snorri's *Heimskringla*.⁹⁴

[l. 7] *austr af unnar best*

An almost identical line is attested in a *lausavísa* attributed to Gunnlaugr ormstunga, in the eponymous saga. The ambiguous nature of the poetry contained in this saga calls for a careful analysis.

Gunnlaugr ormstunga Illugason, *lausavísa* 9

Segið ér frá jarli
 oddfeimu staf* þeima,
 hann hefr litnar *hóvar*
 (hárr karl es sá) *bórrur*.
 Sigurreynir hefr sénar

92 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 823–825; Theodore M. Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180–1280)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 70.

93 Mikael Males, "Fóstbræðra saga: A Missing Link?", *Gripla* 31 (2020), 93–94; Fulk, *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 482.

94 The early dating of *Fóstbræðra saga* was challenged by Jónas Kristjánsson in his thesis: *Um 'Fóstbræðrasögu'* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1972). See, however, Theodore M. Andersson, "Redating *Fóstbræðra saga*," in *Dating the Sagas: Reviews and Revisions*, ed. Else Mundal (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2013), 66–72.

sjalfr í miklu gjalfri
 austr fyr unnar hesti
 Eirekr bláar fleiri.

Tell the stave of the point-maiden [VALKYRIE > WARRIOR = GUNNLAUGR] of that jarl; he has seen towering waves; that is a grey-haired old man. The victory-rowan [WARRIOR], Eirekr, has himself seen more blue ones east in the great ocean-surge in front of his horse of the waves.⁹⁵

The similarity between the two lines was noted by Kari E. Gade, who regarded it, together with several other echoes occurring in the poetry of *Gunnlaugs saga*, as a sign of late composition.⁹⁶ Gade's general argument about the use of echoes in the composition of pseudonymous poetry is quite convincing and is strengthened by the findings presented in this article. Unlike *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Gunnlaugs saga* does not belong among the earliest *skáldasögur*, it shows influence especially from *Hallfreðar saga*, and is indeed rich in late, pseudonymous stanzas.⁹⁷ Not all the poetry attributed to the protagonist was composed for the saga, however. Although Gunnlaugr's poetic production is almost entirely transmitted in the saga, he is listed among professional poets in both versions of *Skáldatal*, and his *runhent* poem for the king of Dublin Sigtryggr silkiskegg, *Sigtryggsdrápa*, contains at least one clear archaic feature (prenominal particle: *of skil*, st. 1.1).⁹⁸ Furthermore, the first half of *lv 12* is quoted also in *Skáldskaparmál* and shares the theme of love rivalry with other stanzas in the saga.⁹⁹ This is a more reassuring situation than that, for instance, of Gísli Súrsson, a skald almost ignored by sources other than *Gísla saga*. And yet, a large portion of the poetry attributed to Gísli is compatible with a tenth-century dating.¹⁰⁰ It is thus reasonable to think that *Gunnlaugs saga* contains a mixture of authentic and inauthentic stanzas, although the portion of the

95 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5 (Diana Whaley, ed. and trans), 838–839.

96 Gade, "The Dating and Attributions of Verses," 73.

97 Russell Poole, *Skaldsagas: Text, Vocation, and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 125–171; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 819.

98 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 836.

99 Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, vol 1, p. 63; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 856–858; Poole, *Skaldsagas*, 162.

100 Myrvoll, "The Authenticity of Gísli's Verse."

latter is higher than in other texts belonging to this genre. The linguistic evidence for dating *lv* 9 is not decisive, since the *aðalhending* in *ár : ór* in l. 4 would have been valid also after the merger of the two phonemes. The hiatus form *bláar* in l. 8 (positions 3–4) instills some confidence in an early date, although this is admittedly the kind of form that was analogically restored after *c.* 1250 and that could be reproduced by imitation.¹⁰¹ In general, the stanza presents several textual problems. As it stands, line 1 is hypometrical (*segið* would normally be subject to resolution) and seems to lack *skothendingar* (the irregular rhyme *ér : arl* assumed by the editor seems unwarranted).¹⁰² The last word of line 3 is omitted in both witnesses and has been inserted by conjecture. Formal features of the verse are thus of limited help. The situation is ambiguous: on the one hand, several stanzas in *Gunnlaugs saga* seem to contain echoes from lines in other *skáldasögur*, and this has been interpreted as a sign of pseudonymous composition.¹⁰³ On the other hand, however, the cumulative evidence of Pseudo-Egill's praxis in *lausavísa* 15 makes a strong case for the opposite scenario, as it seems uneconomical to postulate that uniquely line 7 in the stanza is not based on a model but became, in turn, target of imitation. Thus, given the seemingly archaic (albeit non-decisive) features in Gunnlaugr's stanza, and in light of the evidence from all other lines in Pseudo-Egill's stanza, I will limit myself to claim that it is not unreasonable to assume that, in this case, the loan might have gone from Gunnlaugr's verse to *Egils saga*.

