

BROT AF SIGURÐARKVIÐU (“Fragment of a Sigurd Lay”)

Hollander on “The Great Lacuna”

There is a gap of eight manuscript pages in *Codex Regius* after Stanza 31, line 2 of “The Lay of Sigdrífa.” Then follows all that is left of a “Lay of Sigurth” (*Brot*). This is the so-called “Great Lacuna.”¹ Of the poems thus lost to us, only “The Lay of Sigdrífa” can be pieced out from several paper manuscripts—of unknown source—although it too is fragmentary. For the remainder we are dependent on the paraphrase of the *Völsunga saga* (Chaps.21-29) which in all likelihood renders the substance of the missing pages.² Unfortunately scholars have found it impossible to arrive at any agreement about what the *Regius* pages contained, because the author of the *Völsunga saga* has demonstrably rounded out his narrative with passages from the *Piðreks saga* and paraphrases of “The Lay of Grípir.”

However, we may be fairly sure that a major portion had as subject the winning of Brynhild for Gunnar, Sigurth’s ride through the wall of flames (see Stanzas A and B below), and the deception practiced on her; another portion, the famous quarrel between the bathing queens, when Brynhild for the first time learns of the deception (these stanzas no doubt contained some magnificent lines), the continuation of the quarrel on the next morning (see Stanza C), and Sigurth’s vain attempt to console Brynhild—also a powerful scene (see Stanza D). Then there was, possibly, a lay dealing with Guthrún’s anxious dreams of her winning, but soon losing, Sigurth, and of her remarriage to Atli.

(Gunnar attempts vainly to ride through the wall of flames. Then Sigurth urges on his steed Grani: the *Völsunga saga*, Ch.27)

[Hollander’s Translation:]

[Bellows’ Translation:]

[Thorpe’s Translation:]

A. The flickering flames | upflared to the skies,
 The earth quivered | with awful fire;
 But few³ then dared | of the folk-warders
 To ride through the fire | unflinchingly.

The fire raged, | the earth was rocked,
 The flames leaped high | to heaven itself;
 Few were the hardy | heroes would dare
 To ride or leap | the raging flames.

The fire began to rage, and the earth to tremble,
 High rose the flame to heaven itself:
 There ventured few chiefs of people
 Through that fire to ride, or to leap over.

B. His Grani Sigurth | with sword did urge:
 The fire was quenched | before the king,
 The flames bated | before the bold one,
 The byrnie glistered, | by Regin given.

Sigurth urged Grani | then with his sword,
 The fire slackened | before the hero,
 The flames sank low | for the greedy of fame,
 The armor flashed | that Regin had fashioned.

Sigurd Grani with his word urged,
 The fire was quenched before the prince,
 The flame allayed before the glory-seeker
 With the bright saddle that Rok had owned.

(On the morrow after their quarrel Guthrún endeavors to reconcile Brynhild and to convince her that her husband Gunnar is second to no one; but Brynhild answers that it was Sigurth who slew the dragon and that this weighs more heavily with her than all of Gunnar’s power: the *Völsunga saga*, Ch.28).

C. “Will not ever after | on earth be forgotten
 How Sigurth slew | the grim serpent;
 But thy brother | brooked in nowise
 To ride through the fire | unflinchingly.”

Sigurth the dragon | slew, and that
 Will men recall | while the world remains;
 But little boldness | thy brother had
 To ride or leap | the raging flames.

Sigurd the serpent slew, and that henceforth
 Shall be by none forgotten, while mankind lives:
 But thy brother neither dared
 Through the fire to ride, nor over it to leap.

(Brynhild rejects all attempts on the part of Sigurth to console her: the *Völsunga saga*, Ch.29).

D. From the talk turned him | the trusted thane,
 The son of Sigmund, | sorrowing greatly
 At his sides so that | his sark did rive,
 Of iron woven, | on the atheling.

Forth went Sigurth, | and speech he sought not,
 The friend of heroes, | his head bowed down;
 Such was his grief | that asunder burst
 His mail-coat all | of iron wrought.

Out went Sigurd from that interview
 Into the hall of kings, writhing with anguish;
 So that began to start the ardent warrior's
 Iron-woven sark off from his sides.

Bellows' Introduction (1936)

The gap of eight leaves in the *Codex Regius* (cf. introductory note to the *Sigrdrifumol*) is followed by a passage of twenty stanzas which is evidently the end of a longer poem, the greater part of it having been contained in the lost section of the manuscript. There is here little question of such a compilation as made up the so-called *Reginismol*, *Fafnismol*, and *Sigrdrifumol*; the extant fragment shows every sign of being part of a poem which, as it stood in the manuscript, was a complete and definite unit. The end is clearly marked; the following poem, *Guthrunarkvitha I*, carries a specific heading in the manuscript, so that there is no uncertainty as to where the fragment closes.

It seems altogether likely that the twenty stanzas thus remaining are the end of a poem entitled *Sigurtharkvitha* (Lay of Sigurth), and, more specifically, the "Long" Lay of Sigurth. The extant and complete Sigurth lay, a relatively late work, is referred to by the annotator as the "Short" Lay of Sigurth, which, of course, presupposes the existence of a longer poem with the same title. As the "short" lay is one of the longest poems in the whole collection (seventy stanzas), it follows that the other one must have been considerably more extensive in order to have been thus distinguished by its length. It may be guessed, then, that not less than eighty or a hundred stanzas, and possibly more, of the "Long" Lay of Sigurth have been lost with the missing pages of *Regius*.

