

'Vinr em ek vinar míns': Guðrún Gjúkadóttir in *Gísla saga* and *Íslendinga saga*.

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Among the scholars who in the past decades have busied themselves with the significance of the figure of Guðrún Gjúkadóttir for Icelandic literature of the thirteenth century, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (1988a) has, as far as I know, presented the most complete analysis. He comes to the conclusion that:

'Im Bewusstsein dieser Epoche [thirteenth-century] war das Heldenzeitalter historische Wirklichkeit, und in seinen Personen mit ihren Handlungsweisen sah man Menschen und Ereignisse der eigenen Zeit abgespiegelt.'

In the following pages I will approach the literary use of some motifs of the heroic lays, especially Guðrún Gjúkadóttir, in the so called 'dream-verses' of *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and in Jóriðr's dreams in *Íslendinga saga*. The author of *Gísla saga* was more dependent on the limitations of his sources and on the fictional tradition than Sturla, who, although writing about events of his own time, had a wider freedom to include or adapt different elements of different literary traditions to suit his political or moral standpoint.

Of all the *Íslendingasögur*, *Gísla saga* is the one where the literary traits of the Heroic Age are most obvious and many of its thematic units were modelled after the tragic happenings of the Nibelungen legend. Gíslí's ill-fated life, for example, is dictated by the omnipresence of the ideas of fate, honour and family loyalty and a direct mention of Guðrún Gjúkadóttir in st. 10 [M]¹, where Gíslí reproaches his sister's lack of loyalty, offers us another very clear point of contact between the saga and the heroic lays which dealt with Guðrún's tragedy, specifically *Guðrúnarqviða in fyrsta* and *Guðrúnarqviða önnor*. This is not, however, the only stanza in the saga which has been influenced by the Guðrún story.

Gísla saga has been the object of intense analysis since at least the beginning of the twentieth century. Some scholars, aware of its distinctiveness, have tried to find the origins of the saga in a combination of various sources, such as a local tradition about Gíslí, a poetic one (probably shaped under the influence of the heroic lays), and a disputable later Christian re-elaboration of some passages. The saga as we know it shows the traces of a conscious and deliberate process of adjustment, which would have resulted in at least two different versions of the story of the poet and outlaw Gíslí Súrsson. Attempted solutions to the dilemma of these two versions have consisted mainly in looking at the so-called 'Norwegian prologue' and labelling it as archetypal or artificial according to structural, thematic or stylistic features. The differences in the poetry, however, have hardly been considered.

Gísla saga contains thirty six stanzas attributed to Gíslí, one of which is only preserved in the long version of the saga. Most of them are spoken by the poet, composed in the *dróttkvætt* metre and thematically connected to the expression of

¹ References to the stanzas and the prose as they appear in the long version [S] apply to Agnete Loth's edition (1960). For the short version [M] I have used Finnur Jónsson's edition (1929).

Gísli's emotions about the main events of his life. The dating and authorship of the stanzas has also been the subject of much debate among those who variously believed that they were the work of a Christian poet of the twelfth century, of the author of the saga or of Gísli himself. This is a question that for obvious reasons I shall not face here.

A thematic analysis of the stanzas in the saga reveals that more than half of them are dream-stanzas. They do not deal with the real world, but with Gísli's dream encounters with two valkyrie-like women, who exert an enormous influence on the poet's spiritual struggle from their first appearance until the day of his final battle.

St. 27 [M] is among those in the saga which have received the most attention, mostly due to the fact that in it, one of Gísli's dream-women overturns the prophecy made by the other. Such a contravention represented a breach of the unspoken rule that predictions could not be annulled unless they contained an element that allowed this, as with the spell that Þorgrímr *nef* cast on Þorgrím's assassin (ch. 21). The first half of the stanza in Agnete Loth's edition of the long version [S] in *Membrana regia deperdita*² is as follows:

Skulu þo it kvaþ skorþa	You shall not, said the woman (lady of
skaptkers, saman verja,	the Vessel), abide together,
svo hefir yckr til ecka	So has the poison of good love (?)
eitr goþnurnar leitit.	turned into sorrow for you.