[l. 8] *Eyvindr of hljóp skreyja*

This line is in all likelihood modeled on the only other poetic occurrence of the name Eyvindr skreyja in the same metrical positions, namely Eyvindr skáldaspillir's line: *Eyvindar lið skreyju*. Notice the occurrence of the particle *of/um* in position 3. As in the case of the verbs *eira* and *signa* in the *Bárðr* stanza above (*lv* 9), the occurrence of such a preverb in front of the preterit of *hlaupa*, an intransitive verb of motion, seems etymologically implausible (cf. Gothic *hlaupan*; OE *hleapan*, pret. *hleop*; OS *hlōpan*; OHG *hlaufan*). Thus, evidence from spurious stanzas suggests that pseudo-Egill did actively archaize, using the particle *of/um* as a metrical filler. It is quite possible that he used occurrences of the particle in genuine stanzas as a

101 Myrvoll, *Kronologi i skaldekvæde*, 312–313; Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, 7.

102 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 838.

103 Gade "The Dating and Attribution of Verses," 72–73; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 822.

model. For instance, the *lausavísa* following the one about Eyvindr skreyja in *Egils saga* contains a plausibly etymological occurrence of the particle *of/um* in the same metrical position:

Egils saga, lausavísa 15.7–8

austr af unnar hesti
Eyvindr of hljóp skreyja.

...to the east, off the wave's horse,
Eyvindr skreyja leapt.

Egils saga, lausavísa 16.1–2

Áleifr of kom jöfri
– ótt vas víg – á bak flótta [...]

Áleifr had the prince turn his back
and flee – the battle raged [...]

The *of* in the sentence *Áleifr of kom jöfri á bak flótta* is etymologically justified, as it marks the causative use of the verb *koma* in the meaning 'bring to, cause to go'.¹⁰⁴ Due to the loss of the preverb in classical Old Norse, however, the causative construction of the verb *koma* no longer had a morphological marker on the verb, the causative value relying only on the construction with the direct object in the dative. Thus, Pseudo-Egill might have analyzed *of* as a preverbal particle simply occurring before a verb in the preterite and might have perceived *lv* 15.8 and *lv* 16.1 as perfectly parallel lines. Moreover, the occurrence of the expletive particle in front of finite verbs is well attested in this line-type ever since the ninth century. The preverbal particle *of/um* in position 3 is especially common in type E4 odd, in sentence introductory lines.

104 Kuhn, *Das Füllwort*, 41. Cf. similar causative constructions in *Haustlǫng* (late ninth century), st. 9.5–6: *Brunmakrs of kom bekkjar | Brísings goða dísi* [...] (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 3, 444) and in *Þórsdrápa* (late tenth century) st. 19.1–2 *Bifðisk hǫll, þás hǫfði | Heiðreks of kom breiðu* [...] (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 3, 117).

Table 3: Type E4 Odd¹⁰⁵

Ninth century	Þjóð <i>Haustl</i> 3.5	margspakr of nam mæla
	Þjóð <i>Haustl</i> 9.5	brunnakrs of kom bekkjar
Tenth century	Egill <i>Aðdr</i> 1.5	Aðalsteinn of vann annat
	Egill <i>lv</i> 16.1	Áleifr of kom jöfri
	Glúmr <i>Gráf</i> 8.5	viðlendr of bað vinda
	Glúmr <i>lv</i> 1.5	folkrakkr, of vannt, fylkir,
	Esk <i>Vell</i> 10.3	þrimlundr of jók Þundi
	Hallfr <i>lv</i> 8.7	skölkving of þák skjalga
	<i>Skj A1</i> , 175	Barðøðr of rist báru
Eleventh century	Ótt <i>Hfl</i> 15.3	allvaldr of getr aldar
	Gizsv <i>Frag</i> 1.3	Áleifr of vinnr élum
Twelfth century	Bjþp <i>Jóms</i> 15.5 [<i>stef</i>]	góð ætt of kømr grimmu
	Bjþp <i>Jóms</i> 34.5	Þorleifr of vann þjokkva
	StjOdd <i>Geirdr</i> 1.1	Geirviðr of nam greiða
	StjOdd <i>Geirdr</i> 7.5	Geirviðr of vá geiri
	Jór <i>Send</i> 4.7	upp angr of hófsk yngva ¹⁰⁶

According to Gade's taxonomy, *Eyvindr of hljóp skreyja* is an E4 Even line. Apart from alliteration and rhymes, this is the exact same line-type of E4 Odd. Expletive *of* in position 3 is much more common in the odd variant, however, because of restrictions on verb placement in even lines. In E4 Even, it is found in only a handful of occurrences before the year 1000, but makes an unexpected comeback in the twelfth century, in two poems with archaizing pretensions.

105 The table is based on Kari Ellen Gade, *The Structure of Old Norse dróttkvætt Poetry*, *Islandica XLIX* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 90–91; Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 57.

106 Gade included Jörunn skáldmærs *Sendibitr* among tenth-century sources. This poem, however, probably fits better among the actively archaizing *sogekvæde* of the twelfth century; cf. Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, 181; Bjarne Fidjestøl, "Sogekvæde," in *Deutsch-nordische Begegnungen*, ed. K. Braunmüller and M. Brøndsted (Odense: Odense University Press, 1991), 57–76.

