3 The Legendary Past in AM 589a–e 4to

The gaze of 589a–e is fixed on the very highest echelon of secular medieval society – the figure of the king and his immediate followers. Its eight sagas are all coming-of-age stories following the young princes of various European lands as they undergo a variety of trials before being able to assume royal offices of their own. The three *þættir* interspersed between them, which feature protagonists of somewhat humbler origins of more recent history, similarly follow individuals who advance themselves by offering their services to a king. But although there are distinct parallels between the journeys these texts' heroes go on, each one constructs a distinctly different narrative world that represents a particular time and place in history.

My aim in this chapter is to outline the interpretation of the past constructed across them using Lachmann's (1997) framework of cultural memory and intertextuality, while also taking cues from recent studies on the generic hybridity of Icelandic sagas. Because so many texts are discussed in this chapter, my focus is not on specific intertextual references, but rather on the more general interaction between content derived from the translated *riddarasögur* and that which might be described more generally as inherited Nordic tradition about the legendary past. The former can be restricted to a relatively confined corpus of written texts, whereas the latter is considerably more amorphous and includes material beyond just those texts which are designated *fornaldarsögur*. This encompasses legend, myth, and folklore, much of which would have been transmitted orally and entered the written record in various places, such as in *Snorra Edda*, Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*, other sagas, or in the records of later folklore collectors (Mitchell 1991, 49–73; Mitchell 2014). I treat material together that some scholars might separate into myth, legend, and folklore, but which I believe can be understood as manifestations of the same broad tradition.[37] Since I deal with this material on a very general level – motifs and character types rather than whole narratives – its variation over time (i.e. between the fifteenth century when these two manuscripts were produced and the eighteenth century when many folk stories were recorded) should be minimal enough to not affect its general designation as deriving from, or referring to, 'tradition'. My aim in this chapter is to draw attention to how this material is positioned in relation to the chivalric world of the translated romances across 589a–e's sagas. Since cultural remembering is an in-

37 For an overview of this distinction, see Frog and Ahola 2021. In treating this material together, I am following scholars such as Bek-Pedersen 2014; DuBois 2014; Gunnell 2014; Mitchell 1991, 49–73; Mitchell 2014.

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herently identity-forming project, my specific interest is in how these two narrative fields are brought together to construct identities or, more precisely, elite identities.

To explore this interaction in the sagas of 589a–e requires a kind of double vision, paying attention firstly to each text's individual intertextuality and, secondly, to their specific resonances with others in the same codex. In what follows, I discuss each text separately in the order that they appear in the manuscript. Rather than a temporal organising principle, they seem to be arranged according to a vaguely generic one: the texts in the half before *Stúfs þáttr* are generally grouped among the 'indigenous' *riddarasögur* while those after it are mostly considered *fornaldarsögur*.[38] I begin with the first half of the compilation which, I argue, constructs an idealised elite culture. I then show how the manuscript's second half situates the legendary north in relation to that culture. I do not discuss the two *þættir* that bracket this half – *Stúfs þáttr* and *Hákonar þáttr Hárekssonar*. While their interest in kingship resonates with the other texts, they seem to have been included because of the specific regional and political appeal they had to the manuscript's commissioners, which I discuss in Chapter 8.

3.1 The Chivalric Half

3.1.1 *Kirialax saga*

The first text in 589a–f is heavily dominated by references to translated texts and contains very few to anything resembling legendary tradition. It tells of the young hero Kirialax, son of Laicus, King of Athens, as he travels to the most important sites of European history before settling down in Byzantine Constantinople, where he marries the daughter of the "stolkonungr" (589a–f, fol. 20^{v}, l. 5; *Kirialax saga*, 1917, p. 74) (throne-king) and then assumes the title himself.[39] As a result of both this journey and the events bracketing it (which detail his father's and his own marriage negotiations), a pattern of ideal elite masculinity is sketched out that sets a standard by which the rest of the manuscript's heroes can be compared.

38 *Ála flekks saga* and *Valdimars saga* are both marginal cases although generally listed among the 'indigenous' *riddarasögur*.

39 In this saga, the *stólkonungr* rules under the auspices of the Byzantine Emperor (*keisari*), here Leo hinn ellre (the Elder), otherwise known as Leo I (457–474). See further Cook 1985, 322; Divjak 2009, 249–252; Barnes 2014, 180.

Two central tenets of this ideal are non-violence and the pursuit of knowledge. Such is evident in the description of Kirialax's travels where the noble goal of learning is offered as a more desirable elite vocation than war and conquest. The intertextuality of this journey is wide and includes a vast swathe of learned texts in addition to translated *riddarasögur*.[40] One of the most important points of reference that runs throughout is Alexander the Great (known in Iceland via the translated *Alexanders saga*) who travelled to many of the same places as Kirialax and is mentioned several times by the narrator.[41] Comparison between them is encouraged when, like Alexander, Kirialax visits Troy while awaiting the onset of a battle in Friggia (Phrygia) and sees the graves of the Trojan Ektor (Hector) and his killer, the Greek Akillas (Achilles) (Divjak 2009, 125–138; Kålund, 1917, p. xix). For Alexander, the ruin represents his ancestors' greatest victory and foreshadows the extensive imperial campaign that follows (*Alexanders saga*, 1925, ch. 1, pp. 15–16). By contrast, Kirialax's visit to the city is a moment of historical reflection rather than inspiration, in which the narrator offers two different accounts of Ektor's death, neither of which are particularly flattering explanations of the Greek victory.[42] Rather than seeking to emulate the conquering ethic of his ancestors like Alexander had, Kirialax learns about the past; he dispassionately examines the site and moves on, returning to Friggia to fight a battle which ends in reconciliation rather than conquest.

Similar transformations occur in the other places he visits. The description of Jerusalem is based on a text written during the crusades of the twelfth century, but, as Alenka Divjak shows, the narrative's emphasis is on Kirialax's own spiritual advancement and lacks the "crusading spirit" which pervades most saga accounts of such journeys (Divjak 2009, 193–219). As in Troy, his visit to paradisiacal India evokes that of Alexander but, again, the saga is less interested in having its hero dominate than it is in India's many sights, scents, and exotic inhabitants, one of whom (a Griffin) makes it clear that Kirialax is not welcome and prompts his rapid departure (Divjak 2009, 220–240). By the end of his journey, Kirialax has become, as Barnes (2014, 71) writes, a master of the world "through the explorer's gaze rather than the conqueror's sword". He looks upon the Pillars of Hercules, which are so great "sem uarla hafi matt mannligr kraptr þui orka" (589a, fol. 19^{v}, ll. 21–22; *Kirialax saga*, 1917, p. 72) (that human power hardly could have made

40 For a detailed discussion, see Divjak 2009, 118–261. For a list of places where a source is directly named, see Cook 1985, 306–307.

41 *Alexanders saga* is the Norse translation of Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis*. Its earliest manuscript is AM 519a 4to (1270–1290). It is sometimes counted among the translated *riddarasögur*: Clunies Ross 2010, 31–32; Glauser 2005, 374.

42 On the sources of the two interpretations, see Cook 1985, 315–317; Divjak 2009, 134–136.

them). Humbled by the majesty of God, he returns home, overwriting the imperial successes of the pagan Alexander with his own more modest and non-violent scholarly ones.

This same ethic comes through in the events before and after the journey, in which marriage agreements are used to acquire power. These are usually preceded by demonstrations of martial skill that solidify both parties' status as equals and create opportunities for them to demonstrate courtly restraint. Kirialax's father Laicus embodies these ideals in his pursuit of Mathidia, princess of Syria: after being rejected by her father, he attacks and captures her brother Eggias. However, he chooses to spare Eggias's life and thus ingratiates himself with Mathidia's family. At the wedding, Eggias extolls the virtues of his captor, telling his father's court that Laicus fought "eigi sem grimmr uikingr helldr sem hæuerskr haufdingi" (589a, fol. 3^{v}, ll. 1–2; *Kirialax saga*, 1917, p. 8) (not as a cruel Viking, but as a well-mannered chieftain). Kirialax's own marriage negotiations are even more well-mannered: they take the form of a tournament and result in Kirialax's acquisition both of his desired wife and the title of *stókonungr*.

An explicit comparison is made between the code of behaviour these men follow and that depicted in the translated *riddarasögur*, with the former positioned as superior. Direct reference is made to the British King Arthur in a narratorial aside after Kirialax's wedding: while Kirialax had been travelling the world and negotiating his marriage, it is said that Arthur, an imperial conqueror, had been plundering "á Italiam og uann under sig, alla nordur álfu heimsinns. Og setti uyda jfir landid sinna kappa og haufdingia" (AM 532 4to, fol. 58^{r}, ll. 7–9; *Kirialax saga*, 1917, p. 89) (in Italy and gained for himself all the northern hemisphere and appointed across the land his champions and chieftains).[43] Another comparison is made implicitly when the saga's attention turns to the next generation. In typical Arthurian fashion, an unknown knight named Kvintatus arrives unannounced on Christmas Eve, and Kirialax's son Vallterus challenges him to a joust (Barnes 2014, 180).[44] Kvintatus has great skill but little pride and, after they have each knocked

43 Arthur and Emperor Leo are also said to be contemporaries in *Breta sögur* (*Breta sǫgur*, 2014, pp. 76, 78, and 86). *Breta sögur*, an adaptation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, is extant in two fourteenth-century redactions: a shorter one in AM 544 4to (Hauksbók, 1290–1360) and longer one in AM 573 4to (1325–1375). Black's edition is based on the shorter version.