The narrative, from the point at which the so-called *Sigrdrifumol* breaks off to that at which the *Brot* takes it up, is given with considerable detail in the *Volsungasaga*. In this prose narrative four stanzas are quoted, and one of them is specifically introduced with the phrase: "as is told in the Lay of Sigurth." It is possible, but most unlikely, that the entire passage paraphrases this poem alone; such an assumption would give the Lay of Sigurth not less than two hundred and fifty stanzas (allowing about fifteen stanzas to each of the missing pages), and moreover there are inconsistencies in the *Volsungasaga* narrative suggesting that different and more or less conflicting poems were used as sources. The chances are that the "Long" Lay of Sigurth filled approximately the latter half of the lost section of the manuscript, the first half including poems of which the only trace is to be found in the *Volsungasaga* prose paraphrase and in two of the stanzas therein quoted.

The course of the *Volsungasaga's* story from the *Sigrdrifumol* to the *Brot* is, briefly, as follows. After leaving the Valkyrie ["Sigrdrifa"], Sigurth comes to the dwelling of Heimir, Brynhild's brother-in-law, where he meets Brynhild and they swear oaths of fidelity anew (the *Volsungasaga* is no more lucid with regard to the Brynhild-Sigrdrifa confusion than was the annotator of the poems). Then the scene shifts to the home of the Gjukungs. Guthrun, Gjuki's daughter, has a terrifying dream, and visits Brynhild to have it explained, which the latter does by foretelling pretty much everything that is going to happen; this episode was presumably the subject of a separate poem in the lost section of the manuscript. Guthrun returns home, and Sigurth soon arrives, to be made enthusiastically welcome. Grimhild, mother of Gunnar and Guthrun, gives him a magic draught which makes him forget all about Brynhild, and shortly thereafter he marries Guthrun.

Then follows the episode of the winning of Brynhild for Gunnar (cf. *Gripisspo*, 97 and note). This was certainly the subject of a poem, possibly of the first part of the "Long" Lay of Sigurth, although it seems more likely that the episode was dealt with in a separate poem. The *Volsungasaga* quotes two stanzas describing Sigurth's triumphant passing through the flames after Gunnar has failed and the two have changed forms. They run thus: [*See Stanzas A/B above*]

After Sigurth has spent three nights with Brynhild, laying his sword between them (cf. *Gripisspo*, 41 and note), he and Gunnar return home, while Brynhild goes to the dwelling of her brother-in-law, Heimir, and makes ready for her marriage with Gunnar, directing Heimir to care for her daughter by Sigurth, Aslaug. The wedding takes place, to be followed soon after by the quarrel between Guthrun and Brynhild, in which the former betrays the fact that it was Sigurth, and not Gunnar, who rode through the flames. Brynhild speaks with contempt of Guthrun and her whole family, and the following stanza, which presumably belongs to the same Sigurth lay as the *Brot*, is quoted at this point: [*See Stanza C above*]

Gunnar and Sigurth alike try to appease the angry Brynhild, but in vain. After Sigurth has talked with her, his leaving her hall is described in the following stanza, introduced by the specific phrase: "as is said in the Lay of Sigurth": [*See Stanza D above*]

Brynhild then tells Gunnar that she had given herself wholly to Sigurth before she had become Gunnar's wife (the confusion between the two stories is commented on in the note to *Gripisspo*, 47), and Gunnar discusses plans of vengeance with his brother, Hogni. It is at this point that the action of the *Brot* begins. Beginning with this poem, and thence to the end of the cycle, the German features of the narrative predominate (cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*).

“FRAGMENTS OF THE LAY OF SIGURD & BRYNHILD”

[Thorpe's Translation]

These fragments from the *Volsunga-Saga*, which are inserted in some paper manuscripts of the *Edda*, and containing matter probably derived from the lost poems relative to Sigurd and Brynhild, are printed in the Stockholm edition of the *Edda*. They are also given by Afzelius in his Swedish version, and partially in Danish by Finn Magnussen in his edition. A complete translation into Danish of the entire *Saga* has since been given, by Prof. Rafn at Copenhagen.

* * *

Sigurd then rides away from Hindarfiall, and journeys on till he comes to the habitation of Heimir, who was married to Beckhild, Brynhild's sister. Alsvið, Heimir's son, who was at play when Sigurd arrived at the mansion, received him kindly, and requested him to stay with him. Sigurd consented, and remained there a short time. Brynhild was at that time with Heimir, and was weaving within a gold border the great exploits of Sigurd.

