

ROBERT J. GLENDINNING

THE DREAMS IN STURLA ÞÓRDARSON'S ÍSLENDINGA SAGA AND LITERARY
CONSCIOUSNESS IN 13TH CENTURY ICELAND

Although the dreams in Old Icelandic saga literature, particularly those in the Sagas of Icelanders, have received a good deal of critical attention, Sturla Þórdarson's Íslendinga saga as distinct from other Old Icelandic sagas has been virtually overlooked in this respect until very recently. This is surprising in view of the large number of dreams in this text - 23 in the part accredited as original, and 45 if the probable interpolations are included;¹⁾ indeed, the fact seems remarkable when it is borne in mind that the text of Íslendinga saga (hereafter Ís.s., text: Sturlunga saga, I, Reykjavík, 1946) ostensibly presents the authentic history of 13th century Iceland, of which the author was a personal witness and co-agent, as distinct from the Sagas of Icelanders which have been increasingly recognized in recent years as imaginative literature. This two-fold distinction of Ís.s. invites an examination of the saga with respect to what is undoubtedly one of the most characteristic elements of style in the Sagas of Icelanders.²⁾ Admittedly, similarities and differences between the dreams in Ís.s. and those in the classical sagas must be treated cautiously as evidence in the question of the literary-historical development of the classical saga-genre and its relationship to the

1) The Sagas of Icelanders average 3 or 4 dreams per saga, cf. Margarete Haeckel: Die Darstellung und Funktion des Traumes in der isländischen Familiensaga (unpublished diss., Hamburg, 1934) p.8.

2) Haeckel, pp.55-65.

reality of the saga-age. While it is doubtful that any major insight may be expected in this area, a discovery of literary elements in the dreams in Ís.s. might be expected to reveal information about the relationship of the real life of the 13th century to the imaginative literature which the age produced; it is possible also that a thin ray of light might be shed on the question of the poetological theory of the saga in the 13th century.³⁾

The research on saga dreams was initiated by Henzen in 1890 with the collection of 250 dreams from Old Icelandic prose literature and their classification on anthropological and cultural-historical principles.⁴⁾ While useful as a 'Bestandsaufnahme', this work failed to satisfy later interest in the literary quality of the sagas and was supplemented by Margarete Haeckel's study in 1934 (cf. note 1). Haeckel lists and examines the saga dreams under stylistic categories such as the presence and absence of imagery, the appearance of various motifs, the symbolical value of the latter, and proceeds from this to a consideration of the function of the dreams in individual sagas. While some dreams have a logical-causal function in the action of the saga itself, a great many of them represent a formal aesthetic principle, giving a preview of the entire action of the saga (Vorschautraum), acting in concert with other dreams in a chain which plots the progressive stages of the action (Ausschnitt-Traum), or simply giving particular accent to a single event which an individual dream presages.⁵⁾ The philosophical rationale of the saga dreams has been seen in the Germanic belief in fate, and the latter has made for the more general aesthetic function common to the majority of the dreams - that of creating the pervasive fatalistic mood and tragic atmosphere of the

³⁾ For an illuminating discussion of this general problem cf. Fritz Paul, "Zur Poetik der Isländersagas", Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum (1971), 166-178.

⁴⁾ Wilhelm Henzen, Über die Träume in der altnordischen Sagaliteratur (Leipzig, 1890).

⁵⁾ Haeckel, pp.35-46; cf. also Gerhard Loescher: Gestalt und Funktion der Vorausdeutung in der isländischen Sagaliteratur (Tübingen, 1956).

sagas.⁶⁾ Besides the dissertations of Henzen and Haeckel, contributions have been made to this field of research by Sofus Larson (cf. note 6), who has shown the influence of the formulaic interpretations of medieval dream books of Asiatic provenance on the saga dreams, G.W. Kelchner,⁷⁾ who has stressed the folklore background of the dreams, and G. Turville-Petre,⁸⁾ who has likewise seen the importance of indigenous tradition and argued for coalescence of the latter with the Asiatic dream-book elements in the saga dreams. In an article on dreams of "future renown" Paul Schach has contributed to the typology of saga dreams,⁹⁾ and such recognition of the type-uniformity of these dreams has occasioned the view, either explicit or implied in most of the published research, that all or the majority of the dreams in the sagas are fictitious.¹⁰⁾

The most strongly marked types noted in the saga dreams are those in which the fylgja of a man's enemy appears in animal form, those in which a religious figure appears with aid or advice, these two types dividing the dream material chronologically, according to Henzen, into a pagan and a Christian period,¹¹⁾ genealogical dreams and dreams in which an ancestor or kin-guardian appears, troll-dreams, word-play dreams and verse-dreams. Functionally, a large number of these dreams prophecy misfortune,¹²⁾ and the particular events most often presaged

⁶⁾ Haeckel, p.58, 60-62; cf. also Sofus Larsen, "Antik og nordisk drømmetro", Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie, III Række, VII (1917), 42-43.

