

FÁFNISMÁL (“The Ballad of Fáfnir”)

Bellows' Introduction (1936)

The so-called *Fafnismol*, contained in full in the *Codex Regius*, where it immediately follows the *Reginmol* without any indication of a break, is quoted by Snorri in the *Gylfaginning* (stanza 13) and the *Skaldskaparmál* (stanzas 32 and 33), and stanzas 6, 3, and 4 appear in the *Sverrisaga*. Although the *Volsungasaga* does not actually quote any of the stanzas, it gives a very close prose parallel to the whole poem in chapters 18 and 19.

The general character of the *Fafnismol*, and its probable relation to the *Reginmol* and the *Sigrdrifumol*, have been discussed in the introductory note to the *Reginmol*. While it is far more nearly a unit than the *Reginmol*, it shows many of the same characteristics. It has the same mixture of stanza forms, although in this case only nine stanzas (32-33, 35-36 and 40-44) vary from the normal *Ljothahattr* measure. It shows, though to a much less marked extent, the same tendency to introduce passages from extraneous sources, such as the question-and-answer passage in stanzas 11-15. At the same time, in this instance it is quite clear that one distinct poem, including probably stanzas 1-10, 16-23, 25-31, and 34-39, underlay the compilation which we here have. This may, perhaps, have been a long poem (not, however, the “Long Sigurth Lay”; see introductory note to *Brot af Sigurtharkvithu*) dealing with the Regin-Fafnir-Sigurth-Brynhild story, and including, besides most of the *Fafnismol*, stanzas 1-4 and 6-11 of the *Reginmol* and part of the so-called *Sigrdrifumol*, together with much that has been lost. The original poem may, on the other hand, have confined itself to the Fafnir episode. In any case, and while the extant *Fafnismol* can be spoken of as a distinct poem far more justly than the *Reginmol*, there is still no indication that the compiler regarded it as a poem by itself. His prose notes run on without a break, and the verses simply cover a dramatic episode in Sigurth's early life. The fact that the work of compilation has been done more intelligently than in the case of the *Reginmol* seems to have resulted chiefly from the compiler's having been familiar with longer consecutive verse passages dealing with the Fafnir episode.

The *Reginmol* is little more than a clumsy mosaic, but in the *Fafnismol* it is possible to distinguish between the main substance of the poem and the interpolations.

Here, as in the *Reginmol*, there is very little that bespeaks the German origin of the Sigurth story. Sigurth's winning of the treasure is in itself undoubtedly a part of the earlier southern legend, but the manner in which he does it is thoroughly Norse. Moreover, the concluding section, which points toward the finding of the sleeping Brynhild, relates entirely to the northern Valkyrie, the warrior-maiden punished by Othin, and not at all to the southern Brynhild the daughter of Buthli. The *Fafnismol* is, however, sharply distinguished from the *Reginmol* by showing no clear traces of the Helgi tradition, although a part of the bird song (stanzas 40-44, in *Fornyrthislag* form, as distinct from the body of the poem) sounds suspiciously like the bird passage in the beginning of the *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*. Regarding the general relations of the various sets of traditions in shaping the story of Sigurth, see the introductory note to *Gripisspo*.

The *Fafnismol*, together with a part of the *Sigrdrifumol*, has indirectly become the best known of all the Eddic poems, for the reason that Wagner used it, with remarkably little change of outline, as the basis for his “Siegfried.”

Hollander's Introduction (1962)

Though set off in the original by a different—and not very appropriate—title (*Frá dauða Fáfnis*, “Of Fáfnir's Death”), this poem is, both in matter and manner, unquestionably a continuation of the preceding lay; therefore, here too, it is a matter of dispute whether we are dealing with a number of fragments of diverse origin joined together by the Prose of the Collector, or whether the whole was planned thus. The unsuitableness of several stanzas in the dialogue between Sigurth and Fáfnir, and the unusual change from *ljóðaháttur* to *fornyrðislag* in the middle of the bird chorus certainly lend color to the former assumption.

Æsthetically considered, no one portion of the lay is satisfactory to the modern taste; yet the total impression is pleasing, thanks no doubt to the poetic glamor thrown over it by the story of young Sigurth.

The poem is found in its entirety only in the *Codex Regius*, but pieces from the gnomic portions are quoted in a number of sources, attesting its popularity. The paraphrase of it in the *Volsunga saga* is a particularly close one. Owing to the diversity of contents it is particularly difficult to assign a date.

OUTLINE ¹

[P = Prose, L = Ljóðahátttr, F = Fornyrðislag]

	P1	Of Sigurd's Slaying of Fáfnir
1	L1-a1	Fáfnir's Dying Words
	P2	Why Sigurd Withholds his Name
2-10	L1-a2	Sigurd's Dialogue with Fáfnir: of Sigurd's Heritage and Fate
11-15	L1-b	Question & Answer Interpolation (proto-Hávamál I)
16-22	L1-c1	Of the Fear-Helm, the Gold, and Fáfnir's Counsel
	P3	Regin Returns from Hiding
23	L1-c2	Regin Praises Sigurd
24	L2	Sigurd's Modest Reply (Interpolation?)
25-27	L3-a	Regin Claims Credit for Fáfnir's Death
28-29	L3-b	Interpolation: Sigurd's Battle Counsel (proto-Hávamál II)
30	L3-c	Sigurd Gives Regin Some Credit
	P4	Regin Cuts Out Fáfnir's Heart & Drinks His Blood
31	L3-d	Regin Directs Sigurd to Roast the Dragon's Heart
	P5	Sigurd Burns his Finger on the Roasting Heart
32-33	F1	The Birds' Advice to Sigurd I: Eat the Heart and Beware Regin
34	L4-a	The Birds' Advice to Sigurd II: Send Regin to Headless to Hel
35-36	F2	The Birds' Advice to Sigurd III: Trust Not Fáfnir's Kin
37-38	L4-b1	The Birds' Advice to Sigurd IV: Reiterations [Noisy Bird Chatter]
39	L4-b2	Sigurd's Reply: Hearty Agreement
	P6	Sigurd Slays Regin & Drinks His Blood
40-41	F3-a	The Birds' Speak of Guthrún
42-44	F3-b	The Birds' Speak of Brynhild
	P7	Sigurd Rides to Fáfnir's Lair to Acquire the Treasure

Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Hollander (1962)
<p>Sigurd and Regin went up to Gnitahaid, and there found Fafnir's slot, or track, along which he crawled to the water. There on the way Sigurd made a large pit, and went down into it. When Fafnir crawled from the gold he blew forth venom, but it flew over Sigurd's head. When Fafnir crept over the pit, Sigurd with his sword pierced him to the heart. Fafnir shook himself, and beat with his head and tail. Sigurd leapt from the pit, and each looked at the other. Fafnir said:</p> <p>1. Young fellow! young fellow! by what fellow art thou begot? / Of what people are thou the son? That thou in Fafnir reddendst thy glittering falchion? Thy sword has pierced my heart.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">[OF FÁFNIR'S DEATH]⁶</p> <p>[P1] Sigurth and Regin went up to the Gnitahaid,⁷ and found there the track that Fafnir⁸ made when he crawled to water. Then Sigurth made a great trench across the path, and took his place therein. When Fafnir crawled from his gold, he blew out venom,⁹ and it ran down from above on Sigurth's head. But when Fafnir crawled over the trench, then Sigurth thrust his sword into his body to the heart. Fafnir writhed and struck out with his head and tail. Sigurth leaped from the trench, and each looked at the other. Fafnir said:</p> <p>1. "Youth, oh, youth! of whom then, youth, art thou born?¹⁰ / Say whose son thou art, Who in Fafnir's blood thy bright blade reddened, And struck thy sword to my heart."</p>	<p>[The fared Sigurth home to Hjalprek; but Regin egged on Sigurth to slay Fáfnir.]⁵³</p> <p>Sigurth and Regin went up to the Gnita Heath and found there the tracks of Fáfnir where it was his wont to go for water. There Sigurth dug a great ditch and hid himself in it. Now when Fáfnir left his lair on the gold, he spewed poison, and it flowed from above on Sigurth's head. But when Fáfnir crept over the ditch, Sigurth thrust his sword into the dragon's heart. Fáfnir shook himself and beat (the ground) with his head and his tail. Sigurth leapt out of the ditch, and then they saw one another.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Fáfnir said:</i></p> <p>1. "Thou fellow bold, what thy father's kin? Youth, from what house dost hail? With Fáfnir's blood thy brand is red; In my heart standeth thy steel."</p>

<p>Sigurd concealed his name, because it was the belief in those times, that the words of dying persons were of great power, if they cursed an enemy by his name.</p> <p>Sigurd 2. Gofugt-dyr I am called, But I have wandered a motherless child; Nor have I a father like the sons of men: Alone I wander.</p> <p>Fafnir 3. If thou hast no father like the sons of men, By what wonder art thou begotten?</p> <p>Sigurd 4. My race, I tell thee, is to thee unknown, And myself also. Sigmund was my father named, my name is Sigurd, Who with weapon have assailed thee.</p> <p>Fafnir 5. Who has incited thee? why hast thou suffered thyself To be incited to take my life? Youth of the sparkling eyes! Thou hadst a cruel father— * * * *</p> <p>Sigurd 6. My heart incited me, my hands gave me aid, And my keen sword. Rarely a man is bold, when of mature age, If in childhood he was faint-hearted.</p> <p>Fafnir 7. I know if thou hadst chanced to grow in the lap of friends, / They would have seen thee fierce in fight. Now thou art a captive, taken in war, And, 'tis said, slaves ever tremble.</p> <p>Sigurd 8. Why Fafnir! dost thou upbraid me That I am far from my paternal home? I am not a captive, although in war I was taken: Thou hast found that I am free.</p> <p>Fafnir 9. Thou wilt account only as angry words all I to thee shall say, / But I will say the truth. The jingling gold, and the gleed-red treasure, Those rings, shall be thy bane.</p>	<p>[P2] Sigurth concealed his name because it was believed in olden times that the word of a dying man might have great power if he cursed his foe by his name. He said:</p> <p>2. "The Noble Hart my name, and I go A motherless man abroad; Father I had not, as others have, And lonely ever I live."</p> <p>Fafnir spake:¹¹ 3. "If father thou hadst not, as others have, By what wonder wast thou born? (Though thy name on the day of my death thou hidest, Thou knowest now thou dost lie.)"¹²</p> <p>Sigurth spake: 4. "My race, methinks, is unknown to thee, And so am I myself; ¹³Sigurth my name, and Sigmund's son, Who smote thee thus with the sword."</p> <p>Fafnir spake: 5. "Who drove thee on? why wert thou driven My life to make me lose? A father brave had the bright-eyed youth, For bold in boyhood thou art."¹⁴</p> <p>Sigurth spake: 6. "My heart did drive me, my hand fulfilled, And my shining sword so sharp; Few are keen when old age comes, Who timid in boyhood be."</p> <p>Fafnir spake: 7. "If thou mightest grow thy friends among, One might see thee fiercely fight; But bound thou art, and in battle taken, And to fear are prisoners prone."¹⁵</p> <p>Sigurth spake: 8. "Thou blamest me, Fafnir, that I see from afar The wealth that my father's was; Not bound am I, though in battle taken, Thou hast found that free I live."</p> <p>Fafnir spake: 9. "In all I say dost thou hatred see, Yet truth alone do I tell; The sounding gold, the glow-red wealth, And the rings thy bane shall be."</p>	<p>Sigurth withheld his name; for it was the belief in olden times that the words of a doomed man had great might, if he cursed his foe by name.⁵⁴</p> <p><i>He said:</i> 2. "Stag⁵⁵ I am hight; homeless I wandered; I am a motherless man; No father had I as folk do else: Ever fare I unfriended."⁵⁶</p> <p><i>(Fáfñir said:)</i> 3. "If a father thou had'st not as folks do else, How wast thou, boy, then born? (Not knowing thy name, though now I die, I little doubt thou liest.)"⁵⁷</p> <p><i>(Sigurth said:)</i> 4. "My forefathers to fame are known,⁵⁸ Of myself I say the same: Sigurth thou see'st here, was Sigmund my father; Thou know'st now whose sword smote thee."</p> <p><i>(Fáfñir said:)</i> 5. "Who wetted thee, and why didst wish To seek, Sigurth, my life?⁵⁹ Thou keen-eyed boy, thou had'st bold father, (such daring deed to do.)"⁶⁰</p> <p><i>(Sigurth said:)</i> 6. "My hands did help as my heart did whet, And eke my bitter brand; Brisk will not be as bearded man⁶¹ Who was afraid when fledged."</p> <p><i>(Fáfñir said:)</i> 7. "If haply 'mong kinsmen thou had'st grown up, Thou bold in battle would'st be; But unfree art, nor thy own master, And ay are fearful the fettered."⁶²</p> <p><i>(Sigurth said:)</i> 8. "Since far I am, Fáfñir, from my father's kin Thou scornfully scoffest at me: No bondsman am I, as babe though taken: Unfettered thou feltest me now."</p> <p><i>(Fáfñir said:)</i> 9. "But words of hate to hear thou weenest; Yet I tell thee this for truth: The glistening gold and the glow-red hoard, The rings thy bane will be."</p>
--	--	---

