

Grund gulls [ground of gold]

The Trope of Woman as “Land” in Skaldic Poetry from the Tenth to Fourteenth Centuries

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ABSTRACT: Skaldic diction has long been noted for the many analogies it creates between the human body and the natural environment. One manifestation of this interchange occurs where women are referenced by kennings with base words denoting “land” or “earth,” as in the kenning *grund gulls* [ground of gold]. The idiosyncrasies of this type of woman-kenning have not before been studied, although a related metaphorical construction in which land is likened to a woman has been discussed. This article examines the linguistic taxonomies, metaphorical correlatives, and creative adaptations of this kenning-type “woman-as-land” within skaldic verse of the tenth to fourteenth centuries. The article also looks beyond kennings as lexical units, considering how imagery of women as “land” occurs in various forms of wordplay in skaldic verse and how these images are subsequently incorporated into the prosimetrical contexts of sagas.

RÉSUMÉ: La diction Skaldique a depuis longtemps été reconnue pour les nombreuses analogies qu'elle crée entre le corps humain et l'environnement naturel. L'une des manifestations de cet échange apparaît lorsque les kennings font référence aux femmes avec des mots de base désignant le « territoire » ou la « terre », tel que dans le kenning *grund gulls* [terre d'or]. Les particularités de ce type de kenning-femme n'ont pas été étudiées auparavant, même si une construction métaphorique similaire par laquelle la terre est assimilée à une femme a été discutée. Cet article examine les taxonomies linguistiques, les corrélatifs métaphoriques et les adaptations créatives de ce kenning-type de « femme en tant que terre » au sein de versets scaldiques du Xe au XIVe siècle. L'article se penche également au-delà des kennings en tant qu'unités lexicales, considérant la façon dont l'image des femmes en tant que « terre » apparaît par diverses formes de jeux de mots dans le verset scaldique et considérant la façon dont ces images sont ensuite incorporées dans les contextes prosimetricaux des sagas.

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imagery figuring a woman's body as a landscape explored or dominated by men appears in the literature of many cultures and times. John Donne's *Elegy XIX*, in the Renaissance blason tradition, envisions a female lover as the speaker's colony: "O my America! my new-found-land,/My kingdome, safeliest when with one man man'd" (ll.27–28; *Complete English Poems*, 184). In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, the strife among Greek city states and the hostilities between the women and men of Athens are resolved when the Spartans and Athenians use the naked body of Lysistrata's maid *Διαλλαγή* [Reconciliation] as a map of Greece, marking out territories for ownership through verbal puns on parts of her body (130ff). In Pablo Neruda's *Cuerpo de Mujer*, the candid speaker embraces the violent face of this convention: "*Cuerpo de mujer, blancas colinas, muslos blancos, te pareces al mundo en tu actitud de entrega*" (ll.1–3) [Body of a woman, white hills, white thighs,/you look like a world, lying in surrender] (8–9). Contemporary writers have subverted this pervasive trope of the subjugated feminine landscape, as Mohja Kahf's "My Body is Not Your Battleground" challenges: "My body is not your battleground/My private garden is not your tillage/My thighs are not highway lanes to your Golden City" (ll.22–24; 58). Ecofeminism has considered paradigms linking female bodies and landscapes within the enduring rhetoric of colonization embraced by many imperialistic and patriarchal societies (Cuomo; Kolodny). The universality of such images may point to an underlying conceptual metaphor linked to historical gender inequalities, a desire for domination, and the necessity of cultivating nature to advance civilization.

In skaldic poetry from medieval Iceland and Norway, the trope of woman as "land" appears in various forms of rhetoric and wordplay from the tenth to fourteenth centuries. Most frequently, the trope occurs in a conventional type of woman-kennings with base words denoting earth or its natural features and determinants relating to a woman's appearance or work. For example, a woman can be *línvangr* [linen-field] (*Skj* BII, 523), *fold mens* [earth of the necklace] (*Skj* BI, 198), or *grund hringa* [ground of rings] (*Skj* BII, 476).¹ Woman-as-land images also appear in skaldic verse in more complex forms of wordplay, extended comparisons, and religious rhetoric. Despite the multiform appearance of this metaphorical construction within skaldic verse, it has received little analysis to date. Lack of attention to this trope is surprising, for a number of studies have discussed a related metaphor by which skalds liken land to a woman. The present study, as the first to focus on woman-as-land kennings and tropes in skaldic verse,² provides an overview of characteristic features of their use and evolution from the tenth to fourteenth centuries. Section I introduces essential features of the more familiar metaphor of land-as-woman and of the goddess-giantess *Jörð* [Earth], whose name literalizes the connection between land and the feminine. Section II outlines the broader context for nature metaphors in kennings as well as for the potential

mythic and rhetorical origins of the conceptual association between female bodies and land. Section III analyzes an extensive sample set of woman-as-land kennings drawn from the extant skaldic corpus and discusses their key features, including linguistic taxonomies, referential ambiguities, and evolution from early secular verse into later Christian verse. Section IV examines how these woman-as-land metaphors enliven and engage both verse contexts and saga prosimetrum in scenes from *Gunnlaugs saga*, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, *Óláfs saga helga*, and *Víglundar saga*. These texts represent a moderate cross-section of influences within which to assess the continuing use of a motif: two thirteenth-century *Íslendingasögur* (*Gunnlaugs saga* and *Egils saga*) focusing on the lives of poets; a later, likely fourteenth-century *Íslendingasaga* (*Víglundar saga*) shaped by the *riddarasögur*, *foraldarsögur*, and Romance traditions; and one thirteenth-century historical saga of a saint (*Óláfs saga helga*) as preserved in the fourteenth-century compilation *Flateyjarbók*.

I

One of the more disquieting images in early skaldic verse compares a ruler's subjugation of a country to sexual coercion of a woman. In *Hákonardrápa*, the tenth-century skald Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson dramatizes Hákon Sigurðarson's conquest of Norway as a martial tryst between Óðinn and his consort Jörð. Hallfreðr's imagery plays on the homonymous associations of the simplex *jörð*, meaning "earth," and has received considerable scholarly attention (Attwood 44; Falk 74–76; Faulkes 22; Frank 1978, 63–68; Lie 97; Ström 448–54). Norway becomes *brúðr Báleygs, barrhaddaða biðkván Þriðja* [bride of Báleygr <=Óðinn> [EARTH], barley-haired waiting-woman of Þriði <=Óðinn> [EARTH]], *dóttir Ónars viði gróna* [daughter of Ónarr covered with trees], and the *jörð* surrendering *und menþverri* [to the necklace-diminisher [WARRIOR]] – or, more suggestively, "under" Hákon (*Skj* BI, 147–48).³ Motifs of cosmic colonization likely resonated with later Norwegians and Icelanders in the ages of saga composition and recording, who documented in these literary works the settlement of Iceland and the expansionist activities of their ancestors. Other skalds enliven similar metaphors using the aural ambiguities of *jörð*, including Þjóðólfr Arnórsson's stanzas on Magnús Ólafsson (*Skj* BI, 332–38) and his *Sexstefja* (*Skj* BI, 339–46), Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson's *Háleygjatal* (*Skj* BI, 60–62) and one of his *lausavísur* (*Skj* BI, 62), Guthormr sindri's *Hákonardrápa* (*Skj* BI, 55–56), and stanzas 8 and 17 in *Nóregs konungatal* (*Skj* BI, 576–78). Such images offered the skald a striking means by which to communicate the political machinations of his royal patron while highlighting his own skilful manipulation of language. In reference to them and to the status of women more generally in skaldic verse, William Sayers draws attention to the creative clout of the skald, who "can impose order and his person only through

the creation of a rigorously formal verse so that woman, like land and nature, comes provisionally under the control of the male art” (38).