⁷⁾ Dreams in Old Norse Literature and Their Affinities in Folklore (Cambridge, 1935).

⁸⁾ "Dreams in Icelandic Tradition", Folklore 69 (1958), 93-111 and "Dream Symbols in Old Icelandic Literature", Festschrift Walter Baetke (1964), pp.343-354.

⁹⁾ "Symbolic Dreams of Future Renown in Old Icelandic Literature", Mosaic 4 (1971), 51-73.

¹⁰⁾ E.g. Henzen, pp.74-78, 80; Haeckel, pp.8, 28-30; Larsen, 55 and passim.

¹¹⁾ Cf. p.78.

¹²⁾ According to Haeckel, p.61, all but 2 of those in the classical sagas.

are death and battle;¹³⁾ the ominous and bizarre dreams featuring troll-like figures have this function almost exclusively.¹⁴⁾

Ís.s. lacks, with one exception (Ís.s., 418-19), the pagan element of the fylgja-dream, and several of its dreams belong to the specifically Christian type in which a religious figure appears with aid and advice (Ís.s., pp.291, 428-29). Thus it reflects culturally the period in which its dreams are set, but surprisingly, the dreams in Ís.s. are for the most part more rather than less strongly typed than those in the classical sagas. Of the 45 dreams in the text, no fewer than 41 presage bloodshed or death, and the majority of these fall into categories of multiple stereotype. This fact, together with other internal evidence, virtually forces the conclusion that most of them are fictitious in the sense that they are either wholly invented or are drastically amputated and rationalized versions of authentic dreams.

I have attempted elsewhere¹⁵⁾ to demonstrate that the dreams in Ís.s. serve the same literary purposes as described by Haeckel for the Sagas of Icelanders, with the addition of a personal element characteristic of the saga-author. This element, perhaps reflecting influence of religious literature, is the use of dreams as an indirect interpretation of events from a moral or ethical point of view. While the literary function of the dreams in Ís.s. should be borne in mind, it is the problem of the origin of these dreams that is of primary interest in the present context.

The admissability of stereotyped features in the dreams as evidence of spuriousness is heightened by the fact that such features usually appear in typical combinations. In many cases a correspondence is found between the dreams in Ís.s. and the dream-types of the classical sagas. The ancestor and kin-guardian dreams of the latter¹⁶⁾ are represented

¹³⁾ Haeckel, pp.39-41.

¹⁴⁾ Henzen, p.61.

¹⁵⁾ Träume und Vorbedeutung in der Íslendinga saga Sturla Thordarsons. Eine Form- und Stiluntersuchung (Lang: Bern, to appear in 1973).

¹⁶⁾ Henzen, pp.29-31.

in a dream in which Egill Skallagrímsson appears to one of his descendants (Ís.s., pp.241-242), the appearance of a religious figure is represented in the dream of Aron Hjörleifsson (Ís.s., pp.291 and 305) - a dream in which there are indications of spuriousness other than its stereotyped features; a combination of these two types is found in Gizurr Þorvaldsson's dream (Ís.s., pp.428-429), where Gizurr's uncle, Bishop Magnús Gizurarson, promises him support in the Battle of Örlygsstaðir. This same combination is found in the shorter version of Óláfs saga ens helga,¹⁷⁾ where Saint Olaf appears to his son Magnús and promises him victory in battle. In both cases the dream-figure addresses the dreamer with the words "statt upp" or "standið þér upp", a formulaic expression which also occurs in Njáls saga¹⁸⁾ and Mag-nússona saga.¹⁹⁾ It is tempting to see this phrase as an imitation of the biblical "arise" (surge/surgite, cf. Actus Apostolorum 9:6, 10:13, 12:7, Marcus 5:41, Luca 22:46).

The wordplay dreams of the classical sagas²⁰⁾ are represented by four dreams in Ís.s. (pp.236, 350, 506, 511).

A factor of some importance in assessing the dreams in Ís.s. is the strophic form in which many of them are couched. That a real dream should find expression - in Ís.s. often exclusively so - in the rigidly structured and rationalized form of a scaldic strophe, and that such a strophe should have succeeded in so many cases in passing the memory barrier, contradicts the findings of modern dream psychology. The latter provides us with the following information which is relevant to the strophic dreams in Ís.s.: the language of dreams is primarily imagery, the normal person has a tendency to adapt a remembered dream to his conscious wishes and intentions, sometimes with the emergence of literary tendencies, the tendency of the dream to be forgotten

17) Heimskringla, II ("Íslenzk fornrit", XXVII), pp.447-448.

18) ("Íslenzk fornrit", XII), p.197.

19) ("Íslenzk fornrit", XXVIII), p.274.

20) Henzen, pp.45-49.