<p>Sigurd 10. Treasure at command every one desires, Ever till that one day; For at some time each mortal Shall hence to Hel depart.</p>	<p>Sigurth spake: 10. "Some one the hoard shall ever hold, Till the destined day shall come; For a time there is when every man Shall journey hence to hell."</p>	<p><i>(Sigurth said:)</i> 10. "For wealth doth wish each wight that's born, To have till the day of death; Sometime, forsooth, shall each son of man Fare hence to Hel."</p>
<p>Fafnir 11. The Norms' decree thou wilt hold in contempt As from a witless wight: In water thou shalt be drowned, if in wind thou rowest. All things bring peril to the fated.</p>	<p>Fafnir spake: 11. "The fate of the Norms before the headland¹⁶ Thou findest, and doom of a fool; In the water shalt drown if thou row 'gainst the wind, All danger is near to death."¹⁷</p>	<p><i>(Fáfñir said:)</i> 11. ⁶³ "The norms' doom before the nesses threatens:⁶⁴ A fool's fate will be thine; In the water will drown in the wind who rows: All spells death to the doomed one."</p>
<p>Sigurd 12. Tell me, Fafnir! as thou art wise declared, And many things to know: Who those Norms are, who help in need, And from babes loose the mothers.</p>	<p>Sigurth spake: 12. "Tell me then, Fafnir, for wise thou art famed, And much thou knowest now: Who are the Norms¹⁸ who are helpful in need, And the babe from the mother bring?"</p>	<p><i>(Sigurth said:)</i> 12. "Say now, Fáfñir, for sage thou art, And much learned in lore: Which norms⁶⁵ are near when need there is To help mothers give birth to their babes?"</p>
<p>Fafnir 13. Very diversely born I take those Norms to be: They have no common race. Some are of Æsir-race, some of Alfar-race, Some are Dvalin's daughters.</p>	<p>Fafnir spake: 13. "Of many births the Norms must be,¹⁹ Nor one in race they were; Some to gods, others to elves are kin, And Dvalin's²⁰ daughters some."</p>	<p><i>(Fáfñir said:)</i> 13. "Of unlike issue are the ilks of norms, Nor of the same sib: Of Æsir kin some, of alf kin others, And some are Dvalin's⁶⁶ daughters."</p>
<p>Sigurd 14. Tell me, Fafnir! as thou art wise declared, And many things to know, how that holm is called, Where Surt and the Æsir Will sword-liquor together mingle?</p>	<p>Sigurth spake: 14. "Tell me then, Fafnir, for wise thou art famed, And much thou knowest now: How call they the isle where all the gods And Surt shall sword-sweat mingle?"²¹</p>	<p><i>(Sigurth said:)</i> 14. "Say now, Fáfñir, for sage thou art, And much learned in lore: How that holm is hight where the holy gods And Surt will meet in swordplay?"</p>
<p>Fafnir 15. Oskopnir it is called; There shall the gods with lances play; Bifrost shall be broken, when they go forth, And their steeds in the river swim.</p>	<p>Fafnir spake: 15. "Oskopnir²² is it, where all the gods Shall seek the play of swords; Bilrost²³ breaks when they cross the bridge, And the steeds shall swim in the flood.</p>	<p><i>(Fáfñir said:)</i> 15. "Tis Óskopnir⁶⁷ hight; there all the gods Will unsheath their shining swords; Bifrost⁶⁸ will break, on that bridge when they ride; Their steeds will swim the stream.</p>
<p>16. An Oegis-helm I bore among the sons of men, While I o'er the treasures lay; Stronger than all I thought myself to be; Stronger I found not many!</p>	<p>16. "The fear-helm²⁴ I wore to afright mankind, While guarding my gold I lay; Mightier seemed I than any man, For a fiercer never I found."</p>	<p>16. "With the Helm of Fear⁶⁹ I affrighted men While I lay on the hated hoard; For the might of all men a match I weened me, Nor e'er worthy foeman found."</p>
<p>Sigurd 17. An Oegis-helm is no protection, Where men impelled by anger fight: Soon he finds, who among many comes, That no one is alone the boldest.</p>	<p>Sigurth spake: 17. "The fear-helm surely no man shields When he faces a valiant foe; Oft one finds, when the foe he meets, That he is not the bravest of all."</p>	<p><i>(Sigurth said:)</i> 17. "The Helm of Fear hideth no one, When bold men bare their swords; When many are met to match their strength, 'Twill be found that foremost is no one."⁷⁰</p>
<p>Fafnir 18. Venom I blew forth, When on my father's great heritage I lay.</p>	<p>Fafnir spake: 18. "Venom I breathed when bright I lay By the hoard my father had; (There was none so mighty as dared to meet me, And weapons nor wiles I feared.)"²⁵</p>	<p><i>(Fáfñir said:)</i> 18. "I spewed venom as I sprawled on the hoard Of my father's gleaming gold; (by noon or night no one neared me, No weapons nor wiles I feared.)"⁷¹</p>

