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Ála flekks saga: An Introduction, Text and Translation

Jonathan Y. H. Hui, Caitlin Ellis, James McIntosh, Katherine Marie Olley, William Norman
and Kimberly Anderson¹

1. Background

The Old Norse *riddarasögur* ('sagas of knights') were one of the most popular genres of saga literature in Iceland down the centuries, as demonstrated by the extant manuscript evidence.² The corpus encompasses a diverse array of texts which can be positioned along a scale spanning from reworkings of texts from continental Europe to original compositions which more closely resemble the native saga tradition. On the one hand, the early Norwegian translations of texts from the Continent seem to have been translated in the court of King Hákon Hákonarson, who ruled Norway from 1217 to 1263. These include the romances *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* (translated from Thomas of Britain's *Tristan*), *Elis saga ok Rósamundu* (*Elie de Saint-Gilles*), *Parcevals saga* (Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal*), *Ívens saga* (Chrétien's *Le Chevalier au Lion*) and *Erex saga* (Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*), as well as *Möttuls saga* (*Le mantel mautailé*) and the *Strengleikar* (Marie de France's *lais*). Old Norse translations of many other diverse texts, such as *Breta sögur* (Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*) and *Pamphilus saga ok Galatheu* (the elegiac comedy *Pamphilus de amore*), are now also classified by scholars as *riddarasögur*.

On the other hand, the indigenous *riddarasögur* were composed in Iceland and are not thought to be direct translations of Continental works, though they are still influenced by them to varying degrees. These sagas 'take place in an exotic (non-Scandinavian), vaguely chivalric milieu, and are characterised by an extensive use of foreign motifs and a strong supernatural or fabulous element'.³ They also tend to follow set narrative patterns, to such an extent that they have often been criticised as 'formulaic'.⁴ The disdain with which these sagas

¹ The project was run as a collaborative effort among graduate students at the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at the University of Cambridge. The authors would also like to thank Lucie Hobson and Jonathan Wright for their contributions during the early stages of the translation, Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir for her invaluable comments and suggestions on successive drafts of the translation, and the anonymous peer-reviewers, whose recommendations were especially useful in helping us improve the focus of the introduction.

² Marianne E. Kalinke, 'Norse Romance (*Riddarasögur*)', in *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Carol J. Clover and John Lindow (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 316–64 (p. 316).

³ Matthew J. Driscoll, 'Late Prose Fiction (*lygisögur*)', in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rory McTurk (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 190–204 (p. 190).

⁴ Driscoll, 'Late Prose Fiction', p. 198.

were dismissed as derivative and unaesthetic by late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century scholars is well-documented.⁵

Ála flekks saga (‘the saga of Áli flekkr’) lies far to the indigenous end of the *riddarasaga* spectrum. It is thought to have been composed around the early fifteenth century,⁶ placing it among the youngest medieval Icelandic romances — though this is something of an arbitrary statement given that the tradition of saga composition continued to flourish for centuries after the Reformation.⁷ The saga is an entertaining tale in its own right, and the first-time reader wishing to discover this for themselves may prefer to read the translation before continuing with this spoiler-laden introduction. The story was certainly popular in Iceland down the centuries, as evinced by its thirty-seven extant manuscript witnesses as well as its adaptation into three sets of *rímur* (rhymed metrical ballads indigenous to Iceland). Despite this, the saga fell victim to the aforementioned scholarly disdain for — and consequent disinterest in — the genre. Few early scholars paid any attention to it at all. One who did, Finnur Jónsson, called it ‘ret ubetydelig’ (‘rather insignificant’), though he did concede that ‘den er sá at síge mere rationel i sit indhold end de flestre andre’ (‘it is, so to speak, more rational in its content than most of the others [late romances]’).⁸ It is a sign of just how neglected and underappreciated the saga has been that this latter remark remains one of the only — and therefore highest — compliments it has ever received.

Part of the ‘rationality’ that Finnur Jónsson identified in *Ála flekks saga* undoubtedly derives from the careful construction of its cohesive narrative around a set of curses. The saga is, in the words of Alaric Hall, Steven D. P. Richardson and Haukur Þorgeirsson, ‘the pre-eminent Old Icelandic example of an *álög* tale—a story whose plot [...] centres on breaking a stepmother’s curse (*álög*)’.⁹ This motif is commonly found in medieval Irish and Welsh and modern Gaelic tales. It was therefore probably of Celtic origin, although by the fifteenth century it had become firmly crystallised as a stock element of late medieval Icelandic romances.¹⁰ The use of the motif in *Ála flekks saga* has been relatively understudied compared to some of its contemporary Icelandic analogues. Of particular curiosity to the folklorist will be the fact that this motif plays a central role in the saga’s use and adaptation

⁵ See, for instance, the summaries of scholarship by Kalinke, ‘Norse Romance’, p. 316, and Driscoll, ‘Late Prose Fiction’, pp. 196–97. Perhaps the most famous criticism of these prose romances was by W. P. Ker, who remarked that ‘they are among the dearest things ever made by human fancy’ (*Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1908), p. 282).

⁶ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Gad, 1920–24), III, 110; Stefán Einarsson, *A History of Icelandic Literature* (New York: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), pp. 163–64.

⁷ On this, see Matthew J. Driscoll, *The Unwashed Children of Eve: The Production, Dissemination and Reception of Popular Literature in Post-Reformation Iceland* (London: Hisarlik Press, 1997). It should also be stressed that medieval *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* continued to be widely copied and adapted in the post-medieval period, and a number of recent doctoral projects and monographs have addressed the post-medieval production, transmission and reception of some of these sagas: see Tereza Lansing, ‘Post-Medieval Production: Dissemination and Reception of *Hrólfs saga kraka*’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2011); Silvia Hufnagel, ‘*Sörla saga sterka*. Studies in the Transmission of a *fornaldarsaga*’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2012); Jeffrey S. Love, *The Reception of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Munich: Utz, 2013); Philip Lavender, ‘Whatever Happened to *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra*? Origin, Transmission and Reception of a *fornaldarsaga*’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2014); and Sheryl McDonald Werronen, *Popular Romance in Iceland: The Women, Worldviews, and Manuscript Witnesses of *Núða saga** (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016).

⁸ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, III, 110.

⁹ Alaric Hall, Steven D. P. Richardson and Haukur Þorgeirsson, ‘*Sigrarðs saga frækna*: A Normalised Text, Translation, and Introduction’, *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies*, 21 (2013), 80–155 (p. 88).

¹⁰ Margaret Schlauch, *Romance in Iceland* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1934), pp. 125–34.

of the narrative structure of the Snow White tale-type, something that has never before been noted in scholarship; a substantial discussion on both the saga's use of the *álög* motif and the Snow White connection can be found in a separate article later in this issue.¹¹ Furthermore, a number of episodes and motifs heavy in folkloric overtones, including a wolf-transformation episode and a dream which causes grave wounds to the hero's physical body, can tell us much about the saga's place not simply among the literature of medieval Iceland, but among contemporary European romance as well.

This translation represents part of a recent wave of English translations of indigenous *riddarasögur*.¹² Since the turn of the millennium, English translations have been produced of *Mírmanns saga* (2002),¹³ *Kirialax saga* (2009),¹⁴ *Nítiða saga* (2010),¹⁵ *Sigurðar saga fóts* (2010),¹⁶ *Sigrgarðs saga frækna* (2013),¹⁷ *Þjalar-Jóns saga* (2016),¹⁸ and *Vilmundar saga viðutan* (forthcoming).¹⁹ *Ála flekks saga* has in fact been translated into English on one previous occasion, in a popular translation by W. Bryant Bachman and Guðmundur Erlingsson, as part of their *Six Old Icelandic Sagas*.²⁰ This volume is now out of print and difficult to get hold of. It is the intention of the present authors to provide a new and scholarly translation, freely accessible to academics, students and enthusiasts alike, in order to help the saga gain a wider audience and some long-overdue attention.

2. Genre

Ála flekks saga displays more direct influence from the native saga tradition than from the Continental tradition, and has usually been considered one of the clearest examples of an indigenous romance, formerly termed *lygisögur* ('lying sagas') by some scholars.²¹ Stefán Einarsson remarks that '[t]he influence of chivalrous romance on these sagas is slight for

¹¹ See Jonathan Y. H. Hui, Caitlin Ellis, James McIntosh and Katherine Marie Olley, 'Ála flekks saga: A Snow White Variant from Medieval Iceland', *Leeds Studies in English*, 49 (2018), 45–64.

¹² For more on recent trends in *riddarasaga* translation, see Alaric Hall, 'Translating the Medieval Icelandic Romance-Sagas', *The Retrospective Methods Network*, 8 (2014), 65–67.

¹³ *Icelandic Histories and Romances*, trans. by Ralph O'Connor, 2nd edn (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), pp. 235–96.

¹⁴ Alenka Divjak, *Studies in the Traditions of Kirialax saga* (Ljubljana: Institut Nove revije, zavod za humanistiko, 2009), pp. 298–352.

¹⁵ Sheryl McDonald, 'Nítiða saga: A Normalised Icelandic Text and Translation', *Leeds Studies in English*, 40 (2010), 119–45. A revised version of this translation can be found in Sheryl McDonald Werronen, *Popular Romance in Iceland*, pp. 235–48.

¹⁶ Alaric Hall and others, 'Sigurðar saga fóts (The Saga of Sigurðr Foot): A Translation', *Mirator*, 11 (2010), 56–91.

¹⁷ Hall, Richardson and Haukur Þorgeirsson, 'Sigrgarðs saga frækna', 80–155.

¹⁸ Philip T. Lavender, 'Þjalar-Jóns saga: A Translation and Introduction', *Leeds Studies in English*, 46 (2016), 73–113.

¹⁹ 'Vilmundar saga viðutan': *The Saga of Vilmundur the Outsider*, ed. and trans. by Jonathan Y. H. Hui (London: Viking Society of Northern Research, forthcoming).

²⁰ *Six Old Icelandic Sagas*, trans. by W. Bryant Bachman and Guðmundur Erlingsson (Lanham: University Press of America, 1993), pp. 41–61. The saga has also been translated into German by Gert Kreutzer, in *Islandische Märchensagas*, ed. by Jürg Glauser and Gert Kreutzer (Munich: Diederichs, 1998), pp. 20–40, into French by Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir and Héléne Tétrel, in *Histoires des Breagnes. 3. La petite saga de Tristan et autres sagas islandaises inspirées de la matière de Bretagne*, ed. by Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir and Héléne Tétrel (Brest: Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, 2012), pp. 123–41, and into Czech by Markéta Podolská, in *Lživé ságy starého Severu*, ed. by Jiří Starý (Prague: Herrmann & synové, 2015), pp. 73–91.

²¹ The term *lygisögur* has one medieval attestation, which has become well-known because of its relevance to questions of genre in the *fornaldarsögur*: in the thirteenth-century *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, we are told that King Sverrir complimented the telling of **Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* at a wedding in Reykjahólar in 1119. No

their chief characteristics are native motifs and native style’;²² and it was on account of the saga’s simple syntax and infrequent use of loanwords that Åke Lagerholm, who produced the first edition of the saga, wrote that ‘[a]us diesem Gesichtspunkte stellt sich die saga als eine der isländischsten *lygisögur* dar, die wir besitzen’ [‘from this viewpoint, the saga presents itself as one of the most Icelandic *lygisögur* that we possess’].²³ The translated *riddarasögur*, of course, share ‘their courtly setting, their interest in kingship, and their concerns with the ethics of chivalry and courtly love’,²⁴ and, under this influence, a large number of indigenous *riddarasögur* contain overt textures of chivalry, with traces also found in some *fornaldarsögur* (‘sagas of an ancient time’, or mythic-heroic sagas). However, so far removed from this courtliness is *Ála flekks saga* that it belies the narrowest sense of the term *riddarasaga*: it contains no knights, no jousting tournaments, nor any overt chivalric texture at all. Probably the closest thing to an overt chivalric feature in the saga is Áli greeting his father *kurteisliga*, ‘courteously’, in chapter 11.

It has long been recognised that the boundary between the genres of *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* is an arbitrary one, and *Ála flekks saga* contains many similarities with some of the *fornaldarsögur*. The designation of the *fornaldarsaga* corpus is itself arbitrary, and its extended history has been laid out in a recent article by Philip Lavender.²⁵ The term ‘*fornaldarsögur norðrlanda*’ was coined by Carl Christian Rafn in his 1829–30 edition of the corpus, which he defined as Icelandic sagas detailing events that happened ‘á Norðrlöndum’ (‘in Northern Lands’, meaning Scandinavia), before the settlement of Iceland.²⁶ Lavender notes that these two chronological and geographical criteria were the same criteria used by Peter Erasmus Müller in volume two of his *Sagabibliothek*, published in 1818, whose choice of texts would also influence Rafn’s own. Müller was open-handed with his choice of sagas, including sagas dealing with seemingly ancient heroic traditions as well as younger sagas which seemed to him to have drawn on other old traditions.²⁷ Lavender remarks that ‘the juxtaposition of seemingly ancient subject matter with later works that use the features of such sagas for coloring led to a heterogeneity in the collection, which can be seen to have had as a consequence several later attempts to subdivide the *fornaldarsögur* genre’.²⁸ These ‘later attempts’ all subdivide the corpus on roughly similar lines. Helga Reuschel (and Kurt Schier after her) divided them into *Heldensagas* (‘Heroic sagas’), *Wickersagas* (‘Viking sagas’) and *Abenteuersagas* (‘Adventure sagas’),²⁹ while Hermann Pálsson divided them into ‘hero legends’

medieval versions of **Hrómundar saga* survive, but Hrómundr’s narrative tradition survived in medieval *rímur* from which the postmedieval *Hrómundar saga* derives. For a history of the usage of the term *lygisögur* and the texts it encompasses, see Driscoll, ‘Late Prose Fiction’, pp. 190–204.

²² Stefán Einarsson, *A History of Icelandic Literature*, pp. 163–64.

²³ *Drei lygisögur: Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana; Ála flekks saga; Flóres saga konungs ok sona hans*, ed. by Åke Lagerholm (Halle (Saale): Niemeyer, 1927), p. lvi. There are still a number of Irish-influenced elements in the saga, for instance the dream discussed in Section 3.ii., but here Lagerholm was referring to the lack of an overt chivalric texture.

²⁴ Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 81.

²⁵ Philip Lavender, ‘The Secret Prehistory of the *Fornaldarsögur*’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 114 (2015), 526–51.

²⁶ *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda*, ed. by Carl Christian Rafn, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Popp, 1829–30), 1, p. v.

²⁷ Peter Erasmus Müller, *Sagabibliothek med anmærkninger og inlledende afhandlinger*, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Schulz, 1817–20), 1, p. xvi; Lavender, ‘Secret Prehistory’, p. 532.

²⁸ Lavender, ‘Secret Prehistory’, p. 532.

²⁹ Helga Reuschel, *Untersuchungen über Stoff und Stil der Fornaldarsaga* (Bühl-Baden: Konkordia, 1933), and Kurt Schier, *Sagalitteratur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1970), pp. 86–91.

and ‘adventure tales’/‘Viking romances’.³⁰ Stephen Mitchell qualified this heterogeneity by suggesting the applicability of a scale of engagement with ‘traditional materials’.³¹ Whichever subdivision we apply, there are clear differences between the two poles of the *fornaldarsaga* spectrum in terms of key generic aspects. Key differences noted by Elizabeth Ashman Rowe include the following: the heroic legends span several generations, are set in ‘the pagan world of Scandinavian legend’, are driven by heroic values and are always tragic in mood; while the adventure tales cover a single generation, are not limited to Scandinavian settings, often contain commoner heroes and are invariably comic.³²

It is with the adventure-tale *fornaldarsögur* that *Ála flekks saga* shares many stylistic and generic similarities. Indeed, the saga is one of around six indigenous *riddarasögur* which have been designated ‘borderline *fornaldarsögur*’, because they each have strong literary connections to a number of *fornaldarsögur*. Besides *Ála flekks saga*, this group consists of: the fragmentary *Hrings saga ok Tryggva*, *Sigurðar saga fóts*, *Sigrgarðs saga frækna*, *Vilmundar saga viðutan* and *Þjalar-Jóns saga*.³³ Regarding these texts, Matthew Driscoll notes that ‘the scene of the action lies outside Scandinavia proper, but in a Viking, rather than a chivalric, milieu’.³⁴ The reason that the ‘borderline *fornaldarsögur*’ are not classified with the adventure-tale *fornaldarsögur* is simply that this latter group either involve Scandinavian heroes or feature a Scandinavian setting (with the exception of *Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis*, which does not explicitly name a Scandinavian location, and whose heroes are from a place called ‘Mannheimar’). The ‘borderline *fornaldarsögur*’ have neither. Therefore, a dominant factor in why they have usually been (and continue to be) classified as *riddarasögur* is that they were excluded from the *fornaldarsaga* corpus on geographic grounds. This separation has become further entrenched with each publication of an edition of either the *fornaldarsaga* or *riddarasaga* corpus.

Although it features neither a Scandinavian character nor a Scandinavian setting, *Ála flekks saga* is in the highly unusual position of having a non-Scandinavian hero who is genealogically linked to a *fornaldarsaga* hero, that is, a legendary Scandinavian hero. Áli flekkr is said both in *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra* and in most manuscripts of *Ála flekks saga* to be the grandson of Hálfðan Brönufóstri, since Ríkarðr, the father of Áli flekkr, is the son of Hálfðan Brönufóstri and his wife Princess Marsibil, through whom Hálfðan inherits the English throne. Áli is thus not only the son of the king of England but the grandson of the king of both Denmark and England.

Áli’s heroic career mirrors that of his illustrious grandfather in many ways. Most notably, both Áli and Hálfðan are aided on their adventures by supernatural female helpers. Áli is liberated from the clutches of the troll-woman Nótt by Hlaðgerðr, her half-human daughter, in much the same way that Brana, the daughter of the giant Járnhauss and a kidnapped Norman princess, aids Hálfðan by killing her father.³⁵ Both Hlaðgerðr and Brana explicitly choose

³⁰ Hermann Pálsson, ‘Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda’, in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 13 vols, ed. by Joseph L. Strayer (New York: Scribner, 1985), vi, 137–43 (p. 138).

³¹ Stephen A. Mitchell, *Heroic Sagas and Ballads* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 15–18.

³² Rowe’s observations are tabulated in her contribution in Judy Quinn and others, ‘Interrogating Genre in the *Fornaldarsögur*: Round-Table Discussion’, *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 2 (2006), 275–96 (pp. 284–86).

