

ODDRÚNARGRÁTR (*Oddrún's Lament, or The Complaint of Oddrún*)

Bellows' Introduction (1936)

The *Oddrunargratr* follows *Guthrunarkvitha III* in the *Codex Regius*; it is not quoted or mentioned elsewhere, except that the composer of the "short" Sigurth lay seems to have been familiar with it. The *Volsungasaga* says nothing of the story on which it is based, and mentions Oddrun only once, in the course of its paraphrase of Brynhild's prophecy from the "short" Sigurth lay. That the poem comes from the eleventh century is generally agreed; prior to the year 1000 there is no trace of the figure of Oddrun, Atli's sister, and yet the *Oddrunargratr* is almost certainly older than the "short" Sigurth lay, so that the last half of the eleventh century seems to be a fairly safe guess.

Where or how the figure of Oddrun entered the Sigurth-Atli cycle is uncertain. She does not appear in any of the extant German versions, and it is generally assumed that she was a creation of the North, though the poet refers to "old tales" concerning her. She does not directly affect the course of the story at all, though the poet has used effectively the episode of Gunnar's death, with the implication that Atli's vengeance on Gunnar and Hogni was due, at least in part, to his discovery of Gunnar's love affair with Oddrun. The material which forms the background of Oddrun's story belongs wholly to the German part of the legend (cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*), and is paralleled with considerable closeness in the *Nibelungenlied*; only Oddrun herself and the subsidiary figures of Borgny and Vilmund are Northern additions. The geography, on the other hand, is so utterly chaotic as to indicate that the original localization of the Atli story had lost all trace of significance by the time this poem was composed.

In the manuscript the poem, or rather the brief introductory prose note, bears the heading "Of Borgny and Oddrun," but nearly all editions, following late paper manuscripts, have given the poem the title it bears here. Outside of a few apparently defective stanzas, and some confusing transpositions, the Poem has clearly been preserved in good condition, and the beginning and end are definitely marked.

Hollander's Introduction (1936)

Oddrún's love for Gunnar, a specifically Northern development of the Niflung legend, hinted at also in *The Short Lay of Sigurth*, is here elaborated into a whole poem—perhaps the most elegiac of the whole Collection. It is also probably one of the youngest, and was not known to the compiler of the *Volsunga saga*. The very beginning as well as the whole feel of the lay attest its late origin: the many archaizing turns and allusions¹ are due to the conscious effort of an Icelandic poet of the late twelfth century to imitate the earlier manner. It will be noted, in this connection, that Gunnar's and Hogni's death at Atli's hands is here motivated by the enmity aroused by Gunnar's relations with Oddrún—an unauthentic perversion of the legend. Aesthetically, too, the poem is inferior. Though facile, it is full of inconsistencies and irrelevancies,² due in this instance, not only to a problematic and utterly disordered text, but also to the mediocrity of the poet.

OUTLINE

[line numbers according to Bellows]

P1	Of Borgný and Oddrún
1	Of Borgný's Plight
2-3	Oddrún rides to Borgný's aid
4-5	Oddrún inquires as to Borgný's state
6	Oddrún invokes spells of healing
7-8	Borgný's children born and Oddrún blessed
9-11	Oddrún and Borgný's harsh exchange
12-15	Oddrún's Tale I: Of Buðli's Plans
16-18	Of Brynhild's Fate (Atli Version)
19-21	Of Oddrún & Gunnar's Illicit Love
22-25	Atli's spies report the affair, refusing the lovers' bribes
26a	Gunner and Hogni arrive at Atli's hall
26b	Hogni's heart cut out and Gunnar cast into a dungeon
27-29	Gunnar plays his Harp to summon Oddrún
30	Atli's mother appears as a serpent and bites Gunnar
31-32	Oddrún's Lament is ended

Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Hollander (1962)
<p>There was a king named Heidrek, who had a daughter named Borgny. Her lover was named Vilmund. She could not give birth to a child until Oddrun, Atli's sister, came. She had been the beloved of Gunnar, Giuki's son. Of this story it is here sung:</p> <p>1. I have heard tell, in ancient stories Hhow a damsel came to the eastern land: No one was able, on the face of earth, Help to afford to Heidrek's daughter.</p> <p>2. When Oddrun, Atli's sister, Heard that the damsel had great pains, From the stall she led her well-bridled steed, And on the swart one the saddle laid.</p> <p>3. She the horse made run on the smooth, dusty way, Until she came to where a high hall stood. She the saddle snatched from the hungry steed, And in she went along the court, And these words first of all uttered:</p> <p>4. "What is most noteworthy in this country? Or what most desirable in the Hunnish land?"</p>	<p>[P1] Heithrek was the name of a king, whose daughter was called Borgny.¹⁰ Vilmund was the name of the man who was her lover. She could not give birth to a child until Oddrun,¹¹ Atli's sister, had come to her; Oddrun had been beloved of Gunnar, son of Gjuki. About this story is the following poem.</p> <p>1. I have heard it told in olden tales¹² How a maiden came to Morningland;¹³ No one of all on earth above To Heithrek's daughter help could give.</p> <p>2. This Oddrun learned, the sister of Atli, That sore the maiden's sickness was; The bit-bearer forth from his stall she brought, And the saddle laid on the steed so black.</p> <p>3. She let the horse go o'er the level ground, Till she reached the hall that loftily rose, (And in she went from the end of the hall;)¹⁴ From the weary steed the saddle she took; Hear now the speech that first she spake:</p> <p>4. "What news on earth, ¹⁵ Or what has happened in Hunland now?"</p>	<p>Heithrek was the name of a king, and his daughter was hight Borgný. Vilmund⁶³ was the name of her lover. She could not give birth to her children before Oddrún, Atli's sister, came to her help.⁶⁴ Oddrún had been the leman of Gunnar, the son of Gjúki. Of these matters dealeth this lay.</p> <p>1. I have heard it told in tales of yore How that came a maid to Mornaland;⁶⁵ Not any one could, the earth above, Lend a helping hand to Heithrek's daughter.</p> <p>2. Then heard Oddrún, Atli's sister, That this maid lay in throes full long; The bitted steed from stall she drew, And saddle laid on the swart-hued horse.</p> <p>3. The even earth-ways she eagerly rode Till the high-built hall of Heithrek she saw. She swung the saddle from slender steed, And in she went to endmost gable. These words then first fell from her lips:</p> <p>4. "I fain would find if befallen hath evil, As I have heard, in Hunnish lands?"⁶⁶</p>