<p>Sigurd 19. Thou, glistening serpent! didst a great belching make, And wast so hard of heart. Fierceness so much the greater have the sons of men, When they possess that helm.</p> <p>Fafnir 20. Sigurd! I now counsel thee, do thou take my counsel; And hence ride home. The jingling gold, and the gleed-red treasure, Those rings, shall be thy bane.</p> <p>Sigurd 21. Counsel regarding thee is taken, And I to the gold will ride, on the heath that lies. But lie thou, Fafnir! in the pangs of death, Until Hel have thee!</p> <p>Fafnir 22. Regin betrayed me, he will thee betray, He of us both will be the bane. Fafnir must, I trow, let forth his life: Thine was the greater might!</p> <p>Regin had gone away while Sigurd slew Fafnir, but came back as Sigurd was wiping the blood from his sword. He said:</p> <p>23. Hail to thee now, Sigurd! Now hast thou victory won and Fafnir slain: Of all the men who tread the earth, Thou art, I say, the bravest born.</p> <p>Sigurd 24. Uncertain 'tis to know, when we all come together, Sons of victorious heroes, Which is the bravest born. Many a one is bold, who sword Has never broken in another's breast.</p> <p>Regin 25. Glad are thou now, Sigurd! and in thy gain rejoicing, While Gram, in the grass thou driest. My brother thou to death hast wounded, Yet in some degree was I the cause.</p> <p>Sigurd 26. [30] Thou didst me counsel, That I should ride o'er high fells hither. Treasure and life had still possess'd that glistening serpent, Hadst thou my anger not excited.</p>	<p>Sigurth spake: 19. "Glittering worm, thy hissing was great, And hard didst show thy heart; But hatred more have the sons of men For him who owns the helm."</p> <p>Fafnir spake: 20. "I counsel thee, Sigurth, heed my speech, And ride thou homeward hence, The sounding gold, the glow-red wealth, And the rings thy bane shall be."²⁶</p> <p>Sigurth spake: 21. "Thy counsel is given, but go I shall To the gold in the heather hidden; And, Fafnir, thou with death dost fight, Lying where Hel shall have thee."</p> <p>Fafnir spake: 22.²⁷ "Regin betrayed me, and thee will betray, Us both to death will he bring; His life, methinks, must Fafnir lose, For the mightier man wast thou."</p> <p>[P3] Regin had gone to a distance while Sigurth fought Fafnir, and came back while Sigurth was wiping the blood from his sword. Regin said:</p> <p>23. "Hail to thee, Sigurth! Thou victory hast, And Fafnir in fight hast slain; Of all the men who tread the earth, Most fearless art thou, methinks."</p> <p>Sigurth spake: 24. "Unknown it is, when all are together, (The sons of the glorious gods),²⁸ Who bravest born shall seem; Some are valiant who redden no sword In the blood of a foeman's breast."</p> <p>Regin spake: 25. "Glad art thou, Sigurth, of battle gained, As Gram²⁹ with grass thou cleanseest; My brother fierce in fight hast slain, And somewhat I did myself."</p> <p>Sigurth spake: 26.³⁰ "Afar didst thou go while Fafnir reddened With his blood my blade so keen; With the might of the dragon my strength I matched, While thou in the heather didst hide."</p>	<p>(<i>Sigurth said:</i>) 19. "Thou hateful worm, great hissing thou madest, On thy gold grimly brooding; But harder grow the hearts of men If that helm they have."</p> <p>(<i>Fáfñir said:</i>) 20. "Hear thou, Sigurth, and heed it well: Ride thou home from hence: The glistening gold and the glow-red hoard, The rings thy bane will be."⁷²</p> <p>(<i>Sigurth said:</i>) 21. "Warning thou'st give; now wot that I ride To the gold hoarded on heath; But thou, Fáfñir, shalt flounder in death Till Hel harbor thee."</p> <p>(<i>Fáfñir said:</i>) 22. "Regin betrayed me, will betray thee too, Will be the bane of us both; Fáfñir is doomed to die full soon, Greater thy might was than mine."</p> <p>Regin had taken himself off, the while Sigurth slew Fáfñir, and showed himself again when Sigurth was wiping the blood from his sword. <i>He said:</i></p> <p>23.⁷³ "Hail now, Sigurth, thou hast slain Fáfñir: Well hast thou won the day; Of all the men on earth that walk I call thee bravest born."</p> <p>(<i>Sigurth said:</i>) 24. "When men are met to match their thews, Who knows who is bravest born? Full many are brave who brand never reddened In the blood from foeman's breast."</p> <p>(<i>Regin said:</i>) 25. "Glad art, Sigurth, hast slain thy foe, And driest now Gram on the grass; My own brother thy brand did slay, Yet had I a hand in his death."</p> <p>(<i>Sigurth said:</i>) 26.⁷⁴ "Afar thou wert while in Fáfñir's blood I reddened my slaughterous sword; My strength I strained to strive with the worm, Whilst thou in the heather didst hide."</p>
---	--	---

[P4] Regin then approached Fafnir and cut out his heart with a sword named Ridill, and afterwards drank blood from his wound. He said:

27. [31] Sit now, Sigurd!—but I must go to sleep—
And Fafnir's heart hold to the fire.
Of this refection I would fain partake,
After that drink of blood.

Sigurd

28. [26] Thou wentst far off, while I in Fafnir
My keen sword reddened.
With my strength I strove against the serpent's might,
While in the ling thou layest.

Regin

29. [27] Long hadst thou allowed in the ling to lie
That Jotun old,
Hadst thou the sword not used that I forged for thee,
Thy keen-edged glaive.

Sigurd

30. [28] Valour is better than might of sword,
When foes embittered fight;
For a brave man I have ever seen gain victory
With a dull sword.

31. [29] For the brave 'tis better than for the timid
To join in the game of war;
For the joyous it is better than for the sad,
Let come whatever may.

Sigurd took Fafnir's heart and roasted it on a stick. When he thought it roasted enough, and the blood frothed from it, he touched it with his finger, to try whether it were quite done. He burnt his finger and put it in his mouth; and when Fafnir's heart's blood touched his tongue he understood the language of birds. He heard the eagles chattering among the branches. One eagle said:

32. There sits Sigurd sprinkled with blood;
Fafnir's heart at the fire he roasts.
Wise methinks were the ring-dispenser,
If he the glistening life-pulp ate.

Second eagle

33. There lies Regin communing with himself;
He will beguile the youth, who in him trusts:
In rage he brings malicious words together,
The framer of evil will avenge his brother.

Regin spake:

27. "Longer wouldst thou | in the heather have let
Yon hoary giant hide,
Had the weapon availed not | that once I forged,
The keen-edged blade thou didst bear."

