

## SIGURÐARKVIÐA HIN SKAMMA (*The Short Lay of Sigurd*)

### Bellows' Introduction (1936)

*Guthrunarkvitha I* is immediately followed in the *Codex Regius* by a long poem which in the manuscript bears the heading "*Sigurtharkvitha*," but which is clearly referred to in the prose link between it and *Guthrunarkvitha I* as the "short" Lay of Sigurth. The discrepancy between this reference and the obvious length of the poem has led to many conjectures, but the explanation seems to be that the "long" Sigurth lay, of which the *Brot* is presumably a part, was materially longer even than this poem. The efforts to reduce the "short" Sigurth lay to dimensions which would justify the appellation in comparison with other poems in the collection, either by separating it into two poems or by the rejection of many stanzas as interpolations, have been utterly inconclusive.

Although there are probably several interpolated passages, and indications of omissions are not lacking, the poem as we now have it seems to be a distinct and coherent unit. From the narrative point of view it leaves a good deal to be desired, for the reason that the poet's object was by no means to tell a story, with which his hearers were quite familiar, but to use the narrative simply as the background for vivid and powerful characterization. The lyric element, as Mogk points out, overshadows the epic throughout, and the fact that there are frequent confusions of narrative tradition does not trouble the poet at all.

The material on which the poem was based seems to have existed in both prose and verse form; the poet was almost certainly familiar with some of the other poems in the Eddic collection, with poems which have since been lost, and with the narrative prose traditions which never fully assumed verse form. The fact that he seems to have known and used the *Oddrunargratr*, which can hardly have been composed before 1050, and that in any case he introduces the figure of Oddrun, a relatively late addition to the story, dates the poem as late as the end of the eleventh century, or even the first half of the twelfth. There has been much discussion as to where it was composed, the debate centering chiefly on the reference to glaciers (stanza 8). There is something to be said in favor of Greenland as the original home of the poem (cf. introductory note to *Atlakvitha*), but the arguments for Iceland are even stronger; Norway in this case is practically out of the question.

The narrative features of the poem are based on the German rather than the Norse elements of the story (cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*), but the poet has taken whatever material he wanted without much discrimination as to its source. By the year 1100 the story of Sigurth, with its allied legends, existed throughout the North in many and varied forms, and the poem shows traces of variants of the main story which do not appear elsewhere.

### Hollander's Introduction (1962)

The generally accepted title of "The Short Lay of Sigurth"—thus it is called in the Prose immediately preceding it in the *Codex Regius*—is decidedly a misnomer; for the tragedy, not of Sigurth's, but of Brynhild's life forms its chief content, just as "The First Lay of Guthrún" contemplates Guthrún's sorrows. The performance of the poet is uneven. The introduction strikes one as perfunctory and grudging, as though to furnish just enough background to make Brynhild's behavior comprehensible. Even Sigurth's dying words contain no memorable lines. It is only when "the fiendish woman's" fierce jealousy is at work, when she eggs on Gunnar with scornful threats, when she prepares to be reunited with Sigurth in death, and also when Hogni sternly repels Gunnar's treachery and later refuses to hinder Brynhild from slaying herself, that the lines rise to a dark grandeur. The latter part of the lay falls off in power and contains elements which one would like to consider interpolations. Thus, the prophecy of Guthrún's fate reminds one of the style of the *Gripisspá*, besides being psychologically out of place. And unfortunately it cannot be said that the character of Brynhild and her tragedy has been brought humanly near to us. Though one of the longest, this is likewise one of the weakest, poems of the Collection.

For reasons, both of composition and legendary development, our lay is generally attributed to an Icelander of the eleventh or twelfth century. In particular, it is a later, Icelandic development to make Brynhild a sister of Atli; so, also, is the whole relationship hinted at between Gunnar and Oddrún, especially as a motivation of the fall of the Niflungs. The *Völsunga saga* which makes extensive use of the lay allows of fairly close control. The metre is *fornyrðislag*, at times, rather irregular.