An alternative wording of verse 4 is preserved in Nks. 1181 fol. and AM 149 fol. (*eitr goðmunar leitit*), but its meaning is equally obscure.

The variant of this *helmingr* in the main manuscript of the short version [M], AM 556 a 4to, has been transcribed several times, e.g. in Konrad Gislason's, Agnete Loth's and Finnur Jónsson's editions (see below).

Skulut þit ei, kvað skorda	You shall not, said the woman (lady of
Skapt kers, saman vera,	the Vessel), abide together,
svo hefir yckr við ecka	So has Guðrún's poison (?)
eitr gudrunar heitit,	sorrow for you promised.

The main problems posed by st. 27 therefore, concern the interpretation of line 4 and its second *helmingr*. The scholars who have followed the different variants of the manuscripts of the long version, *eitr goþnurnar*, *eitr goð munar*, *eitr goð munar* have not agreed as to the significance of the *kenning*. Finnur Jónsson's (*Skj* B I, 101) reading *sva hefr goð leitit yckr munar eitrs til ekka*, 'således har gud bestemt eder glædens gift med sorg', i.e. 'God has prescribed for you the poison of love [grief] with grief', where he isolates *goð* from the rest of the *kenning*, did not convince Ernst A. Kock (1923, 42-43), who initially rejected Finnur Jónsson's interpretation, proposing an alternative *ekka eitrs*, 'grief's poison', but later (1930, 28-29) admitted that the isolated appearance of *goð* could be united to *eitr*, *eitr goð*, 'bitterhetens gud', i.e. 'the god of wrath', to refer to one of the gods of the Norse Pantheon. Þórólfsson's (1943, 102-3) *eitr goðmunar*, 'the poison of the great love, i.e. "an extraordinary love"' does not offer a convincing explanation. Konrad Gislason's rendering of the line (1849, 186), 'Saaledes er Gudernes Bestemmelse,' 'So is the decision of the gods', where *goð* is interpreted as a plural form and the whole *kenning* then as 'the poison of the will of

² Agnete Loth's edition of the poetry is based on Árni Magnússon's own handwritten copy preserved in AM 761 B 4to.

the gods [fate]' was probably based on Jonsonius' Latin translation in Nks 1181 fol. In Jonsonius the noun *munnr* acquires the sense of 'voluntas' (Cf. Fritzner, 1891, II, 751), and thus *godmunar* is rendered as 'deorum voluntas':

Vos faxo, inquit sustentatrix
 Poculi manubriati, non conuivetis;
 Quod vobis ad moerorem fatum
 Venefica deorum voluntas
 destinavit (quaesivit)
 Potentissimus mundi rector
 (Odinus)
 Te ex regione misit (missum vult)
 Unum ex vestra domo
 Ad cognoscendum alium mundum

You will not, said the holder of the
 handle of the vessel, live together;
 The poison of the will of the gods has
 prescribed this fate for your sorrow

The all-powerful ruler of the world
 has sent you away from the land

alone from your home
 to explore another world.

Jonsonius' translation reflects the idea which is recurrent in the prose, that Gísli's fate was the ruling power in his life, which of course leads the translator to avoid the Christian interpretation of *allvaldr aldar*, but also leaves us with the unexplained problem of why Gísli's future is placed in Óðinn's hands. As we can see from the divergent analyses of st. 27, l. 4 in [S], its various readings do not offer an unambiguous understanding of how Gísli's 'pitiful fate' has come into being.

