

# GUÐRÚNARKVIÐA I

## (*The First Lay of Guðrún*)

### Bellows' Introduction (1936)

The First Lay of Guthrun, entitled in the *Codex Regius* simply *Guthrunarkvitha*, immediately follows the remaining fragment of the "long" Sigurth lay in that manuscript. Unlike the poems dealing with the earlier part of the Sigurth cycle, the so-called *Reginsmol*, *Fafnismol*, and *Sigrdrifumol*, it is a clear and distinct unit, apparently complete and with few and minor interpolations. It is also one of the finest poems in the entire collection, with an extraordinary emotional intensity and dramatic force. None of its stanzas are quoted elsewhere, and it is altogether probable that the compilers of the *Volsungasaga* were unfamiliar with it, for they do not mention the sister and daughter of Gjuki who appear in this poem, or Herborg, "queen of the Huns" (stanza 6).

The lament of Guthrun (Kriemhild) is almost certainly among the oldest parts of the story. The lament was one of the earliest forms of poetry to develop among the Germanic peoples, and I suspect, though the matter is not susceptible of proof, that the lament of Sigurth's wife had assumed lyric form as early as the seventh century, and reached the North in that shape rather than in prose tradition (cf. *Guthrunarkvitha II*, introductory note). We find traces of it in the seventeenth Aventure of the *Nibelungenlied*, and in the poems of the *Edda* it dominates every appearance of Guthrun. The two first Guthrun lays (I and II) are both laments, one for Sigurth's death and the other including both that and the lament over the slaying of her brothers; the lament theme is apparent in the third Guthrun lay and in the *Guthrunarhvot*.

In their present forms the second Guthrun lay is undoubtedly older than the first; in the prose following the *Brot* the annotator refers to the "old" Guthrun lay in terms which can apply only to the second one in the collection. The shorter and "first" lay, therefore, can scarcely have been composed much before the year 1000, and may be somewhat later. The poet appears to have known and made use of the older lament; stanza 17, for example, is a close parallel to stanza 2 of the earlier poem; but whatever material he used he fitted into a definite poetic scheme of his own. And while this particular poem is, as critics have generally agreed, one of the latest of the collection, it probably represents one of the earliest parts of the entire Sigurth cycle to take on verse form.

*Guthrunarkvitha I*, so far as the narrative underlying it is concerned, shows very little northern addition to the basic German tradition. Brynhild appears only as Guthrun's enemy and the cause of Sigurth's death; the three women who attempt to comfort Guthrun, though unknown to the southern stories, seem to have been rather distinct creations of the poet's than traditional additions to the legend. Regarding the relations of the various elements in the Sigurth cycle, cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*.

### Hollander's Introduction (1962)

There are a number of indications, in sentiment, style, conception, and invention, which argue this short lay—or, rather, "lament"—to belong among the youngest in the collection, perhaps from the twelfth century. It is not likely that the compiler of the *Volsunga saga* knew it.

The theme is manifestly taken from "The Second Lay of Guðrún" from which, indeed, a number of expressions are borrowed bodily. But this in no wise detracts from the originality and depth of the conception. Unfortunately, the artistic effect of the lay is marred, for our modern taste, by a certain lack of unity in bringing in Brynhild's fierce love and hate. The intensity of Guðrún's grief still lives for us in Tennyson's poignant lyric "Home They Brought Her Warrior Dead."<sup>1</sup>

#### "Home They Brought Her Warrior Dead"

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)

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| 1. Home they brought her warrior dead:<br>She nor swooned, nor uttered cry:<br>All her maidens, watching, said,<br>'She must weep or she will die.' | 3. Stole a maiden from her place,<br>Lightly to the warrior stepped,<br>Took the face-cloth from the face;<br>Yet she neither moved nor wept. |
| 2. Then they praised him, soft and low,<br>Called him worthy to be loved,<br>Truest friend and noblest foe;<br>Yet she neither spoke nor moved.     | 4. Rose a nurse of ninety years,<br>Set his child upon her knee—<br>Like summer tempest came her tears—<br>'Sweet my child, I live for thee.' |

