5 *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*

My analysis of 589a–f's final text, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, uses the same methodology as the previous one, although the types of intertextual relationships cannot be as easily distinguished into Lachmann's three types as was the case for *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*. Although exhibiting features of 'participation' and 'troping', *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s intertextuality is largely 'transformational': it mixes together numerous different references and creates something new from the contrasts between them. Because of the complexity of these relations and the fact that it is much longer, it is necessary to provide a summary of the saga's plot before in-depth analysis. In each of the sections that follow, I look at a different element of the text: first the bridal quest, then the saga's geography, and finally its representation of paganism. In the final section, I move the focus from the saga's plot to its *apologiæ*, which will lay important foundations for the discussion in this book's second half about the nature and function of the saga as a medium of cultural memory

5.1 Summary of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*

Göngu-Hrólfs saga begins by introducing a Scandinavian warrior named Hreggviðr who is said to have raided so successfully in the east that he became the King of Garðaríki. After several years of rule, a challenger named Eiríkr arrives from Gestrekaland with a gang of *berserkir* – foremost among them is the magically-skilled Grímr Ægir. Eiríkr defeats Hreggviðr and takes over his kingdom. Hreggviðr's daughter Ingigerðr convinces Eiríkr to make a deal with her. She will choose one champion every year to joust against his man Sörkvir on her behalf. If her champion is successful, she will retain her freedom and a third of her father's kingdom, but if after three years her champions all fail, she will marry Eiríkr and surrender her territory to him. Grímr Ægir casts a spell to ensure her failure, making it so that no one can beat Sörkvir without wearing Hreggviðr's armour, which had been buried in his grave mound with him. Planning ahead, however, Ingigerðr stays in her father's mound longer than anyone else after his burial and places a duplicate set of armour beside the real one.

After these events, the saga's attention moves west from Garðaríki to Scandinavia where we are introduced to the protagonist. Sturlaugr starfsami is, according to this saga, a jarl in Hringeríki in Norway where he and his wife Ása have several sons. The youngest is Hrólfr, otherwise known as Göngu-Hrólfr (walking-Hrólfr) because he is so heavy he cannot ride a horse for long and has to walk everywhere he goes. Sturlaugr complains that Hrólfr has done nothing to distin-

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guish himself and should acquire a wife. Hrólfr leaves, promising not to return until he has acquired more territory than his father. He travels first to Sweden where he encounters the hostile farmer Atli Ótryggsson and then the immoral Viking Jólgeirr. He overcomes them both with ease, acquiring a spear from the former and a ship and its men from the latter.

Hrólfr then travels to the court of an old widowed jarl named Þorgnýr in Denmark and joins his retinue. Two mysterious brothers named Hrafni and Kráki also arrive in Denmark and join the jarl's following. One day a swallow drops a hair in Þorgnýr's hand while he is sitting at his dead wife's grave. He is told the hair belongs to Ingigerðr, the princess of Garðaríki, and Þorgnýr decides he wishes to marry her, and sends Hrólfr on a quest to the east to woo her on his behalf. On his way, Hrólfr encounters the conniving Vilhjálmr (who wishes to marry Eiríkr's sister Gyða) and he manages to trick Hrólfr into becoming his servant. They travel to Garðaríki together and Hrólfr secretly performs a series of tasks on Vilhjálmr's behalf that have been set by Eiríkr to test his worth. First, he hunts a white stag through a forest. In order to capture it he must provide assistance to a heavily-pregnant *álfkona* (elf-woman) with her birth, whose mother gives him the stag in gratitude. He is then sent to Hreggviðr's mound to recover the dead king's armour – a mission which Eiríkr intends as a trap. When he gets there, however, Hrólfr finds the dead king is wide awake, guarding his treasures. He greets Hrólfr warmly and offers both his armour and his horse Dúlcifal, before revealing that he had been the swallow that dropped Ingigerðr's hair on Þorgnýr's lap because he wanted to bring Hrólfr to Garðaríki to avenge him and marry his daughter. Hrólfr takes the armour, but instead of surrendering it to the usurper-king, he gives Eiríkr the fake set that Ingigerðr had hidden in the mound earlier. The final task Hrólfr performs is to defend Eiríkr's kingdom from an attack by a *tröll* named Sóti. After completing these tasks, Hrólfr is chosen by Ingigerðr to be her champion that year and he successfully defeats Sörkvir with Hreggviðr's armour. He then whisks Ingigerðr back to Denmark to marry Þorgnýr. On his way, however, he is waylaid by the jealous Vilhjálmr who, eager to have Þorgnýr's gratitude for himself, stabs Hrólfr with a sleep-thorn and cuts his feet off, taking Ingigerðr to the jarl and leaving Hrólfr behind. Hrólfr is saved by Dúlcifal who carries him to the home of Þórgnyr's counsellor Björn who had been usurped by a villainous dwarf named Möndull. Hrólfr threatens the dwarf (who is skilled in healing), and he reattaches Hrólfr's feet to his legs, allowing him to reveal Vilhjálmr's deceit to Þorgnýr.

Möndull then joins Hrólfr's cause and they return to Garðaríki with a large following and fight a several-days long pitched battle against Eiríkr and Grímr Ægir. During the battle, Sturlaugr arrives from Norway to support his son, but he is killed by Grímr Ægir. The brothers Hrafni and Kráki make a reappearance, and

Kráki is killed. Hrólfr makes a second visit to Hreggviðr's grave mound where the dead king gives him a vat of magic drink to revive his army, and eventually Hrólfr is triumphant. After the battle has been won, Hrafni reveals himself to be Haraldr, the son of the recently deposed King of England named Játgeirr. The final portion of the saga details how Hrólfr successfully helps Haraldr back onto his throne and concludes with a triple marriage: Haraldr marries Þorgnýr's daughter Þóra; her brother and Hrólfr's good friend Stefnir marries Haraldr's sister Álfhildr; and, Þorgnýr having died earlier in a hostile attack on his jarldom by a *berserkr* named Tryggvi, Hrólfr marries Ingigerðr and becomes King of Garðaríki. Hrólfr's first son is named Hreggviðr, who is said to have made an ill-fated expedition to the east. His second son is called Óláfr and is said to have become the King of Denmark who fought Helgi the Brave with the support of the legendary Hrómundr Gripsson. His daughters, Dagny and Dagbjört, are said to have healed Hrómundr, and his third son was called Hörðr, father of Kári, father of Hörða-Knútr.

5.2 The Bridal Quest

Göngu-Hrólfs saga's principal intertext is, of course, *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, which is invoked when Hrólfr is introduced as the son of Sturlaugr. The scene which immediately follows invites comparison to a significant part of that text: its bridal quest. In *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, the hero had been convinced to pursue Ása by his father, who had complained that his son had done nothing to distinguish himself. At the beginning of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, Sturlaugr attempts to do the same for his own unpromising son, another *kolbítr* (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2005, 92–93; Mitchell 1991, 55–56), saying:

> suo litz mer á þig sem litel muni afdrif þin uerda, heyrdi þat meir konu en karlmanni at hafa þui ligt framferdi sem þu hefir, þicki mer likazt at þu kuænezt ok setizt i bu ok gerir þig at kotkarli i afdal nóckrum þar eingen [madr] finni þig ok al þar þinn aldr suo leingi sem audet uerdr (589f, fol. 15^{v}, ll. 24–27; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 4, p. 249)
>
> (It seems to me that your fate will be meagre, the way you behave is more fitting for a woman than a man. It seems advisable to me that you look for a wife and settle down on a farm and make yourself a cottager in some remote valley where no one will find you and live your life for as long as is fated.)

Hrólfr is clearly insulted and replies that "eigi mun eg bua" (589f, fol. 15^{v}, l. 27 (*Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 4, p. 249) (I will not be a farmer) and goes on to proclaim: "eda kvænazt þui konur skulu mer eigi" (589f, fol. 15^{v}, ll. 27–28; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 4, p. 249) (nor will I marry, because women will not [have]

me). He says instead: "skal eg þui i burt uerda ok eigi aftr koma fyrr en eg hefi feingit jafnmikit riki ok þu att eda deyia ella þicki mer þetta kotungs eign ein, er þu hefir med ferdar ok lited til skiptiz med oss brædrum" (589f, fol. 15^{v}, ll. 28–31; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 4, p. 249) (I will go away from here and not come back until I have got a realm as large as yours or else die. It seems to me the property which you have managed is that of a croft-farmer, and it is too small to share between us brothers). Whereas Sturlaugr had accepted the challenge of finding a wife and proved it to be hardly a challenge at all, Hrólfr declares himself more interested in acquiring territory. Although his response differs to that of his father, the expected outcome of the parental goading seems, at first, like it will be the same – that this hero is not interested in impressing women and his saga will not be a bridal quest.

