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“From kenning to insult: downgrading of Old Norse poetic phrases in East Slavic epic tradition”

1. Russian folk tales and *byliny*: insult hurled at a horse refusing to move (1, 2, 3, 7, 10)

- (1) Ilja Muromec’s first feats, l. 72-73
“*Ax ty, volč’ja syt’ da i travjanoj mešok!*
Ali ty idti ne xoš’, ali nesti ne moš’?”
“You wolf’s food, you grass bag!
Don’t you really want to move, can’t you really carry me?”
- (2) Dobrynja Nikitič, his wife and Aleša Popovič, l. 148-149
“*Ax ty, volč’ja syt’ da ty, medvež’ja šerst’!*
Ty čego segodnja podtykaeš’sja?”
“You wolf’s food, you bear’s wool!
Why do you refuse to move a hoof today?”
- (3) Afanas’ev, *Russian folk tales*, vol. 2, p. 385, n° 296, Neznajko
“*Ax ty, volč’ja syt’, travjanoj mešok! Čto bežiš’-spotykaeš’sja? Al’ nesčast’je slyšiš’?*”
Otvečaeť dobryj kon’: “*Budet krov’ na oboix – na kone i na xozjaine!*”
“You wolf’s food, you grass bag! Why do you flee and refuse to move a hoof? Is it that you hear a misfortune?” The good horse replies: “There will be blood on both – on the horse and on the master!”
- (4) Afanas’ev, *Russian folk tales*, vol. 1, n° 176, Skazka o molodce-udal’ce, molodil’nyx jablokax i živoj vode
(to a horse trying to escape) *Ivan uxvatil eě za grivu i govorit: “stoj, kon’, volč’e mjaso!”* / Ivan seized the horse by the mane and said: “stop, horse, you wolf’s meat!”
- (5) Afanas’ev, *Russian folk tales*, vol. 3, n° 400 (Ivanuška Duračok)
“*Čto ž ty ne p’jěš’, volč’je mjaso?*” / “Why do you not drink, you wolf’s meat?”
- (6) Afanas’ev, *Russian folk tales*, vol. 2, p. 317, n° 282 (Kosoručka)
(the best horse has disappeared, the master reacts to the news) “*Nu, pust’ volkam budet mjaso!*” / “Well, let him be meat for the wolves!”
- (7) Afanas’ev, *Russian folk tales*, vol. 2, p. 24, n° 182 (Svinka zolotaja ščetinka)
(to a horse refusing to move) “*No, No, sobač’e mjaso!*” / “O, o, you dog’s meat!”
- (8) Afanas’ev, *Russian folk tales*, vol. 2, p. 99, n° 198 (Beznogij i slepoj bogatyri)
(to the horse speaking to him) “*Slušaj, sobač’je mjaso!*” / “Hear, you dog’s meat!”
(to a cow refusing to move) “*Ty čego, sobač’je mjaso, dožidaeš’sja?*” / “What, you dog’s meat, are you waiting for?”
- (9) *Slovar’ Russkix Narodnyx Govorov*, vol. 43: 5. *syť* (White Sea), word used to chase dogs away; V. Dal’, *Tolkovyj Slovar’ Velikorusskogo Jazyka*, s.v. *sněd’* ‘food’: *volč’ja sněd’, voron’e mjaso (bran’ na lošad’)* “wolf’s food, raven’s mean (insult to a horse)”
- (10) Afanas’ev, *Russian folk tales*, vol. 1, p. 219, n° 136 (Burja-bogatyř Ivan korovij syn)
“*Čto ty, voron’e mjaso, spotykaeš’sja? druga slyšiš’ ali nedrug?*” *Otvečaeť dobryj kon’*: “*Est’ nam nedrug, Burja-bogatyř korovij syn.*” – “*Vrěš’, voron’e mjaso!*” / “Why, you raven’s meat, do you not move a hoof? Do you hear a friend or a foe?” The good horse replies: “There is a foe, Burja-bogatyř son of the cow.” – “You lie, you raven’s meat!”

2. Suzdal’ Chronicle (*Laur.* 167v-168, s.a. 1262)

- (11) The same year the criminal Zosim was killed: he was in appearance a monk, but he was only the vase of Satan: a drunkard, full of shameful words (...) and in the end he renounced Christ and became a Muslim, entering the lies of the false prophet Mahmed [...] And then they killed this impious Zosim in the city of Jaroslavl’. And his body was food for dogs and ravens (*Bě tělo jeho jěd’ psom i voronom*).