## OUTLINE

*(line numbers according to Bellows)*

1-2	Sigurth takes Oaths with the Gjúkings, Guthrún given
3-4	The Wooing of Brynhild, the Naked Sword
5	Of Brynhild's Fate
6-7	Brynhild Vows to Have Sigurd at Any Cost
8-9	Of Brynhild's Bitterness & Sorrow
10-12	Brynhild Incites Gunnar to Murder Sigurd & Sigmund
12-13	Gunnar's Indecision
14-16	Hogni Consulted: Gunnar Desires the Rhinegold
17-19	Hogni's Response, Brynhild blamed
20-21	Guthorm Slays Sigurd
22-23	Sigurd Slays Guthorm in Return
24-28	Guthrún Wakes / Sigurd's Last Words
29	Guthrún Swoons
30	Brynhild Laughs
31-32	Gunnar Scolds Brynhild
33-34	Brynhild Reproaches Gunnar
35-37	The Atli Episode
38-41	Brynhild's Decision
42-43	Attempts to Dissuade Brynhild Fail
44-45	Gunnar Holds Council
46-47	Brynhild's Slaves Put to Death, She Stabs Herself
48-51	Brynhild Calls for Volunteers
52-63	Brynhild's Prophecy of Doom for the Gjúkings
64-69	Brynhild's Request for a Funeral Pyre
70	Brynhild Dies

Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Hollander (1962)
<p>1. It was of old that Sigurd, the young Volsung, Giuki sought, after his conflict, Received the pledge of friendship from the two brothers; Oaths exchanged the bold of deed.</p> <p>2. A maid they offered him, and treasures many, Gudrun, Giuki's youthful daughter. Drank and conversed, many days together, Sigurd the young and Giuki's sons.</p> <p>3. Until they went to woo Brynhild, And with them Sigurd, the youthful Volsung, Rode in company, who knew the way. He would have possessed her, if her possess he might.</p>	<p>1. Of old did Sigurth   Gjuki<sup>5</sup> seek, The Volsung<sup>6</sup> young,   in battles victor; Well he trusted   the brothers twain, With mighty oaths<sup>7</sup>   among them sworn.</p> <p>2. A maid they gave him,   and jewels many, Guthrun the young,   the daughter of Gjuki; They drank and spake   full many a day, Sigurth the young   and Gjuki's sons.</p> <p>3. Thereafter went they   Brynhild<sup>8</sup> to woo, And so with them   did Sigurth ride, The Volsung young,   in battle valiant,-- Himself would have had her   if all he had seen.</p>	<p>1. In times long gone came to Gjúki's hall Sigurth the Volsung—had he slain Fáfnir— In the troth was taken of the twain brothers:<sup>98</sup> To each other sware oaths the kings.</p> <p>2. The maid they gave him with much treasure, Guthrún the young, Gjúki's daughter,<sup>99</sup> Drank together days full many Sigurth the young and the sons of Gjúki.</p> <p>3. Then wended their way to woo Brynhild: Rode Sigurth with them to seek her hall, Sigmund's young son, the seaways knowing—<sup>100</sup> For himself had won her if fate had willed.</p>

<p>4. Sigurd the southern laid a naked sword, A glittering falchion, between them; Nor the damsel did he kiss, Nor did the Hunnish king to his arm lift her. He the blooming maid to Giuki's son delivered.</p> <p>5. She to herself of body was of no sin conscious, Nor at her death-day, of any crime, That could be a stain, or thought to be: Intervened therein the grisly fates.</p> <p>6. Alone she sat without, at eve of day, Began aloud with herself to speak: "Sigurd must be mine; I must die, Or that blooming youth clasp in my arms."</p> <p>7. "Of the words I have uttered I now repent; He is Gudrun's consort, and I am Gunnar's. The hateful Norns long suffering have decreed us."</p> <p>8. Oftentimes she wandered, filled with evil thoughts, O'er ice and icebergs, every eve, When he and Gudrun had to their couch withdrawn, And Sigurd her in the coverings wrapt, The Hunnish king his wife caressed.</p> <p>9. "Devoid I go of spouse and pleasure; I will beguile myself with vengeful thoughts."</p> <p>10. By those fits of fury she was impelled to murder. "Thou, Gunnar! shalt wholly lose My land, and myself also. Never shall I be happy, king! with thee.</p> <p>11. I will return thither from whence I came, To my near kindred, my relations; There will I remain, and slumber life away, Unless thou Sigurd cause to be slain, And a king become than the other greater.</p> <p>12. Let the son go together with the father, The young wolf may not longer be fostered. For whom will vengeance be the easier to appease, If the son lives?"</p> <p>13. Wroth was Gunnar, and with grief borne down; In his mind revolved, sat the whole day; He knew not well, nor could devise, What were most desirable for him to do, Or were most fitting to be done, When he should find himself of the Volsung bereft,</p>	<p>4. The southern hero   his naked sword,<sup>9</sup> Fair-flashing, let   between them lie; (Nor would he come   the maid to kiss;)<sup>10</sup> The Hunnish king<sup>11</sup>   in his arms ne'er held The maiden he gave   to Gjuki's sons.