One day, when Sigurd was come from the forest, his hawk flew to the window at which Brynhild sat employed on weaving. Sigurd ran after it, saw the lady, and appeared struck with her handiwork and beauty. On the following day Sigurd went to her apartment, and Alsvið stood outside the door shafting arrows. Sigurd said: "Hail to thee, lady!" or "How fares it with thee?" She answered: "We are well, my kindred and friends are living, but it is uncertain what any one's lot may be till their last day." He sat down by her. Brynhild said: "This seat will be allowed to few, unless my father comes." Sigurd answered: "Now is that come to pass which thou didst promise me." She said: "Here shalt thou be welcome." She then arose, and her four maidens with her, and, approaching him with a golden cup, bade him drink. He reached towards her and took hold of her hand together with the cup, and placed her by him, clasped her round the neck, kissed her, and said: "A fairer than thou was never born." She said: "It is not wise to place faith in women, for they so often break their promise." He said: "Better days will come upon us, so that we may enjoy happiness." Brynhild said: "It is not ordained that we shall live together, for I am a shield-maiden (*skjaldmær*)." Sigurd said: "Then will our happiness be best promoted, if we live together; for harder to endure is the pain which herein lies than from a keen weapon." Brynhild said: "I shall be called to the aid of warriors, but thou wilt espouse Gudrun, Giuki's daughter." Sigurd said: "No king's daughter shall ensnare me, therefore have not two thoughts on that subject; and I swear by the gods that I will possess thee and no other woman." She answered to the same effect. Sigurd thanked her for what she had said to him, and gave her a gold ring. He remained there a short time in great favour.

Sigurd now rode from Heimir's dwelling with much gold, until he came to the palace of King Giuki, whose wife was named Grimhild. They had three sons, Gunnar, Hogni, and Guthorm. Gudrun was the name of their daughter. King Giuki entreated Sigurd to stay there, and there he remained a while. All appeared low by the side of Sigurd. One evening the sorceress Grimhild rose and presented a horn to Sigurd, saying: "Joyful for us is thy presence, and we desire that all good may befall thee. Take this horn and drink." He took it and drank, and with that drink forgot both his love and his vows to Brynhild. After that, Grimhild so fascinated him that he was induced to espouse Gudrun, and all pledged their faith to Sigurd, and confirmed it by oaths. Sigurd gave Gudrun to eat of Fafnir's heart, and she became afterwards far more austere than before. Their son was named Sigmund.

Grimhild now counselled her son Gunnar to woo Brynhild, and consulted with Sigurd, in consequence of this design. Brynhild had vowed to wed that man only who should ride over the blazing fire that was laid around her hall. They found the hall and the fire burning around it. Gunnar rode Goti, and Hogni Holknir. Gunnar turns his horse towards the fire, but it shrinks back. Sigurd said: "Why dost thou shrink back, Gunnar?" Gunnar answers: "My horse will not leap this fire," and prays Sigurd to lend him Grani. "He is at thy service," said Sigurd. Gunnar now rides again towards the fire, but Grani will not go over. They then changed forms. Sigurd rides, having in his hand the sword Gram, and golden spurs on his heels. Grani runs forward to the fire when he feels the spur. There was now a great noise, as it is said:

1. The fire began to rage, and the earth to tremble,
High rose the flame to heaven itself:
There ventured few chiefs of people
Through that fire to ride, or to leap over.

2. Sigurd Grani with his word urged,
The fire was quenched before the prince,
The flame allayed before the glory-seeker
With the bright saddle that Rok had owned.

Brynhild was sitting in a chair as Sigurd entered. She asks who he is, and he calls himself Gunnar Giuki's son. "And thou art destined to be my wife with thy father's consent. I have ridden through the flickering flame (vaflogi) at thy requisition." She said: "I know not well how I shall answer this." Sigurd stood erect on the floor resting on the hilt of his sword. She rose embarrassed from her seat, like a swan on the waves, having a sword in her hand, a helmet on her head, and wearing a corslet. "Gunnar," said she, "speak not so to me, unless thou art the foremost of men; and then thou must slay him who has sought me, if thou hast so much trust in thyself." Sigurd said: "Remember now thy promise, that thou wouldst go with that man who should ride through the flickering flame." She acknowledged the truth of his words, stood up, and gave him a glad welcome. He tarried there three nights, and they prepared one bed. He took the sword Gram and laid it between them. She inquired why he did so. He said that it was enjoined him so to act towards his bride on their marriage, or he would receive his death. He then took from her the ring called Andvaranaut, and gave her another that had belonged to Fafnir. After this he rode away through the same fire to his companions, when Gunnar and he again changed forms, and they then rode home.

Brynhild related this in confidence to her foster-father Heimir, and said: "A king named Gunnar has ridden through the flickering flame, and is come to speak with me; but I told him that Sigurd alone might so do, to whom I gave my vow at Hindarfiall, and that he only was the man." Heimir said that what had happened must remain as it was. Brynhild said: "Our daughter Aslaug thou shalt rear up here with thee." Brynhild then went to her father, King Budli, and he with his daughter Brynhild went to King Giuki's palace. A great feasting was afterwards held, when Sigurd remembered all his oaths to Brynhild, and yet kept silence. Brynhild and Gunnar sat at the drinking and drank wine.