Jörð is an allusive persona within skaldic verse, in whom connections between the feminine and the land coalesce on mythological and linguistic levels. Yet she also remains an elusive figure within the Norse pantheon insofar as it can be reconstructed from extant sources. *Gylfaginning’s* presentation of the giantess-goddess Jörð is relatively undeveloped; she is Óðinn’s consort and mother of Þórr (*Gylfaginning*, 17). Jörð is primarily referenced in *Skáldskaparmál* within kennings denoting her familial or conjugal relations with the Æsir. *Skáldskaparmál* also provides several examples of earth-kennings in which it is personified through extended metaphors (*nýgervingar*) based on the name Jörð. In the R, T, and A manuscripts, a list of terms for earth includes the appellation *jörð* alongside other synonyms such as *fold*, *hauðr*, *land*, and *lād*; furthermore, the appendix for *jarðar heiti* in the *þulur* contains synonyms for “land” as well as names of goddesses and giantesses (*Skáldskaparmál*, vol I, 9, 14–15, 35; vol II, 485). A verse personifying earth as Jörð occurs also in *Háttatal*, st. 3 (*Háttatal*, 5).

Jörð’s sexual relations with Óðinn recall cross-cultural stories of ruler gods who mate with fertility goddesses (such as Zeus and Demeter, Uranus and Gaia, Varaha and Bhūmi), of legendary rulers who control the fertility of their anthropomorphized kingdoms (Elatha and Eriu, Fisher king), and even of narratives like *Sir Orfeo* in which a ruler must reclaim both a woman and kingdom. The skaldic images may indeed derive from an early Germanic *hieros gamos* myth in which Jörð was worshipped as a goddess, although some scholars have questioned the mythic origin of the metaphor (cf., Enright 279; Frank 2007, 178–90; Steinsland 1989, 121–25, 1992, 237). Jörð may have figured in an unknown etiological narrative, although no extant source figures her as progenitor of the land. Surviving Norse myths instead depict male parthogenesis (Clunies Ross 1994, 152–58; Jochens 347), as when the cosmos are formed from the jotunn Ymir’s dismembered body in the Eddic poems *Völuspá* (st. 2; *Edda: Die Lieder*, 1), *Vafþrúðnismál* (st. 21; *Edda: Die Lieder*, 47), and *Grímnismál* (sts. 40 and 41; *Edda: Die Lieder*, 63), and in Snorri’s *Gylfaginning* (cf., Clunies Ross 1987, 167–73; Schulz 2004; Steinsland 1987). Furthermore, *Skáldskaparmál’s* list of earth-kennings places Ymir and Jörð together and makes no distinction between animate and inanimate base words: “*Hvernig skal jörð kenna? Kalla Ymis hold ok móður Þórs, dóttur Ónars, brúði Óðins, elju Friggjar ok Rindar ok Gunnlaðar, sværu Sifjar, gólf ok botn veðra hallar, sjá dýranna, dóttir Náttar, systir Auðs ok Dags*” (*Skáldskaparmál*, vol I, 35) [How should earth be designated? To call it Ymir’s flesh and mother of Þórr, daughter of Ónarr, bride of Óðinn, rival wife of Frigg and Rindr and Gunnlōð, mother-in-law of Sif, floor and bottom of the hall of weather [SKY], that precious one, sister of Auðr and Dagr]. A divergence in the manuscript versions of this passage is important to note: while U describes Jörð as the wife of Dellingr and mother of Dagr, R, W, and T ascribe this role to Nótt. Haukur Thorgeirsson has suggested that an error

by the scribe of U could have affected the presentation of Jǫrð's familial relations in skaldic verse (161–63).

Jǫrð's murky textual origins blur the distinction between her mythic ancestry and widening associations within the intricate and self-referential typologies of skaldic diction. She has been described as a primordial earth goddess, an Áss, and a giantess (Clunies Ross 1994, 46–47, 55–58; Lindow 205; McKinnell 46; Motz; Simek 179). Else Mundal has noted that although sources mentioning Jǫrð seem to place her among the Æsir, demarcations between giantesses and earth-goddesses within extant sources are difficult to draw (12–15). Lotte Motz links Jǫrð to a sub-group of giantesses, including Molda, Torfa, and Gerðr, whose names are linguistically rooted in the earth. In skaldic diction, the practice of synonymic substitution within classes of kennings and *heiti* (by which skalds over the centuries coined many unique poetic terms and compounds to fit the tight metrical and alliterative demands of the verse form) allowed names of other giantesses to stand as typological correlatives for “earth.” The fluid associations of Jǫrð's name moreover were particularly suited to the creation of the complex wordplay involving homonyms and synonyms, ironically termed *ofljóst* [too clear] (*Háttatal*, 12–14; *Skáldskaparmál*, vol I, 109): for example, in a tenth-century *erfidrápa* attributed to Vǫlu-Steinn, the kenning for rocks, *Hlǫðvinjar beina* [Hlǫðyn's bones], employs the giantess name “Hlǫðyn” as a substitute for Jǫrð, whose homonym *jǫrð* would have “rocks” for its metaphorical “bones” (*Skj* BI, 93; cf., Schulz 74–75). For skalds like Hallfreðr, Jǫrð became an acquiescent being to be manipulated both elementally and linguistically, and her connections with giantesses (whether by familial relation or imagistic association), fitted neatly into an entrenched mythological pattern where gods have thorny sexual relations with giantesses, as in Freyr's coercion of Gerðr in the Eddic poem *Skírnismál*, and the trickery by which Óðinn attains the poetic mead after his seduction of Gunnlǫð in the *Prose Edda*.

II

Symbolic parallels between bodies and nature pervade skaldic diction. Kennings create diverse analogies: an arm can be *valteigr* [falcon-field] (*SkP* II, 55–56), a head can be *grund munna* [ground of the mouth] (*SkP* I, 845), blood can be *hrælogr* [corpse-sea] (*SkP* II, 200–201), and an island can be *hjarta lagar* [heart of the sea] (*Skj* BI, 11). Metaphorical networks between bodies and nature are so entangled that it often becomes difficult, as Guðrun Nordal has suggested, to distinguish where the skald is denoting a body or a landscape (296). Human subjects are therefore viewed in relation to the macrocosm while the objective world is animated and personified (Clunies Ross 1987, 97ff).

Although kennings for classes of people (such as “warrior,” “ruler,” “woman,” “saint,” “seafarer”) and their body parts are numerous, skalds generally avoided

kennings for the human body in its entirety, that is, with “body” as the immediate referent. Meissner lists only three examples of body-kennings in *Die Kenningar* (126), two of which Guðrún Nordal has disputed. Nordal instead speculates that references to the whole body may have “bordered on indecency” and that kennings, inherently ambiguous and ironic, were unsuitable nomenclature for the body and could be construed in this context as slanderous (264–66). Both in Christian and secular verse, skalds instead designate the whole body mostly through non-periphrastic *heiti* such as *líkami/líkamr* [body] or *hold* [flesh]; Björn Híttdœlakappi Arngeirsson, for example, describes his lover Oddný’s *faḡrt lík* [beautiful form] (*Skj* BI, 277). The absence of body-kennings in Old Norse poetry stands in contrast to the numerous interrelated metaphorical compounds for the whole body in Old English verse, where it is envisioned as the building for the spirit, as in *Beowulf*’s *bancofa* [bone-chamber] (l. 1445), *banfæt* [bone-vessel] (l. 1116), *banhus* [bone-house] (l. 2508), *banloca* [bone-enclosure] (l. 818), and *bengeat* [wound-gates] (l. 1121) (*Beowulf*, 31, 42, 54, 94), or within the two-part kenning for the mind (or spirit) in *Exodus*, *banhuses weard* [keeper of the bone-house] (l. 523) (*Old English Exodus*, 64; cf., Tally Lionarons 43–44; Gardner 110). Although skalds do not employ architectural metaphors in kennings for the human body as a whole, similar metaphors appear within kennings for body parts, notably the human breast, as in *borg hugar* [fortress of the mind] (*Brúðskaupsvísur*, 16; *SkP* VII, 540) or *geðveggr* [wall of the mind] in *Háttatal* st. 50 (*Háttatal*, 23; cf., Nordal 255–58). Another body part that skalds frequently describe using architectural metaphors is the Virgin Mary’s womb, as discussed below.