<p>Borgny 5. Here lies Borgny with pains overwhelmed, Thy friend, Oddrun! See if thou canst help her.</p> <p>Oddrun 6. What chieftain has on thee brought this dishonour? Why so acute are Borgny's pains?</p> <p>Borgny 7. Vilmund is named the falcon-bearer's friend: He the damsel wrapt in a warm coverlet Five whole winters, so that from her father she was hidden.</p> <p>8. They, I ween, spoke not more than this: Kindly she went to sit at the damsel's knee. Vehemently sang Oddrun, fervently sang Oddrun Songs of power over Borgny.</p> <p>9. A girl and boy might then tread the mould-way, Gentle babes, born of Hogni's bane. Then began to speak the death-sick damsel, Who before had no word uttered.</p> <p>10. "So may thee help the benignant genii, Frigg and Freyia, and other gods besides, As thou hast from me peril removed!"</p> <p>11. "I was not inclined to give thee help, Because thou never wast of succour worthy: I vowed, and have performed what I then said— When the princes the heritage divided, That I would ever help afford."</p> <p>Borgny 12. Mad art thou, Oddrun! and hast lost thy wits, When in hostile spirit most of thy words thou utterest; For I have been thy companion upon the earth, As if from brothers we both were born.</p> <p>Oddrun 13. I remember yet what thou one evening saidst, When I for Gunnar, a comotation made. Such a case, saidst thou, would not thenceforth happen, To any maiden, save to me alone."</p> <p>14. Then sat down the sorrowing lady To tell her woes, from her great grief:</p> <p>15. "I was nurtured in the kingly hall,</p>	<p>A serving-maid spake:¹⁶ "Here Borgny lies in bitter pain, Thy friend, and, Oddrun, thy help would find."</p> <p>Oddrun spake:¹⁷ 5. 'Who worked this woe for the woman¹⁸ thus, Or why so sudden is Borgny sick?"</p> <p>The serving-maid spake: ¹⁹"Vilmund is he, the heroes' friend, Who wrapped the woman in bedclothes warm, (For winters five, yet her father knew not)."²⁰</p> <p>6. Then no more they spake, methinks; She went at the knees of the woman to sit; With magic Oddrun and mightily Oddrun Chanted for Borgny potent charms.²¹</p> <p>7. At last were born a boy and girl, Son and daughter of Hogni's slayer;²² Then speech the woman so weak began, Nor said she aught ere this she spake:</p> <p>8. "So may the holy ones thee help, Frigg and Freyja²³ and favoring gods, As thou hast saved me from sorrow now."</p> <p>Oddrun spake:²⁴ 9. "I came not hither to help thee thus Because thou ever my aid didst earn;²⁵ I fulfilled the oath that of old I swore, That aid to all I should ever bring, (When they shared the wealth the warriors had)."²⁶</p> <p>Borgny spake:²⁷ 10.²⁸ "Wild art thou, Oddrun, and witless now, That so in hatred to me thou speakest; I followed thee where thou didst fare, As we had been born of brothers twain."</p> <p>Oddrun spake:²⁹ 11. "I remember the evil one eve thou spakest,³⁰ When a draught I gave to Gunnar then;³¹ Thou didst say that never such a deed By maid was done save by me alone."</p> <p>12.³² Then the sorrowing woman sat her down To tell the grief of her troubles great.</p> <p>13. "Happy I grew in the hero's³³ hall</p>	<p><i>The handmaid said:</i> "Here lieth Borgný by labor o'ercome, Thy friend, Oddrún—fly to her help!"</p> <p><i>Oddrún said:</i> 5. "Who did this harm to Heithrek's daughter, And brought Borgný to the brink of death?"</p> <p><i>The handmaid said:</i> "Vilmund is hight a hero proud: Under warm cover he kept the maid,⁶⁷ For five winters, so her father knew not."</p> <p>6. Nor more spoke they, the mournful ones; Nigh her, Oddrún did kneel to help: Stern spells she spake, strong spells she spake, For womb-bound woman witchcraft mighty.⁶⁸</p> <p>7. Two bonny babes were born to the world, Son and daughter, to the slayer of Hogni,⁶⁹ Then said the maid sick unto death, Nor any word she ere that spoke:</p> <p>8. "May hallowed wights bring help to thee, Frigg and Freya,⁷⁰ and favoring gods, As off thou warded evil from me (and hastened hither help to bring me)."⁷¹</p> <p><i>(Oddrún said:)</i> 9. "Not hastened I hither help to bring thee, As though worthy ever thou were of it: An oath I swore, and ever kept, That the ailing all 'gainst ill I would guard."</p> <p><i>(Gudrún said:)</i> 10.⁷² "Bereft of reason and raving art, Since spiteful words thou speakest to me; Yet faithfully I followed thee, As though born we had been to brothers twain."</p> <p><i>(Oddrún said:)</i> 11. "I remember yet how meanly you spoke, When to Gunnar I gave the evening goblet,⁷³ Saying such shame never should be known Of any maid, but of me only."</p> <p>12. Then sate her down the sorrowful queen,⁷⁴ To hell her tales of trials great.</p> <p>13. "To high heroes in hall I was born.</p>
