

Hví fara heiðnir menn hér? Christian and Pagan Allusions in the Skaldic Poetry of the Thirteenth Century

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This paper will discuss references to mythological situations in skaldic poetry of the thirteenth century. The quotation in the title comes from the famous passage in *Íslendinga saga*, ch. 190, where a legendary person, Guðrún Gjúkadóttir, appears to a young girl in a dream — the name of the latter is Jóreiðr. Their conversation is reported to have taken place in 1255 AD at the household of Miðjumdair, South Iceland. Its account in the saga is puzzling. The dream-woman from the Eddic poetry seems to dislike Jóreiðr's question and does not confirm that she is pagan — *engu skal þik skipta, hvárt ek em kristin eða heiðin*. Jóreiðr probably knew that 'God's Trinity is Good' — *góð er guðs þrenning*, but scarcely expected to hear this formula from a 'heathen woman'. In the context of ch. 190 'Christian' apparently means 'moral', 'civilized', 'appropriate', whereas 'Pagan' (*heiðinn*) may convey such connotations as 'immoral', 'spoiled' and even 'barbarous'. We, together with Jóreiðr, learn from the dream-woman that the main fault of Eyjólftr ofsi and other enemies of Gizurr Þorvaldsson, the *brennimenn*, is that they 'maliciously tried to establish paganism in the whole country' — *þá ætla þeir með illvilja sínum at koma heiðni á allt landit*. These words of Guðrún Gjúkadóttir in ch. 190 directly correspond to the digression placed earlier in the saga in ch. 174, where the narrator blames the burning at Flugumýrr (October 12, 1253) as one of the worst crimes in the history of Iceland.¹ Exactly the same attitude towards the *brennimen* is found in two skaldic stanzas from *Íslendinga saga*, where the fire-raisers are called *brennuvargar*, lit. 'fire wolves'² and *mannhundar* 'degenerates', lit. 'human dogs'. The first stanza (st. 81: *Borg lét brennuvarga*) is ascribed in the saga to Gizurr Þorvaldsson, but probably actually composed by Sturla Þórðarson himself³. The second stanza (st. 87: *Hann es hurð fyr heim*) is put in the mouth of Guðrún Gjúkadóttir in ch. 190. We may conclude that in all these contexts, both in Skaldic poetry and in saga prose, we are dealing with one and the same system of values and cultural conventions: it is not so much the conflict between Christian and Pagan ideologies, as a play with the notions and terms 'Christian' and 'Pagan' in situations which involve moral judgements of some persons' conduct (mostly negative judgements).⁴

The status of ch. 190 is not quite clear: a number of scholars share the view of Jón Jóhannesson, who assumed that the episode with Jóreiðr's dreams is a later

¹ *Ok þótti öllum vitrum mönnum þessi tíðendi einhver mest hafa orðit hér á landi, sem Guð fyrirgefi þeim, er gerðu, með sinni mikilli miskunn ok mildi* [St II, 444].

² Or even 'fiends', 'devilish people', since Ol. *vargr* in many contexts denotes not *canis lupus*, but 'outlaw', 'the foe of the mankind', 'the evil one'.

³ Or by the compiler of *Sturlunga saga* though he is a less likely candidate.

⁴ It is difficult to find an episode of *Íslendinga saga* where a person is explicitly characterized positively for not being or acting like a pagan. The reason for this asymmetry is clear: in Sturla Þórðarson's eyes obedience was not a virtue to be specially praised, except in extreme situations, such as the death of a pious man (ch. 119, 120), or torture (ch. 24, 115).