One day Brynhild and Gudrun went to the river Rhine, and Brynhild went farther out into the water. Gudrun asked why she did so? Brynhild answered: "Why shall I go on along with thee in this more than in anything else? I presume that my father was more potent than thine, and my husband has performed more valorous deeds, and ridden through the blazing fire. Thy husband was King Hialprek's thrall." Gudrun answered angrily: "Thou shouldst be wiser than to venture to vilify my husband, as it is the talk of all that no one like to him in every respect has ever come into the world; nor does it become thee to vilify him, as he was thy former husband, and slew Fafnir, and rode through the fire, whom thou thoughtest was King Gunnar; and he lay with thee, and took from thee the ring Andvaranaut, and here mayest thou recognize it." Brynhild then looking at the ring, recognized it, and turned pale as though she were dead. Brynhild was very taciturn that evening, and Gudrun asked Sigurd why Brynhild was so taciturn. He dissuaded her much from making this inquiry, and said that at all events it would soon be known.

On the morrow, when sitting in their apartment, Gudrun said: "Be cheerful, Brynhild! What is it that prevents thy mirth?" Brynhild answered: "Malice drives thee to this; for thou hast a cruel heart." "Judge not so," said Gudrun. Brynhild continued: "Ask about that only which is better for thee to know; that is more befitting women of high degree. It is good, too, for thee to be content, as all goes according to thy wishes." Gudrun said: "It is premature to glory in that: this forebodes something; but what instigates thee against us?" Brynhild answered: "Thou shalt be requited for having espoused Sigurd; for I grudge thee the possession of him." Gudrun said: "We knew not of your secret." Brynhild answered: "We have had no secret, though we have sworn oaths of fidelity; and thou knowest that I have been deceived, and I will avenge it." Gudrun said: "Thou art better married than thou deservest to be, and thy violence must be cooled." "Content should I be," said Brynhild, "didst thou not possess a more renowned husband than I." Gudrun answered: "Thou hast as renowned a husband; for it is doubtful which is the greater king." Brynhild said: "Sigurd overcame Fafnir, and that is worth more than all Gunnar's kingdom, as it is said:

"Sigurd the serpent slew, and that henceforth
Shall be by none forgotten, while mankind lives;
But thy brother neither dared through the fire to ride,
Nor over it to leap."

Gudrun said: "Grani would not run through the fire under King Gunnar: but he [Gunnar] dared to ride." Brynhild said: "Let us not contend: I bear no good will to Grimhild." Gudrun said: "Blame her not; for she is towards thee as to her own daughter." Brynhild said: "She is the cause of all the evil which gnaws me. She presented to Sigurd the pernicious drink, so that he no more remembered me." Gudrun said: "Many an unjust word thou utterest, and this is a great falsehood." Brynhild said: "So

enjoy Sigurd as thou hast not deceived me, and may it go with thee as I imagine." Gudrun said: "Better shall I enjoy him than thou wilt wish; and no one has said he has had too much good with me at any time." Brynhild said: "Thou sayest ill and wilt repent of it. Let us cease from angry words, and not indulge in useless prattle. Long have I borne in silence the grief that dwells in my breast: I have also felt regard for thy brother. But let us talk of other things." Gudrun said: "Your imagination looks far forward."

Brynhild then lay in bed, and King Gunnar came to talk with her, and begged her to rise and give vent to her sorrow; but she would not listen to him. They then brought Sigurd to visit her and learn whether her grief might not be alleviated. They called to memory their oaths, and how they had been deceived, and at length Sigurd offered to marry her and put away Gudrun; but she would not hear of it. Sigurd left the apartment, but was so greatly affected by her sorrow that the rings of his corslet burst asunder from his sides, as is said in the *Sigurdarkvida*:

"Out went Sigurd from that interview
Into the hall of kings, writhing with anguish;
So that began to start the ardent warrior's
Iron-woven sark off from his sides."

Brynhild afterwards instigated Gunnar to murder Sigurd, saying that he had deceived them both and broken his oath. Gunnar consulted with Hogni, and revealed to him this conversation. Hogni earnestly strove to dissuade him from such a deed, on account of their oaths. Gunnar removed the difficulty, saying: "Let us instigate our brother Guthorm; he is young and of little judgment, and is, moreover, free of all oaths; and so avenge the mortal injury of his having seduced Brynhild." They then took a serpent and the flesh of a wolf, and had them cooked, and gave them to him to eat, and offered him gold and a large realm, to do the deed, as is said:

"The forest-fish they roasted, and the wolf's carcass took,
While some to Guthorm dealt out gold;
Gave him Geri's⁴ flesh with his drink,
And many other things steeped therein."⁵

With this food he became so furious, that he would instantly perpetrate the deed. On this it is related as in the *Sigurdarkvida*, when Gunnar and Brynhild conversed together.

Hollander's Introduction (1962)

Following "The Great Lacuna" there is, on page 33 of the *Codex Regius*, a fragment of twenty-odd stanzas, constituting the conclusion—or rather, part of the conclusion—of what must have been one of the proudest lays in the *Edda*: very possibly the four fine stanzas cited above are taken from it. That it was probably also one of the longest, may be inferred from the fact that the other Sigurth lay, with some seventy stanzas, is called "The Short Lay of Sigurth."⁶ The text is in a rather disordered condition.