This turns out not to be the case, and instead of rejecting 'heroic love' as *Sturlaugs saga starfsama* had, Hrólfr's reluctance to pursue marriage is used as a vehicle to reassert it. This is facilitated by his proxy bridal quest, which means that although Hrólfr ends up marrying Ingigerðr, he never actively pursues this goal. As Kalinke (1990, 152–153) points out, he is entirely passive in all his (limited) interactions with her and expresses no desire to win the princess's affections for himself. In fact, he seems intent on doing the exact opposite: when she asks him to joust Sörkvir, for example, he tells her "allheimskliga kys þu þui at eg kann eigi at rida eirn saman suo at eg falle eigi ofan er eg þegar hræddr er menn yglazt á mik" (589f, fols 23^{r}, l. 34 – 23^{v}, l. 1; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 20, p. 293) (You choose unwisely for I cannot ride without falling down, I am afraid when men frown at me). But despite this lack of active courtship, Hrólfr's heroic pursuits are enough to make her want to marry him; after the final battle and Þorgnýr's conveniently timed death, "Sagði ingigerdr einardliga at hun uilldi aungan mann [ei] ga nema hrólf sturlaugsson, þui at hann hefir mestu um kostad faudr mins at hefna" (589f, fol. 33^{v}, ll. 22–23; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 34, p. 349) (Ingigerðr said firmly that she wanted to marry no other man than Hrólfr Sturlaugsson, because he had done the most to avenge her father). As Daniel Sävborg (2003, 66) observes, Ingigerðr does not choose Hrólfr out of love but because she admires his commitment to the heroic duty of vengeance. This is the absolute opposite of the perspective on 'heroic love' in the previous saga where Ása's judgement of Sturlaugr's heroic standing had no narrative significance at all.

Göngu-Hrólfs saga diverges further from its prequel in its treatment of material from *Völsunga saga*. As Rowe points out, Hrólfr's proxy-wooing of Ingigerðr echoes that of Brynhildr anyway, but the comparison between the two couples is made explicit by having Hrólfr and Ingigerðr sleep with a sword between them when they travel from Garðaríki to Denmark (Rowe 2013, 210; Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1980, 20). Further references to the legend come in the form of the

sleep thorn which Vilhjálmr stabs Hrólfr with and the drink of forgetfulness that Möndull gives to Björn's wife when he takes his place at Þorgnýr's court (Rowe 2013, 210).[112] The uniquely powerful and intelligent horse Dúlcifal also plays a similarly critical role in the pursuit of Ingigerðr as Sigurðr's horse Grani does in the wooing of Brynhildr (Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1980, 20). But these motifs are not, as in *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, taken up to be mockingly brushed aside, rather they are integrated into the saga's bridal quest: Hrólfr's wooing of Ingigerðr is the central task that propels the action forward, and the couple who sleeps either side of the sword in this saga (and here it really is a sword unlike in *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*) is the one whose relationship the saga actually follows. In Hrólfr and Ingigerðr, the 'heroic love' of Sigurðr and Brynhildr is given a new lease of life.

However, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s perspective on *Völsunga saga* is not wholly participatory since the romance-inflected world that Hrólfr and Ingigerðr inhabit is strikingly different to the tragic one of their legendary forebears. Not only, as Rowe (2013, 211) notes, is the couple in question given a happy ending, but their path to it diverges sharply from *Völsunga saga* in its use of courtly lexis. In his study of the *fornaldarsögur*, Peter Hallberg (1982, 18–32 and 34–35) has noted that both sagas draw particularly heavily on the 'vocabulary of chivalry'. In *Völsunga saga*, this vocabulary is clustered in the second half, which recounts Sigurðr's dealings with the Gjúkungs, his betrayal of Brynhildr, and the many deaths which follow (Würth 2003, 106–108; Ney 2003, 114–116). These courtly scenes take place in distinctly feminised spaces and involve secretive private interactions which negatively contrast the honourable public ones that are preferred by Sigurðr and Brynhildr (Ney 2003, 116–121; Quinn 2003, 93–97). The heroic code followed by them does not fit within the double-dealing practices of the Gjúkungs, and the pair's tragic deaths result from their refusal to assimilate (Larrington 2012, 253–260).

In contrast, the same world in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* is positively coded and aligned with Hrólfr and Ingigerðr. When Hrólfr is introduced as a *kolbítr* figure, he is positioned as an outcast not because of laziness but because he is uninterested in typical farm life. Instead, he prefers the same pastimes as the elites described in the sagas of 589a–f's first half: "ecki uar hann sidblendin uid alþydu, for hann litt med gledi ok skemtan utan hellzt þotti honum gaman at fara i skotbakka ok uera i burtreidum" (589f, fol. 15^{v}, ll. 19–20; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 4, p. 249) (he did not mix well with the common people, he did not enjoy merriment and entertainment although he did enjoy shooting butts and jousting).

112 Rowe also notes there are two minor characters named Sigurðr who appear in the saga.

When in Denmark, he begins to engage with this courtly culture: Þorgnýr puts him in charge of his own *kastali* (castle) – one of the words Hallberg identifies as a *riddarasaga* import – whereas the jarl himself occupies a more traditional *höll* (hall).[113] But it is in the east that Hrólfr really proves his chivalric worth. The hunt for the white stag may have derived from the translated French *lais* and echoes a scene in *Samsons saga fagra*'s *riddarasaga*-inflected first half. This is followed by the most critical test of Hrólfr's chivalric prowess: his joust with Sörkvir. The beginning of it is described as follows:

> [s]kikar nu huattuegi sinni burdstaung til lags ok ridr huor i mot aud[rum] sem hestarner kunnu hardazt bera þa, leggr þa hvor til annars afli miklu spiot saurkua kom i skiólldin hrólfs ok renndi ut af, En hrólfr stakk hialminum i b[urt] af saurkuir (589f, fol. 23^{v}, ll. 25–28; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 21, p. 295)
>
> (Both now aimed their lances to attack, and charged towards one another as hard as their horses could carry them. They struck each other with great strength. Sörkvir's lance struck Hrólfr's shield and glanced aside, but Hrólfr knocked Sörkvir's helmet away.)

This scene occurs at a critical juncture in Hrólfr's bridal quest, since it is where he and Ingigerðr meet. The Garðaríki princess – who is consistently described as a *jungfrú* (princess or lady), another *riddarasaga* import (Hallberg 1982, 19; Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1971, 107) – is also depicted using romance conventions:

> allra kuenna uar hun friduzt ok kurteisuzt er i uoru gardariki ok þo at uidara uæri leitad, uizku ok malsnilld bar hun yfir huern mann ok allar þær listir kunni hun er kvenn manne somdi ok þa plaugudu dyrir konur at kenna ok nenna, hun hafdi hár suo mikit at [vel] matti hylia allan hennar likama ok suo fagurt sem gull edr hálmr (589f, fol. 13^{v}, ll. 5–8; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 1, p. 238)
>
> (She was the loveliest and most courteous woman in Garðaríki and beyond. She had more wisdom and eloquence than other people. She was capable of all those skills which befitted women and which noble women cultivated to teach and practise. She had hair so long that it could cover her whole body and [it was] as beautiful as gold or straw.)

Like Hrólfr, Ingigerðr also occupies a *kastali* or *friðkastali* (castle of peace), which is "agiætliga innann buit med gulli ok gimsteinum" (589f, fol. 13^{v}, l. 10; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 1, p. 238) (excellently fitted out with gold and gemstones), whereas Eiríkr rules from a *höll*. But, unlike in *Völsunga saga*, it is not the women who cause trouble in this world. Accordingly, no scenes occur inside Ingi-

113 With 17 occurances of the word *kastali*, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* has the highest usage among the sagas surveyed by Hallberg (1982, 34–35) after *Þiðreks saga af bern*.

gerðr's castle, and although it is said of Þorgnýr's daughter Þóra that "uar henne skemma reist ok sat hun þar i [med] sinum þionustukonum" (589f, fol. 16^{r}, ll. 21–22; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 5, p. 251) (a chamber was built for her, and she sat there with her female servants), echoing Brynhildr's own maiden-inhabited *skemma*, we are never actually shown it.[114]

The courtly world of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* is instead characterised by large ostentatious public events. Foremost among them is the romance-style triple wedding at the saga's close (Lönnroth 2003, 41; Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1971, 97–98), which echoes scenes in several of 589a–f's other texts, *Kirialax saga* most of all. To the banquet they invite "burgeisar ok [hi]rdmenn greifar jarlar hertugar ok konungar ok adrir mikits hattar monum" and "kurteiser junkiærar ok hæuersker hofmenn" (589f, fol. 35^{v}, ll. 18–21; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 37, pp. 358–59) (burghers and courtiers, counts and jarls, dukes and kings, and other distinguished men [and] courteous young men and well-mannered courtiers). No expense is spared when it comes to food: "þar u[aru fram] bornir allz konar rettir, medur hinum dyruztum jurtum, allra handa dyra holld ok fugla, af reinum ok hiortum ok uænum uillisuinum, traunur ok giæs hæns ok riúpur med piprudum páfuglum, Eigi uanntadi þar hin dyrligazta dryck, kal ok enskan miod med uilldazta uini, piment ok klaretur" (589f, fol. 35^{v}, ll. 21–25; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 37, p. 359) (they carried in all kinds of dishes with expensive herbs, all kinds of animal meats and birds, of reindeer and harts, and fine wild boar, cranes and goose, chickens and ptarmigans with peppered peacocks. There was no lack of expensive drink, ale and English mead, with the finest wines, both spiced and claret). And the same can be said of the entertainment: "allz kyns streingleika, haurpur ok gigiur, sinfon ok sallterium þar uoro bumbur ok trumbur ok pipur blasnar" (589f, fol. 35^{v}, ll. 26–27; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 37, p. 359) (all kinds of stringed instruments, harps and fiddles, symphonies and psalteries, there were tambourines and drums, and pipes were blown).