Although kennings for the whole body are virtually absent in skaldic verse, those referring to men are one of the most common categories and those referring to women appear regularly. Many semantic and lexical correspondences exist between man- and woman-kennings. Both genders, as detailed in *Skáldskaparmál*, are denoted by tree-related base words, with characteristic determinants of “weapon,” “gold,” “jewel,” or “clothing.” Similar determinants are paired with base words for gods and goddesses. *Nomen agentis* kennings portray men and women in parallel activities, as “distributor,” “thrower,” or “trier” of gold, weapons, or ale (*Skáldskaparmál*, vol I, 62–66; cf., Meissner 243ff, 399ff; Clunies Ross 1987, 92–6, 107–10, 119ff; *Skáldskaparmál*, vol I, 89ff). Yet there is one common type of woman-kenning with no correlative in man-kennings, which curiously does not appear in *Skáldskaparmál*’s lists. In the extant corpus of kennings for people, only woman-kennings contain base words denoting “land,” “earth,” or “ground.” While parts of both men’s and women’s bodies are denoted with base words of “land” or “earth” (such as the head-kenning quoted above, *grund munna*), surviving man- and warrior-kennings do not employ this semantic category in their base words. In man-kennings, this category is restricted to determinants, for example, a ruler being *vörðr grundar* [guardian of ground] (*SkP* I, 254). Meissner explains the group of woman-kennings with “land” base words as an extension

of the type of land-as-woman images discussed above in Section I: the homonymous meaning of *jörð* may have led to the creation of other woman-kennings with “land” base words through a form of *offjóstr* (399). No scholar apart from Meissner has explored the implications of this distinction in kennings for men and women, as far as I am aware, which may in part be due to the precedent set in *Skáldskaparmál* where this kenning type of woman-as-land is absent from its catalogues (cf., Osborne 2013). The fact that the woman-as-land trope is cross-cultural and often appears as the basis for extended wordplay, as described in the introduction to this article, suggests that its derivation and appearance in skaldic verse are not so linear.

III

Periphrastic exchanges involving women and earth in skaldic verse do not rely solely on the *jörð*/*Jörð* topos. Various words denoting “land” or “earth” appear in woman-kennings from the tenth to fourteenth centuries, as is evident in the table below, which I have compiled from verses and kennings edited in *Skj* BI and BII, *SkP* I, II, and VII, Meissner’s *Die Kenningar* (409), and Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson’s *Lexicon Poeticum*; attributed centuries are based on provisional editorial dating in these sources. While these sources may contain only a fraction of the kennings coined by medieval skalds, together they represent a sizeable selection of terms from the extant skaldic corpus. The kennings below range in complexity, including simple kennings with one determinant, *tvíkennt* kennings (containing two determinants, in which an internal kenning must be solved in order to arrive at the referent of the whole kenning), and *rekitt* kennings (possessing three or more determinants).

Base word	(Skald and/or poem; <i>Skj</i> / <i>SkP</i> edition) century	Kenning
Grund	(Þmáhl <i>Máv</i> 17; <i>Skj</i> BI, 109) 10th	<i>grund mundar fagr vita</i> [ground of the hand’s beautiful beacon]
	(Leiknir Lv 1; <i>Skj</i> BI, 110) 10th	<i>Siggjar linda sól-grund</i> [ground of the sun of Siggeir’s <legendary king> shield]
	(ÞK Kolb Lv 2; <i>Skj</i> BI, 207) 11th	<i>grund bauga</i> [ground of rings]
	(Grett Lv 2; <i>Skj</i> BII, 464) 11th	<i>grund hodda</i> [ground of treasure]
	(Oddi Lv 2; <i>Skj</i> BI, 510) 12th	<i>hlaðgrund</i> [headband-ground]
	(Pl 55; <i>Skj</i> BI, 621) 12th	<i>hyrgrund klifs hauka</i> [ground of the fire of the cliff of hawks]
	(GunnHám Lv 2; <i>Skj</i> BII, 212) 13th	<i>grund refsils</i> [ground of tapestry]
	(EGils <i>Guðkv</i> 33; <i>Skj</i> BII, 427) 14th	<i>grund gulls</i> [ground of gold]

Base word	(Skald and/or poem; Skj/SkP edition) century	Kenning
	(Þórðh Lv 9; Skj BII, 485) 14th	<i>grund arms sýnar</i> [ground of the arm's sight]
	(EGils <i>Guðkv</i> 35; Skj BII, 428) 14th	<i>grund mundar fagr víta</i> [ground of the hand's beautiful beacon]
	(<i>Vitn</i> 23; Skj BII, 525) 14th	<i>silkigrund</i> [silk-ground]
	(<i>Mv I</i> 21; Skj BII, 530) 14th	<i>mjóva mengrund</i> [slender necklace-ground]
	(<i>Pét</i> 11; Skj BII, 547–48) 14th	<i>grund gjálfrs hyrs</i> [ground of the ocean's fire]
	(Þstdr Lv 1; Skj BII, 476) 14th	<i>grund hringa</i> [ground of rings]
	(<i>Vígþ</i> Lv 4; Skj BII, 489) 14th	<i>þorn-grund</i> [ground of the brooch-pin]
	(<i>Vígþ</i> Lv 16; Skj BII, 493) 14th	<i>lýsi-grund elds liðar</i> [shining-ground of the arm's fire]
	(<i>Brúðv</i> 2; SkP VII, 530) 14th	<i>grund víta vaxta</i> [ground of the beacon of the fishing-bank]
Land	(Gunnl Lv 7; Skj BI, 186–87) 11th	<i>land lautsíkjar lyngs</i> [land of the heather of the hollow-fish]
Strönd	(Kálf <i>Kátr</i> 19; Skj BII, 574) 14th	<i>strönd falda</i> [beach of head-dresses]
	(Kálf <i>Kátr</i> 19; Skj BII, 574) 14th	<i>strönd falda heims græðara</i> [beach of head-dresses of the world's healer]
Vangr	(<i>Vitn</i> 16; Skj BII, 523) 14th	<i>línvangr</i> [linen-field]
Fit	(GSúrs Lv 25; Skj BI, 101) 10th	<i>fit grjót-øluns grundar</i> [meadow of the ground of the forearm's rock]
	(<i>Liðs</i> 10; Skj BI, 393) 11th	<i>fit dags fyllar</i> [meadow of the daylight of the sea]
	(<i>Brúðv</i> 20; SkP VII, 542–43) 14th	<i>fit falds</i> [meadow of the head-dress]
	(KormQ Lv 29; Skj BI, 76) 10th	<i>hørfít</i> [linen-meadow]
Hlíð	(<i>Mv II</i> 20; Skj BII, 537) 14th	<i>hlíð hringis</i> [slope of the ring]
	(SignV Lv 1; Skj BII, 477) 14th	<i>hlíð auðs</i> [slope of wealth]
	(ESk Lv 2; SkP II, 569–70) 12th	<i>jöfra heiðar galdrs hlíð</i> [slope of the chant of the princes of the heath]
Brekka	(Hfr Lv 15; Skj BI, 160) 10th	<i>lýsibrekka íss leggjar</i> [bright slope of the ice of the arm]