interpolation made by the compiler of *Sturlunga saga* [Jón Jóhannesson 1946: xxxviii].⁵ This possibility certainly cannot be excluded, though Jón Jóhannesson and his followers have not explained how the compiler of *Sturlunga*, Þórðr Narfason, dared to insert a large chapter with many skaldic stanzas, visions and a dream figure from Eddic poetry into Sturla's text: a move like that seriously contradicts Þórðr's treatment of the preceding parts of *Íslendinga saga*, as far as one can trace it through the comparison of the *Sturlunga* version with an elder version taken over from the protograph of *Íslendinga saga* into *Guðmundar saga biskups A*, [cf. Stefán Karlsson 1983: clv-clx]. In fact there are no skaldic stanzas at all in the parts of the *Sturlunga* compilation which are attributed to Þórðr with certainty. At the same time, two stanzas pronounced in dreams foreboding severe repressions against Bishop Guðmundr in 1209 AD have been taken from *Íslendinga saga* into *Guðmundar saga biskups A*: one of them has a reference to the Christian Doomsday, *Efsti Dómr* (GA, 162). It is thus reasonable to conclude that the use of dream stanzas was a device of Sturla's, not of the compiler. The same apparently holds for the playful use of figures from the remote past. There are two more instances of this kind in *Íslendinga saga* and both of them are connected with Sturla's uncle, Snorri Sturluson. In ch. 16 Sturla evoked the figure of the great skald Egill Skallagrímsson, who appeared in a dream to a descendant of his, Egill Halldórsson, and blamed (in a stanza) 'their relative' Snorri for his cowardice: *snjóhvít es blóð líta*. In ch. 64 Sturla refers to the legendary Danish king Hrólfr kráki, the 'lord of Leire' (*Hleiðrar stillir*), in a stanza which brings about a comparison of Snorri with Hrólfr kráki: this stanza foreshadows that Snorri would be killed by his son-in-law (OI. *mágr*) Gizurr in 1241 A.D., just as Hrólfr kráki had been killed by his stepfather (also called *mágr* in OI.) Aðils. This stanza (st. 29: *Eiguð áþekkt mægi*) is ascribed to a well-known skald and supporter of Snorri, Sturla Bárðarson, yet the narrator specially emphasizes that it had been pronounced in a private conversation between Snorri and Sturla Bárðarson and that nobody could overhear them (St II, 154).⁶ Both episodes were at once addressed to the naïve audience which was supposed to take the story literally, and to more advanced readers who could see the message behind the conventions of the saga style. But the most carefully hidden point is the irony of the narrator: Sturla Þórðarson is here hinting at the fact that no one other than Snorri Sturluson himself had told the Icelanders about Egill (in *Egils saga*) and Hrólfr kráki (both in *Snorra-Edda* and in *Ynglinga saga*)!

It would be entirely wrong to ascribe all the poetry in *Íslendinga saga* to Sturla or see a pastime or child's play in the way he treats legendary figures. Following in the footsteps of Preben Meulengracht Sørensen [Sørensen 1988:121,124], we could rather say that Sturla's playing with the cultural heritage was first and foremost a matter of his narrative technique and he was presumably trying to be as convincing and reliable as possible, cf. [Zimmerling 2003: 565]. Elsewhere in the saga Sturla seems to provide his readers with hints about how they should interpret his text (cf. st. 29, mentioned above, with a reference to Hrólfr kráki; it is ascribed to the narrator's

⁵ However, Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir seems to acknowledge Sturla's authorship, cf. her analysis of st. 94 (*Þá var betra/ es fyrir baugum réð*), pronounced by the dream-woman in ch. 190 [Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1988: 196].

⁶ It is of course possible that Sturla Bárðarson's stanza is authentic and that Sturla Þórðarson got to know it from his namesake, but this explanation is highly speculative.