</p> <p>5. Ill she had known not   in all her life, And nought of the sorrows   of men she knew; Blame she had not,   nor dreamed she should bear it, <sup>12</sup>But cruel the fates   that among them came.<sup>13</sup></p> <p>6. By herself at the end   of day she sat, And in open words   her heart she uttered: "I shall Sigurth have,   the hero<sup>14</sup> young, E'en though within   my arms he die."<sup>15</sup></p> <p>7. "The word I have spoken;   soon shall I rue it, His wife is Guthrun,   and Gunnar's am I; Ill Norns set for me   long desire."<sup>16</sup></p> <p>8. Oft did she go   with grieving heart On the glacier's<sup>17</sup> ice   at even-tide, When Guthrun then   to her bed was gone, And the bedclothes Sigurth   about her laid.</p> <p>9. "(Now Gjuki's child   to her lover goes,)<sup>18</sup> And the Hunnish king<sup>19</sup>   with his wife is happy; Joyless I am   and mateless ever, Till cries from my heavy   heart burst forth."</p> <p>10. In her wrath to battle   she roused herself: "Gunnar, now   thou needs must lose Lands<sup>20</sup> of mine   and me myself, No joy shall I have   with the hero ever.</p> <p>11. "Back shall I fare   where first I dwelt, Among the kin   that come of my race, To wait there, sleeping   my life away, If Sigurth's death   thou shalt not dare, (And best of heroes   thou shalt not be.)<sup>21</sup></p> <p>12. "The son<sup>22</sup> shall fare   with his father hence, And let not long   the wolf-cub live; Lighter to pay   is the vengeance-price After the deed   if the son is dead."</p> <p>13. Sad was Gunnar,   and bowed with grief,<sup>23</sup> Deep in thought   the whole day through; Yet from his heart   it was ever hid What deed most fitting   he should find, (Or what thing best   for him should be, Or if he should seek   the Volsung to slay,</p>	<p>4. His naked sword laid the Southron<sup>101</sup> king Betwixt them twain, his trusted blade;<sup>102</sup> Nor did he kiss the queenly woman, The Hunnish hero, nor held her to him, But yielded to Gunnar the youthful maiden.</p> <p>5. In all her life no ill knew she, And in her fate no flaw, either; Of blemish none in her body knew she: Yet cruel norms came between them.<sup>103</sup></p> <p>6. Without she sate at eventide;<sup>104</sup> Gan Brynhild rashly<sup>105</sup> to raise her voice: "I shall hold Sigurth, the youthful hero, Within my arms, his end though it be.</p> <p>7. "In wrath spoke I: I shall rue it after— His wife is Guthrún, and Gunnar's, I. The loathly norms our longing caused."</p> <p>8. Without went she, wishing them evil Every evening with ice-cold heart,<sup>106</sup> When both they to bed did go, Sigurth and Guthrún, to sleep together.</p> <p>9. "(Now Gjúki's daughter him gladly kisses)<sup>107</sup> And the Hunnish king clasps his lady: I have nor husband nor happiness, Must seek my glee in grim revenge."</p> <p>10. In hate-filled breast she brooded murder: "Shalt, Gunnar, forego altogether My demesnes and me also: Thy love I list not, liege, to have ever.</p> <p>11. "Will I fare thither where before I was, To my near kindred, my kinsmen dear— There dully dwell, and dream through life— But thou do to death Guthrún's darling, And greatest grow, Gunnar, of all."<sup>108</sup></p> <p>12. "Let the son fare eke with his father, Nor keep too long the cub of the wolf: Easier never is revenge Than when slain warrior's son still lives."<sup>109</sup></p> <p>13. Then hung his head, heartsick, Gunnar; Brooding darkly he sate all day, Nor did he know in nowise clearly What were for him wisest to do, What were for him worthiest to do, Since to Sigurth he had sworn dear oaths,<sup>110</sup></p>
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<p>And in Sigurd a great loss sustain.</p> <p>14. Much he thought, and also long, That it did not often happen, That from their royal state women withdrew. Hogni he then to counsel summoned, In whom he placed the fullest trust.</p> <p>15. "Of all to me Brynhild, Budli's daughter, Is the dearest; she is the chief of women: Rather will I my life lay down Than that fair one's treasures lose.</p> <p>16. "Wilt thou the prince for his wealth circumvent? Good 'tis to command the ore of Rhine, And at ease over riches rule, And in tranquility happiness enjoy."</p> <p>17. This alone Hogni for answer gave: "It beseems us not so to do, By the sword to break sworn oaths, Oaths sworn, and plighted faith.</p> <p>18. "We know not on earth men more fortunate, While we four over the people rule, And the Hun lives, that warlike chief; Nor on earth, a race more excellent, If we five sons long shall foster, And the good progeny can increase.</p> <p>19. I know full well whence the causes spring: Brynhild's importunity is over-great.