## OUTLINE

*(line numbers according to Bellows)*

P1	Guthrún Consoled (prose summary of opening stanzas)
1-3	Guthrún near to death from sorrow
4-5	Gjaflaug consoles Guthrún
6-10	Herborg consoles Guthrún
11-13	Gollrond unveils Sigurd's body
14-15	Guthrún weeps at last
16	Gollrond praises Guthrún love
17-21	Guthrún's Lament & Curse
22	Brynhild Curses Gollrond (for bringing Guthrún to tears)
23	Gollrond Casts Dispersions on Brynhild
24-25	Brynhild spews out blame and anger
P2	Guthrún removes to Denmark, and Brynhild kills herself

Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Hollander (1962)
<p>Gudrun sat over Sigurd dead; she wept not as other women, although ready to burst with sorrow. Both men and women came to console her, but that was not easy. It is said by some that Gudrun had eaten of Fafnir's heart, and therefore understood the talk of birds. This is also sung of Gudrun:</p> <p>1. Of old it was that Gudrun prepared to die, When she sorrowing over Sigurd sat. No sigh she uttered, nor with her hands beat, Nor wailed, as other women.</p> <p>2. Jarls came forward of great sagacity, From her sad state of mind to divert her. Gudrun could not shed a tear, such was her affliction; Ready she was to burst.</p> <p>3. Sat there noble wives of jarls, Adorned with gold, before Gudrun; Each of them told her sorrows, The bitterest she had known.</p> <p>4. Then said Giaflaug, Giuki's sister: "I know myself to be on earth most joyless: Of five consorts I the loss have suffered; Of two daughters, sisters three, And brothers eight; I alone live."</p>	<p>[P1]<sup>4</sup> Guthrun sat by the dead Sigurth; she did not weep as other women, but her heart was near to bursting with grief. The men and women came to her to console her, but that was not easy to do. It is told of men that Guthrun had eaten of Fafnir's heart,<sup>5</sup> and that she understood the speech of birds. This is a poem about Guthrun.</p> <p>1.<sup>6</sup> Then did Guthrun   think to die, When she by Sigurth   sorrowing sat; Tears she had not,   nor wrung her hands, Nor ever wailed,   as other women.</p> <p>2. To her the warriors   wise there came, Longing her heavy   woe to lighten; Grieving could not   Guthrun weep, So sad her heart,   it seemed, would break.</p> <p>3. Then the wives   of the warriors came, Gold-adorned,   and Guthrun sought; Each one then   of her own grief spoke, The bitterest pain   she had ever borne.</p> <p>4. Then spake Gjaflaug,<sup>7</sup>   Gjuki's sister: "Most joyless of all   on earth am I; Husbands five   were from me taken, (Two daughters then,   and sisters three,)<sup>8</sup> Brothers eight,   yet I have lived."</p>	<p>Guthrún sate over dead Sigurth's body. She wept not, like other women, yet her heart was nigh bursting with sorrow. Both men and women came to speak cheer to her; but that was not easy. It is told that Guthrún had eaten of Fáfñir's heart and hence understood the speech of birds.<sup>34</sup> This lay, too,<sup>35</sup> was indited about Guthrún.</p> <p>1. Erst Gjúki's daughter unto death was nigh, As o'er Sigurth she sate sorrowfully; She whimpered not, nor her hands she wrung, Nor wept, either, as do women else.</p> <p>2. Went to the widow wise earls kindly, The heavy heart of her to ease; Nor yet Guthrún her grief could weep, In her bosom though her heart would burst.</p> <p>3. Sate then with her the wives of earls, With Gjúki's daughter gold-dight women: Their greatest griefs they gan tell her, The fellest which had befallen them.</p> <p>4. Then quoth Gjaflaug,<sup>36</sup> Gjúki's sister: "On earth am I most utterly wretched: Five highborn husbands have I buried, Three of my daughters, three of my sisters, And eight brothers; yet on I live."</p>