("Tendenz zur Verflüchtigung" - Kemper) is a constant hindrance to psychotherapeutic practice.²¹⁾

Respecting the last point it is of interest that Stefan Einarsson has documented a strophic dream in modern Iceland from the year 1910.²²⁾ Although this dream contains a strong scenic element, a strophe is spoken, of which the dreamer has remembered the following four lines on awakening;

En kljúfa munu og krjúfa
kalda brynju
foldarfrera fráangurslíðar,
seint en um síðir, seint þó um síðir.

What is interesting about this strophe is that if it is authentic, and there seems reason to doubt that it is, it not only documents the possibility of dreaming in verse - albeit in relatively simple form - but also the difficulty of doing so, since only the second half of the stanza was remembered by the dreamer. In the dreamer's own words as reported by Einarsson: "The first part of the stanza I either did not get or forgot as I awoke". In view of this the extremely complex scaldic strophes found in the dreams of both Ís.s. and the classical sagas necessarily arouse suspicion of conscious invention - suspicion which borders on certainty when it is borne in mind that these dreams belong to a strongly marked stereotype of which the strophic form is only one of the elements.

The overwhelming majority of the strophic dreams in Ís.s. occur in combination with three other constant factors: they are grisly or at least unpleasant in their content and atmosphere, they refer to or foreshadow bloodshed, and with one exception (the dream of Steinvör Sighvatsdóttir, Ís.s., pp.421) they are reported by people whose names occur in not a single other instance in all the pages of Sturlunga saga. There is only one strophic dream in Ís.s. which does not clearly show this four-fold combination - the dream of Egill Halldórsson (Ís.s.,

21) Ernst Aeppli, Der Traum und seine Deutung, 3. Aufl. (Zürich und Stuttgart: Eugen Rentsch, 1960), pp.24-27, 127-128, 169; Werner Kemper, Der Traum und seine Be-Deutung (Hamburg: Rowohlt 1955), pp.72, 29-30; Sigmund Freud, Die Traumdeutung, "Gesammelte Werke", vol. 2 and 3 (London: Imago Publishing Co., 1942, rpt. 1948), p.234.

22) "Alternate Recital by Twos in Widsíp (?), Sturlunga and Kalevala", Arv 7 (1951), 68-69.

pp.241-242) in which a disgruntled Egill Skallagrímsson is critical of Snorri Sturluson's move from Borg to Reykjaholt in 1206, and even here there are elements in the dream which can be related to Snorri's death much later, but this cannot be pursued here. Likewise there is only one dream in Ís.s. grisly in atmosphere, presaging bloodshed and attributed to an otherwise unknown person, which does not contain a stanza - a dream foreshadowing the Battle of Örlygsstaðir in 1238 (Ís.s., p.421). Over against these few exceptions we find 8 dreams in Ís.s. proper and 18 additional dreams in the interpolated chapter 136 which have the fourfold combination of strophic form, grisly content, reference to bloodshed and an otherwise unknown dreamer. The frequency of this combination can only point to a rational process of thought as the origin of these dreams as they are recorded, and the last mentioned feature - the absence of the dreamer elsewhere in the saga - suggests a further explanation. In absolute contrast to the strophic dreams, the dreams which explicitly incite to battle or warn the dreamer against a conflict are reported exclusively by prominent figures who participated in battles and expeditions of attack. Such purported dreamers in Ís.s. are Sturla Sighvatsson (Ís.s., pp.332, 350, 430), Sturla Þórðarson (Ís.s., pp.384, 422), Sighvatr Sturluson (Ís.s., pp.418-419), Aron Hjörleifsson (Ís.s., pp.291, 305), Gizurr Þorvaldsson (Ís.s., pp.428-429), Svarthöfði Dufgusson (Ís.s., p.506), Hrafn Oddsson (Ís.s., p.511), and Snorri Þorvaldsson of Vatnsfjörður (Ís.s., p.348). These were the illustrious men of the Sturlung age, participants in and shapers of what might be called its official history. The grisly strophic dreams, on the other hand, appear to have been the exclusive preserve of those who were excluded for one reason or another from direct participation in public events: young people (as is suggested by Þorgrímur Hauksson's dream, Ís.s., p.320, which will be discussed below), women (many of the strophic dreams are in fact ascribed to women), old people, servants and vagrants. In this light even Steinvör Sighvatsdóttir's dream ceases to be an exception to the rule. (A strophic dream each attributed to Sturla Sighvatsson and Sturla Þórðarson in chapter 136 are falsely ascribed, as will be explained below).

These "dreamers" were people who wanted their share in the public events of the day, but the illustrious battle-dreams of the great men were inappropriate here. What remained for them was to thrill to or shudder at these events at a distance - but not in silence. To create an affective connection between themselves and the events they told each other dreams. Such dreams were a means by which the poor in spirit played their own unique role in the history of the age.

