



THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT



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Edward Pettit, *The Poetic Edda: A Dual-Language Edition*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0308>

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ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80064-772-5

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80064-773-2

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80064-774-9

ISBN Digital ebook (EPUB): 978-1-80064-775-6

ISBN Digital ebook (AZW3): 978-1-80064-776-3

ISBN XML: 978-1-80064-777-0

ISBN HTML: 978-1-80064-778-7

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0308

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Back cover image: The god Heimdallr blowing his horn, from a seventeenth-century Icelandic manuscript (AM 738 4to, fol. 35v)

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Atlamál in grœnlenzku

Atlamál in grœnlenzku (*Am.*) ‘The Greenlandic Poem/Sayings of Atli’ tells essentially the same story as *Akv.*, but in more leisurely fashion, in more modern idiom, at much greater length, and with many differences of detail and focus. Although *Am.* is generally held to suffer from comparison with *Akv.*, and its presence in **R** (fol. 41r–44r) may frustrate an audience keen not for recapitulation but progression to the end of the story of Guðrún’s offspring, we should be grateful to the compiler who preserved it in writing, as it has considerable merit.

Am. is an ambitious poem. Its composer has not only created the second-longest poem in **R**—the longest of which, *Háv.*, is clearly a composite work—but undertaken a thorough modernization of a well-known traditional narrative. Although still set in the past and known worldwide, the events he (or she) recounts are not said to have happened long ago, and, in contrast to *Akv.*, his characters are no longer Burgundians and Huns who come to grief over a famed treasure destined to glitter in the depths of the Rhine. Instead, he transplants the continental dealings of ancient royal houses to a setting suggestive of the great farmsteads and farmers of Icelandic prose sagas of the thirteenth century. His tale is one of domestic, not dynastic, intrigue and strife. Accordingly, its language tends toward the prosaic, colloquial and everyday, rather than the elevated. In similar vein, there is almost no mythological aspect; gods and other supernatural beings neither play a direct part nor hover on the side-lines nor lurk in the background as they do in many other heroic poems, although there is a strong sense of fate. The only suggestions of the mythological come in dreams, which feature quite prominently, as in many Icelandic prose sagas. They culminate in Glaumvǫr’s creepy vision of dead spirit-women visiting her husband, Gunnarr. Notably, no Óðinnic magic surrounds the runic warning sent by Guðrún to her brothers (it is the counterpart of the wolf’s hair in *Akv.*); its interest lies solely in the literal message it conveys, the malicious alteration thereof, and the atmospherically nocturnal and firelit effort by Kostbera, Hǫgni’s wife, to decipher its true meaning.

In terms of narrative and characterization, *Am.* is most significant for the prominence it gives to the fight between Atli’s men and the Gjúkungar, even if the numbers involved are rather few, and to Guðrún’s martial role there and in earlier years. During that fight we see Guðrún—who, we later learn, had gone raiding in her youth with her brothers and Sigurðr—in a vigorously active light, throwing off her cloak, seizing a sword and felling two of Atli’s men, including his brother. Yet, as

well as she performs the ‘masculine’ role of warrior, she is also adept at intrigue and at voicing an almost proto-feminist view about the gender-based division of power in society: ‘Men’s overbearing might strikes down women’s choices!’, she declares.

Guðrún’s severing of Atli’s brother’s leg exemplifies another characteristic of the *Am.* poet, namely his taste for bloody and grotesque detail. This is also apparent, for instance, in Kostbera’s unnerving dream of a lumbering polar bear, in Glaumvǫr’s macabre vision of a spear with howling wolves at either end, in Gunnarr’s playing of the harp with his toes while hanging from a gallows crawling with snakes, in Guðrún’s slitting of her sons’ throats on the edge of a bench, in Atli’s drinking of their blood, and in the deliciously horrible image of Atli ‘trusting in his molars’ as he munches on their flesh. The poem abounds with striking details.

It is not all excess and conflict, however. One striking feature of *Am.* is also its most subdued. Unlike in *Akv.*, Guðrún does not burn Atli within his hall. Instead of this dramatic climax, we hear that, after stabbing him with the help of Hǫgni’s son, she buried him respectfully, as he wished. The precise form of burial—in a coffin within a ship—may be the poet’s antiquarian invention, but it is nonetheless memorable.

Ultimately, though, *Am.* is most notable for two fundamental things. First is its sustained use of *málaháttr*. Second, despite some indications of a Danish background, is its apparent status as an instance of Greenlandic literature.

A version of *Am.* was among the sources of chapters 35 to 40 of *VS*. The story is also told in chapter 42 of *SnESkáld*.

Strikingly different accounts of the visit of Gunnarr and Hǫgni to Atli’s hall, and of Atli’s death, appear in the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, the Old Norse (Norwegian) *Þiðreks saga af Bern* and the Faroese ballad *Høgna táttur* ‘Høgni’s Story’.

Synopsis

The poet announces the widespread knowledge of private talks held by men, which led to the betrayal of the sons of Gjúki (1), but which also harmed Atli, who invited his brothers-in-law, Gunnarr and Hǫgni, to visit him (2). Guðrún, Atli’s wife, found out about their plan, but could not go to meet her brothers herself (3). Instead, she sent them a runic warning, which Atli’s messenger, Vingi, distorted, before he arrived at Gjúki’s home and delivered the message (4).

The hosts were cheerful and expected no trickery (5). Kostbera, Hǫgni’s wife, and Glaumvǫr, Gunnarr’s wife, greeted Atli’s messengers (6). The visitors invited Hǫgni to visit their lord at his home, but Hǫgni thought Gunnarr’s enthusiasm ill-advised (7).

Mead was drunk (8), Hǫgni and Kostbera made their bed, and she tried to interpret the confused runes of Guðrún’s message (9). Husband and wife got into bed, and Kostbera dreamed a dream and immediately told Hǫgni (10). She advised him not to go, as the runes were not an invitation from Guðrún (11); instead, were it not for one missing rune, it looked as though the message predicted the brothers’ death, if

they were to come (12). Hǫgni replied that all women are suspicious, and that he was never fearful (13). Kostbera stressed the danger (14) and told him a series of ominous dreams she had had, to each of which he gave an innocuous interpretation (15–20).

Glaumvǫr then told Gunnarr of her similarly ominous dreams, to one of which he gave an innocuous interpretation before stating that, although much indicated that he and Hǫgni would soon die, he could not escape fate (21–22, 23–25 [24–26], 26–27 [28–29]).

The next day the company set out, despite further attempts by the women to dissuade them (28–29 [31–31]). Glaumvǫr told Vingi that she doubted his motives, but he claimed innocence (30–31 [32–33]). Kostbera wished them luck (32 [34]), Hǫgni replied graciously (33 [35]), and husband and wife looked at each other for the last time (34 [36]).

The company rowed strongly (35 [37]), until they saw Buðli's farmstead, where Hǫgni knocked loudly (36 [38]). Vingi confessed his deceit and warned the brothers to leave (37 [39]), but Hǫgni told him to keep quiet (38 [40]). They then killed Vingi (39 [41]). Atli and his men armed themselves, and the two parties exchanged hostile words (40–41 [42–43]). Battle began outside the hall (42 [44]), news of which was brought inside (43 [45]).

Guðrún was immediately enraged (44 [46]), boldly greeted her brothers for the last time (45 [47]), and tried unsuccessfully to reconcile the two sides (46). She then took up a sword (47 [49]), and killed two men, including Atli's brother (48–49 [50–51]). The Niflungar fought a celebrated battle all morning, before Kostbera's sons and brother fell (50–51 [52–53]).