</p> <p>20. We will Guthorm, our younger brother, And not over-wise, for the deed prepare: He is free from sworn oaths, Sworn oaths, and plighted faith."</p> <p>21. Easy it was to instigate the ferocious spirit: In the heart of Sigurd stood his sword.</p> <p>22. On vengeance bent, the warrior in his chamber Hurled his brand after the fierce assassin; To Guthorm flew dartlike Gram's gleaming steel From the king's hand.</p> <p>23. Fell the murderer in two parts, Arms and head flew far away, But his feet's part fell backwards on the place.</p>	<p>For with mighty longing   Sigurth he loved.)<sup>24</sup></p> <p>14. Much he pondered   for many an hour; Never before   was the wonder known That a queen should thus   her kingdom leave; In counsel then   did he Hogni call, (For him in truest   trust he held.)<sup>25</sup></p> <p>15. "More than all   to me is Brynhild, Buthli's<sup>26</sup> child,   the best of women; My very life   would I sooner lose Than yield the love<sup>27</sup>   of yonder maid.</p> <p>16.<sup>28</sup> "Wilt thou the hero   for wealth betray? 'Twere good to have   the gold of the Rhine,<sup>29</sup> And all the hoard   in peace to hold, And waiting fortune   thus to win."</p> <p>17. Few the words   of Hogni were: "Us it beseems not   so to do, To cleave with swords   the oaths we swore, The oaths we swore   and all our vows.</p> <p>18. "We know no mightier   men on earth The while we four<sup>30</sup>   o'er the folk hold sway, And while the Hunnish   hero<sup>31</sup> lives, Nor higher kinship   the world doth hold.<sup>32</sup></p> <p>19. "If sons we five<sup>33</sup>   shall soon beget, Great, methinks,   our race shall grow; Well I see   whence lead the ways;<sup>34</sup> Too bitter far   is Brynhild's hate."</p> <p>Gunnar spake:<sup>35</sup></p> <p>20. "Gotthorm<sup>36</sup> to wrath   we needs must rouse, Our younger brother,   in rashness blind; He entered not   in the oaths we swore, The oaths we swore   and all our vows."</p> <p>21. It was easy to rouse   the reckless one. The sword in the heart   of Sigurth stood.<sup>37</sup></p> <p>22. In vengeance the hero   rose in the hall, And hurled his sword   at the slayer bold; At Gotthorm flew   the glittering steel Of Gram<sup>38</sup> full hard   from the hand of the king.<sup>39</sup></p> <p>23. The foeman cleft   asunder fell, Forward hands   and head did sink, And legs and feet   did backward fall.<sup>40</sup></p>	<p>And loth he was to lose the Volsung.</p> <p>14. Both this and that in thought he weighed: Ere now was it nowise known that ever From her king a queen did go.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Gunnar said:)</i></p> <p>15. "To me is Brynhild, Buthli's daughter, Above all else, the best of women; And my life liefer would I lose, by far, Than of her riches<sup>111</sup> bereft to be."</p> <p>16.<sup>112</sup> Summoned he Hogni to secret speech, To whom he could wholly trust him: "Wilt betray Sigurth for the sake of gold? 'Tis good to gain the golden rings, To have and to hold the hoard-of-the-Rhine,<sup>113</sup> And at our ease to own this wealth."</p> <p>17. To him hardy Hogni answered: "‘Twould ill beseem us, for the sake of gold With swords to sever oaths which we sware— Our former oaths, the faith we plighted.</p> <p>18. "On earth are not more honored kings, The while we four<sup>114</sup> o'er folk hold sway And here the Hunnish hero liveth, Nor beneath heaven more highborn sib; If we begat us goodly sons,<sup>115</sup> Still greater grew then the Gjúkung kin.</p> <p>19. "Full well know I whose wiles these be: 'Tis Queen Brynhild's unbridled hate."<sup>116</sup></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Gunnar said:)</i></p> <p>20. "Egg we Guthorm<sup>117</sup> to the evil deed, Our younger brother, a boy as yet: He stood without the oaths we sware, Our former oaths, the faith we plighted."</p> <p>21. "‘Twas easy to egg the o'er eager one—<sup>118</sup> Stood in Sigurth's heart the steel.</p> <p>22. Arose in the hall the hero, to wreak him, And after the rash on in anger threw— Cast the king's hand—the keen-edged sword, Gleaming Gram—on to Guthorm flew it.</p> <p>23. Then fell on the floor his foe, sundered: His head and hands did hasten on, The nether half into hall fell back.</p>