namesake Sturla Bárðarson, and reported to have arisen in very doubtful circumstances. In a similar way, st. 37 in ch. 73 is ascribed to another namesake of the narrator, Sturla Sighvatsson: the verse collected in this chapter shows contemporary reaction to the Raid to Sauðafell (*Sauðafellsför*) in 1229 AD. The point is that all the Sauðafell-stanzas except this one are safely attributed to different skalds,⁷ while st. 37 is introduced with the ambiguous phrase: 'that winter, a stanza was pronounced at Sauðafell, and some people ascribe it to Sturla'. It looks as if Sturla Þórðarson is placing his own signature under this stanza by putting it in the mouth of his namesake and cousin Sturla Sighvatsson. The same device can be traced in Sturla's treatment of the dream stanzas. An impressive collection of them appears in *Íslendinga saga*, ch. 136, just before the climactic battle of Örlygsstaðir A.D. 1238: ominous visions and dream figures forebode the coming catastrophe. The names of the sources generally tell us little or nothing, though the first readers of *Íslendinga saga* could possibly gain a bit more from them. Sturla normally mentions the locus of the vision and the household or district his source is linked to. This is however not done with the alleged source of st. 65, a certain Jón Grettisson. I assume that this is due to the fact that this stanza contains a remarkable quotation from eddic and skaldic poetry, namely, the obsolete word *skálmöld*. This word comes from *Völuspá*, where it is associated with the very last hours of mankind. Sturla (or Jón Grettisson, if one believes the stanza to be authentic) was not the first skald to quote this eschatological Eddic word. A stanza ascribed to Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld (d. 1030) but probably actually composed in the later eleventh or the twelfth century⁸ revives the atmosphere of *Völuspá* in the phrase *skálmöld vex nú*. This stanza is included in almost all the surviving sagas of King Óláfr the Saint, where it appears immediately before the climactic battle of Stiklastaðir (1030). We may see now that this whole situation is repeated in *Íslendinga saga*: the dangerous word *skálmöld* again appears just before the central event, the battle of Örlygsstaðir (1238), in a stanza attributed to a very dubious and scarcely identifiable skald, where the metre is not *dróttkvætt* but plain *fornyrðislag*. It is likely that Sturla is either directly quoting *Völuspá* or alluding to Þormóðr's stanza in the Stiklastaðir episode.

There is one more quotation from *Völuspá* in *Íslendinga saga* — the famous *vitu enn lengra*: it again appears in a dream stanza (st. 30 in ch. 65), and the metre again is Eddic *fornyrðislag* but not skaldic *dróttkvætt*. Sturla richly exploits the belief that great events should be foreshadowed by ominous dreams, and he often marks the turning points of his narratives with carefully selected skaldic lines (though not in *Hákonar saga gamla*, probably because a King's Saga demanded a different type of skaldic poetry — posthumous laudatory poems). The contrast between *Hákonar saga gamla* and *Íslendinga saga* regarding the use of dream stories and foreboding visions confirms the hypothesis that Þormóðr's stanza with the *skálmöld* quotation has been taken over from family sagas or *þættir* about Þormóðr and inserted into King's Sagas of King Óláfr the Saint, but not vice versa.

Turning now to Christian allusions in the poetry of Sturla's contemporaries and immediate predecessors, one may state that they are generally less reflected upon but

⁷ Ormr Svínfellingr, Árni Magnússon, Svertingr Þorleifsson (two stanzas), Ólafur Brynjólfsson (two stanzas).

⁸ Cf. Zimmerling 1997 and Zimmerling 2000: 545-549 for the details.

nonetheless eloquent. Some skaldic stanzas in the *Sturlunga saga* compilation seem to beg the opposite question with regards to Jóreiðr's reply in the conversation with Guðrún Gjúkadóttir: what are the Christian figures doing here? One of the best Icelandic skalds of his day, Guðmundr Oddsson, boldly insisted in 1222 AD that his patron Sturla Sighvatsson had been inspired to kill the bishop's men by Jesus Christ himself:

Stórlátr hefir Sturla
Stendr hrafn á ná jafnan
Kristr ræðr tír ok trausti
Tuma hefnda vel efndar.