Atli remarked grimly on the loss of his men, including his brothers (52–53 [54–55]), and blamed Guðrún for past losses, including Brynhildr (54 [56]). Guðrún retorted that he had killed her mother and starved her cousin, and thanked the gods for his troubles (55 [57]). Atli urged his men to heap further sorrow on Guðrún (56 [58]), and told them to cut out Hǫgni's heart and to hang Gunnarr and encourage snakes to attack him (57 [59]). Hǫgni told them to do as they wish (58 [60]), but Atli's steward urged them to kill Atli's cook, Hjalli, instead (59 [61]). The cook tried frantically to escape, lamented his lot (60 [62]), and pleaded for his life (61 [63]). Hǫgni, angered by the cook's wailing, took exception to his substitution (62 [64]), whereupon Atli's men returned to Hǫgni, who laughed as they excised his heart (63 [65]). Gunnarr, meanwhile, played a harp with his toes (64 [66]). Both brothers then died, though their prowess lived on (65 [67]).

Atli then taunted Guðrún with her partly self-inflicted loss (66 [68]). She predicted that evil awaited him (67 [69]), and Atli offered her a handmaid and treasures, if they could be reconciled (68 [70]). Guðrún refused the offer and said (to herself?) that, now that Hǫgni was dead, she would be more terrible than ever (69 [71]). She then recalled her happy childhood with her brothers (70 [72]), criticized men's power over

women, and dissemblingly told Atli that he could have his way (71 [73]). Atli gullibly believed her (72 [74]).

Guðrún then organized a funeral feast for her brothers, as did Atli for his men (73 [75]). She remained determined to wreak vengeance on Atli (74 [76]) and called her sons to her (75 [77]). She told them that she intended to kill them (76 [78]). She then did so, and Atli asked where his boys were (77 [79]). She told him that she had fulfilled her promise of vengeance (78–79 [80–81]) and that he had been using their skulls as cups at the feast, drinking their blood (80 [82]), and eating their flesh (81 [83]). She expressed no pride in this deed (82 [84]). Atli remarked on her ferocity (83 [85]). She revealed that she would also like to kill him for his stupidity and cruelty (84 [86]), but he said she would be killed before that happens (85 [87]).

The pair then sat discontentedly in the same house, and Hniflungr, Hǫgni's son, told Guðrún how he hated Atli (86 [88]). He and Guðrún wounded Atli mortally (87 [89]). Atli awoke from sleep, thus wounded, and asked who had killed him (88 [90]). Guðrún told him (89 [91]), and Atli reflected on her duplicity, despite all the wealth she had (90–93 [92–95]), and how she undermined him (94 [96]). Guðrún then called him a liar (95 [97]), and reflected on her glorious past raiding with her brothers and Sigurðr (96–97 [98–99]), until Sigurðr's death put an end to her prospects and she was forced into the torture of marriage to Atli (98 [100]), whom she accused of failure and cowardice (99 [101]). Atli, in turn, accused her of lying, but conceded that all involved had suffered loss, and requested that she treat his corpse honourably (100 [102]). She agreed to giving him a fine ship-burial (101 [103]). Atli then died and Guðrún wanted to commit suicide, but was unable to at that time (102 [104]).

Finally, the poet praises the outstanding deeds of Gjúki's children and their defiant words, which will live on throughout the world, wherever there are people to hear them (103 [105]).

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Atlamál in grœnlenzku

1. Frétt hefir öld ófu, þá er endr um gørðu
seggir samkundu — sú var nýtt fæstum!
Æxtu einmæli — yggd var þeim síðan,
ok it sama sonum Gjúka, er váru sannráðnir.
2. ‘Sköpp æxtu Skjöldunga — skylduat feigir! —
illa rézk Atla, átti hann þó hyggju;
feldi stoð stóra, stríddi sér harðla,
af bragði boð sendi at kvæmi brátt mágar.
3. ‘Horsk var húsfreyja, hugði at manviti,
lag heyrði hon orða, hvat þeir á laun mæltu;
þá var vant vitri, vildi hon þeim hjálpa —
skyldu um sæ sigla — en sjálf né komskat.
4. ‘Rúnar nam at rísta; rengði þær Vingi —
fárs var hann flýtandi — áðr hann fram seldi;
fóru þá síðan sendimenn Atla
um fjörð Lima, þar er frœknir bjoggu.
5. ‘Qlværir urðu ok elda kyndu,
hugðu vætr véla er þeir váru komnir;
tóku þeir fórnir er þeim fríðr sendi,
hengðu á súlu, hugðut þat varða.
6. ‘Kom þá Kostbera — kvæn var hon Högna,
kona kapps gálig — ok kvaddi þá baða;
glöð var ok Glaumvör, er Gunnarr átti,
fellskat saðr sviðri, sýsti um þörf gesta.
7. ‘Buðu þeir heim Högna, ef hann þá heldr fœri —
sýn var svipvísi, ef þeir sín gæði;
hét þá Gunnarr, ef Hogni vildi,
Hogni því nítti er hinn um réði.
8. ‘Báru mjöð mærar, margs var alls beini;
fór þar fjöld horna, unz þótti fulldrukkit.

The Greenlandic Poem of Atli

- 1.¹ ‘The world has heard of the hatred² when once
 men held an assembly — it was useful to the fewest!³
They pursued⁴ private talks — terror was [forthcoming] for them later,
 and the same for the sons of Gjúki, who were truly betrayed.
2. ‘They furthered the fates of Skjöldungar⁵ — they⁶
 shouldn’t have been doomed! —
 it turned out badly for Atli, even though he had insight;
 he felled a great pillar,⁷ harmed himself greatly,
 hastily sent a message that his brothers-in-law should come swiftly.
3. ‘The house-lady⁸ was wise, thought with her wits,
 she caught the drift of their words, of what they said in secret;
 then it was difficult for the wise one,⁹ she wanted to help them¹⁰ —
 they had to sail over the sea — but she couldn’t come [there] herself.¹¹
4. ‘She began to carve runes;¹² Vingi¹³ distorted them —
 he was a provoker of peril — before he handed them over;
 then, afterwards, Atli’s emissaries went
 over the fjord of Limi,¹⁴ to where the brave men lived.
5. ‘They¹⁵ were very cordial and kindled fires,
 they suspected no tricks when they¹⁶ had come;
 they took the gifts which the gracious one(?)¹⁷ sent them,
 hung them on a pillar, thought nothing of it.
6. ‘Then Kostbera came — she was Høgni’s wife,
 a highly observant woman — and greeted them both,¹⁸
 also glad was Glaumvǫr, whom Gunnarr married;¹⁹
 decency²⁰ didn’t fail the wise one²¹ — she attended to the guests’ needs.
7. ‘They²² invited Høgni home, [to see] if he²³ would then
 be more inclined to come —
 duplicity was evident, if [only] they’d²⁴ been on their guard;
 then Gunnarr promised [to go], if Høgni would;
 Høgni rejected that which he advised.²⁵
8. ‘Splendid ones²⁶ brought mead, hospitality was most lavish;²⁷
 a multitude of horns²⁸ went [round] there, until
 they thought themselves fully drunk.