Whereas Sigurðr and Brynhildr's refusal to operate within the norms of courtly culture had been a testament to their heroic status, it is Hrólfr's success in navigating that same world which demonstrates his. Although the couple's union is based on a traditional conceptualisation of heroic love, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* positions that tradition as mutually compatible with the courtly world that *Völsunga saga* scorns. The saga's amalgamation of these two worlds is embodied by the intertextuality of Hreggviðr's horse Dúlcifal. He can understand human speech and "skiotr uar hann sem fugl fimr sem ikorni mikill sem ulfalldi, en likaztr lioni at grimleik ok afle" (589f, fol. 13^{v}, ll. 17–18; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 1, p. 239)

114 There is a hole in the page on l. 21 where we would expect the word 'med' to be.

(was swift as a bird, nimble as a squirrel, great as a camel, and resembling a lion in cruelty and power) and "uar af kyni dromedariorum" (589f, fol. 13^{v}, l. 26; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 1, p. 240) (was related to the dromedary). He is, as mentioned, Hrólfr's equivalent to Sigurðr's Grani but he also seems to have been inspired by Alexander the Great's steed Bucephalus (Magoun 1934). In this manuscript context, there is also an echo with *Ektors saga*, in which the eponymous hero is said to ride a dromedary (589d, fol. 19^{r}, l. 4; *Ectors saga*, 1962, ch. 2, p. 86). Connoting figures from both Scandinavian and classical traditions, in addition to the courtly culture constructed in 589a–f's first half, Dúlcifal represents the middle-ground which this saga strikes in its construction of a hero who is traditional at his core but nevertheless successful in an overtly Europeanised setting.

This is drastically different from *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, which had thoroughly rejected both of the narrative fields that *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* embraces. Not only had that saga made a mockery of the Völsungs, but it had also snubbed the king-centred ideology of the translated *riddarasögur*. *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, by contrast, evinces the totally opposite attitude towards kingship. This is evident in the saga's contrary approach to the legendary King Gautrekr, to whom *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*'s Haraldr had been negatively compared. As Kalinke (1990, 147) points out, in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* when the swallow drops Ingigerðr's hair on jarl Þorgnýr's lap, he is sitting at the grave of his dead wife, just as Gautrekr is said to have done in both *Gautreks saga* and *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* (*Saga Gautreks konungs*, 1830, ch. 8, p. 39; *Saga af Hrólfi konúngi Gautrekssyni*, 1830, ch. 1, p. 57).[115] It is thus Þorgnýr who is the Gautrekr-equivalent of this saga, but unlike Haraldr, he is not undermined by the saga's hero. Rather, all the heroic acts which Hrólfr performs are by-products of his service to the jarl; his goal is not to marry, but to complete the task assigned to him by Þorgnýr. The saga's villains are his opposite in this regard: rather than serving those with power, they all attempt to take it illegitimately. This is the case for Eiríkr who takes Garðaríki by force, the usurping King Heinríkr who does the same in England, and the *berserkr* Tryggvi who invades Þorgnýr's jarldom while Hrólfr is away. Unlike these illegitimate takers-of-power, Hrólfr elevates himself by defending the status-quo: he is rewarded for remaining ever-loyal to his overlord, ousting two usurpers, and bringing about the return of the rightful dynasties to both. In contrast to Eiríkr, Hrólfr does not impose himself as king, rather it is said that "uar hrólfr þa til konungs teken yfir allt gardariki med radi konungs [dóttur] ok annara rikis manna"

115 The swallow dropping the hair seems to derive from the Tristan tradition although the motif does not occur in any Icelandic versions of the legend. Kalinke (2015, 157) sees this as evidence that Icelanders were familiar with other versions.

(589f, fol. 36^{r}, ll. 32–33; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 38, p. 362) (Hrólfr was adopted as king over the whole of Garðaríki on the advice of the king's daughter and other rulers).

Consequently, the proxy nature of Hrólfr's bridal quest has two purposes. On the one hand, it enables Hrólfr to demonstrate his worth to Ingigerðr without actively pursuing her, and thus rearticulates *Völsunga saga*'s heroic love. On the other hand, it also provides a means through which that heroic love can be recalibrated: the kind of heroism which Hrólfr's union with Ingigerðr represents is characterised by fidelity to his overlord. Consequently, this saga has more in common with the political ideology of the translated *riddarasögur* than that of either *Völsunga saga* or *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*.

The intertextuality of the bridal quest is thus thoroughly transformational. Its courtly world is a sharp departure from that in *Völsunga saga*; as Rowe (2013, 211) writes, *Völsunga saga* "represents what *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* is not–not a tragedy of ancient heroes, not tainted by malevolent pagan gods or incestuous siblings". But as the representation of love and comparison to *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*'s shows, although moving away from it, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* does not totally reject or supplant this source text. Instead, it confuses *Völsunga saga*'s internal oppositions to create something new, participating in both the heroic world of its first half *and* the courtly one of its second. The result is the re-embrace of both the systems of value which Sturlaugr had rejected and their reconfiguration into one integrated whole. With this reconfiguration, the *riddarasaga*-inflected courtly culture that was depicted in 589a–f's first half and which was imperfectly realised in *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*, and *Ála flekks saga*, finally reaches full fruition in Scandinavia.

5.3 Geography and Kingship

The intertextual relationships which relate to the saga's geography are of a similarly transformational character. These relationships embed the saga in the wider memory space of saga literature and, by providing a point of entry for Hrólfr's recalibrated version of legendary heroism, they are also a means through which the saga reconfigures it. Each of its three main locations – Garðaríki, England, and Denmark – will be treated in turn below.

5.3.1 Garðaríki

Garðaríki is the Norse name for the kingdom of the Kievan Rus that emerged in the ninth century amidst a considerable amount of 'Viking' activity along the eastern European river routes, known as the *austrvegr* (eastern way).[116] Tatjana N. Jackson (2019, 171–172) has distinguished three distinct phases in the representation of the *austrvegr* and Garðaríki in Icelandic sources. The first is that of Viking raids, while the second and third deal with the diplomatic relations between the Christian kings of Scandinavia and Garðaríki. *Heimskringla*'s *Ynglinga saga* provides an example of the first. It tells of King Yngvarr's unsuccessful raids in the Baltic: "Yngvarr konungr gerði frið við Dani, tók þá at herja um Austrvegu [. . .] Var þá landherinn svá drjúgr, at Svíar fengu eigi mótstǫðu. Féll þá Yngvarr konungr, en lið hans flýði" (Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla, I,* 1941, p. 61) ("King Yngvarr made peace with the Danes and then began to raid around the *austrvegr* [. . .] The native army was so numerous that the Svíar could put up no resistance. Then King Yngvarr died and his army fled") (Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla, I,* 2014, p. 34). Examples of the other two stages are found in other sagas in *Heimskringla*. For example, in the early eleventh century, it is said that Óláfr Tryggvason spent a portion of his youth in Garðaríki at the court of Valdamarr (Vladimir the Great) (Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla, I,* 1941, pp. 231–232). Later, Óláfr Haraldsson took refuge at the court of Jarizleifr (Jaroslav the Wise) following his defeat at the Battle of Helgeå in 1026, because his Swedish wife Ástriðr was the sister of Jarizleifr's wife Ingigerðr (Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla, II,* 1941, pp. 339–344). Both phases are represented in the *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s opening account of Hreggviðr:

> þa er hreggvidr konungr uar á ungum alldri la hann i hernadi, hann hafdi siglt i ana dynu er fellr um gardariki ok heriar þadan a austrriki á ymesligar þiodir ok feingit iafnan sigr ok mikit fe ok fáséna gripe, þessi á er en þridia edr fiorda stærst i heiminum at uppsprettu ár þessarar leitadi ynguar hinn uidfaurli (589f, fol. 13^{v}, ll. 11–14; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 1 pp. 238– 239)[117]
>
> (When king Hreggviðr was young in age he raided [and] he sailed on the River Dvína that flows through Garðaríki, and from there raided various nations to the east and always had victory and took from them many a rare treasure. This river is the third or fourth largest in the world and it was this river's source that Yngvarr víðförli sought.)

116 On the possible origins of the toponym, see Jackson 2019, 65–69.
117 I have corrected the scribes misspelling of *siglt* as "silgt".