Sigurth spake:

³¹28. "Better is heart | than a mighty blade
For him who shall fiercely fight;
The brave man well | shall fight and win,
Though dull his blade may be.

29. "Brave men better | than cowards be,
When the clash of battle comes;
And better the glad | than the gloomy man
Shall face what before him lies.

30. "Thy rede it was | that I should ride
Hither o'er mountains high;
The glittering worm | would have wealth and life
If thou hadst not mocked at my might."³²

[P4] Then Regin went up to Fafnir and cut out his heart with his sword, that was named Rithil,³³ and then he drank blood from the wounds. Regin said:

31. "Sit now, Sigurth, | for sleep will I,
Hold Fafnir's heart to the fire;
For all his heart | shall eaten be,
Since deep of blood I have drunk."

[P5] Sigurth took Fafnir's heart and cooked it on a spit. When he thought that it was fully cooked, and the blood foamed out of the heart, then he tried it with his finger to see whether it was fully cooked. He burned his finger, and put it in his mouth. But when Fafnir's heart's-blood came on his tongue, he understood the speech of birds. He heard nut-hatches chattering in the thickets. A nut hatch said:

³⁴32. "There sits Sigurth, | sprinkled with blood,
And Fafnir's heart | with fire he cooks;
Wise were the breaker | of rings, I ween,
To eat the life-muscles | all so bright."

A second spake:

33. "There Regin lies, | and plans he lays
The youth to betray | who trusts him well;
Lying words | with wiles will he speak,
Till his brother the maker | of mischief avenges."

(Regin said:)

27. "Long had lived in his lair on heath
That age-old etin,⁷⁵
If the sword thou had'st not which myself did make,
The blade which bites so sore."

(Sigurth said:)

28. "Courage is better than keenest steel,
When bold men bare their brands;
Oft beheld I wholehearted swain
With dull sword win his way.

29. "The fearless ay, but the fearful nowise,
Will fare the better in fray;
To be glad is better than of gloomy mind,
Whether fair or foul betide."⁷⁶

30.⁷⁷ "Thy rede was it that ride I should
Over high mountains hither;
Fáfñir still held his hoard and life,
Had'st thou not egged me on."

Then Regin went up to Fáfñir and cut out his heart with the sword which is hight Rithil; and then he drank the blood which from the wound. *He said:*

31. "Sit now, Sigurth—I shall sleep the while—
And hold Fáfñir's heart o'er the fire;
For this morsel I mean to eat
After gulping this gory drink."

Sigurth took Fáfñir's heart and steaked it on a spit. When he thought it was done, and the blood ran foaming out of the heart, he touched it with his finger to see whether it were fully done; he burned himself and stuck his finger in his mouth. But when Fáfñir's heartblood touched his tongue, he understood the speech of birds. He overheard some titmice speaking in the bushes. *One titmouse said:*

32. "There sits Sigurth, all smeared with blood,
And Fáfñir's heart he holds over the fire;
Wise would be the war leader
If the hated worm's bright heart he ate."

(A second said:)

33. "There lies Regin, and racks his brain,
Would betray the boy who trusts in him,
And take him to task in tricky ways;
Would the base one now his brother avenge."

<p>Third eagle 34. By the head shorter, let him the hoary babbler Send hence to Hel; Then can he all the gold possess alone, The mass that under Fafnir lay.</p> <p>Fourth eagle 35. He would, methinks, be prudent, If he could have your friendly counsel, my sisters! If he would bethink himself, and Hugin gladden. There I expect the wolf, where his ears I see.</p> <p>Fifth eagle 36. Not so prudent is that tree of battle, As I that martial leader had supposed, If he one brother lets depart, Now he the other has of life bereft.</p> <p>Sixth eagle 37. He is most simple, If he longer spares that people's pest. There lies Regin, who has betrayed him.— He cannot guard against it.</p> <p>Seventh eagle 38. By the head shorter let him make the ice-cold Jotun, And of his rings deprive him; Then of that treasure thou,² which Fafnir owned, Sole lord wilt be!</p> <p>Sigurd 39. Fate shall not so resistless be, That Regin shall my death-word bear; For the brothers both shall speedily Go hence to Hel.</p> <p>Sigurd cut off the head of Regin, and then ate Fafnir's heart, and drank the blood of both Regin and Fafnir. He then heard the eagles saying:</p> <p>40. Bind thou, Sigurd! the red-gold rings. It is not kingly many things to fear. I a maid know by far the fairest, with gold adorned. Couldst thou but her obtain!</p> <p>Second eagle 41. To Gjuki lead all-verdant ways; The fates point out to wayfarers where The good king a born daughter has; Her wilt thou, Sigurd! purchase with bridal gifts.</p>	<p>A third spake: 34.³⁵ "Less by a head let the chatterer hoary Go from here to hell; Then all of the wealth he alone can wield, The gold that Fafnir guarded."</p> <p>A fourth spake: 35. "Wise would he seem if so he would heed The counsel good we sisters give; Thought he would give, and the ravens gladden, There is ever a wolf where his ears I spy."³⁶</p> <p>A fifth spake: 36. "Less wise must be the tree of battle³⁷ Than to me would seem the leader of men, If forth he lets one brother fare, When he of the other the slayer is."</p> <p>A sixth spake: 37.³⁸ "Most foolish he seems if he shall spare His foe, the bane of the folk, There Regin lies, who hath wronged him so, Yet falsehood knows he not."</p> <p>A seventh spake: 38. "Let the head from the frost-cold giant³⁹ be hewed, And let him of rings be robbed; Then all the wealth which Fafnir's was Shall belong to thee alone."</p> <p>Sigurth spake: 39. "Not so rich a fate shall Regin have As the tale of my death to tell; For soon the brothers both shall die, And hence to hell shall go."</p> <p>[P6] Sigurth hewed off Regin's head, and then he ate Fafnir's heart, and drank the blood of both Regin and Fafnir. Then Sigurth heard what the nut-hatch said:</p> <p>⁴⁰40. "Bind, Sigurth, the golden rings together, Not kingly is it aught to fear; I know a maid, there is none so fair, Rich in gold, if thou mightest get her."</p> <p>41. "Green the paths that to Gjuki⁴¹ lead, And his fate the way to the wanderer shows; The doughty king a daughter has, That thou as a bride mayst, Sigurth, buy."</p>	<p><i>(A third said:)</i> 34. "Hew off the head of the hoary wizard! Let him fare to Hel from hence; Then lord art alone of the lustrous gold, Of the heaped hoard of Fáfñir."</p> <p><i>(A fourth said:)</i> 35. "Crafty were he and keen of mind, If ear he gave to us sisters— Took heed for himself and the hawks gladdened:⁷⁸ Look out for the wolf when his ears ye see!"⁷⁹</p> <p><i>(A fifth said:)</i> 36. "Crafty were not the king's offspring—⁸⁰ As ought to be armed men's leader— If he let scot-free escape the brother, When he Fáfñir first felled with the sword."</p> <p><i>(A sixth said:)</i> 37. "Witless were then the warlike hero If he spared his fell foeman; Regin lies there who has lied to him: Let him guard against his guile!"</p> <p><i>(A seventh said:)</i> 38. "Cut off the head of the cold etin, And take his red-gold rings; Of Fáfñir's hoard then, on the heath where it lies, The only owner wilt be."⁸¹</p> <p><i>(Sigurth said:)</i> 39. "'Tis not written that Regin shall wreak him on me, And ever be my bane; For both brothers shall by my hand Full soon fare hence to Hel."</p> <p>Sigurth hewed off Regin's head. Then he ate Fáfñir's heart, and drank the blood of both Regin and Fáfñir.⁸² <i>Then heard Sigurth what the timice said (further):</i></p> <p>40. "Gather now, Sigurth, the golden rings— To flinch in fear befits not a king: A maiden⁸³ I know, of many most fair, In golden weeds: a wife for thee."</p> <p>41. "Green⁸⁴ are the paths to Gjúki's hall— Fate doth further the fearless man; That folk-king hath a fair daughter: With the gold, Sigurth, mayst thou gain her hand."</p>
--	---	--