3. Old Icelandic

(12) *Skáldskaparmál* 58

Vargr heitir dýr. þat er rétt at kenna við blóð eða hræ svá at kalla verð hans eða drykk. Eigi er rétt at kenna svá við fleiri dýr.

A. Faulkes 1998, p. 87:

P. 87/8–9 *Við* may be adverbial in line 8: ‘It is right to refer to blood or carrion in terms of it (i. e. the wolf) so as to refer to them as its food or drink’ rather than ‘It is right to refer to it in terms of blood or carrion so as to call them its food or drink.’ The next sentence is then more likely to mean ‘It is not right to refer to them thus using names of other animals’ than ‘It is not right to refer to other animals in these terms’. Cf. note to 90/26–9.

(13) *Skáldskaparmál* 60

Tveir eru fuglar þeir er eigi þarf at kenna annan veg en kalla blóð eða hræ drykk þeira eða verð, þat er hrafn ok orrn. Alla aðra fugla karlkenda má kenna við blóð eða hræ ok er þat þá nafn orrn eða hrafn.

A. Faulkes 1998, p. 90:

P. 90/26–9 ‘There are two birds that there is no need to refer to in any other way than by calling blood or carrion their drink or food, that is the raven and the eagle [i. e. any bird referred to as drinker of blood or eater of carrion means raven or eagle]. All other masculine birds can be referred to in terms of blood or carrion and then it means eagle or raven.’ The object of *kenna* can be either the base word or the referent; the object of *kenna við* is normally the determinant, sometimes the base word (see 87/8–9 n.).

(14) *Egil’s Saga*, St. 53, l. 1-2 (ed. and transl. B. Einarsson, London, 2003)

Sækjum jarl þann er auka

úlfs verð fyrir sverðum;

Let us visit the jarl who dares to increase the wolf’s food with swords;

(15) *Egil’s Saga*, St. 13, l. 2-3 (ed. and transl. B. Einarsson, London, 2003)

þiví at þú sjaldan hefir gefnar

vargi varmar bráðir;

For you have seldom given warm meat to the wolf.

(16) *Egil’s Saga*, *Höfuðlausn* St. 12

Kom gríðar læ

at Gjálpur skæ;

bauð úlfum hræ

Eiríkr of sæ.

The bane of greed (= satiety) came to Gjálp’s steed (= wolf); across the sea Eiríkr offered corpses to the wolves.

(17) kennings for ‘corpse’

Meissner, *Die kenningar der Skalden*, p. 203: *úlfs tafn* ‘wolf’s prey’, *úlfs verðr* ‘wolf’s food’, *úlfs tuggu* ‘(on the) wolf’s mouthful’, *úlfa barr* ‘wolves’ barley’; *Hugins vára* (“*várar* soll die Ruhe, die die Sättigung gibt, bedeuten”)

others (cf. p. 4) ‘raven’s food’, ‘Hugin’s banquet’, ‘eagle’s food’, ‘eagle’s barley’

4. Old English

(18) *Beowulf* 3024-3027 (transl. F.B. Gummere)

ac se wonna hrefn

fus ofer fægum fela reordian,

earne secgan hu him æt æte speow,

þenden he wið wulf wæl reafode.

But the wan-hued raven, / fain o'er the fallen, his feast shall praise / and boast to the eagle
how bravely he ate / when he and the wolf were wasting the slain.

- (19) Beowulf 2447-2448 (transl. F.B. Gummere)
 sarigne sang, þonne his sunu hangað
 hrefne to hroðre,
 sorrow-song for his son there hanging / as rapture of ravens;

5. German

- (20) Grimm, *DWb*, s.v. Rabenaas: Kaspar von Stieler, *Der Teutschen Sprache Stammbaum und Fortwachs*, 1691, col. 895. Rabenas / *caro morticina*. oh du rabenas / *vah, cadaveretum!*;
 var. Rabenfell, Rabenstück; *ibid.*, col. 1237 Rabenmann / *homo suspendio dignus, furcifer*,
 var. Rabenfutter ‘raven’s fodder’ (Garg. 47a)