³³ Driscoll, ‘Late Prose Fiction’, p. 191.

³⁴ Driscoll, ‘Late Prose Fiction’, p. 191.

³⁵ *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*, ch. 6, in *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, 4 vols (Akureyri: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1954–59), iv, 303–4. All references to *fornaldarsögur* will be to this edition, which will subsequently be abbreviated as *FAS*.

to identify with their human parent and thereby with the human heroes they encounter.³⁶ While there is never any liaison between Áli and Hlaðgerðr as there is between Brana and Hálfðan, Áli does support Hlaðgerðr’s eventual marriage to King Eireikr and acts as her bride-giver. Much as Hlaðgerðr’s mixed parentage was an inversion of Brana’s, Áli’s role as bride-giver likewise inverts Brana’s role in arranging Hálfðan’s marriage to Marsibil.³⁷ Chapter 9 of *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra* even mentions a female figure called Hlaðgerðr, who is said to rule over Hlaðeyjar (the fictitious Hlaðir Islands),³⁸ though there is no explicit connection made between this Hlaðgerðr and her namesake in *Ála flekks saga*. As a final note, Marianne Kalinke has raised the possibility that Marsibil and Þornbjörg could also be considered to parallel one another (somewhat in the manner of Brana and Hlaðgerðr), since they both represent what she calls ‘nonfunctional’ maiden kings.³⁹ Marsibil is never explicitly referred to as a maiden king (*meykonungr*) in *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*, nor does she independently rule a kingdom as Þornbjörg does, but it is apparent that both *Hálfðanar saga* and *Ála flekks saga* selectively draw on aspects of the maiden-king motif, further strengthening the narrative connections between them.

Similar genealogical connections to that between Hálfðan and Áli are also found in two other ‘borderline *fornaldarsögur*’. Firstly, the Russian hero Vilmundr of *Vilmundar saga* is the grandson of the East-Gautish Bósi of *Bósa saga ok Herraud’s*. Secondly, the Hunnish king Ásmundr Húnakappi in *Sigurðar saga fóts* is said to be the grandfather of the half-brothers of *Ásmundar saga kappabana*, the half-Danish-half-Swedish protagonist Ásmundr and the half-Swedish antagonist Hildibrandr Húnakappi.⁴⁰ In the cases of Hálfðan Brönufóstri-Áli flekkr and Bósi-Vilmundr, the ending of the grandfather’s saga also corroborates the genealogical connection.⁴¹

It is helpful to draw a further comparison between Áli and Vilmundr of *Vilmundar saga*. Vilmundr is the son of Sviði (a minor character named in several *fornaldarsögur*), who is the son of one of the East-Gautish heroes of *Bósa saga*, Bósi, and this makes Vilmundr the descendant of a legendary Swede. During the seventeenth century and eighteenth centuries, the medieval Icelandic *fornaldarsögur* were of particular interest to Swedish and Danish scholars, who were keen to ‘suggest continuities between their respective modern societies and the heroic spirit of the ancient Goths’.⁴² Accordingly, this nationalistic impulse saw the publication of editions of many *fornaldarsögur* involving those respective countries; indeed,

³⁶ *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*, ch. 6, in *FAS*, iv, 302.

³⁷ *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*, ch. 7, in *FAS*, iv, 305.

³⁸ *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*, ch. 7, in *FAS*, iv, 306.

³⁹ Marianne E. Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 102 n. 46.

⁴⁰ Hall and others, ‘*Sigurðar saga fóts*’, p. 91. Notably, *Sigurðar saga fóts* states that Ásmundr Húnakappi’s son was the father of both Ásmundr and Hildibrandr Húnakappi, meaning that the half-brothers’ common parent was the father. However, in *Ásmundar saga kappabana*, their common parent is their mother, Hildir, and neither of their fathers is called Hrólfr (Ásmundr’s is called ‘Áki’, and Hildibrandr’s ‘Helgi’). There is no such intertextual discrepancy in the Hálfðan-Áli and Bósi-Vilmundr connections, where the linking genealogical figure is given the same name in both pairs of sagas, Ríkarðr in *Hálfðanar saga* and *Ála flekks saga*, and Sviði in *Bósa saga* and *Vilmundar saga*.

⁴¹ For *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*’s mention of Áli flekkr, see *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*, ch. 17, in *FAS*, iv, 318. For *Bósa saga*’s mention of Vilmundr, see *Bósa saga*, ch. 16, in *FAS*, iii, 322. For *Vilmundar saga*’s mention of Bósi, see *Vilmundar saga víðutan*, ch. 8, in *Late Medieval Icelandic Romances*, ed. by Agnete Loth, 5 vols (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1962–64), iv, 152.

⁴² Andrew Wawn, ‘The Post-Medieval Reception of Old Norse and Old Icelandic Literature’, in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. by McTurk, pp. 320–37 (p. 324).

the first ever Icelandic sagas to appear in a printed edition were the Gautland-based *Gautreks saga* and *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, published by Olaus Verelius in 1664.⁴³ One such edition was of *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, by Guðmundur Ólafsson in 1694. In his introduction to the saga, Guðmundur stated his belief that *Sturlaugs saga* was part of a group of true stories, and he listed eight sagas as named examples.⁴⁴ Seven of these involve prominent Scandinavian heroes and/or locations and are today classified as *fornaldarsögur*, and the other is *Vilmundar saga*. Philip Lavender points out that *Vilmundar saga* follows *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar* in Guðmundur's list, and that *Hálfðanar saga* features Vilmundur's father Sviði. Lavender suggests that '[a] genealogical principle (rather than a geographical one [...]) seems to determine inclusion on Guðmundur's list', noting that Vilmundur 'could [...] be seen as a type of Swedish hero by blood'.⁴⁵

Yet while there is some evidence for Swedish nationalistic interest in *Vilmundar saga*, there seems to be no evidence that *Ála flekks saga* was seen in a similar light by the Danes, despite Áli being the grandson of a legendary Dane, Hálfðan Brönufóstri, and the fact that their sagas share some noticeable similarities. This means that, unlike *Vilmundar saga*, there is no evidence that *Ála flekks saga* was viewed in scholarly discourse as having a particularly close relationship with Scandinavia-based romances. This is in spite of the fact that it travelled frequently with *fornaldarsögur* in Icelandic manuscripts that were being produced through to the nineteenth century, and the fact that the saga it travels with most frequently in extant manuscripts is *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*.⁴⁶ However, there is one prominent and relatively recent instance in which scholars have grouped *Ála flekks saga* with some *fornaldarsögur* in publication: in Bachman and Guðmundur Erlingsson's *Six Old Icelandic Sagas*. There, it appears alongside translations of five *fornaldarsögur*, namely *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar*, *Yngvars saga víðförla*, *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra*, *Sörla þátr* and *Ásmundar saga kappabana*. This marked the first time that *Ála flekks saga* had ever been edited or translated alongside *fornaldarsögur*. Groundbreaking as this decision was, the translators did not give a reason for the specific inclusion of *Ála flekks saga* alongside five *fornaldarsögur*, although they did note that the *álög* central to the saga's structure is common in the *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*.⁴⁷ They do not mention the Hálfðan Brönufóstri connection in their introduction, so it seems likeliest that they included it purely because they recognised the strong stylistic similarities with some of the *fornaldarsögur*.

In *Ála flekks saga*, therefore, we have an indigenous Icelandic romance without much of a chivalric texture, whose hero is descended from a legendary Scandinavian hero, and which has significant connections to *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* alike. Therefore, in

⁴³ Matthew J. Driscoll, 'What's Truth Got to Do with it? Views on the Historicity of the Sagas', in *Skemmtiligastar byggingur: Studies in Honour of Galina Glazyrina*, ed. by Tatjana N. Jackson and Elena A. Melnikova (Moscow: Dimitriy Pozharskiy University, 2012), pp. 15–27 (pp. 17–18).

⁴⁴ Philip Lavender, 'Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra in Sweden: Textual Transmission, History and Genre-Formation in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Arkiv för Nordisk filologi*, 129 (2014), 197–232 (pp. 204–5).

⁴⁵ Lavender, 'Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra in Sweden', pp. 227–28.

⁴⁶ Of the eight manuscripts which contain both *Ála flekks saga* and *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*, the two sagas appear consecutively in five of them. These are AM 589 e 4to (1450–1500), AM 571 4to (1500–1550), AM 297 b 4to (1650–1700), Lbs 272 fol. (1700) and Lbs 840 4to (1737). The full contents of these manuscripts can be found on *Stories for All Time: The Icelandic 'fornaldarsögur'*, compiled by Matthew Driscoll, with Silvia Hufnagel and others (Copenhagen: Nordisk Forskningsinstitut, 2016): <http://fasn1.ku.dk>. AM 589 e 4to and AM 571 4to are the only surviving medieval witnesses to *Ála flekks saga*, and two out of three of the only surviving medieval witnesses to *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra* (the other being AM 152 1 fol., which dates to 1500–1525).

⁴⁷ *Six Old Icelandic Sagas*, p. xxi.

spite of its usual classification as a *riddarasaga* — an arbitrary classification essentially based on geographical setting rather than generic markers — *Ála flekks saga* must be studied as part of a fluid generic spectrum that invites a more natural association with the sagas in the *fornaldarsaga* corpus. Just as *Vilmundar saga* has been argued to be ‘a Russia-based spin-off of the Scandinavia-based romances’,⁴⁸ it is not only useful, but also generically accurate, to consider *Ála flekks saga* to be another ‘spin-off of the Scandinavia-based romances’.

3. Notable Motifs

Ála flekks saga contains a number of interesting features which deserve a brief introduction in their own right. Previous scholarly interest in the saga has focussed principally on two notable episodes: Áli’s werewolf transformation in chapters 8–10 and his supernatural dream in chapter 12. This section will provide an introductory overview of these episodes and their literary context. Additionally, although it has received little scholarly attention, readers may also be curious to learn more about the birthmark from which Áli’s takes his cognomen and the saga takes its title, and this notable feature will be discussed at the end of this section.

3.1. The Werewolf Episode

Ála flekks saga is one of fourteen indigenous Icelandic works that feature a werewolf episode, all of which are more fully discussed in Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir’s survey of the werewolf in medieval Icelandic literature.⁴⁹ Aðalheiður follows Einar Ólafur Sveinsson’s division of the motif into two variants, the first an indigenous variant characterised by the innate ability to shift into wolf-form and associated with ‘war and warlike behaviour’ and the second a Continental variant, ultimately deriving from Celtic tradition, in which the transformation results from an external spell or curse.⁵⁰ It is the cross-fertilisation between these two variants, she suggests, which resulted in the werewolf episode in *Ála flekks saga*, which shows influence from both indigenous and Celtic traditions.

The clearest parallels, however, are found in *Völsunga saga* and *Hrólfs saga kraka*. Like Áli, Sigmundur and Sinfjötli both take on wolf form, in chapter 8 of *Völsunga saga*. Though their initial donning of wolf pelts is voluntary, unlike Áli’s forced transformation, the father and son find themselves trapped and unable to remove the skins until ten days have passed. In both sagas, the wolf skins are clearly cursed, overwhelming the wearer with murderous aggression which seeks to kill indiscriminately, both men and beasts, rather than hunt for prey. As Sigmundur turns on his son Sinfjötli, whom he has begotten incestuously by his sister, nearly killing him, so Áli’s aggression is directed at his family, first ravaging the livestock of his future wife and then that of his father. When Áli finally sheds the wolf-skin, his foster-mother, Hildir, directs her husband, Gunni, to burn it, just as Sigmundur and Sinfjötli take theirs ‘ok brenna í eldi ok báðu engum at meini verða’ (‘and burn them in fire and pray no

⁴⁸ ‘*Vilmundar saga viðutan*’, ed. and trans. by Hui, forthcoming.

⁴⁹ For a full discussion of these works and their handling of werewolves see Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, ‘The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 106 (2007), 277–303.

⁵⁰ Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, ‘The Werewolf’, p. 279; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, ‘Keltnesk áhrif á íslenskar ýkjusögur’, *Skírnir*, 106 (1932), 100–23 (pp. 118–19). See also Einar Ól. Sveinsson, ‘Celtic Elements in Icelandic Tradition’, *Béaloideas*, 25 (1957), 3–24.

further harm should occur’).⁵¹ *Sigrarðs saga frækna* provides a further example of animal skins being burnt, when the princesses, Hildr and Signý, are released from their cursed forms, as a pig and as a foal respectively, suggesting that fire was a common solution to the obvious magical potency of such skins.

The *Ála flekks saga* episode also bears notable similarities to the transformation of Björn in *Hrólfs saga kraka*. Transformed by his step-mother, Hvít, into a bear, Björn ravages the livestock in his father’s kingdom. Only his sweetheart, Bera, still knows him since ‘í þessum birni þykkist hún kenna augu Björns konungssonar’ (‘in the bear she thought she recognised the eyes of the king’s son, Björn’), just as Áli’s foster mother Hildr recognises the wolf’s eyes as those of Áli flekkr.⁵² By contrast, Björn’s father, Hringr, leads a hunting party to kill his son, mirroring the actions of Áli’s father Ríkarðr, but with deadlier results since Björn is granted no last-minute quarter and is instead killed by his father’s men.

3.ii. Áli’s Dream

The motif of physical wounds sustained in a dream is exceptionally rare in medieval Icelandic literature. Apart from *Ála flekks saga*, versions of the motif appear in three other sagas: the thirteenth-century *Fóstbraeðra saga* and the fourteenth-century *Bárðar saga Snæfellsnáss*, both *Íslendingasögur*; and the fourteenth-century *ridðarasaga Sigurðar saga þögla*. A fuller discussion of the motif in these three sagas can be found in John Roberts’ dissertation on dreams in the medieval Icelandic romances,⁵³ but none of these three instances will be discussed here, since they are too dissimilar to Áli’s dream to assume a connection. For instance, Áli’s dream is entirely recounted in the first-person, while the other three sagas recount their dreams in the third-person. Another key difference is the specificity of the wound sustained; Áli’s wounds are described very generally and presumably located all around his body, while in the other three sagas, the wounds are localised to the eyes in two cases, and the head in one.⁵⁴

However, Áli’s dream does have an uncannily close parallel in another medieval text. Einar Ól. Sveinsson noted the strong similarities between Áli’s dream and that of Cú Chulainn in the Old Irish *Serglige Con Culainn* (‘The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn’).⁵⁵ In this tale, the legendary hero Cú Chulainn is persuaded to catch beautiful lake-birds for the Ulsterwomen, and he attempts to catch two particularly special birds for his own wife. He throws a stone, but misses, and then throws a spear which pierces one of the birds. He then falls asleep, and two women appear to him in a dream, whipping him in turn until he is near death. He lies under these wounds for close to a year, before being visited by Lí Ban, one of the women from his dream and one of the two birds he had attacked, who asks him to go to Fand, the other dream-woman, and fight a battle in the otherworld on her behalf, in exchange for fully healing him.

⁵¹ *Völsunga saga*, ch. 8, in *FAS*, 1, 124.

⁵² *Hrólfs saga kraka*, ch. 26, in *FAS*, 1, 48.

⁵³ John J. Roberts, ‘Dreams and Visions in Medieval Icelandic Romance’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds, 2007), pp. 163–75. Roberts discusses *Ála flekks saga* immediately afterwards, at pp. 175–83.

⁵⁴ The instances of eye-pain in the dreams of the two *Íslendingasögur* are discussed in Kirsi Kanerva, ‘“Eigi er sá heill, er í augun verkir”’: Eye Pain in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century *Íslendingasögur*’, *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore*, 69 (2013), 7–35.

⁵⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, ‘Celtic Elements in Icelandic Tradition’, pp. 16–17. For an edition of this text, see Myles Dillon, ‘The Trinity College Text of *Serglige Con Culainn*’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 6 (1949), 139–75. For a

The similarities are obvious: in both cases the hero is visited in a dream by a woman or women whom he had previously met in person; in both cases the hero is being punished in retaliation for an offence against the woman; in both cases wounds are inflicted by whips; in both cases these wounds render the hero bedridden for an extended period of time; and in both cases it is stipulated that the wounds are only to be fully healed by someone living in a faraway paranormal otherworld. There are also some differences, such as the fact that Áli is given an expiration date while Cú Chulainn is not, but the specificity of some of the similarities, such as the whip-wielding women, strongly implies a connection between the two.⁵⁶ This in itself is not evidence that *Serplige Con Culainn* was known in late medieval Iceland, as the rest of the narrative differs drastically from that of *Ála flekks saga*. However, at the very least, it is probable that the key aspects of Áli’s dream were based on a source with some connection to the much older tradition of Cú Chulainn’s dream, even if it is difficult to say how direct this connection is, whether this source was oral or literary, or how close the source was to the versions of *Serplige Con Culainn* that survive.⁵⁷

3.iii. Áli’s Fleck

The fleck on Áli’s right cheek is integral to his identity, but it is nothing more than a blind motif. There does not seem to be an immediate source for it,⁵⁸ but in medieval romance, the birthmark is frequently a marker of royalty and usually has a single narrative function, namely to prove a hero or heroine’s royal identity.⁵⁹ However, in *Ála flekks saga*, this birthmark is only

translation, see Myles Dillon, ‘The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 7 (1953), 47–88.

⁵⁶ Beyond the dream, there is one other similarity between the two texts: in the Icelandic saga, Glóðarauga’s curse that turns Áli into a wolf is followed by the provision that he will never be released ‘unless a woman should ask for quarter for you when you are captured’; in the Irish tale, Cú Chulainn’s charioteer Láeg is told that he will not depart from Fand’s land alive unless protected by a woman.

⁵⁷ Alaric Hall has noted that several aspects of *Serplige Con Culainn* (and to a lesser extent other Irish and Welsh texts) find parallels in the description of the death of Vanlandi in *Ynglinga saga* (Alaric Hall, *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England: Matters of Belief, Health, Gender and Identity*, Anglo-Saxon Studies, 8 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), pp. 137–9, 144), suggesting therefore that the form of Snorri’s narrative has ‘deeper roots’ (p. 139). He draws further parallels between *Serplige Con Culainn* and an account of a witchcraft trial on Orkney in 1616 (2007, 152–3; for further details see Alaric Hall, ‘Hoe Keltisch zijn elfen eigenlijk?’, trans. by Dennis Groenewegen, *Kelten*, 37 (2008), 2–5). Orkney has been suggested as a possible staging post in the travel of Irish or Gaelic folklore and literary ideas to Iceland; see for example Michael Chesnutt, ‘An Unsolved Problem in Old Norse-Icelandic Literary History’, *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 1 (1968), 122–37 (p. 129); Bo Almqvist, *Viking Age: Studies on Folklore Contacts Between the Northern and the Western Worlds* (Aberystwyth: Boethius Press, 1991), pp. 1–29, esp. 24–5. For a more minimalist view of Orkney as a conduit see Gísli Sigurðsson, *Gaelic Influence in Iceland: Historical and Literary Contacts: A Survey of Research*, 2nd edn (Reykjavik: University of Iceland Press, 2010), pp. 42, 47.