9. Hjú gørðu hvílu, sem þeim hægst þótti.
Kend var Kostbera, kunni hon skil rúna,
 inti orðstafi at eldi ljósum;
 gæta varð hon tungu í góma báða:
 váru svá viltar at var vant at ráða.
10. ‘Sæing fóru síðan sína þau Høgni;
dreymði dróttláta, dulði þess vætki —
sagði horsk hilmi, þegars hon réð vakna:
11. “‘Heiman gørisk þú, Høgni! Hyggðu at ráðum —
fár er fullrýninn — far þú í sinn annat!
Réð ek þær rúnar, er reist þín systir:
björt hefir þér eigi boðit í sinn þetta!
12. “‘Eitt ek mest undrumk — mákat ek enn hyggja —
hvat þá varð vitri, er skyldi vilt rísta;
þvíat svá var á vísat, sem undir væri
bani ykkarr beggja, ef it brálla kvæmið;
vant er stafs vífi, eða valda aðrir.”
13. “‘Allar ru illúðgar,” kvað Høgni, “áka ek þess kynni,
vilka ek þess leita, nema launa eigim;
okkr mun gramr gulli reifa glóðrauðu;
óumk ek aldregi, þótt vér ógn fregnim!”
14. “‘Stopalt munuð ganga, ef it stundið þangat;
ykk mun ástkynni eigi í sinn þetta!
Dreymði mik, Høgni — dyljumk þat eigi —
ganga mun ykk andæris, eða ella hræðumk.
15. “‘Blæju hugða ek þína brenna í eldi;
hryti hár logi hús mín í gognum!”
16. “‘Liggja hér línklæði, þau er lítt rækið;
þau munu brát brenna, þar er þú blæju sátt.”
17. “‘Björn hugða ek hér inn kominn, bryti upp stokka,
hristi svá hramma, at vér hrædd yrðim;
munni oss mǫrg hefði, svá at vér mættim ekki;
þar var ok þrømmun þeygi svá lítil!”

18. “Veðr mun þar vaxa, verða ótt snemma;
hvítabjörn hugðir, þar mun hregg austan.”
19. “Örn hugða ek hér inn fljúga at endlönngu húsi —
þat mun oss drjúgt deilask — dreifði hann oss öll blóði;
hugða ek af heitum at væri hamr Atla!”
20. “Slátrum sýsliga, sjám þá roðru;
opt er þat fyr oxnum, er örn dreymir;
heill er hugr Atla, hvatki er þik dreymir!”
Lokit því létu — líðr hver ræða.
21. ‘Voknuðu velborin, var þar sams dæmi —
gættisk þess Glaumvör, at væri grand svefna;
tók við Gunnarr at fá tvær leiðir.
22. “Görvan hugða ek þér gálga — gengir þú at hanga,
æti þik ormar, yrða ek þik kvikvan,
gørðisk rok ragna! Ráð þú, hvat þat væri!
- 23 [24]. “Blóðgan hugða ek mæki borinn ór serk þínum —
illt er svefn slíkan at segja nauðmanni;
geir hugða ek standa í gognum þik miðjan,
emjuðu úlfar á endum báðum!”
- 24 [25]. “Rakkar þar renna, ráðask mjök geyja:
opt verðr glaumr hunda fyr geira flaugun.”
- 25 [26]. “Á hugða ek hér inn renna at endilönngu húsi,
þyti af þjósti, þeystisk uf bekki;
bryti foetr ykkra broeðra hér tveggja,
gerðit vatn vægja — vera mun þat fyr nøkkvi!
- 26 [28]. “Konur hugðak dauðar koma í nótt hingat;
værit vart búnar, vildi þik kjósa,
byði þér brálliga til bekkja sinna;
ek kveð aflima orðnar þér dísir!”
- 27 [29]. “Seinat er at segja, svá er nú ráðit;
forðumka furðu, allz þó er fara ætlat;
mart er mjök glíklíkt at munim skammæir!”

18. “[That signifies that] a wind will get up, it’ll be dawn soon;
 you thought [you saw] a white bear,⁴⁸ [which
 means] there’ll be a snowstorm from the east.”
19. ““I thought an eagle flew in here the full length of the house —
it⁴⁹ will be liberally allotted to us — it splattered us all with blood;
I thought from its threats that it was the spirit-form⁵⁰ of Atli!”
20. ““We’ll slaughter [our beasts] soon, then we shall see blood;
 it often stands for oxen, when one dreams of eagles;⁵¹
 Atli’s heart is sincere, whatever you dream!”
 With that they let it⁵² be closed — every conversation ends.
21. ‘Well-born ones⁵³ awoke, [and] there was an example of the same —
Glaumvǫr was anxious about it, that there was evil in her dreams;⁵⁴
 Gunnarr undertook to find two ways [to interpret them].
22. ““I thought a gallows was prepared for you — you went to be hanged,
 snakes ate you,⁵⁵ I lost you as a living [man],
 the doom of the powers⁵⁶ came to pass! Read what that was!⁵⁷
- 23 [24]. ““I thought a bloody sword was brought from your shirt —
it’s a bad thing to speak of such a dream to a relative by marriage;
 I thought a spear was stuck⁵⁸ through your middle,
 wolves howled at both ends!”
- 24 [25]. ““[That’s] dogs running, they bark a lot:
 often the din of hounds goes before the flight of spears.”
- 25 [26]. ““I thought a river ran in here the entire length of the house,
 roared from rage, surged over benches;
 it broke the legs of you two brothers here,
 the water didn’t relent — that must signify something!⁵⁹
- 26 [28]. ““I thought dead women came here in the night;
 they weren’t carefully clothed, they wanted to choose you,
 asked you [to come] quickly to their benches;
 I say your spirit-women⁶⁰ have become limbless!”⁶¹
- 27 [29]. ““It’s too late to speak [of this], now it’s been decided thus;
 I can’t escape destiny, since it’s been decided that we go;
 much [indicates that it’s] very likely that we’ll be short-lived!”

- 28 [30]. ‘Litu er lýsti; létusk þeir fúsir
allir upp rísa; önnur þau lottu;
fóru fimm saman — fleiri til váru
hálfu húskarlar — hugat var því illa!
Snævarr ok Sólarr, synir váru þeir Høgna,
Orkning þann hétu er þeim enn fylgði;
blíðr var þorr skjaldar, bróðir hans kvánar.
- 29 [31]. ‘Fóru fagrúna, unz þau fjörðr skilði;
lottu ávalt ljósar, létuat heldr segjask.
- 30 [32]. ‘Glaumvör kvað at orði, er Gunnarr átti,
mælti hon við Vinga sem henni vert þótti:
“Veitkat ek hvárt verð launið at vilja ossum;
glœpr er gests kváma, ef í gørisk nakkvat!”
- 31 [33]. ‘Sór þá Vingi — sér réð hann lítt eira! —
“Eigi hann jøtnar, ef hann at yðr lygi,
gálgi gørvallan, ef hann á grið hygði!”
- 32 [34]. ‘Bera kvað at orði, blíð í hug sínum:
“Sigli þér sælir ok sigr árníð!
Fari sem ek fyrir mælik! Fæst eigi því níta!”
- 33 [35]. ‘Høgni svaraði — hugði gott nánum:
“Huggizk it, horskar, hvégi er þat gørvisk!
Mæla þat margir — missir þó stórum! —
mørgum ræðr litlu hvé verðr leiddr heiman.”
- 34 [36]. ‘Sásk til síðan, áðr í sundr hyrfi;
þá, hygg ek, skøp skiptu, skilðusk vegir þeira.
- 35 [37]. ‘Róa námu ríki, rifu kjøl hálfan,
beystu bakföllum, brugðusk heldr reiðir;
hømlur slitnuðu, háir brotnuðu;
gerðut far festa áðr þeir frá hyrfi.
- 36 [38]. ‘Litlu ok lengra — lok mun ek þess segja —
bœ sá þeir standa er Buðli átti;
hátt hrikðu grindr er Høgni kníði.