6. Old and Middle Irish

- (21) *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, recension II, Stowe version (15th c., ed. O’Rahilly 1961), l. 4642
rastair brain brocaig ‘satiety of sorrowful ravens’ (= corpses)
- (22) *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, recension I, Lebor na hUidre (end of 11th – beg. of 12th c.) l. 6611-6612
 Biait collai fó chossaib There will be corpses under foot
 biait brain for branfossaib (branfesaib *Táin*, Yellow Book of Lecan, end of 14th c., l. 2077)
DIL, s.v. bran: branfossaib *i.e.* field of carnage? s.v. foss ‘rest, quietude, halt’: cf. Windisch
 ‘zu Rabenaufenthalt’); s.v. feis, fess ‘spending the night, supper’, exceptionally ‘stay,
 sojourn’, cf. branfesaib
Táin Bó Cúalnge, recension II, Leinster Book l. 2427 (/ LU 6612)
 betit buind fri brannusa
- (23) *Sanas Cormaic*: an Old-Irish Glossary compiled by Cormac úa Cuilennáin, King-Bishop of
 Cashel in the ninth century (ed. Meyer, 1912)
DIL: *branorgain .i. nī oirges fīach* carrion for ravens (?), Corm. Y 105
 ‘raven’s spoil’: ‘that which a raven plunders’, transl. O’Donovan, in Stokes 1868:17 (*DIL*
orgun a) ‘murdering’, b) ‘raiding, ravaging, massacre’, c) rare in sing. ‘spoils, booty’)

6. IE background

- (24) RV 10.95.14c – 15ab (transl. Jamison – Brereton)
 ádhā śáyīta nírṭter upásthé ’dhainaṃ vṛkā rabhasāso adyúḥ
 púrūravo má mṛthā má prá pāpto má tvā vṛkāso áśivāsa u kṣan
 Then he might lie in the lap of Dissolution. Then again the ravening wolves might eat him.
 – O Purūravas, don’t die. Don’t fly away. Don’t let the unkindly wolves eat you.
- (25) Avesta, Vd 8.10 (transl. Darmesteter)
 yaḍōiṭ. dim. bāidištəm. auuazanəm.
 sūnō. vā. kərəfš.x^varō.
 vaiiō. vā. kərəfš.x^varō.
 (and they shall lay it down on a place) where they know there are always corpse-eating dogs
 and corpse-eating birds.
- (26) Il. 8.739 = 17.241 = 13.831: [...] κορέει(ς) κύνας ἦδ’ οἰωνούς #
 he / you will satiate dogs and birds
- (27) Il. 22.354: ἀλλὰ κύνες τε καὶ οἰωνοὶ κατὰ πάντα δάσσονται
 but the dogs and the birds will have you all for their feasting (transl. Lattimore)
- (28) Il. 24.411: ὃ γέρον οὔ πω τόν γε κύνες φάγον οὐδ’ οἰωνοί,
 old man, neither dogs nor birds have eaten him yet
- (29) Il. 18.271: [...] πολλοὺς δὲ κύνες καὶ γῦπες ἔδονται #
 dogs and vultures will devour many
- (30) Il. 1.4-5: [...] αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεύχε κύνεσσιν || οἰωνοῖσι τε δαῖτα (Zenodotus / πᾶσι vulg.)
 and made them prey to the dogs and feast for the birds

- (31) Aeschylus, *Suppl.* 800-801
 κυσὶν δ' ἔπειθ' ἔλωρα κἀπιχωρίοις
 ὄρνησι δεῖπνον οὐκ ἀναίνομαι πέλειν·
 Thereafter I refuse not to become a booty for dogs and a banquet for the local birds
- (32) Euripides, *Hec.* 1078: (τέκνα) σφακτὰ κυσὶν τε φοινίαν δαῖτ(α)
 (children) slaughtered, and a feast of blood for dogs
- (33) Sophocles, *Ant.* 1016-1018
 βωμοὶ γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐσχάροι τε παντελεῖς
 πλήρεις ὑπ' οἰωνῶν τε καὶ κυνῶν βορᾶς
 τοῦ δυσμόρου πεπτῶτος Οἰδίου γόνου.
 For the altars of our city and our hearths have one and all been tainted by the birds and dogs
 with the carrion taken from the sadly fallen son of Oedipus (transl. R. Jebb).