⁵⁸ Two others characters have the cognomen *flekkr* in the corpus of Old Norse saga literature. In *Óláfs saga helga* there is a farmer called Þorgeirr flekkr. Additionally, there is a Barðr flekkr in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*. The origin of the nickname is not explained in the case of either Þorgeirr or Barðr, nor do their ‘flekks’ serve any narrative purpose.

⁵⁹ Under Stith Thompson’s motif-index classification, this is motif number H71, ‘mark of royalty’ (Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books and Local Legends*, rev. and enl. edn, 6 vols (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955–58), III, 379–80), and the best-known Norse example of this can be found in the birthmark of Sigurðr ormr-í-auga in *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*. A wider survey of the literary and linguistic associations of the birthmark can be found in Karl Jæberg, ‘The Birthmark in Language and Literature’, *Romance Philology*, 10 (1956), 307–42, with the ‘mark of royalty’ motif only briefly discussed at p. 311. The birthmark has been a well-established motif since classical antiquity. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle refers to two legends involving inherited birthmarks: ‘the spear which the earth-born race bear on their bodies’ (the birthmark of the descendants

mentioned as part of the brief physical description of Áli given immediately after his birth, and it serves no narrative function in the saga other than to provide him with his cognomen while he is being fostered by Gunni and Hildir. It does not even feature at the moment his real mother recognises him — for there he is recognised not by his fleck, but by his eyes.

One prominent example of this form of the birthmark motif, and one with a tantalising set of similarities to *Ála flekks saga*, is the thirteenth-century Middle High German romance *Wolfdietrich*.⁶⁰ The eponymous hero is born with the following birthmark: ‘im zwischen schultern ein rôtez kriuzelin’ (stanza 140, ‘between his shoulders a red cross’); and in the very next line, the poet reveals its function: ‘dâ bâ si dâ erkante ir liebez kindelîn’ (st. 141, ‘by which she [his mother, Princess Hildeburg of Salonika] recognised her dear baby later’).⁶¹ *Wolfdietrich* is exposed as a baby, but is found by his unknowing grandfather, King Walgunt of Salonika, and recognised not long afterwards by Hildeburg (st. 189).⁶² Following this, the truth of *Wolfdietrich*’s parentage is revealed to all. In *Wolfdietrich*’s case, this is only the backstory to his adventures as an adult, as opposed to constituting the full drama. *Wolfdietrich* in fact shares notable biographical similarities to Áli. Both are born into royalty, but are exposed as children and are later brought back into their true family by being recognised by their mother. In both cases, the exposure, recognition and return are only the backstory to their adventures proper. Both have a birthmark of some implied significance, though only in *Wolfdietrich* is it used as proof of identity. *Wolfdietrich* briefly lives among the wolves while Áli is temporarily transformed into one. Another curious similarity, albeit a minor one, is that both are at one point associated with the same number of companions: Áli is said in chapter 3 to have sixteen *leiksveinar* (‘playmates’), who are never named and whose only action in the saga is to inform the king and queen of Áli’s disappearance; while Duke Berchtung gives *Wolfdietrich* his sixteen sons as vassals, along with himself and five hundred knights — though six of his sons and all of the other knights are killed shortly afterwards. Berchtung and his remaining ten sons do feature again at the very end of the romance and are therefore, unlike Áli’s playmates, of some structural importance. Tantalising though it is, this evidence remains too thin for us to posit a definite relationship between *Wolfdietrich* and *Ála flekks saga*, but the similarities remain noteworthy nevertheless.

of the *spartoi* spawned from the dragon teeth sowed by Cadmus); and ‘the “stars” introduced by Carcinus in his *Thyestes*’ (the birthmark of the Pelopids, the descendants of the ivory-shouldered Pelops) (*Aristotle: Poetics. Longinus: On the Sublime. Demetrius: On Style*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Halliwell, W. Hamilton Fyfe, Donald Russell, W. Rhys Roberts and Doreen Innes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 82–83). Another notable ancient example can be found in Heliodorus of Emesa’s third- or fourth-century novel *Aethiopica*, in which the final and conclusive proof of the true identity of Chariclea, lost daughter of the king and queen of Ethiopia, is the birthmark above her left elbow. Prominent birthmarks are also to be found in Shakespeare (in *Cymbeline*, for instance, there is the mole on Imogen’s left breast and Guiderius’ birthmark of a ‘sanguine star’) and Cervantes (for instance the moon-shaped mark under Preciosa’s left breast in *La Gitanilla*, and the mole behind Isabela’s ear in *La española inglesa*); and this timeless fascination with the dramatic and symbolic potential of congenital bodily marks continues to be seen in modern literature, with a prominent example being Toni Morrison’s *Sula* (1973).

⁶⁰ *Wolfdietrich* survives in three thirteenth-century versions, two of which are fragmentary, and in another version dating to around 1300; see J. W. Thomas, ‘Ornit’ and ‘Wolfdietrich’: *Two Medieval Romances*, *Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture*, 23 (Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1986), p. xvii. For more on the manuscripts containing the romance, see *Deutsches Heldenbuch*, ed. by Oskar Jänicke, Ernst Martin, Arthur Amelung and Julius Zupitza, 5 vols (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1866–1873), III, pp. v–viii.

⁶¹ *Ornit und die Wolfdietriche nach Müllenhoffs Vorarbeiten*, ed. by Arthur Amelung and Oskar Jänicke, 2 vols (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1871–73), I, 188.

⁶² *Ornit und die Wolfdietriche*, ed. by Amelung and Jänicke, I, 196.

The motif of the royal birthmark does not always provide proof of both royalty and identity. In some cases, the birthmark is simply a proof of royalty, rather than identity, to those who do not actually know the hero. Examples from medieval European romance include the thirteenth-century Old French romance *Richars li Biaus*, in which the hero is said to have the mark of two crosses on his right shoulder (ll. 668–69),⁶³ as well as in the late thirteenth-century Middle English romance *Havelok*, in which Havelok is said to have a ‘kine-merk’ (‘king-mark’) on his ‘right shuldre’ (‘right shoulder’) (ll. 604, 2140–47).⁶⁴ In other cases, we also have instances in which a royal birthmark appears without fulfilling an identification role at all. One example is found in the Middle English *Emaré*, which dates to the late fourteenth century but which claims to have been based on an Old French poem (ll. 1030–2).⁶⁵ In it, Segramour is said to have a ‘dowbyll kyngus marke’ (‘double king’s mark’; l. 504),⁶⁶ but it does not fulfil the usual identification function because he is never separated from his mother, Emaré. It is nevertheless clearly supposed to be the same motif with all the connotations of royalty, and it is possible that the dual crosses might be interpreted to represent Segramour’s descent from both the Welsh and Roman royal houses.⁶⁷ In a Norse context, a royal birthmark without narrative function is found in *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, an indigenous *ridðarasaga* probably composed in the fourteenth century — in this saga, Ríkilát, daughter of the emperor of Miklagarðr (Constantinople), has the mark of a golden cross on the back of her right hand.⁶⁸

The fact that the motif of the royal birthmark could appear as a blind motif is illuminating. Like Segramour’s in *Emaré*, Ríkilát’s birthmark is never used for any sort of identification or royal verification, but the fact that it is shaped like a cross strongly suggests that it was drawing on this wider European motif, and, accordingly, Inger Boberg catalogues it as a sign of royalty in her *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature*.⁶⁹ That this is deployed as a blind motif in *Jarlmanns saga* is important here because it raises the possibility that the same process underlies Áli flekkr’s birthmark, which is similarly functionless but lacks the cross-shape and is therefore not as obviously connected to the wider European motif (although it is on his right cheek, which may be related to other right-sided manifestations of the motif). However, Áli’s exposure as an infant and his return to his real, royal family are consistent with other instances in which the motif is deployed, and it is therefore plausible that Áli’s fleck was based on this common European motif.

⁶³ *Richars li Biaus: Roman du XIIIe siècle*, ed. by Anthony J. Holden (Paris: Champion, 1983), p. 45.

⁶⁴ *Havelok the Dane*, in *Middle English Verse Romances*, ed. by Donald B. Sands (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1986), pp. 74, 108. On the relationship between *Richars li Biaus* and *Havelok*, see Maldwyn Mills, ‘Havelok’s Return’, *Medium Ævum*, 45 (1976), 20–35. The earlier Old French and Anglo-Norman versions of the Haveloc/Havelok legend do not contain the birthmark (for editions of these, see *The Anglo-Norman Lay of ‘Haveloc’*, ed. and trans. by Glyn S. Burgess and Leslie C. Brook (Cambridge: Brewer, 2015)).

⁶⁵ *Emaré*, in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, ed. by Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), p. 167.

⁶⁶ *Emaré*, in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, ed. by Laskaya and Salisbury, p. 182.

⁶⁷ *The Middle English Metrical Romances*, ed. by Walter H. French and Charles Brockway Hale, 2 vols (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), 1, 439.

⁶⁸ *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, ch. 2, in *Late Medieval Icelandic Romances*, III, 7–8. In the younger version of the saga, the mark is on the back of Ríkilát’s left hand; see *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns i yngre handskrifters redaktion*, ed. by Hugo Rydberg (Copenhagen: Møller, 1917), p. 4.

⁶⁹ See motif H71.5 in Inger M. Boberg, *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1966), p. 148.

4. Manuscripts, Editions and Notes on the Translation

Ála flekks saga is preserved in some form in a total of thirty-seven known extant manuscripts, the earliest of which was produced in the fifteenth century, and the latest in the late nineteenth century.⁷⁰ The total of thirty-seven manuscript witnesses may be relatively low within the exceptionally popular corpus of surviving medieval indigenous *riddarasögur*, in which Matthew Driscoll observes that ‘over half are preserved in 40 manuscripts or more, and two, *Mágus saga* and *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, in nearly twice that many’,⁷¹ but it is still a high number in the context of the entire corpus of saga literature, and it indicates that the saga was relatively popular through the centuries. The popularity of the *Áli flekkr* tradition is also evident from the fact that the saga spawned three sets of *rímur*: one composed in the seventeenth century, possibly by a certain Gísli Jónsson; one by Ingimundur Jónsson of Sveinungsvík in the eighteenth century; and one by Lýður Jónsson of Skipaskagi, composed in 1854.⁷² Study of the *rímur* does not come into the scope of this article, but it remains an important and as-yet unexplored avenue of the *Áli flekkr* tradition (and this is also true of most other narrative traditions which were adapted into *rímur*).

Of the thirty-seven manuscripts containing *Ála flekks saga*, the oldest is AM 589 e 4to (hereafter 589e), which dates to the second half of the fifteenth century and contains, in order, *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns*, *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*, *Ála flekks saga* and *Hákonar þáttur Hárekssonar*.⁷³ It is one of six manuscripts that once formed a single volume, but which are now separate and have the individual shelfmarks AM 589 a 4to, AM 589 b 4to, AM 589 c 4to, AM 589 d 4to, AM 589 e 4to and AM 589 f 4to;⁷⁴ all six are now housed at the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík. Although the 589e text of *Ála flekks saga* (and indeed *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*) is now fragmentary, it was very fortunately copied in entirety before it lost its opening.⁷⁵ That copy now survives as AM 181 k fol. (hereafter 181k) and was produced around 1650.⁷⁶

Apart from 589e, *Ála flekks saga* survives in another very late medieval manuscript, AM 571 4to (hereafter 571), which dates to the first half of the sixteenth century and contains, in order, two fragments of *Ála flekks saga*, two of *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*, one of *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* and three of *Grettis saga*.⁷⁷ Although the text of *Ála flekks saga* in 571 is fragmentary, it is closely related to the (completely intact) text of the saga in the seventeenth-century manuscript AM 182 fol. (hereafter 182), and it may even have been its direct source.⁷⁸ The 571-182 text of *Ála flekks saga* bears some minor differences to that of 589e-181k, mostly in the form of omissions of short phrases, and they therefore represent two different, though very close, stemmatic branches of the saga’s transmission.⁷⁹

⁷⁰ Marianne E. Kalinke and P. M. Mitchell, *Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Romances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 19–20.

⁷¹ Driscoll, ‘Late Prose Fiction’, p. 194.

⁷² Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal*, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið, 1966), i, 13–15.

⁷³ AM 589 e 4to, viewed at *Stories for All Time* (<http://fasnl.ku.dk>) [accessed 19 May 2017].

⁷⁴ *Fornaldarsagas and Late Medieval Romances: Manuscripts No. 586 and 589 a–f, 4to in the Arnarnaganean Collection*, ed. by Agnete Loth (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1977), pp. 7, 9.

⁷⁵ *Drei lygisögur*, p. lxix, cf. *Fornaldarsagas and Late Medieval Romances*, p. 15.

⁷⁶ Kristian Kålund, *Katalog over den Arnarnaganeanske håndskriftsamling*, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske boghandel, 1889–94), i, 153.

⁷⁷ AM 571 4to, viewed at *Stories for All Time* (<http://fasnl.ku.dk>) [accessed 19 May 2017].

⁷⁸ *Drei lygisögur*, p. lxix.

⁷⁹ *Drei lygisögur*, p. lxix. In footnote 1 on the same page, Lagerholm lists examples of differences between the two

Only one critical edition of the saga has been produced, by Áke Lagerholm in 1927, and the text he used was 589e-181k. The same text was reproduced, in Modern Icelandic orthography, in volume five of Bjarni Vilhjálmsson’s six-volume *Riddarasögur*.⁸⁰ The translation here is of Lagerholm’s edition, though it is in substance the exact same text as the translation by W. Bryant Bachman and Guðmundur Erlingsson, who used Bjarni’s edition.

We have opted to present Lagerholm’s text — with his original normalisation to Old Norse — as a facing text for our translation. We recognise that it is nowadays — with good reason — usual to present the text of a late medieval Icelandic romance normalised to the pre-thirteenth-century conventions of ‘standard Old Norse’. We have chosen to retain Lagerholm’s text with its anachronistic features here because it is the orthography most familiar to the student of Old Norse.⁸¹ *Ála flekks saga* is a simple text in both narrative and language, and it was felt that retaining this more familiar orthography would make the saga singularly accessible, particularly for those less experienced with the Old Norse language. Nonetheless, four changes have been made to the text. Firstly, in order to avoid confusion over inflections and vowel lengths, we have removed from personal and place names the superfluous accents which Lagerholm had added. Therefore, we have normalised, for instance, Lagerholm’s ‘Pólicáná’ to ‘Pólicana’, ‘Tartaría’ to ‘Tartaría’, ‘Indía’ to ‘Indía’, ‘Mandán’ to ‘Mandan’ and ‘Andán’ to ‘Andan’. Secondly, we have changed Lagerholm’s Roman numerals into their equivalent Norse words, for instance ‘II þrælar’ into ‘tveir þrælar’. Thirdly, in two instances of morphological levelling where a first-person plural pronoun is accompanied by the third-person plural verb (in both cases ‘eru vit’), we have amended the verb to the first-person plural conjugation more familiar to students (‘erum vit’). Fourthly, we have normalised the definite article to ‘inn/in/it’; the base manuscripts use the younger forms ‘hinn/hin/hit’, while Lagerholm mostly normalises them to the older forms ‘enn/en/et’. We hope that our decision to retain Lagerholm’s orthography, with these changes, will give students and enthusiasts every opportunity to engage with the language in the saga, with the help of the translation.

In terms of the orthography of our translation, we have followed scholarly convention by keeping personal, animal and object names in their nominative form. For the sake of consistency, we have retained the orthography of these names as they appear in Lagerholm’s text, rather than using the more modern forms that tend to appear in scholarship. For instance, our translation uses ‘Ríkarðr’ instead of ‘Ríkarð’, ‘Richard’ or the equivalent of the name in modern Icelandic orthography, ‘Ríkarður’; and where names contain an ‘ö’, such as ‘Þornbjörg’, this letter has not been converted to the more modern ‘ö’ (‘Þornbjörg’). However, place-names have all been rendered in their English forms, with the exception of ‘Pólicana’, which probably cannot be identified with a real place. A list of names of characters, animals and objects, followed by one of places, can be found at the end of this introduction. Regarding our translation style, we have sought to follow the text as closely as possible. On the whole, therefore, we have tried to maintain the verb tenses of the original text, although on rare occasions where the text contained tense changes that would have been too awkward in translation, such as in a single sentence with more than two verbs, we have rendered

branches of the saga.

⁸⁰ *Ála flekks saga*, in *Riddarasögur*, ed. by Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, 6 vols (Reykjavik: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1951), v, 123–60.

⁸¹ For instance, in *An Introduction to Old Norse*, ed. by E. V. Gordon, rev. by A. R. Taylor, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957) or *A New Introduction to Old Norse. Part I: Grammar*, ed. by Michael Barnes, 3rd edn (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2008).

present verbs as present participles. However, we have been selective in our translation of the conjunctions ‘en’ (‘but’) and ‘ok’ (‘and’) and the adverb ‘þá’ (‘then’), sometimes omitting them from the translation in order to preserve the flow of the story. We have also divided up long sentences in some instances, for the same reason.