It is instructive to compare the dreams of this type with Sighvatr Sturluson's dream in 1238 (Ís.s., p.410-419). This was the summer of decision for the Sturlungs - the Battle of Örlygsstaðir was only a few months off and it was clear to the aging Sighvatr as to all Icelanders that the rivalry between his son and Gizurr Þorvaldsson was about to come to the boil. Filled with pessimistic presentiments he is reported to have had a dream which he himself interpreted as an omen of misfortune. This dream, like the ones just discussed, produced a strophe, but with the significant difference that Sighvatr composed the strophe on the subject of his dream after the fact. The strophe intensifies the unpleasant aspect of the dream and makes it more explicit as an evil omen. It is easy to see how, in the case of people with no overt public role to play, the strophe produced by this sort of exercise would slip from exterior situation into the dream itself.

Chapter 136 of Ís.s. consists entirely of strophic dreams - 18 in number - all of which have been intended by the interpolator of the chapter as omens of the Battle of Örlygsstaðir. That the chapter is an interpolation is clear from a number of facts: it is placed after the event to which the dreams refer rather than before; elsewhere in the saga the author always places portents before their events, and in fact he has done so here as well; we find 6 dreams reported in the summer of 1238 in the text proper (Ís.s., pp.416-421), all obviously meant to portend the Battle of Örlygsstaðir. Most conclusive of all is the author's remark on the occasion of Steinvör Sighvatsdóttir's dream that "margir váru aðrir draumar sagðir í þenna tíma, þó at hér sé eigi ritaðir, þeir er tíðindavæðir þóttu vera, svá ok aðrir fyrirburðir" (Ís.s., p.421). In addition to this we find a dream in chapter 136 ascribed to the author himself, as well as one ascribed to Sturla Sighvatsson, both of which he would surely have included in the

original text if the ascriptions were correct. The ninth dream in the chapter consists of two lines of which the second line breaks off in the middle. The interpolator evidently discovered or remembered that the same lines occur in a complete dream-stanza in the saga proper (Ís.s., p.418). In the saga the dream is ascribed to a man in Borgarfjörður, in the interpolation to a woman in Svartárdalur.

All this demonstrates the avidity with which the Icelandic commons attempted to participate in the nation's official history; the means of doing this was through a product of the creative imagination, and what is of particular interest here - this was a means which coincides with one of the cardinal elements of literary style in the presentation of these events in saga-form. It is now necessary to examine the dreams of the eminent in the context of their literary quality.

I have argued elsewhere²³⁾ that although the author of Ís.s. may have invented several notices of dreams and undertaken a very few minor alterations in the exercise of his own literary style, it is not credible that he invented full-fledged dream texts. Since this point cannot be elaborated here, the following remarks must be based on the premise that the term "invented" does not mean invented by the author of Ís.s. but by someone else.

A dream which conveys an idea of the inherent natural closeness of real life to the literary form and style of the saga, or the ease with which it could be approximated to this, is the dream attributed to Aron Hjörleifsson (Ís.s., pp.291, 305).²⁴⁾ The circumstances of the dream are that Aron, who is being hunted by Sturla Sighvatsson because of his (Aron's) contribution to Bishop Gudmundr's defence in the fight on Grímsey (1222), is being hidden by a farmer in Geirþjófsfjardareyrr. He is approached one day by two strangers who inform him that Sturla's men are in the vicinity, are searching the district, and will reach his hiding place very shortly. Aron replies that this may well be so

²³⁾ Träume und Vorbedeutung in der Íslendinga Saga Sturla Thor-
darsons.

²⁴⁾ More accurately recorded in Arons saga, Sturlunga saga, II,
pp.260-261; cf. my article "Arons saga and Íslendinga saga. A
Problem in Parallel Transmission", Scandinavian Studies 41 (1969),
41-51.

since he has dreamt that Bishop Gudmundr laid his cloak over him. After some vacillating the strangers stay with Aron and help him repulse Sturla's men. A careful examination of this dream and its attendant circumstances suggests one of the following alternatives: 1) that Aron invented the dream and actually told it as recorded, thereby effortlessly transferring a stylistic device of saga-literature to real life, or 2) that the dream was invented by Aron or some other early narrator after the fact, initiating the process of literary stylization almost as soon as the events had taken place. I have attempted elsewhere (cf. note 24) to show that Aron's dream is fictitious, reflecting two external elements: (1) the awareness on the part of Aron and others that he (Aron) had experienced a miraculous escape from Grimsey - miraculous because of the severity of his wounds (Is.s., p.291) and because of an apparent connection between his escape and Bishop Gudmundr's blessing and prophecy that they would meet again, and (2) a quasi-legendary belief in the miraculous power of Gudmundr's cloak, which went back to an event of the year 1194 when Gudmundr saved the life of a young girl in a severe snowstorm by wrapping her in his cloak and burying her in the snow. Both the sagas of Bishop Gudmundr which recount the event²⁵⁾ impute unusual salutary power to the cloak.