Table 4: Type E4 Even¹⁰⁷

Ninth century	Þjóð <i>Haustl</i> 1.6	trygglaust of far þriggja (prenominal)
	Gsind <i>Hákr</i> 5.6	iðvandr of kom skíðum
Tenth century	Eyv <i>lv</i> 6.6	Eiríks of rak geira
	Eil <i>Þdr</i> 19.2	Heiðreks of kom breiðu
Eleventh century	Sigv <i>Erlfl</i> 5.8	Óleif of tók mólum
Twelfth century	HSt <i>Rst</i> 6.6	skjald†fryðr† of nam ryðja
	HSt <i>Rst</i> 8.6	Óláfr of galt dála
	Anon <i>Óldr</i> 6.8	vígmóðr of kom glóðum
	Anon <i>Óldr</i> 13.6	rjóðendr of vann góðar

As suggested by Kari E. Gade:

The four lines from the twelfth century belong to two poems commemorating Óláfr Tryggvason, namely Hallar-Steinn's *Rekstefja* and the anonymous *Óláfsdrápa Tryggvasonar*, while Sighvatr's line relates to Óláfr helgi. Possibly the later occurrences represent conscious attempts to create a link with older poetry commemorating leaders with the name "Óláfr" [cf. Table 3 above, Egill *lv* 16.1 *Áleifr of kom jofri* and Gizsv *Frag* 1.3 *Áleifr of vinnr élum*]. The stereotyped group of verbs in position 4, *koma*, *nema* and *vinna*, would seem to support that suggestion.¹⁰⁸

In any event, Pseudo-Egill would have had several examples of this line-type to draw upon.

In sum, the nature of the sources used by Pseudo-Egill includes skalds later than Egill himself; most of them are active between the last decades of the tenth and the early eleventh century: Eyvindr skáldaspillir and Tindr Hallkelsson composed for Hákon jarl, Halldórr ókristni and Gunnlaugr ormstunga for his son Eiríkr jarl, and Sighvatr and Þormóðr were among the skalds of Óláfr Haraldsson. The latest poem to be used appears to be Halldórr skvaldri's *Útfaradrápa* composed for Sigurðr Jórsalafari. All of these are professional skalds, listed in *Skáldatal*, and most of the source

¹⁰⁷ Based on Gade, *The Structure of Old Norse Dróttkvætt Poetry*, 58.

¹⁰⁸ Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 58.

texts are extensively quoted in the kings' sagas, with the exception of Þormóðr's and Gunnlaugr's verse, the latter being the most problematic.

What about the Kenning *hranna njótr*?

If *lv 15* is a product of Pseudo-Egill, so must be also the story of the sea-battle between Egill and Eyvindr skreyja. As a consequence, the reading *hranna njótr* in Eyvindr skáldaspillir's *lausavísa* can hardly be interpreted as a kenning for 'swimmer' alluding to Skreyja's past humiliations. An alternative interpretation or an alternative reading to the kenning is thus in order. The expression occurs in the *helmingr* that contains Hákon góði's answer in direct speech, and, as noticed above, its kennings appear to have caused much trouble to both copyists and editors. This is the reading adopted in the latest edition, by Russell Poole.¹⁰⁹

Ef sǫkkspenni svinnan,
sigrmínnigr, vilt finna,
framm halt, njótr, at nýtum
Norðmanna gram, hranna.

If, mindful of victory, you want to find the wise treasure-grasper [RULER], keep straight ahead to the capable king of the Norwegians, user of the waves [SWIMMER = EYVINDR SKREYJA].

The *helmingr* is transmitted in both branches of the *Fagrskinna* tradition and in the *Kringla*-branch of the *Heimskringla* tradition,¹¹⁰ in only two witnesses, namely Ásgeir Jónsson's copy of *Kringla* (AM 35 fol = *K^x*) and *Fríssbók* (AM 45 fol).

Fsk A^x (AM 303 4to, p. 53–54, *Fagrskinna A*, paper, c. 1675–1700):
eḟ fól rýri fara | figr minúgr þíllt fínna | fram halt þū niotr at nýtum |
noðm:āna gram **ranna**

¹⁰⁹ *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 219–220.

¹¹⁰ *Heimskringla*, vol. I, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, xciv.

Fsk B^x (OsloUB 371 fol 11r, paper, c. 1700):

eḟ fol sḟenner funnan | ḟigr minnigr þillt ḟinna | ḟram̄ halltu niotr at nýtum
| nozð^á gḟam ranna

Fríssbók (AM 45 fol, 18r b ll. 6–7, *Heimskringla*, parchment, c. 1300)

eḟ fuipkeni fuinan | ḟigr minnigr uillt ḟina | ḟm̄ hallto niotr at nýtō | nozð m̄
ḟm þanig

Kringla^x (AM 35 fol, 103 v, *Heimskringla*, paper, c. 1675)

eḟ faeckspeni* fuinan | ḟigr minnigr uillt ḟina | fram̄ haltu niotr at nytō |
norð^á g^rm hrana*

(*fuipkeni)

(*þanig)

The most complex text-critical situation is found at the beginning of the *helmingr*, especially in l. 1.¹¹¹ For what concerns the last part of the