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<p>I was the joy of many in the council of men. Life I enjoyed, and my father's wealth, Five winters only, while my father lived.</p> <p>16. These last words the noble-hearted king Strove to utter, ere he departed hence.</p> <p>17. He bade me be endowed with ruddy gold, And in the south be given to Grimhild's son. He said no maiden could more excellent In the world be born, if fate willed it not otherwise.</p> <p>18. Brynhild in her bower was occupied in broidery: She had people and lands around her. Earth slumbered, and the heavens above, When Fafnir's bane her burgh first saw.</p> <p>19. Then was conflict waged with the Walish sword, And the burgh taken which Brynhild owned. It was not long—which was not surprising— Ere she discovered all those frauds.</p> <p>20. These she caused cruelly to be avenged, So that we all have great afflictions. Known it will be through every land of men, That she caused herself to die with Sigurd.</p> <p>21. But I for Gunnar, rings' dispenser, Love conceived, such as Brynhild should. [But he Brynhild bade a helmet take, Said she a Valkyria should become.]³</p> <p>22. They forthwith offered⁴ ruddy rings to my brother, And indemnity not small. He⁵ besides offered For me fifteen vills, and the load of Grani's sides, If he would accept them.</p> <p>23. But Atli said he never would A marriage-gift receive from Giuki's son. Still we could not our loves withstand, But I my head must lay upon the ring-breaker.</p> <p>24. Many things said my relations; Declared they had surprised us both together; But Atli said, that I would not Crime commit, nor scandal perpetrate. But such should no one for another Ever deny, when love has part.</p> <p>25. Atli sent his emissaries about</p>	<p>As the warriors wished, and they loved me well; ³⁴Glad I was of my father's gifts, For winters five, while my father lived.</p> <p>14. "These were the words the weary king, Ere he died, spake last of all: ³⁵He bade me with red gold dowered to be, And to Grimhild's son in the South be wedded.³⁶</p> <p>15. ["But Brynhild the helm he bade to wear, A wish-maid³⁷ bright he said she should be;]³⁸ For a nobler maid would never be born On earth, he said, if death should spare her.³⁹</p> <p>16.⁴⁰ "At her weaving Brynhild sat in her bower, Lands and folk alike she had; The earth and heaven high resounded When Fafnir's slayer⁴¹ the city saw.</p> <p>17.⁴² "Then battle was fought with the foreign swords, And the city was broken that Brynhild had; Not long thereafter, but all too soon, Their evil wiles full well she knew.</p> <p>18. "Woeful for this her vengeance was, As so we learned to our sorrow all; In every land shall all men hear How herself at Sigurth's side she slew.⁴³</p> <p>19. "Love to Gunnar then I gave, To the breaker of rings, as Brynhild might; ⁴⁴To Atli rings so red they offered,⁴⁵ And mighty gifts to my brother would give.</p> <p>20. "Fifteen dwellings fain would he give For me, and the burden that Grani bore;⁴⁶ ⁴⁷But Atli said he would never receive Marriage gold from Gjuki's son.</p> <p>21. "Yet could we not our love o'ercome, And my head I laid on the hero's shoulder; Many there were of kinsmen mine Who said that together us they had seen.</p> <p>22. "Atli said that never I Would evil plan, or ill deed do; But none may this of another think, Or surely speak, when love is shared.</p> <p>23. "Soon his men did Atli send,</p>	<p>My life I led beloved of most Whilst lived my father—⁷⁵ fair was my lot— But I fatherless drooped when five winters.</p> <p>14. "These words then spake the weary king When last in life his lips he oped: That dowered with gold his daughter should be Given in Southland to Grimhild's son.⁷⁶</p> <p>15. "But to Brynhild he the helmet gave: She should, said he, a shield-maid be.⁷⁷ 'No better maiden was born in the world To be a queen,' he quoth, 'while she lives.'</p> <p>16. "In her bower Brynhild gold braids did weave, As lady lorded it o'er land and folk; The earth quivered, and all the sky, When Fáfñir's slayer⁷⁸ first saw her hall.</p> <p>17. "Then Sigurth's sword did smite amain, Broke the stronghold which Brynhild owned; Not long it lasted, but little while, Till of all whiles she aware did grow.⁷⁹</p> <p>18. "Revenge full hard vowed she therefor, And took felly, as we found ourselves To farthest folklands will fly the tale How at Sigurth's side she slew herself.⁸⁰</p> <p>19. "To Gunnar then gladly I gave my love, To the breaker-of-rings,⁸¹ as Brynhild did not; To Atli they⁸² offered untold riches⁸³ Of bright gold rings, to my brother dear.</p> <p>20. "Bade he fondly for me fifteen manors And Grani's burden,⁸⁴ if gold he wished; But Atli spurned to bespeak ever A dowry gift from Gjukung's kinsmen.</p> <p>21. "Yet could we not overcome our love, To the gold-ring-giver⁸⁵ I gave myself. Then muttered among them many kinsmen, And spoke they had spied us together.</p> <p>22. "Still Atli thought that I forsooth All stainless stayed, nor stooped to ill; Yet should no one be sure of this, Or believe another, if love's at stake.</p> <p>23. "Sped Atli forth his spies full soon</p>