The interpretations of the kenning as it stands in [M] '*eitir gudrunar*', although more unanimous, also fail to give an explanation of how 'the poison of Guðrún' is to be understood in the context of the stanza. Konrad Gislason (1849, 176) translated it as 'Gudrun's Forbittelse', 'Guðrún's bitterness' and admitted that although it was a very plausible reference to the historical Guðrún Gjúkadóttir, he could not prove that this was the case, due to 'Mangel paa bestemte Data', 'lack of reliable data'. In his edition of the short version Finnur Jónsson quoted the verses from AM 556 a 4to (1929, 64, 104-5), but he did not mention Guðrún in his explanation of the stanza. He insisted on translating the verse as if he were doing so from S, because according to him, '[det] må være den ægte læsemåde', '[that] must be the original reading'. Agnete Loth (1956, 88-89) concluded that the stanza is of 'incomprehensible meaning'. Despite the variations of form, the message uttered by the bad woman in the first half of the stanza seems to be that Gísli will not enjoy the future happiness that the good woman had 'changed into' sorrow (*leitit* [S]) or 'promised' (*heitit* [M]) him.

Basic to the understanding of the whole stanza is the reading of the second *helmingr*. The differences between the two versions (S and M) are also remarkable:

Allvaldr hefir alldar
 erlendis þik sendan
 einn or yþru ranni
 annan heim at kanna.

allvaldr hefir allda
 erlennis mik senda
 enn ur öðru ranni
 annan heim at kanna.

(God has sent you away from your home
 to explore a new world)

(God has sent me again far from the other
 world to explore another abode)

In the second *helmingr* of the stanza in the S-version, the bad woman, addressing Gísli, announces God's/Óðinn's future plans for him. In M, on the contrary, the pronoun *mik*, the feminine past participle *senda* and the adverb *enn* allow for a completely new interpretation of the stanza. The bad woman is now talking about

herself, declaring that Óðinn, once again, has sent her away from her previous dwelling to explore a new world

Bearing in mind the importance played by some heroic poems in the conception of *Gísla saga*, it will not seem implausible that some clues for the interpretation of Gísli's stanzas might be found within them. As some scholars have pointed out, the unfriendly encounter between Brynhildr and Guðrún by the river probably served as a model for the conversation between Auðr and Ásgerðr in ch. 9. The enmity between Brynhildr (the alter-ego of the valkyrie Sigdrífa, as is stated for example in *Helreið Brynhildar*) and the ill-fated and disconsolate Guðrún, seems a very likely source for the conception of the dream-women cycle in *Gísla saga*. As we will discuss later, some of the qualities of the heroic characters were reshaped according to Christian literary usage in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In this way, the figure of Guðrún in *Gísla saga* would have acquired some traits of the 'piety' later ascribed to her, for example, by the dream in question in *Íslendinga saga*.

Brynhildr, on the other hand, is still represented as the gruesome valkyrie whom Óðinn (*altvaldr aldar*) once compelled to abandon her warlike nature, and who was later deprived of Sigurðr's love. According to the tradition preserved in the heroic lays, but also in sagas contemporary to *Gísla saga* (such as *Völsunga saga*), Brynhildr and Guðrún blamed each other for their misfortunes. In st. 13 of *Helreið Brynhildar*, Brynhildr accuses Guðrún and her brothers of betraying her:

*Dá varð ec þess vis, er ec vildigac,
at þau vélto mic í verfangi* (Neckel, 1962, 222)
'Then I grew aware of what I wish I had never done,
that they betrayed me in my choosing a husband.'

In *Sigurðarqviða in scamma*, Guðrún also blames Brynhildr

*ec veit gorla, hvi gegnir nú:
ein veldr Brynhildr öllu bölví* (Neckel, 1962, 211)
'I know well why this is happening now:
Brynhild alone has caused all this grief.'

Although the characters of the Burgundian cycle are presented from different points of view, sometimes putting emphasis on the suffering widow, sometimes on the injustice of Sigurðr's murder or the feeble natures of Atli and Gunnar, I agree with Preben M. Sørensen (*op. cit.*, 194) that the apparent inconsistencies in the presentation of Guðrún in the various lays of the Edda are only due to the fact that their authors emphasize different aspects of her personality.