5. Lists of names

Characters, animals and objects (in order of first mention)

- **Ríkarðr** — king of England.
- **Sólbjört** — Ríkarðr’s wife. Hers is a rare name, meaning ‘Sun-bright’, but it also appears in *Úlfhams saga*.
- **Áli flekk** — the saga hero, and son of Ríkarðr and Sólbjört. Assumes the name **Stuttheðinn** (‘Short-cloak’) at first while in Tartary, and **Gunnvarðr** while in Jötunoxi’s kingdom.
- **Gunni** and **Hildir** — a poor couple who find and adopt Áli.
- **Blátönn** — sister of Nótt, Glóðarauga, Jötunoxi, Leggr and Liðr. Her name means ‘Black-Tooth’, or, alternatively, ‘Blue-Tooth’.
- **Hlaðgerðr** — daughter of Nótt and a human man.
- **Nótt** — sister of Blátönn, Glóðarauga, Jötunoxi, Leggr and Liðr, and mother of Hlaðgerðr. Her name means ‘Night’.
- **Pornbjörg** — maiden-king of Tartary. Assumes the name **Gunnvör** while in Jötunoxi’s kingdom.
- **Björn** — a kinsman of Pornbjörg and a protector of the borders of Tartary.
- **Álfr** and **Hugi** — two earls who rule over India.
- **Ingifer** — father of Álfr and Hugi. As a common noun attested as early as the fourteenth century, his name refers to the ginger plant, and it may have been assigned to an Indian noble on account of its exoticism. Alternatively, it may derive from Yngvi-Freyr, one of the names of the Norse deity Freyr.
- **Gergín** — a champion of Álfr and Hugi. His name may be derived from *Gergen*, an old genitive form of the German name ‘Georg’, or it may be a variant of the Danish and Norwegian *Jørgen*.
- **Glóðarauga** — brother of Blátönn, Nótt, Jötunoxi, Leggr and Liðr. His name means ‘Ember-eye’, although in modern Icelandic it refers to a ‘black eye’.
- **Rauðr** — a counsellor of Ríkarðr. His name means ‘Red’.

- **Jötunoxi** — brother of Blátönn, Nótt, Glóðarauga, Leggr and Liðr. His name means ‘jötunn-ox’ (*jötunn* being a type of giant), and as a common noun, refers to the hairy rove beetle (*Creophilus maxillosus*), which, according to Icelandic folklore, has some healing properties.⁸² In rare medical contexts, it refers to a festering wound (or a cancer). Both meanings are curiously appropriate for the character, given Áli’s physical state during their initial interaction.
- **Leggr** and **Liðr** — brothers of Blátönn, Nótt, Glóðarauga and Jötunoxi. These two brothers’ names mean ‘Limb’ and ‘Joint’ respectively.
- **Mandan** and **Andan** — sons of an earl called Polloníus, and the only human servants of Jötunoxi. Their names may be Irish in origin.
- **Gunnbjörn** — supposedly an earl in Russia, whom Þornbjörg claims to be the father of Áli and herself while they are under the assumed names Gunnvarðr and Gunnvör.
- **Polloníus** — father of Mandan and Andan. The name may derive from Latin *polonius* (meaning ‘Polish’, but used here without any apparent connection to its etymological meaning). This seems to be the earliest extant attestation of this personal name; the saga antedates, by approximately two centuries, the Polonius of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, whose source for the name has never convincingly been identified.⁸³ It may alternatively be a rendering of *Apollonius*, a name well known in medieval Europe through the popular legend of Apollonius of Tyre. ‘Apollonio’ (the Latin dative form of ‘Apollonius’) is indeed found in the 182 witness of the saga, but the fragmentary 571 witness lacks the corresponding passage.
- **Bremill** — a sword taken from Jötunoxi’s hall by Áli. Its name is probably based on *brimill*, which refers to a male of a species of large seal.
- **Kolr** — a giant in Mirkwood. His name means ‘Coal’.
- **Bárðr** — a farmer in Scythia.
- **Eireikr** — king of Scythia and an unspecified kinsman of Áli.
- **Krákr** — a black horse given by Eirekr to Áli. Its name means ‘Crow’.
- **Vilhjálmr, Ríkarðr** and **Óláfr** — sons of Áli and Þornbjörg.

Place-names (in order of first mention)

- **England** — England.
- **Tartaría** — Tartary. A land in central Asia, which features in several *fornaldarsögur* and indigenous *riddarasögur*, including *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, *Rémundar saga keisarasonar*, *Sigrarðs saga frækna* and *Sigurðar saga þögla*.

⁸² Jónas Jónasson, *Íslenzkir þjóðhaettir*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 4th edn (Reykjavik: Bókaútgáfan Opna, 2010), pp. 325–30.

⁸³ J. Madison Davis and A. Daniel Frankforter, *The Shakespeare Name Dictionary* (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 391–92.

- **Pólicana** — Unattested elsewhere in Old Norse literature as a place-name. It is clearly Latinate, given that it is declined according to the Latin first declension accusative ending *-am* in chapter 7. ‘Policana’ does feature as the name of Marcolf’s wife in the widespread Solomon and Marcolf tradition, including in the accusative ‘Policanam’ form, a form which also appears in *Ála flekks saga*.⁸⁴ There exists an Icelandic variant of this tradition from the fourteenth century, *Melkólfs saga ok Salomons konungs*, but only the beginning of the text survives, and Melkólfr, whose youth is emphasised, is not mentioned to have a wife.⁸⁵ It may also be of potential interest that in some postmedieval manuscripts of the fourteenth-century *riddarasaga Saulus saga ok Nikanors*, the sister of Duke Nikanor is called ‘Pólísiana’,⁸⁶ but we cannot read much into this similarity given that in medieval manuscripts, she is called ‘Potenciana’.⁸⁷ An alternative explanation for this place-name is that it may be a rendering of ‘-politanus’, found in such Latin adjectives as ‘Constantinopolitanus’ (‘from Constantinople’).
- **Indía(land)** — India.
- **Affríca** — Africa.
- **Ásía** — Asia.
- **Rússía** — Russia.
- **Svíþjóð in mikla** — Also referred to in this saga as ‘Svena’ or abbreviated to **Svíþjóð**, this place is usually identified as Scythia. The literal meaning of this name is ‘Sweden the Great’. According to the opening of *Ynglinga saga*, ‘Svíþjóð in mikla’ (there also called ‘Svíþjóð in kalda’, ‘Sweden the Cold’) is a vast north-eastern land which extends down to the Black Sea. However, some geographical treatises use the term to refer to the Kievan Rus’.⁸⁸
- **Myrkviðr** — Mirkwood, a mythological forest which is named in several eddic poems, as well as in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*.
- **Valland** — Gaul, although perhaps denoting France more generally in this saga since *Frakkland* is not mentioned.
- **Saxland** — Saxony.

⁸⁴ *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf*, ed. by Nancy M. Bradbury and Scott Bradbury (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2012), p. 28.

⁸⁵ For an edition, see John Tucker, ‘Melkólfs saga ok Salomons konungs’, *Opuscula*, 10 (1996), 208–11.

⁸⁶ *Fjórar riddarasögur*, ed. by H. Erlendsson and Einar Þórðarson (Reykjavik: E. Þórðarson, 1852), p. 35.

⁸⁷ *Sáulus saga ok Nikanors*, in *Late Medieval Icelandic Romances*, II, 8.

⁸⁸ Tatjana N. Jackson, ‘The North of Eastern Europe in Early Nordic Texts: The Study of Place-Names’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 108 (1993), 38–45 (p. 43).

Ála flekks saga

Chapter 1

Ríkarðr hefir konungr heitit;⁸⁹ hann réð fyrir Englandi. Hann var allra konunga vitrastr, svá at hann vissi fyrir óorðna hluti. Hann átti sér dróttningu, þá er Sólbjört hét. Hon var hverri konu vænni ok vitrari. Þau konungr ok dróttning áttu ekki börn, ok þótti þeim þat mikit mein.

Kotbær einn var skammt frá hollinni. Þar átti atsetu karl, sá er Gunni hét. Hann átti sér kerlingu, þá er Hildir hét. Þau váru bæði mjök órík. Karl átti skóg, þann er honum þótti beztr af sínum eigum; þangat fór hann hvern dag at veiða dýr ok fugla sér til matar.

Einn tíma segir konungr, at hann vill láta búa skip ór landi, ok svá var gort, ok váru búin sextán skip. Síðan velr konungr með sér ina frœknustu menn er í váru ríkinu, ok gerir þat bert fyrir alþýðu, at hann ætlar at halda í leiðangr ok ætlar at vera í burtu í þrjá vetr. Dróttning mælti þá til konungs:

‘Ek fer eigi kona einsaman, ok er ek með barni.’

Konungr mælti þá: ‘Ef þú fœðir sveinbarn, þá skal þat út bera, ok hvern er eigi vill þat gera, skal lífit láta.’

Dróttning frétti, því svá skyldi breyta. Konungr mælti þá:

‘Ek sé, ef þat heldi lífi, at hann muni eiga æfi bæði harða ok langa. En ef þu átt mey’, segir hann, ‘þá skal hana upp fœða.’

Dróttning var óglöð við þessi orð konungs. Skilja þau nú þetta tal.

Chapter 2

Þegar sem konungr var nú allbúinn, þá gekk hann til skipa, ok kvaddi áðr dróttningu ok aðra menn; sigldi síðan í burt af Englandi, ok fær frægð mikla hvar sem hann kom. En dróttning var eptir mjök hljóð, ok kemr sú stund, er hon skal léttari verða. Hon fœðir sveinbarn. Sá sveinn var bæði mikill ok vænn; hann hafði flekk á hœgri kinn. Dróttning skipar tveimr þrælum at bera út sveininn. Þeir gera svá, taka barnit ok bera til skógar Gunna, ok bjuggu um undir einu tré, ok fóru heim síðan, ok sögðu dróttningu, at þeir hefðu týnt sveininum.⁹⁰ Hon trúði því.

Einhvern dag gekk Gunni til skógar síns, ok ætlar at veiða dýr. Hann heyrði þá óp mikit, ok skundaði þangat, ok sér barn eitt, ok sýniz sveinninn fagr; tekr upp ok berr heim til kerlingar sinnar, ok sýnir henni ok segir, hvar hann hefði fundit, ok biðr hana leggjaz á golf. Hon gerir svá, ok lætr sem hon fœði svein þenna. Þau karl ok kerling unnu mikit sveininum, ok óx hann þar upp. En hvert þat nafn, sem þau gáfu honum at kveldi, mundu þau aldri at morni.

Chapter 3

Nú skal þar til máls taka, er konungr kemr heim ór leiðangri, ok fann dróttningu. Hon sagði honum, hversu hon hefði breytt. Konungr spurði, hvar þeir væri, sem sveinninn hefðu út borit. En þeir gengu fyrir konung ok sögðuz hafa deytt sveininn; en konungr kvez eigi trúa því.

⁸⁹ This is the point at which most manuscripts call Ríkarðr ‘sonr Hálfðanar Brönufóstra’ (‘son of Hálfðan, Brana’s foster-son’).

⁹⁰ The verb *týna* can mean ‘to lose’ or ‘to kill’ in Old Norse (though not in modern Icelandic, where it only means the former). In this case, the slaves are probably claiming to have killed the boy, given the corresponding scene at the beginning of chapter 3, in which they tell the king that they have killed the boy (the meaning of *deyða* being unequivocal), but the king, unlike the queen, does not believe them.

The Saga of Áli flekkur

Chapter 1

There was a king called Ríkarðr; he ruled over England. He was the wisest of all kings, such that he knew beforehand of things that had not yet happened. He was married to a queen called Sólbjört. She was more beautiful and wise than any woman. The king and queen had no children, and that was a great sorrow to them.

There was a cottage a short way from the hall. An old man called Gunni had his residence there. He was married to an old woman called Hildir. They were both very poor. The old man owned a forest, which he considered the best of his possessions; he went there every day to hunt game and birds for food.

One time, the king says that he wants to have ships prepared for a voyage abroad, and so it was done, and sixteen ships were prepared. Then the king selects the most valiant men in the kingdom to accompany him, and makes it known to all his people that he intends to make a naval expedition and to be away for three winters. Then the queen spoke to the king:

‘I do not walk alone: I am with child.’

The king spoke: ‘If you give birth to a boy, he must be exposed, and anyone who will not do that shall lose his life.’

The queen asked why this should be done. The king spoke:

‘I foresee that if he remains alive, he will lead a life both hard and long. But if you have a girl’, he says, ‘then she must be brought up.’

The queen was unhappy with the king’s words. Now they drop the subject.

Chapter 2

When the king was fully prepared, he went to the ships. He first bade farewell to the queen and other people, and then sailed away from England, and gained much fame wherever he went. But the queen became very quiet after this, and the time comes for her to deliver. She gives birth to a boy. This boy was both large and handsome. He had a fleck on his right cheek. The queen orders two slaves to expose the boy. They do so; they take the child, carry it to Gunni’s forest and laid him under a tree. Then they went home and told the queen that they had killed the boy. She believed that.

One day, Gunni went to his forest intending to hunt game. He heard a great cry and hastened towards it, and sees a child, and the boy seems fair to him. He picks him up and carries him home to his wife, shows him to her and tells her where he had found him, and asks her to lie down on the floor. She does so, and acts as if she is giving birth to the boy. The old man and woman loved the boy greatly, and he grew up there. But whatever the name they gave him in the evening, they never remembered it in the morning.

Chapter 3

Now the tale will be taken up when the king arrives home from his expedition and met the queen. She told him what she had done. The king asked where those who had exposed the boy might be. They went before the king and said that they had killed the boy, but the king said that he did not believe this.

Einhvern morgun stóð karl upp snemma, ok gekk at rúmi því, er sonr hans lá í, ok þá mælti hann:

‘Sefr þú, Áli flekkr?’ En hann sagði sik vaka.

Þetta nafn bar hann síðan. Þá var hann átta vetra. Bæði var hann mikill vexti ok vænn álit.

Konungr lætr nú búa veizlu ok til bjóða öllum beztum mönnum, er í váru hans ríki; ok at öllum þeim þar komnum verðr mikill prís ok gleði í höllinni ok höfuðborginni. Gunni ok kerling fóru til veizlunnar; þau sátu útarliga í höllinni. Áli var með þeim, ok gekk innarr fyrir konungsborðit. Dróttning sat á einum stóli, ok er hon sér Ála, þá roðnaði hon mjök ok horfði á hann. Þetta gat konungr skjótt at líta, ok mælti till hennar:

‘Hví horfir þú svá á þenna mann, eða þykkiz þú hafa sét hann fyrr?’

Dróttning svarar: ‘Ek þekki hann til fulls ekki, en þó hefi ek sét hann fyrri.’

Konungr mælti þá: ‘Hvar er Gunni ok kerling hans? Komi þau hér!’

Þeim var sagt, at þau kæmi til konungs. Ok þeir gera svá, ganga fyrir konung ok kveðja hann. Konungr tók svá til máls:

‘Grunr er mér á, hvárt þau Gunni ok Hildir eiga þenna mann inn unga, er hér stendr, ok vil ek, at þit segið satt frá, hversu þat er til komit.’

Gunni tekr þá mál: ‘Þessi sveinn er víst ekki okkarr sonr. Ek fann hann á skógi mínum, ok höfum vit hann síðan upp fæddan.’

Konungr fann þá af sinni vizku, at þessi sveinn var hans sonr. Var þá bert gort fyrir alþýðu, at Áli var konungs sonr. Tók konungr hann þá með miklum heiðri, en gaf Gunna karli góðar gjafir. Fór karl þá ok kella hans til síns heimilis. Var svá slitin veizlan, ok var Áli heima með fýður sínum. Hann hafðu sextán leiksveina, ok gengu þeir með honum út ok inn.

Chapter 4

Blátönn hét ambátt ein, er var í konungsgarðinum. Hon var at öllu illa fallin. Eitt kveld var þat, er Áli konungssonr var úti staddr einn saman, þá kom þar Blátönn. Hon grenjaði hátt ok mælti svá:

‘Þú, Áli!’ segir hon, ‘hefir mik aldri kvatt með góðum orðum, ok skal ek nú launa þér þat: þú skalt þegar í stað verða at fara á skóg, ok eigi fyrr létta, en þú kemr til Nóttar, systur minnar; henni sendi ek þik til bónda.’

Áli mælti þá: ‘Þat mæli ek um, at þú farir fram til eldahúss, ok verðir at einni hellu, ok kyndi þrælar eld á þér. En ef ek komumz frá Nótt tröllkonu, þá skaltu klofna í sundr, ok láta svá lífit.’

Þá mælti Blátönn: ‘Þat vil ek, at þetta haldiz hvárki.’

Áli kvað þetta verða statt at standa. Þegar fór Áli á skóg, en Blátönn í eldahús, ok varð hon at hellu, ok gerðu þrælar á henni elda; stóð hennar æfi þann veg.

Sveinar sakna hans nú, ok leita at honum allsstaðar nær borginni, ok finna þeir hann eigi. Þeir segja konungi ok dróttningu hvarf konungssonar. Konungr mælti: ‘Nú er þat fram komit, er ek víska fyrri, at þessi sveinn mundi fyrir miklum ósköpum verða. Veit ek, at hann er horfinn í trølla hendr, ok mun ek ekki leita hans.’

Við þetta allt saman grét dróttningin mjök sárliga.

One morning, the old man woke up early and went to the bed in which his son lay, and then he spoke: 'Are you sleeping, *Áli flekkur?*' But he said that he was awake.

He bore that name thereafter. He was then eight winters old. He was both large in stature and fair of face.

The king now has a feast prepared and invites all the best men in his kingdom; and when all of them had arrived, there was much pomp and merriment in the hall and the capital city. Gunni and his wife went to the feast; they sat on the fringes of the hall. *Áli* was with them, and went farther in up to the king's table. The queen sat on a chair, and when she sees *Áli*, she reddened greatly and stared at him. The king immediately noticed that, and spoke to her:

'Why do you stare so at that person, or do you think you have seen him before?' The queen replies: 'I do not fully recognise him, but even so I have seen him before.'

The king spoke: 'Where are Gunni and his wife? Have them come here.'

They were told that they should come to the king. And they do so, going before the king and greeting him. The king began to speak thus:

'I am doubtful whether Gunni and Hildir are the parents of that young man who stands here, and I want you two to speak the truth about how this came to pass.'

Gunni begins to speak: 'This boy is indeed not our son. I found him in my forest, and we two have brought him up since then.'

The king realised through his wisdom that this boy was his son. Then it was made known to all the people that *Áli* was the king's son. The king received him with great honour, and gave the old man Gunni good gifts. Then the old man and his wife went to their homestead. The feast was concluded thus, and *Áli* stayed at home with his father. He had sixteen playmates, and they accompanied him inside and outside.

Chapter 4

There was a bondwoman called *Blátǫnn* in the king's court. She was wholly malevolent. It happened one evening, when the king's son *Áli* was outside alone, that *Blátǫnn* arrived there. She howled loudly and spoke thus:

'You, *Áli*', she says, 'have never greeted me with kind words, and I will now repay you for that: you shall immediately have to go away into the forest, and not stop until you come to *Nótt*, my sister. I send you to her as a husband.'