44 It is common in the translated *riddarasögur* for significant events to happen on or around Christian feast days. For example, see *Ívens saga*, 1999, p. 38; *Möttuls saga*, 1999, ch. 2, p. 8; *Erex saga*, 1999, ch. 14, p. 258. Holm perg 6 4to (1400–1425) contains the oldest witness of *Ívens saga* and a fragment of *Möttuls saga*. Paper copies were made of the latter when it was complete in the seventeenth century (AM 179 fol, 1625–1672, and AM 181β fol, 1638–1652). Kalinke's editions of these sagas are based on Holm perg 6 4to and AM 179 fol respectively. *Erex saga* is extant in full

the other from their horse, they become compatriots with Vallterus proclaiming that "margir menn meigi fá, frábærann riddaraskap, og at giorfi, og filgir þar med hræsne, og metnadur, kappgirne, og jfirbod [. . .] Enn þessi riddari, er so kurteys, og suo lytilátur, hæuerskur og hlutdeilinn" (AM 532 4to, fols 63^{v}, l. 20 – 64^{r}, l. 6; *Kirialax saga*, 1917, p. 99) (many men might gain surpassing knighthood and accomplishment and boasting and pride, energy and authority accompany such traits [. . .] But this knight is so courteous and so humble, well-mannered and considerate). As Barnes (2014, 179–180) argues, this concluding storyline "recasts the Byzantine court in the style of Camelot", leaving audiences with "the image of a harmonious brotherhood of knights", displacing Arthur as the sole figurehead of a knightly roundtable.

This recasting is furthered by the saga's liberal use of courtly lexis, which has its roots in the translated *riddarasögur*. Kirialax is the picture of courtly perfection: as well as mastering the liberal arts, he practices "skiot ok skylmingar turniment ok taflspeki sund ok sigur fimi ok allz kynz riddarligar listir" (589a, fol. 5^{r}, ll. 6–7; *Kirialax saga*, 1917, pp. 13–14) (shooting and fencing, the tournament and the skill of board-game-playing, swimming, the skill of winning victory, and all kinds of knightly skills).[45] The same can be said of his two sons who begin "ad skióta og skilmast, og ad ryda j Turniment" (AM 532 4to, fol. 59^{v}, l. 4; *Kirialax saga*, 1917, pp. 91–92) (to shoot and fence and ride in tournaments) as soon as they are of a suitable age. Their participation in the culture of the translated *riddarasögur* is signalled also by the numerous lavish feasts and extravagant courtly entertainments they enjoy.[46] When Kirialax marries Florencia, for example, "ǫll strætinn hlioda med sætum Saung hliödum, allra handa Saungfæra" (AM 532 4to, fol. 56^{r}, ll. 9–11; *Kirialax saga*, 1917, p. 86) (all the streets filled up with the sound of sweet song and all kinds of instruments),[47] and they were served "fleire enn einn fáuys

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only in two seventeenth-century paper manuscripts: Holm papp 46 fol (*c.* 1690) and AM 181b fol (also based on Holm perg 6 4to when it was complete), which Kalinke's edition is based on.

45 Compare *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, 1999, ch. 17, p. 50; *Gvímars saga*, 1979, ch. 1, pp. 121–122. The earliest manuscripts of *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* are fragments from the fifteenth century, and the earliest full version is the seventeenth-century paper manuscript AM 543 4to (1600–1699), which Jorgensen's edition is based on. The only extant version of *Gvímars saga*, a translation of Marie de France's *Guigemar*, is in Lbs 840 4to (1737). However, the translation is likely considerably older. See further Kalinke 1980.

46 For example, see *Erex saga*, 1999, ch. 6, pp. 234–36; *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, 1999, ch. 3, p. 32; *Strengleikar*, 1979, pp. 4–6. With the exception of *Gvímars saga* in Lbs 840 4to, the *Strengleikar* are preserved in only one medieval Norwegian manuscript (De la Gardie 4–7, 1250–1270), which formerly also included the fragment AM 666 b 4to. On the *Strengleikar* manuscripts, see Aðalheiður Guðmundsson 2014, 120–124.

47 *Saungfæra* is likely a scribal error which should read *hljóðfæri*.

madur, fáe greint, Og hier med vijn piment og claret: og grasadur miǫdur" (AM 532 4to, fol. 57^{r}, ll. 11–12; *Kirialax saga*, 1917, pp. 87–88) (more than a foolish man can recount, and in addition wine, spiced wine and claret and herb-flavoured mead).[48]

There are, by contrast, only a handful of allusions in *Kirialax saga* to anything resembling traditional *fornaldarsaga* material. The first occurs in a contextual narratorial aside where two figures are mentioned who also appear in Norse legend: Þíðrekr (Theoderic) and Atli (Attila).[49] The information about them, however, derives from less sympathetic Latin historical traditions: the narrator explains that Þíðrekr had just conquered Rome, converted the city to Arianism and killed Symmachus, Boethius, and the pope, while Atli has captured Ursula, an English princess, and had her beheaded.[50] The second reference to the north occurs when Kirialax is in Sicily, and we are told that "komen af nordr halfu heimsens uikingr sa er egenius het" (589a, fol. 15^{v}, ll. 26–27; *Kirialax saga*, 1917, pp. 57–58) (from the northern half of the world came that Viking who is called Eugenius) to launch a hostile attack on the island's king. In these two asides, we get glimpses of the barbaric, politically volatile, pagan world that exists to Kirialax's north.

3.1.2 *Samsons saga fagra*

The next saga in the compilation is an Icelandic prequel to *Möttuls saga* (adapted from the French poem *Le lai du cort mantel*), which makes a jump back in time from the Arthurian age of Kirialax to provide an origin story for the magic mantle that ends up at Arthur's court. In this text, as in *Kirialax saga*, the world of Scandinavian legend is diametrically opposed to the courtly culture associated with the translated *riddarasögur*.

Samsons saga fagra falls in two clear parts. The first deals with the English prince Samson, son of an earlier King Artús (Arthur), whose courtship of the Irish princess Valentína is obstructed by the conniving thief Kvintalín who attempts to

48 The scribe seems to have made some spelling mistakes here (which I have amended), writing 'priment' instead of 'piment' and 'clarent' instead of 'claret'.

49 Both appear together in *Þiðreks saga af Bern* and *Guðrúnarkviða in þriðja*, while Atli (brother of Brynhildr) features in several other eddic poems and *Völsunga saga*: *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, 1905–1911; *Edda*, 1983, pp. 199, 206, 212–216, 228–230, 232–233, 237–239, 240–263, 270; *Vǫlsunga saga*, 1965, chs. 26–40, pp. 44–73. *Þiðreks saga af Bern*'s oldest manuscript is Holm perg 4 fol (1275–1300), which Bertelsen's edition is based on. *Völsunga saga* is preserved in only one medieval manuscript (NKS 1824b 4to, 1400–1425). The eddic poems cited here appear only in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda (GKS 2365 4to, 1260–1280).

50 On the sources, see Divjak 2009, 173–174, 185–193.

capture her. Valentína is rescued by the widowed Ólympía of Bretland (Britain or Wales), a character seemingly inspired by the Arthurian fey (Lockley 1979, lv–lix), and finds refuge at her castle. In his attempts to find her, Samson (who is also tricked by Kvintalín) finds refuge with Ólympía too and is reunited with Valentína. Ólympía then gives Kvintalín an opportunity to redeem himself, sending him on a quest to bring them a precious cloth made by four *álfkonur* – the mantle of *Möttuls saga*. The second part of the saga provides context for this quest. It centres on the life of a certain Sigurðr, son of Goðmundr of Glæsisvellir, who, via friendship, violence, and trickery, grows up to become the King of Jötunheimar and owner of the mantle. At Sigurðr's wedding, Kvintalín manages to steal the mantle (killing Sigurðr) and returns to England to present it to Samson. The saga ends with a series of peaceful marriage alliances.

The saga's two-part structure juxtaposes two geographically distinct narrative worlds in the north of Europe: the saga's England and Bretland are inflected by the Matter of Britain whereas the far north evokes the *fornaldarsögur* (Lockley 1979, clxxix–clxxxviii; Torfi H. Tulinius 1990, 147–149). The former locations share in *Kirialax saga*'s courtly culture, as is evident from the protagonists' non-Norse names and chivalric character descriptions. Samson is "mikill og sterkur fryedur synum kurteis og [j allri medferd], vinsæll og trulindur og skarz *madr* mikill" (AM 181b fol, fol. 6^{v}, ll. 2.27–29; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 1, p. 1) (tall and strong, handsome to look at, courteous and mannerly, popular and faithful, and a very well-dressed man),[51] who learned "jþrottir [. . .] ok riddara skap" (AM 181b fol, fol. 6^{v}, ll. 2.50–51; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 1, p. 2) (sports [. . .] and knightly skills) from a knight named Salmon. His sister Grega is "bædi fogur og kurteis lærd og mentud a flestar handirder þær ed jungfrum voru tydar" (AM 181b fol, fol. 6^{v} ll. 2.34–36; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 1, p. 1) (both fair and courteous, learned and well-versed in most of the skills that young ladies used to practice), and Valentína is much the same. This society's elite take part in courtly pursuits, such as "tafl og burtreyder skot og skylmingar" (AM 181b fol, fol. 9^{r}, ll. 2.24–25; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 9, p. 19) (board games and jousting, shooting and fencing), and Samson is captured by Kvintalín while pursuing "einn fagrann hiort j einu riodri, suo ad alldri sa hann annann slykann" (AM 181b fol, fol. 9^{v}, ll. 1.23–25; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 10, p. 19) (a fair hart in a glade, such that he had never seen the like), in a hunt similar to that which occurs in *Erex saga* and the translated *lais Guiamar* and *Grelent* (*Erex saga*, 1999, pp. 222–224; *Strengleikar*, 1979,

51 The scribe seems to have made an error when writing the word 'fryedur', which is particularly unclear. There also seems to be a scribal error in l. 28 where elsewhere is written 'j allri medferd'.

pp. 14 and 286; Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2014, 129). As in Kirialax's Constantinople, the elite of this court prefer peaceful conflict resolution to open violence: the saga opens with a disagreement between Arthur and the Irish King Garlant, which is quickly resolved, and the kings "hieldu þeir sidan vel syna sætt og kurteisliga" (AM 181b fol, fol. 7^{r}, ll. 1.27–28; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 1, p. 3) (kept their agreement thereafter well and courteously).