Guðmundr Oddsson was one of the few skalds of the thirteenth century who imported the metaphor of civil war in Norway and applied it to Icelandic feuds: he openly called the bishop's men *Baglar* in another stanza dated with 1222 AD (st. 19, which also appears in *Guðmundar saga biskups A*). Guðmundr was in Norway in 1220 AD: he is mentioned as a skald of Earl Skúli, who by that time still might be regarded as one of the leaders of the *Birkibeinar*, cf. *Hákonar saga gamla*, ch. 47, 57. It is therefore fairly possible that Guðmundr imagined himself a Birkibeinn: the latter used to appeal directly to God's justice when they got involved in a conflict with the Norwegian Church, cf. e.g. the rhetoric of Dagfinnr bóndi in *Hákonar saga gamla*, ch. 47 (1218 AD). There was indeed a man called Eiríkr Birkibeinn in Sturla Sighvatsson's following: he was presumably a Norwegian of low origin, cf. Zimmerling 2003: 564. It is worth mentioning that another person with the same nickname, Einarr Birkibeinn, had been killed earlier, in 1209 AD, notably, during the previous attack by Icelandic chieftains against bishop Guðmundr. All these details pass neatly to the proposed explanation that Guðmundr Oddsson's stanza is first and foremost an instance of political, not religious, propaganda. I think however that one should not overestimate the bellicosity or religious zeal of this fine poet: he was a champion of skaldic poetry and not a war-like character. In 1230 AD, when Sturla Sighvatsson settled an argument with his enemies, the sons of Þorvaldr, Guðmundr Oddsson praised his patron for his peacefulness (ch. 77). The good result is explained here by the influence of the Holy Spirit:

Mjök hefr málalyktir
menýranda ins dýra,
vegr Sturlu þvarr varla,
vandat heilagr andi (st. 42).

But when Sturla Sighvatsson killed the sons of Þorvaldr in 1232 AD Sturla and his wife Solveigr Sæmundardóttir ordered war-like poetry, and Guðmundr produced the required stanzas with ease (stt. 45-46 in ch. 85). Perhaps the most honest and open-hearted example of Guðmundr's art is the brilliant st. 32 in ch. 72, where the skald explains how he managed to survive during the Raid to Sauðafell in 1229 AD. In this stanza, as well as in stt. 19, 45, Guðmundr uses the names of the pagan deities in his kennings, but this fact tells us less than sporadic references to Christian and Pagan figures in direct nomination. I assume that the absence of Njörðr, Freyr, Rán etc. from kennings might be of some significance and controlled by good skalds of the thirteenth century like Guðmundr, whereas their presence in kennings did not need any special explanation.

Contexts where skaldic texts refer or allude to Christian and Pagan figures in direct nomination come up elsewhere in the contemporary sagas but it is sometimes difficult to establish whether the skald was thinking of the Christian Doomsday or the heathen Ragnarök (or possibly both?), cf. e.g. a stanza from *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* ch.14 in which a dreamer speaks on the one hand of some 'wandering sinful souls' but adds on the other that they are 'being tortured in the Worm's jaws' (*kveljask andir í orms gini*).⁹ The author of this saga, who according to a very plausible hypothesis by Guðrún Helgadóttir was a priest (Guðrún Helgadóttir 1987: xci)¹⁰ even ventured to tell a grotesque story about the devil, who used to appear in dreams to a certain man in the Western Fjords and predict great events in regular *dróttkvætt* stanzas (*Hrafn's saga*, ch. 7, 14). The name of the source is given — Guðbrandr Gestsson. We do not know exactly where he lived, but we know how the devil presented himself to Guðbrandr — for reasons that remain unexplained, the evil spirit chose the name 'Ingólfr'. The author of the saga apparently found Guðbrandr's account trustworthy, as we can see from his comments on the first stanza in ch. 7. The second example of the devil's artistry preserved by Guðbrandr is put in the saga into a block of stanzas foreboding the death of the main character, Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, in 1213 AD. We may hypothesize that if Sturla Þórðarson had any particular model in mind when he was arranging the dream stories in the *Íslendinga saga* it was *Hrafn's saga*. This possibility is more than purely theoretical. In both sagas, the stanzas embody an autonomous world which is unfolding before the reader's eyes parallel to the progress of the narrative: the authors of both sagas employ dream stanzas just before the climactic events. In both sagas the skaldic outcome is placed on a very broad scale: from stanzas composed by the well-known skalds about local folk-lore (Ol. *héraðsleygt*)¹¹ and satiric pamphlets¹² to stanzas recited by supernatural figures.