Base word	(Skald and/or poem; Skj/SkP edition) century	Kenning
	(GSúrs Lv 25; Skj BI, 101) 10th	<i>brekka hrann logs hæli</i> [slope of the flame of the keel of the wave]
	(Úlfr Lv 1; Skj BI, 372) 11th	<i>hørbrekka</i> [flax-slope]
	(Kálf Kátr 22; Skj BII, 574–75) 14th	<i>brekka elda sika</i> [slope of fires of ditches]
	(Vígþ Lv 5; Skj BII, 489) 14th	<i>brekka men</i> [slope of necklaces]
Fold	(Bbreiðv Lv 3; Skj BI, 125) 10th	<i>fold fòldu</i> [earth of the head-dress]
	(GSúrs Lv 13; Skj BI, 98) 10th	<i>fold unnfúrs</i> [earth of the wave-fire]
	(Þbrún Lv 1; Skj BI, 198) 11th	<i>fold mens</i> [earth of the necklace]
	(Gunnl Lv 9; Skj BI, 187) 11th	<i>fold flóðhyrs</i> [earth of the flood-fire]
	(GKort Lv 1; Skj BII, 111) 13th	<i>fold digulsveita</i> [earth of the host-crucible]
	(EGils Guðkv 39; Skj BII, 429) 14th	<i>fold álvar strengs</i> [earth of the ribbon of the arm]
Jörð	(Þmáhl Lv 14; Skj BI, 108) 10th	<i>jörð alnar leiptra</i> [goddess/earth of the forearm's lightning]
	(Vgl Lv 2; Skj BI, 112) 10th	<i>jörð ísung</i> [goddess/earth of cloth]
	(Hár Lv 2; Skj BI, 286) 11th	<i>jörð flausts ifla</i> [goddess/earth of the ship of the hawk]
	(Gunnll Lv 7; Skj BI, 187) 11th	<i>jörð drifna hørvi</i> [goddess/earth of snow-drift linen]
	(Rv Lv 4; Skj BI, 479) 12th	<i>jörð ormvangs</i> [goddess/earth of the serpent-field]
	(Pl 24; Skj BI, 612–13) 12th	<i>hættin jörð hørstrengs</i> [virtuous goddess/earth of the linen-cord]
Ey	(Ólhelg Lv 4; SkP I, 521) 11th	<i>ey varrbliks aurborðs</i> [island of the wake-glimmer]
	(HrafnQ Lv 1; Skj BI, 188) 11th	<i>ey orms löggar</i> [island of the snake's cask]
Rein	(Grett Lv 38; Skj BII, 475) 11th	<i>steina rein</i> [land-strip of stones]
	(EGils Selv 1; Skj BII, 434) 14th	<i>baugrein</i> [land-strip of rings]
	(EGils Selv 3; Skj BII, 434) 14th	<i>bauga rein</i> [land-strip of rings]
Kleif	(Jøk Lv 1; Skj BI, 291) 11th	<i>kleifar funa ýstétar</i> [cliffs of the flame of the yew-bow's foundation]

Base word	(Skald and/or poem; Skj/SkP edition) century	Kenning
Strind	(Esk Lv 12; Skj BI, 456) 12th	<i>hvíta strind stalls aurriða strandar</i> [white land of the seat of the trout of the coast]
Hæð	(Kálf Kátr 35; Skj BII, 578) 14th	<i>hæð hafnar ljósa</i> [height of the harbour-light]

Table 1: Woman-kennings with “land” base words

Organizing these kennings by base word reveals not only the marked preference for *grund* as a compositional resource, but also the variety of synonyms. Meissner also lists three examples of potential variation on this woman-kenning type with toponyms (*Lodda*, *Serkland*, and *Samland*) as base words (409–410; Skj BI, 279 and 600), which could attest to the reach of this metaphor at a time when skalds were commemorating their own and their patrons’ foreign travels. Considering the distribution of kennings in the table by century of their editorial dating—Tenth (10), Eleventh (12), Twelfth (8), Thirteenth (1), Fourteenth (22)—is also illuminating. The near absence of thirteenth-century kennings might tentatively be attributed to a general decline in the production of verse in skaldic metres during this period; however, some verses provisionally ascribed to tenth- and eleventh-century skalds could have been composed during the thirteenth century by saga authors or scribes. The popularity of this kenning type within fourteenth-century verse coincides with the comparatively large number of references to holy women in Christian skaldic poetry. Fourteenth-century verse also frequently refers to the Virgin Mary through metaphors in which she is the “building” and occasionally the “land” of various Christian virtues or of the pre-natal Christ, that is, the *temple domini* and *terre domini*. Skaldic *terre domini* calques for Mary derive from separate literary traditions and are thus not included above. It is worthwhile to note here, however, that in the extant corpus of metaphorical appellations for Mary, far more correspond to the *temple domini* than to the *terre domini* type (an extensive discussion of these calques for Mary appears in Osborne 2012, 167ff).

Comparing earlier kennings with those from the fourteenth century reveals that the base words *grund*, *land*, *strönd*, and *brekka* continued to be used, yet *jørð* did not. As the simplex *jørð* alone contains overt mytho-religious import, it would be tempting to assume that later Christian skalds avoided its pagan associations; however, the prevalence of other goddess names as base words in fourteenth-century woman-kennings argues against this hypothesis. Traditional base words used in woman-kennings frequently designate Christian women and saints, as in the following: *Sól hring heiðar röðuls* [goddess of the ring of the heath of the sun [SKY/HEAVEN > SUN > Mary]] (*Brúðv* 13), *Vár víns* [goddess of wine] (*Has* 52), *Sól silki* [goddess of silk] (*Mv I* 12), *Bil auðar* [goddess of wealth] (*Mv I* 14),

baugnorn [Norn of rings] (*Mv II* 6), *Vár gulls* [goddess of gold] (*Mv II* 15), *Hrund gulls* [valkyrie of gold] (*Mv III* 5), *Hlín hrings* [goddess of rings] (*Vitn* 5) (*SkP VII*, 538–39, 119–20, 688–89, 706, 711, 721, 743; cf., Meissner 402–03). Moreover, a *lausavísa* attributed to Rognvaldr kali Kolsson, the twelfth-century jarl who was posthumously sainted, uses the woman-kenning *jörð ormvangs* [goddess/earth of the serpent-field] (*SkP II*, 579–80), the twelfth-century Christian poem *Plácitusdrápa* contains the kenning *jörð hørstrengs* [goddess/earth of the linen-rope] (55; *SkP VII*, 216–17), and a late secular *ríma* contains the *rekit* woman-kenning *jörð ljóma mistin[s] hesta Mævils* [land of light of the [sea]mist of the horses of Mævill [=sea-king] > SHIPS > SEA > GOLD > WOMAN] (on this last kenning, see Hughes, 209). Based upon extant material, it appears that fourteenth-century skalds eschewed allusions to Jörð within their designations for Christian women. This general avoidance may not have been due to any association with a pagan deity, but rather to the violent and sexual *nýgervingar* that earlier skalds crafted using the *jörð/Jörð* topos; perhaps the innuendo of these images still resonated even in contexts where an Óðinn-Jörð mytheme was not called into play. These associations could also have contributed to the evident preference in extant calques for Mary for *temple domini* as opposed to *terre domini* metaphors, if skalds were attempting to avoid sexualizing the mother of Christ. Gender politics underlined in these recurrent *nýgervingar*, in which the feminized landscape is controlled by men, may have further reinforced the absence of man-kennings with base words denoting “ground” or “land.” To designate another man by a metaphor associated with submissive sexual behaviour could have crossed the border into the illegal form of verse-defamation known as *níð*.