The northern world of the saga's second half is, by contrast, distinctly 'uncourtly' and instead of chivalric men and women is inhabited by "troll ok ouettir" (589b, fol. 3^{r}, ll. 31–32; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 16, p. 31) (trolls and monsters). This half begins with an encyclopaedic description of the far north that fuses legend, traditional geographical knowledge, and Latin learning to provide a counterpart to *Kirialax saga*'s learned tour of the south (Simek 1986, 259–264). It describes the relative positions of Glæsisvellir, Risaland, Jötunheimar, Greenland, and Svalbard, as well as some of the non-human tribes that live there. This marginal region is ruled by the *jötnar* who are familiar from myth: their King Skýmir seems to be an invention of the saga compiler, using the homonym of the mythlogical Útgarða-Loki (Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, 2005, pp. 37–43; Lockley 1979, lx),[52] but King Goðmundr of Glæsisvellir is a figure that recurs in several texts and seems to have been associated with his own specific traditions (Grant and Hui 2020; Lockley 1979, pp. lxxv–lxxxiv). This world of giants is more barbaric than the south: child exposure is an accepted practice and so Sigurðr is abandoned and fostered by two peasants.[53] In stark contrast to Samson who is a "skarzs madr mikill" (AM 181b fol, fol. 6^{v}, ll. 2.29; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 1, p. 1) (a very well-dressed man), Sigurðr grows up "[illa] settr at klædum, hempa uar gior af honum af ulfallda hare ok ofen sem beckflota haukulskuor á fotum ur bolrefs skinni lodnu kylfu i hendu" (589b, fol. 4^{r}, ll. 7–8; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 18, p. 35) (poorly clothed. A robe was made for him out of camel hair and woven like a bench cover [with] over-shoes on his feet made out of hairy fox skin, [and he] carried a club).[54] He goes on to become a Viking raider who uses grotesque violence to deal with conflict: after killing the son of Skýmir, he appears to agree to a truce, but

52 *Gylfaginning* is preserved in three vellum manuscripts which do not differ significantly: De la Gardie 11 (Codex Upsaliensis, 1300–1325); GKS 2367 4to (Codex Regius, 1300–1325); and AM 242 fol (Codex Wormianus, *c*. 1350), as well as one paper manuscript, Traj 1374 4to (Codex Trajectinus, *c*. 1595), which is believed to be a copy of a now-lost medieval vellum closely related to the Codex Regius. Faulkes's edition is based on the Codex Regius version.

53 On child exposure, see Jochens 2015, 85–89.

54 This page is very damaged so I have transcribed it with the assistance of Wilson's edition. The scribe wrote 'uhonum' instead of 'honum', which I have corrected. See Wilson's notes on this error.

when the king reaches out to shake his hand, Sigurðr "reidde hann upp stafinn ok rak uid eyra skrymi suo hausinn klofnade. enn augun hrutu burt ur honum" (AM 343a 4to, fol. 13^{r}, ll. 19–20; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 22, pp. 42–43) (picked up the staff and drove it into Skýmir's ear so that his skull split and his eyes flew out of his head).

The barbaric north does, however, encroach on the courtly south in the character of Kvintalín – the son of a miller and a *gyðja* (sea-ogress) – and a stone-dwelling dwarf named Grelent, a stock *fornaldarsaga* character.[55] Kvintalín is not at home in the royal courts but rather "lá ute i skogum" (589b, fol. 1^{r}, l. 1; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 3, p. 7) (resided out in the woods), where he lures noble women to him by playing a magic harp. Kvintalín is a threat to Samson's society: by stealing women and imperilling their favoured model of class-exclusive dynastic politics, he threatens not only Samson's union with Valentína, but the stability of their entire class. And as Torfi H. Tulinius (1990, 148) observes, it is precisely that which makes him an outcast in the south (his comfort with violence and skill in woman-theft) that makes him an adept navigator of Jötunheimar. There, he enacts a mythological story pattern to steal the mantle: he disguises himself as Sigurðr's bride, evoking *Þrymskviða*'s account of Þórr's journey to the court of the *jötunn* Þrymr (Lockley 1979, xcvi; *Edda*, 1983, pp. 111–115).

The magic mantle that Kvintalín brings back to Samson's circle neatly symbolises their success in protecting themselves from the threat which the thief poses. In *Möttuls saga*, the mantle (which reveals women's infidelity) is a destabilising object: one after the other, the women of Arthur's court try it on and are all found morally wanting. In *Samsons saga fagra*, the mantle is given additional powers: it "birti fals epter konum þeim sem falsat hofdu bændr sina edur meyiar þær sem odyggiliga hofdu heima setit" (AM 343a 4to, fol. 12^{v}, ll. 15–16; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 20, p. 40) (illuminated the deceit of women that had been untrue to their husbands, or maidens who had not loyally stayed at home). Later it is added that "ef þiofur klædizt stickiunni þa fiell hun a jord" (AM 343a 4to, fol. 13^{v}, ll. 10; *Samsons saga fagra*, 1953, ch. 24, p. 44) (if a thief dressed in the cloth it fell to the ground). The mantle threatens to reveal those who pose a danger to the stability of the nobility – unfaithful women who imperil lines of descent and thieves that steal their resources. In this saga its testing serves the inverse function to that in *Möttuls saga*: when Valentína tries it on and it fits her perfectly, it does not bring shame on herself and Samson, but rather evidences the moral superiority of her class in comparison with the mythologically-inflected woman-thief who had attempted to kidnap her.

55 This is a common saga motif, variations of which appear in myth. See Boberg 1966, 109–110.

However, the mantle's origins in Jötunheimar complicate the saga's otherwise dualistic relation between courtly society and the myth and legends associated with the far north. As Clunies Ross (1994, 103–143) has shown, the primary source of conflict in Norse myth is the state of "negative reciprocity" between the *jötnar* and the gods, in which the transfer of resources goes, for the most part, in one direction: from the intellectually inferior *jötnar* to the quick-witted *æsir*, the power of the latter being dependent on their extraction of resources from the former. By placing Samson's elite in opposition to the *jötnar* and making them dependent on a powerful magical object that the *jötnar* possess, Samson's aristocracy are implied to be the *Æsir*-equivalent of this saga world. The folkloric Kvintalín is an additional intermediary and a convenient scapegoat through which the unsavoury aspects of the *Æsir* can be separated from the likes of Samson and Ólympía, whose chosen method of neutralisation is diplomacy rather than violence. But by the end of the text, their society is, nevertheless in possession of (and arguably dependent on) a magic object that was made in Jötunheimar.

3.1.3 *Valdimars saga*

The next text takes place in Saxland at an unspecified point in time. It begins with the hero of the saga, prince Valdimarr, watching as his sister Marmória is abducted by a *flugdreki* (dragon) at his coming-of-age tournament. Valdimarr travels to Risaland in pursuit of her where a family of *risar* (giants) – Alba, her brother Nissus, their father Aper, and grandmother Nigra – help him save Marmória from the clutches of queen Lúpa (who had taken the dragon form) along with her step-children, Blabus and Florida. The successful rescue mission is followed by a series of marriages.

Valdimarr and his sister are participants in the same *riddarasaga*-inflected courtly culture as Samson and Kirialax. In addition to having jousting mark Valdimarr's entry into manhood,[56] this is signalled by their stereotyped introductions: Valdimarr "[uar stor ok] sterkr ok uænn ok aungum likr at iþrottum eigi at eins um s[axland helldr] fannzt eigi hans liki i nordr hallfuni" (589c, fol. 1^{r}, ll. 3–4; *Valdimars saga*, 1962, ch. 1, p. 53) (was tall and strong and beautiful and [there was] no one alike in skills not only throughout Saxland, rather his equal could not be found in the northern hemisphere),[57] while Marmória "bar suo skiæra asionu at

56 There is a comparable scene in *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, 1999, ch. 4, pp. 32–34.
57 This page is very damaged.

eingen þessa heims fegurd matte likiazt uid hennar liosa likama" (589c, fol. 1r, ll. 5–7; *Valdimars saga*, 1962, ch. 1, p. 53) (had such a shining appearance that no one in this world may compare in beauty with her brightness). The force which threatens their society is their stepmother Lúpa (a stock villain in Icelandic folklore) whose shapeshifting,[58] skill in "trolldomi" (589c, fol. 4^{r}, l. 11; *Valdimars saga*, 1962, ch. 1, p. 63) (magic),[59] and position as the leader of a group who "uar trollum likara en menszkum monum" (589c, fol. 3^{v}, l. 6; *Valdimars saga*, 1962, ch. 1 p. 61) (were more like trolls than men) clearly align her with evil. Like Kvintalín, she threatens the stability of the elite by stealing one of their most important resources – an unmarried woman.