Áli spoke: 'I pronounce that you will go forth to the kitchen and become a stone slab, and slaves will kindle fires on you. But if I should escape from *Nótt* the troll-woman, you shall be cloven asunder, and thus lose your life.'

Blátǫnn spoke: 'I wish that neither of these would hold true.'

Áli said that it would have to come to pass. *Áli* went at once into the forest, and *Blátǫnn* into the kitchen, and she became a stone slab, and slaves lit fires on her. Her life was spent in this way.

The boys now miss *Áli* and search for him everywhere near the city, but they do not find him. They tell the king and the queen of the disappearance of the king's son. The king spoke: 'It has now come about as I foresaw, that this boy would suffer a very evil fate. I know that he is lost into the hands of trolls, and I will not look for him.'

Because of all this, the queen wept very bitterly.

Chapter 5

Nú skal segja frá Ála, at hann liggir úti á mörkum átján dægr, ok um síðir kemr hann í dal einn. Áli var þá illa klæddr. Hann sér þá hús eitt mikit; þangat gengr hann, ok sér þar eina fríða konu. Hon heilsar honum með nafni, en hann undrar þetta geysimjök, ok mælti svá:

‘Hvert er nafn þitt, kona?’ segir hann, ‘er þú heilsar mér svá kunnugliga, en ek þykkjumz eigi hafa sét þik.’

Hon mælti þá: ‘Görla kenni ek þik, Áli!’ segir hon, ‘ok svá veit ek, hvert þú ert sendr. Fyrir dal þessum ræðr móðir mín, er Nótt heitir, ok til hennar ertu sendr. Faðir minn var mennskr maðr, ok til hans bregðr mér meirr at betr er, ok heiti ek Hlaðgerðr. En er þú ferr í burt héðan, muntu hitta helli stóran; honum stýrir móðir mín. En er þú kemr, muntu engan mann sjá, þvíat eigi er Nótt heima, ok aldri kemr hon, fyrr en langt er af nótt. En er hon kemr heim, mun hon fyrst neyta fœzlu. Hon mun bjóða þér at eta með sér, en þat skaltu eigi gera. Hon mun segja, at þú skalt eigi mat fá. Því næst mun hon til sængr fara, ok biðja þik at liggja hjá sér, en þú skalt þat eigi vilja; en þat mun henni illa líka, ef þú liggir í oðrum stað; en þó mun hon sofna brátt. Þú munt ok brátt sofna, ok eigi muntu vakna fyrr en byrgðar eru hellisdyrr. Burt mun þá Nótt horfin.

Þá skal ek senda þér skikkjurakka⁹¹ minn með þá hluti, er þér þarfaz, ok með því einu muntu lauss verða, at hann leysi þik út. En ef hann ferr með flesk af svíni, þá tak þat; er þú kemr upp á þat fjall, er fyrir ofan er helli Nóttar, legg þat niðr í gotuna, ok mun hon þá ekki eptir þér fara; enda fartu nú í burt, þvíat móðir mín veit, at þú ert hér.’

Áli kvað svá vera skyldu, ok fór hann í burt ór dyngjunni í þann hluta dalsins, er myrkt var í. Hann kemr at einstigi; þar váru í klöppuð spor. Áli hafði óxi eina sér í hendi, er Hlaðgerðr hafði gefit honum; hann krœkti óxarhrynnu upp í sporit, ok las sik spor af spori, þar til er hann kom upp á bjargit. Hann sér þar helli stóran; þóttiz hann þá vita, at Nótt tröllkona mundi fyrir þeim ráða eiga. Snýr hann þá at hellinum, ok skjótliga gengr hann inn; þar var bæði fúlt ok kalt. Hann settiz niðr við hellisdyrr, ok beið þar allt til dagsetrs, ok kom flagðit eigi heim. En þá er vera mundi þriðjungr af nótt, heyrði konungssonr dunur ok dynki stóra; sá hann þá, at flagðit skauz í hellinn. Hon var í skorpnum skinnstakki; hann tók eigi á lendar á bakit, en á tær fyrir. Enga skepnu þóttiz Áli ferligri sét hafa.

Nótt tók svá til orða: ‘Vel verði Blátönn, systur minni, er hon sendi þik, Áli, mér til handa ok bónda! En þú gerðir þat illa, er þú lagðir á hana.’

Áli svaraði engu. Nótt bjó sér fœdu, hrossakjöt ok manna, ok bauð Ála með sér til matar; en Áli neitaði því.⁹² Hon kvað hann eigi fyrr skyldu hafa, en hann yrði feginn.

⁹¹ The term *skikkjurakki* only appears in this saga, *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*, and *Orkneyinga saga*. Although the Cleasby-Vigfússon and Zoega dictionaries of Old Norse translate it as ‘lapdog’, none of these attestations portrays the dog as the small, domesticated and pampered dog to which the modern English term refers. The noun *skikkja* means ‘cloak’ or ‘mantle’, so the literal translation is ‘cloak-dog’. It is unclear what this refers to. One possibility is that it refers to a dog who follows by its master’s cloak, or perhaps more metaphorically, a dog who watches its master’s back closely. This fits the attestations of the word, since the dogs of *Ála flekks saga* and *Hálfðanar saga* are loyal and physically capable (and in *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*, protective). Another possibility is that it refers to a type of dog with a saddle coloured differently to the rest of its body, such as modern-day German shepherds or Siberian huskies; the modern Icelandic term *skikkja* in fact is used in this context. We are grateful to Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir for these suggestions.

⁹² The verb *neita*, ‘to refuse’, may be a pun on its homophone *neyta*, ‘to consume’, which is used when Hlaðgerðr introduces Nótt and also later in this chapter.

Chapter 5

The next thing to say about *Áli* is that he spends eighteen days in the forest, and comes at last to a valley. By then *Áli* was poorly clothed. Then he sees a large house. He walks to it and sees a beautiful woman there. She greets him by name, and he wonders greatly at that and spoke thus:

‘What is your name, lady’, he says, ‘who greets me so familiarly, though I don’t think I’ve seen you before?’

She spoke: ‘I know you well, *Áli*’, she says, ‘and I also know where you’ve been sent. My mother, who is called *Nótt*, rules over this valley, and you have been sent to her. My father was human, and I resemble him more, which is fortunate, and I am called *Hlaðgerðr*. When you go away from here, you will find a large cave. My mother rules it. But when you arrive, you will see no one, because *Nótt* is not at home, and she never returns until it is late into the night. And when she comes home, she will first of all eat food. She will invite you to eat with her, but you must not do that. She will say that you will not get any food. Next, she will go to the bed and invite you to lie with her, but you must resist the desire to do that. She will take it badly if you lie somewhere else, but she will nevertheless fall asleep quickly. You will also fall asleep quickly, and you will not wake before the cave-door is shut. *Nótt* will have disappeared by then.

‘Then I shall send you my dog with the things that you need, and you can only become free by him letting you out. And if he brings some pork, then take it. When you come up onto the mountain above *Nótt*’s cave, lay it down on the path, and she will not follow you. Go away now, because my mother knows that you are here.’

Áli said that it would be so, and he went out of the bower and into the part of the valley which lay in darkness. He comes to a narrow path; footholds were chiselled there. *Áli* had an axe in his hand, which *Hlaðgerðr* had given to him; he hooked the heel of the axe-blade into the foothold and pulled himself up from foothold to foothold until he came up onto the ledge. He sees a great cave there, and he realised that *Nótt* the troll-woman must rule it. Then he turns to the cave and walks in briskly. It was both foul-smelling and cold inside. He sits down by the cave-door, and waited there all the way until nightfall, and the ogress did not come home. But when a third of the night had passed, the king’s son heard thunderous noises and a great clamour, and then he saw the ogress burst into the cave. She was in a shrivelled skin-cloak; it did not reach her buttocks down the back, but fell to her toes in the front. *Áli* thought that he had never seen a more monstrous creature.

Nótt began to speak: ‘*Blátǫnn*, my sister, did well, when she sent you into my power to be my husband, *Áli*! But you acted badly when you laid a curse on her.’

Áli did not reply. *Nótt* prepared food for herself, horse-flesh and man-flesh, and invited *Áli* to eat with her, but *Áli* refused this. She said that he must not have had it before, but that he would come to like it. And when she had eaten what she wanted, she put away the food

En er hon hafði etit sem hon vildi, geymdi hon fœðuna, en bjó sér sæng með þeim hætti, at hon lagði einn beð undir höfuð sér; hann var gorr af geitskinnum. Bauð hon Ála at liggja hjá sér, en þat vildi hann eigi. Henni líkaði þat ekki vel, en þó sofnaði hon brátt, því hon var móð. Konungssonr sofnaði ok skjótt, ok eigi vaknaði hann fyrr en hann sá, at alljóst var í hellinum, ok Nótt var ǫll í burtu,⁹³ en hellisdyrr byrgðar. Áli stendr þá upp ok gengr til hellisdyra. Hann sér, at bora var á hellisberginu; hann sá þar úti, at skikkjurakki Hlaðgerðar var kominn, ok hafði gort rauf á berginu með trýninu. Áli ferr þá ór klæðum sínum, ok getr smogit út þessa boru, ok sér, at hundrinn bar á baki sér flesk af svíni; klæði hafði hundrinn meðferðar, ok svá góða fœðu, at konungssonr mátti vel neyta. Tekr hann þessa hluti alla af hundinum; neytir hann þá fœðu sem hann lysti; klæðin váru Ála mátulig. En sem hann hafði etit ok drukkit sem hann lysti, býz hann til ferðar; gengr upp á fjallit, ok er hann kemr upp þangat, skerr hann fleskit niðr í gøtuna, þat er Hlaðgerðr hafði gefit honum. Eptir þat gengr Áli á merkr ok skóga marga daga. Eigi kann hann nú veg til fōður síns, ok aldri veit hann, hvar hann ferr.

Chapter 6

Á einum degi kom Áli ofan í eitt ríki mjök stórt. Hann sér þá smá bæi ok stóra, ok eina borg mjök stóra sá hann þar. Þangat gengr Áli, ok er hann kom at hallardyrum, beiðiz hann af dyravörðum inn at ganga, eptirspyrjandi, hverr fyrir þessarri borg réði. Þeir segja, at fyrir henni réði einn meykungr, ok ætti hon þar forræði, er Þornbjörg hét— ‘ok hefir hon nýtekit við fōðurleifð sinni.’

Síðan lofa þeir honum inn at ganga. Áli gengr nú inn fyrir meykununginn, ok kveðr hana virðuliga. Meykungr tók honum vel, ok spurði hann at nafni; en hann sagðiz Stuttheðinn heita— ‘ok eru bráð brautingja erendi, ok vilda ek vera hér hjá yðr í vetr.’

Meykungrinn játar því, ok skipar honum hjá gestum á inn óæðra bekk. Þessi meykungr var bæði væn ok vitr. Stuttheðinn kom sér í mikla kærleika við meykununginn, ok mat hon hann mikils vónum bráðara. Allir unnu honum hugástum; en hann var fálátr. Meykungr spurði sína menn, hvat manna þeir ætluðu hann vera. En þeir sōgðuz þat eigi vita, ok fréttu hana, hvat hon ætlaði. Hon sagði þá: ‘Þat ætla ek’, sagði hon, ‘at hann sé konungsettar, ok hafi orðit fyrir álōgum’; ok fell þar niðr þetta mál.

Bjorn hét maðr ok var frændi meykunungs ok mikils metinn af meykunungi. Hann varði landit fyrir víkingum ok ránsmonnum, er gengu á ríkit. Land þetta, er meykungr réð fyrir, hét Tartaría. Sat Bjorn í ýzta hluta landsins, í borg þeirri, er Pólicana heitir. Var Bjorn af því sjaldan með meykununginum.

Chapter 7

Jarlar tveir réðu fyrir Indía. Þeir hétu Álfr ok Hugi, ok váru Ingifers synir. Þeir váru miklir hōfðingjar, ok fréttu þeir til þessa meykunungs, ok safna sér liði, ok fóru til Tartaríam þess erendis, at Álfr ætlaði at biðja meykunungsins; en ef hon tæki því fjarri, ætluðu þeir at eyða ríkit með eldi ok vápnum. Fara þeir nú með þrjátigi skipa til Tartaría, ok koma við Pólicanam.

⁹³ This seems to be a pun on *nótt* as a common noun, meaning ‘night’, such that the phrase could also mean ‘night had completely gone away’.

and prepared the bed for herself by laying a pillow under her head; it was made of goat-skin. She invited Áli to lie with her, but he did not want to. She did not take that well, but she quickly fell asleep, because she was exhausted. The king's son also fell asleep swiftly, and he did not wake until it was entirely bright in the cave and Nótt had completely gone away, but the cave-door was closed. Áli stands up and goes to the cave-door. He sees that there was a small hole in the cave-wall. Through it, he saw that Hlaðgerðr's dog had arrived outside, and it had made an opening in the wall with its muzzle. Áli takes off his clothes and manages to slip out through this hole, and he sees that the dog carried some pork on its back. The dog had brought clothes and such good food that the king's son could happily consume it. He takes all these things from the dog, and he eats as much food as he wished. The clothes were suitable for Áli. And when he had eaten and drunk as he wished, he prepares himself for the journey. He walks up onto the mountain, and when he arrives there, he cuts up the meat which Hlaðgerðr had given him and places it down on the path. After that, Áli walks in forests and woods for many days. He does not now know the way to his father, and he has no idea where he is going.

Chapter 6

One day, Áli came down into a very large kingdom. He sees towns both small and large, as well as one very large city. Áli walks to it, and when he came to the hall-door, he asks the door-wardens to let him in, asking who ruled over this city. They say that a maiden-king called Þornbjörg ruled over it and had authority there — ‘and she has recently come into her patrimony.’

Then they allow him to enter. Áli walks in before the maiden-king and greets her respectfully. The maiden-king received him well and asked his name, and he said that he was called Stuttheðinn — ‘the wanderer's business is urgent, and I want to stay here with you this winter.’

The maiden-king grants this and seats him with the guests on the bench for those lower in rank. This maiden-king was both beautiful and wise. Stuttheðinn developed a strong friendship with the maiden-king, and she esteemed him greatly sooner than was expected. Everyone loved him with all their hearts, but he was reserved. The maiden-king asked her men what kind of man they thought him to be. But they said that they did not know, and asked her what she thought. She said: ‘I think that he might be of royal birth, and that he has come under a curse’, and they dropped the subject there.

There was a man called Björn who was a kinsman of the maiden-king and was greatly esteemed by her. He protected the land from pirates and robbers who encroached upon the kingdom. This land over which the maiden-king ruled was called Tartary. Björn resided in the outermost part of the land in the city which was called Pólicana. Because of this, Björn was seldom with the maiden-king.

Chapter 7

Two earls ruled over India. They were called Álfr and Hugi, and they were the sons of Ingifer. They were mighty chieftains, and having heard of this maiden-king, they gather their host and went to Tartary for this mission: that Álfr intended to ask for the hand of the maiden-king — but if she were to take that badly, they intended to lay waste to the kingdom with fire and weapons. Now they go to Tartary with thirty ships and arrive at Pólicana.

Björn fór þegar til bardaga við þá, er hann vissi, hvers erendis þeir fóru, ok kvað þá eigi skyldi sjá meykoninginn, ok var þat harðr bardagi. Jarlarnir gengu hart framm. Sá maðr var með þeim, er Gergín hét. Hann mætti Birni í bardagum, ok hafði kesju eina í hendi, ok lagði til Bjarnar; þat kom í lærit. Björn hjó kesjuna af skaptinu, ok komz með þat á flótta, ok tveir menn með honum. Björn kom á fund meykonungs; hann segir henni ferðir jarlanna ok þat, at Álfr vildi biðja hennar. Þornbjörg ansar þá á þessa lund: ‘Hvernin er Álfr jarl at sjá?’

‘Ljótr maðr ok illmannligr’, segir Björn. Meykonungr fréttir þá, hverr vera vildi höfuðsmaðr á móti jarlinum fyrir liðinu— ‘þvíat eigi vil ek’, segir hon, ‘eiga jarl; en Björn er sárr, ok má hann því eigi vera forstjóri yðvarr.’

Enginn af mǫnnum Þornbjargar vildi forstjóri vera. Meykonungr hét þá at ganga með þeim manni, er forstjórinn vildi vera fyrir liðinu. Stuttheðinn segiz þat vildi til vinna, ok geriz höfðingi fyrir liðinu; váru þat nærri tvau hundruð manna. Jarlar váru þá komnir á slétta völlu, er þar váru nær borginni þeirri, er meykonungr sat í, ok höfðu fjögur hundruð manna. Stuttheðinn ríðr út af borginni með sína menn. Jarlarnir höfðu fylkt liði sínu.

Stuttheðinn ríðr nú hart framm ok allir hans menn á hendr óvinum sínum. Stuttheðinn sér, hvar Gergín berz allhraustliga; vendir hann þá í móti honum, ok hæggr til hans með mæki þeim, er meykonungr hafði gefit honum, ok kom þat hogg á hægri oxlina, ok tók af höndina ok þar með síðuna ok fótinn annan fyrir ofan knéit, en annan fyrir neðan, ok fell Gergín dauðr til jarðar. Hugi jarl sér nú fall hans, ok verðr ákafliga reiðr, ok snýr þegar móti Stuttheðni, ok leggr til hans með spjóti. Hann hjó þat af skaptinu, ok kastar eptir þat mækinum, en hleypr undir jarl, ok keyrir hann niðr. Þá koma þar nokkrir fylgðarmenn Stuttheðins, ok höfðu þá handtekit Álfr jarl. Einn af þeim hjó Huga banahogg. Stuttheðinn gaf Álfi jarli grið með því móti, at Álfr jarl særi eiða, at herja aldri á ríki Þornbjargar. Hann helt þegar í burt með lið þat, sem eptir var, heim til Indíalands, ok sez um kyrt. Nú skal segja frá Stuttheðni; hann kemr heim til meykonungs, ok segir frá ferðum sínum, en hon lét vel yfir þeim.

Chapter 8

Nú gerir Áli bert fyrir alþýðu, at hann er sonr Ríkarðar konungs af Englandi. Heimtir hann nú framm þau fǫgr heit, er meykonungr hafði heitit at ganga með honum; mælti meykonungr ekki í móti. Var þá búiz við brullaupi; gekk Áli at eiga Þornbjörgu dróttningu, ok var veizla en bezta; ok um kveldit váru þau Áli ok dróttning leidd í eina sæng í eina skemmu vel innan búna; var þat it vænsta herbergi.