Both poems deal with the central theme of the Sigurth legend—in the main, the hero's stay at Gjúki's court, the winning and betrayal of Brynhild, her quarrel with Guthrún, Brynhild's instigation of Sigurth's death, and Guthrún's lament—so that we have a parallel treatment, as in the cases of *Helgakviða* I and II and *Atlakviða* and *Atlamá*. As in most of the lays following, a knowledge of the story is assumed. The poet is interested chiefly in the words, these lays are dramatic lyrics with an epic frame.

The paraphrase in the *Völsunga saga* (Ch.29) seems based, partly on "The Short Lay of Sigurth," partly on still other poems, now lost. Most scholars would assign the "Fragmentary Lay" to, say, the earlier part of the eleventh century, and therefore to Iceland.

OUTLINE

1-3	Gunnar Incited to Vengeance by Brynhild, but Hogni Demurs
4-5a	Gothorm Induced to Murder Sigurd
5b	Prophecy of the Birds
6-7	Guthrún receives Hogni and learns of Sigurd's Death
8-10	Brynhild mocks Sigurd's demise
11	Guthrún Curses the Evildoers
12-13	Gunnar Lays Awake, Agitated
14-15	Brynhild's Lament
16-17	Brynhild's Prophecy of Doom
18-20	Brynhild Speaks of Loyalty
Prose	Of Sigurd's Death: An Attempt at Reconciling Versions

Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Hollander (1962)
<p><i>Gunnar</i> 1. ["Why art thou, Brynhild! Budli's daughter! Absorbed in evil and murderous thoughts? What injury has Sigurd done thee, That thou the hero wilt of life bereave?"</p> <p><i>Brynhild</i> 2. "Sigurd to me oaths has sworn, Oaths sworn, all falsehoods. He at a time deceived me when he should have been Of all oaths most observant."</p> <p><i>Hogni</i> 3. "Thee Brynhild has in anger Instigated evil to perpetrate, harm to execute. She grudges Gudrun her happy marriage, And thee, possession of herself."</p> <p>4. Some a wolf roasted, some a snake cut up, Some to Guthorm served the wolf, Before they might, eager for crime, On the mighty man lay their hands.</p> <p>5. Without stood Gudrun, Giuki's daughter, And these words first of all uttered: "Where is now Sigurd, lord of warriors, Seeing that my kinsmen foremost ride?"</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <p>Hogni⁸ spake: 1. "(What evil deed has Sigurth) done, That the hero's life thou fain wouldst have?"</p> <p>Gunnar spake:⁹ 2. "Sigurth oaths to me hath sworn, Oaths hath sworn, and all hath broken; He betrayed me there where truest all His oaths, methinks, he ought to have kept."</p> <p>Hogni spake: 3. "Thy heart hath Brynhild whetted to hate, Evil to work and harm to win, She grudges the honor that Guthrun has, And that joy of herself thou still dost have."</p> <p>4. They cooked a wolf, they cut up a snake,¹⁰ They gave to Gotthorm¹¹ the greedy one's flesh, Before the men, to murder minded, Laid their hands on the hero bold.</p> <p>5.¹² Slain was Sigurth¹³ south of the Rhine;¹⁴ From a limb a raven called full loud: "Your blood shall redden Atli's¹⁵ blade, And your oaths shall bind you both in chains."¹⁶</p> <p>6. Without stood Guthrun, Gjuki's daughter, Hear now the speech that first she spake: "Where is Sigurth now, the noble king, That my kinsmen riding before him come?"</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Hogni said:)</i></p> <p>1.³² "What hateful harm hath he done thee, That Sigmund's son thou slain would'st have?"</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Gunnar said:)</i></p> <p>2. "To me hath Sigurth oft sworn dear oaths,³³ Hath sworn dear oaths which all were false; And then betrayed me the trusted one— He ought not have been—in all these oaths."</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Hogni said:)</i></p> <p>3. "Envious Brynhild to evil deed In hate did whet thee, much harm to do: Begrudges Guthrún her goodly husband, And also thee, in her arms to lie."</p> <p>4. Some a wolf did steak, some a worm did bake,³⁴ Of the grim beast gave they Guthorm to eat Ere, eager to evil, the angry men On highborn hero their hands could lay.</p> <p>5. Slain was Sigurth south of the Rhine.³⁵ A raven on tree had wrathfully cawed: "Atli's³⁶ sword blade your blood will redden,³⁷ Your mainsworn oaths will murder you."</p> <p>6. Without³⁸ stood Guthrún, Gjúki's daughter. These words then first fell from her lips: "Where lingers Sigurth, the leader of men, Since all my kin are come before him?"</p>