<p>Third eagle 42. There stands a hall on the high Hindarfiall, Without 'tis all with fire surrounded; Sagacious men have it constructed Of the resplendent radiance of the flood.³</p> <p>Fourth eagle 43. On the fell I know a warrior maid to sleep, Over her waves the linden's bane.⁴ Ygg whilom stuck a sleep-thorn in the robe of the maid Who would heroes choose.</p> <p>44. Thou, youth! mayest see the helmed maiden, Her whom Vingskornir from battle bore. May not Sigdrifa's slumber break the son of warriors,⁵ Against the Norns' decrees.</p> <p>Sigurd rode along Fafnir's track to his lair, which he found open. The doors and door-posts were of iron; of iron also were all the beams in the house; but the treasure was buried in the earth. Sigurd found there a great quantity of gold, and filled two chests with it. He took thence the Oegishelm, a golden corslet, the sword named Hrotti, and many precious things, all which he laid on Grani; but the horse would not proceed until Sigurd had mounted on his back.</p>	<p>Another spake: 42. "A hall stands high on Hindarfjoll,⁴² All with flame is it ringed without; Warriors wise did make it once Out of the flaming light of the flood.⁴³</p> <p>43. "On the mountain sleeps a battle-maid,⁴⁴ And about her plays the bane of the wood;⁴⁵ Ygg⁴⁶ with the thorn⁴⁷ hath smitten her thus, For she felled the fighter⁴⁸ he fain would save.</p> <p>44. "There mayst thou behold the maiden helmed, Who forth on Vingskornir⁴⁹ rode from the fight; The victory-bringer⁵⁰ her sleep shall break not, Thou heroes' son, so the Norns have set."</p> <p>[P7] Sigurth rode along Fafnir's trail to his lair, and found it open. The gate-posts were of iron, and the gates; of iron, too, were all the beams in the house, which was dug down into the earth. There Sigurth found a mighty store of gold, and he filled two chests full thereof; he took the fear-helm and a golden mail-coat and the sword Hrotti,⁵¹ and many other precious things, and loaded Grani with them, but the horse would not go forward until Sigurth mounted on his back.⁵²</p>	<p>42. "A high hall standeth on Hindar Fell, All enfolded is it by fire without; Cunning craftsmen this castle builded Of the glistening gold of rivers.</p> <p>43. "A Valkyrie⁸⁵ rests on the rock in sleep, Flickering fire flames about her; With the sleep-thorn Ygg her erst did prick: Other heroes she felled than he had willed.⁸⁶</p> <p>44. "There mayst thou see the maiden helm-decked Who steered from battle the steed Vingskornir;⁸⁷ Nor mayst Sigdrifa⁸⁸ from sleep awaken, That know thou, Skjoldung,⁸⁹ but by norms' stern doom."</p> <p>Sigurth followed Fáfñir's tracks till he came upon his lair, and found it open. The doors and doorposts were of iron. Of iron, too, were all posts in the house, and the whole was let into the ground. There found Sigurth a great hoard of gold, and filled two chests with it. He took from thence the Helm of Terror, and a gold byrnie, and the sword Hrotti,⁹⁰ and many other things of great worth, and loaded Grani therewith; but the steed would not stir before Sigurth got on his back, too.</p>
--	--	---

¹ [Outline and numbering given in brackets inserted by this compiler - RSJ]

² I.e., Sigurd; a transition from the 3d person to the 2nd.

³ Another periphrasis for gold.

⁴ A periphrasis for fire.

⁵ Of Skioldungs.

⁶ The prose follows the concluding prose passage of the *Reginsmol* without any interruption; the heading "Of Fafnir's Death" is written in the manuscript very faintly just before stanza 1.

⁷ Gnitaeith: cf. *Gripisspo*, ii and note.

⁸ Fafnir: Regin's brother: cf. *Reginsmol*, prose after stanza 14.

⁹ Venom: in the *Volsungasaga* it was the blood, and not the venom, that poured down on Sigurth's head. Sigurth was much worried about this danger, and before he dug the trench asked Regin what would happen if the dragon's blood overcame him. Regin thereupon taunted him with cowardice (Sigurth refers to this taunt in stanza 30, but the stanza embodying it has disappeared). After Sigurth had dug his trench, an old man (Othin, of course) appeared and advised him to dig other trenches to carry off the blood, which he did, thereby escaping harm.

¹⁰ The first line in the original, as here, is unusually long, but dramatically very effective on that account.