Another striking feature of many of the woman-kennings listed above is the way they intertwine or evoke multiple images of the land. Kennings such as *fold unnfúrs* [earth of wave-fire], *grund hringa* [ground of rings], and *bauga rein* [land-strip of rings] are linguistically congruent to the prevalent type of arm-kenning following the paradigm “ground of rings,” for example *baugness* [headland of the ring] (*SkP VII*, 64) and *lād bauga* [land of rings] (*SkP VII*, 278). Further complicating this linguistic overlap between woman- and arm-kennings is the fact that *tvíkennt* and *rekit* woman-kennings frequently associate the woman with the arm and its jewels, as in *lýsibrekka íss leggar* [bright slope of the ice of the arm] and *jörð alnar leiptra* [earth of forearm’s lightning]. Structural and lexical parallels among these woman-kennings and arm-kennings not only highlight the role of verse context as a factor in correctly determining referents, but they also weave the female body into the larger conceptualized landscape of skaldic rhetoric. In a different way, determinants in the kennings *hørbrekka* [flax-slope] and *steina rein* [land-strip of stones] reference the conceptual categories of a woman’s work (weaving flax stalks) and accessories (precious stones), yet the kennings could be seen to have additional connotations deriving from the woman-as-land paradigm, with the combination of base words and determinants suggesting features of a

landscape such as a meadow of flax or a rocky beach. As complex superimpositions, these kennings could be considered conceptual blends involving multiple cognitive metaphors as they circumscribe referents (on kennings as conceptual blends, see Bergsveinn Birgisson; Orton).

Another kind of aural and conceptual ambiguity can occur in extended woman-kennings when these kennings use a noun denoting “land” or “earth” for the base word of the woman-kenning as well as for the determinant of an internal gold-kenning. In the *tvíkennt* and *rekit* kennings below, woman is the “land of gold,” gold is the “light” or “fire” of the sea, and the sea is in turn the “land of fish” (for explanation of the gold-kenning type, “light of the sea,” see *Skáldskaparmál*, vol I, 40–42).

- *grund vita vaxta* [ground of the beacon of the fishing-bank] (*SkP* VII, 530)
- *strind strandar aurriða stalls* [land of the seat of the fish of the coast] (*Skj* BI, 456)
- *jöfra heiðar galdrs hlíð* [slope of the chant of the princes of the heath] (*SkP* II, 569–70)
- *hæð hafnarljósa* [hill of the harbour-light] (*SkP* VII, 953)
- *jörð ormvangs* [earth of the serpent-field] (*Skj* BI, 479)
- *hyrgrund klifs hauka* [ground of the fire of the cliff of hawks] (*Skj* BI, 621)
- *land lautsíklar lyngs* [land of the heather of the hollow-fish] (*Skj* BI, 186–87)
- *fit grjótt-øluns grundar* [meadow of the ground of the forearm’s rock] (*Skj* BI, 101)

By interweaving multiple pictures of the natural environment, many woman-as-land kennings draw an intricate map of the female body. In view of the complexity of these associations, it follows to consider whether such metaphors interplay with their verse contexts (as, for example, the basis for *nýgervingar*) as do related land-as-woman images and wordplay on the Óðinn-Jörð mytheme. In the next section I examine woman-as-land kennings and imagery in several *lausavísur* as preserved in *Gunnlaugs saga*, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, *Óláfs saga helga*, and *Víglundar saga*, as well as the prose contexts that incorporate or respond retrospectively to these metaphors.

IV

In *Gunnlaugs saga*, the protagonist Gunnlaugr orrmstunga Illugason is caught between conflicting demands: his desire to travel away (*útfara*) from Iceland in order to secure his fortune and his need to stay in Iceland in order to secure his marriage to Helga Þorsteinsdóttir. This conflict is superficially resolved when Helga’s father agrees to a betrothal between Gunnlaugr and Helga on the condition

that Gunnlaugr return from his travels by summer's end (*Gunnlaugs saga*, 67–68). Gunnlaugr's return is delayed, however, and as he sails toward Iceland in the ship of Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson, Hallfreðr informs Gunnlaugr that his rival Hrafn Qnundarson has asked for permission to marry Helga. Gunnlaugr responds to this news with a cryptic verse:

<i>Munat háðvörum hyrjar</i>	<i>þvíit lautsíkjar lékum</i>
<i>hríðmundaðar þundar</i>	<i>lyngs, es vörum yngri,</i>
<i>hafna hørvi drifna</i>	<i>alnar gims á ýmsum</i>
<i>hlýða jörð at þýðask;</i>	<i>andnesjum því landi.</i>

(Skj BI, 186–87⁴)

Munat hlýða {mundaðar {hyrjar {hríð þundi}}} hafna {jörð {drifna hørvi}}; at þýðask háðvörum. Þvíit es vörum yngri, lékum ýmsum {andnesjum {alnar gims}} á því {landi {lyngs lautsíkjar}}.

[It will not be proper for {the handler {of the fire {of the storm of þundur <=Óðinn>}} [BATTLE > SWORD > WARRIOR]⁵ to abandon {the earth of the {snow-drift linen} [WOMAN]; we are [I am] associated with scorn. For when we were younger, I played in all kinds of ways with {the headlands {of the forearm's jewel}} [RING > FINGERS] on that {land {of the heather of the hollow-fish}} [SERPENT > GOLD > WOMAN].]

Many stanzas in the thirteenth-century *Gunnlaugs saga* are likely later coinages falsely attributed to the eleventh-century Gunnlaugr (cf., Poole 2001, 162–63). The verses and their surrounding prose may in this respect provide a retrospective view of earlier skaldic praxis, including its metaphoric traditions. In the above stanza, the skald (to whom I refer as Gunnlaugr for expediency) advances his claim to Helga by suggesting she is a territory to which he alone should be permitted access. Imagery of Helga as land appears not only in the woman-kenning base words *jörð* and *land*, but also in *nýgervingar*. Gunnlaugr states that *munat hlýða* [it will not be proper] for the warrior to abandon (*hafna*) this *jörð*. The man referred to through this generic warrior-kenning is likely Gunnlaugr himself, although the intended referent remains open for debate. Katrina Attwood and Russell Poole have postulated Hrafn as a referent of this kenning, based upon an alternate understanding of the verb *hafna* to that which I have adopted here. In prose, *hafna* most often means “to reject, abandon,” while in poetry it can have the sense of “to harbour (a boat)” and could purport (by figurative extension of this meaning) “to court” or “to woo” (“Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-tongue,” 581; Poole 2001, 166; Poole 1981, 470; cf., Fritzner 686; de Vries 201). While both meanings of *hafna* could be latent in Gunnlaugr's verse, the construal of “to reject” is most immediate; it presupposes Gunnlaugr as the referent of the man-kenning and is supported

by several other elements in the verse. Gunnlaugr's description of himself as worthy of scorn (*at þýðask háðvorum*) implies he is circumspect of any accusation that he has failed to follow through on his betrothal to Helga (a concern present in the saga) and the switch from third to first person could hint at his personal application of this allegation. A charge of abandoning Helga would be particularly grievous if Gunnlaugr had been physically intimate with her, as his verse claims. The imagery in the second *helmingr* is innocently fronted as a game, although the underlying insinuation (cf., Poole 1981, 471ff on the use of *anders*) that he and Helga played with each others' *andnes* [headlands] is provocative. Helga's body becomes a territory that Gunnlaugr laid claim to physically and attempts to reclaim linguistically (Poole 1981, 475-76).