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<p>24. Sunk in sleep was Gudrun, in her bed, Void of cares, by Sigurd's side: But she awoke of joys bereft, When in the blood of Frey's friend she swam.</p> <p>25. So violently struck she her hands together, That the stout of heart rose in his bed. "Weep not, Gudrun! so cruelly, My blooming bride! thy brothers live.</p> <p>26. An heir I have, alas! too young; He cannot flee from the hostile house; Among themselves they recently have Dark and evil counsels devised.</p> <p>27. Never henceforth, although seven thou bear, Will such a son to the trysting with them ride. Full well I know how this has befallen: Brynhild the sole cause is of all the evil.</p> <p>28. Me the maiden loved more than any man; But towards Gunnar I sinned not; Affinity I held sacred, and sworn oaths; Thence forward I was called his consort's friend."</p> <p>29. The woman gave forth sighs, and the king his life. So violently she struck her hands together, That the beakers on the wall responsive rang, And in the court the geese loudly screamed.</p> <p>30. Laughed then Brynhild, Budli's daughter, Once only, from her whole soul, When in her bed she listened To the loud lament of Giuki's daughter.</p> <p>31. Then said Gunnar, the hawk-bearing prince: "Laugh not thereat, thou barbarous woman! Glad on thy couch, as if good awaited thee. Why hast thou lost that beauteous colour? Authoress of crime! Methinks to death thou art doomed.</p> <p>32. Well dost thou deserve, above all women, That before thy eyes, we should lay Atli low, That thou shouldst see thy brother's blood-streaming sore, His gory wounds shouldst have to bind."</p> <p>33. Then said Brynhild, Budli's daughter: "No one provokes thee, Gunnar! Complete is thy work of death. / Little does Atli thy hatred fear; His life will outlast thine, And his might be ever greater.</p>	<p>24. Guthrun soft   in her bed had slept, Safe from care   at Sigurth's side; She woke to find   her joy had fled, In the blood of the friend   of Freyr<sup>41</sup> she lay.</p> <p>25.<sup>42</sup> So hard she smote   her hands together That the hero rose up,   iron-hearted: "Weep not, Guthrun,   grievous tears, Bride so young,   for thy brothers live.</p> <p>26. "Too young, methinks,   is my son<sup>43</sup> as yet, He cannot flee   from the home of his foes; Fearful and deadly   the plan they found, The counsel new   that now they have heeded.</p> <p>27. "No son will ride,   though seven thou hast, To the Thing<sup>44</sup> as the son   of their sister rides;<sup>45</sup> Well I see   who the ill has worked, On Brynhild alone   lies the blame for all.</p> <p>28. "Above all men   the maiden loved me, Yet false to Gunnar   I ne'er was found; I kept the oaths   and the kinship I swore; Of his queen the lover   none may call me.<sup>46</sup></p> <p>29. In a swoon she sank   when Sigurth died; So hard she smote   her hands together That all the cups   in the cupboard rang, And loud in the courtyard   cried the geese.<sup>47</sup></p> <p>30. Then Brynhild, daughter   of Buthli, laughed, Only once,   with all her heart, When as she lay   full loud she heard The grievous wail   of Gjuki's daughter.<sup>48</sup></p> <p>31. Then Gunnar, monarch   of men, spake forth:<sup>49</sup> "Thou dost not laugh,   thou lover of hate, In gladness there,   or for aught of good; <sup>50</sup>Why has thy face   so white a hue, Mother of ill?   Foredoomed thou art.</p> <p>32. "A worthier woman   wouldst thou have been If before thine eyes   we had Atli slain; If thy brother's bleeding   body hadst seen And the bloody wounds   that thou shouldst end."<sup>51</sup></p> <p>Brynhild spake:<sup>52</sup> 33. "None mock thee, Gunnar!   thou hast mightily fought, But thy hatred little   doth Atli heed; Longer than thou,   methinks, shall he live, And greater in might   shall he ever remain.</p>	<p>24. At Sigurth's side had slept Guthrún, In carefree slumber, at the side of the king. To wild woe now awakened she, In the blood of Frey's friend<sup>119</sup> as she weltered.</p> <p>25. Her hands wrung she so ruefully That bold Sigurth by the bed him lifted: "Weep not, Guthrún, nor wail so sore, My young bride: thy brothers live."<sup>120</sup></p> <p>26. "Too young the heir<sup>121</sup> who after me lives To flee afar from his father's slayers; They rashly wrought the reckless deed Nightly and knavish, but newly sworn to it.</p> <p>27. "Like sister's son at their side ne'er rides, Though seven sons thou suckle hereafter;<sup>122</sup> Full well know I whose wives are these: This bale was wrought by Brynhild alone.</p> <p>28. My she loved more than any man; Yet Gunnar's trust betrayed I never, But always kept him the oaths I sware, Lest I be called the Queen's lover."</p> <p>29. Her senses lost she—his life the king— Her hands wrung she so ruefully That in the cupboard the beakers clinked And in the garth the geese sang out.</p> <p>30. Laughed then Brynhild, Buthli's daughter, One time only, out of inmost heart, On her couch when came to her ears The grievous wailing of Gjúki's daughter.</p> <p>31. Said then Gunnar, the goodly king: "Thou laughest not, vengeful lady, So gleefully as though glad thy heart: Wherefore wholly hueless grow'st thou; Fiendish woman? I ween thee fey."<sup>123</sup></p> <p>32. "But right were it, wretched woman, That before thy eyes were Atli slain, And with bloody wounds thy brother lay, With bloody wounds, for thee to bind."</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Brynhild said:)</i></p> <p>33. "No fault find I: thou hast foughten well;<sup>124</sup> But little Atli thy anger fears: Longer will he live than thou, And in might will ever o'er match thee, Gunnar!</p>