The dream-stanzas of the Christian author of *Gísla saga* may have modelled Gísli's dream women on the opposed roles of Brynhildr and Guðrún. As the personification of family loyalty, Guðrún is also given the Christian attributes of what Lönnroth (1969) defined as a noble heathen. Brynhildr, on the other hand, appears as the vindictive valkyrie who covers Gísli in human blood (stt. 28 and 29 [M]) and tells him that 'Guðrún's bitter fate', *eitr Guðrúnar*, will prevent them from being together. In this way we interpret *eitr*, 'poison', as the negative force present in both Gísli's and Guðrún's destiny. The fact that the bad woman managed to oppose the prophecy of the good one was due to her valkyrie nature and her sharing some attributes with the norms, who controlled fate. Brynhildr's characterization in the poems as a woman capable of foretelling the future makes her knowledge of Gísli's destiny

understandable. A similar instance of Brynhildr's prophetic aptitude in *Völsunga saga* illustrates my point. In ch. 28 Brynhildr tells Guðrún:

Njóti þér svá Sigurðar sem þér hafði mik eigi svikit, ok er yðart samveldi ómakligt, ok gangi yðr svá sem ek hygg

'And enjoy Sigurd now as if you had not betrayed me, although you don't deserve to live together, and may it happen to you as I predict.'

Although *Völsunga saga* probably postdates *Gísla saga* by a few decades, a good part of its content is nothing but a retelling of some of the lays dealing with Guðrún's story as preserved in the *Codex Regius*. That both works contain motifs belonging to the same tradition about Guðrún is not very unlikely. St. 27, as preserved in the short version of *Gísla saga*, could thus be understood as a representation of Gísli's subjection to fate based on the example of Guðrún's. The second part of the stanza, where the bad woman speaks about herself, offers us clear clues to her identity, and to that of *allvaldr aldar*, who according to Jonsonius' Latin rendering of the verse, must be none other than the *Potentissimum mundi rector*, *Odinus*.

Another example of the use of heroic-mythological motifs in *Gísla saga* can be found in the controversial mention of the mythical *vargr* in two prose paragraphs connected to the dreams. There is only one dream in *Gísla saga* that is not recounted in poetical form. In chapter fourteen, in the prose paragraph that precedes st. 3 [M], Gísli tells about the two dreams, already mentioned in the first two lines of the previous chapter, that he has had during the nights before the murder of Vésteinn. These two dreams about Vésteinn's death offer a clue to the identity of the assassin.

If we take into account that all of the other dreams in the saga are told in verse and that in many cases they are introduced by a prose summary of their content, we cannot but ask ourselves whether st. 3 is not the only remaining one of a now lost group of stanzas. It is in these stanzas that Gísli's ominous dreams about Vésteinn's murder were probably put into poetic form. At the same time it is worth asking whether the whole prose paragraph before st. 3 did not originate as an attempt to recreate the content of the second verse (*biðkat draums ens þriðja*) and the allusion to the dreams in the opening of ch. 13 [M]).

The abrupt thematic change which takes place between Þorkell and Gísli's conversation about Auðr's grief and Gísli's announcement of his prophetic dream, also points in that direction.³ After Gísli has refused to reveal the content of the dreams (though he suggests that they were quite clear), he suddenly changes his mind and renders them in prose, adding that his previous silence was due to his desire that nobody should interpret them. After the narrator announces that Gísli had composed a verse about it, one would expect to find a stanza (or more), with mythical kennings for the wolf and the serpent that have been mentioned earlier. What we have instead is a single stanza where Gísli expresses his relief at not having to wake up a third time from such horrible dreams and praises the friendship that he and Vésteinn had enjoyed when they were together in Vේbjörg.

³ The long version contains a better elaboration of the scene. Þorkell's direct question to Gísli about the content of his dreams offers a less abrupt transition between the theme of Auðr's grief and Gísli's dreams, but fails to explain the incongruence between Gísli's first *vil ek eigi aa kveda* and the sudden *Þat dreynde mik hina fyrre nott* (page 21).