But whereas in *Samsons saga fagra*, giants represent the antithesis of courtly culture, in this text a (heavily adapted) mythological paradigm is instead used to bring them in its service. This saga's happy ending comes about not because of the courtly morals of an Arthurian character like Ólympía, but because of the unconditional support shown to Valdimarr by the mythologically- and folklorically-aligned family of *risar* (giants). This is spearheaded by Alba who is a derivation of the traditional story pattern known as the 'Helpful Giantess' or 'Affair with the Giantess', which finds expression in the myths about Þórr's visit to the court of the giant Geirröðr and Óðinn's sexual liaisons with giantesses such as Gunnlöð (Snorri Sturluson, *Edda, I*, 1998, pp. 3–4 and 24–30).[60] As both pseudo-mothers and lovers to their chosen heroes, 'Helpful Giantesses' such as these, as well as their

58 Stories about evil stepmothers seem to have been circulating at least as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century when Karl Jónsson wrote in *Sverris saga* that the eponymous king's journey through Värmland was like "i fornu*m* sogu*m* er sagt at verit hæfði. þa er k*onun*ga born urðo fyr*ir* stiup-mæðra skopu*m*" (*Sverris saga*, 1981, ch. 7, p. 7) (what is said in old sagas about kings' children who were put under step-mothers' curses). See further Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 2003, 79 and 227–247; Boberg 1966, 140. *Sverris saga* is extant in manuscripts from the early fourteenth century in two groups: A, which is represented by AM 327 4to (1290–1310) only and which is quoted here, and B, which includes all other versions, the oldest of which is AM 47 fol (1300–1325), where this line also appears.

59 As Nicholas Meylan (2014, 35) writes, the term *trolldómr* is "inherently condemnatory and was used in contexts where magic was vigorously denounced".

60 This section of *Snorra Edda*, *Skáldskaparmál*, varies in detail and arrangement more than the Prologue and *Gylfaginning* in its medieval manuscripts, but not to the extent that it is necessary to discuss here. Faulkes's edition is based on the Codex Regius version but the same stories are recounted in the Codex Upsaliensis and Codex Wormianus versions: Snorri Sturluson, *The Uppsala Edda*, 2012, pp. 88 and 94–96; Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, 1924, pp. 53–55 and 65–68. McKinnell (2005, 147–171 and 181–184) provides an overview of these narratives and a psychological reading. Their saga reflexes have been the subject of much discussion: e.g. Ellis 1941; Gallo 2006; Jóhanna Katrín Friðrikdsóttir 2013, 73–76; Kroesen 1996, 57–71; McKinnell 2005, 172–180 and 184–195; Roby 2020.

various saga counterparts, have been argued to play an important role in their male hero's psychological development (e.g. Hansen 2009). But here, the significance of the paradigm goes beyond the individual: by bringing about Marmória's safe return, Alba plays a larger role in protecting the stability of the society from which Marmória comes. Thus Alba is the total opposite of *Samsons saga fagra*'s Kvintalín; rather than disrupting noble lines of descent, she is committed to reinforcing them. Direct comparison between her family and Kvintalín is suggested by the reappearance of the magic-harp that Kvintalín had used to lure in noble women but which is used by Nissus to lure Florida and Marmória away from Lúpa to safety.[61] The difference between the texts goes even further: it is not merely one *risi* family that aids Valdimarr, but they also enlist the support of the "allra trolla þing" (589c, fol. 7^{r}, ll. 18; *Valdimars saga*, 1962, ch. 2, p. 73) (assembly of all trolls), who travel to the final battle on stone boats,[62] bringing with them "margan tuihaufdadan iotun" (589c, fol. 7^{r}, ll. 21–22; *Valdimars saga*, 1962, ch. 2, p. 73) (many two-headed *jötnar*). Whereas in *Samsons saga fagra* the giants of myth and folklore had threatened courtly society, here they flock in large numbers to protect it.

The reformulation of this traditional paradigm does require some changes: although the *risi*-family resemble the *jötnar*, they have different intertextual connections. Whereas the *jötnar* derive from myth, the earliest appearances of the term *risi* are in translated works where they denote figures of non-Scandinavian origin (Grant 2019, 84–90). Those of *Valdimars saga* are also made distinct by the introduction of noble blood into their family line: Aper reveals at the end of the saga that Alba's mother was the daughter of Gallo, King of Småland, but "sokti modir min hana á þann hatt sem lupa sokti marmoriu" (589c, fol. 8^{r}, ll. 20–21; *Valdimars saga*, 1962, ch. 3, p. 76) (my mother captured her in the same way that Lúpa captured Marmória). By dint of her semi-noble birth, Alba does not belong in woods and caves like her grandmother, but at a royal court – a position she is returned to as a result of her alliance with Valdimarr. With these adaptations, the 'Helpful Giantess' paradigm is refitted for courtly society, and space is made for traditional mythological material to fit within it, albeit in a purely supportive role.

61 Lockley (1979, xciii–xciv) argues both drew on an orally-circulating motif.

62 For other examples of stone boats in Icelandic texts, see Boberg 1966, 118. A stone boat belonging to a *tröllkona* appears in the Icelandic folktale 'Skessan á steinnökkvanum', which also features a *þríhöfðaður þuss* (three-headed ogre): *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri, I*, 1862, pp. 427–431.

3.1.4 *Klári saga*

The focus of the next text remains in Saxland but turns its attention to integrating another problematic aspect of mythological femininity into the world of romance – the *valkyrja* (or Valkyrie).

Klári saga is a bridal-quest narrative that follows Klárus, prince of Saxland, as he attempts to woo and marry Serena, the princess of Frakland (France). Serena is a *meykongr* (maiden-king), a stock 'indigenous' *riddarasaga* character.[63] The sagas in which this figure appears generally follow a standard pattern: the male hero pursues her hand in marriage; she violently spurns his advances and humiliates him; he retaliates, humiliating her in return, until finally she agrees to marry him. Although potential foreign sources for the motif have been mooted (Schlauch 1934, 92–94; Kalinke 1990, 106–108), Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2012, 231–238) has shown how its essential elements – such as the adoption of a male social position and the desire for autonomy in choosing a marriage partner – can be found in various other mythological and legendary figures, such as the shield-maidens/*valkyrjur* Hervǫr, Brynhild/Sigrdrifa, Sigrún, and Sváva, with the narrative pattern reaching its full form (at least in the extant textual record) in the figure of Þornbjörg/Þórbergr in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*.[64]

Klári saga is more explicitly concerned with the subject of gendered elite identity than most *meykongr* narratives. Klárus's quest for Serena is presented as a scholarly task: having mastered the seven liberal arts, Klárus's father seeks out a new tutor for his son – *meistari* Pérús from Arabia.[65] Pérús informs Klárus about the princess Serena and instructs him to compose a poem about her. When this proves too difficult, Klárus decides to woo her instead, setting out on a journey he describes, as Barnes (2014, 75) notes, as a "foruitnis ferd" (589d, fol. 3^{v}, l. 1; *Clarus saga*, 1879, ch. 5, p. 4) (journey of curiosity), akin to Kirialax's world travels. His efforts are thwarted when Serena humiliates him at a feast by conniving to have him spill egg on his clothes. As Kalinke (2008, 19) points out, the skill which Serena accuses him of lacking as a result, *hoftypt* – a Middle Low German loan word referring to education and decorum – is the same skill which Pérús, as

63 The saga's prologue claims it was translated from a Latin text found in France by bishop of Skálholt Jón Halldórsson (1322–1339), but Shaun Hughes (2008) has convincingly argued that it is more likely that Jón composed the text himself.

64 *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* is preserved in full in two redactions: the main manuscript of the shorter version is Holm perg 7 4to and that of the longer is AM 152 fol. On the difference in the characterisation of Þornbjörg/Þórbergr in the two redactions, see Kalinke 2012b, 204–209.

65 There are three other short stories about Pérús, two of which appear in 586: *Af meistara Pero ok hans leikum*, 1882.

typtumeistari, had been enlisted to teach. Serena's great crime, therefore, is not merely that she has humiliated Klárus, but that she has revealed his lack of class-specific knowledge.

The tables are turned in the punishment that Pérús subjects her to following her and Klárus's eventual marriage: in addition to physical abuse, he disguises himself as a "dolg eigi litinn ok helldr osinniligan" (589d, fol. 12^{v}, ll. 17–18; *Clarus saga*, 1879, ch. 16, p. 17) (ogre [who is] not small and rather villainous) who Serena believes to be her husband and puts her through a kind of class-based humiliation, robbing her of her expensive clothes, embarrassing her with his outrageous manners, and having her beg strangers for alms. Serena earns her status as good wife and courtly lady not by cultivating knowledge (the domain of men) but by demonstrating obedience to her husband (Kalinke 2007, 71). The saga ends by stating its moral outright, declaring the pacified Serena to be a "lios dæmi huersu audrum godum konum byriar at hallda dygd med sina eiginbændr edr unnasta" (589d, fol. 17^{r}, ll. 24–26; *Clarus saga*, 1879, ch. 19, p. 24) (clear example of how it behoves other good women to maintain virtue with their husbands or fiancés). By contrast, the induction into elite manhood which Pérús provides for Klárus is one where intellectual, physical, and sexual control are bound together.