Nýgervingar in this *lausavísa* calls to mind the Óðinn-Jörð motif as it is enacted in Hallfreðr's *Hákonardrápa* (see Section I above). Hallfreðr likens the land of Norway to a woman at the mercy of the enterprising jarl and the jarl regaining control of his father's kingdom to Óðinn exercising his divine authority by forcing Jörð into submission. In Gunnlaugr's *lausavísa*, Helga is likened to a land under the control of a human warrior explicitly denoted by the Óðinn-*heiti* "Þundr." In *Hákonardrápa*, Norway as Jörð is "barley-haired," evoking blonde hair as well as the golden barley-fields covering the literal earth. Gunnlaugr's betrothed is similarly the *Jörð drifna hǫrvi* [earth of the snow-drift linen]; this *rekit* kenning may be a coded reference to Helga, called "the fair" (*in fagra*) in a likely reference to her light hair (*Gunnlaugs saga*, 58). *Jörð drifna hǫrvi* here evokes flaxen hair or clothing adorning Helga as snow blankets earth and furthermore contains *ofljóst* on "Iceland," the land of snow and ice. Jörð, figured as Norway in the stanzas of Hallfreðr's *Hákonardrápa* and other skalds, here symbolizes both Helga and Iceland: in the prosimetric context of *Gunnlaugs saga* and in the patriarchal rhetoric of colonization, she is the rightful heritage of the returning skald.

Alignment of Helga's body with Iceland analogizes the acts of claiming a woman and claiming a territory; this analogy is corroborated by the prosimetric context, for Gunnlaugr must return to Iceland in order to secure his marriage. Mythic and poetic reflexes cast Gunnlaugr in the role of the invading ruler, like Hákon returning to secure Norway in *Hákonardrápa* and Óðinn asserting primacy through his sexual relations with Jörð. The fact that Hallfreðr is the audience of this verse in *Gunnlaugs saga* strongly points to the parallels in the two skalds' compositions as well as to the saga audience's appreciation of interplay between land-as-woman and woman-as-land motifs. Gunnlaugr's verse is not only an assertion of primacy over Helga, as the prosimetric context implies, but also of mastery in poetic metaphor: Hallfreðr responds not with a comment upon Gunnlaugr's matrimonial prospects, but rather upon his verse's merit, testifying, "*þetta er vel ort*" [that is well composed] (86).

Burying the female body within the symbolic channels of *nýgervingar* and *ofljóst* may have been an expedient manoeuvre for verse as sexually suggestive

as Gunnlaugr's, both from a contemporary and a retrospective perspective. In *Egils saga*, Egill Skallagrímsson likewise masquerades his desire for Ásgerðr, the widow of his deceased brother, within an abstract poetic landscape. He recites this verse to Ásgerðr's cousin Arinbjörn:

Ókynni vensk, ennis,	verðk í feld, þás, foldar,
ung, þorðak vel forðum,	faldr kœmr í hug skaldi
hauka klífs, at hefja,	berg-óneris, brúna
Hlín, þvergnípur mínar;	brátt miðstalli hváta.

(Skj BI, 45)

{Hlín {klífs hauka}} vensk ókynni; ung forðum, vel þorðak at hefja {þvergnípur mínar ennis}.
Verðk brátt hváta í feld, þás {faldr {foldar {berg-óneris}}} kœmr í skaldi hug, {miðstalli
brúna}.

[{The Hlín <=>goddess> {of the cliff of hawks}} {ARM > WOMAN} becomes accustomed to rudeness; [when] young in former days, I certainly dared to lift {the vertical peaks of my brow} [EYEBROWS]. I must quickly conceal in [my] cloak, when {the head-dress {of the earth of {mountain-Ónerir}}} [GIANT > MOUNTAIN > Ásgerðr] comes into the skald's mind, {the middle-altar of eyebrows} [NOSE].]

Arinbjörn's response to Egill's stanza, "*hefir þú fólgt nafn hennar í vísu þessi*" [you have concealed her name in this verse] (*Egils saga*, 148ff), indicates an expectation for women's names or identities to be disguised by wordplay; this prosimetric prompt has (rather paradoxically) made Egill's obscure pun on the name "Ásgerðr" a well-known example of *ofljóst*. The *ofljóst* occurs in the rekit kenning *faldr foldar berg-óneris* [head-dress of the earth of mountain-Ónerir]. "Mountain-Ónerir" is generally interpreted as a giant-kenning, following similar giant-kennings such as *berg-Mærir*, *berg-Danir*, and *berg-Saxar* (Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson 120–21; Meissner 256–57). The "earth" of a giant is a mountain or ridge, which can be expressed by the synonym *áss* [ridge]. The noun *faldr* [head-dress] has a synonym in the feminine plural *gerðar* [armour, garments] (nominative singular *gerð*) (de Vries 163–64; Fritzner 586–87). Combining these synonyms *áss* and *gerð* generates the homonym *Ásgerðr* (Clunies Ross 2005, 111–12; Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson 120). *Faldr foldar berg-óneris* appears to contain additional wordplay on conventions of woman-kennings. The suggestion of the noun *gerð*, in conjunction with the giant name *berg-Ónerir*, recalls the goddess-giantess *Gerðr*. The extent to which allusions to giantesses may have called to mind for an audience their sexually-submissive role is, while unclear, interesting to consider. Invocations to "Gerðr" do appear frequently in woman-kennings, sometimes in combination with the determinant *faldr*, as in *fald-Gerðr*

[head-dress-goddess] from a Kormákr *lausavísa* (*Skj* BI, 70). Implicit in *faldr foldar* [head-dress of the earth] is also a reversal of the common woman-kenning type “earth of linen,” as in Gunnlaugr’s kenning *jörð hørvi* (above). *Faldr foldar* [head-dress of the earth] reverses the normative relationship of woman-kenning base words and determinants and obscures the distinction between female bodies and the land through the gendered artifice of clothing. Another of Egill’s stanzas manipulates the boundary between bodies and nature by reversing traditional woman-kenning constructions and hinting at a woman’s apparel. After Egill has slaughtered his enemies Berg-Önundr, Haddr, and Fróði, he describes the blood blanketing earth as a red cloak covering a woman’s body: *Bors beðju feltek blóði* [Bor’s <=Óðinn’s> bedmate [Jörð, EARTH] I clothed in blood] (*Skj* BI, 47). *Falda* [to clothe] echoes the *faldr* of a woman’s attire, but here *Jörð* is dressed in a rather untraditional garment.

