

***Draumvísur* and *Draugvísur* in Icelandic Sagas:
The Border between Fantasy and Reality**

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Many of the old Icelandic sagas deal quite closely at times with the Other World and how persons in our world come into contact with the Other World. This contact mainly occurs in the form of dreams, visions and, sometimes, interaction with ghosts and monsters. Within the frame of realistic prose narrative, for which the Icelandic sagas – particularly older ones – are famous, poetical expression often turns out to be one of the best means of conveying this relationship with the Other World. Being more personal than the prose narrative of the sagas, poetry is regularly used to express the saga characters' experience of contacts with the Other World, as well as to underline messages from the Other World. These poetical expressions are mainly short and often take the form of single stanzas.

In the Icelandic sagas we thus find a number of single stanzas concerned with dreams, visions, and other messages from the Other World. This paper attempts (1) to analyse the impact of these stanzas and their messengers on our world and (2) to draw a borderline between the 'fantastic' and the 'real' in the stanzas and their context. The medieval Icelandic view of the 'fantastic' and the 'real' is obviously different from our modern view, and this paper aims to reconstruct the views of the audiences of the medieval Icelandic sagas and their stanzas, as well as to trace the changes in those views from the older sagas to the younger ones. The paper considers mainly the sagas of Icelanders but also touches on some other Icelandic sagas for comparison.

Single stanzas which convey or underline messages from the Other World and which will be analysed here can be divided into several groups, according to the circumstances of their creation and their presumed authors:

1. Dream-stanzas (*draumvísur*) composed by the dreaming character either in the dream or after the dream.
2. Dream-stanzas heard by the dreaming character from someone who comes to him or her in the dream (dream-person: *draummaðr* / *draumkona*).
3. Stanzas heard by a character who has a vision (*syn*) from someone who appears to the character (vision-persons).
4. Stanzas heard, presumably not in dreams or visions, from a ghost (*draugr*).

The spheres of dreams, visions and interactions with ghosts – whether of a more spiritual or a more corporeal kind – are closely intertwined, and the borderlines between them are often unclear. For instance, dreams in the Icelandic sagas are sometimes considered as being close to hallucinations, illusions, visions and day-dreams (Lid, 1958, 300; Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson, 1989, 35-36). Moreover, ghosts were often regarded as dreams or diabolical illusions (cf. Augustine – see Lauwers, 2000, 604; Schmitt, 1998, 17ff.). This should not surprise those who consider *draumr* and *draugr* to derive from the same root **draugma*- 'deceive, betray' (Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon, 1989, 125).

This leads to a slight confusion in terminology regarding the messengers from the Other World mentioned above, particularly ghosts. Several Old Norse – Icelandic words are used to describe ghosts in the sagas, among them *draugr*, *aptrganga*, and *haugbúi*. There is no unanimity in the usage or interpretation of these terms. For instance, *draugr* is often defined by simply naming the other two terms: ‘attergangar’ and ‘den døde som buande i haugen’ (Solheim, 1958, 297). *Haugbúar* seem to be referred to as *draugr*, but sometimes also as *aptrganga*. The words *draugr*, *aptrganga* / *ganga apr* and *haugr* are often mentioned in the same instance (see examples in *ONP*: I, 509-510, and III, 192). The scope and hierarchy of these terms is thus not quite obvious, nor is the degree of corporeality of the entities signified by this term.

Different English words are used to translate these Icelandic terms.¹ Definitions and translations overlap, and it is thus difficult to produce a concise classification of these supernatural beings – a task that is, in any case, beyond the scope of this paper (see, however, Ström, 1958, 432-438; Gläuser, 1993, 623-624). For convenience, the generic word *draugr* will be used in this paper in the widest meaning (almost any kind of ghost, spiritual or corporeal), and *haugbúi* will be used only for mound-dwellers.