This dream exemplifies two stereotyped elements of saga dreams, the appearance of a religious figure as draummadr with aid or advice, and the telling of a dream before a battle as a warning or incitement. But more noteworthy is the literary quality of the presentation, of which the dream is an integral part. This is especially the case in Arons saga. The highly dramatic and psychologically subtle realism of this account cannot be elaborated here but will be evident to the careful reader of the saga. The point which clearly emerges is that as the account is recorded in the saga, Aron tells the strangers his dream in order to spark their courage and induce them to stay with him, and that the dream is successful in this respect. That this event actually took place as it has been recorded except for minor details is borne out by its transmission in parallel sources, Arons saga and Íslendinga saga.

²⁵⁾ Biskupa sögur, ed. Guðni Jónsson (Reykjavík, 1948), II, p.233 and III, pp.202-204.

Both sources contain the identical dream. Björn M. Ólsen has compared these sources and argued that they are both derived independently from Aron's own account of the event at Geirþjófsfjardareyrr.²⁶⁾ This raises the perplexing question already mentioned. If the dream was invented, was it invented and told by Aron for the purpose indicated in the text - that of actually influencing events, or was it invented by him or some other narrator, an archetype x as it were, soon after the event as a means of re-casting the real event in the mould of a narrative literary convention? Unfortunately this questions remains unanswerable in the case of Aron's dream, and any evidence that exists must be sought in other dreams in Ís.s.

Although the two dreams to be cited next give no conclusive answer to the question of whether they were told before or after the fact, they do shed further light on the nature of battle-dreams in Ís.s. and their possible motivation. The first of the two is Sturla Sighvatsson's sausage-dream.

In the year 1232 a party of men from Vatnsfjörður was surrounded in a hay-yard at Erpsstadir by Sturla Sighvatsson and his men. The party was led by two sons of Þorvaldr Snorrason and had been passing through Sturla's district enroute to visit Snorri Sturluson in Reykjaholt. In spite of his having previously settled his hostilities with the Þorvaldssons and having expressly and emphatically given them safe-conduct for this very trip through his territory (Ís.s., p.347), Sturla now launched a savage attack which ended, in spite of repeated intercessions from his own men, in the execution of the Þorvaldssons. Before the fight, while Sturla and his party were riding after the Vatnsfirdings, Sturla related a dream to HalldórrJónsson and some other men (maelti til þeira Halldórs) in which he imagined himself stretching out a piece of sausage and cutting it into pieces which he was distributing to his men (Ek þóttumst rétta ok slíta þat í sundr milli handa mér ok gefa yðr öllum at eta af með mér.- Ís.s., p.350). Halldórr interpreted the dream as indicating that Sturla was about to redress his grievances and set things right (þar muntu rétta hlut þinn, kann ok vera, at þú gefir oss nökkurn bergibita af, áðr þessum fundi lúki). The dream is thus

²⁶⁾ Um Sturlungu ("Safn til sögu Íslands", III; Reykjavík, 1897) p.259.

a word-play dream, the interpretation resting on a pun on the words "rétta hlut", meaning to straighten or stretch a thing (here sausage), and figuratively to redress a wrong. What should be noted is that if the dream was actually told by Sturla and was intended to produce fighting spark in his men, this was not because the latter were facing the dangers of a pitched battle. The central theme around which the whole incident revolves in Sturla Þórðarson's account is the numerical superiority of Sturla's force and the one-sidedness of the fight.

The most plausible motivation for the telling of a dream of this specific content at the time when the text reports it is the element of moral justification which it contains. In view of the circumstances mentioned above and his intentions in the imminent attack, Sturla had good reason to stress this factor vis-à-vis his own men. (Sturla claimed that the Þorvaldssons had broken their earlier agreement with him.) This is an element which the sausage-dream shares with Hrafn Oddsson's dream at Geldingaholt and, implicitly, with Aron Hjörleifsson's dream and the dream of Gizurr Þorvaldsson before Örlygsstaðir.

Although the word-play on which this dream is based cannot in itself be considered a negative criterion in the evaluation of the dream's authenticity, semantic variability being acknowledged in modern dream research as a common source of real dreams,²⁷⁾ it nevertheless makes a highly contrived impression. Suspicion seems well-founded not only because of the way in which the content of the dream appears tailored to fit practical needs, but also because of the way it coincides with the real situation in terms of time. Sturla relates that the time in the dream seemed to be "this time now", i.e. when the Þorvaldssons were being pursued (En vita þóttumst ek, at sjá tíð var, sem nú er). It is difficult to imagine a device more admirably designed to induce the very interpretation which follows. This temporal dove-tailing of dream and reality is found in another dream in Ís.s. which is likely invented, that of Þorgrímr Hauksson, as well as in a dream in Droplaugarsona saga.²⁸⁾

²⁷⁾Cf. Freud, pp.410-428; Aeppli, pp.44-48; Kemper, pp.64-69, 73-77.

²⁸⁾("Íslensk fornrit", XI), p.161.