Glóðarauga hét þræll einn er var í borginni; hann var bróðir Nóttar tröllkonu. Hann kom í skemmu, er meykonungi ok Ála var í fylgt. Áli var þá afklæddr öllum klæðum nema línklæðum. Þá mælti þræll með ógurligri raust:

‘Gott hyggr þú nú til, Áli!’ segir hann, ‘at sofa hjá meykonungi; en nú skal ek launa þér þat, er þú lagðir á Blátönn, systur mína, ok því legg ek þat á þik, at þú verðir at vargi ok farir á skóg ok drepir bæði menn ok fé, ok á þat fé grimmastr, er meykonungr á, ok at því mest leggjaz.’

When Bjørn discovered what mission they were on, he immediately engaged in battle with them and said that they would not see the maiden-king, and it was a hard battle. The earls made a bold advance. A man called Gergín was with them. He met Bjørn in battle, and he had a halberd in his hand and struck at Bjørn; it stabbed him in the thigh. Bjørn hewed the halberd from the shaft, and with that he escaped, along with two men.

Bjørn came to meet the maiden-king. He tells her of the earls' journey and that Álfr wished to ask for her hand. Þornbjörg answers in this way: 'How is Earl Álfr to look upon?'

'He is an ugly and wicked man', says Bjørn. Then the maiden-king asks who would like to be her champion at the head of her host against the earls — 'because I do not wish', she says, 'to marry the earl, but Bjørn is wounded, and for this reason he is not able to be your leader.'

None of Þornbjörg's men wanted to be the leader. Then the maiden-king promised to marry the man who wished to be the leader at the head of her host. Stuttheðinn said that he wanted to do that, and he made himself leader at the head of the host, which was nearly two hundred men. The earls had arrived on the flat plains which were near the city in which the maiden-king resided, and they had four hundred men. Stuttheðinn rides out of the city with his men. The earls had drawn up their host.

Stuttheðinn now rides forth boldly with all his men against his enemies. He sees where Gergín fights most valiantly. He makes his way towards him and hews at him with the short-sword which the maiden-king had given him, and the blow fell upon his right shoulder and took off the arm, and with it the side, and one leg above the knee and the other below it, and Gergín fell dead to the ground. Earl Hugi sees his death and becomes exceedingly angry, and he immediately turns to face Stuttheðinn and thrusts at him with his spear. He hewed the spear from the shaft and, throwing down the short-sword, throws himself under the earl and drags him down. Then some followers of Stuttheðinn arrive there, having captured Earl Álfr. One of them struck Hugi a fatal blow. Stuttheðinn gave Earl Álfr quarter on this condition: that Earl Álfr should swear an oath never to attack Þornbjörg's kingdom. He immediately went home to India with what remained of the army, and settles down peacefully. It is now to be told about Stuttheðinn that he comes home to the maiden-king and recounts his journey, and she expressed her approval of it.

Chapter 8

Now Áli makes it known to all the people that he is the son of Ríkarðr, king of England. He claims the fair promises which were made when the maiden-king promised to marry him. The maiden-king did not disapprove of that. Then the wedding feast was prepared. Áli went to marry Queen Þornbjörg, and there was a magnificent feast, and during the evening, Áli and the queen were led into a bed in a bower which was well-furnished. It was the most beautiful room.

There was a slave called Glóðarauga in the city; he was the brother of Nótt the troll-woman. He came to the bower to which the maiden-king and Áli had been led. Áli was then completely undressed apart from his linen undergarments. The slave spoke with a terrible voice:

'You're looking forward to sleeping with the maiden-king, Áli!' he says, 'but now I shall repay you for the curse which you laid on Blátönn, my sister, and so I lay this on you: that you will turn into a wolf and go into the forest and kill both men and livestock and attack most fiercely the livestock which the maiden-king owns — may you pursue them most of all.'

Áli tekr þá svá til máls: ‘Með því’, segir hann, ‘at þú, Glóðarauga! hefir með fullum fjándskap á mik lagt, þá mæli ek þat um, at þú sitir á þeirri sǫmu kistu sem nú ok ǫpir upp yfir þik sem mest getr þú, alla þá stund, sem ek er í þessum nauðum, svá at aldri hafir þú ró. En ef ek kemz ór þessi þraut, þá skulu tveir þrælar leiða þik til skógar ok hengja á gálga.’

Glóðarauga grenjaði þegar ógurliga ok mælti: ‘Þat legg ek þó inn til við þik, Áli! at þá er þú hefir eytt ǫllu fé í ríki Þornbjargar dróttningar, skyndir þú í ríki fǫður þíns ok eirir þar hvárki fé né mǫnnum, ok ekki skal þér til undanlausnar annat um þína æfi, nema at nokkur kona verði til at biðja griða fyrir þik, þá er þú verðr handtekinn, ok verðir þú af því lauss; en þat mun aldri verða.’

Svá varð þegar í stað; hljóp Áli á skóg ok verðr at einum vargi, ok svá grimnum, at hann drepr bæði menn ok hesta ok fé; en Glóðarauga ǫpir bæði nótt ok dag, svá at hann linnir aldri, ok fengu menn dróttningar af þessu inar mestu ónáðir.

Chapter 9

Þat er af Ála at segja, at hann eyðir ǫllu fé Þornbjargar dróttningar; en eptir þat fór hann á burt á merkr ok skóga, ok um síðir kemr hann frammi í ríki fǫður síns, ok reif þar bæði menn ok fé til dauðs, ok svá geriz hann þar skœðr, at hann bítr einn veg fé til bana, þótt þat sé læst í grindum. Þetta er sagt konungi. Ríkarðr konungr lætr nú saman kalla þá beztu menn, er í váru ríkinu, ok sagði þeim þat vandkvæði, er þar hafði gorz, at vargr sá var þar kominn í ríkit, svá skœðr, at ekki lét ógort, ok dræpi bæði menn ok fé, ok frétti þá ráða. En þeir skutu allir til hans.

‘Þat er þá mitt ráð’, segir konungr, ‘at vér leggjum þrjár merkr silfrs til hǫfuðs varginum, ok gerum hann svá útlægan; þat fé skal sé eignaz, er varginum verðr at bana.’

Ǫllum líkaði þetta vel, ok var við þat slitit þinginu, ok fór hverr til sinna heimkynna. En vargrinn rífr niðr hjörð konungs slíkt eðr meirr en fyrr, ok af því býr hann út sína hirð, ok ætlaði at veiða vargin, ok þeir geta slegit hring um hann. Konungr eggjar nú sína menn at ganga at varginum; en í því bili þá hleypr vargrinn upp yfir mannhringinn þar sem konungrinn var sjálfr fyrir, ok síðan fengu þeir ekki vald á honum, ok fóru þeir heim við svá búit.

Chapter 10

Eitt kveld kemr vargrinn í garðshorn til Gunna ok Hildar. Þar lét vargrinn allt í friði, ok settiz í garð þann, er var fyrir bæ karls. Kerling sér þetta, ok mælti við karl sinn:

‘Engi augu hefi ek líkari sét, en í vargi þessum ok var í Ála flekk!’

‘Ekki sýniz mér svá’, segir hann.

Kerling gekk þá frammi ok í búr sitt, ok kom út apr ok hefir með sér trog ok þar í þorur ok margt hark, ok setr niðr fyrir vargin. Hann var þá allsvangr, ok tekr til at eta ór troginu, ok lýkr því ǫllu, ok hleypr í burt síðan ok á skóg. En kerling tók trog sitt ok ferr inn síðan, ok er henni tíðrœtt um vargin.

Áli starts to speak in this way: ‘Because you, Glóðarauga’, he says, ‘have laid this on me with complete enmity, I pronounce that you will sit on the same chest as now and shriek as loudly as you can, so that you have no rest, for the whole time that I am in this ordeal. And if I should escape from this hardship, then two slaves will bring you to the forest and hang you on the gallows.’

At once, Glóðarauga howled terribly and spoke: ‘Nevertheless I lay another curse on you, Áli: that when you have destroyed all the livestock in Queen Þornbjörg’s kingdom, you will hasten to your father’s kingdom and spare neither livestock nor men, and nothing will release you for the rest of your life apart from a woman asking for quarter for you when you are captured, and then you will be released — but that will never happen.’

Thus it immediately came to pass: Áli ran into the forest and becomes a wolf, and such a ferocious wolf that he kills both men and horses and livestock; and Glóðarauga shrieks both night and day, so that he never ceases, and the queen’s men suffered great disturbances from this.

Chapter 9

It is to be told about Áli that he destroys all the livestock of Queen Þornbjörg, and after that he went away into the forests and woods, arriving at last in his father’s kingdom, where he tears both men and livestock to death, becoming so vicious that he fatally bites livestock in the same way, even if they are locked in pens. This was reported to the king. King Ríkarðr now calls together all the best men in the kingdom and told them of those troublesome events which had happened there: that such a vicious wolf had entered the kingdom and left no stone unturned, killing both men and livestock. He asked for advice, but they all deferred to him.

‘It is my decision, then’, says the king, ‘that we offer three marks of silver as a bounty on the wolf’s head, and thus make it an outlaw. The one who kills the wolf shall have that reward.’

This was to everyone’s liking, and with that, the meeting was dissolved and each went to his own household. But the wolf tears down the king’s herd just as much or more than before. Because of this, the king prepares his followers to go out, intending to hunt the wolf, and they manage to form a circle around it. The king now encourages his men to close in on the wolf, but at that moment, the wolf leaps up over the circle of men out to where the king himself was situated, and after that they could not lay a hand on it. They went home, leaving the matter there.

Chapter 10

One evening the wolf comes to the farmhouse, to Gunni and Hildir. There, the wolf disturbs nothing and settles down in the yard which was in front of the old man’s farmstead. The old woman saw that, and said to her husband:

‘I have never seen more familiar eyes than this wolf’s — they’re just like Áli flekkr’s.’

‘It doesn’t seem that way to me’, he says.

Then the old woman went into her pantry and came back out with a trough, in which were scraps and a lot of waste, and she places it down in front of the wolf. By then it was famished; it begins to eat out of the trough, finishes it all and then runs away again into the forest. But the old woman took the trough and goes inside, chattering about the wolf.

Þat er nú af varginum at segja, at hann hljóp á skóg, ok reif fé til dauða, ok á þessi nótt drepr hann þrjá hjarðarsveina konungs. Ok um morguninn lætr konunginn út fara hirðr sína, ok ætlar at veiða varginn, ok er nú hringrinn ferfaldr. Allir menn af inum næstu heruðum váru þangat komnir með konungi; þar váru þau bæði Gunni ok Hildir. Hirðmenn konungs sækja nú hart at varginum. Hann ætlar þá at stökkva út yfir hringinn; í því kom sjálftr konungrinn ok gat handtekit varginn, ok frétti þá konungr sína menn, hvern dauðdaga þeir vildu at vargrinn hefði; en þeir báðu hann ráða. Í því bili kom framm Hildir kerling fyrir konung, svá mælandi: ‘Vilda ek, herra!’ segir hon, ‘at þér gæfið varginum grið; en ek vil ábyrgjaz, at hann geri engum manni mein.’

Þeir er hjá stóðu báðu konunginn eigi svá gera. Konungr tekr svá til máls: ‘Veita mundi Áli þér, Hildir! þessa böen, ef hann væri hér, ok fyrir hann, Hildir! vil ek veita þér þat, er þú biðr.’

Hon þakkar þá konungi þessa gjöf, ok ferr heim með varginn, ok svá Gunni karl. En konungr ok hans menn fara til hallar, ok var þá komit at kveldi dags. Alla þessa nótt vakir Hildir í hvílugólfi sínu yfir varginum ok er kemr at miðri nótt, þá kemr svefnhöfgi at Hildi; ok er hon vaknar, sér hon mann liggja í hvílugólfinu. Þekkir hon þar Ála flekk. En vargshamr sá, sem hann hafði í verit, lá þar niðri fyrir hjá honum. Hildir stendr þá upp skyndiliga ok vekr Gunna ok biðr hann upp standa, ok segir honum, hvat um er, ok segir, at hann fari til ok brenni sem skjótast þenna vargsham; ok hann gerir svá. En Hildir tekr sér vín, ok sez undir herðar honum ok dreypir því á hann, ok tekr hann þá at nærar skjóttliga, ok er hann mátti mæla spyrr hann, hverr honum hefði komit ór ánauðum. En Hildir sagði til sín. Áli varð feginn, er hann sá fóstru sína, ok var þar fagnafundur. Þá gekk Gunni at Ála, ok fagnar þar hvárr öðrum. Sofa þau nú þat er eptir var nætr öll í góðum friði.

Chapter 11

At morni dags fara þau Gunni ok Hildir til konungshallar, ok Áli með þeim. Ok er þau koma þar, segja þau konungi alla hluti, hversu þau höfðu breytt. Áli gengr þá fyrir konunginn feðr sinn, ok kvaddi hann kurteisliga. Konungr varð nú harðla glaðr, ok tekr vel syni sínum. Allr borgarlýðr varð þessu feginn, at Áli var heim kominn, ok einna mest dróttningin, móðir hans. Áli tekr þá menn sér til fylgðar, er fyrr hafði hann sér til sveina, ok hvárki skilja þeir nú við hann nótt né dag. Er hann nú heima með feðr sínum um hrið, ok var lofaðr af hverjum manni.

Nú er at segja af Glóðarauga, at þann sama dag sem Áli var ór þeirri ánauð kominn, er hann hafði á hann lagt, leiða tveir þrælur Þornbjargar dróttningar hann til skógar ok reisa þar gálga ok hengja hann síðan, ok lýkr þar hans æfi. Áli er nú heima með feðr sínum, ok er harðla vinsæll af öllum lýð, ok er nú kyrt um hans hag.

Chapter 12

Eina nótt liggir Áli í sæng sinni sofandi, en sveinar hans lágu umkring hann. Áli lætr þá illa í svefni, ok eru svefnfarir hans bæði harðar ok langar; en um síðir vaknar hann, ok var þá ákafliga móðr, ok þat sá fylgðarmenn Ála, at hann hafði á sínum líkama mörð sár ok stór. Þeir fréttu hann, hverju þetta sætti.

It is now to be told about the wolf that it ran to the forest and tore livestock to death, and that night it kills three of the king's shepherd-boys. And in the morning, the king has his retinue go out and intends to hunt the wolf, and now the circle is four men deep. All the men from the nearest districts had come there with the king. Both Gunni and Hildir were there. The king's followers now charge fiercely towards the wolf. Just as it intends to leap out over the ring, the king himself entered the ring and managed to capture the wolf. The king then asked his men what manner of death they wished the wolf to have, but they asked him to decide. At that moment, the old woman Hildir came before the king, speaking thus:

'I wish, my lord', she says, 'that you grant the wolf quarter; and I want to vouch for it, that it will cause harm to no one else.'

The bystanders asked the king not to do so. The king thus begins to speak: 'Áli would grant you this request, Hildir, if he were here, and for him, Hildir, I will grant you what you ask for.'

Then she thanks the king for this gift and goes home with the wolf, as does the old man Gunni. But the king and his men go to the hall, and by then, evening had come. All that night, Hildir lies awake in bed, watching the wolf, but when the middle of the night comes, drowsiness comes over Hildir, and when she wakes, she sees a man lying in the bed. She recognises Áli flekkr there. But the wolf-skin, which he had had on, lay there down at his feet. Hildir then gets up hastily and wakes Gunni and asks him to get up, and she tells him what is going on, and says that he should go and burn the wolf-skin as quickly as possible, and he does so. And Hildir takes some wine, seats herself under Áli's shoulders and drips it on him. He then begins to recover quickly, and when he is able to speak, he asks who had helped him escape from affliction. And Hildir told him who she was. Áli became joyful when he recognised his foster-mother, and there was a joyous meeting there. Then Gunni went to Áli, and each greets the other. Now they all sleep peacefully for the rest of the night.

Chapter 11

In the morning, Gunni and Hildir go to the king's hall, along with Áli. And when they arrive there, they tell the king everything they had done. Then Áli goes before the king, his father, and greeted him courteously. The king became very glad, and receives his son well. All the townspeople became joyful that Áli had come home, and most of all the queen, his mother. Then Áli takes as followers the men who had previously accompanied him as boys, and they part from him neither night nor day. He now stays at home with his father for a while, and was praised by everyone.

Now it is to be told about Glóðarauga that on the same day that Áli had escaped from the affliction which he had laid on him, two slaves of Queen Þornbjörg bring him to the forest, raise a gallows there and then hang him, and there his life ends. Áli stays at home with his father and is very popular among all the people, and he lives in peace.

Chapter 12

One night, Áli lies sleeping in his bed, and his companions lie in a circle around him. Áli was ill at ease in his sleep, and his dreams are both long and difficult. When he wakes at last, he was exhausted, and Áli's followers saw that he had many great wounds on his body. They asked him how that came about.

Hann tekur svá til máls: ‘Nótt tröllkona kom til mín’, sagði hann, ‘ok barði mik með járnsvipu bæði hart ok tíðum, ok kvaz eigi fyrr hafa mátt hefna mér, er ek hljóp í burt frá henni ór hellinum, ok þat annat, er ek lagða á Glóðarauga bróður hennar, ok lagði hon þat á mik, at þessi sár skyldi aldri gróa fyrr en brœðr hennar grœddi mik; ok í þeim sárum skylda ek liggja tíu vetr, ok ef ek yrða þá eigi grœddr, þá skylda ek andaz ór þeim sárum. Er ek nú svá stírðr ok lerkaðr, at ek má héðan hvergi ganga.’

Sveinar Ála verða mjök óglaðir við þetta, ok segja þó konungi til svá búins. Ríkarðr konungr gengr nú til þess húss, sem Áli svaf í, ok er hann kemr þar, kvaddi hann feðr sinn, ok segir honum til, hversu at hafði borit um vanmátt sinn. Konungr ok allr borgarlýðr harma þetta mjök. Liggir Áli nú í sárum um þessa tólf mánaði. Fær konungr til þá beztu lækna, sem í váru öllu Englandi, ok gátu þeir ekki at gørt. Fúnar nú hold Ála, ok gengr af honum mikill óþefr.

Einn dag kom konungr til Ála, en Áli segir þá svá til hans:

‘Kæri faðir!’ segir hann, ‘einn er sá hlutr, er ek hefi yðr leynt.’

‘Hverr er sá?’ sagði konungr.