A plausible explanation of such inconsistencies, is that the writer, influenced by the dream-stanzas of the last part of the saga and by the mentions of the two dreams in st. 3 and the opening of ch. 13, might have considered it acceptable to invent the two missing dreams by using ingredients known to him from the heroic lays. If our author's intention was to produce a dream which pointed at the culprit of an assassination where blood-brothers were involved, it is not improbable that he might have thought of Sigurðr and Guðrún's tragic story. In st. 4 of *Brot af Sigurðarqvíðu* we read:

*Sumir úlf sviðo,
sumir Gothormi
áðr þeir mætti,
á horscom hal*

*sumir orm sniðo,
af gera deildo,
meins um lystir,
hendr um leggja.*

(Neckel, 1962, 198)

'Some a wolf did roast/ some a snake sliced/ some fed it to Guthorm/
before, prone to evil, they were able/ to lay their hands on the noble man.'

Gothorm was the only one of Gjúki's sons who was not bound by the loyalty-oaths sworn to Sigurðr just as Þorgrímr was not bound to Vésteinn after the *fóstbræðralag* ceremony could not be completed. Guthorm needed to be fed magical food to increase his courage, and Þorgrímr needed the assistance of his namesake, the evil Þorgrímr *nef*, to re-forge the magical sword *Grásiða* into a 'sacrificial' spear. In this way, the meat of the two mythological animals ingested by Guthorm to perform the killing could have impelled *Gísla saga's* author to create two new dreams (the number implied in the stanza), where the two animals represented the man responsible for Vésteinn's slaying,⁴ i. e. Þorgrímr.

This is not, however, the only instance where the writer of the saga decided to add a popular mythological element to the basic plot. In the prose preface to the dream unit composed by stt. 30, 31 and 32 [M] we find:

*Einn þeirra for fystr, greniannde miok, ok þottumzt ek hauggva hann
sunnr i midiu, ok þotte mer vera aa honum vargs höfud. Þaa sottu
margir at mer; ek þóttumzk hafa skiöldinn i hende mer ok veriazt leingi
(Finnur Jónsson, 1929, 65)*

'One of them went first, howling loudly, and I think I cut him asunder at the waist, and thought that he had the head of a wolf. Then many warriors attacked me; I thought I had my shield in my hand and defended myself for a long time.'

Rendering the content of the verses, the writer mentions the long-lasting defence Gíslr manages with his shield (st. 31 [M]), as well as the fact that he cuts a man's body into pieces, (in st. 32 [M] it is only one leg). Most interesting is that the writer has found it necessary to add '*vera aa honum vargs höfud*'. Curiously enough, the only two mentions of the mythological *vargr* in the short version of the saga occur in the prose summaries of the dream-stanzas.⁵

⁴ Cf. *Völsunga saga*, ch. 32.

⁵ St. 4 only preserved in the 'Norwegian prologue' of the long version contains also a reference to the *vargar* in line 4 (*en vargar saddir*). It is though of a much different kind, since it does not imply any mythological references and only points to the fact that people had been killed and that the wolves had thus been fed.

In this second case, the prose summary contains information that cannot be found in the verses. It is also presented by an introductory prose summary, but, unlike the other stanzas, it is in a different order. The name of one of Gísli's enemies is referred to in the first sentence, *at menn kæme at oss ok væri Eyolfur í faur*, although in the verses no man is singled out, and we have only plural forms as *fianndr* (st. 30 [M]) or *þeir* (st. 31 [M]). In this case, it is very likely that our author might have composed the prose summary following the order of the account of Gísli's last encounter in chapters 34-36 [M], and then later added the supernatural-mythical element, which appears neither in the poetry nor in chapters 34-36. Presumably these changes were made to emphasize the wickedness of the attackers. The first to attack Gísli is described in the prose summary as 'howling loudly and wearing a wolf's head'. This first attacker is no other than *Njósna*-Helgi, who according to the narration of ch. 34, accused Eyjólfur of cowardice for not daring to attack first. When he finally attacks Gísli, although rather cautiously, the result is that Gísli strikes him in the loins and cuts him down. As is evident from the adjectives used of him in the saga, such as *lafhræddur ok felmtsfullr*, 'very scared and frightened' (ch. 31), Helgi does not show much wolfish courage. All in all, the first depiction of Helgi as a dreadful warrior is nothing but an attempt, for pure dramatic effect, to invest the text with a sense of pagan antiquity.