<p>6. Hogni alone to her answer gave: "Asunder have we Sigurd hewed with our swords; His grey steed bends o'er the dead chief."</p> <p>7. Then said Brynhild, Budli's daughter: "Well shall ye now enjoy arms and lands. Sigurd would alone over all have ruled, Had he a little longer life retained.</p> <p>8. Unseemly it had been that he should so have ruled Over Giuki's heritage and the Goths' people, When he five sons, for the fall of hosts, Eager for warfare, had begotten."</p> <p>9. Then laughed Brynhild—the whole burgh resounded— Once only from her whole heart: "Well shall ye enjoy lands and subjects, Now the daring king ye have caused to fall."</p> <p>10. Then said Gudrun, Giuki's daughter: "Much thou speakest, things most atrocious: May fiends have Gunnar, Sigurd's murderer! Souls malevolent vengeance awaits."</p> <p>11. Sigurd had fallen south of Rhine: Loud from a tree a raven screamed: "With your blood will Atli his sword's edges redden; The oaths ye have sworn your slaughter shall dissolve."</p> <p>12. Evening was advanced, much was drunken, Then did pleasant talk of all kinds pass: All sank in sleep, when to rest they went. Gunnar alone was wakeful longer than all:</p> <p>13. He began his foot to move, and much with himself to speak; / The warlike chief in his mind pondered, What during the conflict the raven and the eagle Were ever saying, as they rode home.</p> <p>14. Brynhild awoke, Budli's daughter, Daughter of Skioldungs, a little ere day: "Urge me or stay me—the mischief is perpetrated— My sorrow to pour forth, or to suppress it."</p> <p>15. All were silent at these words; Few understood the lady's conduct, That weeping she should begin to speak Of what she laughing had desired.</p> <p>16. "In my dream, Gunnar! all seemed so horrid, In the chamber all was dead; my bed was cold;</p>	<p>7. Only this did Hogni answer: "Sigurth we with our swords have slain; The gray horse mourns by his master dead."¹⁷</p> <p>8.¹⁸ Then Brynhild spake, the daughter of Buthli:¹⁹ "Well shall ye joy in weapons and lands; Sigurth alone of all had been lord, If a little longer his life had been.</p> <p>9. "Right were it not that so he should rule O'er Gjuki's wealth and the race of the Goths;²⁰ Five²¹ are the sons for ruling the folk, And greedy of fight, that he hath fathered."</p> <p>10. Then Brynhild laughed— and the building echoed— Only once, with all her heart; "Long shall ye joy in lands and men, Now ye have slain the hero noble."</p> <p>11. Then Guthrun spake, the daughter of Gjuki: "Much thou speakest in evil speech; Accursed be Gunnar, Sigurth's killer, Vengeance shall come for his cruel heart."</p> <p>12. Early came evening, and ale was drunk, And among them long and loud they talked; They slumbered all when their beds they sought, But Gunnar alone was long awake.²²</p> <p>13. His feet were tossing, he talked to himself, And the slayer of hosts²³ began to heed What the twain from the tree had told him then, The raven and eagle,²⁴ as home they rode.</p> <p>14. Brynhild awoke, the daughter of Buthli, The warrior's daughter, ere dawn of day: "Love me or hate me, the harm is done, And my grief cries out, or else I die."</p> <p>15. Silent were all who heard her speak, And nought of the heart of the queen they knew, Who wept such tears the thing to tell That laughing once of the men she had won.</p> <p>Brynhild spake: 16.²⁵ "Gunnar, I dreamed a dream full grim: In the hall were corpses; cold was my bed;</p>	<p>7. To which Hogni only did answer make: "With our swords we sundered Sigurth's body; Now stands the grey steed by stricken hero."³⁹</p> <p>8. Then quoth Brynhild, Buthli's daughter: "May ye fearless now hold folklands and arms: Would Sigurth alone have had sway over all If but little longer his life he had held.</p> <p>9. "Unseemly were it if sway he had Over Gjuki's gold and Gothic⁴⁰ hosts, And to fend him from foes five sons begat,⁴¹ Swordplay-eager young athelings."</p> <p>10. Laughing then Brynhild—her bower rang— One time only, out of inmost heart: "Long may ye live to rule lands and thanes, Ye twain who felled the foremost hero."</p> <p>11. Then quoth Guthrún, Gjuki's daughter: "With fey mouth say'st thou foul words many: Let trolls Gunnar take who betrayed Sigurth! Thy thoughts bloodthirsty crave threefold revenge."</p> <p>12. Deep the men drank—the dark night came— Many welcome words⁴² then warmed their hearts. By sleep then summoned all slept in their beds, But Gunnar only of all did wake.</p> <p>13. Much gan mutter, and move his feet,⁴³ Gan bethink him, the thanes' leader, What on greenwood tree the twain⁴⁴ had said, Raven and hawk, when home they rode.</p> <p>14. Awoke Brynhild, Buthli's daughter, The queenly woman, ere coming of day: "Whet me or let me,⁴⁵ the harm is done now, Whether I say my sorrow or cease therewith."</p> <p>15. Were silent all when said these words Fair-browed Brynhild, nor fathomed her speech, When wailing wept the woman the deeds Which laughing she had led them to do.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Brynhild said:</i></p> <p>16. "Me dreamed, Gunnar, a gruesome dream, That chill our chamber and cheerless my bed;</p>
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<p>And thou, king! wast riding of joy bereft, With fetters loaded, to a hostile host. So will ye all, race of Niflungs! Be of power deprived, perjurers as ye are!</p> <p>17. Ill Gunnar! didst thou remember, When blood ye in your footsteps both let flow; Now hast thou him ill for all that requited, Because he would prove himself foremost.</p> <p>18. Then was it proved, when the hero had ridden To see me, to woo me, How the warlike chief whilom held sacred His oath towards the youthful prince.</p> <p>19. Laid his sword, with gold adorned, The illustrious king between us both: Outward its edges were with fire wrought, But with venom drops tempered within."</p> <p>From this lay, in which the death of Sigurd is related, it appears that he was slain without doors, while some relate that he was slain sleeping in his bed: but the Germans say he was slain out in the forest; and it is told in the "<i>Gudrunarkviða hin Forna</i>," that Sigurd and the sons of Giuki had ridden to the public assembly (thing) when he was slain. But it is said by all, without exception, that they broke faith with him, and attacked him while lying down and unprepared.</p>	<p>And, ruler, thou didst joyless ride, With fetters bound in the foemen's throng.</p> <p>17.²⁶ "Utterly now your Niflung²⁷ race All shall die; your oaths ye have broken.</p> <p>18. "Thou hast, Gunnar, the deed forgot, When blood in your footprints²⁸ both ye mingled; All to him hast repaid with ill Who fain had made thee the foremost of kings.²⁹</p> <p>19. "Well did he prove, when proud he rode To win me then thy wife to be, How true the host-slayer ever had held The oaths he had made with the monarch young.</p> <p>20. "The wound-staff³⁰ then, all wound with gold, The hero let between us lie; With fire the edge was forged full keen, And with drops of venom the blade was damp."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Of Sigurth's Death]³¹</p> <p>Here it is told in this poem about the death of Sigurth, and the story goes here that they slew him out of doors, but some say that they slew him in the house, on his bed while he was sleeping. But German men say that they killed him out of doors in the forest; and so it is told in the old Guthrun lay, that Sigurth and Gjuki's sons had ridden to the council-place, and that he was slain there. But in this they are all agreed, that they deceived him in his trust of them, and fell upon him when he was lying down and unprepared.</p>	<p>But thou didst ride bereft of joy, Fastened with fetters, into foemen's throng.⁴⁶</p> <p>17. "Thus shall be stricken the strength of the Niflungs,⁴⁷ The mainsworn kin unmindful of oaths.</p> <p>18. "Forgettest, Gunnar, altogether How your blood ye both did blend under sward?⁴⁸ Him now hast thou with hate requited, And foully felled, who foremost made thee.⁴⁹</p> <p>19. "Was seen fully, when Sigurth rode Through flickering flame to fetch me thence, How the high hero had held before The oaths he sware to serve the king:</p> <p>20. "His wand-of-wounds,⁵⁰ all wound with gold, The trothful king betwixt us laid; In hot fire wholly was hardened Gram, Its blade blazoned with bitter poison."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Of Sigurth's Death</p> <p>In this lay we are told about Sigurth's death, and that he was slain in such wise, as though they had slain him out of doors; but others say that they slew him while asleep in his bed.⁵¹ But German men have it that he was felled in the forest,⁵² and in "The Old Song of Guthrún"⁵³ we are told that Sigurth was slain while on his way to the Thing with the sons of Gjúki; but all are at one in saying that they overcame him by treachery and killed him while lying down and unawares.</p>
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¹ As the manuscript consists altogether of 45 pages it is evident that about one sixth of the whole is lost, or approximately 300 stanzas. However, one must reckon on more or less extensive prose passages.