Here, as in the previous two sagas, we see a figure derived from legendary/mythological tradition – a later reflex of the *valkyrja* – brought into contact with courtly culture. The result is to reinforce the ideal models of elite femininity and masculinity found in the texts discussed above (Bagerius 2009, 127–130; Glauser 1983, 202–207; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir 2013, 116–126). For women, the edges of the autonomous *valkyrja*-figure who wishes to choose her own husband are softened, and, for men, elite and explicitly foreign manners and knowledge are shown to be essential tools of domination. Serena's defeat and punishment represent the triumph of courtly society over the subversive femininity that the *valkyrja* represents; in the story of her taming, this aspect of myth is shown to be incompatible with the new, distinctly foreign, elite order.

3.1.5 *Ektors saga*

The final saga in the first half of the manuscript provides an historical perspective on the courtly culture explored in the texts so far and, like *Kirialax saga*, contains very little material derived from legend or folklore. It takes place in the eastern Mediterranean, several generations after the fall of Troy, and recounts the deeds of one of King Priam's descendants, Ektor (son of King Karnotius of Tyrkland (Turkey)) and his band of six knights: Vernacius, Florencius, Fennacius, Alanus, Trancival, and Aprival. Although the saga is very long, its seven-part episodic

plot is quite simple. Following a conversation about their valiant ancestors, the knights go out to test their "riddaraskapar" (589d, fol. 20^{r}, l. 27; *Ectors saga*, 1962, ch. 4, p. 90) (courtly prowess) and achieve comparable renown, with each episode following one of them.[66] The final two episodes take the heroes to Mesopotanea (Mesopotamia), which is ruled by another of Priam's descendants, Troilis, who captures Aprival. The knights then wage war against Troilis and capture his son Eneas. Troilis's daughter, Trobil, travels to Tyrkland to negotiate his release, and agrees to marry Ektor in return. The saga concludes with each of the knights marrying other noble women and becoming kings themselves.

The principal effect of *Ektors saga* is to overwrite the legacy of Troy's destruction with a military victory. This legacy was well known across Europe from *Daretis Phrygii De Excidio Troiae Historia*, which was adapted into the Icelandic *Trójumanna saga* in the thirteenth century.[67] *Ektors saga* is positioned as a continuation of that narrative in its opening scene. In a play on one in *Trójumanna saga*, Ektor's mother is visited in a dream by the historic Ektor (Hector), and he tells her to name her son after himself (Barnes 2014, 92; *Trójumanna saga*, 1963, p. 9).[68] However, the young prince Ektor does not just take up his namesake's legacy: when his father dubs him as a knight he is also given a shield owned by Ektor's killer – the Greek Akillas (Achilles). And it is both these heroes, and two others, whose memory he and his compatriots summon before setting out on their individual quests: "fyrst hinn sterka ektor ok sidan agium ok akillam her med nefndu þeir hinn sterka herculem" (589d, fol. 20^{r}, ll. 10–11; *Ectors saga*, 1962, ch. 4, p. 89) (first the strong Ektor and then Ajax and Akillas, as well as the one they named the strong Hercules). Thus the dynasty-consolidating marriage between two branches of Priam's descendants with which the saga concludes, not only "strengthens the ongoing course of Trojan history" (Barnes 2014, 93), but it also updates it, constructing a new vision of the classical world in which violence is directed not towards those within the elite (i.e. the Greeks), but those outside it (the various monsters encountered by the knights on their quests).

66 The text is quite damaged on this page. Glauser (1983, 149–158) provides a structural reading of these episodes.

67 *Trójumanna saga* is mentioned directly by the narrator in the saga's epilogue, which I discuss in Chapter 7. It is extant in three redactions that vary in detail. The α-redaction is represented by the fragment AM 598 II α4to (1490–1510) and later paper manuscripts; the β-redaction is represented by AM 573 4to (1330–1375), the fragment AM 598 II β4to (1300–1350), and several Swedish transcripts of the now-lost Ormsbók; and the third redaction is AM 544 4to (Hauksbók), which contains a shortened version.

68 This reference is to the Hauksbók version.

And indeed, it is not within the mould of the classical Ektor or Akillas that this new generation is cast. Although classical in setting, the saga is indebted above all to the Arthurian *riddarasögur* for its centripetal structuring and much of its detail (Kalinke 2012a). It is furnished with the same descriptive formulas found in the sagas before it: Ektor is a typical chivalric hero who is well versed in the liberal arts, can understand "allar tungur þær er um heiminn gangu" (589d 4to, fol. 18^{r}, l. 17; *Ectors saga*, 1962, ch. 1, p. 83) (all the languages around the world), and has a castle built with "dyrligra steinna" (589d, fol. 18^{r}, ll. 21–22; *Ectors saga*, 1962, ch. 1, p. 84) (precious stones). And, much like those in *Kirialax saga*, during the lavish wedding with which the saga concludes, it is said that "allz kynz hliodfærum pipar ok harpar sungu" (589d, fol. 47^{v}, l. 21; *Ectors saga*, 1962, ch. 26, p. 184) (all kinds of instruments, pipes and harps sung),[69] and the guests were served "piment ok klaret" (589d, fol. 48^{r}, l. 1; *Ectors saga*, 1962, ch. 26, p. 184) (spiced wine and claret). Moreover, as Kalinke (2012a) shows, each of the knights' adventures are variations on Arthurian motifs: Vernacius's encounter with a magic spring resembles that of *Ívens saga*'s Kalebrant (1999, pp. 38–44); Florencius's duel with a giant, for which he equips himself with a shield that is inlaid with gold and gemstones is a standard Arthurian affair with several parallels (Kalinke 2012a, 71–73); Fennacius's encounter with the dragon mirrors that in *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* (1999, ch. 36, p. 98); Alanus's violent confrontation with some robbers in the woods conflates two similar ones in *Erex saga* (1999, ch. 7, pp. 238–240 and ch. 10, pp. 248–250); and Trancival's tale features a grateful lion inspired by *Ívens saga* (1999, pp. 80–88).

A handful of *fornaldarsaga*-inspired motifs are also woven into this Matter-of-Britain framework. They appear, for the most part, among the saga's many villains: Vernacius fights *jötnar* and *berserkir*; the Tristram-legend-inspired dragon killed by Fennacius is given a *fornaldarsaga* colouring with the addition of a backstory and hoard that liken him to legendary dragons like Fáfnir; and the two sorcerers who Alanus must overcome are described using Scandinavian vocabulary for magic (Kalinke 2012a, 82): they are "blot menn mikler ok fraumdu seid" (589d, fol. 28^{v}, l. 10; *Ectors saga*, 1962, ch. 9, p. 117) (men who performed great sacrifices and *seiðr*). There is also one instance where a figure familiar from legendary texts assists one of the knights: Fennacius is successful against the above-mentioned dragon because he covers himself in a salve given to him by a dwarf whose daughter he earlier saved from an attempted rape – a variation of the

69 The scribe seems to have made an error here (which I have amended) writing what appears to be "piarpar ok hararpar". Note that the description of the wedding in Loth's edition (based on AM 152 fol) is less detailed than that in 589d and the other fifteenth-century witness, Holm perg 7 fol.

'Helpful Dwarf' motif that appears in numerous medieval Icelandic texts (Boberg 1966, 109–110).[70]

The overall effect of situating this round table in the ruins of Troy is to create an origin for the courtly culture that is colourfully depicted in *Kirialax saga* and to further the displacement of Arthur which had begun there. As is recorded in *Breta sögur*, the Britons were themselves descended from the Trojan Brutus, an ancestor of Aeneas (*Breta sǫgur*, 2014, pp. 2–18). Therefore, the result of placing the courtly culture associated with those Britons earlier on in Troy, is to present it not as an innovation of Arthur, but as an older, fundamentally Trojan legacy. It means that the culture which extends from Kirialax's Constantinople to Samson's pre-Arthurian Britain and Valdimarr and Klárus's Saxland are not derivations of an Arthurian ethos, but developments of a shared Trojan heritage.

3.2 The Legendary Half

In the manuscript's second half, legendary/mythological material becomes dominant. It is introduced by two *þættir* which take place during more recent periods of Scandinavian history. The first (*Stúfs þáttr*) is, as mentioned, not particularly relevant to the concerns of this chapter, but the second deals with the same tensions as the texts explored so far and warrants further discussion.