- 28 [30]. ‘They saw when it grew light; they said they
were all eager to rise; others would have restrained them;
five went together — twice as many manservants
were available⁶² — it was ill-considered!
Snævarr and Sólarr, they were sons of Hǫgni,
Orkningr⁶³ was the name of the one who also accompanied them;
kindly was the tree of the shield,⁶⁴ the brother of his⁶⁵ wife.
- 29 [31]. ‘Beautifully attired ones went,⁶⁶ until a fjord parted them;⁶⁷
radiant ones⁶⁸ kept restraining [them, but] they⁶⁹
didn’t let them speak any the more.
- 30 [32]. ‘Glaumvǫr, whom Gunnarr married,⁷⁰ said these words,
she spoke to Vingi as seemed to her appropriate:
“I don’t know whether you’ll repay our hospitality
according to our will;
a guest’s coming is a crime, if something [evil] comes of it!”
- 31 [33]. ‘Vingi swore then — he decided to spare himself little! —
“Let giants have him,⁷¹ if he’s lied to you,
a complete gallows, if he thought to violate the peace!”
- 32 [34]. ‘Bera⁷² said these words, kindly in her heart:
“Sail with good fortune and secure victory!
May things go as I declare! May the fewest⁷³ have
reason to deny this!”⁷⁴
- 33 [35]. ‘Hǫgni answered — he was well-disposed toward his kin:
“Comfort yourselves, wise ones,⁷⁵ whatever it is that comes to pass!
Many say this — yet it misses [the mark] entirely! —
[that] for many a man it matters little how he’s led⁷⁶ from home.”
- 34 [36]. ‘They looked at each other then, before they parted;
then, I think, destiny⁷⁷ parted [them],⁷⁸ their ways separated.
- 35 [37]. ‘They began to row mightily, ripped half the keel apart,
struck [the water] with backward leaning,⁷⁹ became rather wrathful;
oar-thongs snapped, thole-pins broke;
they did not make to tie up the boat before they turned from it.
- 36 [38]. ‘And a little later — I will tell this [tale] to the end —
they saw standing the farmstead⁸⁰ that Buðli owned;
the gates creaked loudly when Hǫgni beat them.

- 37 [39]. 'Then Vingi spoke words, those which could have been done without:
 "Go further away from this house! It's treacherous to approach!
 Quickly I'll have you both burnt,⁸¹ swiftly you shall be hewn down;
 delightfully I asked for your coming, but deceit was behind it —
 or else wait here, while I hew you a gallows!"
- 38 [40]. 'Hogni spoke these words — he thought little of withdrawing —
 [being] wary about nothing that had to be tested:
 "Don't bother to frighten us! Bring [your case] forward⁸² seldom!⁸³
 If you add to your speech, you'll lengthen your ills!"
- 39 [41]. 'They shoved Vingi away and struck him into Hel,⁸⁴
 they laid into him with axes, as long as he gasped for breath.
- 40 [42]. 'Atli and his men mustered themselves and put on⁸⁵ mail-coats,
 they advanced thus prepared, so that there was
 [only] a palisade between them,⁸⁶
 they threw words at each other,⁸⁷ all wrathful at once:
 "We have long been fully resolved to remove you from life!"
- 41 [43]. "'One can hardly see it,⁸⁸ if you'd planned [this] in advance!
 You're still unprepared, and we've felled one man,
 battered him to Hel — he was [one] of your band!"
- 42 [44]. 'They became furious then, when they heard those words,
 they flexed their fingers and seized their spear-thongs,
 shot spiritedly and protected themselves with shields.
- 43 [45]. 'Inside came report, then, of what they engaged in outside;
 they heard a slave speak, loudly before the hall.
- 44 [46]. Guðrún was terrible then, when she heard the trouble,
 laden with neck-torcs — she threw them all off,
 slung silver, so that the arm-rings broke asunder.
- 45 [47]. 'Out she went then, didn't raise the doors slightly,⁸⁹
 she didn't go timidly at all, and she welcomed those who had come;
 she turned to⁹⁰ the Niflungar — that was their last greeting —
 sincerity accompanied such [a gesture], [and] she said
 considerably more.⁹¹
- 46 [48]. "'I sought to take care of you, by keeping you both from
 leaving home —
 no one can oppose fate — and yet you had to have come here!"
 She spoke with her native wit, [to see] whether
 they would be reconciled;
 they didn't decide that at all — they all said "No!"

- 47 [49]. ‘Sá þá sælborin at þeir sárt léku;
hugði á harðræði ok hrauzk ór skikkju;
nøkðan tók hon mæki ok niðja fjör varði;
hæg var at hjaldri, hvars hon hendr festi.
- 48 [50]. ‘Dóttir lét Gjúka drengi tvá hníga:
bróður hjó hon Atla — bera varð þann síðan —
skapði hon svá skæru, skeldi fót undan.
- 49 [51]. ‘Annan réð hon hoggva, svá at sá upp reisat —
í Helju hon þann hafði; þeygi henni hendr skulfu.
- 50 [52]. ‘Þjorku þar gørðu, þeiri var við brugðit;
þat brá um allt annat er unnu börn Gjúka;
svá kváðu Niflunga, meðan sjálfir lifðu,
skapa sókn sverðum — slítask af brynjur —
hoggva svá hjálma sem þeim hugr dygði.
- 51 [53]. ‘Morgin mest vágu, unz miðjan dag líddi —
óttu alla ok öndurðan dag —
fyrir var fullveggit, flóði völlr blóði;
átján, áðr fellu, øfri þeir urðu,
Beru tveir sveinar ok bróðir hennar.
- 52 [54]. ‘Röskr tók at ræða, þótt hann reiðr væri:
“Illt er um lítask — yðr er þat kenna!
Várum þrír tigir þegnar vígligr,
eptir lifum ellifu — ór er þar brunnit!
- 53 [55]. “Bræðr várum fimm, er Buðla mistum,
hefir nú Hel hálfá, en hoggnir tveir liggja!
- 54 [56]. “Mægð gat ek mikla — mákak því leyndu —
konu válaga — knáka ek þess njóta!
Hljótt áttum sjaldan, síz komt í hendr ossar;
firðan mik frændum, fé opt svikinn;
senduð systir Helju, slíks ek mest kennumk!”
- 55 [57]. “Getr þú þess, Atli? Gørðir svá fyrri!
Móður tókt mína ok myrðir til hnossa!
Svinna systrungu sveltir þú í helli!
Hlœglickt mér þat þikkir, er þú þinn harm tínr!
Goðum ek þat þakka, er þér gengsk illa!”

- 47 [49]. 'Then the high-born one⁹² saw that they were playing bitterly;
she turned her thoughts to harsh deeds and threw off her cloak;
she seized a naked sword and defended her kinsmen's lives;
she was able in battle, wherever she firmly applied her hands.
- 48 [50]. 'Gjúki's daughter⁹³ made two young men sink [down]:⁹⁴
she hewed Atli's brother — that one had to be borne [away] then —
she shaped the battle thus, slashed the leg from beneath him.
- 49 [51]. 'The other she determined to hew, so that he didn't get up —
she had him [put] in Hel,⁹⁵ her hands didn't shake at all.
- 50 [52]. 'They engaged in a dispute there, which was extolled;
it outdid all other [deeds] which the children of Gjúki performed;
so they⁹⁶ said of the Niflungar, while they themselves⁹⁷ lived,
[that] they shaped battle with swords — mail-coats were shredded —
chopped helmets as their courage availed them.
- 51 [53]. 'They fought for most of the morning, until midday had passed —
all through dawn and the day's forenoon —
before [the battle] was fully fought, the field flooded with blood;
eighteen they overcame, before they [themselves] fell,
Bera's two sons and her brother.
- 52 [54]. 'The brave one⁹⁸ began to speak, though he was angry:
"It's an ill thing to look about oneself — that's owing to you!
We were thirty valiant thanes,
[only] eleven [still] live afterwards — [part of us]
has been burnt away⁹⁹ there!
- 53 [55]. "'We were five¹⁰⁰ brothers, when we lost Buðli;
now Hel has half, and two lie hewn down!
- 54 [56]. "'I got mighty in-laws — I can't conceal it —
[but] a pernicious wife — I can't profit from it!
We've seldom had peace, since you came into our hands;
you've deprived me of kinsmen, often defrauded me of wealth;
you¹⁰¹ sent my sister¹⁰² to Hel — I suffer most from such!"
- 55 [57].¹⁰³ "'Are you [really] bringing that up, Atli? You acted
like that first!
You took my mother and murdered her for treasures!
You starved my wise cousin in a cave!¹⁰⁴
Risible it seems to me, when you recount your affliction!
I thank the gods for it, when things go badly for you!"