Different problems also emerge in the classification of the single stanzas related to the Other World. One of them concerns the circumstances of the creation of the stanzas. Thus, we assume that a saga character who communicates with a *draugr* is not asleep or having a vision, but we can seldom be completely sure of this, unless the contact with the *draugr* is physical (cf. Grettir and Glámr). Even then, we can recall cases of people being physically affected by the supernatural through dreams; compare the case of Þórmóðr and Kolbrún. To be sure, the force which affects Þórmóðr is mainly Kolbrún’s words, pronounced when she comes to him in a dream, and not her direct physical actions; still, this is a borderline case of spiritual and physical contact.

Another problem is one of the authorship of the dream and vision stanzas. Who should be considered the author of a dream stanza: the dream-person, from whom the stanza was heard in the dream, or the saga character, who recites the stanza once awake? In this paper, I follow the information that the sagas provide us about the stanzas’ authorship and presume the authorship of the dream-person, keeping groups (1) and (2) of the dream-stanzas above separate.

All of these reflections on the classification of the ‘fantastic’ in the sagas are coloured by our modern view of ghosts, phantoms, etc. To reconstruct the medieval view of the ‘otherworldly’ events described in the sagas, we should consider all groups of the stanzas above in detail.

1. We have very few examples of saga persons creating stanzas *in a dream*, like Þorbjörn in *Heiðarvíga saga*, who says: *En eg þóttist kveða vísur tvær í svefninum og man eg þær báðar* (*ÍSOT*, 1378-1379).² These stanzas are clearly a part of the dream. This can also be concluded from the way the dream is described in the saga. Þorbjörn

¹ E.g.: *draugr* – ‘ghost’, ‘spirit’, ‘the dead inhabitant of the cairn’, ‘revenant’, ‘apparition’, ‘spectre’; *aptrganga* – ‘ghost’, ‘apparition’, ‘revenant’; *haugbúi* – ‘cairn-dweller’, ‘ghost’ (cf. Cleasby and Vigfusson, 1957; Geir T. Zoëga, 1942; *ONP* I, III).

² The saga texts are quoted from *ÍSOT* in modern Icelandic spelling for the sake of uniformity and convenience, as well as to avoid the large number of specific Old Icelandic characters which can present problems in printing; but the stanzas are quoted from *Slg. B.*

tells the dream in *one* short prose sentence:

‘Þar þóttist eg vera staddur er eigi þótti öllum einnug og þóttist eg hafa sverð það er eg hefi vanur verið að hafa í hendi mér en nú er ei heima og brotnaði í sundur þegar eg hjó fram’ – *ibid.*)

and *two* stanzas which contain much more information about the essence of the dream than the prose sentence.

More often the saga characters relate their dreams in stanzas composed *post factum*, i.e. when they wake from their dreams. Apparently, their descriptions depend to some extent on how much time has passed between the dream and the composition of the stanza, and on how emotionally the saga hero takes the dream. This can be shown from two stanzas describing two dreams of Víga-Glúmr. He relates the dreams to Már at the same time, but in different ways. Glúmr ends the description of the first dream with the words: ‘*Og er eg vaknaði kvað eg visu*’ (*ÍSOT*, 1935). The stanza is thus, according to the saga information, composed immediately after Glúmr wakes up. The dream is fresh in his mind and the stanza is a forthright, first-person expression:

Harðsteini lét huna
harðgeðr lima fjarðar
(þat sák) dóms (í draumi)
dyn-Njörðr mik of barðan,
en þráráttar þóttumk
þjósti keyrðr of ljósta
sævar hrafns í svefni
snarr beinanda steini. (*Skj.* B I, 113)

The description of the second dream ends with these words: ‘... *Og vaknaði eg [Glúmr] síðan og hygg eg fyrir tíðindum vera, og kvað visu*’ (*ÍSOT*, 1936). Thus, the stanza is not necessarily composed right after Glúmr wakes up, but more likely when Glúmr tells the dream to Már. The stanza is more reserved and is in third person:

Menstiklir sá mikla,
mun sverða brak verða,
komin es grára geira,
goðreið of tröð, kveðja,
þars ásynjur jósu
eggmóts of fõr seggja
(valir fagna því) vegna
vígmóðar framm biðði. (*Skj.* B I, 113)

To be sure, the question of the first- and third-person point of view in the skaldic poetry is still subject to discussion. In fact, this is one of the very few dream-stanzas in the third person. Even when skalds describe what they dreamed long ago, they usually use the first person – probably because dreams are such personal phenomena. This happens, for instance, in yet another stanza by this same Glúmr, when he describes a dream that he had several months earlier. In that dream, he sees the *hamingja* of Vigfúss, his relative. He relates and interprets the dream in prose immediately and correctly, assuming that Vigfúss died and his *hamingja* had now come to Glúmr, but he does not give the poetic ‘confirmation’ of the dream before he learns about Vigfúss’ death from earthly informants (*ÍSOT*, 1918).

More importantly, these three stanzas give little additional information to the

events of the prose narrative. This could, however, depend on the narrative mode of the saga in question. In *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa* and *Gunnlaugs saga orms tungu*, where the narrative is more lyrical than in *Viga-Glúms saga* or *Heiðarviga saga* (cf. Gíslí's dream there, *ÍSOT*, 1378-1379), the saga heroes are asked what they have dreamt and answer *only* with a stanza, which describes the whole dream. The stanzas are in the first person and are highly emotional (*ÍSOT*, 107, 115; 1184).

Finally, there are *post-factum* stanzas which do not relate dreams, but instead comment on them. One of the most famous is the stanza by Gíslí Súrsson commenting on his dreams foreboding the death of Vésteinn. He relates the dreams in prose to Þorkell after Vésteinn's death, adding that '*...því sagði eg hvorigan drauminn fyrir en nú að eg vildi gjarna að hvorngi réði*' (*ÍSOT*, 919).³ An emotional stanza in the first person follows:

Betr hugðak þá (brigði
 biðkat ek draums ens þriðja
 slíks af svefni vöðum
 sárteina) Vésteini,
 þás vér í sal sötum
 Sigrhadds, við mjöð gladdir,
 komskat maðr á miðli
 mín né hans, at víni. (*Skj.* B I, 96)

It seems very significant that almost all of these dreams that are accompanied by stanzas forbode (or reveal, as in case of the death of Vigfúss) a battle and/or the death of the hero. All of these dreams come true, despite the precautions which some of the saga heroes take (e.g. Gíslí Súrsson). This shows that predictions from the Other World were regarded as objective, 'real' phenomena which could come true whether they were made public or whether an effort was made to keep them private.⁴

2. In the cases considered above, messages come from the Other World directly to the saga characters. However, dreams often require a messenger, particularly if the dreams concern larger groups of men or even rulers and their battles.

Several saga characters have dreams about persons reciting a stanza to them, such as the fathers of Gunnlaugr and Hrafn when the death of their sons is revealed to them in their dreams. Here is what happened to Gunnlaugr's father:

Og um sumarið áður þessi tíðindi [the deaths of Gunnlaugr and Hrafn – *YSH*] spurðust út hingað til Íslands þá dreymdi Illuga svarta og var hann þá heima á Gilsbakka. Honum þótti Gunnlaugr að sér koma í svefnum og var blóðugur mjög og kvað visu þessa fyrir honum í svefnum. Illugi

³ Other stanzas from *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, even though of great interest, are not considered in this paper for a number of reasons. First, we cannot see properly whether the stanzas in the saga are single stanzas or parts of larger poem(s). The latter is very probable; for instance, in the case of the stanzas related to the dream-women. Second, the age of the stanzas is also undetermined. Third, the material on the stanzas of *Gísla saga* is so rich that a discussion of them would not fit within the limits of this paper. Another paper, based on the conclusions of this one and particularly devoted to the stanzas of *Gísla saga*, seems a reasonable solution.

⁴ Another opinion is given in Hallfréður Örn Birksson, 1989, 35-36.

mundi vísuna er hann vaknaði og kvað síðan fyrir öðrum (*ÍSOT*, 1191-1192).