3.2.1 *Þorsteins þáttr bæjarmagns*

Þorsteins þáttr bæjarmagns is, as Rowe (2003, 100–102) observes, a hybrid not just of *riddarasaga* and *fornaldarsaga* material, but it also adopts a pattern from the *konungasögur* – the "didactic Óláfr-*þáttr*" – to create what is essentially a missionary story about Jötunheimar. It follows a retainer of Óláfr Tryggvason, Þorsteinn bæjarmagn (whose name, 'mansion-might', refers to his large size), as he is sent by the king on three dangerous missions. First, he goes to *undirheimar* (the underworld), following a young boy named Bjalfi who rides on a *krókstaf* (crooked stick) to a royal feast where he steals a magic ring and table cloth and gives them to King Óláfr. Next, Þorsteinn comes upon a dwarf in a forest whose son has been stolen by an eagle. Þorsteinn saves the boy and is rewarded with an enchanted wool shirt and piece of flint. In the third episode, Þorsteinn travels to Jötunheimar where he meets Goðmundr of Glæsisvellir, a *risi* who rules a depen-

70 See also discussion about dwarfs in Chapter 5.4.2.

dency under the auspices of the tyrannical *jötunn* King Geirröðr. The bulk of the *þáttr* details Þorsteinn's efforts to help Goðmundr overthrow Geirröðr and take over rule of Jötunheimar. It concludes with Þorsteinn's brief return to Óláfr's retinue and his marriage to Guðrún, the half-human daughter of a *jötunn* jarl named Agði, after which he (with Óláfr's permission) receives a jarldom from Goðmundr and settles in Jötunheimar himself.

Þorstein's three 'otherworld' adventures all derive from attested folkloric traditions. The story about the boy riding on a *krókstaf* has been convincingly connected by Eldar Heide (2018, 227–232) to an oral elf-queen legend recorded in Iceland in the 1840s, while Þorsteinn's encounter with the dwarf and his son is another example of the 'Helpful Dwarf' motif.[71] The third episode also has its roots in pre-Christian myth and legend (Heide 2018, 220–227; Power 1985, 163–166). It has features in common with the mythological stories concerning Þórr's journeys to the courts of Geirröðr and Útgarða-Loki and closely corresponds to a tale told about Thorkillus (Þorsteinn) in Saxo Grammaticus's twelfth-century *Gesta Danorum* where Guthmundus (Goðmundr) and Getherus (Geirröðr) appear as two giant brothers who rule side-by-side realms (Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*. The History of the Danes, 2015, pp. 599–621).[72] As mentioned above, Goðmundr makes appearances in several other Icelandic legendary texts, one of which (*Helga þáttr Þórissonar*) features a pair of magic horns that also appear in this *þáttr*, hinting at a shared underlying oral tradition (Lockley, 1979, lxxix).

The reformulation of this material chimes with the two mythological paradigms for human-giant relations discussed above. Geirröðr's *jötnar* are explicitly pagan and grotesque: Agði looks "blár sem hel" (589e, fol. 3^{v}, l. 20; *Saga af Þorsteini Bœarmagni*, 1827, ch. 7, p. 189) (blue as Hel), and it is said that "[hann uar] fiolkunnegr ok menn hans uaro tröllum likari en monnum" (589e, fol. 3^{r}, ll. 3–4; *Saga af Þorsteini Bœarmagni*, 1827, ch. 5, pp. 184–185) (he was a sorcerer and his men were more like trolls than human beings). He and his compatriots frequently appeal to Óðinn and Þórr, are violently opposed to Christianity, and the entertainment they favour is a barbaric perversion of typical courtly games, which involves a flaming seal's head rather than a ball. By contrast, Goðmundr is civilised and physically beautiful: he tells Þorsteinn "unum uer illa uid at þiona iotnum" (589e, fol. 2^{v}, l. 22; *Saga af Þorsteini Bœarmagni*, 1827, ch. 5, p. 183) (we are not happy about being ruled by *jötnar*); is said to be "i gullskotnum klædum á bleikum heste" (589e, fol. 2^{v}, l. 5; *Saga af Þorsteini Bœarmagni*, 1827, ch. 5, p. 182) (wearing clothes that were woven with gold and riding a light-coloured horse); "uar

71 See pp. 40–41 above.
72 See p. 32 above.

huitr á skinnzlit" (589e, fol. 3^{v}, l. 21; *Saga af Þorsteini Bœarmagni*, 1827, ch. 8, p. 189) (was fair of complexion); and although he is not a Christian himself, he repeatedly states that he will respect Þorsteinn's faith.

And while the centripetal quest-based structure gives the *þáttr* the feeling of Arthurian romance and recalls the adventures of Ektor's knights, it is not courtly society that the 'Helpful Giant' Goðmundr is enlisted to support, as was the case for *Valdimars saga*'s Alba. Rather, the *risi*'s role is to further the missionary agenda of King Óláfr who, ultimately, is the one responsible for overthrowing Geirröðr. Such is clear from the appeals Þorsteinn makes to "konungs hamingiuna" (589e, fol. 1^{v}, l. 7–8; *Saga af Þorsteini Bœarmagni*, 1827, ch. 2, p. 177) (the king's luck);[73] the thanks and elaborate gift that Goðmundr sends to King Óláfr after Geirröðr has been killed; and the concluding marriage between Þorsteinn and Guðrún, which extends Óláfr's Christian sphere into the land of giants. The effect of this mythologically-infused missionary story is to integrate Jötunheimar into the Christian world – to give it an enduring relevance which need not be maligned by the polemical treatment given to the *jötnar* themselves.

3.2.2 *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*

The manuscript's next three texts take us back to the pre-Christian legendary age and focus on regions that are peripheral to the main Scandinavian kingdoms, depicting them as culturally and politically backward compared with those of the manuscript's first half.

The first of these texts, *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, is set on the far eastern edge of the Viking sphere – the kingdom of "Rusía" (Russia) – where the princesses Brynhildr and Bekkhildr, daughters of King Hertryggr, have been abducted. One day a traveller from Hálogaland named Ásmundr joins Hertryggr's retinue and is quickly dispatched to defend his realm against an attack by Egill from Småland. Instead of going to war, however, the two champions become sworn-brothers and travel together to Jötunheimar in pursuit of Hertryggr's daughters. On their travels, they meet a *kerling* (old woman) named Arinnefja who prepares gruel for them to eat. While it is cooking, each of them tells their *ævisaga* (life-story) and it is revealed that Egill and Arinnefja had previously met. The following morning, Arinnefja tells the sworn-brothers that the princesses were taken by her brothers, two *jötnar* named Gautr and Hildir.[74] With the assis-

73 On Óláfr's 'luck', see Lal 2014.

74 It is worth noting that, as a female, Arinnefja is not a *jötunn* herself (Grant 2019, p. 92).

tance of Arinnefja and her partner Skröggr, the brothers then save Hertryggr's daughters and marry them. Egill marries Bekkhildr to become King of Rusía, and Ásmundr marries Brynhildr. She bears Ásmundr one child, who is later killed by the legendary Starkaðr inn gamli, before dying young herself.[75] Ásmundr then acquires a ship named Gnoð, giving him the nickname Gnoð-Ásmundr, before meeting his end at the hands of Óðinn.[76]

Ásmundr is a hero rooted in legendary tradition, whereas Egill is an innovation of it; this is revealed in their *ævisögur*. Ásmundr's is, in essence, a miniature *fornaldarsaga* and seems to be based on material of some antiquity (Lagerholm 1927, xxiii–xxxi). It tells of his sworn-brotherhood with prince Aran of Tattaríá, then Aran's death and Ásmundr's dealings with his restless corpse, as well as his competition with Aran's uncles for rule over Tattaríá. As Åke Lagerholm (1927, xxiv–xxxi) demonstrates, the story has correspondences with several other texts, suggesting it was put together from material circulating in oral traditions. The most striking parallel is an episode in the *Gesta Danorum* about an undead Aran that relates to two sworn-brothers named Asmundus and Asuitus (Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*. The History of the Danes, 2015, pp. 335–339). Egill's character, by contrast, seems to be an innovation of the saga compiler. It is made up of several stock motifs and its central episode – which details Egill's capture and escape from a giant – seems to have been inspired by the twelfth-century Latin *Dolopathos sive de Rege et Septem Sapientibus* (Gottskálk Jensson 2003, 193–194; 2021, 64–71).

In the creation of a new hero to accompany Ásmundr, a romantic gloss is given to the legendary world that he represents. Such is evident in the scene when they meet, which begins as a hostile encounter between two large forces but turns into a duel between the two individuals. They fight for several days before Ásmundr decides they are equally matched and agrees to enter a sworn-

75 Starkaðr appears in several sources: *Heiðreks saga*, 1924, ch. 1, p. 2 (H-text) and ch. 1, pp. 90–91 (U-text); *Saga Gautreks konungs*, 1830, chs. 3–7, pp. 15–37; Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*. The History of the Danes, 2015, pp. 379–447, 471, 493, 531, 533, 547, 553, 559–573. *Heiðreks saga* is extant in three redactions, most commonly referred to as the R, H, and U versions. The oldest witness, AM 544 4to (Hauksbók), is of the H-text, which is followed by the R-text in GKS 2845 4to (1440–1460), and the U-text in UppsUB R 715 (*c*. 1650); the story about Starkaðr appears in the H and U versions. *Gautreks saga* has a shorter and a longer redaction. The earliest full manuscripts of the shorter (which does not include the Starkaðr story) date from the seventeenth century, and the earliest witness of the longer redaction (cited here) is AM 152 fol. On Starkaðr, see further Hui 2018b, 82–84 and 143–148.