¹¹ The names of the speakers do not appear in the manuscript, though they seem originally to have been indicated in the margin for stanzas 3-30.

¹² The last two lines of stanza 3 are missing in the manuscript, with no gap indicated, but the *Volsungasaga* prose paraphrase indicates that something was omitted, and the lines here given are conjecturally reconstructed from this paraphrase.

¹³ The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a stanza.

¹⁴ Line 4, utterly obscure in the manuscript, is guesswork.

¹⁵ Fafnir here refers to the fact that Hjordis, mother of the still unborn Sigurth, was captured by Alf after Sigmund's death; cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*, note.

¹⁶ The headland: Fafnir is apparently quoting proverbs; this one seems to mean that disaster ("the fate of the Norns") awaits when one rounds the first headland (i. e., at the beginning of life's voyage, in youth). The third line is a commentary on obstinate rashness.

¹⁷ Stanzas 11-15 are probably interpolated, and come from a poem similar to *Vafthruthnismol*. The *Volsungasaga* paraphrases these stanzas throughout.

¹⁸ Norns: cf. stanza 13 and note. Sigurth has no possible interest in knowing what Norns are helpful in childbirth, but interpolations were seldom logical.

¹⁹ Snorri quotes this stanza. There were minor Norns, or fates, in addition to the three great Norns, regarding whom cf. *Voluspo*, 20.

²⁰ Dvalin: chief of the dwarfs; cf. *Voluspo*, 14.

²¹ Surt: ruler of the fire world; the reference is to the last great battle. Sword-sweat: blood.

-
- ²² Oskopnir ("Not-Made"): apparently another name for Vigrith, which is named in *Vafþruthnismol*, 19, as the final battle-ground.
- ²³ Bilrost (or Bifrost): the rainbow bridge which breaks beneath Surt's followers; cf. *Grimnismol*, 29 and note.
- ²⁴ With this stanza Fafnir returns to the situation. Fear-helm: regarding the "aegis-hjalmr" cf. *Reginismol*, prose after stanza 14 and note.
- ²⁵ Lines 3-4 do not appear in the manuscript and no gap is indicated; they are here conjecturally paraphrased from the prose passage in the *Volsungasaga*.
- ²⁶ It has been suggested that this stanza is spurious, and that stanza 21 ought to follow stanza 22. Lines 3-4, abbreviated in the manuscript, are identical with lines 3-4 of stanza 9. The *Volsungasaga* paraphrase in place of these two lines makes Fafnir say: "For it often happens that he who gets a deadly wound yet avenges himself." It is quite likely that two stanzas have been lost.
- ²⁷ The *Volsungasaga* places its paraphrase of this stanza between those of stanzas 15 and 16.
- ²⁸ Line 2 is probably spurious, but it is a phrase typical of such poems as *Grimnismol* or *Vafþruthnismol*.
- ²⁹ Gram: Sigurth's sword; cf. *Reginismol*, prose after 14.
- ³⁰ In the manuscript stanzas 26-29 stand after stanza 31, which fails to make clear sense; they are here rearranged in accordance with the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase.
- ³¹ 28-29. Almost certainly interpolated from some such poem as the *Hovamol*. Even the faithful *Volsungasaga* fails to paraphrase stanza 29.
- ³² Something has evidently been lost before this stanza. Sigurth clearly refers to Regin's reproach when he was digging the trench (cf. note on introductory prose), but the poem does not give such a passage.
- ³³ Rithil ("Swift-Moving"): Snorri calls the sword Refil ("Serpent").
- ³⁴ That the birds' stanzas come from more than one source is fairly apparent, but whether from two or from three or more is uncertain. It is also far from clear how many birds are speaking. The manuscript numbers II, III, and IV in the margin with numerals; the *Volsungasaga* makes a different bird speak each time. There are almost as many guesses as there are editions. I suspect that in the original poem there was one bird, speaking stanzas 34 and 37. Stanza 38 is little more than a repetition of stanza 34, and may well have been a later addition. As for the stanzas in *Fornyrthislag* (32-33 and 35-36), they apparently come from another poem, in which several birds speak (cf. "we sisters" in stanza 35). This may be the same poem from which stanzas 40-44 were taken, as well as some of the *Fornyrthislag* stanzas in the *Sigrdrifumol*.
- ³⁵ Some editions turn this speech from the third person into the second, but the manuscript is clear enough.
- ³⁶ Wolf, etc.: the phrase is nearly equivalent to "there must be fire where there is smoke." The proverb appears elsewhere in Old Norse.
- ³⁷ Tree of battle: warrior.
- ³⁸ Here, as in stanza 34, some editions turn the speech from the third person into the second.
- ³⁹ Giant: Regin was certainly not a frost-giant, and the whole stanza looks like some copyist's blundering reproduction of stanza 34.
- ⁴⁰ Neither the manuscript nor any of the editions suggest the existence of more than one bird in stanzas 40-44. It seems to me, however, that there are not only two birds, but two distinct stories. Stanzas 40-41 apply solely to Guthrun, and suggest that Sigurth will go straight to Gunnar's hall. Stanzas 42-44, on the other hand, apply solely to Brynhild, and indicate that Sigurth will find her before he visits the Gjukungs. The confusion which existed between these two versions of the story, and which involved a fundamental difference in the final working out of Brynhild's revenge, is commented on in the note on *Gripisspo*, 13. In the present passage it is possible that two birds are speaking, each reflecting one version of the story; it seems even more likely that one speech or the other (40-41 or 42-44) reflects the original form of the narrative, the other having been added, either later or from another poem. In the *Volsungasaga* the whole passage is condensed into a few words by one bird: "Wiser were it if he should then ride up on Hindarfjöll, where Brynhild sleeps, and there would he get much wisdom." The Guthrun-bird does not appear at all.
- ⁴¹ Gjuki: father of Gunnar and Guthrun: cf. *Gripisspo*, 13 and note.
- ⁴² Hindarfjöll: "Mountain of the Hind."
- ⁴³ Light of the flood: gold; cf. *Reginismol*, 1 and note.
- ⁴⁴ Battle-maid: Brynhild, here clearly defined as a Valkyrie.
- ⁴⁵ Bane of the wood: fire.
- ⁴⁶ Ygg: Othin; cf. *Grimnismol*, 53.
- ⁴⁷ The thorn: a prose note in *Sigrdrifumol* calls it "sleep-thorn."
- ⁴⁸ The fighter: the story of the reason for Brynhild's punishment is told in the prose following stanza 4 of *Sigrdrifumol*.
- ⁴⁹ Vingskornir: Brynhild's horse, not elsewhere mentioned.
- ⁵⁰ Victory-bringer: the word thus translated is in the original "sigdrifa." The compiler of the collection, not being familiar with this word, assumed that it was a proper name, and in the prose following stanza 4 of the *Sigrdrifumol* he specifically states that this was the Valkyrie's name. Editors, until recently, have followed him in this error, failing to recognize that "sigdrifa" was simply an epithet for Brynhild. It is from this blunder that the so-called *Sigrdrifumol* takes its name. Brynhild's dual personality as a Valkyrie and as the daughter of Buthli has made plenty of trouble, but the addition of a second Valkyrie in the person of the supposed "Sigdrifa" has made still more.
- ⁵¹ Hrotti: "Thruster."
- ⁵² There is no break in the manuscript between the end of this prose passage and the beginning of the one introducing the *Sigrdrifumol*: some editors include the entire prose passage with one poem or the other.
- ⁵³ [Most editions place this at the end of the *Reginismál*. – Compiler's note]
- ⁵⁴ Similar beliefs are held throughout the world among primitive peoples; see Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, III, 320 ff. See also *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II, St.12 note.
- ⁵⁵ In the original, "noble animal"; but see *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II, St.38.
- ⁵⁶ Unless we are to assume that Sigurth deliberately misrepresents, this version is at variance with his princely rearing at Hjálprek's court; but indeed, according to the German story of Sigfrid (also *Þiðreks saga*, Ch.168), he came to Regin's smithy as a foundling; so that there may be traces of this conception in this and the following stanzas.
- ⁵⁷ Supplied after the paraphrase in the *Volsunga saga*, Ch.18.
- ⁵⁸ After Cederschiold: the original, "unknown," does not agree with Fáfñir's knowing Sigmund (St.5 below) and the circumstances of Sigurth's birth.
- ⁵⁹ The text here is corrupt, the translation of the line hence purely conjectural.
- ⁶⁰ The Translator's emendation of this corrupt line. See *Scandinavian Studies*, VII (1932), 280-287.
- ⁶¹ The text here is corrupt, the translation of the line hence purely conjectural.
- ⁶² On this and the following stanzas, see *Frá dauða Sinfjötla*.
- ⁶³ This stanza, as well as several others following, seems to have belonged originally to some collection of didactic sayings like *Hávamál*.
- ⁶⁴ The "windy nesses" threaten the unwary sailor with destruction.