This is a direct reference to *Yngvars saga víðförla*, which was probably written by the Þingeyrar monk Oddr Snorrason in the early thirteenth century (Hofmann 1981). It details the eastwards travels made by a certain Yngvarr to Garðaríki and beyond in the eleventh century, at the core of which was a historic expedition commemorated on over twenty runic inscriptions in Sweden (Shepard 1985). The details of this expedition were, however, a mystery to medieval Icelanders (as they are for us today), and so Oddr freely invented his protagonist's genealogical connections and furnished the sparse oral core with material from Christian learned sources, giving it the flavour of hagiography.[118] According to his saga, Yngvarr was the grandson of King Eiríkr of Sweden and thus related to the historic Ingigerðr. After leaving Sweden in search of a kingdom of his own, he visits her and Jarizleifr's court in Garðaríki before venturing further east in search of the source of an unnamed river. On his journey he encounters pagan cities and several deadly marvels but falls ill and dies on his return. His son, Sveinn, follows in his footsteps, bringing a bishop to preach the true faith in the kingdom of the formerly pagan Silkisif and consecrate a church there.

Yngvarr víðförli and *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s Hreggviðr represent the two stages of eastern contact which Jackson identifies: Hreggviðr is a raider representative of the earlier stage, whereas the pious Yngvarr is a visitor in a friendly kingdom comparable to later kings. Göngu-Hrólfr provides a link between these two poles. When he and his men travel eastwards for the final battle, they travel along the same river as Hreggviðr and Yngvarr and take part in Viking activity like the former: "laugdu þeir upp i ana dynu ok heriudu þegar á bædi bord, þeir brendu bygdir en ræntu [fe] þui er þeir nádu" (589f, fol. 28^{r}, ll. 33–34; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 28, p. 317) (they sailed up the river Dvína and raided there on both banks, burned settlements, and plundered all the goods they could obtain).[119] However, in the saga's conclusion, Hrólfr instead enacts the Scandinavian-eastern relations familiar from Jackson's later stages – he becomes a king in the east not by conquest, but via marriage to the (aptly-named) Ingigerðr. As a result, a new layer of history is added between the two poles presented at the beginning of the narrative, in which a Viking hero of the legendary age engages in the kind of international diplomatic relations typical not only of the courtly knights depicted in 589a–f's first half, but also Scandinavia's later Christian kings.

118 For a recent discussion on the saga's sources and authorship, see Lönnroth 2014.
119 The beginning of line 34 is damaged.

5.3.2 England

The same pattern characterises Hrólfr's interactions with England. The historic relationship between Viking Age Scandinavia and England was, in much the same way, one of raiding. Memories of this relationship are recorded in a group of texts which Rowe (2009, 2) sees as evoking the "myth of the Viking empire", which extended from Scandinavia to England and centred on the legendary figures Haraldr hilditönn and Ragnarr loðbrók. Rowe sees the origin of the Viking-empire myth in the no-longer-extant *Skjöldunga saga*. Arguably, such a myth is also evoked in the various accounts of the historic Göngu-Hrólfr (otherwise known as Rollo) who conquered Normandy at the end of the ninth century and founded the dynasty that went on to conquer England in 1066.[120] Whereas some *fornaldarsögur* (such as *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*) evoke the empire myth, others depict a mutually beneficial, if somewhat unequal, relationship between the English and Scandinavian rulers. Such is the case in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* where Hrólfr offers the English military aid and unites their royal houses in marriage alliances. Rowe (2009, 3–7) sees the template for these "non-Viking-empire *fornaldarsögur*" in Snorri's *Heimskringla*, in which sympathies lie with the Scandinavians who assisted the English rather than those who invaded. But whereas Snorri's anti-Norwegian-empire bias meant he presented the English kings as superior to the Scandinavian ones, by placing the English royal house in a network of alliances that centre on and are indebted to Denmark, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* adopts his preferred pattern for Anglo-Scandinavian relations without the damning portrayal of expansionist politics. Instead, it maintains the notion of Scandinavian ascendancy found in the "Viking-empire *fornaldarsögur*" but reimagines that empire as a peaceful aristocratic community that was founded on diplomacy rather than conquest. This is, of course, the total opposite of the invasions of Normandy and England that are associated with the historic Göngu-Hrólfr and his descendants,

120 The historic figure is mentioned in *Orkneyinga saga*, *Heimskringla*'s *Haralds saga ins hárfagra*, *Landnámabók*, and some of the Icelandic annals: *Orkneyinga saga*, 1913–1916, ch. 4, p. 5; Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla, I*, 1941, p. 123; *Landnámabók I–III*, 1900, pp. 31, 96, 152, 210; *Islandske annaler*, 1888, pp. 14, 175, 247, 460. The earliest fragments of *Orkneyinga saga* (AM 325 I 4to, 1290–1310; AM 325 III α–β 4to, 1290–1350) do not preserve the beginning where this information is recorded; this section of Sigurðr Nordal's edition is based on AM 332 4to (1688–1705), a copy of a now-lost medieval manuscript. *Landnámabók*'s information about Göngu-Hrólfr appears in both the Sturlubók (AM 107 fol, 1640–1660) and Hauksbók (AM 371 4to, 1302–1310) versions, which are both cited here. The annals I have cited are (in the order and with the titles used by Gustav Storm): *Annales Reseniani* (AM 424 4to, 1690–1710), *Skálholts-Annaler* (AM 420a 4to, 1362), *Lögmanns-annáll* (AM 420b 4to, 1362–1390), and the *Oddveria Annall* (AM 417 4to, 1550–1600). On the historic Göngu-Hrólfr, see further Hartmann 1912, 43–54.

which means that although the events of this saga supposedly took place at a much earlier time, its hero is considerably more modern in his international relations than his namesake.

5.3.3 Denmark

The patterning of Hrólfr as a precursor to later kings comes through clearly in the saga's closing description of Denmark. After the triple wedding, the saga provides descriptions of the three main settings. The description of Denmark is the most detailed and weaves together two intertextual references. The bulk of the information is taken from *Knýtlinga saga*, which provides a detailed account of Denmark's internal geography after Knútr IV (Knútr the Saint) is appointed king (Hartmann 1912, 72–75; Lavender 2018, 93–99). *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* uses that saga's information about Denmark's geographic divisions, main towns, and islands, but omits what would have been anachronistic details about its episcopal sees and the numbers of ships under the king's levy. The passage in *Knýtlinga saga* begins as follows:

> Danmǫrk er mikit ríki ok liggr mjǫk sundrlaust. Inn mesti hluti Danaríkis heitir Jótland. Þat liggr it syðra með hafi. Þar er inn synnzti biskupsstóll í Danmǫrk í Heiðabœ, ok er í þeim biskupsdómi hálft fjórða hundrað kirkna, en þrír tigir skipa ok hundrað konungi til útboðs. Annarr bikupsstóll er á Jótlandi, þar er heitir í Rípum. Í því biskupsríki eru fjórar kirkjur, ok tuttugu ins fjórða hundraðs, en tólf tigir skipa konungi til útboðs. (*Knýtlinga saga*, 1982, ch. 32, pp. 150–151)[121]
>
> (Denmark is a large kingdom and very disjointed. The greater part of Denmark is called Jutland and lies to the south by the sea. The most southerly episcopal see in Denmark is situated there, at Hedeby, where there are three hundred and fifty churches and one hundred and thirty ships under the king's levy. Another episcopal seat in Jutland is at a place called Ribe and in that bishopric there are three hundred and twenty four churches and one hundred and twenty ships under the king's levy.)[122]

121 The fullest version of the saga (representing the A group, which is quoted here) is a later transcript (AM 18 fol, *c*. 1700) made by Árni Magnússon based on a fourteenth-century manuscript that was subsequently lost in the 1728 fire, with its large lacuna (another result of the fire) filled by the edition prepared for publication (AM 20k fol, 1740–1760) based on the then-complete transcript. The earliest manuscripts of the B group are the fragment AM 20b II fol (1300–1325) and AM 180b fol (1490–1510). Both versions feature the description of Denmark.