‘Ek er giptr’, segir Áli, ‘ok fekk ek Þornbjargar dróttningar af Tattaría, ok vilda ek nú, minn góði faðir! at þér senduð eptir henni.’

En hann játar því, ok skilja at sinni, ok gekk konungr í burt.

Rauðr hét ráðgjafi konungs. Hann sendi hann þessa erendis at sækja Þornbjörgu dróttningu ok segja henni af hag Ála, ok at hon kæmi á hans fund.

Chapter 13

Rauðr býr nú skip sitt, ok fær menn til; ok at því búni heldr hann til Tattaría, ok er eigi sagt af hans ferð fyrr en hann kemr í ríki dróttningar, ok kemr skjótt á hennar fund ok gengr fyrir hana ok kveðr hana. Hon tekur því vel. Hann segir henni þá sitt erendi ok þat, at Áli væri litt haldinn. Dróttning varð við þetta mjök óglöð, ok lætr búa skip ór landi fimm at tölum, ok velr með sér ina vöskustu menn. Dróttning heldr þeim skipum í burt af Tattaría til Englands, ok kemr þar at áliðnu sumri. Ok er hon kemr, fagnar konungr henni vel ok allr landslýðr, ok var þar fyrir búin en bezta veizla. Ok inn fyrsta dag veizlunnar gengr dróttning Þornbjörg í þat hús, er Áli lá í; ok þegar þau funduz mintiz hann við hana. Hon spurði þá eptir, hversu at hefði boriz um vanmátt hans. Áli segir henni allt, hversu farit hafði með þeim Nótt tröllkonu. Dróttning harmaði þetta mjök, ok skilja nú sitt tal, ok gengr hon nú í burt ok þiggir ina beztu veizlu, ok er hon með konungi þenna vetr allan vel haldin ok allir hennar menn.

Chapter 14

At várinu komanda búa menn dróttningar skip sín at boði hennar. Konungr lætr ok búa þrjú skip, þvíat Áli lýsir yfir því, at hann ætlar í burt með Þornbjörgu dróttningu. Ok at þeim skipum búnum taka þau Áli ok dróttning orlof af konungi, ok halda í burt af Englandi, ok váru þau Áli ok dróttning á einu skipi. Svá er sagt, at þau sigldu allt þetta sumar um alla norðrhálfuna, leitandi eptir þeim læknum, sem hon vissi at beztir váru,

He begins to speak thus: 'Nótt the troll-woman came to me', he said, 'and struck me both hard and often with an iron whip, and said that she had not been able earlier to take revenge on me for running away from her out of the cave, and also for laying a curse on her brother Glóðarauga. And she laid this curse on me: that these wounds would never heal unless her brothers healed me; and that I would lie with these wounds for ten winters, and if I have not been healed by then, I would die from those wounds. I am now so stiff and bruised that I am unable to walk anywhere from here.'

Áli's companions become very unhappy at this, and they tell the king how matters stand. King Ríkarðr goes to the house in which Áli was sleeping, and when he arrives, he greeted his father and tells him how his illness had come about. The king and all the townspeople lament this greatly. Áli lies wounded for the next twelve months. The king gets the best physicians in all England, but they could do nothing. Then Áli's flesh starts to fester, and a great stench rises from him.

One day, the king came to Áli, and Áli speaks to him thus:

'Dear father', he says, 'there is one thing which I have hidden from you.'

'What is that?' said the king.

'I am married', says Áli. 'I wedded Queen Þornbjörg of Tartary, and now I want you to send for her, good father.'

The king agrees to this and parts from him, and goes away.

There was a counsellor to the king called Rauðr. He sends him on this mission: to seek Þornbjörg and tell her of Áli's condition, and that she should come to meet him.

Chapter 13

Now Rauðr prepares his ship, and gathers men, and when this is done, he sails to Tartary, and nothing is said of his journey until he arrives in the kingdom of the queen. He goes quickly to meet her, and he walks before her and greets her. She receives him well. Then he tells her of his mission, and that Áli was in a bad way. The queen became very unhappy at that, and she has ships prepared to depart the land, five in number, and chooses the most valiant men to join her. The queen sails these ships away from Tartary to England, and arrives there in late summer. And when she arrives, the king, along with all the countrymen, greets her well, and a magnificent feast was prepared. And on the first day of the feast, Queen Þornbjörg goes into the house in which Áli lay, and as soon as they met, he kissed her. Then she asked how his illness had come about. Áli tells her everything regarding how things had gone between himself and Nótt the troll-woman. The queen lamented that greatly, and they end their conversation. She now goes away and accepts the magnificent feast, and she stays in comfort with the king during the winter, with all her men.

Chapter 14

The following spring, the queen's men prepare their ships at her bidding. The king also has three ships prepared, because Áli declares that he intends to go away with Queen Þornbjörg. And when the ships were prepared, Áli and the queen take their leave of the king and sail away from England, and Áli and the queen were on the same ship. It is said that they sailed all that summer throughout the northern hemisphere, searching for those physicians whom

ok gaf þeim fé til at græða Ála; en enginn þeirra gat þat gort fyrir illum álogum Nóttar tröllkonu.

Ok þá er dróttning hefir kannat alla norðrhálfuna, ok hafði engan þann fengit, at Ála gæti læknat, heldr nú sínum skipum út í Affricam, ok kannar þat allt, en fekk þó engan þann, er Ála ynni bót. Þar er dróttning tvá vetr. Áli geriz nú banvænn. Enginn af mǫnnum dróttningar þolir at þjóna honum fyrir þeim óþef, er af Ála gekk, nema Þornbjörg dróttning.

At liðnum tveimr vetrum býr dróttning ferð sína út í Ásíam, ok kemr við Indíaland. Þar réð fyrir Álfr jarl, sem fyrr var sagt. En er hann vissi, at Þornbjörg dróttning var þar komin, gengr hann sjálfr ofan til strandar með sína menn, ok er hann finnr Ála ok dróttningu, fagnar hann þeim vel ok verðr þó hryggr við þat at Áli er svá litt haldinn.

Hann býðr þeim til sín með alla sína menn. Eru þau þar um vetrinn; veitti jarlinn þeim vel ok skǫrugliga. Dróttning spurði, ef hann vissi nokkura bræðr Nóttar tröllkonu á lífi vera. Jarl svarar þá:

‘Ek veit víst’, segir hann, ‘at hon á þrjá bræðr á lífi, er heita Jotunoxi, Leggr ok Liðr, ok er Jotunoxi langt fyrir þeim, ok þjóna þeir báðir honum. Þeir bræðr Leggr ok Liðr eiga svá góð smyrsl, at allt mega græða, þat er lífs verðr auðit; en enga menn þora þeir at græða, nema Jotunoxi skipi þeim. En þó at ek hafa þetta fyrir þér rætt’, segir jarl, ‘þá er þér þat þó til enskis bata.’

‘Hversu má þat vera?’ segir dróttning.

‘Þat má ek segja þér’, segir hann. ‘Jotunoxi ræðr fyrir því landi, er allt er út við heimsendann, ok þangat getr þú hann aldri sótt.’

‘Þat skal þó prófa!’ segir dróttning.

‘Þat máttu ok’, segir hann, ‘en þat má ek segja þér af þessu landi, at þar eru engir menn nema jotnar⁹⁴ ok flagðkonur. Þar er jafnríkt nótt ok dagr. Þar eru flest illkvikendi ok eitrvikendi.’

Dróttning segiz þó fara skyldu eigi at síðr. Jarl segiz þá ok eigi mundu letja hana; kvað henni várkunn á vera, ef hennar harmr mætti þar nokkut bœta— ‘skal ek ok allan mik til leggja.’ Dróttning þakkar honum fyrir sín heit; skilja þau nú sitt tal. Er dróttning með jarli um vetrinn vel haldin ok hennar menn.

Chapter 15

En at sumrinu komnu bjóz dróttning í burt af Indíalandi. Álfr jarl býðr at fara með henni, en hon biðr hann at veita sér þat lið, at koma til móts við sik, þá er vika væri af vetri; en jarl játar því. Heldr dróttning nú í burt af Indíalandi, ok er eigi sagt af hennar ferð fyrr en hon kemr við land Jotunoxa. Ok er hann veit, at tígnir menn eru komnir, lætr hann bjóða þeim heim til veizlu. Dróttning þiggir þat; ok áðr hon gengr heim frá skipum, segir hon sínum mǫnnum, at þeir skulu kalla hana Gunnvǫru ok segja, Ála vera bróðir hennar ok nefna hann Gunnvarð. Þeir játa þessu.

Gengr dróttning nú frá skipum með sínum mǫnnum til hallar Jotunoxa, ok tekr hann vel við þeim ok fréttir dróttningu at nafni ok at erendum. En hon sagðiz Gunnvǫr heita ok vera dóttir Gunnbjarnar jarls af Rússía— ‘ok fer ek með Gunnvarð, bróður minn mjök sáran,

⁹⁴ The *jotnar* are a specific type of giant, and are usually hostile in mythological and legendary sources. This contrasts with the frequent portrayal of the *risar*, another type of giant, as benign beings (although the *risi* that Áli encounters in chapter 17 is entirely hostile).

she knew were the best, and gave them money to heal Áli — but none of them were able to do that, because of the evil curse of Nótt the troll-woman.

And when the queen had explored all of the northern hemisphere and found no one who could heal Áli, she sails her ships out to Africa and searches all of it, but still she found no one who could bring about a cure for Áli. The queen stays there for two winters. Áli now becomes mortally ill. Apart from Queen Þornbjörg, none of the queen's men could bear to serve him on account of the stench which emanated from Áli.

At the end of the two winters, the queen prepares for her journey out to Asia, and arrives in India. Earl Álfr ruled over it, as was previously told. And when he learned that Queen Þornbjörg had arrived, he himself goes down to the shore with his men, and when he meets Áli and the queen, he greets them well, but becomes distressed that Áli was in such a bad way.

He invites them to stay with him, along with all her men. They stay there during the winter. The earl treated them well and fittingly. The queen asked if he knew whether certain brothers of Nótt the troll-woman were alive. The earl replies:

'I know for sure', he says, 'that she has three living brothers, who are called Jǫtunoxi, Leggr and Liðr — Jǫtunoxi is foremost among them, and the others both serve him. The brothers Leggr and Liðr have such a good ointment that it can heal everything that is destined to live, but they don't dare to heal anyone unless Jǫtunoxi orders them to. But though I have told you this', says the earl, 'it will not be to your advantage in any way.'

'Why might that be?' says the queen.

'I can tell you this', he says. 'Jǫtunoxi rules over the land which is all the way out at the world's end, and you will never be able to find him there.'

'That will nevertheless be tested', says the queen.

'You might do that', he says, 'but I can tell you this about that land: that there are no men there except giants and ogresses. There, night and day are equally powerful. The most evil and poisonous creatures reside there.'

The queen says that she must go nonetheless. The earl says that he would not dissuade her, saying that she might be excused if it might lessen her grief somewhat — 'and I will contribute all that I can.' The queen thanks him for his promise. They now end their conversation. The queen and her men stay with the earl in comfort during the winter.

Chapter 15

And at the coming of summer, the queen prepared to go away from India. Earl Álfr offers to go with her, but she asks him to grant her assistance by coming to meet her when a week of winter had passed, and the earl agreed to this. Now the queen sails away from India, and nothing is said of her journey until she arrives in Jǫtunoxi's land. When he discovered that honourable people had arrived, he has them invited to his home for a feast. The queen accepts, but before she departs from the ships, she tells her men that they should call her 'Gunnvǫr' and say that Áli was her brother and that he was called 'Gunnvarðr'. They agree to this.

Now the queen goes from the ships with her men to Jǫtunoxi's hall, and he receives them well and asks the queen for her name and mission. And she said that she was called Gunnvǫr and that she was the daughter of Gunnbjörn, earl of Russia — 'and I come with Gunnvarðr, my sorely wounded brother, and I have not met anyone who could bring about a cure for him.

ok hefi ek engan þann hitt, at hann hafi læknað getat. Nú hefi ek heyrt, at þér eigið tvá brœðr, þá er allt mega grœða þat er lífs verðr auðit. Nú er ek því hér komin, at ek vænti at þér munið bróður minn láta grœða til fullra peninga.’

Jötunoxi svarar svá máli dróttningar: ‘Með því einu’, segir hann, ‘læt ek grœða bróður þinn, at þú játir at vera mín dróttning.’

‘Því skal ek játa’, segir hon, ‘ok þó með því, at þú drepir áðr Nótt tröllkonu.’

‘Þat skal ek til vinna’, segir Jötunoxi, ‘þótt hon sé systir mín; erum vit ok ekki skaplík.’

Jötunoxi kallar þá á sína menn, ok biðr þá heyra þeirra tal, ok segir þá, hvat þau hafa við talaz, ok kemr allt ásamt með þeim. Jötunoxi sendi þá tvá menn af sínum mǫnnum með Ála til brœðra sinna, at þeir grœði hann at heilu. Þessir menn hétu Mandan ok Andan. Þeir koma fyrir þá Legg ok Lið, ok bera framm orðsending Jötunoxa. Þeir brœðr taka Ála ok grœða hann; en sendimenn fara aptr til Jötunoxa.

Chapter 16

Nú býz Jötunoxi heiman til fundar við Nótt tröllkonu einn saman. Eigi er mér sagt, hverju faraldi hann fór; en eitt kveld kemr hann í helli Nóttar systur sinnar. Hon var þá við soðketil ok át þar ór mannkjöt ok hrossa.

Jötunoxi tekr þá í herðar henni ok fellir hana á bak aptr. En er hon sér bróður sinn, heilsar hon honum; en hann svarar engu, ok greyfiz niðr at henni ok bítr í sundr í henni barkann ok drekkir ór henni blóðit, ok lætr hon svá sitt ljóta líf. Síðan tekr hann sér eld, ok brennir hana til kola. Síðan býz hann í burt, ok fimm nóttum síðarr kemr hann heim í sitt ríki, ok segir þá allt frá ferðum sínum.

Dróttning lætr vel yfir ok segir, at hon vill láta senda eptir Gunnvarði bróður sínum. Hann segir svá vera skyldu, ok sendir þá Mandan ok Andan at sækja hann. Þeir koma til þeirra brœðra; var þeim þar vel fagnat. Gunnvarðr var þá gróinn, ok fór þaðan með þeim. Ok einn dag, er þeir ríða úti, tekr Andan til orða:

‘Gjarna vilda ek fá mér annan lánardröttin en Jötunoxa.’

‘Svá vilda ek ok’, segir Mandan.

Gunnvarðr mælti þá: ‘Vili þit, góðir drengir! at vér sverjumz í fóstbrœðralag?’ Ok þeir játa því, ok þar í stað sverjaz þeir í fóstbrœðralag. Síðan segir Áli þeim nafn sitt ok ætt, ok þat með, at hann ætlar at drepa Jötunoxa. En þeir láta vel yfir því, ok segja sik nauðga honum þjónat hafa— ‘eru hér ok eigi fleiri mennskir en vit’, segja þeir. ‘En Jötunoxi hertók okkr frá Polloníu jarli, feðr okkrum.’

Eptir þetta þeirra tal koma þeir heim til Jötunoxa, ok tekr hann vel við þeim ok einna bezt við Gunnvarði. Síðan segir hann Gunnvǫru, at hann ætlar til veizlu at búa— ‘ok ætla ek at drekka brúðlaup til þín.’ Hon kvað þat vel fallit. Jötunoxi lætr til bjóða þessarrar veizlu tveimr hundruðum flagða. En at þeim samankomnum ǫllum flögðunum verðr mikill glaumur í borg Jötunoxa. Ok it fyrsta kveld veizlunnar mælti Gunnvǫr til Jötunoxa:

‘Nú skulum vér hafa þann sið, sem hafðr er í váru landi.’

‘Hverr er sá?’ segir Jötunoxi.

‘Brúðr skal skenkja brúðguma’, segir hon, ‘ok þeir með henni, sem hon vill.’

‘Þat líkar mér vel’, segir hann.

Now I have heard that you have two brothers, who can heal everything that is destined to live. I have come here now because I hope that you will have my brother healed, for full payment.'

Jǫtunoxi answers the queen's words in this way: 'On this condition alone', he says, 'will I have your brother healed: that you agree to be my queen.'

'I will accept that', she says, 'on this condition: that you first kill Nótt the troll-woman.'

'I will do that', says Jǫtunoxi, 'even though she is my sister. We are not alike in character.'

Then Jǫtunoxi summons his men and asks them to listen to their conversation, and tells them what they had discussed, and all is agreed among them. Jǫtunoxi sends two of his men with Áli to his brothers, so that they could restore him to health. These men were called Mandan and Andan. They come before Leggr and Liðr and deliver Jǫtunoxi's message. The brothers take Áli and heal him, and the messengers go back to Jǫtunoxi.

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Now Jǫtunoxi prepares to depart to meet Nótt the troll-woman alone. Nothing is told to me concerning the means by which he travelled, but one night he arrives in the cave of his sister Nótt. She was by the cooking-kettle and ate from it man-flesh and horse-flesh.

Jǫtunoxi takes her by the shoulders and trips her backwards. When she sees her brother, she greets him but he does not reply. He bends down over her, bites open her windpipe and drinks her blood out of it, and thus she loses her loathsome life. Afterwards he takes some fire and burns her to cinders. Then he prepares to depart, and five nights later he arrives home to his kingdom and recounts everything about his journey.

The queen expresses approval of it and says that she wants to have her brother Gunnvarðr sent for. Jǫtunoxi says that it would be so, and sends Mandan and Andan to fetch him. They come to the brothers and were greeted well there. Gunnvarðr was healed by then, and left with them. And one day, when they ride out, Andan begins to speak:

'I desperately want a master other than Jǫtunoxi.'

'I also want that', says Mandan.

Gunnvarðr spoke: 'Good men, would you like us to swear oaths of foster-brotherhood?' They agree to this, and there, on the spot, they swear oaths of foster-brotherhood. Afterwards, Áli tells them his name and lineage, and also that he intends to kill Jǫtunoxi. And they express approval of this, and declare that they had served him unwillingly — 'there are no humans here apart from the two of us', they say. 'But Jǫtunoxi captured the two of us from Earl Polloníus, our father.'

After their conversation, they arrive home to Jǫtunoxi, and he receives them well, and Gunnvarðr best of all. He then tells Gunnvǫr that he intends to prepare a feast — 'and I intend to drink a bridal-toast to you.' She said that was quite appropriate. Jǫtunoxi has two hundred ogresses invited to the feast. At their gathering, all of the ogresses caused great revelry in Jǫtunoxi's city. And on the first evening of the feast, Gunnvǫr said to Jǫtunoxi:

'Now we shall follow that custom which we have in our land.'