111 Although the semantics of l. 1 are not directly relevant to the discussion of the kenning *hranna njótr*, a closer look at the manuscript variants of this line is not without interest. While, on the one hand, the nature of the readings seems to suggest a common written source shared by *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*, on the other, oral variants seem to have intervened within the *Fagrskinna* tradition. Let us look at the four text-critically relevant readings of the line:

Fsk A^x: eḟ fol rýri fara ‘ef sólrýri sára’ (‘if, a sun-diminisher of wounds’)

Fsk B^x: eḟ fol sḟenner funnan ‘ef sólsḟennir sunnan’ (‘if, the sun-grasper from the south’)

Fríssbók: eḟ fuipkeni fuinan ‘ef svipkenni svinnan’ (‘if, a wise clang-knower’)

Kringla: eḟ faeckspeni fuinan ‘ef sḟökkspenni svinnan’ (‘if, a wise treasure-grasper’)

All mss share the conjunction *ef* at the opening of the *helmingr*, although this is pretty much the only thing they all agree upon. Although remarkably different, the four readings are not completely independent from one another, however. The reading *sunnan* of *Fsk B* is relatable to the reading *svinnan* common to the *Hkr* manuscripts, the difference probably being due to minim confusion. Both *sunnan* and *svinnr* are common skaldic words, often occurring in positions 5–6 of *dróttkvætt* lines. Furthermore, the reading *spennir* is shared by *Fsk B^x* and *K^x*. This might in fact suggest either a direct dependence between the two texts, or dependence on a common written source. Thus, the *Fsk B* and the *Hkr* manuscripts share a considerable segment of text, but all diverge in one point (highlighted in bold):

Fsk B^x: eḟ fol sḟenner funnan

Fríssbók: eḟ **fuipkeni** fuinan

Kringla: eḟ **faeckspeni** fuinan

The vowel following the first *studill* and the consonantal cluster following it are rendered in different ways by the three witnesses, and this might indicate that this passage of the exemplar was damaged and only partially readable. It seems that the copyists tried to make sense of the passage in different ways. In *Fsk B*, *sólsḟennir* is in the nominative, so that the ‘sun-grasper from the south,’ whatever its meaning, must refer to Eyvindr skreyja. It is somewhat interesting that the variant *sól* appears together with *sunnan*, a collocation known

stanza, and the kenning *branna njótr* in particular, the situation is relatively straightforward: both branches of the *Fagrskinna* tradition present the reading *ranna*; *Fríssbók* has *þannig*, whereas *K^x* has *branna*. The reading *þannig* in *Fríssbók* seems to be a *lectio facilior* that would leave the base-word *njótr* pending and can be safely dismissed. Considering that the reading *ranna* is found in the Norwegian *Fsk* manuscripts and *branna* in the Icelandic *Heimskringla* ones, previous editors have apparently interpreted *ranna* as a norwegianism for *branna*.¹¹² It is, however, possible to explain the kenning taking the *Fsk* reading for good. *Njótr ranna* ‘enjoyer of houses’ or ‘of halls’ could be taken as an injurious address, based on the topos, recurring in skaldic poetry, of cowards enjoying the comfort of the house, while the brave ones prefer to be outside, fighting. This theme is attested already in *Haraldskvæði* st. 6:

Úti vill jól drekka,	ef skal einn ráða,
fylkir inn framlyndi,	ok Freys leik heyja.
Ungr leiddisk eldvelli	ok inni at sitja,
varma dyngju	eða vottu dúns fulla.

The courageous leader wants to toast the Yuletide out at sea, if he alone has his way, and practise the sport of Freyr [BATTLE]. [When] young he grew tired of cooking by the fire and sitting indoors, of a warm women’s chamber and of mittens filled with down.¹¹³

from eddic poetry (*Völuspá* 5.1: *sól varþ sunnan*). The variants *svipkennir* and *sökkspennir* of the *Hkr* tradition are difficult to reconcile, unless they are, as suggested, attempts at emending a lacuna in the exemplar, retaining a compounded kenning with a *nomen agentis* as the base-word. The *Fsk A* reading by contrast, has no points of contact with the other witnesses, except for the word *sól*, that it shares with *Fsk B*. It reads *efsólryri sára* (‘if the sun-diminisher of wounds’), that is, *scil.*, ‘the diminisher of the sun of wounds’ [SWORD (?) > WARRIOR]. This is a relatively straightforward kenning and, whoever was responsible for this variant, made sure to vary the rhyme scheme accordingly. Unlike the differences between *Fsk B* and the *Hkr* mss, those between the readings of *Fsk B* and *Fsk A* can hardly be attributed to scribal activity and are more easily explained as oral variants.

112 On norwegianisms, see Stefán Karlsson, “Om norvågismer i islandske håndskrifter,” *Maal og Minne* (1978), 87–101; Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, “Islandske målmerker i Sth. 4 fol. hand 3,” *Maal og Minne* (1985), 202–222; Magnus Rindal, “Norsk eller islandsk: Ei drøfting av språkforma i norske og islandske mellomalderhandskrifter,” *Íslensk málsgaga og textafræði*, ed. Úlfar Bragason, Rit Stofnunar Sigurðar Nordals 3 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Sigurðar Nordals, 1997), 113–120.

113 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 99.