122 This translation is adapted from *Knytlinga saga*. The History of the Kings of Denmark, 1986, ch. 32, p. 59.

The parallel passage in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* reads:

> Danmaurk er mikit riki, ok miog sundrlaust, ok er þar iotland mestr hluti rikis, þat ligr et sydra med hafinu, iotlandz sida er kaullud uestan fra uanndels skaga ok sudr til ripa, i iotlandi eru margir haufud stadar, hin synnzte er i heidabæ, annar i ripum þridi i árose (589f, fol. 36[r], ll. 12–15; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 37, pp. 360–61)[123]
>
> (Denmark is a large kingdom and very disjointed. Jutland is the largest part of the kingdom; it lies south by the sea. Jutland Side is the name of that part lying on the west coast from Skagen and south to Ribe. In Jutland, there are many important towns, Hedeby is the most southerly; another is Ribe, a third Aarhus)

Knýtlinga saga begins where *Skjöldunga saga* probably ended (with the reign of Haraldr Gormsson), and describes the unification of Denmark and its development into a powerful Christian kingdom. Its description of Denmark concludes with the words: "Þessi lǫnd ǫll, eru nefnd, liggja undir Danakonungs ríki, ok eru þau bæði víð ok fjǫlmenn. Þessi lǫnd váru at fornu margra konunga ríki" (*Knýtlinga saga*, 1982, ch. 32, p. 152) ("All these territories listed here, which in the old days were many separate kingdoms, now belong to the Kingdom of Denmark") (*Knytlinga saga*. The History of the Kings of Denmark, 1986, ch. 32, p. 60). The legendary past is used to demonstrate the successes of Knútr and his recent forebears. The parallel description in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* also concludes with a reference to the (here contemporaneous) legendary age: "hafdi riki skiolldunga i þat tima, en þo haufdu adrir konungar ok jarlar, eigi minna riki at rada i danmaurku, helldr en þeir þott skiolldungar bære hæsta tigr fyrir nafns sakir ok ættar" (589f, fol. 36[r], ll. 25–27; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 37, p. 361) (the Skjöldungar had the kingdom at that time, and even though other kings and earls had realms no smaller than theirs in Denmark, the Skjöldungs were held in greater respect on account of their title and kin). By placing the description of Knútr's kingdom in the same period as the Skjöldungs, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* reacts against the teleological account of kingdom formation found in its source, making the point that even though it may not have been ruled by the likes of Knútr the Saint, legendary Denmark was still the domain of powerful rulers whose legacies laid the foundations for the triumphs of later generations. It affirms *Knýtlinga saga*'s pro-Danish sentiment but draws it back in time to reduce the political difference between the distant and recent pasts.

123 I have corrected the scribe's misspelling of *vestan* as "vastan".

5.3.4 Foreshadowing Christianity

The foreshadowing of conversion is an important feature of these intertextual relationships; they liken Hrólfr not just to kings, but to secular figures notable for their opposition to heathenism. Knútr IV was, of course, a saint, and Yngvarr víðförli achieves saint-like status in his saga with the construction of a church in his memory. For Oddr Snorrason's other biographical subject, Óláfr Tryggvason, the Scandinavian-eastern connection also had powerful Christian resonances since the kingdom of Garðaríki was the first place he converted after visiting Constantinople (Oddr Snorrason, *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar*, 1932, ch. 13 (A-text) and ch. 9 (S-text), pp. 42–43).[124] The places he is said to have gone on to convert (the British Isles and Scandinavia) are, broadly, the same places that are drawn together in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s concluding marriages. As such, not only does Hrólfr's journey to Garðaríki evoke that of Yngvarr and his marriage to Ingigerðr prefigure the future diplomatic and spiritual affinity between Scandinavia and the east, but it also hints at a reading of his reimagined Viking empire as a foreshadowing of the future spiritual community that would be created by later Christian kings.

Audiences are invited to look forward to this future, and specifically to Óláfr Tryggvason, by another explicit intertextual reference:

> suo er sagt at milli gardarikis ok tattararikis ligr ein ey er hiedensey heitir hun er eitt iarlsriki, þat er fornra manna saugn at heden hiarandason tæki fyst land uid þessa ey er hann silgdi til danmerkr af indialandi eptir til uisan gaundlar sem segir i hedninga uigum ok eyin hafi af honum nafn tekit sidan (589f, fol. 22^{r}, ll. 32–35 – fol. 22^{v}, l. 1; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 17, p. 284).[125]
>
> (It is said that an island lies between Garðaríki and Tattararíki called Heðinn's Isle, an earldom. It is the story of ancestors that Heðinn Hjarrandason made this island his first stop when he sailed to Denmark from India, following the advice of Göndul, as it says in the battle of the Heðningar and the island has taken its name from him ever since.)

This is a reference to the legend of the *Hjaðningavíg*: the everlasting battle between Högni and Heðinn over Högni's daughter Hildr. The legend is recorded in *Snorra Edda*, both in the prose and, in some manuscripts, the quotation of Bragi Boddason's *Ragnarsdrápa* (Snorri Sturluson, *Edda, I*, 1998, pp. 72–73; *Edda*, 1924,

124 Yngvarr is explicitly likened to Óláfr Tryggvason: Oddr Snorrason, *Yngvars saga víðförla*, 1912, p. 10. On the spiritual resonances of the east in saga literature more generally, see Haki Antonsson 2008, 169–171; Sverrir Jakobsson 2006, 953–943.

125 I have removed what seems to be an error: the addition of what looks like "het" between "heden" and "hiarandason". According to Rafn, AM 152 fol here reads "Héðin konúngr Hjarandason" (*Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 17, p. 284).

pp. 82–85; *The Uppsala Edda*, 2012, p. 234). It is also reworked in the later *Sörla þáttr*, which is preserved only in Flateyjarbók. *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* seems to refer to something more like the latter, since it is the only version extant which describes Heðinn's encounter with Göndul.[126] In this version, the battle takes place on the Orcadian island of Hoy and is eventually brought to an end when one of Óláfr Tryggvason's retainers acts as a channel for the grace of God to break the curse that had initiated the battle (Rowe 2002, 62–63). As with the reference to *Yngvars saga víðförla* and *Knýtlinga saga*, the reference to this reworked version of the *Hjaðningavíg* legend reminds audiences of the future which is to come during the time of Norway's great missionary king.

In this way, the intertextual relationships of the saga's three main settings are also thoroughly transformational. As argued in the first part of this chapter, Hrólfr's proxy bridal quest had redefined heroism for the courtly world. The settings within which that quest takes place give that heroism a space within wider historical narratives. The references to *Yngvars saga víðförla*, *Knýtlinga saga*, and *Sörla þáttr* anchor it within the same grand narrative of Christian history which was summoned at the beginning of *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, but rather than looking back to creation and the loss of humanity's relationship with God, they invite audiences to look forward to its return during the time of Scandinavia's future kings. In Hrólfr's travels, a narrative is written which connects these two historical moments: he leaves Norway to turn the Viking world of his father's generation into one ruled by Christian-style kings whose tastes and politics align them more with Kirialax and Ektor than legendary heroes like Sigurðr Fáfnisbani and Ragnarr loðbrók.

5.4 Representing Paganism

When it comes to the pagan religion of the legendary age, a similar phenomenon is, to a certain extent, evident. *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* participates in the same demonic interpretation that was evident in *Sturlaugs saga starfsama* and similarly associates it with the saga's villains. But not all of the saga's mythological references are associated with this interpretation and instead represent a drastic departure from conventional representations of the pre-Christian past.

126 *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* and *Sörla þáttr* do not agree on where in the east Heðinn travelled from. In the former it is India and in the latter Serkland (*Sörla þáttr*, 1860, p. 278).

5.4.1 The Demonic Interpretation

The demonic interpretation is invoked by the above-mentioned references to *Yngvars saga víðförla* and *Sörla þáttr*. In the former, all manner of monsters (with roots in both learned and native tradition) lurk beyond the eastern border of the known world, including the devil himself (Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1989, 6–7). In the latter, the Norse gods (who reside in the far east) are not divine beings but vindictive euhemerised kings and queens who deal in dark magic (Quinn 2006a). *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s references to these texts complement *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*'s Bjarmaland episode by extending its geographical fringe to the east.

Unlike the previous saga, however, the demonic interpretation which is found on the saga's fringes also appears in an intensified form in its centre. The principal villain, Grímr Ægir, is a medley of mythological associations and clearly aligned with evil. The first part of his name, Grímr (mask), is listed both as one of Óðinn's monikers and a dwarf name (Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, 2005, p. 21; *Dverga heiti*, 2017, p. 695).[127] The second part, Ægir, is that of the sea deity who is said to be both a *jötunn* and a friend of the gods (Snorri Sturluson, *Edda, I*, 1998, pp. 1–5; *Edda*, 1924, pp. 50–55 and 71–74; *The Uppsala Edda*, 2012, pp. 86–90 and 154–162). Grímr Ægir is reportedly from Hlésey where he was found, reared, and instructed in the art of magic by the *völva* (prophetess) Gróa, who has the same name as the *völva* of myth who attempts to remove a whetstone from Þórr's head (Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, *I*, 1998, pp. 22–24; *Edda*, 1924, p. 64; *The Uppsala Edda*, 2012, p. 94).[128] Grímr Ægir is very clearly a demon: the saga states that "hans edle uar olikt anara manna natturu" (589f, fol. 14^{r}, ll. 13–14; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 2, p. 241) (his nature was unlike any other man's) and when he dies at battle at the end of the saga, his shapeshifting body is revealed to be an immaterial illusion that "bradnadi i sundr sem snior i elldi [ok uard] at dufte einu" (589f, fol. 33r, ll. 2–3; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 3, p. 245) (melted away like snow in a flame and turned into nothing but dust).

Göngu-Hrólfs saga goes further than its prequel in differentiating its hero from the demonic interpretation of paganism that Grímr Ægir represents. In contrast to the priestesses who had been confined to the far north and only posed a danger when Sturlaugr sought them out, Grímr Ægir roams freely around the

127 *Dverga heiti* is preserved in AM 748 I b 4to and AM 757a 4to (1390–1410).