It is conceivable that if this dream was invented, it was done by someone other than Sturla Sighvatsson. Halldórr Jónsson seems to be excluded because of the incongruity between his apparently cheerful interpretation of the dream and his later role in the episode. He interceded with Sturla on behalf of the þorvaldssons no fewer than three times and finally took charge of their bodies (Ís.s., pp.354-355, 357; cf. Sturla's sarcastic remark: "þú munt skjótt kalla þá helga"). It is unlikely that Halldórr would have misrepresented himself with an invented dream of this kind; a much more plausible alternative would be that his role in the dream is authentic and that he seriously underestimated the gravity of Sturla's intentions at this point. The same incongruity would obtain if the dream were invented by an anonymous third person, although it would carry less weight as a negative factor. Here, however, there would be the dubious element of assigning rather elaborate fictitious roles to living people (unless the dream were invented later than 1238 when Sturla Sighvatsson died).

The fact that Sturla tells the dream to Halldórr Jónsson is in itself highly suggestive. This, like many similar passages in the account, make it likely, according to Björn M. Ólsen²⁹⁾ and Pétur Sigurdsson,³⁰⁾ that Halldórr was the source for the entire episode in Ís.s. It is striking that Sturla purportedly sought out the very man as an audience for and interpreter of his dream who later acted as its narrator. (Ólsen argues that Halldórr actually wrote a þáttr about the episode but Sigurdsson rejects this theory). In the light of what has been said, the possibility is most intriguing that Sturla sought out Halldórr for his dream in anticipation of Halldórr's later role as a narrator. If this were the case, it would be logical to conclude that the note of moral self-justification in the dream was intended at least as much for the ears of a later public as for the men who were engaged in the expedition.

The dream related by Hrafn Oddsson (Ís.s., p.511) while he rode out with a party to attack Oddr Þórarinnsson at Geldingaholt in 1255 shares

29) Um Sturlungu, p.425-426.

30) Um Íslendinga sögu Sturlu Þórdarsonar ("Safn til sögu Íslands", VI, 2), p.169.

a number of features with Sturla Sighvatsson's sausage-dream: the external circumstances of a planned attack, a favourable prognostication for the attack, the element of moral justification, and like the sausage-dream it achieves its effect through a play on words. This event, however, was one of the most heroic actions of the era, as is amply borne out by the text itself (Ís.s., p.511-516). In keeping with this it is endowed with two scaldic strophes which are delivered by participants just before and during the journey.

One of these stanzas was composed by Guttormr kórtr, the man to whom Hrafn told his dream. While it can be deduced on internal textual evidence that Sturla Þórdarson's principal source for this episode was Svathöfði Dufgusson, Hrafn may nevertheless have told his dream to the man who in his opinion was most likely to preserve it in literary form. Since this same surmise was made with respect to Sturla Sighvatsson's sausage-dream, an additional possible analogy with the latter exists. Moreover, there are stylistic similarities in the presentation of the two dreams. Both consist of dialogue. In the first instance Halldórr Jónsson tells Sturla: "auðsær er draumr þinn" (Ís.s., p.350), while Guttormr says to Hrafn: "Kann ek eigi öðruvísi at ráða þenna draum". After the interpretation of the earlier dream we hear Sturla say: "'Vera má, at svá sé,' ... ok hló at". Hrafn Oddsson says: "Líklega er upp tekinn".

There are no compelling grounds for denying the authenticity of Hrafn Oddsson's dream. On the other hand, the evidence afforded by the remaining dreams that "battle-dreams" were indeed invented and related before impending conflicts must necessarily reflect upon Hrafn's dream in view of the demonstrated literary predilections of his party on the occasion (scaldic strophes).

Although the discussion so far has produced much speculation, the remaining dreams to be considered progressively unfold a pattern of accumulating evidence. The three dreams yet to be discussed are told with reference to a conflict which either did not take place at all or ended anti-climactically. One of them is a vehicle of satiric humour and the other two have evidently been preserved by chance.

A second dream reported by Sturla Sighvatsson - his "coffin-dream" - is almost certainly invented. Although it precedes the sausage dream in time, it has a considerable affinity with the latter in that it appears to distill and parody qualities of character in Sturla - sadistic cunning, opportunism and hypocrisy - which are best exemplified in the Erpsstaðir episode.

In the year 1229 Sturla mustered the men in his district and announced an expedition to the south to attack his uncle, Snorri Sturlason (Ís.s., p.332). At issue was the long-standing bone of contention in the Sturlung-clan, ownership of the original Sturlung-godord. When his men balked at this proposal, Sturla is reported to have told a dream he had had the night before. A man had come to him in the dream and told him that Snorri would be put in a box before him (Sturla) (at Snorri skal fyrr í kistuna en þú). For this reason he (Sturla) didn't want to go south. The idea behind the telling of the dream in these circumstances is evidently that as long as Snorri lives, Sturla's life is secure; therefore it would be folly to attack him. However, the dream is so obviously ambiguous, the same message serving admirably as a favourable omen for such an attack, that it is impossible to construe it as anything but a vehicle for ironical humour which could not possibly have been invented or told by Sturla Sighvatsson. That the dream was told and later recorded in Ís.s. for its ironical effect is borne out by the fact that exactly the opposite to its prophecy came true - it is probably the only dream in Old Icelandic literature of which this can be said - and that Sturla belied his own interpretation of it when he actually attacked Snorri in 1236 and drove him away from Reykjaholt (Ís.s., p.392).