Not only Ásgerðr’s body, but also Egill’s own, is viewed in abstraction. Egill portrays his face as *gnípa* [rocky peaks] and *enni* [forehead; also, crag, precipice] that he must hide in his *felldr* [cloak] when he thinks about Ásgerðr, possibly to conceal his grief; Egill’s *felldr*, interestingly, chimes with the *faldr* [head-dress] that designates Ásgerðr. Yet if all Egill here intimates is that he covers his face in order to hide his grief, why does he claim that Ásgerðr presently “becomes accustomed to rudeness” (*vensk ókynni*)? In former days he may have dared to gawk at her, but now, he hides his face and raw emotions in what would seem to be a gesture of secrecy or even civility. Might there be a more explicit meaning behind the imagery? *Enni*, in its usage in place-names, can denote a crag or precipice, and a secondary meaning of *brún* is the edge of a mountain or moor (Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson 111; Cleasby and Vigfusson 130). The vertical peaks of Egill’s “crag” and “mountain ridges” that he must conceal in his cloak when he thinks about Ásgerðr could imply concealment of another body part from her, that is, an erect penis.

Egill and Gunnlaugr voice their disconnection from the women they desire through the woman-as-land motif and create further cognitive distance through *nýgervingar* and *ofljóst*, which defamiliarize not only names, but also traditional metaphors. In *Óláfs saga helga*, a *lausavísa* attributed to the eleventh-century Norwegian king Óláfr inn helgi Haraldsson contains complex wordplay analogizing a desired but distant woman to the land toward which the skald sails. It is difficult to date this *lausavísa*, considering its singular preservation within the *Flateyjarbók* version of *Óláfs saga helga* as well as its lack of historically-verifiable subject matter (*SkPI*, 516); nevertheless, its presence within the fourteenth-century compilation attests to the continued use of the motif within a textual atmosphere more explicitly Christian than that of *Gunnlaugs saga* or *Egils saga*. In the saga, Óláfr is sailing off the Norwegian coast near the hazardous waters of Stad when his men ask if he would like to harbour the ship and see his former love interest, Steinvör (*Óláfs saga helga*, vol II, 686). Óláfr’s verse response expresses his physical and

psychological predicament. The edition and translation of this stanza are by Russell Poole in *SkP* I, 521:

*Vandfærra es várrar
varrbliks fyrir Stað miklu
— þreyk of aldr — til eyjar
aurborðs, an vas forðum.*

*Nús fyrir höfn, þás hafna
hlyn sævar mák æva,
Gunnr hvíta, grjóti
geirþorps boða orpit.*

Es miklu vandfærra aurborðs fyrir Stað til várrar {eyjar {varrbliks}}, an vas forðum; þreyk of aldr. Nús grjóti orpit fyrir höfn {boða {geirþorps}}, þás mák æva hafna {hlyn sævar}, {Gunnr hvíta}.

[It is much harder for the plank [ship] to pass in front of Stad to {our [my] island {of the wake-gitter}} [WAVE > GOLD > WOMAN] than it was formerly; I yearn through my lifetime. Now rock is dumped in front of the harbour {against the messenger {of the spear-settlement}} [SHIELD > WARRIOR = Óláfr], when I can never beach {the maple of the sea} [SHIP], {Gunnr <valkyrie> of drinking-horns} [WOMAN].]

The rocky waters near the Stad peninsula impede Óláfr harbouring the ship and reaching the *ey varrbliks* [island of the wake-gitter [WAVE > GOLD > WOMAN]]. Symbolized as the land, the woman becomes the target of the ship's course as well as the object of the skald's desire. This woman-as-land may be separated from the sea-voyaging skald, but the elements of her kenning, *vørr* [wake] and *ey* [island], embody a coupling of land and sea (on *vørr* in this woman-kenning, see also Kock, § 597). The difficulty of harbouring his ship becomes almost a metaphysical conceit for the skald's frustrated inability to reach the *ey varrbliks*, as Poole suggests: the "idea of blocked access may also have sexual connotations" (*SkP* I, 521). Mention of the rocky harbour may allude, Poole notes further, to the name *Steinvørr* [stone landing-place]. Óláfr's use of the first-person plural possessive pronoun *várr* [our] with this woman-kenning further entwines woman and land, as well as the king's circumstantial and personal predicaments. Is "our island" the literal land to which the ship's crew steer, or should this pronoun be interpreted as "my island," a more intimate figure to which Óláfr directs his attention? First-person pronouns in skaldic verse indeed shift regularly between singular and plural where the skald refers to himself; Óláfr appears to use the traditional fluidity of the first-person pronoun to link his potential journeys toward two different destinations.

Creative dialogue between verse and prose in these scenes from *Gunnlaugs saga*, *Egils saga*, and *Óláfs saga helga* reveal that woman-as-land kennings were not dormant metaphors. While the extent to which kennings participate in the circumstantial references of skaldic stanzas is certainly a point of scholarly debate,

there can be little doubt that in the above verses, kennings form the basis of extended wordplay participating in the semantics of the verse and thematics of the prose. In a later *Íslendingasaga*, *Víglundar saga*, the woman-as-land motif finds expression beyond the kenning as a formal unit and the associated devices of *nýgervingar* and *ofljóst*. Scholars today generally accept that *Víglundar saga*, with its clear influences from the *riddarasögur*, *fornaldarsögur*, and Romance traditions, was composed in the fourteenth century and recorded in the fifteenth (Ashman Rowe 692–93). Many of its verses, although attributed in the prose to tenth-century characters, were likely composed later or are contemporary with the saga's composition. Two verses from *Víglundar saga* rework the prosimetric situation seen in *Gunnlaugs saga* and *Óláfs saga helga*, where the skald at sea desires a woman on land and subsequently symbolizes that woman as the land in his verse. The unattainability of the distant beloved is of course a thematic basis for much Romance literature current throughout Europe during the High and Late Middle Ages, most notably in troubadour and *minnesang* lyric (on the knowledge of such traditions in Iceland, cf., Finlay 232–35; Andersson; Bjarni Einarsson; Poole 1997; Sävborg 338–39; in addition, Dronke has demonstrated that the theme is found more widely throughout world literature).

As in other of the so-called “*skáldasögur*,” the protagonist’s frustrated desire for a woman catalyzes several of the plot turns in *Víglundar saga*. Numerous verses attributed to Víglundur Þorgrímsson recount his relations, real or imagined, with Ketilríður Hólmkelsdóttir. After Víglundur and his brother Trausti Þorgrímsson have been implicated in the deaths of Hákon, Jökull, and Einarr, the brothers find themselves in danger of death or outlawry and, at the advice of their father Þorgrímr, embark on a voyage to Norway. While at sea, Víglundur sees Snæfellsjökull and laments his separation from Ketilríður in abstruse verse (*Víglundar saga*, 104–5). The complexity in the two verses below derives not from the use of copious or extended kennings, but rather from other techniques of symbolic association.

*Sé ek á fjall þat er Fjötra
framlunduðust sitr undir,
hér renni ek til hennar
hug rakkr, vinar augum;*

*þá brekku kveð ek þekka,
þrúðr þar er sitr en príða
hlaðs, en hlíðir aðrar
hugþekkri mér nokkut.*

(*Skj* BII, 490)

Ek sé á það fjall, Fjötra, undir er framlunduðust sitr. Hér, hug rakkr, ek vinar augum renni til hennar; ek kveð þá brekku er þar þekka, príða {þrúðr hlaðs} sitr, er hugþekkri mér en nokkut aðrar hlíðir.

[I look on that mountain, Fjötra [Fetter], under which the most courageous one lives. Here, stout-hearted, I make [my] friendly eyes run toward her; I declare that the slope where the agreeable, proud {Þrúðr of embroidery} [WOMAN] lives, is more pleasing to me than any other slope.]