(17) <https://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/db.php?if=default&table=kenningrefs&view=>

kennings for CORPSE

tuggu ulfs, — ‘on the wolf’s mouthful,’ - CORPSE

(2. *Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson*, 4. *Þorfinnsdrápa*, 9 [Vol. 2, 240-1], kenning 1)

tafni ylgjar. — ‘the prey of the she-wolf.’ - CORPSE

(1. 18. *Einarr skálaglamm Helgason*, 2. *Vellekla*, 35 [Vol. 1, 327], kenning 2)

marga fylli egðis. — ‘for many a full meal of the wolf.’ - CORPSE

(8. *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* 14 (*Eiríkr Ragnarsson*, *Lausavísur*, 4) — *Eiríkr* [Vol. 8, 653], kenning 4)

tuggu Munins — ‘of Muninn’s <raven’s> mouthful’ - CORPSE

(1. 14. *Þórðr Særeksson (Sjáreksson)*, 1. *Þórálfs drápa Skólmssonar*, 3 [Vol. 1, 239], kenning 3)

barri ulfa — ‘wolves’ barley—’ - CORPSES

(2. *Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson*, 3. *Magnússdrápa*, 11 [Vol. 2, 220-1], kenning 1)

verð ulfs — ‘the wolf’s food’ - CORPSES

(1. 18. *Einarr skálaglamm Helgason*, 3. *Lausavísur*, 2a [Vol. 1, 332], kenning 1)

fermu Hugins — ‘of Huginn’s <raven’s> food’ - CORPSES

(3. *Einarr Skúlason* (biog. vol. 2), 2. *Fragments*, 6 [Vol. 3, 157], kenning 6)

beitu Gera; — ‘Geri’s <wolf’s> bait;’ - CORPSES

(3. *Einarr Skúlason* (biog. vol. 2), 2. *Fragments*, 8 [Vol. 3, 159], kenning 2)

ótu Hugins; — ‘with the food of Huginn <raven>;’ - CORPSES

(7. *Einarr Skúlason* (biog. vol. 2), *Geisli*, 29 [Vol. 7, 30-1], kenning 1)

grjóts Hjaðninga. — ‘of the stones of the Hjaðningar <Heðinn and his followers>.’ - CORPSES

(3. 54. *Hallar-Steinn* (biog. vol. 1), *Fragments*, 4 [Vol. 3, 205], kenning 4)

beitu Gera; — ‘the food of Geri <wolf>;’ - CORPSES

(1. 34. *Halldórr ókristni*, *Eiríksflokkur*, 7 [Vol. 1, 482], kenning 4)

krás arnar; — ‘the delicacies of the eagle;’ - CORPSES

(8. *Ketils saga hængs* 36 (*Ketill hængr*, *Lausavísur*, 20) — *Ketill* [Vol. 8, 590], kenning 1)

verðar hrafnis — ‘raven’s food’ - CORPSES

(2. *Kolli inn prúði*, *Ingadrápa*, 1 [Vol. 2, 528-9], kenning 2)

mikla beitu ulfs, — ‘much wolf’s food,’ - CORPSES

(1. 38. *Óttarr svartí*, 2. *Knútsdrápa*, 11 [Vol. 1, 781], kenning 1)

krós hjaldrmós — ‘the morsel of the battle-gull’ - CORPSES

(3. *Rognvaldr jarl and Hallr Þórarinnsson*, *Háttalykill*, 50 [Vol. 3, 1058], kenning 6)

bráðar hauka boðvar — ‘of the meat of hawks of battle’ - CORPSES

(3. *Rognvaldr jarl and Hallr Þórarinnsson*, *Háttalykill*, 73 [Vol. 3, 1082], kenning 7)

Ferðar Hugins verð — ‘of the meal of the flock of Huginn <raven>’ - CORPSES

(1. 19. *Tindr Hallkelsson*, *Hákonardrápa*, 4 [Vol. 1, 345], kenning 2)

Yggjar valbygg — ‘the barley of the falcon of Yggr <= Óðinn>’ - CORPSES

(2. *Þjóðólfr Arnórsson*, 4. *Sexstefja*, 28 [Vol. 2, 143-4], kenning 2)

barri ara; — ‘the eagle’s barley;’ - CORPSES

(2. *Þjóðólfr Arnórsson*, 4. *Sexstefja*, 29 [Vol. 2, 144-5], kenning 2)

orð svans sveita. — ‘the corn of the swan of blood.’ - CORPSES

(2. *Þjóðólfr Arnórsson*, 4. *Sexstefja*, 29 [Vol. 2, 144-5], kenning 5)

ærnu hveiti Freka; — ‘plentiful wheat of Freki <wolf>;’ - CORPSES

(1. 35. *Þórðr Kolbeinnsson*, *Eiríksdrápa*, 17 [Vol. 1, 513], kenning 3)

drekkur Hugins, — ‘Huginn’s <raven’s> banquet,’ - CORPSES

(1. 14. *Þórðr Særeksson (Sjáreksson)*, 1. *Þórálfs drápa Skólmssonar*, 4 [Vol. 1, 240], kenning 2)