<p>5. Gudrun could not shed a tear, Such was her affliction for her dead consort, And her soul's anguish for the king's fall.</p> <p>6. Then said Herborg, Hunaland's queen: "I a more cruel grief have to recount: My seven sons, in the south land, My spouse the eighth, in conflict fell.</p> <p>7. My father and my mother, my brothers four, On the sea the wind deluded; The waves struck on the ship's timbers.</p> <p>8. Their last honours 'twas mine to pay, 'twas mine to see them tumbled, / Their funeral rites to prepare was mine. All this I underwent in one half-year, And to me no one consolation offered.</p> <p>9. Then I became a captive, taken in war, At the close of the same half-year. Then had I to adorn, and tie the shoes, Of the hersir's wife, each morn.</p> <p>10. From jealousy she threatened me, And with hard blows drove me: Nowhere master found I a better, But mistress nowhere a worse."</p> <p>11. Gudrun could not shed a tear, Such was her affliction for her dead consort, And her soul's anguish for the king's fall.</p> <p>12. Then said Gullrond, Giuki's daughter: "Little canst thou, my fosterer, wise as thou art, With a young wife fittingly talk." The king's body she forbade to be longer hidden.</p> <p>13. She snatched the sheet from Sigurd's corpse, And turned his cheek towards his wife's knees: "Behold thy loved one, lay thy mouth to his lip, As if thou wouldst embrace the living prince."</p> <p>14. Gudrun upon him cast one look: She saw the prince's locks dripping with blood, The chief's sparkling eyes closed in death, His kingly breast cleft by the sword.</p> <p>15. Then sank down Gudrun back on her pillow, Her head-gear was loosed, her cheeks grew red, And a flood of tears fell to her knees.</p> <p>16. Then wept Gudrun, Giuki's daughter,</p>	<p>5. Grieving could not   Guthrun weep, Such grief she had   for her husband dead, And so grim her heart   by the hero's body.<sup>9</sup></p> <p>6. Then Herborg<sup>10</sup> spake,   the queen of the Huns: "I have a greater   grief to tell; My seven sons   in the southern land, And my husband, fell   in fight all eight.</p> <p>(Father and mother   and brothers four Amid the waves   the wind once smote, And the seas crashed through   the sides of the ship.)<sup>11</sup></p> <p>7. "The bodies all   with my own hands then I decked for the grave,   and the dead I buried;<sup>12</sup> A half-year brought me   this to bear; And no one came   to comfort me.</p> <p>8. "Then bound I was,   and taken in war, A sorrow yet   in the same half-year; They bade me deck   and bind the shoes Of the wife of the monarch   every morn.</p> <p>9. "In jealous rage   her wrath she spake, And beat me oft   with heavy blows; Never a better   lord I knew,<sup>13</sup> And never a woman   worse I found."</p> <p>10.<sup>14</sup> Grieving could not   Guthrun weep, Such grief she had   for her husband dead, And so grim her heart   by the hero's body.</p> <p>11. Then spake Gollrond,<sup>15</sup>   Gjuki's daughter: "Thy wisdom finds not,   my foster-mother, The way to comfort   the wife so young." She bade them uncover   the warrior's corpse.<sup>16</sup></p> <p>12. The shroud she lifted   from Sigurth, laying His well-loved head   on the knees of his wife: <sup>17</sup>"Look on thy loved one,   and lay thy lips To his as if yet   the hero lived."</p> <p>13. Once alone did   Guthrun look; His hair all clotted   with blood beheld, The blinded eyes   that once shone bright, The hero's breast   that the blade had pierced.</p> <p>14. Then Guthrun bent,   on her pillow bowed, Her hair was loosened,   her cheek was hot, And the tears like raindrops   downward ran.</p> <p>15. Then Guthrun, daughter   of Gjuki, wept,</p>	<p>5. Nor yet Guthrún her grief could weep, So sore her sorrow o'er Sigurth's fall, So cold her heart o'er the king's body.</p> <p>6. then quoth Herborg, the Hunnish queen: "Sadder sorrow suffered I still: My seven sons in the Southland all Fell whilom in battle, my husband the eighth.</p> <p>7. "Both father and mother and four brothers I lost in the waves, on wind-tossed ship, When the billows brake 'gainst the ship's bulwarks.</p> <p>8. "Myself needs buried the bodies all, Needs laid them out and their limbs straightened. This woe befell me in one half year— To soothe my sorrow no soul did try.</p> <p>9. "As captive was I kept in bondage, That very half year this happened to me; Then trimmed I the tresses,<sup>37</sup> and tied the shoes, For the earl's housewife every morning.