-
- ⁶⁵ Evidently not the fate-goddesses but minor divinities, the fairies of folklore. After describing these, Snorri adds (*Gylfaginning*, Ch.14), “yet are there other norms who come to every child that is born, to shape its fate, and these are sprung from the gods; but others are of the race of alfs; and still others, of the dwarfs.” Whereupon a version of St.13 is quoted.
- ⁶⁶ A dwarf. See “The Catalogue of Dwarfs,” St.14.
- ⁶⁷ Probably identical with the *Vígríth of Vaffbrúðnismál*, St.18.
- ⁶⁸ See *Grimnismál*, St.45. The bridge breaks down under the hosts of Muspelheim, “and their horses must swim over great rivers.” (*Gylfaginning*, Ch.12).
- ⁶⁹ See *Reginismál*, Prose after St.14.
- ⁷⁰ Compare with *Hávamál*, St.64.
- ⁷¹ Supplied by the Translator after the paraphrase in the *Völsunga saga*, Ch.18.
- ⁷² These stanzas would seem to belong more properly after St.9.
- ⁷³ In the following stanzas, Sigurth modestly replies to Regin’s fulsome praise, but claims for himself full share of praise and blame for slaying Fáfnir. Regin, with an eye on the hoard, admits that it would not have been done but for his egging on, but maintains that it could not have been done but for the wondrous sword he had fashioned.
- ⁷⁴ The order of Stanzas 26-31 is changed here, following Müllenhoff.
- ⁷⁵ Both Regin and Fáfnir are originally of the giant race.
- ⁷⁶ Compare with *Hávamál*, St.15.
- ⁷⁷ It has been suggested that a stanza is lacking before St. 30 in which Regin reiterated his charge of St. 25. Indeed, words to this effect are found in the *Völsunga saga*, Ch.19.
- ⁷⁸ By furnishing another carcass.
- ⁷⁹ Icelandic proverb: Regin’s speech has been suspicious. Compare with *Ex ungue leonem* [“You may tell the lion by his claws.”]
- ⁸⁰ Sigurth.
- ⁸¹ Grundtvig suggested that the bird chorus has three voices only. The calmer stanzas (in *fornyrðislag*) he would assign to the first and second titmice (Sts.32 and 35 to one and Sts.33 and 36 to the other); whereas the excited advice of stanzas 34, 37, 38 (in *ljóðaháttur*) would represent the third. Bugge pointed out that the suggestion would seem to be corroborated by the wood carving on the portals of the old Hyllestad Church, Norway, representing the scene, where only three birds are seen.
- ⁸² There is a widely spread belief among primitive peoples that the drinking of the blood, or the eating of certain vital parts, of the slain animal or foe will transfer to the slayer the powers that resided in them.
- ⁸³ Guthrún, the daughter of Gjúki.
- ⁸⁴ That is, “pleasant.”
- ⁸⁵ Brynhild.
- ⁸⁶ See *Sigrdrífumál*, Sts.4ff. and *Helreið Brynhildar*, Sts.8ff.
- ⁸⁷ Brynhild’s steed.
- ⁸⁸ Most likely, another name for “Valkyrie” (meaning, probably, “Giver of Victory”). It was misunderstood by the Collector as the name of a second Valkyrie, a supposition which is altogether uncalled for. As to the confusion produced, see *Grípisspá*, initial note.
- ⁸⁹ “Descendant of Skjold,” the mythical progenitor of the royal race of Denmark. Here used in a general sense for “hero.” See *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, Sts.48 and 55.
- ⁹⁰ Compare with *Hrunting*, Beowulf’s sword.