⁹ The source of this stanza was a rather well-known skald, Eyjólfur forni Snorrason from Hakinaberg, Bárðaströnd. He accompanied bishop-elect Guðmundr góði and Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson on their voyage to Norway in 1202 AD. Sturla Þórðarson quotes in *Íslendinga saga* a verse couplet associated with this Eyjólfur: this couplet (st. 74, *Seft þú úti. / Sék eld yfir þér*) is the final gem in Sturla's collection of dream stories in ch. 136. This parallel is significant, since it confirms the links between Sturla and the skalds from *Hrafn's saga*.

¹⁰ Guðrún suggested that *Hrafn's saga* was composed by priest Tómas Þórarinsson from Selárdalur (d.1253).

¹¹ As *Íslendingasaga* is regarded, following stanzas of this kind should be mentioned: st. 6-8 (Hrafngrílingar about Kálfr Guttormsson), st. 11 (about Eyjólfur Kársson's slave), st. 18 (about Sæmundr's and Loptr's retreat). As for *Hrafn's saga*, following stanzas should be classified with the *héraðsleygt* category: Hr.B. st. 6 (*Hvatvetna grét* — about Þormóðr's howling), st. 7 (*Verða nadda Nírdír* — about Gellir's brag), st. 24 (*Vist eru farnir flestir* — about Loptr), st. 25 (*Færum gildan grepp* — about Þorvaldr's dependant). All this poetry is anonymous.

¹² The examples from *Íslendingasaga* are numerous: st. 10 (Tann Bjarnason about the Gíslungar family), st. 15 (a parodist mocking Snorri), st. 17, 28, 31 (Snorri's advocates), st. 36-41 (reactions at the *Sauðafellsfögr*), st. 22-24 (a polemic of Þorvaldr's supporters against their opponents), st. 26-27 (about Dufgus' cowardice), st. 32-35 (a polemic of Snorri's followers against Sturla's followers), st. 47 (about Snorri' cowardice), st. 48 (about the panic-stricken flight of Hjálmr), st. 49 (about the mean conduct of Þorálfr Bjarnason) etc. In *Hrafn's*

There are two other grounds for seeing influence on Sturla from *Hrafn's saga*. The first point is metric: the thirty-four stanzas in *Hrafn's saga*, even if not masterpieces by themselves, represent a great variety of skaldic metres, some of which, e.g. *hálfhneppt*, are extremely rare. The second point concerns the biography of two major skalds from Hrafn's following, Guðmundr Galtason and Sturla Bárðarson, who later became Snorri Sturluson's skalds and followers. Sturla Þórðarson was acquainted with both of them, cf. his own account in *Íslendinga saga*, ch. 60 (1226). He might have gained much from his elder colleagues (and probable mentors), one of whom, Sturla Bárðarson, was also a cousin of his. I conclude that the author of *Íslendinga saga* found Sturla Bárðarson a suitable mouthpiece for a warning text including a reference to Hrólfir Kráki because there had been some connection between him and Sturla Bárðarson, although we are unable to trace it in detail. Sturla used to play this trick, as far as we can see, only with the members of his own family — Sturla Sighvatsson (see above) or his uncle Sighvatr, cf. st. 9 (*Nú spurðum vér norðan*), which is once again introduced with the familiar formula 'some people say that Sighvatr pronounced this stanza'. Sturla acted as if he were authorized by his family — as well as by Egill Skallagrímsson and Guðrún Gjúkadóttir! I conclude furthermore that Sturla had no intention of mocking his readers: on the contrary, the formula 'some people say that X composed this stanza' and similar devices were guidelines for sceptical medieval readers or listeners which hinted at how they could get a positive reading in a dubious context. If this is the right approach, all those stanzas in *Íslendinga saga* which are safely, i.e. without any 'some-people-say'-formula, attributed to Snorri, Óláfr Hvítaskáld, Guðmundr Oddsson, Guðmundr Galtason, Sturla Bárðarson and other thirteenth century Icelanders with a stable reputation as skalds, must be considered authentic.