Here, as in the case of Víga-Glúmr, the death of a relative is revealed (rather than predicted) to the dreaming character. The stanzas by Gunnlaugr and Hrafn are in the first person and describe what has already happened, constituting the main part of their fathers' dreams – as in most of the other stanzas, which are heard from dream-persons.

Another example, on a larger scale, is the dream of Gilli jarl in the Hebrides (*Njáls saga*):

Gilla jarl í Suðureyjum dreymdi það að maður kæmi að honum og nefndist Herfinnur og kvaðst vera kominn af Írlandi. Jarl þóttist spyrja þaðan tíðinda (*ÍSOT*, 343).

In the stanza which follows, Herfinnr describes a battle in Ireland and the death of Sigurðr konungr and his men;

Þeir Flosi og jarl tölðu mart um draum þenna. Viku síðar kom þar Hrafn hinn rauði og sagði þeim tíðindin öll úr Brjánsorustu, fall konungs og Sigurðar jarls og Bróður og allra víkinganna' (ibid.).

The stanza is in the first person but is not particularly emotional; Herfinnr relates the battle as an eyewitness.

Among the stanzas heard from the messengers of the Other World, we also find predictions, as in case of Flosi's dream in *Njáls saga*, before the battle at the Alþingi (*ÍSOT*, 290). His *draummaðr*, who calls himself Járngrímr, walks out of Lómagnúpr and has a dark appearance: *var í geithéðni og hafði járnstaf í hendi*. He calls 25 men by name, all friends and relatives of Flosi and Ketill ór Mörk, who listens to Flosi's dream and says that it forbodes the death of these men. The stanza recited by the *draummaðr* describes what happens later at the Alþingi – also as an objective witness:

Höggorma mun hefjask
herði-þundr á landi;
séa munu menn á moldu
margar heila borgir;
nú vex blárri brodda
beystisullr í fjöllum;
koma mun sumra seggja
sveita-dögg á leggi. (*Skj.* B I, 605)

The dream-persons who recite stanzas can thus be of different kinds. However, there are no normal or living men among them. They can be recently departed people, such as Gunnlaugr and Hrafn when they come to tell their fathers about their deaths, unknown people of a strange nature, like Járngrímr or Herfinnr (Herfinnr's verse does not assume that he fell in the battle), or obviously supernatural beings like the dream-women who come to Gísli Súrsson. Dream-people seem to belong fully to the Other World; they do not step out of it, and have only an indirect effect on our world.

3. Some characters in the Icelandic sagas have visions. Visions are different from the dreams in that the saga character who has a vision is, according to the saga, *not asleep*. These visions are similar to the second type of dream described above.

One of the most famous examples of visions in the sagas of Icelanders is, again, in *Njáls saga*, when Hildiglúmr Runólfsson sees *gandreið*:

Hann gekk út drottinsdagsnótt þá er tólf vikur voru til vetrar. Hann heyrði brest mikinn svo að honum þótti skjálfa bæði jörð og himinn. Síðan leit hann í vesturáttina. Hann þóttist sjá þangað hring og eldslit á og í hringinum mann á grám hesti. Hann bar skjótt yfir og fór hann hart. Hann hafði loganda eldbrand í hendi. Hann reið svo nær honum að hann mátti gjörla sjá hann. Hann var svartur sem bik. Hann kvað visu þessa með mikilli raust: [...] Þá þótti honum hann skjóta brandinum austur til fjallanna fyrir sig og þótti honum hlaupa upp eldur mikill í móti svo að hann þóttist ekki sjá til fjallanna fyrir. Honum sýndist sjá maður ríða austur undir eldinn og hvarf þar. Síðan gekk hann inn og til rúms síns og fékk langt óvit og rétti þó við úr því. Hann mundi allt það er fyrir hann hafði borið [...]