Finally, the incongruous textual juncture of the dream and Sturla's remark following it betrays the suppletive nature of the dream (... ok því vildi hann eigi fara. En ekki lézt hann eiga mundu undir Dalamönnum öll ráð sín).

This dream goes further than any of the dreams considered so far to suggest that the idea of a bloody encounter operated in the real life of the period as a natural stage-setting for the invention of a dream; indeed, it seems that both Sturla Sighvatsson's personality and this convention of fictitious dreams are being parodied in the

coffin-dream.

The last two dreams to be discussed belong to the four-fold stereotype dealt with earlier which was considered strong evidence of spuriousness, notwithstanding the fact that many such dreams may go back ultimately to real dreams. One of these, reported of a certain þuríðr, is found in the interpolated chapter 136 along with 18 other dreams of which we are told that they were dreamt before and presaged the Battle of Örlygsstaðir (Ís.s., p.424). It is noticeable of this dream that despite the assurance that it was dreamt before the battle (Um sumarit enn fyrir Örlygsstaðafund - Ís.s., p.426, str.67) its content apparently effects a jump into the future. A bloody Sturla Sighvatsson appears to þuríðr as a draugr and speaks a strophe in which he refers to his defeat at Örlygsstaðir and to the hostility of himself and his clan towards the victor, Gizurr Þorvaldsson:

Hverir vöktu mér
varman dreyra?
Segið mér, ok segið mér,
sárt vask leikinn.
Aetlask virdar,
- ok veit Tumi,
gledr mik, ok gledr mik, -
Gizur veida.

On closer examination it can be seen that this dream did not originally refer to the Battle of Örlygsstaðir at all.

On December 21, 1241, three years after the Battle of Örlygsstaðir Sturla Þórðarson and Órækja Snorrason led an attack party into southern Iceland against Gizurr Þorvaldsson, who was now not only the victor of Örlygsstaðir, but also the murderer of Snorri Sturlason. The attackers caught up with their retreating quarry in the bishop's seat at Skálholt, but after a very short skirmish Bishop Sigvarðr succeeded in pacifying the two parties (Ís.s., pp.458-464).

On the internal evidence of the dream strophe, it was this event to which the dream originally referred, not the Battle of Örlygsstaðir. Besides accounting for the strophe's apparent jump into the future, this would explain its references to both Tumi and Gizurr. The Tumi in the strophe can hardly be any other than Tumi Sighvatsson, the only one of the sons of Sighvatr at Örlygsstaðir who survived the battle. At the time of the battle he was 15 or 16 years old (he must have been born

after the death of Sighvatr's eldest son Tumi who was killed in 1222) and his presence at the battle provides the first occasion for the mention of his name in the saga. It is plausible in this light that his name should have attracted mention in a dream-strophe after the battle, when his lone survival had raised him into the public consciousness, but not that this should have happened before the battle as is claimed in chapter 136. This is further confirmed by the fact that the dream was purportedly dreamt at Fellsendi, a farm in Dalir not far from Saudafell, Sturla Sighvatsson's former home. This farm was taken over by Tumi Sighvatsson in the spring of 1241. With the mention of the "hunting" of Gizurr in the dream-strophe the connections with the expedition of 1241 are complete. Here Gizurr was in fact located with some difficulty, whereas at Örlygsstaðir he was more pursuer than pursued.

The deductions possible from this dream and the fact of its preservation are the following: the dream must have been invented and told while the attack party was about its business, since the news of the pacification would have made the telling of a battle-dream with this content inappropriate. When this news did arrive with the returning attackers, Þuríðr's dream was in fact found inappropriate for the event and passed over automatically into the dreams in circulation about the Battle of Örlygsstaðir. To this it owes its preservation.

The other dream which similarly provides evidence for the telling of a fictitious dream before a conflict is the one reportedly told by Þorgrímur Hauksson to Sturla Þórðarson, the author of Ís.s., and his brother Óláfr (Óláfr hvítaskáld) in 1228 (Ís.s., p.320). Again the dream has been told in the course of a warlike expedition, the background of which was the rivalry in the Sturlung-clan over the old Sturlung-godord. The expedition was led by the two sons of Hvamm-Sturla, Snorri and Þórðr (the father of the author of Ís.s.), and was directed against their nephew, Sturla Sighvatsson and his þingmenn in Dalir. Participating in the expedition were Þórðr's two sons, Sturla and Óláfr, 14 and 16 years old respectively. As the party rode over Vatnaheiði towards the Dalir district an otherwise unknown Þorgrímur Hauksson told the following dream to the two boys:

Hann dreymdi, at hann þóttist ríða með flokkinum inn til Dala. Hann þóttist sjá, at kona gekk á móti flokkinum, mikil ok stórleit, ok þótti honum kenna af henni þef illan. Hon kvað:

Mál es at minnask
 mörnar hlakkar.
 Vit tvau vitum þat.
 Viltu enn lengra? (Is.s., pp.320-321).