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<p>The Murkwood, that he might prove me; And they came to where they ought not to have come, To where we had one couch prepared.</p> <p>26. To the men we offered red-gold rings, That they it might not to Atli tell; But they forthwith hastened home, And it quickly to Atli told.</p> <p>27. But they from Gudrun carefully concealed it, Yet rather by half she should have known it.⁶</p> <p>28. A sound was heard of gold-shod hoofs, When into the court rode Giuki's heirs. Of Hogni they the heart cut out, And into a serpent-pen the other cast.</p> <p>29. I had gone yet once again to Geirmund, To prepare a banquet. The brave king⁷ began the harp to sound; For the prince of noble race hoped That I to his aid might come.</p> <p>30. I it heard from Hleseý, How of trouble there the harp-strings sang.</p> <p>31. I my thralls bade all be ready: I the prince's life would save. The vessel we let float past the forest,⁸ Until I saw all Atli's courts.</p> <p>32. Then came Atli's miserable mother Crawling forth:—may she perish!— She Gunnar pierced to the heart; So that the hero I could not save.</p> <p>33. Oftentimes I wonder, woman gold-adorned!⁹ How I after can life retain; For I seemed the formidable sword-dispenser As myself to love:</p> <p>34. Thou sitst and listenest, while I recount To thee many an evil fate, my own and theirs." Each one lives as he best may. Now is ended <i>Oddrun's lament</i>.</p>	<p>In the murky wood⁴⁸ on me to spy; Thither they came where they should not come, Where beneath one cover close we lay.</p> <p>24. "To the warriors ruddy rings we offered, That nought to Atli e'er they should say; But swiftly home they hastened thence, And eager all to Atli told.⁴⁹</p> <p>25. "But close from Guthrun kept they hid What first of all she ought to have known.⁵⁰</p> <p>26. "Great was the clatter of gilded hoofs When Gjuki's sons through the gateway rode; The heart they hewed from Hogni then, And the other they cast in the serpents' cave.⁵¹</p> <p>27.⁵² "The hero wise on his harp then smote,⁵³ For help from me in his heart yet hoped The high-born king, might come to him.</p> <p>28. "Alone was I gone to Geirmund⁵⁴ then, The draught to mix and ready to make; ⁵⁵Sudden I heard from Hleseý⁵⁶ clear How in sorrow the strings of the harp resounded.</p> <p>29.⁵⁷ "I bade the serving-maids ready to be, For I longed the hero's life to save; Across the sound⁵⁸ the boats we sailed, Till we saw the whole of Atli's home.</p> <p>30. "Then crawling the evil woman came, Atli's mother—⁵⁹ may she ever rot! ⁶⁰And hard she bit to Gunnar's heart, So I could not help the hero brave.</p> <p>31. "Oft have I wondered how after this, Serpents'-bed goddess!⁶¹ I still might live, For well I loved the warrior brave, The giver of swords, as my very self.</p> <p>32. "Thou didst see and listen, the while I said The mighty grief that was mine and theirs; Each man lives as his longing wills,— Oddrun's lament is ended now."⁶²</p>	<p>Through Myrkvith's⁸⁶ fastness, to find me out: They came indeed where come they should not, 'Neath linen where we lay together.</p> <p>24. "With red rings we richly tried them, Lest they Atli told aught of our love; But home in haste they hied them back, But hidden wholly from her⁸⁷ kept it Who all of it ought to have known.</p> <p>25.⁸⁸ "The hoofbeats of horses was heard full loud When Gjúki's sons in the garth did ride. Then Hogni's heart the Huns cut out, In dungeon laid him who was dear to me.</p> <p>26. "His harp then struck the hapless king⁸⁹ (With the toes of his feet that far it rang).⁹⁰ Thought the highborn king that I quickly would Hasten to help if I heard this song.</p> <p>27. "Gone was I then to Geirmund's⁹¹ court, The beer to brew for a banquet there; His harp I heard from Hlés Isle far, How the strings he struck, bestead full sore.</p> <p>28. "I bade my handmaids to hold them ready: The lord's dear life I longed to ward; Full swiftly sailed the sound over, Till I beheld the halls of Atli.</p> <p>29. "Then out did crawl Atli's mother, The evil wretch—may she rot foully!⁹² Into Gunnar's heart she hewed her teeth That I might not save the matchless king.</p> <p>30. "I often wonder, woman gold-dight, Why alone longer I live on earth, When dead the doughty dealer-of-rings⁹³ Whom more I loved than my own self.</p> <p>31. "Thou sat'st listening as I laid before thee Manifold woe, both mind and theirs; Thus live we all as liketh us—⁹⁴ Sad Oddrun's plaint is ended now."</p>
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¹ For example, Oddrún's magic spells (St.7), and the invocation of Frigg and Freya (St.8). Note on the other hand Oddrún's general, Christian, altruism.