128 In *Skáldskaparmál*, the Ægir of the framing narrative who Bragi tells about the gods is also said to be from Hlésey: Snorri Sturluson, *Edda, I*, 1998, p. 1; *Edda*, 1924, p. 50; *The Uppsala Edda*, 2012, p. 86. A sorceress named Gróa also appears as the title character of *Grógaldr*, an eddic poem which is most likely of late composition and preserved only in paper manuscripts from the seventeenth century: *Svipdagsmál. I. Gróagaldr*. 1867.

saga's main settings. As such, he is more alike in character to the mythologically disguised devils that Óláfr Tryggvason is said to have defeated in the various accounts of his life. A few of these instances are mentioned in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s prologue: "finzt þar ok dæmi til at sumir likamir hafa hræring haft af ohreins anda iblæstri, suo sem uar eyuindr kinrifa i olafsaugu trygguasonar edr einar skarfr edr freyr, er gunnar helmingur drap i suiariki" (589f, fol. 13^{r}, ll. 22–24; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 1, p. 237) (there are also some examples of bodies which have moved under the inspiration of an unclean spirit such as Eyvindr kinnrifa in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* or Einarr skarfr or Freyr, who was killed by Gunnar helmingr in Sweden). The Einarr skarfr mentioned here is, as Lavender (2018, 89) observes, otherwise unknown. The other two names refer to instances where Óláfr Tryggvason killed demons in disguise: one who took human form – Eyvindr kinnrifa in Hálogaland – and the other who inhabited the idol to Freyr that was encountered by Gunnar helmíngr in Sweden.[129] By killing Grímr Ægir, Hrólfr is, therefore, more than just implicitly distinct from devil worshippers as Sturlaugr had been. Instead he is, like Óláfr Tryggvason, explicitly the devil's opponent, and the 'Viking empire' he establishes is, like Óláfr's Christian community, predicated on that opposition.

The defeat of Grímr Ægir also has a geographical element. Like the priestesses, Grímr Ægir is associated with the far north, specifically with Jötunheimar where he is said to go raiding. Jötunheimar is never depicted in this saga, but its name evokes potent memories about the *jötnar* from other texts, including those already encountered in 589a–f. By being alluded to but never actually shown, the northern margin is denied full representation; it is relegated to the narrative fringe as well as that of the saga's physical geography. It means that when Hrólfr defeats Grímr Ægir, he does not merely neutralise a threatening force that lurks on the margin of human society, but he also eliminates those with the capacity to travel to it. As a result, the mythological and demonic margin is rendered totally separate from the saga's centre, and Hrólfr is the one responsible.

129 Slightly different versions of the Eyvíndr kinnrifa narrative can be found the different versions of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*: Oddr Snorrason, *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar*, 1932, ch. 45 (A-text) and ch. 34 (S-text), pp. 137–143; Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla, I*, 1941, pp. 322–323. The latter only appears in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta, II*, 1961, ch. 174, pp. 10–17. See also Clunies Ross 2018, pp. 122–123.

5.4.2 Ambiguous Figures

But the saga's representation of pre-Christian religion is far from clear cut, and there are several other figures drawn from myth who do not fit within the conventional *interpretatio Christiana*. First, is Hreggviðr. Grave-dwellers like him are a common feature of Icelandic literature and folklore. They seem to have had distinctly negative connotations and likely would have been interpreted by most as demons (Ármann Jakobsson 2011, 286). Their precise nature is impossible to pin down, but Ármann Jakobsson (2011, 289–291) distinguishes between two broad types: watchmen and roaming ghosts. Hreggviðr belongs to the former group, which is made up of selfish figures motivated to remain in the world by some material goal, such as holding on to their property or (like Hreggviðr) protecting dynastic interests, who often conjure storms and clouds of stench to prevent saga heroes from approaching their graves. But Hreggviðr stands apart from convention. On the surface, he looks like grave-dwellers elsewhere: his mound is surrounded by a large storm and smell which it takes Hrólfr a whole night to pass through. But once he has done so, Hreggviðr informs him that, "eigi uelld eg gerrninga hridum ne fylum edr audrum undrum" (589f, fol. 21^{v}, ll. 1–2; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 16, p. 280) (I did not cause the magical storm, nor the stench or other wonders). He tells Hrólfr that he is a welcome visitor, gladly surrenders his weapons and his horse to him, and then reveals that he was the swallow that dropped Ingigerðr's hair on Jarl Þórgnyr's lap with the intention of luring Hrólfr to Garðaríki to defeat Eiríkr and marry Ingigerðr. As Kalinke (1990, 153–154) observes, this revelation means that Hrólfr is passive in his bridal quest in a double sense: he acts on behalf of Þorgnýr but, since the jarl's mission turns out to have been triggered by Hreggviðr, Hrólfr is actually unknowingly pursuing his own bridal quest which is being orchestrated by the dead king.

Hrólfr's second visit to the grave features another intertextual reference that further highlights Hreggviðr's centrality in the saga's events. As Hrólfr approaches his mound, it is said that, "hann ser huar hregguidr konungr sitr ute undir haugin [um ok h]orfdi i mot tunglenu ok kvad" (589f, fol. 31^{v}, ll. 20–21; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 32, p. 333) (he saw where King Hreggviðr sat out under the mound, gazing at the moon and spoke) (see Table 1).

This scene bears a close resemblance to a scene in *Njáls saga* when Skarpheðinn and Högni approach the grave of Gunnarr and also find him facing towards the moon singing, encouraging the men of the next generation to enact vengeance on his behalf (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, 1954, ch. 78, p. 193; Hermann Pálsson

Table 1: Verse spoken by Hreggviðr in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* with English translation.

Gledz hregguidr af godri faur hrólfs hins hugdiarfa hinngat til landa, mun rekkr sia ræses hefna á eireiki ok ollum þeim	Hreggviðr rejoices in the good journey of Hrólfr the bold-hearted to these lands. That warrior will take vengeance for the ruler upon Eiríkr and them all.
Gledz [hreggvidr] af grims dauda, þordar ok þar med þriota lifstunder mun flokkr sia fiand[a mi]na fyrir hrólfi hniga uerda	Hreggviðr rejoices in the death of Grímr, and the hours of Þórðr's life are diminishing as well. That group of my enemies will come to fall before Hrólfr.
Gledz hreggvidr þa hrólfr fær ungrar meyar ingigerdar m[un] holmingardi hilmir styra sturlaugs son ok standi kuædi	Hreggviðr will rejoice when Hrólfr marries the young maiden Ingigerðr. The prince, son of Sturlaugr, will govern Novgorod; let the poem cease.
589f, fol. 31^{v}, ll. 21–25; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 33, pp. 333–34	*Gǫngu-Hrólfs saga*, 2017, pp. 299–301

and Edwards 1980, 11).[130] By comparing Hreggviðr to the classically-heroic Gunnar, the dead king is placed in the category of good; his intervention in human affairs is for a noble rather than maleficent cause. John D. Martin (1998) has gone as far as to argue that Hreggviðr represents one side of a larger supernatural battle that is taking place beneath the saga's surface layer of action. In this battle, forces of good (Hreggviðr) struggle against forces of evil (Grímr Ægir) and the saga's human characters are caught up in the middle and used as their proxies.

Hreggviðr does not work alone in this battle; his most critical assistant is the dwarf Möndull, a character with roots in pre-Christian myth (Ármann Jakobsson 2008, 188–189 and 192–193). Like the dwarfs of eddic poetry and *Snorra Edda* who crafted the magic objects that sustained the Æsir's power, Möndull (whose name means 'handle of a quern') is a skilled craftsman who declares that "duergs natturu hefir eg at kynstrum ok hagleik" (589, fol. 26^{v}, l. 12; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 25, p. 308) (I have a dwarf's nature in magic and craftsmanship). According to *Völuspá*, at *ragna rök* "stynia dvergar / fyr steindurom" (*Edda*, 1983, p. 12) ("the dwarfs groan before their rocky doors") (*The Poetic Edda*, 2014, p. 10) and, accordingly, Möndull too is associated with the world of rock and stone: during the final battle he dives underground to fight Grímr Ægir beneath the earth's surface. Mythological dwarfs are also notable for their sexual desire for women of other

130 Both Martin (1998, 315) and Lönnroth (2003) also note the parallel with Angantýr in *Heiðreks saga*, 1924, chs. 4–5, pp. 14–33 (R- and H-texts) and chs. 6–7, pp. 102–113 (U-text).

races and, true to character, Möndull is as well. After taking over the estate of Þorgnýr's counsellor Björn, Möndull drugs Björn's wife so she will give in to his advances, then at the end of the saga, he disappears and rumours spread that he has made off with the defeated King Eiríkr's sister.