The kenning *ranna njótr* ‘enjoyer of houses’ or ‘someone who is used to the hall’ meaning ‘coward,’ would then be in line with the semantics of Eyvindr’s nickname *skreyja*, making this interpretation contextually plausible. A comparable kenning is found in *Lokasenna* 15.3, where Bragi is referred to as a *bekkskrautuðr* ‘ornament of the bench,’ vigorous at feasting but slow to battle.¹¹⁴ Rather than the loss of h- in the Norwegian manuscripts, it is possible that the form *hranna* in *K^x*, a purely Icelandic cultural product, originated as an Icelandic hypercorrection, on the part of scribes used to intervene to restore lost initial h- in forms such as *lutr* (Icel. *blutr*), *ross* (Icel. *bross*), *neiga* (Icel. *hneiga*), when copying from Norwegian exemplars.¹¹⁵

Who is Pseudo-Egill?

The present analysis has shown that *lausavísa* 15 in *Egils saga* presents several signs of pseudonymous composition, namely: (a) simple kenning style and syntax; (b) a heavy dip in l. 2; (c) an actively archaizing but not etymological use of the preverb *of* in l. 8 and, in all likelihood, in l. 7; (d) the use of the word *vikingr* as a neutral (possibly positive) term; (e) the heavy use of verbal echoes from tenth- and eleventh-century poets. Analyses of this kind, such as those already undertaken by Males, enable us to get a glimpse at the saga-authors’ tool set in the composition of pseudonymous poetry. In turn, an analysis of the techniques employed might tell us something about the author in question.

Indeed, the last question left to address is, Who is Pseudo-Egill? The hypothesis taken into consideration here is that the author of the pseudonymous stanzas and the author of the prosimetrical work that contains them are one and the same person. Several scholars have considered Snorri Sturluson as the most probable candidate for the authorship of *Egils saga*,

114 For similar insulting kennings building on conventional models, see Rudolf Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden* (Bonn: Schroeder, 1921), 365–367.

115 Norman R. Spencer, “Norwegianisms and Hyper-Norwegianisms in AM 325 IIIa 4to/598 Iþ 4to,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 93 (1994), 374–383; Rune Kyrkjebø, “Norsk eller islandsk skripar i mellomalderhandskrift: Ei kritisk vurdering av bruken av språklege kriterium ved heimfesting,” *Nordica Bergensia* 29 (2003), 15–35; Haraldur Bernharðsson, “Kirkja, klaustur og norskublandið ritmálsviðmið á Íslandi á miðöldum,” *Íslensk klausturmenning á miðöldum*, ed. Haraldur Bernharðsson (Reykjavík: Miðaldastofa Háskóla Íslands og Háskólaútgáfan, 2016), 149–171.

for various reasons: content, perspective, and socio-political agenda;¹¹⁶ authorial style and praxis;¹¹⁷ language use and stylistic affinity to other Snorronian texts;¹¹⁸ and the archaizing technique employed in the composition of the stanzas.¹¹⁹ Indeed, I believe that the poetical praxis of ‘Pseudo-Egill’ illustrated in this article concurs to support this widespread hypothesis and that, in particular, the comparison between Pseudo-Egill’s technique and Snorri’s prescriptions in *Háttatal* strengthens the evidence in favor of Snorri’s authorship of *Egils saga*. The evidence I will draw upon for assessing the identification of Pseudo-Egill with Snorri are of three kinds: (a) formal features of Pseudo-Egill’s poetry; (b) the nature of Pseudo-Egill’s poetic sources; (c) the similar treatment of Eyvindr skreyja in *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla* as opposed to the *Ágrip-Fagrskinna* tradition.

(a) Formal features of the verse

Several traits in Pseudo-Egill’s versificatory techniques find a counterpart in the praxis prescribed and established in the poetry and in the commentary of *Háttatal*.¹²⁰ Most notably, as already pointed out by Males,¹²¹ Pseudo-Egill uses irregularity in the rhyme scheme to give the impression of an archaic poetic style, as Snorri does in *Háttatal* with the *fornskálda*

116 Björn Magnússon Ólsen, “Landnáma og *Egils saga*,” *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 19 (1904), 167–247; Björn Magnússon Ólsen, “Er Snorri Sturluson höfundur *Egilsögu*?” *Skírnir*, 79 (1905), 363–368; Torfi H. Tulinius, *The Enigma of Egill. The Saga, the Viking Poet, and Snorri Sturluson*, *Islandica* LVII (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 24–26; Torfi H. Tulinius, “The Social Conditions for Literary Practice in Snorri’s Lifetime,” in *Snorri Sturluson and Reykholt. The Author and Magnate, His Life, Works and Environment at Reykholt in Iceland*, ed. Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir and Helgi Þorláksson (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2018), 389–405.

117 *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, xciv.

118 Peter Hallberg, *Snorri Sturluson och Egils saga Skallagrímssonar. Ett försök till språklig författarbestämning*, *Studia Islandica* 20 (Reykjavík: Heimspékideild Háskóla Íslands og Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1962); Haukur Þorgeirsson, “Snorri versus the Copyist. An Investigation of a Stylistic Trait in the Manuscript Traditions of *Egils Saga*, *Heimskringla* and the *Prose Edda*,” *Saga-Book* 38 (2014), 61–74; Haukur Þorgeirsson, “How Similar Are *Heimskringla* and *Egils saga*? An Application of Burrow’s Delta to Icelandic Texts,” *European Journal of Scandinavian Studies*, 48 (2018), 1–18.