² For example, the purposeless bringing in of the fates of Sigurth and Brynhild.

³ [see note on these lines at Bellows' stanza 15 – my note]

⁴ For Brynhild's death.

⁵ Gunnar.

⁶ From here the narrative appears to be very fragmentary.

⁷ Gunnar while in the serpent-pen.

⁸ For "lund" (*forest, wood*), which is the reading of the MSS., the Copenhagen editor favors the correction to sund (a *sound* or *strait, the Sound*)?

⁹ Borgny.

¹⁰ Nothing further is known of Heithrek, Borgny or Vilmund. The annotator has added the name of Borgny's father, but otherwise his material comes from the poem itself.

¹¹ Oddrun, sister of Atli and Brynhild, here appears as proficient in birth runes (cf. *Sigrdrifumol*, 8). Regarding her love for Gunnar, Guthrun's brother, and husband of her sister, Brynhild, cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 57 and note.

¹² Olden tales: this may be merely a stock phrase, or it may really mean that the poet found his story in oral prose tradition.

¹³ Morningland: the poem's geography is utterly obscure. "Morningland" is apparently identical with "Hunland" (stanza 4), and yet Oddrun is herself sister of the king of the Huns. Vigfusson tries to make "Mornaland" into "Morva land" and explain it as Moravia. Probably it means little more than a country lying vaguely in the East. With stanza 28 the confusion grows worse.

¹⁴ Line 3 (cf. *Volundarkvitha*, 17) or line 5 (cf. *Thrymskvitha*, 2), both quoted from older poems, is probably spurious; the manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a new stanza.

¹⁵ Line 1 in the original appears to have lost its second half. In line 2 the word rendered "has happened" is doubtful.

¹⁶ The manuscript does not indicate the speaker of lines 3-4, and a few editors assign them to Borgny herself.

¹⁷ The manuscript does not indicate the speakers.

¹⁸ For the woman: conjectural; the manuscript has instead: "What warrior now hath worked this woe?"

¹⁹ The manuscript indicates line 3 as beginning a new stanza.

²⁰ Line 5, apparently modeled on line, 4 of stanza 13, is probably spurious.

²¹ Charms: cf. *Sigrdrifumol*, 8.

²² Hogni's slayer: obviously Vilmund, but unless he was the one of Atli's followers who actually cut out Hogni's heart (cf. *Drap Niflunga*), there is nothing else to connect him with Hogni's death. Sijmons emends the line to read "Born of the sister | of Hogni's slayer."

²³ Regarding Frigg as a goddess of healing cf. *Svipdagsmol*, 52, note. Regarding Freyja as the friend of lovers cf. *Grimnismol*, 14, note. A line is very possibly missing from this stanza.

²⁴ The manuscript does not name the speaker.

²⁵ In line 2 the word rendered "earn" is omitted in the manuscript, but nearly all editions have supplied it.

²⁶ Line 5 is clearly either interpolated or out of place. It may be all that is left of a stanza which stood between stanzas 15 and 16, or it may belong in stanza 12.

²⁷ The manuscript does not name the speaker; cf. note below on stanzas 10-20.

²⁸ 10-20. In the manuscript the order is as follows: 12; 13; 14; 15, 3-4; 10; 11; 16; 17; 15; 19, 1-2; 19, 1-2; 19, 3-4; 20. The changes made here, following several of the editions, are: (a) the transposition of stanzas 10-11, which are clearly dialogue, out of the body of the lament to a position just before it; (b) the transposition of lines 1-2 of stanza 15 to their present position from the middle of stanza 19.

²⁹ The manuscript does not name the speaker; cf. note on stanzas 10-20.

³⁰ The word rendered "evil" in line 1 is a conjectural addition. Apparently Borgny was present at Atli's court while the love affair between Oddrun and Gunnar was in progress, and criticised Oddrun for her part in it.

³¹ A draught, etc.: apparently in reference to a secret meeting of the lovers.