76 At the end of *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra*, it is said that the eponymous hero went on to become the sworn-brother of Gnoð-Ásmundr, although, as Lavender notes in his translation, no mention is made of Illugi in *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*: *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra*, 2015, ch. 6, pp. 16–17.

brotherhood, and "takazt þeir þa i hendr ok sueriazt i fostbrædralag eptir fornum sid" (589e, fol. 6^{v}, ll. 21–22; *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, 1927, ch. 4, p. 16) (then they shook hands and swore an oath of brotherhood following the ancient custom). The pair are said to enact an ancient pre-Christian ritual of *fóstbrœðralag* (sworn-brotherhood), which finds more detailed expression in, for example, the famous scene in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* (1929, ch. 6, p. 7) where a patch of turf is raised and blood is shared.[77] But this scene also resonates with those that occur earlier in the manuscript in more courtly settings, such as in the concluding scenes of *Kirialax saga* where Vallterus becomes the companion of the visiting knight Kvintatus. The specificities of this scene are different. The knights of *Kirialax saga* joust on horseback whereas Egill and Ásmundr are considerably less restrained: they wrestle on the ground without their weapons and Ásmundr even threatens to bite Egill's throat. Moreover, while the latter are said to follow *fornum sið*, Vallterus and Kvintatus simply "leggia nu hendur synar samann" and "huer minnest til annars" (AM 532 4to, fol. 64^{r}, ll. 18–20; *Kirialax saga*, 1985, p. 100) (put their hands together [and] each kissed the other). But despite these differences, their resonances nevertheless position the traditional oath that Ásmundr and Egill swear (the bloody details of which are not described) as a northern equivalent to the knightly fraternity on display at the manuscript's Mediterranean courts.[78]

There are other echoes between this saga and those of the manuscript's first half. The disruption to the status quo which sets the narrative in motion (the abduction of Hertryggr's daughters) echoes the opening of *Valdimars saga* and resonates with the fear of woman-theft evident in *Samsons saga fagra*. This saga also concludes in the same way those do: with an order re-establishing wedding that ties together several different kingdoms in a peaceful alliance. There is an echo of the wedding entertainment motif as well: "matti þar sia margan hofmenn ok margskonar hliodfæri" and "uar þar eingi hlutur sparadr af þeim beztum hlutum sem fa kunne i þeim londum" (one could see many courtiers and many kinds of musical instruments [and] there was nothing spared of the best things which could be found in those lands) (589e, fol. 13^{r}, ll. 17–18; *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, 1927, ch. 17, p. 78). But, since this is still the world of Scandinavian legend, the music is complemented by traditional oral storytelling: "þeir asmundr ok egell saugdu fra ferdum sinum ok til sannenda um saugu sina segir

77 *Gísla saga Súrssonar* is extant in two main redactions conventionally named the shorter and longer versions. The shorter is represented by AM 556a 4to (1475–1499) and the longer by paper copies (AM 149 fol, 1690–1697; NKS 1181 fol, 1775–1800) of a lost medieval vellum. This scene appears in both versions.

78 The chivalric colouring given to a 'traditional Viking oath' is much more overt in *Örvar-Odds saga* (Larrington 2008).

suo, at þær være þar badar skinnefia ok arennefia ok saunnudu saugu þeirra" (AM 589e 4to, fol. 13^{r}, ll. 19–21; *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, 1927, ch. 8, pp. 78–79) (Ásmundr and Egill told of their journey and it is said that to prove the truth of their story, both Skinnefja and Arinnefja were there and vouched for their story).

Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana's romanticising of legend is evident in its other adaptations of *fornaldarsaga* material. There are several references to *Völsunga saga*, which have been pointed out by Rowe (2013, 211), such as the names of Hertryggr's daughters, the appearance of a dwarf-smith named Reginn who fixes Egill's sword, and Ásmundr's death at the hands of Óðinn, which is similar to that of *Völsunga saga*'s Sigmundr (*Vǫlsunga saga*, 1965, ch. 11, p. 20). The reference to Ásmundr's death (and to his son's at the hands of Starkaðr) situates the saga firmly in the world of legend, while the treatment of Brynhildr, Bekkhildr, and Reginn demonstrate how different this legendary world is. Although Brynhildr is introduced as a shield-maiden type figure who is well-versed in "riddara iþrottir" (589e, fol. 5^{v}, l. 19; *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, 1927, ch. 1, p. 4) (knightly skills), she is unlike her feud-inciting namesake and plays an entirely passive role as the object of a quest. The figure of Reginn is similarly changed: in *Völsunga saga* he is a maleficent figure who threatens the stability of the elite, whereas in this saga he is nothing more than a dutiful and largely insignificant smith.

The limits of this society's courtly development are, however, illustrated by the heroes' journey to Jötunheimar, which uses the same mythological paradigm of the 'Helpful Giantess' that occurred in *Valdimars saga* but is more limited. Like Alba, Arinnefja is a critical agent in bringing about the return of the princesses to human society, but, unlike her, Arinnefja is herself a daughter of a *jötunn*. Because of this, she must undergo a violent severance from her *jötunn* nature. As Larrington (2015, 66–69) demonstrates, this is the project of her *ævisaga*, in which she undergoes extreme physical trials that transform her from *flagðkona* (troll-woman) to *kerling* (old woman) and prepare her for a new alliance – this time with men. The alliance is symbolised by the act of healing which she performs when she finishes her story: having realised who Egill is, she offers to reattach his hand. She then integrates herself culturally into the heroes' world: at her brothers' wedding (which she goes on to disrupt), she seats herself next to Brynhildr and Bekkhildr, and "hafdi allan setning á þeirra hattum" (589e, fol. 12^{r}, ll. 20–21; *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, 1927, ch. 15, p. 72) (directed them in their manners). As a result, she is rewarded with upward social movement and given rule of Jötunheimar after her brothers have been killed. But while Arinnefja and her daughter are welcome guests at the concluding wedding, they are not included in the marriage alliances created there; with the parting gift of meat and butter, they return to Jötunheimar on friendly, but nevertheless

subordinate, terms. As Orning (2009, 734) notes, these friendly relations seem like they are only expected to last a generation, and the marriage alliances are perhaps a precaution against threats that may come from Jötunheimar in the future.

The legendary world constructed as a result is one which is on the brink of change. It is not the dark world plagued by feuding and obstinate women that we find in *Völsunga saga*, nor is it an offshoot of the courtly world that is depicted in *Kirialax saga*. Rather than being ruled by a *stólkonungr*, it is made up of rulers of small holdings on the peripheries of Scandinavia. It is vulnerable to threats from the outside and dependent for its stability on the assistance of a figure from the magically-empowered margin. This assistance is not founded on any kind of political alliance (as in *Samsons saga fagra* and *Valdimars saga*) or colonisation (as in *Þorsteins þáttr bæjarmagns*) but is entirely dependent on the personal relationship between Egill and Arinnefja. Nevertheless, with the creation of this alliance, the fragmented legendary world in which the sworn-brothers move takes a step closer towards that of Kirialax. The saga ends with the suggestion of further movement in that direction: with the murder of his son being Starkaðr's "sidazta oskæparverk" (589e, fol. 13^{v}, l. 20; *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, 1927, ch. 18, p. 81) (last crime), the sea-king Ásmundr represents the end of the old order, and his Óðinnic death creates space for the introduction of something new.

3.2.3 *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*

In the next two sagas, which are paired genealogically, attention moves to another two locations within the Scandinavian sphere of influence, Denmark and England, where legendary material dominates.

The first, *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*, begins with the Danish King Hringr being killed in a hostile attack by a pair of Vikings named Sóti and Snækoll. One of Hringr's men survives the attack and helps his two surviving children, Hálfdan and Ingibjörg, escape to Bjarmaland. After some time, the siblings go travelling but become lost at sea and run aground in Helluland. Here, they come across two *tröll* who have captured a pair of human twin brothers and their sister: Sigmundr, Sigurðr, and Hildr. Hálfdan kills the *tröll* and saves the siblings, and together they set sail again. They then encounter three further *flagðkonur*, one of whom – the half-human Brana – reveals that she had helped Hálfdan in his earlier encounter. Brana and Hálfdan then kill the entirety of Brana's trollish family and Hálfdan lays with her for several nights, after which she instructs him to travel to England without her and seek the hand of the princess Marsibil. He does as she advises but, following some interference by a king's man named Áki,

Brana travels to England herself to assist him. Hálfdan then returns to Denmark to reclaim his father's kingdom from Sóti who, in response, curses him to forget Marsibil. Brana appears once again and reminds him about his engagement, and Hálfdan travels back to England to marry.

Like several of the texts already discussed, *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*'s plot is dominated by a variation on the traditional 'Helpful Giantess' or 'Affair with Giantess' motif. The role this giantess plays is, however, quite unusual, because Hálfdan is not a brave warrior or valiant knight like the heroes of *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*. Rather, he is a largely helpless young man whose successful transition from exiled prince to powerful king is entirely the result of the efforts of Brana, who intervenes at every moment of crisis to ensure his success. She helps him kill all the *tröll* and *flagðkonur* he encounters; she tells him who he should marry and gives him the tools he needs to succeed (magic herbs, an enchanted mail coat and ring, and a ship she builds herself); when he misplaces his trust in Áki and fails to protect his sister from attempted rape, Brana intervenes with an icy wind that freezes him stiff; and when Áki tries to burn Hálfdan alive, Brana carries him out of the fire herself, berating him with the proverb, "seinnt er hafglapa at snytra" (589e, fol. 18^{v}, ll. 28–29; *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*, 1830, ch. 13, p. 585) (slowly does a fool become wise). As Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, 76) writes, his many missteps make Hálfdan "one of the most undeserving 'heroes' of Old Norse literature". He is not successful because of his personal qualities, but because he was lucky enough to be 'fostered' by Brana.[79]

The society in which he moves is, moreover, politically unstable and distinctly uncourtly. Its heroes are a far cry from both those of Völsung legend, as the helpless Sigurðr and Sigmundr remind us (Rowe 2013, 206), and the courteous masculinity exhibited by those in *Kirialax saga*. There are faint glimmers of courtly culture present. For example, Ingibjörg is "prydd aullum kuenligum listum suo uar ok skiær hennar ásiona sem skinanda gull" (589e, fol. 14^{r}, ll. 4–5; *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*, 1830, ch. 1, p. 559) (adorned with all womanly skills and her appearance was as bright as shining gold). These glimmers are stronger in England where the noble women Marsibil and Alfífa entertain themselves by walking in their private *lundr* (grove);[80] the former is first spotted by Hálfdan while "hun kemdi sier med gullkambi" (589e, fol. 17^{v}, l. 26; *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*, 1830, ch. 10, p. 579) (she combed her [hair] with a golden comb); and Hálf-

79 As McKinnell (2009, 213–214) notes, there are several characters who meet unlucky ends that highlight the importance of luck in this saga.