*Ljóst er út at líta,
lauka reið, yfir heiði,
sól gengr síð und múla,
slíkt langar mik þangat;*

*fjöll eru mér þekk af bellu,
því er ek hljóðr, valin tróða,
víf á ek vænst at leyfa,
valgrundar er sitr undir.*

(Skj BII, 490)

Er ljóst at líta út yfir heiði, {lauka reið}; sól gengr síð und múla; langar mik slíkt þangat. Fjöll eru þekk mér af bellu; því er ek hljóðr, valin tróða; víf er sitr á undir {valgrundar}, ek vænst at leyfa.

[It is light enough to look out over the moor, {herb-bearer} [WOMAN]; the sun slips late beneath the promontories; I long for such a place. The mountain was agreeable to me because of the pine [woman]; for that reason I am silent, chosen pole [woman]; the woman who lives under {the falcon-ground} [MOUNTAIN], I hoped to praise.]

Víglundr's verses are prompted in the narrative by the sight of the glacier and the glacier in turn figures within the verse as a symbol of both his physical impasse and romantic predicament. Looking out over the *heiðr* [moor], *fjall* [mountain], and *múlar* [promontories], he emphasizes Ketilríðr's proximity to the mountain and distance from him by means of several adverbs (*út*, *yfir*, *þangat*, and *undir*). What the skald sees (the land) stands in place of the woman he can only imagine, even while his eyes search the landscape: "*ek renni til hennar vinar augum*" [I make [my] friendly eyes run toward her]. The association between Snæfellsjökull and Ketilríðr, or between what can and cannot be seen, engenders a metaphysical displacement of desire by which the skald is drawn to the mountain (*hugþekkri mér; langar mik slíkt þangat*) as a visible substitute for his beloved. Ketilríðr's removed and abstracted position within this scene is underscored by the ambiguous denomination for the mountain, *Fjötra* [Fetter]. The mountain simultaneously draws the skald's eye and mind to where Ketilríðr resides and represents his obstructed access to her. The poetic techniques used here—associating the woman with a feature of the landscape and referring to that abstraction as though it were the woman—parallels kenning construction and usage, and could indeed hint at the enduring connections among women and land in the corpus of kennings.

When Víglundr returns to Iceland, a *lausavísa* he composes about Ketilríðr repurposes these symbols. Ketilríðr is now betrothed to Þórðr and living at his

farm; Víglundr goes to their farmstead using an alternate identity and the pseudonym Örn. One day Víglundr sees Ketilríðr sitting on the knees of Þórðr, who has his arms around her waist (*Víglundar saga*, 114). Displeased at Þórðr's actions, Víglundr utters this *lausavísa*:

*Svá vilda ek þik sjaldan,
svinn brúðr, koma at finna,
hørví glæst, at hristi
hrumr maðr at þér krummur;*

*heldr vilda ek halda,
Hlín, at vilja mínum,
lýsigrund, í landi,
liðar elds, um þik miðja.*

(*Skj* BII, 493)

Svá ek sjaldan vilda koma at finna þik, svinn brúðr, at hristi maðr hrumr krummur at þér, hørví glæst. Heldr, Hlín, ek vilda at vilja halda mínum í landi um þik miðja, {lýsigrund {elds liðar}}.

[In this way I seldom want to come to find you, wise bride, [with] a trembling man's curved fingers around you, linen-adorned one [woman]. Rather, goddess, I would wish to hold mine [ie., my arms] on this land around you midway [ie., around your waist], {shining-ground {of the fire of the arm}} [GOLD > WOMAN].]

A man's possessive embrace of a woman is here couched, as it is in Gunnlaugr's verse above, in imagery of her as land. The woman-kenning *lýsigrund elds liðar* [shining-ground of the fire of the arm] uses the familiar trope of the woman as the ground of gold, yet it is entangled conceptually and metrically within the ambiguous adverbial phrase *í landi* [on the land]. What does this "land" represent? Does it refer to the *grund* symbolizing Ketilríðr, or to the literal space of Iceland to which Víglundr had previously longed to return? Both references may be implied considering the linkage between Ketilríðr and the Icelandic landscape made in Víglundr's previous verses. The skald's rhetorical reach has, in a manner of speaking, come full circle: while before his thoughts could only run after the distant woman, proximity now allows him to imagine a controlling embrace, even if he is trespassing on another man's "land."

This article has traced the evolution of a trope from earlier royal praise poetry such as Hallfreðr's *Hákonardrápa* into the *sagaöld* and Christian compositions. Innovative uses of this trope appear to have been appreciated by audiences into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as the creative dialogue between verse and prose in *Gunnlaugs saga*, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, *Óláfs saga helga*, and *Víglundar saga* indicate. In this lively artistic milieu, it is perhaps unsurprising that later Christian skalds should avoid allusions to *Jörð* in their designations for Mary or other female saints and Christian women; even though hagiography often coupled the sacred and the violent in graphic descriptions of

the torture and martyrdom of saints, skalds may have not wished to equate images of the mortification of the martyr's flesh with those of the sexualized female body. While this study has focused on the fragmentation and objectification of women within skaldic diction, further diachronic analysis might consider the prominence women gained in Christian skaldic verse, and how their new roles may have recast or subverted traditionally oblique means of referencing female identity.

NOTES

1. All editions of stanzas are taken from the *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* Volumes I, II, and VII (referenced as *SkP* I, II, and VII) where available and otherwise from Finnur Jónsson's edited texts in *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning* (referenced as *Skj* BI and BII). The three volumes of the *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* are listed as *Poetry from the King's Sagas* 1 and 2 and *Poetry on Christian Subjects* in the References.
2. Some material for this paper has been revised from my doctoral dissertation (Osborne 2012, 85–105, 119–21).
3. Following the practice of the *SkP* editors, I provide the referents of kennings in square brackets and majuscule, the referents of *heiti* in square brackets and minuscule, and clarifications for proper names within "<...>" signs and minuscule. Sigla and abbreviations for skalds and poems also follow conventions used in the *SkP* volumes. Kennings and internal kennings are enclosed within "{...}" brackets in texts and translations. Translations of Old Norse are my own unless otherwise noted.
4. This stanza follows *Skj* BI, 186–87 apart from one point. Holm perg 18 4° (20r) (c. 1300–1350), shows clearly *hafna* at line 17, with no diacritic to indicate a final 'r'. Finnur's transcription in *Skj* AI, 196 follows the manuscript on this particular, however, he emends this verb to *hafnar* in *Skj* BI, 186–87. I find no reason for this emendation, as the infinitive *hafna* fits the stanza in both grammar and sense.
5. Here, lines 1 and 2 clearly suggest a *rekit* warrior-kenning, although there is some question regarding the manuscript tradition and scholarly interpretation of this kenning. Finnur Jónsson (*Skj* AI, 196) transcribes Holm perg 18 4° (20r) as *hrið mundaðar*, and my translation reflects this *tnesis*, because 20r (line 16) separates these words; an image of this page is available publicly on the *SkP* website. Finnur (*Skj* AI, 196) also transcribes *þundi*, which would be the dative form of the masculine noun *þundr*; the emendation to *þundar* in *Skj* BI, 186–87 produces a more complex warrior-kenning. However, if the reading of *þundi* was maintained, we could construct the beginning of the first clause as follows: "It will not be proper for the þundr [warrior], the handler of the fire of the storm [SWORD > WARRIOR]." *þundi* is therefore read quite logically as a warrior-*heiti*, and as the object of the transitive verb *hlýða*, which takes the dative. The transcription of AM 557 4° (9r) (c. 1420–1450), which is also available on the *SkP* website, provides the nominative form *þundr*, although this form is more problematic to construe within the clause. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson ("Gunlaugs Saga," 85–86) note the complex interactions among the extended elements in this kenning.

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