The appearance of Guðrún Gjúkadóttir in Jóreiður's dreams as depicted in *Íslendinga saga* shows some traces of a similar type of treatment of the heroic material. The words uttered by Guðrún when Jóreiður asks her whether heathens are coming to Iceland reveal a conscious adaptation of Guðrún's character:

'Aungu skal þic skipta', segir hon, "hvart ek em kristin eða heiþin, enn uinr em ek vinar mins."⁶

"That should make no difference to you", she said, "whether I am Christian or heathen, because I am a friend of my friends."

Jóreiður's dream-cycle is contained in chapter 190 of *Íslendinga saga*, although only in the fourteenth-century *Króksfjarðarbók* (AM 122a [I] fol.), one of the main manuscripts of the *Sturlunga saga*. The first of the four dreams is said to have happened during the summer of the year 1255 after the battle of Þverá, one of the many bloody encounters that took place in the first two thirds of that century. In the first three dreams Guðrún answers Jóreiður's questions about her origin and identity, and expresses herself in verse when questioned about the news from some of Iceland's most prominent chieftains.

The discussion about whether or not that chapter, and possibly the last ten in *Íslendinga saga*, were written by Sturla Þórðarson (1214-1284), has not yet offered any reliable conclusions. Most scholars are of the opinion that it diverges both stylistically and thematically from the rest of the work and therefore might not be a part of the original saga. The different types of metre used in the stanzas that contain the kernel of the dreams, together with some inconsistencies in the relationship between prose and verse have been presented as a proof that the stanzas originally belonged neither together nor in the prose context, where they must have been inserted at a later time (Sørensen, 1988, 184-85). A broader consensus seems to reign about the fact that the main aspiration of those chapters would have been to praise two of the most important characters of the time, Þorvarður Þórarinnsson and Gizurr Þorvaldsson.

⁶ References to *Íslendinga saga* refer to Jón Johannesson, Magnús Finnbogason and Kristján Eldjárn's edition of *Sturlunga saga* (1946).

Although *Íslendinga saga* and *Gisla saga* were written within a few decades of each other, their varied treatment of the same material was determined by their sources and by the fact that they were dealing with events and characters from periods separated by more than two centuries. *Íslendinga saga* was written as a historical work with the intention of offering a trustworthy account of the present, while *Gisla saga* dealt with less verifiable facts and characters of a much admired, but also idealized past age.

Guðrún is, however, not the only figure from the past who appears in a dream to one of the main characters of *Íslendinga saga*. The appearance of Egill Skalla-Grimsson to one of Snorri Sturluson's relatives, Egill Halldórsson, serves a purpose similar to that of Jóreiðr's cycle, since Egill's dream contains Sturla's veiled criticism of his uncle's greed. In that dream Egill tries to warn Snorri against leaving his farm at Borg by reminding him of a similar event that happened to Hrólfur kraki. By using this device, Sturla is pointing at Snorri's death caused by his unrestrained lechery and ambition. Even though the structure and function of this episode diverge from Jóreiðr's episode, both demonstrate that in the minds of the Icelanders, the literary boundary between heroic-age characters and those of the Settlement period was permeable enough to permit their use with a political or moral agenda.