119 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 219–232.

120 For Snorri’s authorship of the commentary to his own verse in *Háttatal*, see Finnur Jónsson, “Snorri Sturlusons *Háttatal*,” *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 45 (1929), 229–269.

121 Mikael Males, “Applied Grammatica: Conjuring up the Native Poetae,” in *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. Stefka Georgieva Eriksen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 286–289.

hættir.¹²² Moreover, as observed above, in *lv* 7 and 14 Pseudo-Egill resorts to extreme cases of resolution and elision, a metrical technique otherwise only employed by Snorri in *Háttatal* st. 8 to fit up to nine syllables in a six-position line.

The most conspicuous characteristic of Pseudo-Egill's *lv* 15 is that the entire stanza is modeled on lines lifted from other poems. In *Háttatal*, Snorri allows 'loans' from previous verse, as long as they are limited to 'one line of verse, or less': *Átta [leifi] er þat at nýta þótt samkvætt verði við þat er áðr er ort vísuorð eða skemra*.¹²³ This is precisely the technique we observe in stanza 15, where the echoes never exceed the length of one *vísuorð* and are often limited to 'less than a line', meaning that some of the syllables of the model-line are modified.

Moreover, Pseudo-Egill mostly retains the rhyme patterns of the model-lines, so that the stanza, unlike other pseudonymous stanzas in the saga, has regular *hendingar*. There is, however, one exception. Line 3 has *aðalhendingar* instead of the expected *skothendingar*. This is a poetic license allowed, again, in the commentary of *Háttatal*: *Þriðja leyfi er þat at hafa aðalhendingar í fyrsta eða þriðja vísuorði*.¹²⁴ Thus, the only irregularity in this stanza's rhyme pattern still conforms to Snorri's prescriptions.

Finally, I have showed that Pseudo-Egill reproduces the *of/um* particle in an unetymological context, probably also as part of a conscious archaizing strategy. This is not something unique to Pseudo-Egill or to Snorri, as the use of *of/um* as a metrical filler keeps being productive after the eleventh century, although less frequent and restricted to certain conventionalized patterns, and was used as conscious archaization by several poets from the late twelfth century onwards.¹²⁵ There is, however, one noteworthy correlation between Snorri, Egill's poetry and the expletive *of*. Kari E. Gade shows that the common line-type A3³ displays a very high frequency of expletive *of* in tenth-century poetry.¹²⁶ Despite remaining an extremely frequent line-type, A3³ displays a dramatic decrease in the use of expletive

122 Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, 24–26.

123 Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, 8.

124 Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, 8.

125 Consciously archaizing use of the expletive article has been argued for *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, stanzas from *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, and the anonymous *Óláfsdrápa Tryggvasonar* (Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 65, 71) as well as for stanzas attributed to Ragnarr loðbrók in his saga (Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 247–248).

126 Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 60.

of after the eleventh century, with only two exceptional occurrences, both from thirteenth-century poems. One occurs in an anonymous stanza in *Njáls saga* and one in Snorri's *Egils háttr* in *Háttatal*.¹²⁷ Thus, it appears that Snorri revived a common tenth-century line-type with expletive *of* when trying to compose 'in the manner of Egill.'

On a more general note, several passages in *Háttatal* reveal that Snorri engaged in a conscious and systematic study of 'anomalous' metrical features of ancient poetry and in their reproduction (e.g. hiatus forms), although he might have not always been fully conscious of the diachronic aspect to them.¹²⁸ As further observed by Myrvoll, we can often individuate the exact forms he targeted as models for his exercise.¹²⁹ A similar praxis is revealed by Pseudo-Egill's meticulous imitation of his models.

(b) Nature of the poetic sources

The echoes employed in *lv* 15 are informative about the poetic canon available to the author of this stanza. Most belong to verse attested in *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*, or in *Skáldskaparmál*. Pseudo-Egill also uses a line from *Þorgeirsdrápa* as well as one from a *lausavísa* by Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld, both transmitted in *Fóstbrœðra saga*, a text that appears to have been used by Snorri as a source for *Heimskringla*.¹³⁰ As observed above, the most problematic case concerns a possible echo from a stanza attested in *Gunnlaugs saga*. Although Gunnlaugr's poetry is hardly found outside of this text, one *helmingr* is attributed to him in *Skáldskaparmál* (*Gunnlaugs saga*, *lv* 12.1–4).¹³¹ Indirectly, these echoes are also possibly informative about the authenticity of some poems of uncertain status, such as the ones transmitted outside the more 'trustworthy' corpus of king-sagas and grammatical treatises.

(c) Strange and unparalleled genealogy in *Egils saga-Heimskringla* vs *Ágrip-Fagrskinna*

The most obvious indication of Snorri's involvement in the Eyvindr skreyja story as portrayed in *Egils saga* is the fact that, although

127 Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 61.

128 Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 52.