'Þú hefir séð gandreið,' segir Hjalti, 'og er það jafnan fyrir stórtíðindum.'
(ÍSOT, 276)

From the saga's description it seems clear that Hildiglúmr was not sleeping. Besides, the words *það er fyrir hann hafði borið* indicate that this was a *fyrirburðr* 'apparition', which is a visible and even corporeal manifestation of the Other World, without the relocation, mental or physical, of the one who has the vision (Barnay, 2000, 85.) In other words, the messenger from the Other World appeared before Hildiglúmr while he was awake and in a familiar place. Thus, this representative of the Other World actually stepped into our world.

However, his influence on Hildiglúmr is apparently mainly verbal and visual (particularly if we assume that Hildiglúmr's prolonged unconsciousness is the result of the shock that he has experienced and not of a strange force that temporarily 'turned him off'). Here is the stanza which had such a shocking effect:

Ek ríð hesti hélugbarða
úrigtoppa, ills valdandi;
eldr es í endum, eitr í miðju;
svá es of Flosa róð sem fari kefli;
svá es of Flosa róð sem fari kefli. (*Skj.* B I, 401)

Another example of a vision is in *Laxdæla saga*. Þorgils Hölluson encounters a mysterious woman on his way to Alþingi. She resembles Vigfúss' *hamingja*, which appeared to Glúmr in his dream (see above), in that she is also enormously big: *Sú var mikil harðla. Þorgils reið í móti henni en hún veik undan* (ÍSOT, 1637). Unlike Vigfúss' *hamingja*, who only lets herself be seen in a dream and does not say a word, this woman whom Þorgils meets recites a stanza to him – and continues her trip, giving way to him and thus remaining just a vision. Þorgils also continues his trip, realizing, however, that he has just met his *hamingja* (or *fylgja* in the shape of a woman; these terms are close synonyms) who has now turned against him, cf. his remark: *'Sjaldan fór svo þá er vel vildi að þú færir þá af þingi er eg fór til þings'* (ibid.). Þorgils does not let the stanza change his plans, although it contains a clear warning:

Kosti fyrðar, ef framir þykkjask,
ok varisk við svá vélum Snorra;
engi mun við varask, vitr es Snorri. (*Skj.* B I, 399)

This stanza, together with the stanza from Hildiglúmr's vision, differs

considerably from those that saga characters hear in their dreams, as in (1) and (2). The dream-stanzas in the sagas of Icelanders are in *dróttkvætt* metre, but here we encounter an old eddic metre – *fornyrðislag*. Besides, in both of these stanzas we first encounter the repetition of last lines or words, unchanged or with slight variation, which will later become characteristic of the stanzas from the Other World.

One of the reasons for this change in metre is that it is in visions that the saga characters are first put face to face with the Other World beings or phenomena. Þorgils meets his *hamingja* in the real world, not in a dream. Hildiglúmr sees a *gandreið* wide awake, and this puts him in shock: he realizes that an otherworldly being has just stepped into our world. In yet another example, again from *Laxdæla saga*, Þorgils *hekla* ('frock') recites another warning stanza, also in *fornyrðislag*, and the reaction of the people who hear it is unambiguous: *Þetta þótti hið mesta undur* (*ÍSOT*, 1638).

Fornyrðislag metre in medieval Iceland was mainly associated with mythological and legendary poems and pre-historical matters – in other words, with what is beyond our knowledge. The root *forn-* also has the meaning 'strange'. It is for this sake, we can assume, that *fornyrðislag* is not only used when talking about old times, but also in cases of people's meeting with the supernatural or in matters concerning *galdur* – to mark events and beings of the Other World, the world beyond our knowledge. The repetition of final lines may serve the same purpose.