³² In the manuscript this stanza follows stanza 9; cf. note on stanzas 10-20. No gap is indicated, but something has presumably been lost. Grundtvig supplies as a first line: "The maid her evil days remembered," and inserts as a second line line 5 of stanza 9.

³³ The hero: Buthli, father of Oddrun, Atli, and Brynhild.

³⁴ The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a new stanza; many editions combine lines 1-2 with stanza 12 and lines 3-4 with lines 1-2 of stanza 14.

³⁵ The manuscript indicates line 3, but not line 1, as the beginning of a new stanza; some editions combine lines 3-4 with lines 3-4 of stanza 15.

³⁶ Making Buthli plan the marriage of Oddrun and Gunnar may be a sheer invention of the poet, or may point to an otherwise lost version of the legend.

³⁷ Wish-maid: a Valkyrie, so called because the Valkyries fulfilled Othin's wish in choosing the slain heroes for Valhall. The reference to Brynhild as a Valkyrie by no means fits with the version of the story used in stanzas 16-17, and the poet seems to have attempted to combine the two contradictory traditions, cf. *Fafnismol*, note on stanza 44.

³⁸ Lines 1-2 have here been transposed from the middle of stanza 19; cf. note on stanzas 10-20.

³⁹ In the manuscript stanzas 10-11 follow line 4 of stanza 15.

⁴⁰ In stanzas 16-17 the underlying story seems to be the one used in *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma* (particularly stanzas 32-39), and referred to in *Guthrunarkvitha I*, 24, wherein Gunnar and Sigurth lay siege to Atli's city (it here appears as Brynhild's) and are bought off only by Atli's giving Brynhild to Gunnar as wife, winning her consent thereto by falsely representing to her that Gunnar is Sigurth. This version is, of course, utterly at variance with the one in which Sigurth wins Brynhild for Gunnar by riding through the ring of flames, and is probably more closely akin to the early German traditions. In the *Nibelungenlied* Brynhild appears as a queen ruling over lands and peoples.

⁴¹ Fafnir's slayer: Sigurth.

⁴² Cf. note on preceding stanza.

⁴³ Cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, stanzas 64-70.

⁴⁴ In the manuscript lines 1-2 of stanza 15 follow line 2, resulting in various conjectural combinations. The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza.

⁴⁵ Rings, etc.: possibly, as Gering maintains, payment offered by Gunnar and Hogni for Brynhild's death, but more probably, as in stanza 20, Gunnar's proffered "marriage gold" for the hand of Oddrun.

⁴⁶ Grani's burden: the treasure won by Sigurth from Fafnir; cf. *Fafnismol*, concluding prose.