</p> <p>10. "With jealous scorn she scolded me, Urged me to work with angry stripes; More friendly master found I never,<sup>38</sup> But harsher housewife had I never."</p> <p>11. Nor yet Guthrún her grief could weep, So sore her sorrow o'er Sigurth's fall, So cold her heart o'er the king's body.</p> <p>12. Then quoth Gullrond, Gjúki's daughter: "Though old and wise, but ill know'st thou, Foster mother, how the mourner to comfort," And bade them bare the king's body.</p> <p>13. She swept the sheet from Sigurth's corse And brought the bolster to the brooding one's knees: "To the life one's lips lay thou thy mouth, As when didst hug when hale, the warrior!"</p> <p>14. Then cast one glance Guthrún on him, Saw the dear one's hair all dank with blood, Saw the folk-warder's flashing eyes dimmed, And the baron's breast breached by the sword.</p> <p>15. Then sank Guthrún swooning on bolster— Her hair loosened, her cheeks grew hot, A rain of tears ran to her knees.</p> <p>16. Then wept Guthrún, Gjúki's daughter,</p>
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<p>So that the tears spontaneously flowed, And at the same time screamed the geese in the court, The noble birds, which the lady owned.</p> <p>17. Then spake Gullrond, Giuki's daughter: "Your loves I know were the most ardent Among living beings upon earth: thou hadst delight nowhere, Sister mine! save with Sigurd."</p> <p>18. Then said Gudrun, Giuki's daughter: "Such was my Sigurd among Giuki's sons, As is the garlick out from the grass which grows, Or a bright stone on a thread drawn, A precious gem on kings.</p> <p>19. I also seemed to the prince's warriors Higher than any of Herian's Disir; Now I am as little as the leaf oft is In the storm-winds, after the chieftain's death.</p> <p>20. Sitting I miss, and in my bed, My dearest friend. Giuki's sons have caused, Giuki's sons have caused my affliction, And their sister's tears of anguish.</p> <p>21. So ye desolate the people's land, As ye have kept your sworn oaths. Gunnar! thou wilt not the gold enjoy; Those rings will be thy bane, For the oaths thou to Sigurd gavest.</p> <p>22. Oft in the mansion was the greater mirth, When my Sigurd Grani saddled, And Brynhild they went to woo, That which accursed, in an evil hour!"</p> <p>23. Then said Brynhild, Budli's daughter: "May the hag lack spouse and children, Who thee, Gudrun! has caused to weep, And this morning given thee runes of speech!"<sup>2</sup></p> <p>24. Then said Gullrond, Giuki's daughter: "Cease, thou loathed of all! from those words. The evil destiny of princes thou hast ever been; Thee every billow drives of an evil nature; Thou sore affliction of seven kings, The greatest bane of friendship among women!"</p> <p>25. Then said Brynhild, Budli's daughter: "Atli my brother, Budli's offspring, Is the sole cause of all the evil;</p>	<p>And through her tresses<sup>18</sup>   flowed the tears; And from the court   came the cry of geese,<sup>19</sup> The birds so fair   of the hero's bride.</p> <p>16.<sup>20</sup> Then Gollrond spake,   the daughter of Gjuki: "Never a greater   love I knew Than yours among   all men on earth; Nowhere wast happy,   at home or abroad, Sister mine,   with Sigurth away."</p> <p>Guthrun spake:<sup>21</sup> 17. "So was my Sigurth   o'er Gjuki's sons As the spear-leek grown   above the grass, Or the jewel bright   borne on the band, The precious stone   that princes wear.</p> <p>18. "To the leader of men   I loftier seemed And higher than all   of Herjan's maids;<sup>22</sup> As little now   as the leaf I am On the willow hanging;   my hero is dead.</p> <p>19. "In his seat, in his bed,   I see no more My heart's true friend;   the fault is theirs, The sons of Gjuki,   for all my grief, That so their sister   sorely weeps.</p> <p>20. "So shall your land   its people lose As ye have kept   your oaths of yore; Gunnar, no joy   the gold shall give thee,<sup>23</sup> (The rings shall soon   thy slayers be,)<sup>24</sup> Who swarest oaths   with Sigurth once.</p> <p>21. "In the court was greater   gladness then The day my Sigurth   Grani saddled, And went forth Brynhild's   hand to win,<sup>25</sup> That woman ill,   in an evil hour."</p> <p>22.<sup>26</sup> Then Brynhild spake,   the daughter of Buthli: "May the witch now husband   and children want Who, Guthrun, loosed   thy tears at last, And with magic today   hath made thee speak."</p> <p>23. Then Gollrond, daughter   of Gjuki, spake: "Speak not such words,   thou hated woman; Bane of the noble   thou e'er hast been, (Borne thou art   on an evil wave, Sorrow hast brought   to seven kings.) And many a woman   hast loveless made."