We have shown that the author of *Íslendinga saga* in many contexts acted as a heir of the pre-Christian, *mutatis mutandis*, 'Pagan' culture which can be seen in his system of hidden references to skaldic and eddic poetry spread elsewhere in the dream stanzas and in similar episodes. It would certainly be risky to attribute a text fragment of unclear origin to Sturla or anyone else on the grounds that its treatment of stanzas resembles that in the corresponding parts of the *Sturlunga* compilation. It however makes sense to establish whether the way the narrator plays with the Pagan heritage is consistent with the use of the term 'Pagan', 'Paganism' (*heiðin*, *heiðni*) in the negative sense 'destructive', 'barbarous' in ch. 190, whoever might have composed this chapter — Sturla himself, the compiler of *Sturlunga* or someone else. An answer to this question can be deduced from two stanzas where a skald is branding his enemy by comparing him with Óðinn.

The first is by Snorri Sturluson and is quoted in *Hákonar saga gamla* ch. 162: according to Sturla, it was recited in Niðaros during the winter of 1238/1239 in the presence of Duke Skúli. The target of Snorri's attack was King Hákon's councillor Gautr Jónsson ór Mel (d.1270). Gautr was King Hákon's and King Magnús's *lendr maðr* for fifty-three years (1217-1270). He was a man of an extremely high social status. It would be no great exaggeration to say that after 1240 Gautr was King

saga, this group is represented by a number of skalds — Magnús prestur (Hr.B. stt. 9-10), Eilífr Snorrason (stt. 8, 11, 32) and Sturla Bárðarson (st. 30). It is noteworthy that both sagas register Sturla Bárðarson's output as a satiric skald.

Hákon's prime minister, as can be seen both from the Norwegian diplomas and from Sturla's *Hákonar saga gamla*. The text of the treaty with the Hanseatic League in 1250 AD states that it was signed in Bergen in the presence of *Domino G(autone) et aliis baronibus nostril domino*, 'Sir G. and other barons of Our Majesty' [DN 5:3]. At the coronation of young King Magnús in 1261 AD, Gautr stalked along parallel (*jafnfram*) with the only Norwegian Earl, Knútr Hákonarson, and bore the coronation sword (*vígslusverðit*): all the King's other vassals had already marched by before him (*Hákonar saga gamla*, ch. 270). In 1263 AD, during King Hákon's trip to the Orkneys, Gautr ruled in Norway as a regent: in the same year Sturla met Gautr for the first time, and Gautr offered him his protection (cf. *Sturlu þátr*, ch. 1). In 1266 AD Gautr was still active and together with his son Finnur undertook a journey to Perth in order to sign the peace treaty with Scotland [DN 8: 8]. One may actually wonder how Sturla dared to quote a derogatory stanza about *dominus Gautus*, even after the death of this mighty man and with a politically correct stipulation that 'Skúli's men uttered at that time plenty of such things about King Hákon's friends that everyone understood that they should not have done'. Sturla tells that Duke Skúli simply ordered Snorri to attack Gautr and compare him with Óðinn in a stanza. One of Óðinn's names was 'Gautr', and both Earl Skúli and Snorri's audience knew that. The point was that a real man, Gautr ór Mel, allegedly instigated the King against his father-in-law (*mágr*) the Duke, and thus followed in the footsteps of the ill-intentioned pagan god who had started the feud between the legendary kings *Hringr* and *Hilditannr*: all this collision is depicted in Snorri's stanza *Herfanga bauð Hringi*. There are reasons to believe Sturla's story: if Snorri undertook an attack against Gautr on his own initiative it was certainly not a clever move. Anyway, we must remember that Sturla was not in a position to confirm that his uncle Snorri had willingly breached his loyalty to King Hákon and Gautr.