- 56 [58]. “Eggja ek yðr, jarlar, auka harm stóran
vífs ins vegliga — vilja ek þat líta!
Kostið svá keppa, at klökkvi Guðrún!
Sjá ek þat mættak, at hon sér né yndit!
- 57 [59]. “Takið ér Høgna ok hyldið með knífi!
Skerið ór hjarta! Skuluð þess gørvir!
Gunnar grimmúðgan á gálga festið!
Bellið því bragði! Bjóðið til ornum!”
- ‘Høgni kvað:
- 58 [60]. “Gør sem til lystir! Glaðr munk þess bíða!
Røskr mun þér reynask — reynt hefi ek fyrr brattara!
Høfðuð hnekking, meðan heilir várum;
nú erum svá sárir at þú mátt sjálfr valda!”
- 59 [61]. ‘Beiti þat mælti — bryti var hann Atla:
“Tøku vér Hjalla, en Høgna forðum!
Høgum vér hálftr yrkjum — hann er skapdauði!
Lifira svá lengi — løskr mun hann æ heitinn!”
- 60 [62]. ‘Hræddr var hvergætir, helta in lengr rúmi,
kunni kløkkv verða, kleif í rá hverja;
vesall létz vígs þeira, er skyldi vás gjalda,
ok sinn dag dapran, at deyja frá svínum,
allri ørkostu er hann áðr hafði.
- 61 [63]. ‘Tóku þeir brás Buðla ok brugðu til knífi;
œpði illþræll áðr odds kendi;
tóm létz at eiga teðja vel garða,
vinna it vergasta, ef hann við rétti;
feginn létz þó Hjalli at hann fjør þægi!
- 62 [64]. ‘Gættisk þess Høgni — gerva svá færi! —
at árna ánauðgum, at undan gengi:
“Fyrir kveð ek mér minna at fremja leik þenna —
hví mynim hér vilja heyra á þá skræktun?”
- 63 [65]. ‘Þrifu þeir þjóðgóðan, þá var kostur engi
rekkum rakklátum ráð enn lengr dvelja;
hló þá Høgni — heyrðu dagmegir —
keppa hann svá kunni, kvøl hann vel þolði.

- 56 [58]. “‘I urge you, earls, to increase the great affliction
 of the grand woman — I want to gaze on that!
Strive to do your utmost, so that Guðrún may cry out!
I could see it [then], that she’s not content with her lot!
- 57 [59]. “‘Seize Høgni and slice away his flesh with a knife!
 Cut out his heart! You must be prepared for this!
 Fasten grim-minded Gunnarr to a gallows!
Press ahead with that swift¹⁰⁵ deed! Invite snakes to him!”
- Høgni said:
58 [60]. “Do as you wish! I’ll gladly await¹⁰⁶ this!
 I’ll prove myself brave to you — I’ve overcome
 tougher¹⁰⁷ [trials] before!
 You had a setback, as long as we were healthy;
[it’s only] now we’re so wounded that you can have your way!”
- 59 [61]. ‘Beiti¹⁰⁸ said this — he was Atli’s steward:
 “Let’s seize Hjalli, and spare Høgni!
 Let’s finish a deed¹⁰⁹ half-done — he’s fated to die!
He won’t live so long — he’ll always be called sluggish!”¹¹⁰
- 60 [62]. ‘The cauldron-tender¹¹¹ was scared, no longer stayed at his post,
 he knew how to be cowardly, climbed into every corner;
 he declared himself wretched due to their war,
 when his hard work should be rewarded,
 and that his day was dreary, in that [he was] to die
 away from his swine,
 from all the plentiful provisions which he had before.
- 61 [63]. ‘They took Buðli’s braiser¹¹² and brandished a knife at him;
 the vile slave screamed before he felt the point;
 he said he’d have ample time to manure the enclosed fields well,
 to do the shittiest work, if he might survive;
he said Hjalli¹¹³ would be delighted, if only he should receive his life!
- 62 [64]. ‘Høgni took exception to this — few¹¹⁴ act thus! —
 that an enslaved one¹¹⁵ should gain [that], that he should get away:
 “I declare there are fewer things in the way of me
 playing out this game —
 why would we willingly listen to that screeching?”
- 63 [65]. ‘They seized the excellent one,¹¹⁶ when there was no opportunity
 for the resolute warriors to delay their decision still longer;
 Høgni laughed then — day-labourers¹¹⁷ heard it —
 he knew how to be staunch like that, he suffered torment well.

- 64 [66]. ‘Hǫrpu tók Gunnarr, hræði ilkvistum;
slá hann svá kunni, at snótir grétu;
klukku þeir karlar, er kunnu gørst heyra;
ríkri ráð sagði — raptar sundr brustu!
- 65 [67]. ‘Dó þá dýrir — dags var heldr snemma —
létu þeir á lesti lifa íþróttu.
- 66 [68]. ‘Stórr þóttisk Atli — sté hann um þá báða;
horskri harm sagði ok réð heldr at bregða:
“Morginn er nú, Guðrún, mist hefir þú þér hollra!
Sums ertu sjálfskapa, at hafi svá gengit!”
- 67 [69]. “‘Feginn ertu, Atli — ferr þú víg lýsa;
á munu þér iðrar, ef þú allt reynir!
Sú mun erfð eptir — ek kann þér segja:
ills gengsk þér aldri, nema ek ok deyja!’
- 68 [70]. “‘Kannka ek slíks synja, sé ek til ráð annat,
hálfu hógligra — hǫfnum opt góðu:
maði mun ek þik hugga, mætum ágætum,
silfri snæhvítu, sem þú sjálf vilir!”
- 69 [71]. “‘Ón er þess engi — ek vil því níta!
Sleit ek þá sáttir, er váru sakar minni!
Afkár ek áðr þóttak, á mun nú gæða!
Hræfða ek um hoðvetna, meðan Høgni lifði!
- 70 [72]. “‘Alin vit upp várum í einu húsi,
lékum leik margan ok í lundi óxum,
gæddi okkr Grímildr gulli ok hálsmenjum;
bana mundu mér bræðra bæta aldregi,
né vinna þess ekki, at mér vel þikki!
- 71 [73]. “‘Kostum drepr kvenna karla ofríki!
Í kné gengr hnefi ef kvistir þverra!
Tré tekr at hníga ef høggr tág undan!
Nú máttu einn, Atli, ǫllu hér ráða!”
- 72 [74]. ‘Gnótt var grunnýðgi er gramr því trúði!
Sýn var sveipvísi, ef hann sín gæði!
Kropp var þá Guðrún, kunni um hug mæla;
létt hon sér gørði, lék hon tveim skjöldum!