This dream appears highly contrived not only because of its strongly marked type-character (four-fold combination of stereotype features), but also because of the circumstances under which it is told. Most noticeable is the correspondence between the dream scenery and the actual situation, which arises because the "flokkr" purportedly seen in the dream is undoubtedly meant to be taken as the expedition actually under way when the dream is told. As was the case in Sturla Sighvatsson's sausage-dream, this dream is therefore told at the critical junction of the dream and the events of real life purportedly foreseen in the dream.

However, the most revealing aspect of this dream is the fact that, although it is apparently in the best tradition of battle-dreams, it was told to two boys as an omen of a fight which never took place.

Although the expedition to Dalir has been referred to here as a warlike expedition, this was more appearance than fact. Ample precautions had been taken to insure that no bloodshed would occur during its course, Sturla having been warned in advance, and Þórðr agreeing to take part only on condition that his role be that of seeking a peaceful settlement. As matters turned out, Sturla Sighvatsson chose the better part of valour and absented himself from Dalir. It was mentioned earlier in connection with this type of dream that it seemed to be the purview of people who did not personally take part in warlike events. In the present instance it is evident that the boys to whom the dream was told, 14 and 16 years of age, were likewise not fighting men in the normal sense. This is the first instance in which Sturla Þórðarson's name is mentioned in the saga in connection with any armed expedition. It is therefore quite plausible that it was his first experience of this kind and that he and his brother were present precisely because the expedition was intended to look warlike - with a force of 450 men - but not to actually be so. Under such circumstances nothing could be

more natural than for the boys to harbour a secret picture in their mind's eye of a dangerous and stirring adventure. There is no way of knowing whether Þorgrímr Hauksson was a comrade of the brothers who shared their motivation in this regard, or whether he was an older person. If the latter, he must have had a fine sense of psychology. Thus the dream is best understood as a means of creating artificially the impression - in this case a false impression - of a stirring saga-like action.

Finally, mention must be made again of Sighvatr Sturluson's dream before Örlygsstaðir. This dream documents patently and explicitly the point towards which the foregoing discussion has been tending: that the prospect of bloodshed in real life had a catalytic effect on the literary imagination, and that the result was a preparation of real life, before the fact as it were, for literary or quasi-literary reception. Sturla Sighvatsson, it will be remembered, had a dream in the summer of 1238 when Örlygsstaðir was lowering on the horizon, about which he himself composed a scaldic strophe. It is in this strophe that the dream actually acquires point as an omen of defeat and death. The dream is typical of Sighvatr's attitude before the Battle of Örlygsstaðir, and his couching of it in the form of a strophe can only be construed as the action of a man who sees his death and is preparing for it. The dream, it would appear, was real, but Sighvatr, unsatisfied with its slender portentousness, consciously reworked it, whereby it became a saga-dream in the best literary tradition.

In the foregoing remarks the path has led through an array of alternatives and conjectures. It has been observed that any dream examined in isolation affords very inconclusive evidence as to its origin. Nevertheless, an unmistakable pattern emerges. Assuming that Sturla Þórdarson invented no full-scale dream texts himself, this pattern invites the conclusion that many of the Icelanders in Ís.s. were what in our own age might be called camera-conscious; but in this instance it would be more accurate to speak of literary consciousness. This was not just the consciousness of literary models and ideals, but the awareness that one was writing one's own saga as one lived. Stated in this form, the conclusion is a truism. The importance of a man's actions for the narrative record is a well attested fact in Sturlunga

saga,³¹⁾ and not surprisingly so. But what has been considered here is not action as such, but the transformation of a literary-aesthetic device into real life - the aesthetic stylization of actual living in preparation for its literary reception.

The interaction of life and literature is, of course, not a very novel discovery. A moment's reflection tells one that life and literature (or the entertainment media of our day) have probably always and everywhere exercised a mutually conditioning effect on each other. The reason this is of particular interest in relation to 13th century Iceland is because here mediaeval Europe's most impressive prose literature was produced, and because of the problematical nature of the poetics of this literature. If a stylistic identity of literary model and real life has been discovered in the dreams in Ís.s., a particular facet of the life of the age may have been illuminated, but the converse is of equal interest - that it has proven possible, at least in this one limited category and in spite of the literary shortcomings of Ís.s., to read the 13th century theory of the saga from the life of the 13th century itself.

³¹⁾ Cf. e.g. Þorgils skardi at Stafaholt (Þorgils saga skarda, Sturlunga saga, II, p.132) and the Þorvaldssons at Erpsstadir (Ís.s., p.352).