'What is that?' says Jǫtunoxi.

'The bride will pour out a drink for the bridegroom', she says, 'and with her those whom she chooses.'

'That pleases me well', he says.

Hon tekr nú at skenkja ok þeir allir Mandan ok Andan. Bera þau nú ákaft qlit, ok verða flogðin qll mjök drukkin, en gefa sínum mǫnnum lítit ql.

Í þessu kemr í hǫllina einn maðr ok talar einmæli við dróttningu Gunnvǫru, en gengr burt síðan. Litlu síðarr gengr dróttning í burt ór hǫllinni — þeir Mandan ok Andan ganga ok með henni — ok er hon kom út af hǫllinni, sér hon Álf jarl, ok verðr þar fagnafundr, ok segir jarl henni, at hann er nú kominn at veita henni lið með fimm hundruð manna. Hon sagðiz þat þiggja mundu— ‘vil ek nú, at þér veitið flogðunum atgöngu með eldi ok vápnum!’

Þeir bera nú eld at hǫllinni, ok logar hon skjótt. Jǫtunoxi verðr nú varr við ófriðinn ok þykkiz nú sjá allt eptir út í gegnum, ok gengr til hallardyra ok mælti:

‘Svá mjök hefir jarl blindat sjónir fyrir mér, því at gǫrla kenni ek þik, Áli flekkr! ok svá þik, Þornbjörg dróttning! Hefir þú ok áðr drepit tvau systkin mín, ok þat líkast, at af þínum völdum láta ek lífit. En þat þyl ek, ok þat mæli ek um, at þá er þú ferr héðan, þolir þú hvergi kyrr, fyrr en þú finnr Hlaðgerði, þá er þú fannt í dyngjunni.’

Þá mælti Mandan: ‘Látum hann nú eigi fleira rausa!’

Hleypr hann þá inn í eldinn, ok hafði í hendi bjarnsviðu, ok lagði til Jǫtunoxa utan á þunnvembit ok þar á hol; en er Jǫtunoxi fekk lagit, greip hann Mandan, ok sviptir honum undir sik. Þat sá Áli, ok snaraz inn í hǫllina, ok hjó á hálsinn Jǫtunoxa með mæki, svá at af tók höfuðið, ok lét hann svá lífit. En Mandan stóð þá upp, ok eigi létu þeir fyrr, en þeir höfðu brent qll flogðin. En síðan tóku þeir allt þat er fémætt var, ok bera á skip sín; halda síðan á burt. Þakkar Þornbjörg dróttning nú Álfi jarli sína liðveizlu. Áli fekk þat sverð þar, er Bremill hét, ok var allra sverða bezt. Þau koma nú heim til Indíalands, ok eru þar qll um vetrinn í góðum fagnaði ok í boði jarls qll vel haldin.

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Litlu eptir þetta, er nú var frá sagt, hverfr Áli í burt af Indíalandi einn saman, leitandi eptir Hlaðgerði. Ferr hann ýmist á skipum eða á hestum. Fimm vetr leitar hann hennar frammi ok aprt, ok finnr hana ekki; í þessarri ferð þolði hann margar þrautir. Einn tíma kom hann í þat land, er Svena heitir; en þat er á vára tungu Svíþjóð in mikla. En þá er Áli fór um þann skóg, er heitir Myrkviðr — sá skógr er furðuliga mikill — þar finnr hann einn rísa, þann er Kolr hét. Hann hafði stóra stöng í hendi. En er hann sér Ála, mælti hann:

‘Far burt, maðr! ok aprt inn sama veg’, segir hann, ‘ef þú vilt halda þínu lífi!’

Áli svarar: ‘Eigi mun ek aprt hverfa at öllu óreyndu.’

Ok er risinn heyrði orð hans, reiddiz hann mjök ok grípr sína stöng ok ætlaði at slá Ála; en hann skýtr sér undan, en stöngin hleypr niðr í vǫllinn allt upp at höndum risanum. Hann lýtr þá eptir hogginu; þat sér Áli, ok bregðr skjótt sínu sverði ok hæggr til risans um þvert bakit, ok tók risann í sundr, ok lætr hann svá sitt líf.

Eptir þetta gengr Áli burt á skóginn; ok at kveldi dags kemr Áli af skóginum at einum litlum bæ. Þar klappar hann á dyrr, ok gengr út skeggjaðr maðr, lágr vexti. Hann mælti til þess er úti var:

‘Mál er þér at ganga inn ok hvíla þik, þvíat þú munt langt hafa til gengit!’

Now she begins to pour out the drinks, along with Mandan and Andan. They serve the ale eagerly, and all the ogresses become very drunk, but they give their own men little ale. At that moment, a man arrives in the hall and speaks privately with Queen Gunnvǫr, and goes away afterwards. A little later, the queen departs from the hall, and Mandan and Andan go with her. And when she came out of the hall, she sees Earl Álfr, and they had a joyful meeting there, and the earl tells her that he has now come to grant her assistance with five hundred men. She said that she would accept that — ‘now I want you to attack the ogresses with fire and weapons!’

They set fire to the hall, and it burns quickly. Jǫtunoxi becomes aware of the hostilities, and he now thinks that he can see through it all, and he goes to the hall-door and spoke:

‘The earl has thoroughly deceived me, because I now fully recognise you, Álí flekkr, and you too, Queen Þornbjörg! You have already killed my two siblings, and it’s most likely that I will lose my life through your actions. But this I chant, and this I pronounce: that when you go from here, you will have no peace until you find Hlaðgerðr, whom you met in the bower.’

Mandan spoke: ‘Don’t let him speak anymore!’

Then he leaps into the fire. He had a bear-hunting knife and struck at Jǫtunoxi in the abdomen and up into the chest cavity, and when Jǫtunoxi received the thrust, he grabbed Mandan and sweeps him under himself. Álí saw that and rushes into the hall, and hewed at Jǫtunoxi’s neck with a sword, such that he took off his head, and so Jǫtunoxi ended his life. Then Mandan got up, and they did not let up until they had burnt all of the ogresses. Afterwards, they took everything that was valuable and carry it onto their ships, then sail away. Queen Þornbjörg thanks Earl Álfr for his support. Álí got the sword called Bremill there, and it was the best of all swords. They now arrive back in India, and they all stay there over the winter in comfort and good cheer at the earl’s invitation.

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A little while after that which was just related, Álí departed from India alone, looking for Hlaðgerðr. He travels both by ship and by horse. He wanders back and forth searching for her for five winters, but he does not find her. On this journey he suffered many hardships. One time, he came to that land which is called ‘Svena’, but it is called Scythia in our tongue. And when Álí went through the forest which is called Mirkwood — that forest is exceedingly large — he encounters a giant called Kolr. He had a large staff in his hand. And when he sees Álí, he spoke:

‘Go away, man, back the same way you came’, he says, ‘if you want to keep your life!’

Álí replies: ‘I will not turn back without trying.’

And when the giant heard his words, he became very angry and gripped his staff, intending to strike Álí, but he darts under him, and the staff plunges down into the field, all the way up to the giant’s hand. The giant bends over with the strike. Álí sees that, draws his sword quickly and strikes the giant across the back, and splits the giant asunder, and so he loses his life.

After that, Álí walks into the forest, and in the evening, he comes from the forest to a little farmstead. He knocks on the door, and out comes a bearded man, short in stature. He spoke to the one who was outside:

‘It is time for you to go inside and rest, because you must have travelled a long way.’

Áli gerir svá; þar gengr hann eptir, sem inn ferr undan, til þess er þeir koma í stofu. Þar sér Áli sitja tvær konur á palli. Þær heilsa báðar fǫður sínum, en hann tekr vel kveðju þeirra. Hann biðr Ála sitja hjá sér. Hann gerir svá, ok frétti hann at nafni; en hann sagðiz Bárðr heita. Áli spurði, hverr konungr væri yfir því landi, er hann væri í kominn. Bárðr kvað hann Eireik heita.

‘Er hér nokkur ókunnig kona komin?’ segir Áli.

‘At vísu er þat’, segir Bárðr, ‘ok nefniz hon Hlaðgerðr, ok er hon hjá konungi, ok ætlar hann at láta brenna hana í eldi, þvíat hann ætlar, at hon sé tröllkona, ok á morgin skal þetta frammgengt verða.’

Áli biðr hann at fylgja sér at morni til konungshallarinnar. Hann játar því. Skilja þeir þetta tal. Litlu síðarr kemr innarr húsfreyja, ok heilsar hon Bárði ok svá þeim er hjá honum sat. Síðan er upp tekit borð ok á borinn matr. Því næst koma inn verkmenn bónda, ok setjaz undir borð. Bónði sez í qndvegi, ok sitr Áli it næsta honum. Ok þá er þeir hfǫðu etit ok drukkit sem á lysti, var framn borin fæðan ok ofan tekinn borðbúnaðr, ok fóru menn at sofa. Áli lá einn saman.

Um morguninn stóð Bárðr upp snemma ok vekr Ála. Hann stendr upp ok býr sik, ok fara síðan til konungshallar. Ok er þeir koma á eitt stræti, sjá þeir þar marga menn ok stóra elda tvá, ok í milli þeirra elda sjá þeir eina konu á stóli.⁹⁵ Áli þekkir þegar Hlaðgerði. Hann hleypr þegar fram at stólinum, ok berr hana út af mannhringnum ok til Bárðar, ok bað hann geyma Hlaðgerði, en sagðiz skyldu ganga fyrir konung. Bárðr tók við henni, en Áli gekk fyrir konung ok kveðr hann. Konungr tekr honum vel, ok frétti hann at nafni; en hann nefndiz Áli ok kvaz vera sonr Ríkarðs konungs af Englandi.

‘Gǫrla þekki ek þína ætt’, segir konungr, ‘ok erum vit frændr; eðr því tóktu konu þessa ór várri geymslu?’

Áli svarar: ‘Því tók ek hana, at hon var annarstaðar betr komin, en þar sem þér létuð hana.’

‘Veiztu nokkur deili á henni?’ segir konungr.

‘Satt er þat’, segir Áli. ‘Hon er at ǫllu því vel fallin, er hon má at gera, þó at ætt hennar sum sé eigi góð. En ek vil þat þiggja af yðr, konungr! at þér látið hana fara í friði, hvert er hon vill.’

‘Því vil ek játa þér’, sagði konungr, ‘en þú ver hér með oss svá lengi sem þér líkar!’

Áli þakkar nú konungi ok gengr til þeirra Bárðar ok Hlaðgerðar. Skiljaz þeir nú Bárðr ok Áli. Fór Bárðr heim á sinn garð, en þau Áli ok Hlaðgerðr fara til konungshallar, ok fagnar konungr þeim vel.

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Konungr hefir þá uppi orð sín ok bað Hlaðgerðar sér til handa. Hon sagði, at Áli skyldi hennar giptingarmaðr vera. Konungr talar þá þetta mál við Ála, en hann svarar því vel, ok svá lýkr því máli, at Eireikr konungr fastnar sér Hlaðgerði með hennar samþykki ok fulltingi Ála. Er nú búit til brúðlaups, ok er til boðit ǫllum þeim beztu mǫnnum, sem í váru ríkinu, ok stendr veizlan sjau nætr. Ok at henni liðinni fóru boðsmenn heim. Gaf konungr mǫrgum góðar gjafir. Ála gaf hann knǫrr með góðum farmi, ok eitt ess brúnt at lit, er Krákr hét. Áli þakkar honum vel þessar gjafir. Heldr Áli nú þaðan, ok skiljaz með kærleikum.

⁹⁵ Punishments involving being placed between two fires are also found in the eddic poem *Grímnismál* and in *Þjalar-Jóns saga*.

Áli does so. He follows close behind the man until they come into a sitting-room. Áli sees two women sitting on a step there. They both greet their father, and he welcomes their greeting. He asks Áli to sit next to him. He does so, and asks him his name, and he said that he was called Bárðr. Áli asked who the king of the land into which he had arrived might be. Bárðr said that he was called Eireikr.

‘Has an unfamiliar woman come here?’ says Áli.

‘Certainly’, says Bárðr, ‘and she is called Hlaðgerðr. She is with the king, and he intends to have her burned in fire, because he thinks that she is a troll-woman, and it will be carried out in the morning.’

Áli asks him to accompany him in the morning to the king’s hall. He agrees to that. They end their conversation. A little later, the housewife enters and greets Bárðr and the man sitting next to him. Afterwards, the table is set and food is brought. Next, the farmer’s labourers come in and sit at the table. The farmer sits in the high-seat, and Áli sits nearest to him. And when they had eaten and drunk as they wished, the food was taken away and the tableware was removed, and the men went to sleep. Áli lay alone.

In the morning, Bárðr got up early and wakes Áli. He gets up and prepares himself, and then they depart to the king’s hall. And when they arrive at a certain street, they see many men and two great fires there, and between the fires, they see a woman on a chair. Áli recognises Hlaðgerðr at once. Immediately, he runs forward to the chair and carries her out of the circle of men to Bárðr, asking him to look after Hlaðgerðr and saying that he must go before the king. Bárðr takes her, and Áli went before the king and greets him. The king receives him well and asked him his name, and he named himself as Áli and said that he was the son of Ríkarðr, king of England.

‘Certainly I recognise your lineage’, says the king, ‘and we are kinsmen — but why did you take this woman out of our custody?’

Áli replies: ‘I took her because she was better-placed elsewhere than where you set her.’

‘Do you know anything about her?’ says the king.

‘Certainly’, says Áli. ‘She is capable in all that she is able to do, though some of her lineage is not good. But I wish to receive this from you, king: that you let her go in peace, wherever she wishes.’

‘I will grant you this’, said the king, ‘and you must stay here with us as long as you like.’

Áli now thanks the king and goes to Bárðr and Hlaðgerðr. Bárðr and Áli take their leave of each other. Bárðr went home to his farmstead, but Áli and Hlaðgerðr go to the king’s hall, and the king greets them well.

Chapter 18

The king then begins to speak and asked Hlaðgerðr for her hand in marriage. She said that Áli should be her bride-giver. The king discusses the matter with Áli, and he responds positively, and so the matter is decided, such that King Eireikr betrothes himself to Hlaðgerðr with her agreement and Áli’s support. The wedding is now prepared, and all the foremost people in the kingdom are invited, and the feast continues for seven nights. And when it ended, the guests went home. The king gave many people good gifts. He gave Áli a merchant-ship with a good cargo, and a black steed, which was called Krákr. Áli thanks him warmly for these gifts. Áli now journeys away, and they part in friendship.

Ferr Áli þá heim til Englands með heilu ok hǫldnu, ok ríðr heim til borgar frá skipi; en menn hans váru þar eptir hjá skipi. En er Áli kom heim, varð honum hverr maðr feginn. Var þar þá komin Þornbjörg dróttning með sínum mǫnnum, ok varð hon Ála allfegin ok hvárt þeirra ǫðru. Hann lét þá ryðja knǫrrinn, en lætr búa langskip með góðum fjárhlut, ok sendir Eireiki konungi þat heim til Svíþjóðar með hans mǫnnum, þeim er Ála hǫfðu þangat fylgt.

Áli gerir þá brúðlaup sitt til Þornbjargar dróttningar, ok var þat veitt með inum mesta prís, ok þar váru allir inir beztu menn, er í váru ríkinu. Ok at því enduðu gefr Áli sínum mǫnnum góðar gjafir, ok fóru þeir heim til sinna heimkynna. Þau Áli ok dróttning unnuz stórliga mikit.

Chapter 19

Skjótt eptir þetta deyr Ríkarðr konungr, en Áli tók ríkit, ok gefa landsmenn honum konungsnafn yfir ǫllu Englandi. Hann var vinsæll af sínum mǫnnum. Áli konungr lagði undir sik Valland ok Saxland. Hann átti tvá sonu við dróttningu sinni. Hét annarr Vilhjálmr en annarr Ríkarðr. Vilhjálmr setti hann konung yfir Valland, en Ríkarðr yfir Saxland. Váru þeir báðir inir mestu menn, ok er mikill ættbogi frá þeim kominn í þeim lǫndum. Áli gat son í elli sinni, er Óláfr hét. Hann var mestr sona Ála.

En þá er Áli konungr var gamall, dó hann af elli, ok svá Þornbjörg dróttning. En Óláfr var tekinn til konungs yfir allt England. Hann fekk sér fríða dróttningu ok af góðum ættum, ok þótti hann mǫrgum mikill konungr ok ágætr bæði at viti ok ríkdómi. Hann var mildr af fé við sína þegna, ok því var hann mjök ástúðigr ǫllu landsfólkinu. Hann ríkti lengi í Englandi, ok jók þar sína ætt; enda er hér endir á sögu Ála flekks; hafi þeir þokk, er hlýddu, en inir skomm, er óhljóð gerðu.

Áli then travels home to England safe and sound and rides home to the city from the ship, but his men stayed behind at the ship. And when Áli came home, everyone was happy to see him. Queen Þornbjörg had arrived with her men, and she was delighted to see Áli; each was happy to see the other. He then had the merchant-ship unloaded, and has a longship loaded with valuable property and sends it back to King Eireikr to Scythia with those of his men who had accompanied Áli there.

Then Áli has his wedding with Queen Þornbjörg, and it was held with the greatest pomp, and all of the foremost people in the kingdom were there. And when it ended, Áli gives his people good gifts, and they went home to their households. Áli and the queen loved each other greatly.

Chapter 19

Shortly after this, King Ríkarðr dies, and Áli took the kingdom, and his countrymen give him the title of king over all England. He was popular with his men. King Áli brought Gaul and Saxony under his rule. He had two sons with his queen. One was called Vilhjálmr, and the other Ríkarðr. He set Vilhjálmr as king over Gaul, and Ríkarðr over Saxony. They were both the greatest men, and a great lineage is descended from them in those lands. Áli had a son in his old age, who was called Óláfr. He was the greatest of Áli's sons.

And when King Áli was elderly, he died of old age, and so did Queen Þornbjörg. And Óláfr was taken as king over all England. He married a queen who was beautiful and of good lineage, and he seemed to many a great king and excellent in both wisdom and authority. He was generous with his wealth toward his liegemen, and because of this, he was greatly beloved by all his countrymen. He ruled over England for a long time, and increased his progeny there. And so, here ends the saga of Áli flekk. Thanks to those who listened, and shame to those who interrupted.