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<p>34. Gunnar! will tell thee, though thou well knowest it, How early we resolved on crimes. I was o'er-young and unrestrained, With wealth endowed, in my brother's house.</p> <p>35. Nor did I desire to marry any man, Before ye Giukungs rode to our dwelling, Three on horseback, powerful kings: Would that journey had never been!</p> <p>36. Then myself I promised to the great king, Who with gold sat on Grani's back. In eyes he did not you resemble, Nor was at all in aspect like: Yet ye thought yourselves mighty kings.</p> <p>37. And to me apart Atli said, That he would not have our heritage divided, Nor gold nor lands, unless I let myself be married, Nor grant me any part of the acquired gold, Which he to me a girl had given to possess, And to me a child in moneys counted.</p> <p>38. Then distracted was my mind thereon, Whether I should engage in conflict, and death dispense, Valiant in arms, for my brother's quarrel. That would then be world-widely known, And to many a one bring heartfelt anguish.</p> <p>39. Our reconciliation we let follow: To me it had been more pleasing the treasures to accept, The red-gold rings of Sigmund's son: Nor did I another's gold desire; Him alone I loved, none other. Menskogul<sup>1</sup> had not a changing mind.</p> <p>40. All this will Atli hereafter find, When he shall hear of my funeral rites completed; For never shall the heavy-hearted woman With another's husband pass her life. Then will my wrongs be all avenged."</p> <p>41. Up rose Gunnar, prince of warriors, And round his consort's neck laid his hands; All drew nigh, yet each one singly, Through honest feeling, to dissuade her.</p> <p>42. She from her neck those about her cast; She let no one stay her from her long journey.</p>	<p>34. "To thee I say,   and thyself thou knowest, That all these ills   thou didst early shape; No bonds I knew,   nor sorrow bore, And wealth I had   in my brother's home.<sup>53</sup></p> <p>35. "Never a husband   sought I to have, Before the Gjukungs   fared to our land; Three were the kings<sup>54</sup>   on steeds that came,— Need of their journey   never there was.</p> <p>36. "To the hero great   my troth I gave Who gold-decked sat   on Grani's back; Not like to thine   was the light of his eyes, (Nor like in form   and face are ye, Though kingly both   ye seemed to be.<sup>55</sup></p> <p>37.<sup>56</sup> "And so to me   did Atli say That share in our wealth   I should not have, Of gold or lands,   if my hand I gave not; (More evil yet,   the wealth I should yield.) The gold that he   in my childhood gave me, (The wealth from him   in my youth I had.)</p> <p>38. "Oft in my mind   I pondered much If still I should fight,   and warriors fell, Brave in my byrnie,   my brother defying; That would wide   in the world be known, And sorrow for many   a man would make.<sup>57</sup></p> <p>39.<sup>58</sup> "But the bond<sup>59</sup> at last   I let be made, For more the hoard   I longed to have, The rings that the son   of Sigmund won; No other's treasure   e'er I sought.</p> <p>40. "One-alone   of all I loved, Nor changing heart   I ever had; All in the end   shall Atli know, When he hears I have gone   on the death-road hence."</p> <p>41. "Never a wife   of fickle will Yet to another   man should yield. .....<sup>60</sup> So vengeance for all   my ills shall come."</p> <p>42.<sup>61</sup> Up rose Gunnar,   the people's ruler, And flung his arms   round her neck so fair; And all who came,   of every kind, Sought to hold her   with all their hearts.</p> <p>43.<sup>62</sup> But back she cast   all those who came, Nor from the long road   let them hold her;</p>	<p>34. "Say I shall now what thyself knowest, How ye Gjúkungs grew guilty full soon; My freedom had I, nor was fettered in aught<sup>125</sup> On my brother's benches, with bounty dowered.</p> <p>35. "Nor did I wish to be wedded ever, Till high on horseback to our halls did ride, Matchless, ye Gjúkungs—mighty kings three. Would that ye never had wended thither!</p> <p>36. "(That hero's wife)<sup>126</sup> I wished to be Who on Grani's back sate, rich in gold; His eyes were ay unlike to yours, Nor were ye like him in looks or shape, Folk-kings though ye called yourselves.