129 Myrvoll, *Samstofur seinar eða skjótar*, 24–25.

130 Andersson, "Redating *Fóstbrœðra saga*," 70–74.

131 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 856–858.

Heimskringla follows *Ágrip* and *Fagrskinna* closely when telling the story of the duel between Hákon góði and Eyvindr skreyja, it deviates from them and rather converges with *Egils saga* in attributing to Eyvindr skreyja the improbable kinship with Álfr and Gunnhildr. The relative chronology between *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla* is a disputed matter, although the prevailing opinion among scholars is that *Egils saga* was composed before *Heimskringla*, and that the latter makes use of the first.¹³² I agree with Bjarni Einarsson in attributing the very existence of Álfr askmaðr to the *Egils saga* author's taste for brothers that come in pairs, a recurring trope in this text.¹³³ The impression of pure fictionality of Álfr askmaðr's character is reinforced by the transparent and vague nickname, meaning simply 'sea-farer,' as opposed to the somewhat obscure *skreyja*. The only reason for Álfr's presence in *Heimskringla* appears to be the author's desire not to contradict *Egils saga*'s account. This strengthens the various arguments already advanced for the common attribution of the two texts.¹³⁴ It is almost humorous to see how Snorri is 'forced' to insert the figure of Álfr askmaðr alongside that of his brother at Fitjar, but hastens to kill him as soon as Eyvindr skreyja exits the scene:

Eyvindr skreyja kallaði þá hátt: "Leynisk Norðmanna konungr nú, eða hefir hann flýit, eða hvar er nú gullhjálmrinn?" Gekk Eyvindr þá fram ok Álfr, bróðir hans með honum ok hjoggu til beggja handa ok létu sem óðir eða galnir væri. Hákon konungr mælti hátt til Eyvindar: "Haltu svá fram stefnunni, ef þú vill finna Norðmanna konung". Svá segir Eyvindr skáldaspillir: [here follows the quotation of Eyvindr's *lausavísa* 4].

Var þá ok skammt at bíða, at Eyvindr kom þar, reiddi upp sverðit ok hjó til konungs. Þórálfr skaut við honum skildinum, ok stakraði Eyvindr við, en konungr tók sverðit Kvernbít tveim höndum ok hjó til Eyvindar ofan í hjálminn ok höfuðit allt í herðar niðr. Þá drap Þórálfr Álfaskmann.¹³⁵

132 Bjarni Einarsson, *Litterære forudsætninger*, 29. For a different opinion, see Jónas Kristjánsson, "Var Snorri upphafsmaður Íslendingasagna?" *Andvari* 115 (1990), 102–104.

133 Bjarni Einarsson, *Litterære forudsætninger*, 101–102, 114–116.

134 On Snorri's authorship of *Heimskringla*, see Ólafur Halldórsson, "Sagnaritun Snorra Sturlusonar," in *Snorri: Átta alda minning* (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 1979), 113–138.

135 *Heimskringla*, vol. I, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 189–190 (emphasis added).

Eyvindr skreyja then shouted out: “Is the king of the Norwegians hiding now? Or has he fled? And where is the golden helmet now?” Then Eyvindr advanced, *and his brother Álfr with him*, and they struck on both sides and went on as if they were mad or possessed. King Hákon shouted to Eyvindr: “Keep on in the same direction if you want to meet the king of the Norwegians.” So says Eyvindr skáldaspillir: [here follows the quotation of Eyvindr’s *lausavísa* 4].

There was also not long to wait before Eyvindr came up, swung [190] up his sword and struck at the king. Þórálfr pushed his shield against him and it made Eyvindr stagger, while the king took his sword Kvernþitr in both hands and struck at Eyvindr down on his helmet, splitting the helmet and his head right down to his shoulders. *Then Þórálfr slew Álfr askmaðr.*¹³⁶

Snorri harmonizes the previous historiographical accounts about Eyvindr skreyja with the one found in *Egils saga* and, with the killing of Álfr askmaðr at Fitjar, he makes sure to leave no loose threads: a perfect murder.

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to demonstrate that the thorny problem of the authenticity of the poetry in the *Íslendingasögur* can be tackled by combining several criteria. This method was first explored by Males, who crossed the most secure metric–linguistic dating criteria employed by Gade and Myrvoll with as much circumstantial evidence as possible, in order to create a set of diagnostic features for inauthentic stanzas in *Egils saga*. As this article has shown, Males’ approach is promising and can be further refined.