² The four stanzas given below are quoted in the *Volsunga saga*.

³ That is, no one.

⁴ The name of one of Odin's wolves; here used poetically for *wolf* in general.

⁵ [cf. Stanza 4 below]

⁶ In the Concluding Prose of *Guðrúnarkviða I*.

⁷ The fragment begins with the last words of line 1 (probably line 3 of the stanza). A few editors ascribe this speech to Gunnar and the next to Brynhild; one reconstruction of lines 1-2 on this probably false assumption runs: "Why art thou, Brynhild, | daughter of Buthli, / Scheming ill | with evil counsel?"

⁸ Hogni (German Hagene): brother of Gunnar and Guthrun.

⁹ A few editors ascribe this speech to Brynhild. Gunnar, if the stanza is his, has believed Brynhild's statement regarding Sigurth's disloyalty to his blood-brother.

¹⁰ The *Volsungasaga* quotes a somewhat different version of this stanza, in which the snake is called "wood-fish" and the third line adds "beer and many things." Eating snakes and the flesh of beasts of prey was commonly supposed to induce ferocity.

¹¹ Gotthorm: Grimhild's son, half-brother to Gunnar. He it is who, not having sworn brotherhood with Sigurth, does the killing.

¹² In the manuscript this stanza stands between stanzas 11 and 12; most editions have made the change here indicated.

¹³ Regarding the manner of Sigurth's death cf. concluding prose passage and note.

¹⁴ South of the Rhine: the definite localization of the action shows how clearly all this part of the story was recognized in the North as of German origin.

¹⁵ Atli (Attila; cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*): the Northern version of the story makes him Brynhild's brother. His marriage with Guthrun, and his slaying of her brothers, are told in the Atli poems.

¹⁶ Stanza 13 indicates that after this stanza another containing the words of an eagle has been lost.

¹⁷ One line of this stanza, but it is not clear which, seems to have been lost. The gray horse: Grani.

¹⁸ Some editions set stanzas 8 and 9 after stanza 11; Sijmons marks them as spurious.

¹⁹ Buthli: cf. *Gripisspo*, 19, note.