</p> <p>37. "And Atli said in secret to me That with me he would not his wealth e'er share— Gold nor land—if my love I have not, Nor aught else of the olden treasures In earliest youth which up he yielded, And in earliest youth to own gave me.<sup>127</sup></p> <p>38. "Then did I dwell in doubt, full long, Whether wars to wage, and went to battle In byrnie bold, my brother to spite: Had that forth gone far to many folks, And to many been a mournful fate.</p> <p>39. "Our bond then made we which bound us together: In my heart hoped I for the Niflung hoard, Sigmund's son's his silver and gold; Nor wanted I another's<sup>128</sup> wealth.</p> <p>40. "But him I loved, nor other lord. A fickle heart I had nowise; Will Atli all this hereafter know, When that he hears how to Hel I fared.</p> <p>41. "For lightheartedly let no woman Another's husband hold in her arms.<sup>129</sup> (Now will I slay me and Sigurth follow):<sup>130</sup> My heavy harm then have I avenged."</p> <p>42. Up rose Gunnar, Gjúki's son; His arm laid he about the lady's neck.<sup>131</sup></p> <p>43. With kindly thoughts all came thither, The highborn heroes, her hands to stay: And though thrust she all thanes from her, Nor would be hindered Helward to fare.</p>
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<p>43. He then called Hogni to consultation. "I will that all our folk to the hall be summoned, Thine with mine—now 'tis most needful— To see if we can hinder my consort's fatal course, Till from our speech a hindrance may come: Then let us leave necessity to rule."</p> <p>44. To him Hogni answer gave: "Let no one hinder her from the long journey, Whence may she never born again return. Unblest she came on her mother's lap, Born in the world for ceaseless misery, For many a man's heartfelt sorrow."</p> <p>45. Downcast he from the meeting turned To where the lady treasures distributed. She was viewing all she owned: Hungry female thralls and chamber-women. She put on her golden corslet—no good meditated— Ere herself she pierced, with the sword's point.</p> <p>46. On the pillow she turned to the other side, and, Wounded with the glave, on her last counsels thought.</p> <p>47. "Now let come those who desire gold, And aught less precious, to receive from me. To every one I give a gilded necklace,<sup>2</sup> Needle-work and coverlets, splendid weeds."</p> <p>48. All were silent, thought on what to do, And all together answer gave: "Too many are there dead: we will yet live, Still be hungry hall-servants, to do what fitting is."</p> <p>49. At length after reflection, the lady linen-clad, Young in years, words in answer uttered: "I desire that none, dead to entreaty, Should by force, for our sake, lose their life.</p> <p>50. Yet o'er your bones will burn fewer ornaments, Menja's good meal,<sup>3</sup> when ye go hence me to seek.</p> <p>51. Gunnar! sit down, I will tell to thee, That of life now hopeless is thy bright consort. Thy vessel will not be always afloat, Though I shall have my life resigned.</p> <p>52. With Gudrun thou wilt be reconciled, sooner than thou thinkest: / That wise woman has by the king sad memorials, / After her consort's death.</p>	<p>In counsel then   did he Hogni call: "Of wisdom now   full great is our need.</p> <p>44.<sup>63</sup> "Let the warriors here   in the hall come forth, Thine and mine,   for the need is mighty, If haply the queen   from death they may hold, Till her fearful thoughts   with time shall fade."</p> <p>45.<sup>64</sup> (Few the words   of Hogni were:) "From the long road now   shall ye hold her not, That born again<sup>65</sup>   she may never be! Foul she came   from her mother forth, And born she was   for wicked deeds, (Sorrow to many   a man to bring.)"</p> <p>46.<sup>66</sup> From the speaker gloomily   Gunnar turned, For the jewel-bearer<sup>67</sup>   her gems was dividing; On all her wealth   her eyes were gazing, On the bond-women slain   and the slaughtered slaves.<sup>68</sup></p> <p>47.<sup>69</sup> Her byrnie of gold   she donned, and grim Was her heart ere the point   of her sword had pierced it; On the pillow at last   her head she laid, And, wounded, her plan   she pondered o'er.</p> <p>48. "Hither I will   that my women come Who gold are fain   from me to get; Necklaces fashioned   fair to each Shall I give, and cloth,   and garments bright."<sup>70</sup></p> <p>49. Silent were all   as so she spake,<sup>71</sup> And all together   answer made: "Slain are enough;   we seek to live, Not thus thy women   shall honor win."</p> <p>50. Long the woman,   linen-decked, pondered,— —Young she was,—   and weighed her words: "For my sake now   shall none unwilling Or loath to die   her life lay down.</p> <p>51.