The second stanza is by Sturla himself: it is dated with 1261 AD and appears in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 197. The target of the attack is Earl Gizurr Þorvaldsson. The previous year Sturla had become a vassal of Gizurr, and the Earl promised, probably on behalf of King Hákon, to give him the district of Borgarfjörðr. But after the arrival of the Norwegian envoy Hallvarðr gullskór, Borgarfjörðr was taken from Sturla and given over to his enemy Hrafn Oddsson. Sturla felt deceived and accused Earl Gizurr of fraud. The name 'Gizurr' was again one of the numerous names of Óðinn, and Sturla richly exploited this fact, claiming that the ignoble behaviour of Earl Gizurr is due to his likeness to this pagan god: both Óðinn and the Earl, claims Sturla, take pleasure in their evil deeds and fraud (*flytja skrókmál* and *unna sér sleitru*); they only promised the good (*héttu góðu*) but did not keep their word (*rufu*). The skald tells that he now is able to see behind the scenes (*skilk, hvat gramr mun vilja*) and his upright message is clear to everybody (*rétt innik þat*). Earl Gizurr is subsequently called Óðinn (in direct nomination, without any paraphrases), *gramr* (an ambivalent word, which may denote both 'lord' and 'evil creature', 'monster'), *slægr jarl*, 'treacherous earl' and, notably, 'Gautr'. In the last case Sturla was probably keeping in mind a line from *Þorgeirsdrápa* composed by Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld (d. 1030): *Gaut veitk at son Sleitu* (cf. Zimmerling 2000: 507-9 for the analysis of Þormóðr's poem).

Hermann Pálsson has suggested that Sturla imitated another stanza which Snorri composed in Norway in 1238/1239 AD and addressed to Þórðr kakali Sighvatsson. This stanza is quoted in *Íslendinga saga*, ch. 139 (*Tveir lifid, Þórðr, en*

trúra), while its imitation is placed later in the same saga, in ch. 157, and dated to 1242 AD: it begins almost in the same way — *Nú erum tveir, en trúra* (cf. Hermann Pálsson 1988: 65). Hermann's hypothesis is plausible, especially if one takes into account that Sturla's stanza is addressed in the saga to another member of the family, Órækja Snorrason — a detail which, as we have tried to show, is important for *Íslendinga saga*. The similarity between Snorri's stanza about Gautr and Sturla's stanza about Gizurr is even more striking. In both cases a skald attacks an enemy who is above him in social status by comparing him with Óðinn: it seems to be a kind of poetic revenge. In both contexts comparison with Óðinn reveals the demonic side of human nature in the man who is being attacked. Thus references to pagan gods and pagan habits may also convey such connotations as 'spoiled', 'immoral' and even 'barbarous' in skaldic poetry, and there appears to be no contradiction between the prosaic comment in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 190 on the one side, and Snorri's and Sturla's negative picture of their contemporaries as followers of Óðinn on the other. But Guðrún Gjúkadóttir goes a few steps further than Snorri or his nephew: while their *dróttkvætt* stanzas settle scores with their personal enemies, her figure from the Edda spreads her negative verdict over everyone, or if one puts it in terms of *Íslendinga saga*, describes most Icelanders of Sturla's generation as her personal enemies, the 'Pagans', who were trying to restore 'Pagan times'.