But although he enters the saga as a troublemaker, Möndull undergoes a change in character when he crosses paths with Hrólfr.[131] After Vilhjálmr cuts off Hrólfr's feet, Dúlcifal carries him straight to the home of Björn where, under duress, Möndull heals him. This is a critical moment for Hrólfr since his legs are an important part of his heroic masculinity: he is so large that he has to walk everywhere he goes and without them, he is completely useless (Lavender 2020, 103–108; Wilson 2016). So when Dúlcifal carries him, legless, to meet Möndull, he is at his lowest, and all his subsequent successes depend on the dwarf's assistance: Möndull helps navigate the storm that Grímr Ægir summons to slow their approach to Garðaríki and then performs his own magic in support of Hrólfr and his army throughout the battle. The dwarf seems, therefore, to be on the same side as Hreggviðr in his conflict with Grímr Ægir (Martin 1998, 320–321). Such is evident in the language used to describe Möndull's magical skills. Grímr Ægir's powers are described as *fjölkynngi* and *galdr*, words which were inherited from the pre-Christian vocabulary of magic and accrued negative connotations in the medieval period (Meylan 2014, 29–36). By contrast, Möndull's powers are described as *konstr* and *kynstr*, terms that (judging by the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*) seem to have entered the Old Norse lexicon at a relatively late date and mostly appear in later 'romance' sagas, where they denote some kind of occult (although not necessarily maleficent) art or skill.

Thus, although the saga participates in the demonic interpretation of paganism through the figure of Grímr Ægir, it also gives voice to the totally opposite view, suggesting that opposition to him could come from other seemingly pagan figures. Martin (1998, 322) suggests an allegorical interpretation, pointing out that Hrólfr and Eiríkr enact different ways of interacting with supernatural forces: Eiríkr co-opts them for his own gain whereas the ever-passive Hrólfr allows himself to be a channel for them and is rewarded in the end. However, if we work from the assumption that this saga was expected to be fundamentally historical, then its magical elements would have to work on a literal level as well as a metaphorical one. This is difficult to maintain. Not only do Hreggviðr and Möndull have no precedents in extant Icelandic texts, but they are at odds with the narra-

131 It should be noted, however, that Möndull is not as unique as Hreggviðr. Although he is notably different to the dwarfs of myth, there are comparable helpful figures in several other 'romances' (Ármann Jakobsson 2008, 189–201).

tive of conversion that pervades the whole saga corpus – that of two great epochs separated by the moment of conversion. Whereas Grímr Ægir is clearly symptomatic of the old order, before "the powers of Christendom could eradicate the dangerous illusions and manifestations of Satan" (Clunies Ross 2010, 78), Möndull's mysterious *konstr* and the benevolent Hreggviðr do not fit within the usual teleological scheme. Rather than contrasting the new dispensation which the allusions to *Yngvars saga víðförla* and *Sörla þáttr* anticipate, they are critical agents in ushering in that order and banishing Satan's 'dangerous illusions' from Scandinavia.

The saga seems, moreover, to be intent on drawing attention to this controversy – particularly in regards to Möndull. While he does eventually join the side of good, it seems that the dwarf (who says he travelled to Denmark on an unnamed *erendi* (errand)) may have at first been working with Grímr Ægir. Before meeting Hrólfr, he taunts the jarl's captured counsellor about the hero's feeble legless status, implying some knowledge of Grímr Ægir's plans. And even once he is on the side of good, his motives and the nature of his magic are unclear: although his powers are terminologically distinct from those of Grímr Ægir, there are several moments where they perform acts that look unsettlingly alike. For example, when the two come head to head at the final battle, they both shake cloth bags to create storms and shoot arrows which meet in mid-air. They then dive into the earth to continue their battle underground and each enlist the assistance of further unnamed forces: Möndull later says that he only escaped because "fleiri uaro minir [vinir] en hans þar fyrir" (589f, fol. 33^{r}, ll. 17–18; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 33, p. 346) (more [of] my [friends] than his were present there).[132] Moreover, as is mentioned above, in addition to evoking Óðinn, Grímr is also a dwarf name, which further blurs the boundary between the two figures.

The *álfkona* who Hrólfr meets in the forest adds to this uncertainty. She is clearly aware of Hreggviðr's plans: when she gives Hrólfr a gold ring, she says "þess muntu þurfa þa er þu fer til hregguidar haugs" (589f, fol. 20^{v}, l. 15; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga,* 1830, ch. 15, p. 277) (you will need this when you go to Hreggviðr's grave). *Álfar* such as her were prominent figures in Icelandic popular belief: later collections of Icelandic folk stories feature numerous tales about them, including several parallels to *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s magical birth (Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 2003, 172). These *álfar* had a disputed theological status and were the subject of learned debate through the early modern period and into the eighteenth century: while some believed they were physical beings made by God, the majority considered them illusions created by Satan (Gunnell 2018). This wider discursive context

132 Although likely an error, it is worth noting that the word *vinir* (friends) is missing in this witness.

will be discussed in Chapter 8.3.2, but it suffices to say here that the addition of an *álfkona* among Hrólfr's allies adds to the general ambiguity that surrounds the supernatural forces underlying his success.

5.4.3 The *apologiæ* of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*

Judging by the content of the *apologiæ* (truth defences) attached to this saga, it seems that this ambiguity caused some anxiety among audiences. Both the mid-saga interjection and the prologue are particularly concerned with defending the possibility of 'good' pre-Christian magic and seem intended to defend against the accusation (which the saga itself hints at) that Hrólfr was reliant on demonic magic. This is clearest in the mid-saga interjection, which occurs after Möndull's act of healing:

> er þar ok uannt i mote at mæla, er hinir fyrri menn hafa samsett, hefdi þeir þat vel matt segia at á annan ueg hefdi at boræt, ef þeir villdi, hafa þeir ok sumir spekingar uerit er mióg hafa talad i figuru um suma hlute, suo sem meistari gallterus i alexandris saugu, edr umeris skalld i troio manna saugu ok hafa eptirkomandi meistrar þat helldr til sannenda fært, en i mote mællt at suo mætte uera, þarf ok eingi meira trunad á at legia, en hafa þo gledi af á medan hann heyrir (589f, fol. 26^{v}, ll. 30–35; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 25, pp. 309–310)
>
> (It is difficult to speak against those things which have been set down by men in the past. They may well have said that it had been another way if they wanted. And there have been some philosophers who have spoken figuratively about such things, such as Master Galterus in *Alexanders saga* and the poet Homer in *Trójumanna saga*, and subsequent masters have turned it into truth and not disagreed that it could have been that way.[133] No one needs to give more credence [than he wants] but nevertheless be happy while he listens.)

Möndull's act of magic is, by modern standards, wholly unbelievable and the inclusion of the narratorial aside suggests that it would have been a step too far for medieval audiences too. As O'Connor has explained, the *apologia* deals with the implausibility by blaming the saga's sources and suggesting previous storytellers had misunderstood what originally may have been figurative rather than literal (O'Connor 2005, 146–147). The chosen defence points towards a concern that extends beyond plausibility alone. The alternative (and perhaps more obvious) interpretation is, as O'Connor (2005, 148) notes, offered in the epilogue of *Mágus saga jarls* where the removing and reattaching of hands and feet is given as an example of the *sjónhverfingar* (optical illusions) worked by the Æsir, thereby

133 On translating the phrase *til sanninda fært*, see O'Connor 2005, 146–149.

evoking the demonic interpretation (*Mágus saga jarls*, 1949, ch. 79, p. 427). It seems likely that the defence which the compiler and/or later scribes of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* chose instead was motivated by a desire to avoid this exact interpretation; they were clearly aware that the episode was stretching the limits of plausibility and so suggested an alternative reading that avoided both the accusation of lies *and* of demonism.

The nature of pre-Christian magic is also one of the saga's potential problems that is addressed in the prologue:

> Er þat ok margra heimskra manna nattura at þeir trua þui einu er þeir sia sinum augum edr heyra sinum eyrum er þeim þickir fiarlægt sinni natturu suo sem ordit hefir um uitra manna rada giordir edr mikit afl edr frabæran lettleika fyri manna suo ok eigi sidr um konstr edr kuklara skap ok mikla fiolkyngi þa þeir seiddu at sumum mönnum æfinliga ogiæfu edr aldr tila, en sumum ueralldar uirding fiar ok metnadar, þeir æstu stundum haufudskepnur, en stundum kyrdu suo sem uar odin edr adrir þeir er af honum námu galldr listir edr lækningar, finzt þar ok dæmi til at sumir likamir hafa hræring haft af ohreins anda iblæstri, suo sem uar eyuindr kinrifa i olafsaugu trygguasonar edr einar skarfr edr freyr, er gunnar helmingur drap i suiariki (589f, fol. 13^{r}, ll. 17–25; *Gaungu-Hrólfs saga*, 1830, ch. 1, p. 237)
>
> (And it is also in many foolish people's nature to believe only what they see with their own eyes or hear with their own ears, [not that] which to them seems distant from their nature, such as the advice of the wise or the great strength or overwhelming agility of men of old and, no less, the skill or tricks of the mind or great sorcery, which they would use to cast spells to bring some men everlasting bad luck or death, but to some all the world's honour, wealth and esteem. Sometimes, they would stir up the principal elements and sometimes calm them, as Óðinn did and those others who learned magic arts and healing from him. There are also some examples of bodies which have moved under the inspiration of an unclean spirit such as Eyvindr kinnrifa in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* or Einarr skarfr or Freyr, who was killed by Gunnar helmingr in Sweden.)