<sup>27</sup></p> <p>24.<sup>28</sup> Then Brynhild, daughter   of Buthli, spake: "Atli<sup>29</sup> is guilty   of all the sorrow, (Son of Buthli   and brother of mine,)</p>	<p>That through her tresses<sup>39</sup> the tears did flow, And in the garth the geese sang out,<sup>40</sup> The far-famed fowl which the fair one owned.</p> <p>17. Then quoth Gullrond, Gjúki's daughter: "Knew I never beneath heaven Greater love than was given thee: Without nor within at ease thou wast But at Sigurth's side, thou sister mine!"</p> <p><i>(Guthrún said:)</i> 18. "Seemed my Sigurth 'mongst the sons of Gjúki Like the garlic, grown the grass above,<sup>41</sup> Like a bright stone set on band of gold, A gleaming jewel, the great ones among.</p> <p>19. "Was I honored higher by the king's heroes Than any one of Óthin's maidens;<sup>42</sup> As little am I as the leaves hanging On sallow twigs, now Sigurth is dead.</p> <p>20. "At board I miss, and in bed also, My bosom's friend. 'Tis my brothers' guilt— 'Tis my brothers' guilt that this grief I bear— Their own sister—and sore tears weep.</p> <p>21. "May ye lose your land, and lieges also, As ill ye kept the oaths ye sware. No good, Gunnar, of the gold will come: The dragon's hoard thy death will be, Since to Sigurth oaths thou swarest.</p> <p>22. "There was greater glee in the garth, by far, The time my Sigurth did saddle Grani— The time they wended to woo Brynhild, That ill wight, in evil hour."</p> <p>23. Then quoth Brynhild, Buthli's daughter: "May that hag ne'er have husband nor children Who again taught thee thy tears to shed, And this morn gave thee the might of speech!"</p> <p>24. Then quoth Gullrond, Gjúki's daughter: "Hush thee, Brynhild, who art hated by all: Athelings' ill fate thou hast ever been, And all did call thee a curse to them— A sorrow to seven kings,<sup>43</sup> And hast brought woe to many a wife."</p> <p>25. Then quoth Brynhild, Buthli's daughter: "From Atli all this evil springs— To Buthli born, my brother he—</p>
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<p>26. When in the hall of the Hunnish folk, With the king we beheld the fire of the serpent's bed.<sup>3</sup> Of that journey, I have paid the penalty, That sight I have ever rued."</p> <p>27. She by a column stood, the wood violently clasped. From the eyes of Brynhild, Budli's daughter, Fire gleamed forth; venom she snorted, When she beheld the wounds of Sigurd.</p> <p>Gudrun then went away to the forest and deserts, and travelled to Denmark, where she stayed seven half-years with Thora, Hakon's daughter. Brynhild would not outlive Sigurd. She caused her eight thralls and five female slaves to be killed, and then slew herself with a sword, as it is related in the "<i>Sigurdarkvida in Skemma</i>" (the Short Lay of Sigurd).</p>	<p>When we saw in the hall   of the Hunnish race<sup>30</sup> The flame of the snake's bed<sup>31</sup>   flash round the hero; (For the journey since   full sore have I paid, And ever I seek   the sight to forget.)"</p> <p>25. By the pillars she stood,   and gathered her strength, From the eyes of Brynhild,   Buthli's daughter, Fire there burned,   and venom she breathed, When the wounds she saw   on Sigurth then.</p> <p>[P2] Guthrun<sup>32</sup> went thence away to a forest in the waste, and journeyed all the way to Denmark, and was there seven half-years with Thora, daughter of Hokon. Brynhild would not live after Sigurth. She had eight of her thralls slain and five serving-women. Then she killed herself with a sword, as is told in the Short Lay of Sigurth.<sup>33</sup></p>	<p>'mongst Hunnish hosts in the hall as we The worm-bed's fire<sup>44</sup> on the warrior saw. But woe did bring their wending thither: Ever since see I that sight before me."</p> <p>26. Neath stone post stood she, nor restrained her wrath<sup>45</sup>— / Burned in Brynhild's, Buthli's daughter's, Her eyes a fire: she foamed with rage<sup>46</sup> When the wounds she saw on Sigurth's body.</p> <p>Guthrún then fared to the woods and wastes until she came to Denmark. There she stayed seven half-years with Thóra, the daughter of Hákon.<sup>47</sup> Brynhild would live no longer after Sigurth's death. She had eight of her thralls and five of her bondmaids slain. Then she slew herself with her sword, as is told in "The Short Lay of Sigurth."</p>
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<sup>1</sup> It was suggested to him by Thorpe's translation of this lay.