80 On *lundr* as a romance signifier, see Hallberg 1982, 24–25

dan and Áki joust using horses with French names – Lóngant and Spóliant (Kruse 2009, 92).[81] However, this sprinkling of courtly lexis never develops into fully-blown romance convention: Hálfdan does not woo Marsibil but instead uses Brana's magic herbs to induce a pseudo-lovesickness, and his joust with Áki does not end with an agreement of friendship as we might expect – it is simply one blind motif in a protracted antagonism that concludes with Áki's death. And it is in Áki, an attempted rapist, that we find expressed the same threat to the elite (focalised through its women) that was embodied by *Samsons saga fagra*'s Kvintalín, *Valdimars saga*'s Lúpa, and *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*'s Gautr and Hildir. But instead of the monstrous margin, in this saga the threat emanates from within the English elite itself. Finally, although the saga concludes with a three-way wedding that recalls those discussed above, a mere "halfan manud med miklum pris" (589e, fol. 19^{v}, l. 34; *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*, 1830, ch. 17, p. 590) (half a month of much splendour) stands in for courtly *strengleikar* and foreign delicacies that are found elsewhere.

3.2.4 *Ála flekks saga*

The next text provides a similarly tumultuous image of legendary England. It begins with Hálfdan and Marsibil's son, King Rikarðr, deciding to have his own son exposed. The abandoned baby is adopted by a poor couple named Gunni and Hildr who name him Áli, but when they bring him some years later to the king's hall, his background is revealed and he returns to live with his royal parents. One day, Áli is cursed by a malevolent *ambátt* (bondwoman) named Blátönn (Blue-tooth) because, she says, Áli "hefir mik alldri kuatt med gódum ordum" (AM 181k fol, fol. 1^{r}, ll. 2.53–54; *Ála flekks saga*, 1927, ch. 4, p. 89) (never greeted me with good words). Blátönn sends him to the forest to become the husband of her sister, the *tröllkona* Nótt. In the forest, Áli meets Nótt's daughter Hlaðgerðr (who has a human father) and she helps him escape. Áli wanders the forest until arriving in Tartaría where he marries its queen Þornbjörg.[82] The couple are followed to their bower by a *þræll* (slave) named Glóðarauga, the brother of Nótt and Blátönn, who turns Áli into a wolf. He is eventually returned to human form by Gunni and Hildr but then has a dream about Nótt in which she curses him again, giving him wounds that can only be healed by her other three brothers, Leggr,

81 I have corrected the scribe's misspelling of *gullkambi* as "gullkamdi".

82 Þornbjörg is a *meykongr*, but Kalinke (1990, 102) describes her as a 'nonfunctional' one because she acquiesces to marriage immediately.

Liðr, and Jötunoxi. Þornbjörg travels to find them, tricks Jötunoxi into killing Nótt and then burns the three of them alive in their hall. The healed Áli then goes to the kingdom of a certain Eiríkr to save Hlaðgerðr from being burnt alive and gives her to the king in marriage. Finally, Áli returns to England and marries Þornbjörg for a second time, taking over the English throne when his father dies.

Uniquely among the manuscript's sagas, *Ála flekks saga* lacks any reference to courtly lexis.[83] Its overall structure seems to derive from oral stories: as Jonathan Y. H. Hui et al. (2018a) have demonstrated, it largely conforms to the folktale type most commonly known as the 'Snow White' story and is the oldest known written version of the tale. The details that furnish this core are, moreover, far from courtly. As discussed in relation to *Samsons saga fagra*, the motif of child exposure and adoption by an older peasant couple is common in medieval Icelandic literature. The family of trolls who plague Áli are also stock figures who are given very typical descriptions: Nótt, for example, lives in a cave and wears an immodest "skinnstacki" which "tok eigi á lendar á bakit" (AM 181k fol, fol. 1^{v}, l. 2.14; *Ála flekks saga*, 1927, ch. 12, p. 93) (skin-cloak [which] did not reach her buttocks at the back).[84] The werewolf episode is a motif familiar from legend and has its roots in pre-Christian beliefs about shapeshifting.[85] Precursors to the dream-wounds are harder to pin down: characters acquire wounds in dreams in a few sagas, but the scene in *Ála flekks saga* has a much closer parallel in the Irish story *Serglige Con Culainn* (Einar Óláfur Sveinsson 1957), which means, as Hui et al. (2018b, 9–10) note, it was probably based on a source (either oral or written) with some connection to the tradition of Cú Chulainn's dream and certainly not from the literary field of romance.

The overall impression of legendary England is, as in *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*, one of instability; far from fulfilling the courtly ideal, it has more in common with the barbaric world of *Samsons saga fagra*'s far north. It is a society where superstitious kings practice child exposure, princes are brought up in poverty where they are "illa klæddum" (AM 181k fol, fol. 1^{v}, l. 1.20; *Ála flekks saga*,

83 As Hui et al. (2018b, 4) note, the one exception is the mention of Áli greeting his father 'kurteisliga' (589e 4to, fol. 20^{v}, l. 21; *Ála flekks saga*, 1927, ch. 11, p. 105) (courteously).

84 See further Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2017; Boberg 1966, 118.

85 Although, as Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir (2007) shows, it seems to have been also influenced by the werewolves of translated literature (such as *Bisclaretz ljóð* in *Strengleikar*), the motif would, I think, have been more familiar to audiences as a standard of the Scandinavian legendary world – the most notable examples appearing in *Vǫlsunga saga*, 1965, ch. 8, pp. 10–12; *Hrólfs saga kraka*, 1960, chs. 18–20, pp. 54–62; *Edda*, 1983, pp. 130–139. Although a version of *Hrólfs saga kraka* seems to have circulated at least as far back as the fifteenth century, the oldest extant manuscripts date from the seventeenth.

1927, ch. 5, p. 90) (poorly-dressed),[86] and rulers are vulnerable to hostile Viking attackers from outside as well as the jealous malice of their own trollish subjects. Combined with the less than flattering portrayal of the English elite which we find in the saga of Áli's grandfather, the overall effect of this saga is to distance England (and, to some extent, Denmark from where Hálfdan originally hailed) from the courtly society found in the manuscript's first half.

3.3 Conclusion

The manuscript begins by outlining a kind of courtly culture comparable to that depicted in the translated *riddarasögur*. The epitome of this culture is, in *Kirialax saga*, placed in a Constantinople that is contemporaneous with the British King Arthur, and the origins of it are traced back to classical Troy in *Ektors saga*. For elite men, the key tenets of this culture are the cultivation of learning and an adherence to a principal of non-violence amongst the elite. Power is obtained primarily through diplomacy and marriage rather than conquest. In the other sagas of the first half, the relationship between this courtly culture and legendary tradition is explored; but rather than the heroes of legend, it is its marginal figures who feature. Some of these figures are incompatible with courtly society and must be overcome by it: the *jötnar* are the antithesis of elite masculinity whereas the *valkyrja*-figure represents the inverse of the pliant courtly woman. There is room, however, within this culture for other figures inspired by legend to play supportive roles. *Valdimars saga*'s Alba brings the narrative fields of legend and romance into contact while maintaining their hierarchical relationship, establishing the latter as the natural and desirable improvement of the former. In *Samsons saga fagra*'s story of the magic mantel, Jötunheimar is also suggested to be a wellspring of magical power that might be utilised in service of courtly society – an idea which is given religious authorisation by *Þorsteins þáttr bæjarmagns*.

These texts provide a framework through which to interpret the sagas of the manuscript's second half. In *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, we witness a courtly culture in the making on the Scandinavian periphery. This saga's heroes are drawn from legend but are a step removed from it: Ásmundr seems to be a hero of some antiquity who, with the addition of his sworn-brother Egill, takes on some characteristics of the knights of the manuscripts' first half. Nevertheless, these two heroes navigate an unstable political landscape, rule minor territories, and the peace they establish at the saga's conclusion seems to

86 Compare to the description of Sigurðr quoted on p. 32.

be temporary. The England of *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra* and *Ála flekks saga* is, however, even further from the chivalric ideal, and its inhabitants are a far cry from both the honourable heroes of the south and those of Scandinavian legend. This unstable society, where one small error can result in a chain of life-threatening and chaos-inducing curses, has more in common with *Samsons saga fagra*'s Jötunheimar than *Ektors saga*'s Troy. Thus the stage is set for the manuscript's final two *fornaldarsögur* where the Trojan courtly culture depicted in the first half goes on to find expression in Scandinavia itself.