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- ⁴⁷ The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza, as also in stanzas 21 and 22.
- ⁴⁸ Murky wood: the forest which divided Atli's realm from that of the Gjukungs is in *Atlakvitha*, 3, called Myrkwood. This hardly accords with the extraordinary geography of stanzas 28-29, or with the journey described in *Guthrunarkvitha II*, 36.
- ⁴⁹ In the manuscript lines 3 and 4 stand in reversed order.
- ⁵⁰ No gap is indicated in the manuscript; some editors assume the loss not only of two lines, but of an additional stanza. Evidently Guthrun has already become Atli's wife.
- ⁵¹ If a stanza has been lost after stanza 25, it may well have told of Atli's treacherous invitation to the Gjukungs to visit him; cf. *Dráp Niflunga*, which likewise tells of the slaying of Hogni and Gunnar (the other).
- ⁵² In the manuscript these three lines follow line 2 of stanza 28. No gap is indicated in the manuscript.
- ⁵³ In the *Volsungasaga* Guthrun gives her brother the harp, with which he puts the serpents to sleep. The episode is undoubtedly related to the famous thirtieth Aventure of the *Nibelungenlied*, in which Volker plays the followers of Gunther to sleep before the final battle.
- ⁵⁴ Geirmund: nothing further is known of him, but he seems to be an ally or retainer of Atli, or possibly his brother.
- ⁵⁵ In the manuscript the three lines of stanza 27 follow line 2, and line 3 is marked as beginning a new stanza.
- ⁵⁶ Hlesey: the poet's geography is here in very bad shape. Hlesey is (or may be) the Danish island of Laso, in the Kattegat (cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 37 and note), and thither he has suddenly transported not only Gunnar's death-place but Atli's whole dwelling (cf. stanza 29), despite his previous references to the ride to Hunland (stanzas 3-4) and the "murky wood" (stanza 23). Geirmund's home, where Oddrun has gone, is separated from Hlesey and Atli's dwelling by a sound (stanza 29). However, geographical accuracy is seldom to be looked for in heroic epic poetry.
- ⁵⁷ Many editions combine this stanza with lines 3-4 of stanza 28.
- ⁵⁸ The sound: cf. note on stanza 28.
- ⁵⁹ Atli's mother: the *Volsungasaga* does not follow this version; Gunnar puts all the serpents but one to sleep with his harp playing, "but a mighty and evil adder crawled to him and drove his fangs into him till they reached his heart, and so he died." It is possible that "Atli" is a scribal error for a word meaning "of serpents."
- ⁶⁰ The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza.
- ⁶¹ Serpents'-bed goddess: woman (i. e., Borgny); "goddess of gold" was a frequent term for a woman, and gold was often called the "serpents' bed" (cf. *Guthrunarkvitha I*, 24 and note).
- ⁶² Some editions make line 4 a statement of the poet's, and not part of Oddrun's speech.
- ⁶³ These and other names occurring here are of the poet's own invention. Heithrek is conceived as the king of one of Atli's domains. See Sts.2 and 4.
- ⁶⁴ See *Sigurþarkviða hin skamma*, St.57, and *Dráp Niflunga*.
- ⁶⁵ Unknown elsewhere.
- ⁶⁶ See note on names above. A difficult line.
- ⁶⁷ Euphemistically.
- ⁶⁸ See the spells referred to in *Fáfnismál*, St.12, and *Sigrdífumál*, St.10.
- ⁶⁹ The lay stands alone in stating Hogni to have been slain by Vilmund.
- ⁷⁰ The aid of Frigg (see *Völuspá*, St.33), goddess of marital love, and wife of Óðin, was invoked at births; she was sometimes confused with Freya (see *Brymskviða* St.3), the goddess of love and sister of Frey.
- ⁷¹ Added by the Translator.
- ⁷² An extensive reordering of several stanzas (10-22) is required here to give a passable coherence.
- ⁷³ Probably to be understood as an euphemism.
- ⁷⁴ Oddrún.
- ⁷⁵ Buthli.
- ⁷⁶ Gunnar is meant.
- ⁷⁷ Buthli wishes Brynhild to become a "shield-maiden," a Valkyrie, rather than to marry.
- ⁷⁸ Sigurth, who approaches her bower (here apparently conceived as a fortress) with the Gjukungs to lay siege to it.
- ⁷⁹ It was not until her return as Gunnar's wife that she became aware of the deception. See *Sigurþarkviða hin skamma*, St.34ff.
- ⁸⁰ The theme of *Brot af Sigurþarkviðu*, and *Sigurþarkviða hin skamma*.
- ⁸¹ Kenning for "prince": Gunnar.
- ⁸² The Gjukungs.
- ⁸³ As weregild for Brynhild, to appease her brother Atli.
- ⁸⁴ The Niflung treasure. See *Gripisspá*, St.13.
- ⁸⁵ Kenning for "prince": Gunnar. Oddrún has evidently been staying at the court of the Gjukungs.
- ⁸⁶ "The Dark Forest," which is here supposed to separate the realm of the Burgundians from Atli's kingdom. See *Atlakviða*, Sts.3, 5, 13.
- ⁸⁷ That is, from Guthrún, who meanwhile was married to Atli: if she had known of this situation she would have had an additional reason to warn her brothers not to come when Atli invited the Gjukungs to his court.
- ⁸⁸ We gather that Oddrún has been called back by Atli. We must suppose that some lines or stanzas are lost here, in which was told of Atli's deceitful invitation to the Gjukungs and their acceptance of it. See *Atlakviða*, St.1ff.
- ⁸⁹ Gunnar.
- ⁹⁰ Supplied after *Atlamál*, St.61.
- ⁹¹ Unknown elsewhere. We are told below that this castle is on the Danish island of Hlésey.
- ⁹² The poet seems to forget here that Atli's mother is her own also. This motif is not found elsewhere.
- ⁹³ Again Gunnar is meant.
- ⁹⁴ That is, we obey the dictates of love (as Borgný, too, had done).