<sup>2</sup> Power of speech.

<sup>3</sup> A periphrasis for gold.

<sup>4</sup> The prose follows the concluding prose of the *Brot* without indication of a break, the heading standing immediately before stanza 1.

<sup>5</sup> Fafnir's heart: this bit of information is here quite without point, and it is nowhere else stated that Guthrun understood the speech of birds. In the *Volsungasaga* it is stated that Sigurth gave Guthrun some of Fafnir's heart to eat, "and thereafter she was much grimmer than before, and wiser."

<sup>6</sup> This stanza seems to be based on *Guthrunarkviða* II, 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> Gjaflaug: nothing further is known of this aunt of Guthrun, or of the many relatives whom she has lost. Very likely she is an invention of the poet's, for it seems improbable that otherwise all further trace of her should have been lost.

<sup>8</sup> Line 4 has been marked by many editors as spurious.

<sup>9</sup> Some editors assume the loss of a line, after either line 1 or line 3. I prefer to believe that here and in stanza 10 the poet knew exactly what he was doing, and that both stanzas are correct.

<sup>10</sup> Herborg: neither she nor her sorrows are elsewhere mentioned, nor is it clear what a "queen of the Huns" is doing in Gunnar's home, but the word "Hun" has little definiteness of meaning in the poems, and is frequently applied to Sigurth himself (cf. note on stanza 24). Herborg appears from stanza 11 to have been the foster-mother of Gollrond, Guthrun's sister.

<sup>11</sup> Lines 5-7 may be interpolations, or may form a separate stanza.

<sup>12</sup> Lines 1 and 2 stand in reversed order in the manuscript; I have followed Gering's conjectural transposition.

<sup>13</sup> Herborg implies that the queen's jealousy was not altogether misplaced.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. stanza 5 and note. The manuscript abbreviates to first letters.

<sup>15</sup> Gollrond: not elsewhere mentioned.

<sup>16</sup> Line 4 looks like an interpolation replacing a line previously lost.

<sup>17</sup> The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza, and some editors have attempted to follow this arrangement. Many editors assume the loss of a line from this stanza.

<sup>18</sup> The word here translated "tresses" is sheer guesswork.

<sup>19</sup> The detail of the geese is taken from *Sigurtharkviða en skamma*, 29, line 3 here being identical with line 4 of that stanza.

<sup>20</sup> Line 1, abbreviated in the manuscript, very likely should be simply "Gollrond spake."

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Guthrunarkviða* II, 2. The manuscript does not name the speaker, and some editions have a first line, "Then Guthrun spake, the daughter of Gjuki."

<sup>22</sup> Herjan: Othin; his maids are the Valkyries; cf. *Voluspo*, 31, where the same phrase is used.