Sturla's stanza is by no means a copy of Snorri's. Snorri's stanza abounds with kennings: one of them (*einsköpuðr galdra*) refers to Óðinn, one (*herstafnandi hafna*) — to Earl Skúli, one (*völundur rómu*) may refer both to Óðinn and to 'Dominus Gautus'. In addition, there are two simple battle kennings (*hjaldr herfanga* and *þrymr Þróttar*). Technically, Snorri's stanza is based on deliberate ambiguity (called *ofsjóst* by Snorri and his pupil and Sturla's brother, Ólafr Hvítaskáld). The kenning *völundur rómu* 'craftsman of the battle' can be interpreted as referring either to Óðinn, 'the master of invocation', or to the ill-intentioned Gautr Jónsson. The same holds for the proper name 'Gautr' in the third line. Sturla's stanza contains only one kenning (*svinnr randa stýfir*) which is reserved for the skald himself. This stanza may be classified with the so called 'upright poetry' (*bersögli*), cf. the famous 'Blunt Stanzas' (*Bersöglisvisur*) by Sighvatr Þórðarson [Hkr III: 21-23]: Sturla's *Rétt innik þat* is an echo of the classical *mart segik bert*. Snorri's stanza is more picturesque, while Sturla's is more dramatic and informative.

Snorri 1238/1239	Sturla 1261
<i>Herfanga</i> bauð <i>Hringi</i> <i>Hjaldr einsköpuðr galdra</i> <i>Gautr</i> hvatti þrymr Þróttar Þann ok <i>Hildittanni</i> . Of lengi veldr yngva Ósætt, en vel mætti <i>Herstafnandi hafna</i> Hans dóm, <i>völundur rómu</i> .	Rauf við <i>randa stýfi</i> Rétt innik þat, <i>svinnan</i> , Allt, þvít oss hefr vélta, <i>Óðinn</i> , þat's hét góðu. Skaut, sás skrókmál flýtir, Skilk, hvat <i>gramr</i> mun vilja, <i>Gautr</i> unni sér sleitu, <i>slægr jarl</i> , við mér bægi.

Perhaps the most interesting detail in Sturla's stanza is the epithet *svinnr* 'clever' in the self-designation *svinnr randa stýfir*. Why did the skald choose this word

in a context where he had been deceived by his enemy (cf. *oss hefr vélta*) and apparently was the loser? The answer is again furnished by Sturla's predecessors, the great skalds of the tenth and eleventh centuries. There was a long tradition, though not in Sturla's days, of describing the deeds of a fallen hero as appropriate and well thought-out, especially in situations in which they had turned out to be unwise in real life, and which had led to bad consequences for them. There is an irresistible parallel in Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld's *Þorgeirsdrápa*, where the epithet *svinngerðr* 'clever' is applied to the hero of the poem, Þorgeirr Hávarsson, exactly in the episode where he made a tragic mistake and trusted his enemies Þorgrímr tröllli and Þórarinn ofsi in 1024 AD. Þorgeirr was certainly not the leading intellectual among his contemporaries, and his adopted brother Þormóðr knew that better than anybody. In spite of this fact, Þormóðr insists on describing Þorgeirr's conduct in the episode as clever *sub specie aeternitatis*, since it was appropriate and morally justified (*svinngerðr með lið minna*), whereas the conduct of Þorgeirr's enemies was mean and treacherous.

The specific use of the epithet *svinnr/svinngerðr* and the rhyme *Gaut...sleitu* prove that Sturla knew *Þorgeirsdrápa*, or at least some stanzas from it. But more important for us is the fact that these parallels indicate that neither the system of values 'Justified/Moral/Christian' vs. 'Treacherous/Immoral/Pagan' nor the expressive devices that made it possible to play with these notions in the thirteenth century were quite new. Snorri, Sturla and men from their environment, including those whose names have been quoted in this paper, were arguably among the last who could still keep the poetic traditions of Sighvatr or Þormóðr. But Snorri and Sturla also did more: they managed to benefit from the heritage of greater skalds in their own saga narratives and to integrate several skaldic stereotypes into Old Icelandic prose.

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