The kinds of magic mentioned here relate to the manipulation of the elements and healing, both of which appear in the saga as the work of both the 'good' figures and the 'bad'.[134] It states that the different kinds of magic depicted ("konstr edr kuklara skap ok mikla fiolkynngi") could have both positive and negative effects. The word *kuklaraskapr* is not used elsewhere in the saga, but, as discussed, *konstr* and *fjölkynngi* are used to describe the powers of Möndull and Grímr Ægir respectively. It seems likely, therefore, that the inclusion of the prologue was in-

134 For example, the great storm surrounding Hreggviðr's mound, the storm which Grímr Ægir summons to slow Hrólfr's final approach to Garðaríki, and the weather magic used by both him and Möndull at the final battle.

tended to defend the saga's suggestion that 'good' and 'bad' pre-Christian magic were not only possible but that they might have looked exactly the same.

The prologue also refers to the euhemerised version of Óðinn found in *Ynglinga saga*, which positions him as the originator of magical knowledge in Scandinavia. Óðinn does not appear anywhere in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* himself but two different interpretations of the deity are given voice in the figures of Grímr Ægir and Hreggviðr. As mentioned, the first part of the former's name (meaning 'mask') is listed as one of Óðinn's names in *Gylfaginning* and evokes the demonic interpretation of the god as a master deceiver.[135] In contrast, Hreggviðr evokes the interpretation of Óðinn as progenitor, since the role he plays in ensuring the continuation of his dynasty is comparable to that which Óðinn plays for the Völsungs in *Völsunga saga*: both intervene in human affairs via remarkably skilled horses (Grani and Dúlcifal), gift their chosen hero a sword (*Gramr* and the *Hreggviðarnaut* (gift of Hreggviðr)), can transform into birds (an eagle and a swallow), and are associated with poetry. Although Óðinn acts as a helping figure in some other *fornaldarsögur*,[136] nowhere does he play as critical a role as in *Völsunga saga* where, as Lassen (2006, 133) notes, no attempt was made to apply a traditional *interpretatio Christiana* to him. This is the case for Hreggviðr as well, although in his opposition to Grímr Ægir he moves further away from the demonic interpretation than the ambiguous Óðinn of *Völsunga saga*. The prologue may, therefore, have been added (in part) to defend the mutual compatibility of these contradictory interpretations of Óðinn and figures associated with him. This would suggest that, although liable to co-option by the devil, his magical powers were not inherently evil and had the potential to be wielded for good.

Finally, the prologue also defends the plausibility of an *óhreinn andi* (unclean spirit) having the capacity to possess dead bodies, giving the examples of Eyvindr kinnrifa and the possessed idol to Freyr as supporting evidence. There are no examples of such a phenomenon in the saga, as Lavender (2018, 89) notes. Grímr Ægir is certainly an unclean spirit and Hreggviðr a member of the waking dead, but there is nothing to suggest the corporeality of the former nor the demonic possession of the latter. The addition of the prologue nevertheless points towards a difficulty when it came to interpreting Hreggviðr: in the process of summoning

135 For examples of texts where Óðinn appears as such a figure, see Lassen 2006, pp. 126–131.

136 According to Lassen (2005, 98–100; 2003, 213), these are *Saga Gautreks konungs*, 1830, ch. 7, pp. 31–38; *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka*, 1981, ch. 1, pp. 169–170; *Sǫgubrot af fornkonungum*, 1982, p. 63. *Sögubrot af fornkonungum* (AM 1e β I fol) is a fragment of a text about legendary Swedish and Danish kings, which is believed to be based on the now-lost *Skjöldunga saga*. Rowe (2010) has discussed Óðinn's role in this text in depth. *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* is preserved in one medieval manuscript (GKS 2845 4to).

authoritative examples to justify the plausibility of the benevolent grave-dwelling watchman, it tacitly acknowledges that there were no precedents for him since the only comparable examples available were instances of demonic possession.

The inclusion of the *apologiæ* suggests that the saga's ambiguous supernatural figures caused uneasiness amongst their audiences – so much so that they were felt to bring the credibility of the whole saga into question. This does not seem to have been an accident on behalf of the compiler who was intentionally elusive regarding the nature of Hreggviðr and Möndull, as is clear from the latter's suspicious magical knowledge and the inclusion of the outlandish (and arguably inessential) leg-healing scene. Although its polemical stance on Grímr Ægir is deeply traditional, the saga is also drastically revisionist in its recasting of various figures with problematic theological status as his opponents. In this way, the saga is caught between a desire (or perhaps an obligation) to participate in the narrative of pre-Christian religion as fundamentally demonic, while also evincing a contradictory – and clearly controversial – desire to strongly react against that same narrative and provide an alternative to it.

5.5 Conclusion

Many of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s intertextual relationships are participatory: they situate the saga within the same narrative of historical development as its prequel had through its opening allusion to the myth of Trojan origins. This is apparent not only in the genealogical connection but also in numerous other intertextual references. *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* takes place during the Skjöldung period, in a world where the Norse gods are worshipped and the *Hjaðningavíg* is ongoing. This legendary world is framed by a Christian historical scheme in which the devil's power will soon be vanquished by Christianisation: Óláfr Tryggvason will bring the true faith north-west from Constantinople, Yngvarr víðförli will take it east again to the edge of the known world, and Denmark will become a powerful Christian kingdom in the reign of Knútr the Saint.

For the most part, however, the saga's intertextuality is thoroughly transformational, and its hero is a bridge between these two radically different times. In this saga we see the re-embrace and amalgamation of both the traditions which Sturlaugr had rejected. Hrólfr is a Sigurðr-equivalent suited for the courtly world who has been chosen by an Óðinnic supernatural figure and proves his worth as a hero by loyally following his overlord. By having his proxy-bridal quest stretch across Scandinavia, Garðaríki, and England, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* reconfigures the history of the legendary age. What were once sites of raiding and conquest become friendly allied kingdoms, and Hrólfr's marriage to Ingigerðr lays the diplo-

matic foundations for the Christians that would follow in his footsteps. Over the course of the saga, the far north and east are associated with the demonic interpretation of paganism which, by the end, has been totally pushed out of the places where the saga takes place. What is left is a series of interconnected kingdoms commanded by aristocratic rulers who have no interest in idol worship or pagan magic and instead have the same tastes as the elites found in, for example, *Ektors saga* and *Kirialax saga*. As the last text in 589a–f, we might read *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s reimagined Denmark as a northern counterpart to *Kirialax saga*'s Byzantium and *Ektors saga*'s Troy. They may not refer to each other explicitly, but their firmly pro-king, anti-Viking stances and shared use of courtly lexis position all their protagonists as participants in the same international culture – a culture Scandinavia inherited via the Trojan origins that were described at the beginning of *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*.

In many ways, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*'s representation of the past is counter to that of its 'prequel'. The two texts do, nevertheless, complement each other. As a saga about an otherwise unknown farmer's son which repeatedly makes light of heroic legend, *Sturlaugs saga starfsama* represents a break from tradition and the turning of a blank page for its sequel to build on. It means that although *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* takes place during the time of the legendary Skjöldung dynasty and incorporates into itself material from *Völsunga saga*, the hero that it celebrates is genealogically distinct from both. The information at the saga's end about Hrólfr's children functions to bolt this narrative into another strand of Iceland's prehistory – the legend of Hrómundr Gripsson who (according to *Landnámabók*) was an ancestor of Ingólfr Árnason, Iceland's first settler (*Landnámabók*, 1900, pp. 6, 131).[137] This serves, as Lavender (2018, 106) writes, to "embed *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* in a network of intersecting narratives" and make its reimagined version of the past relevant to Icelandic audiences.[138]

The saga's *apologiæ*, however, lay bare the problems which underlie the saga's transformation of legendary history, since not only does this text try to rewrite the Vikings of Scandinavia's past but it also attempts a quite radical revision of that region's religious history. Although the saga is anchored into the narrative of historical development articulated in the rest of the corpus by its intertextual references and genealogical beginning and ending, the legendary world it constructs contains powerful benevolent supernatural figures who teeter on the edge of plausibility and force audiences to ask difficult questions that cut right to the heart of that narrative.

137 These references are to the Hauksbók and Sturlubók versions. The information at the end of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* conflicts with other textual sources, suggesting there were varied traditions about Hrómundr in circulation (Jesch 1984; Lavender 2018, 101–106).

138 See also Hallberg 1982, 13–15.

By drawing our attention to the boundaries of the saga as a form, not only do the *apologiæ* reveal the controversial nature of this particular text, but they also highlight the limits of the exclusively intertextual approach to cultural memory that has been pursued in these last three chapters. These limits have arguably already been hinted at by the fact that I have referred to many 'oral' intertexts, which suggest there was something going on here other than simple literary borrowing – that something is mediation, the subject of this book's second half.