Whether Jóreiðr's dream was written by Sturla Þórðarson or not,⁷ its inclusion in *Íslendinga saga* suggests a certain interest in heroic lays among the learned class in Iceland. If we have a look at what is preserved of Sturla's poetical activity, it comes as no surprise that he shows himself to be well-informed in ancient Norse lore, having benefited from the literary inclinations of his erudite uncle Snorri Sturluson, as well as from a similar education to that of his brother Óláfr *hvítaskáld*. The use of mythological references in some of the dream stanzas of *Íslendinga saga*, as well as in some of his well-known poems, such as *Hákonarkviða* or *Hrafnsmál*, is one of the many witnesses to the re-evaluation of the pagan literary heritage that took place in Iceland from the end of the twelfth and during most of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries⁸. The parameters of the literary genre where these old heroic and mythological motifs or characters were included clearly determined its shape and the nature of its representation.

Taking this into account, it should not come as a surprise that Guðrún, as represented in *Íslendinga saga*, emerges as a hybrid figure with both pagan and Christian features, even if some of this figure's literary components were only distant echoes of her original characterization in the heroic lays. In Jóreiðr's four dreams Guðrún answers the girl's questions both in prose and in verse, although it is mostly in the prose where we find information concerning her identity and disposition. In the

⁷ Cf. Kjartanson 1992, 274. Having such a great control over his material, it is most unlikely that Sturla would have fallen into significant errors like the one contained in Jóreiðr's last dream. In it Guðrún declares that she is going to chastise Eyjólfur for mistreating Hallr, while in previous chapters Sturla had said that all of Gissur's sons had perished in the burning.

⁸ Cf. st. 4 of *Íslendinga saga* (1946, 251). After the battle of Viðines, a man from Skagafljörður dreamt that he came to a very large house where two women covered in blood were rocking to and fro as if rowing. They identify themselves as the valkyries, Guðr and Gönduf, and say that they are on their way to Raftahlíð.

prose Guðrún is given the external appearance of a powerful valkyrie coming from the realm of the dead (*násheim*), riding a large grey horse (as in *Gísla saga*) and dressed in the dark colours of the place she comes from (*Hon var þá í bláum klæðum, ok sýndist henni konan mikilúðlig*). Guðrún's irregular depiction throughout the chapter is not easy to explain except as reflecting the author's implicit intention of reconfiguring the most famous literary representative of Germanic family loyalty in new Christian apparel.

In some of the stanzas in the introductory prose and in the final dream (especially 88 and 90), Guðrún is portrayed as the vindictive and loyal woman of the old lays (e.g. st. 9 of *Guðrúnarqviða önnor*: '*þitt scyli hiarta hrafnar slíta*'). In other instances she acquires an almost pious appearance. By labelling the men responsible for the burning of Flugumýr as 'wicked bearers of paganism', and by the half-hearted rejection of her paganism, the author is offering us a clear backing for her surprising final statement '*þat er ok eigi siðr, at góð er guðs þrenning*'. Guðrún's explicit profession of faith would serve the purpose of validating her previous judgements about the main characters of the saga. The author's apparent freedom to modify conflicting elements of an ancient literary tradition in order to include them in dreams about events of his own time is more understandable if we appeal to their literary and moral function. The presence of Guðrún in Jóreiðr's dreams would stress the importance of the values she stands for, loyalty and strength of character, in such a tragic era as the Age of the Sturlungs.

To sum up, the inclusion of different motifs and characters of the heroic poems in Iceland's thirteenth century literature was subject to both the author's agenda and the literary character of the text into which they were inserted. *Gísla saga*'s unusual wealth of heroic motifs, its abundance in dream-stanzas (their habitual literary environment) makes it possible that some obscure points in their presentation can be clarified by interpreting them in the light of the material contained in the Heroic Lays. The fact that the author of *Gísla saga* included the heroic-mythological *ormr* and *vargr* in his attempt to reproduce the possible loss of a few stanzas, and in his characterization of one of Gíslí's enemies, suggest that heroic-mythological characters and motifs were still in use in the Christian period when most sagas were put into writing. Their inclusion in dream-stanzas or in connection with them can thus be interpreted as a clear sign that although they were not to be considered a part of the real world, they were capable of exerting considerable influence on it.

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