²⁰ Goths: a generic term for any German race; cf. *Gripisspo*, 35 and note.

²¹ Five sons: according to the *Volsungasaga* Sigurth had only one son, named Sigmund, who was killed at Brynhild's behest. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma* and *Guthrunarkvitha II* likewise mention only one son. The daughter of Sigurth and Guthrun, Svanhild, marries Jormunrek (Ermanarich).

²² The manuscript marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza, and a few editions combine it with stanza 13.

²³ Slayer of hosts: warrior (Gunnar).

²⁴ Raven and eagle: cf. note on stanza 5.

²⁵ Mogk regards stanzas 16 and 17 as interpolated, but on not very satisfactory grounds. On the death of Gunnar cf. *Drap Niflunga*.

²⁶ No gap is indicated in the manuscript, and some editions attach these two lines to stanza 16.

²⁷ Niflungs: this name (German *Nibelungen*), meaning "sons of the mist," seems to have belonged originally to the race of supernatural beings to which the treasure belonged in the German version. It was subsequently extended to include the Gjúkungs and their Burgundians. This question, of minor importance in the Norse poems, has evoked an enormous amount of learned discussion in connection with the *Nibelungenlied*.

²⁸ Footprints: the actual mingling of blood in one another's footprints was a part of the ceremony of swearing blood-brother hood, the oath which Gunnar and Sigurth had taken.

²⁹ The fourth line refers to the fact that Sigurth had won many battles for Gunnar.

³⁰ Wound-staff: sword. Regarding the sword episode cf. *Gripisspo*, 41 and note.

³¹ This prose passage has in the manuscript, written in red, the phrase "Of Sigurth's Death" as a heading; there is no break between it and the prose introducing *Guthrunarkvitha I*, the heading for that poem coming just before stanza 1. This note is of special interest as an effort at real criticism. The annotator, troubled by the two versions of the story of Sigurth's death, feels it incumbent on him not only to point the fact out, but to cite the authority of "German men" for the form which appears in this poem. The alternative version, wherein Sigurth is slain in bed, appears in *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, *Guthrunarhvot*, and *Hamðesmól*, and also in the *Volsungasaga*, which tells how Gotthorm tried twice to kill Sigurth but was terrified by the brightness of his eyes, and succeeded only after the hero had fallen asleep. That the annotator was correct in citing German authority for the slaying of Sigurth in the forest is shown by the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Thithreks saga*. The "old" Guthrun lay is unquestionably *Guthrunarkvitha II*.

³² *Codex Regius* begins again with the words equivalent to "done harm, that thou..."

³³ That he would not deprive Brynhild of her virginity after his ride through the wall of flames—as she alleges he did (St.20).

³⁴ There is rime here in the original. Only after having fed Guthorm ("He Who Honors the Gods") the flesh of serpents and wolves (to infuriate him) were they successful, with his aid, in slaying Sigurth. See *Sigurþarkviða hin skamma*, Sts.20-21 and notes.

³⁵ That is, in the forest, as in the case in the German versions of the legend. See the Prose at the end of the lay. The stanza is transposed here (following Grundtvig) from its original position after Stanza 10.

³⁶ The historic Attila, King of the Huns [MHG. *Etzel*]. In Eddic tradition he is the son of Buthli and brother of Brynhild, and is responsible for the deaths of Gunnar and Hogni.

³⁷ In revenge for Sigurth's death.

³⁸ She stands outside of the hall to receive her returning kinsmen.

³⁹ See *Guðrúnarkviða II*, St.5.

⁴⁰ Here used as an honorific epithet.

⁴¹ According to *Sigurþarkviða hin skamma*, St.12, Sigurth had only one son, Sigmund: Brynhild refers to the sons he might have begotten.

⁴² Probably, the song of the minstrel, to dispel the uneasy feelings that arise in their hearts at nightfall after the deed.

⁴³ Or, following Rask, "roil his bedding." Either would betray his agitation.

⁴⁴ Compare with St.5 where, however, only a raven is mentioned.

⁴⁵ In the sense of "whether you incite me or hinder me."

⁴⁶ Prophetic of his fate at Atli's court. See *Atlakviða*, St.31.

⁴⁷ "Sons of the Mist"; compare with Niflhel (*Vafþrúðnismál*, St.13) [MHG. *Nibelungen*], a demonic race, the original possessors of the treasure. In the *Edda* the name is applied to the kinsmen of Gjúki.

⁴⁸ The ceremony of swearing foster brotherhood is here referred to. This was accomplished by standing underneath a strip of upraised sod and letting one's blood flow on the same spot in the ground with that of the brother-to-be. The act is probably symbolic of common issue from the same womb.

⁴⁹ The *Volsunga saga* dwells on the increase in wealth and power of the Gjúkungs through their alliance with Sigurth.

⁵⁰ Kenning for "sword." The hilt was gilded (or wound with gold wire).

⁵¹ In his bed: *Sigurðarkviða hin skamma*, St.22ff; *Guðrúnarhvot*, St.4; *Hamðismál*, Sts.6-7.

⁵² In the forest: as instanced in the *Nibelungenlied* and *Piðreks saga* (whose account is based on German stories).

⁵³ *Guðrúnarkviða II*, St.7; a misunderstanding.