Apparently, dreams were conceived of as phenomena of this world. People knew how to behave when someone *lætr illa í svefni*, meaning that the saga character has an important dream. People knew how to interpret dreams, even though interpretations could differ from one saga character to another (see Hallfréður Örn Eiríksson, 1989, 35-36). Dream-people do not step out of the dream, and there is nothing particularly unusual about having dreams – and we find in dream-stanzas *dróttkvætt*, the usual metre for actual, 'this-worldly' events. Vision-people, on the other hand, step out of the Other World. This is apparently not conceived of as a usual phenomenon in this world, and *fornyrðislag* is used in this case. We can thus assume that the borderline between the 'real' and the 'fantastic' in the older sagas of Icelanders lies here, between dreams (and *dróttkvætt*) on the one hand and visions (and *fornyrðislag*) on the other.

Still, the borderline between dream and vision (which is not always quite clear) is not the only factor that matters, either in terms of using *dróttkvætt* or *fornyrðislag* or in terms of the perception of certain occurrences as belonging to this world or the Other World. Time and genre also matter. In *Sturlunga saga*, which is both younger than the sagas of Icelanders considered above and, unlike them, deals with contemporary matters, most of the dream-stanzas are in *fornyrðislag*. This can be interpreted as a shift in the perception of dreams: they move from this world's domain (as in the sagas of Icelanders) to the Other World domain. However, there can be other reasons for *fornyrðislag* in the dream-stanzas of *Sturlunga*. In the dreams of Jóreiðr, where all the stanzas are in *fornyrðislag*, the dream-person is Guðrún Gjúkadóttir herself. It seems natural that she would not speak in *dróttkvætt*. We can also find other references to the Elder Edda in the dream-stanzas of *Sturlunga*, both direct and indirect. The dream-predictions in *Sturlunga* are generally more global than in the sagas of Icelanders and often recall *ragnarök*, as in this dream-stanza from *Hrafnkels saga*:

Se þú, hvé hvarfa heima í milli
 sýndauðigra sálir manna ;
 kveljask andar í orms gini,
 skelfr ramr røðull, ræðk þér at vakna. (*Skj.* B II, 148-149)

It is significant that all of the stanzas which are recited in a dream or vision or describe a dream, both in the sagas of Icelanders and *Sturlunga*, are related to battles and death. These messages from the Other World forboding death always come true.

4. In the sagas, we often meet another type of representatives of the Other World: *draugar*. Meeting a *draugr* is similar to the visions in that *draugar* appear to waking people. *Draugar* are, however, different from dream- and vision-people in that they appear to be corporeal phenomena (Berezovaya, 2001). Thus, they can have a direct physical impact on our world. They do not only allow men to see them and hear their poetry, but sometimes actively and physically participate in saga events, especially in those sagas of Icelanders that are considered younger (and in *fornaldarsögur*).

Draugar that speak in verses appear only occasionally in those sagas of Icelanders which are considered older. Among them is Gunnar in *Njáls saga*, whom a shepherd and a housemaid, and later Skarphéðinn and Högni, see in his *haugr*. The description of this event is actually very similar to descriptions of visions:

Sá atburður varð að Hlíðarenda að smalamaður og gríðkona ráku fé hjá haugi Gunnars. Þeim þótti Gunnar vera kátur og kveða í hauginum. [...]

Þeir Skarphéðinn og Högni voru úti eitt kveld og voru fyrir sunnan haug Gunnars. Tunglskin var bjart en stundum dró fyrir. Þeim sýndist haugurinn opinn og hafði Gunnar smúist í hauginum og sá í móti tunglinu. Þeir þóttust sjá fjögur ljós í hauginum brenna og bar hvergi skugga á. Þeir sáu að Gunnar var kátlegur og með gleðibragði miklu. Hann kvað vísu [...]

Síðan laukst aftur haugurinn. (*ISOT*, 215; italics mine – *YSH*)

The words *þeim þótti*, *þeim sýndist*, *þeir þóttust sjá* are often found in descriptions of dreams and visions but are seldom used in accounts of meeting a *draugr*. The staging (an open mound, light in the mound, the light of the moon, the glad appearance of Gunnar) is that of a vision and even recalls Christian visions. In his mound Gunnar seems to be corporeal, since he turns in the mound. He steps into our world as a representative of the Other World; however, he seems to be out of touch and does not make any attempt to contact this world except by reciting a stanza. Thus he constitutes a borderline case between a vision-person and a *draugr*.