- 64 [66]. 'Gunnarr took a harp, stirred it with his sole-twigs;¹¹⁸
he struck¹¹⁹ it as he knew how, so that women sobbed;
those men cried out, who could hear it most clearly;
he spoke of his plight to a powerful one¹²⁰ — rafters burst asunder!
- 65 [67]. 'Then the dear ones¹²¹ died — it was rather early in the day —
they let their acts of prowess live on at the last.
- 66 [68]. 'Atli thought himself great — he overcame them both then;
he told the wise one¹²² of her sorrow and determined
to taunt her somewhat:
"It's morning now, Guðrún, [and] you've lost those loyal to you!
You yourself are partly responsible for things having gone thus!"
- 67 [69]. "'You're delighted, Atli — you go to declare the killings;¹²³
regrets will beset you, if you put all things to the test!¹²⁴
That will be your inheritance thereafter — I know how to tell you:
never shall evil depart from you, unless I also die!"
- 68 [70]. "'I can't disprove such [an outcome], [but] I foresee
another eventuality,
more fitting by half — [though] we often refuse what's good:
I'll console you with a handmaid, with celebrated treasures,
with snow-white silver, as you yourself may wish!"
- 69 [71].¹²⁵ "'There's no prospect of that — I'll refuse it!
I've broken covenants [before], when the causes were less!
I seemed terrible before, [but] now it¹²⁶ will be enhanced!
I endured everything, as long as Hǫgni lived!
- 70 [72]. "'We were both brought up in one¹²⁷ house,
we played many a game and grew up in its grove,
Grímildr¹²⁸ endowed us with gold and neck-torcs;
you'll never compensate me for the death of my brothers,
nor do anything about this that would seem well to me!
- 71 [73]. "'Men's overbearing might strikes down women's choices!
The fist drops to its knee if the twigs dwindle!¹²⁹
A tree starts to fall if one hews the rootstock from under it!
Now you alone, Atli, can have your way in everything here!"
- 72 [74]. 'Credulity was abundant when the prince¹³⁰ believed that!
Treachery was apparent, if he'd been on his guard!
Guðrún was inscrutable then, knew how to speak dissemblingly;
she lightened her demeanour, she "played with two shields"¹³¹

- 82 [84]. “Barna veiztu þinna — biðr sér fár verra —
hlut veld ek mínum, hælumk þó ekki.”
- 83 [85]. “Grimm vartu, Guðrún, er þú gøra svá máttir,
barna þinna blóði at blanda mér drykkju!
Snýtt hefr þú sífjungum, sem þú sízt skyldir,
mér lætr þú ok sjálfum millum ills lítit.”
- 84 [86]. “Vili mér enn væri at vega þik sjálfan —
fátt er fullilla farit við gram slíkan;
drýgt þú fyrr hafðir þat er menn dømi vissut
til heimsku, harðræðis, í heimi þessum;
nú hefir þú enn aukit þat er nú áðan frágum,
greipt gloep stóran — gørt hefir þú þitt erfi!
- 85 [87]. “Brend mundu á báli ok barið grjóti áðr;
þá hefir þú árnat þatztu æ beiðisk!”
“Seg þér slíkar sorgir ár morgin!
Fríðra vil ek dauða fara í ljós annat!”
- 86 [88]. ‘Sátu samtýnís, sendusk fárhugi,
hendusk heiptyrði — hvártki sér unði.
Heipt óx Hniflungi, hugði á stórræði,
gat fyr Guðrúnu at hann væri grimmr Atla.
- 87 [89]. ‘Kómu í hug henni Høgna viðfarar,
talði happ honum, ef hann hefnt ynni;
vegin var þá Atli — var þess skammt bíða —
sonr vá Høgna ok sjálf Guðrún.
- 88 [90]. ‘Røskr tók at ræða, rakðisk ór svefni,
kendi brátt benja, bands kvað hann þørf ønga:
“Segið it sannasta: hvern vá son Buðla?
Emka ek lítt leikinn, lífs tel ek vón ønga!”
- 89 [91]. “Dylja mun þik eigi dóttir Grímildar:
látumk því valda, er líðr þína ævi,
en sumu sonr Høgna, er þik sár mœða!”
- 90 [92]. “Vaðit hefir þú at vígi, þótt værit skaplíkt;
illt er vin véla, þanns þér vel trúir!
Beiddr fór ek heiman at biðja þín, Guðrún!

- 91 [93]. ““Leyfð vartu ekkja, létu stórráða,
varða ván lygi, er vér um reyndum;
fórtu heim hingat, fylgði oss herr manna,
allt var ítarlikt um órar ferðir.
- 92 [94]. ““Margs var alls sómi manna tíginna,
naut váru ærin, nutum af stórum;
þar var fjöld fjár, fengu til margir.
- 93 [95]. ““Mund galt ek mæri, meiðma fjöld þiggja,
þræla þrjá tigu, þýjar sjau góðar;
sæmð var at slíku, silfr var þó meira.
- 94 [96]. ““Léztu þér allt þikkja, sem ekki væri,
meðan lǫnd þau lágu er mér leifði Buðli;
gróftu svá undir, gerðit hlut þiggja.
Sværu léztu þína sitja opt grátna;
fanka ek í hug heilum hjóna vætr síðan.”
- 95 [97]. ““Lýgr þú nú, Atli, þótt ek þat lítt rækja;
heldr, var ek hæg sjaldan, hóftu þó stórum!
Borðuzk ér bræðr ungir, bárusk róg milli;
hálf gekk til Heljar ór húsi þínu;
hroldi hotvetna, þat er til hags skyldi.
- 96 [98]. ““Þrjú várum systkin, þóttum óvægin,
fórum af landi, fylgðum Sigurði;
skæva vér létum, skipi hvert vårt stýrði,
orkuðum at auðnu, unz vér austr kvómum.
- 97 [99]. ““Konung drápum fyrstan, kurum land þaðra,
hersar oss á hǫnd gengu — hræzlu þat vissi;
vágum ór skógi þanns vildum syknan;
settum þann sælan er sér né áttit.
- 98 [100]. ““Dauðr varð inn húnski — drap þá brátt kosti;
strangt var angr ungri ekkju nafn hljóta;
kvǫl þótti kvikri at koma í hús Atla;
átti áðr kappi — illr var sá missir.
- 99 [101]. ““Komtaðu af því þingi, er vér þat frægim,
at þú sǫk sóttir né slekðir aðra:
vildir ávalt vægja, en vætki halda,
kyrt um því láta”

- 91 [93]. *““You were a praised widow, one of great plans, they said,
[and] expectation was no lie, as we found out;
you came to our home here, an army of men accompanied us,
everything was noble about our entourages.¹⁶⁰*
- 92 [94]. *““There was much honour of all kinds for¹⁶¹ men of high rank,
cattle were plentiful, we profited from them greatly;
there was an abundance of wealth, many availed themselves of it.*
- 93 [95]. *““I paid the bride-price for the glorious one, an abundance
of treasures to give,¹⁶²
thirty male slaves, seven good bondmaids;
there was honour in such — the silver, however, was worth more.*
- 94 [96]. *““You said everything seemed to you as if it were nothing,
as long as the lands which Buðli left me lay unused(?);
you undermined [me?], so that one didn’t accept a share(?).¹⁶³
You made your mother-in-law often sit weeping;
I never found the household in good heart thereafter.”*
- 95 [97]. *““You’re lying now, Atli, though I care little about it;
rather, I was seldom docile, but you extolled yourself hugely!
You young brothers fought amongst yourselves,
traded slanders between you;
half went to Hel from your house;
everything faltered, that which should have been to our advantage.*
- 96 [98]. *““We were three siblings,¹⁶⁴ we seemed invincible,
we journeyed from shore, accompanied Sigurðr;
we made ourselves speed ahead, each of us steered a ship,
we roved according to fate, until we came to the east.*
- 97 [99]. *““We slew a king first, we chose land there,
chieftains surrendered to us — that showed fear;
by fighting we freed from the wood¹⁶⁵ the one
whom we wanted exempt from punishment;
we placed in prosperity the one who possessed nothing himself.*
- 98 [100]. *““Dead became the Hunnish one¹⁶⁶ — [that] soon killed
my opportunities then;
it was a strong anguish for a young woman to be allotted
the name of widow;
it seemed torture for a living one to come into Atli’s house;
a champion had married¹⁶⁷ me before — that was an ill loss.*
- 99 [101]. *““You didn’t come¹⁶⁸ from the assembly, as we’ve heard it,
such that you’d argued your case [successfully] or quashed another’s:
you always wanted to give way, and never hold [your ground],
to acquiesce quietly about it . . . ”¹⁶⁹*