The importance of distinguishing between ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ poetry in the family sagas can hardly be exaggerated. Distinguishing the reality of Viking Age skalds from the techniques of medieval saga authors has profound consequences for the study of this textual corpus, allowing us to acknowledge the different authorial agencies at work and to conduct literary analysis on a more solid historical footing. For instance, some top-

¹³⁶ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, Volume I. The beginnings to Óláfr Tryggvason, transl. by Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, 112–113.

ics that to the present day constitute elements of fascination in common perceptions of the Viking Age find scant support in tenth-century sources, but are already central in thirteenth-century portrayals of this historical period. For instance, the magic employment of runes and the use of the word *vikingr* as an identity marker are not confirmed by the saga's oldest textual layer, Egill's poetry, actually dating to the so-called *Viking Age*. They are, rather, fundamental ingredients of the saga author's depiction of tenth-century Norse society, some of which, like the fascination with runic writing, reflect widespread interests in the intellectual circles of thirteenth-century Scandinavia.¹³⁷ Not everything, however, is a later construction. For instance, Egill's well-known preference for Odinic themes,¹³⁸ and for the mead of poetry myth in particular, finds support both in the long poems and in those *lausavísur* in the saga that are compatible with a tenth-century dating. Similarly, stylistic experimentation with over-ornamental rhymes and extended metaphors is almost non-existent in Pseudo-Egill's stanzas but abounds in the 'authentic' *lausavísur* of *Egils saga*. This fits the trends observable in the diction of safely datable late-tenth-century verse, where these stylistic features play a major role, as borne out, for instance, by the court poetry of Eyvindr skáldaspillir and Einarr skálaglam.

As it emerges from these observations, isolating the different layers of the saga's stratigraphy allows us to assign the right weight and value to our textual sources, from both a literary and a historical perspective. Indeed, much work remains to be done on the poetic corpus of the Icelandic family sagas, but the method outlined for *Egils saga* seems to be yielding promising results. Hopefully, this article has shown that the several dating criteria so far developed, formal and otherwise, can be used critically and tested against each other, enabling us to disentangle the different authorial voices resonating within these multifold texts.

137 Tarrin Jon Wills, "The Thirteenth-Century Runic Revival in Denmark and Iceland," *NOWELE* 69 (2016), 114–129.

138 Sigurður Nordal, "Átrúnaður Egils Skalla-Grímssonar," *Skírnir*, 97 (1924), 145–165; Gabriel E. O. Turville-Petre, "Um Óðinsdyrkun á Íslandi," *Studia Islandica. Íslenzk fræði* 17 (1958), 5–25; Joseph Harris, "Sacrifice and Guilt in *Sonatorrek*," *Studien zum Altgermanischen. Festschrift für Heinrich Beck*, ed. Heiko Uecker (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994), 173–196; Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, "Religious Ideas in *Sonatorrek*," *Saga-Book* 25 (1998–2001), 159–178.

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ÁGRIP

Gervi-Egill og vísur hans í *Egils sögu*

Lykilorð: *Egils saga*, Íslendingasögur, konungasögur, dróttkvæði, óekta kvæði, Snorri Sturluson

Þessi grein fjallar um eina *lausavísu* í 49. kafla *Egils sögu*. Egill kveður vísuna um sjóorrustu þar sem hann tekst á við þrjótinn Eyvind skreyju. Vísan sýnir nokkur merki þess að hafa verið kveðin af söguhöfundi frekar en af Agli sjálfum. Fyrst er vísan borin saman við aðrar heimildir um hinn dularfulla Eyvind skreyju, þar á meðal lausavísur eftir Eyvind skáldaspilli sem eru varðveittar í *Fagurskinnu*. Síðan er gerð grein fyrir tungumáli vísunnar, bragarhætti og stíl og borið saman við aðrar vísur í sögunni sem ætla má að séu ekki eftir Egil sjálfan heldur annað skáld sem kalla mætti Gervi-Egil. Í rannsókninni er bent á eiginleika sem eru dæmigerðir fyrir Gervi-Egil, til dæmis dálæti á orðinu 'víkingur' og endursköpun vísuorða úr öðrum kvæðum. Nærtækast er að Gervi-Egill sé höfundur sögunnar og í greininni er grennslast fyrir um vinnubrögð hans, þar á meðal heimildir hans og getu til að líkja eftir fornum kveðskap. Að lokum eru þessir eiginleikar metnir í ljósi þeirrar útbreiddu fræðitilgátu að höfundur *Egils sögu* og vísanna hafi verið Snorri Sturluson.

SUMMARY

Pseudo-Egill, the *Vikingr*-Poet. More on the Authenticity of the Verse in *Egils Saga*

Key words: *Egils saga*, Sagas of Icelanders, Kings' sagas, Skaldic poetry, linguistic dating of poetry, pseudonymous poetry, Snorri Sturluson

This article focuses on a *lausavísa* found in chapter 49 of *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, concerning a sea-battle between Egill and a villain named Eyvindr skreyja. The *lausavísa* contains several indications of being a product of the saga author, rather than of the historical Egill, to whom it is attributed. The stanza is first compared to other sources about the elusive figure of Eyvindr skreyja, including poetic ones, namely *lausavísur* 3–5 by Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, first attested in *Fagurskinna*. It follows a formal and metrical analysis of the stanza,

which contrasts its features with those observed in other pseudonymous stanzas in *Egils saga*. The analysis reveals traits that are typical of this pseudonymous poet (here called Pseudo-Egill), including a fondness for the word *víkingr* and a creative use of echoes from earlier poems. The article thus sheds light on several aspects of the saga-author's *modus operandi* when composing poetry for the saga, including his capacity for reproducing archaic metric-linguistic features and the nature of his poetic sources. Finally, these traits are evaluated in light of the wide-spread scholarly assumption that the author of *Egils saga* and of the pseudonymous poetry contained in it was Snorri Sturluson.

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