Another *haugbúi*, Sóti in *Harðar saga og Hólmverja* (one of the younger sagas of Icelanders), behaves in a very different way. He assaults Hørör after reciting a stanza, but is deterred: he loses all his power when light shines on him. He is an example of a monstrous *haugbúi* such as we often find in *fornaldarsögur*, cf. e.g. *Hervarar saga og Heiðreks*. His stanza does not contain any prediction or threat, only a question of why he is troubled in his mound. He tries, on the other hand, to affect our world physically.

One of the most noticeable *draugar* in younger sagas of Icelanders is undoubtedly Klaufi in *Svarfáæla saga*. He is of particular interest for this paper, since he composes more stanzas dead than alive. In his actual life, he recites one-and-a-half

stanzas in *fornyrðislag*, but after his death he composes three full stanzas, two *hellingar* and two *fjórðungar* – mainly to revenge himself. Klaufi is a colourful figure, walking around with his head under his arm and talking in verses, pointing out to his friends where to search for his enemies: ‘*Suðr er ok suðr er, / svá skulum stefna*’ – and, after a while, knocking on a door with his head: ‘*Hér er ok hér er, / hvi skulum lengra*’ (*Skj.* B II, 220).

These *post mortem* stanzas of Klaufi put Karl and his men on the right path, and soon a battle starts between Karl and Ljótólfr, Klaufi’s chief enemy. Klaufi does not sit and watch the battle, but takes active part in it:

Þá kom Klaufi í bardaga og barði blóðgu höfðinu á báðar hendur bæði
hart og tíðum og þá kom flótti í lið Ljótólfs (*ÍSOT*, 1810).

He does not forget to compose stanzas either:

Dynr er of allan dal Svarfaðar,
eru vinir órir vals of fyldir;
knýjum, knýjum Karls ofliðar,
látum liggja Ljótólf goða
í urð ok í urð. (*Skj.* B II, 221)

This message from the Other World is a typical *draugavísa* in *fornyrðislag* with a repetition of the last words. However, when Klaufi tries to affect our world physically, the predictions and directions in his verses stop coming true. Ljótólfr is, for instance, not killed in the battle even though Klaufi calls for his death in this stanza.

Later in the saga, Klaufi comes to Karl as an apparition (*fyrirburðr*) and recites his last one-and-a-half stanzas – unexpectedly, in *dróttkvætt*, with the typical repetition of last words. This suggests that in younger sagas visions were already perceived as natural phenomena. Klaufi does not try to interfere in earthly matters physically but remains in the air, where he appears to Karl. He predicts Karl’s death, and now the prediction comes true.

The physical manifestation of *draugar* is a well known phenomenon in the sagas. Glámr fights with Grettir, Þórgunna’s *draugr* cooks for her bearers. Such events seem to be perceived as supernatural, but they still function in our world’s reality. However, the physical actions of *draugar* combined with their poetry apparently constitute not only cases of crossing the border between the natural and the supernatural, but also a violation of the laws of the supernatural. When *draugar* try to use both their physical and poetic power, the latter – the more sophisticated one – betrays them.

The fact that *draugar* have to use both kinds of power, together with the new distribution of *dróttkvætt* and *fornyrðislag*, which to a great extent mirrors the medieval Icelandic view of the ‘real’ and the ‘fantastic’, shows that the borderline between these two spheres was not stable throughout the Icelandic Middle Ages. In the younger sagas of Icelanders, the physical manifestation of *draugr* is no longer enough to be conceived of as ‘fantastic’. In those sagas, our world includes more ‘otherworldly’ elements than before, and the border of the Other World moves off.

Abbreviations

ÍSOT: *Íslendinga sögur: orðstöðulykill og texti*.

ONP: *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*.

Stj.: *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*.

KLNM: *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*.

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