- 100 [102]. “Lýgr þú nú, Guðrún, lítt mun við bætast
hluti hvárigra — höfum öll skarðan!
Gørðu nú, Guðrún, af gæzku þinni,
okkr til ágætis, er mik út hefja!”
- 101 [103]. “Knorr mun ek kaupa ok kistu steinda,
vexa vel blæju at verja þitt líki,
hyggja á þörf hverja, sem vit holl værim.”
- 102 [104]. ‘Nár varð þá Atli, niðjum stríð æxti;
efndi ítrborin alt þats réð heita;
fróð vildi Guðrún fara sér at spilla;
urðu dvöl dægra — dó hon í sinn annat.
- 103 [105]. ‘Sæll er hvern síðan er slíkt getr fæða
jóð at afreki, sems ól Gjúki!
Lifa mun þat eptir á landi hverju,
þeira þrámæli, hvargi er þjóð heyrir!’

- 100 [102]. *“You’re lying now, Guðrún, [and] little will it improve
the lot of either of us — we’ve all suffered loss!
Act now, Guðrún, out of your goodness,
according to our¹⁷⁰ honour, when they carry me out!”*
- 101 [103]. *“I will buy a ship¹⁷¹ and a stained¹⁷² coffin,
wax well the shroud to wrap your body,
think of every necessity, as if we two were well-disposed
[to each other].”*
- 102 [104]. ‘Atli became a corpse then, increased grief for his kinsmen;
the nobly born one¹⁷³ carried out all that she had promised;
wise Guðrún wanted to go and destroy herself;
a delay of days came about — she died on another occasion.
- 103 [105]. ‘Happy is each one¹⁷⁴ thereafter who gets to father
such offspring of outstanding deeds, as those which Gjúki sired!
Their defiant words will live after them in every land,
wherever there are people listening!’

Textual Apparatus to *Atlamál in grænlenzku*

Atlamál in grænlenzku] This poem's rubricated, but faded, title is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; this edition therefore relies on the transcription therein, in which the words *atla mal in* are bracketed

1/1 *Frétt*] The first letter is large, half-inset and rubricated, but faded, in **R**

2/8 *brátt*] **R** *brat*

11/2 *hyggðu*] **R** *hygðv*

12/5 *á vísat*] **R** *am sat*

17/5 *munni*] **R** *mʊN*

17/5 *oss*] **R** *os*

21/5 *tók*] Absent from **R**

27/3 *furðu*] **R** *for- / þo*

33/8 *verðr*] **R** *verþ*

45/1 *hon*] **R** *han*

53/1 *fimm*] **R** *v.*

54/3 *konu*] **R** *kona*

61/3 *illþræll*] **R** *ill þræ*

66/3 *horski*] **R** *hoscri*

68/5 *mani*] **R** *maNi*

69/1 *engi*] **R** *engia*

69/7 *hotvetna*] **R** *hovetna*

74/8 *vinna*] **R** absent

77/3 *skiptit*] **R** *sciptiz*

94/9 *fanka*] **R** *fan* with *-ca* erased

95/4 *hóftu*] **R** *hostu*

97 *áttit*] Below this word **R** has a drawing of a dragon's head and neck

98/4 *nafn*] **R** *nam*

99/8] **R** has a blank space here, sufficient for one half-line of verse

Notes to the Translation

- 1 This edition encloses the words of *Am.* in framing quotation marks on the basis of the first-person passages in stt. 34 [36], 36 [38].
- 2 Or 'malice'.
- 3 I.e., it helped none.

- 4 The verb *æxtu*, literally '(they) grew', suggests a mounting conspiracy.
- 5 I.e., they plotted the deaths of princes, here Gunnarr and Høgni. The *Skjoldungar* 'Shieldings' were originally the Danish royal dynasty; cf. the reference to Limfjord, Denmark in *Am.* 4.
- 6 Gunnarr and Høgni.
- 7 Perhaps the support of Gunnarr and Høgni.
- 8 Guðrún.
- 9 Guðrún. Alternatively, translate 'then the wise one was in want/need'.
- 10 Gunnarr and Høgni.
- 11 I.e., she could not herself visit her brothers at their home.
- 12 Or simply 'She carved runes'.
- 13 One of Atli's messengers. His name perhaps hints at the meaning 'Not a Friend'.
- 14 Limfjord, Denmark.
- 15 The hosts.
- 16 Atli's messengers.
- 17 Atli. Alternatively, there may be a reference to Guðrún as 'fair one' or 'woman'.
- 18 The messengers.
- 19 Literally, 'owned'.
- 20 Literally, 'truth'.
- 21 Glaumvǫr.
- 22 Atli's messengers.
- 23 Gunnarr.
- 24 Gunnarr, his family and their followers.
- 25 In other words, Høgni said he thought Gunnarr's decision to accept Atli's invitation was ill-advised (cf. *Akv.* 8–9); this need not mean, however, that Høgni refused to go. Alternatively, emend *nítti* to *níttit* 'did not reject'.
- 26 I.e., fine women.
- 27 More literally, 'there was hospitality of all [kinds in] many [respects]'.
- 28 Drinking-horns.
- 29 Høgni and Kostbera.
- 30 Runic letters.
- 31 I.e., speak quietly.
- 32 The runes.
- 33 Kostbera.
- 34 Her dream.
- 35 Kostbera.
- 36 Høgni.
- 37 It appears that Gunnarr has decided to visit Atli, and that Høgni will go with him.
- 38 Guðrún.
- 39 Or 'pessimistic'.
- 40 I.e., the evil you speak of.

- 41 Atli.
- 42 In *VS* 36 a corresponding prose passage constitutes Högni's interpretation of Kostbera's first dream about a raging river.
- 43 I.e., you'll take a tumble, meet your downfall.
- 44 I.e., contrary to the desired course, backwards, awry.
- 45 Alternatively, 'or else I fear (too much)' or 'or else I fear for myself'. This stanza has no parallel in *VS* 36.
- 46 I.e., dreamt.
- 47 Stt. 15 and 16 might also be considered a single stanza.
- 48 I.e., a polar bear.
- 49 I.e., misfortune.
- 50 Literally 'skin'. People's spirits were believed to manifest themselves as creatures in dreams and visions. People were also believed to become like, or even to transform into, the creatures whose skins they wore as clothes, as in *Þrk.* 3–5 and the prose introduction to *Vkv.*
- 51 Possibly a deliberately absurd explanation, indicative of Högni's exasperation with his wife's cautions.
- 52 Their discussion.
- 53 Glaumvǫr and Gunnarr.
- 54 Literally, 'that it was a harm of dreams'.
- 55 Perhaps in this version of the story Gunnarr is attacked by snakes as he hangs from a gallows; cf. *Am.* 57 [59]. Only hanging is commanded by Atli in *Am.* 57.
- 56 Ragnarok, the Norse apocalypse.
- 57 I.e., interpret that dream. No corresponding dream is found in *VS* 36. A following stanza in which Gunnarr interprets this dream may be missing. The stanza numbering in *NK* (here bracketed) assumes omission of one stanza after *Am.* 22 and of another after *Am.* 26.
- 58 Literally, 'stood'.
- 59 In *VS* 36 it is Kostbera, not Glaumvǫr, who dreams this dream. In fact, Kostbera relates two corresponding dreams, which begin the series of visions that she relates to Högni. Högni's interpretation of Kostbera's second, longer dream is that '*Þar munu renna akrar, er þú hugðir ána, ok er vér gongum akrinn, nema opt stórar agnir fœtr vára*', 'It will signify rippling [literally, "running"] cornfields, when you thought there was a river, and when we walk through the cornfield, great husks often touch our legs'. A stanza with a corresponding interpretation has probably dropped out of the surviving text of *Am.*
- 60 *Dísir*, here supernatural females suggestive of seductive valkyries and described as 'dead women'.
- 61 I.e., powerless (to help you).
- 62 Literally, 'more manservants were available by half'.
- 63 'Seal Offspring'.
- 64 A kenning for 'warrior', here Orkningr.
- 65 Högni's.
- 66 I.e., women went with the departing men.