<sup>23</sup> How Guthrun's curse is fulfilled is told in the subsequent poems. That desire for Sigurth's treasure (the gold cursed by Andvari and Loki) was one of the motives for his murder is indicated in *Sigurtharkviða en skamma* (stanza 16), and was clearly a part of the German tradition, as it appears in the *Nibelungenlied*.

<sup>24</sup> Line 4 looks like an interpolation (cf. *Fafnismol*, 9, line 4), but some editors instead have queried line 5.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Gripisspo*, 35 and note.

<sup>26</sup> Line 1 is abbreviated in the manuscript.

<sup>27</sup> Editors are agreed that this stanza shows interpolations, but differ as to the lines to reject. Line 4 (literally "every wave of ill-doing drives thee") is substantially a proverb, and line 5, with its apparently meaningless reference to "seven" kings, may easily have come from some other source.

<sup>28</sup> The stanza is obviously in bad shape; perhaps it represents two separate stanzas, or perhaps three of the lines are later additions.

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<sup>29</sup> Atli: Brynhild here blames her brother, following the frequent custom of transferring the responsibility for a murder (cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*, 33), because he compelled her to marry Gunnar against her will, an idea which the poet seems to have gained from *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 32-39. These stanzas represent an entirely different version of the story, wherein Atli, attacked by Gunnar and Sigurth, buys them off by giving Gunnar his sister, Brynhild, as wife. He seems to have induced the latter to marry Gunnar by falsely telling her that Gunnar was Sigurth (a rationalistic explanation of the interchange of forms described in the *Volsungasaga* and *Gripisspo*, 37-39). In the present stanza Atli is made to do this out of desire for Sigurth's treasure.

<sup>30</sup> Hunnish race: this may be merely an error (neither Gunnar nor Sigurth could properly have been connected in any way with Atli and his Huns), based on *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, wherein Sigurth appears more than once as the "Hunnish king." The North was very much in the dark as to the differences between Germans, Burgundians, Franks, Goths, and Huns, and used the words without much discrimination. On the other hand, it may refer to Sigurth's appearance when, adorned with gold, he came with Gunnar to besiege Atli, in the alternative version of the story just cited (cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 36).

<sup>31</sup> Flame of the snake's bed: gold, so called because serpents and dragons were the traditional guardians of treasure, on which they lay.

<sup>32</sup> The manuscript has "Gunnar" in place of "Guthrun," but this is an obvious mistake; the entire prose passage is based on *Guthrunarkvitha II*, 14. The *Volsungasaga* likewise merely paraphrases *Guthrunarkvitha II*, and nothing further is known of Thora or her father, Hokon, though many inconclusive attempts have been made to identify the latter.

<sup>33</sup> Brynhild: the story of her death is told in great detail in the latter part of *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*.

<sup>34</sup> This remark—a reminiscence of the Sigurth motif—entirely falls out of the context.

<sup>35</sup> That is, besides others that had been made of her.

<sup>36</sup> Unknown elsewhere and probably the poet's own invention, like Herborg and Gullrond.

<sup>37</sup> Freely translated.

<sup>38</sup> Which is probably the cause of the "jealous scorn." This is the fate which befell the Irish princess Melkorka (*Laxdæla saga*, Ch.12), and Kûdrûn, in Normandy (*Kûdrûn*, Aventure 20 ff).

<sup>39</sup> The word is doubtful.

<sup>40</sup> See *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, St.29.

<sup>41</sup> In some German dialects the garlic still bears the name Gruserich, "King of the Grasses." Compare the similes in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, St.38, and *Guðrúnarkviða II*, St.2.

<sup>42</sup> The Valkyries.

<sup>43</sup> This accusation is probably not to be taken literally. Compare with *Helreið Brynhildar*, Sts. 2 and 4.

<sup>44</sup> The fire (that is, the glistening gold) of the dragon's lair—a kenning for the treasure of the Nibelungs. The evil entered, she avers, with the ill-fated visit of Sigurth and the Burgundian kings to woo her. The treasure corrupted Atli.

<sup>45</sup> The rendition is doubtful.

<sup>46</sup> Literally, "spewed poison."

<sup>47</sup> See *Guðrúnarkviða II*, St.14.