- 67 I.e., from the men.
- 68 The women.
- 69 The men.
- 70 Literally, 'owned'.
- 71 Vingi refers to himself in the third person.
- 72 Kostbera, Høgni's wife.
- 73 I.e., none.
- 74 The interpretation of the last half-verse is disputed.
- 75 I.e., the women.
- 76 I.e., escorted.
- 77 Literally '(the) fates'.
- 78 Or 'determined (it)'.
- 79 I.e., they leant back as they struck the water with their oars. Alternatively, perhaps, 'struck (the water) with the rudder'.
- 80 Or 'settlement'.
- 81 I.e., destroyed utterly.
- 82 A legal idiom. Høgni is being sarcastic.
- 83 I.e., never.
- 84 I.e., they killed him.
- 85 Literally, 'went into'.
- 86 I.e., between the opposing parties.
- 87 I.e., they exchanged insults.
- 88 I.e., it's not obvious.
- 89 I.e., she opened the doors wide.
- 90 This idiom denotes embracing and kissing.
- 91 Literally, 'she said more by a (substantial) difference'.
- 92 Guðrún.
- 93 Guðrún.
- 94 I.e., fall in battle.
- 95 I.e., she killed him.
- 96 People in general.
- 97 The Niflungar.
- 98 Atli.
- 99 I.e., destroyed.
- 100 In a corresponding passage in *VS* 38, Atli says 'Fjórir váru vér bræðr' 'We were four brothers'; in the present stanza, some editors emend the manuscript reading *v* (i.e., *fimm* 'five') to *iv* (i.e., *ffjórir* 'four'), assuming a simple scribal error.
- 101 Pl. — a reference to Guðrún and her family.
- 102 Brynhildr.
- 103 Guðrún replies.

- 104 These events are otherwise unknown.
- 105 Or 'bold'.
- 106 Or 'experience', 'endure'.
- 107 Literally, 'steeper'.
- 108 'One who Steers/Sails Near the Wind'; elsewhere in Old Norse literature this name is that of a sea-king.
- 109 Literally, 'deeds'—probably a poetic pl. that may be translated as sg.
- 110 More idiomatically, 'However long he lives, he'll always be called worthless!'
- 111 Hjalli, who is Atli's cook.
- 112 One who braises, a cook—Hjalli.
- 113 Hjalli refers to himself in the third person.
- 114 Literally, 'fewer'.
- 115 Hjalli.
- 116 Høgni.
- 117 Either workers in the fields or people in general.
- 118 I.e., he stirred it into life by plucking its strings with his toes. Possibly, in this version of the story, Gunnarr plays his harp with his toes while hanging from a gallows, his hands having been bound; cf. *SnESkáld* (I, 42, pp. 48–49). By contrast, *Akv.* 32 has Gunnarr play the harp with his hand while imprisoned in a snake-enclosure. See also *Dr.*
- 119 I.e., played.
- 120 A powerful woman, often supposed to be Guðrún, but possibly rather Oddrún, Atli's sister (see *Od.* 29).
- 121 Gunnarr and Høgni.
- 122 Guðrún.
- 123 A requirement of Icelandic law, if Atli was not to be guilty of *morð* 'murder' (concealed killing), but Guðrún appears sarcastic.
- 124 Or 'if you experience all'.
- 125 Possibly Guðrún speaks this stanza and the next to herself.
- 126 I.e., Guðrún's terribleness.
- 127 I.e., Guðrún and Høgni grew up in the same house.
- 128 Guðrún's mother.
- 129 Probably an allusion to the board-game *hnefatafl*, literally 'fist's table', which ends when the *hnefi* 'fist', a king-piece, either escapes its opponents or is captured by them. The loss of the fist's defending pieces, apparently called *kvistir* 'twigs' (i.e., 'fingers?'), precipitates its capture, here symbolized by the act of kneeling in submission.
- 130 Atli.
- 131 I.e., she played a duplicitous game.
- 132 Guðrún.
- 133 Guðrún's children.
- 134 I.e., don't ask at all about that.
- 135 I.e., the potential of living into old age.

- 136 I.e., revenge or angry regret will soon follow.
- 137 These words are apparently spoken by one or both of the children.
- 138 Guðrún.
- 139 Alternatively, emend to *skipti skapliga* 'she dealt with them fittingly'.
- 140 I.e., to another part of the hall, presumably.
- 141 I.e., it will be your worst nightmare.
- 142 I.e., aroused, stirred up.
- 143 Cf. *Vkv.* 31.
- 144 Cf. *Vkv.* 35.
- 145 Or 'you alone were responsible for it'.
- 146 I.e., no one asks for.
- 147 I.e., wiped out, killed.
- 148 Literally, 'full badly', 'very badly'.
- 149 I.e., 'perpetrated' or perhaps 'comprehended', but also with a hint of the verb's literal sense in view of Atli's hold on his children's flesh while eating.
- 150 Possibly as a witch; cf. *Ghv.*'s initial prose and *GD* 8.10.14.
- 151 Alternatively, 'I want a fairer death to fare ...'.
- 152 I.e., into the next life, another world.
- 153 Högni's son. His name corresponds to the family-name *Hniflungar* of *HH. I* 48, *Ghv.* 12. In *VS* 40, he is called *Niflungr*.
- 154 Or 'slain'
- 155 Or 'slew'.
- 156 Atli.
- 157 Or 'for a bond/fetter' with which to take him captive (since he was dying).
- 158 Atli refers to himself in the third person.
- 159 Literally 'little'; Atli recognizes that he has been seriously deceived.
- 160 Or 'journeys', 'behaviour', 'circumstances', 'lives'.
- 161 Or 'of', 'possessed by'.
- 162 I.e., 'giving an abundance of treasures'; less likely, 'to receive an abundance of treasures'.
- 163 The meaning is uncertain. Perhaps Atli intended to give part of these lands away, but Guðrún, to keep them under her control, undermined him, so that the intended recipient refused to accept them.
- 164 Guðrún, Gunnarr and Högni.
- 165 I.e., from outlawry (outlaws were often confined to woods).
- 166 Sigurðr; see note to *Sg.* 4.
- 167 Literally, 'owned'.
- 168 I.e., 'you've never come from'.
- 169 This stanza seems to have lost its final half-line.
- 170 Atli uses the dual form *okkr*, referring to himself and Guðrún together.

- 171 Specifically, a large, ocean-going trading ship. Atli will apparently be buried in a coffin within a ship—a form of burial for which there is no known archaeological evidence.
- 172 Painted.
- 173 Guðrún.
- 174 I.e., every man.