<sup>72</sup> "But little of gems   to gleam on your limbs Ye then shall find   when forth ye fare To follow me,   or of Menja's wealth.<sup>73</sup></p> <p>52.<sup>74</sup> "Sit now, Gunnar!   for I shall speak Of thy bride so fair   and so fain to die; Thy ship in harbor   home thou hast not,<sup>75</sup> Although my life   I now have lost.</p> <p>53.<sup>76</sup> "Thou shalt Guthrun requite   more quick than thou thinkest, / Though sadly mourns   the maiden wise Who dwells with the king,   o'er her husband dead.</p>	<p>44. Summoned he Hogni to secret speech: "I will have all heroes in the hall gather, Both thine and mine—much we need them— How we hinder that to Hel she fares; Until in time we turn her from it: Some means must we meanwhile find."</p> <p>45. To him hardy Hogni answered: "Hinder her not Helward to fare, Whence back never she be born again! Wicked left she her mother's womb, To the world was she but woe to bring, Sadness and sorrow to sons of men."</p> <p>46. Sadly he<sup>132</sup> turned from talking with her, When the gold-dight one her gifts bestowed: On all looked she which she had owned, Eke on lifeless bondmaids<sup>133</sup> and on ladies-in-waiting.</p> <p>47. In gold byrnie sheathed her, grim in her mind, Ere with the sword she slew herself; Back on bolster her body sank: Dying bethought her of dire counsel:</p> <p>48. "Now shall hither my handmaids come If gold they wish, and wealth,<sup>134</sup> from me; Gilded trinkets I give to each, Broidered bedclothes, bright-hued raiment."</p> <p>49. Were silent all when said these words, And all together this answer made: "No more shall die: we mean to live; 'Tis unseeming honor to us women."</p> <p>50. Thereon the lady in linen dight, So young in years, full yare did say: "Unfain I wish none to follow me, Nor lose his life who is loth to die.</p> <p>51. "On your bodies' bones will burn, hereafter, Far fewer rings when forth ye come— Nor Menja's meal<sup>135</sup>—and we meet in Hel.<sup>136</sup></p> <p>52. "Seat thee, Gunnar; I say to thee Thy brow-white wife awaiteth death; Nor is thy ship in shelter, either, Even though thy bride have breathed her last.</p> <p>53. "Will Guthrún soon forgive thee this,<sup>137</sup> Though oft the Queen at Atli's court Will think in sorrow on Sigurth dead.</p>
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<p>53. There is born a maid, which her mother rears; Brighter far than the clear day, Than the sun's beam, will Svanhild be.</p> <p>54. Gudrun thou wilt give to an illustrious one, A warrior, the bane of many men: Not to her wish will she be married; Atli will come her to espouse, Budli's son, my brother.</p> <p>55. Much have I in memory how I was treated, When ye me so cruelly had deceived: Robbed I was of happiness, while my life lasted.</p> <p>56. Thou wilt desire Oddrun to possess, But Atli will permit it not; In secret ye will each other meet. She will love thee, as I had done, If us a better fate had been allotted.</p> <p>57. Thee will Atli barbarously treat; In the narrow serpent-den wilt thou be cast.</p> <p>58. It will too come to pass, not long after, That Atli will his soul resign, Hhis prosperity, and cease to live; For Gudrun in her vengeance him in his bed will slay, Through bitterness of spirit, with the sword's sharp edge.</p> <p>59. More seemly would appear our sister Gudrun, Had she in death her first consort followed, Had but good counsel been to her given, Or she a soul possessed resembling mine—</p> <p>60. Faintly I now speak— But for our sake she will not lose her life. She will be borne on towering billows To King Jonakr's paternal soil. Doubts will be in the resolves of Jonakr's sons.</p> <p>61. She will Svanhild send from the land, Her daughter, and Sigurd's. Her will destroy Bikki's counsel; For Jormunrek for evil lives. Then will have passed away all Sigurd's race, And Gudrun's tears will be the more.</p> <p>62. One prayer I have to thee yet to make, In this world 'twill be my last request:</p>	<p>54.<sup>77</sup> "A maid shall then   the mother bear; Brighter far   than the fairest day Svanhild<sup>78</sup> shall be,   or the beams of the sun.</p> <p>55. "Guthrun a noble   husband thou givest, Yet to many a warrior   woe will she bring, Not happily wedded   she holds herself; Her shall Atli   hither seek, (Buthli's son,   and brother of mine.)<sup>79</sup></p> <p>56. "Well I remember   how me ye treated When ye betrayed me   with treacherous wiles; Lost was my joy   as long as I lived.<sup>80</sup></p> <p>57.<sup>81</sup> "Oddrun<sup>82</sup> as wife   thou fain wouldst win, But Atli this   from thee withholds; Yet in secret tryst   ye twain shall love; She shall hold thee dear,   as I had done If kindly fate   to us had fallen.</p> <p>58.<sup>83</sup> "Ill to thee   shall Atli bring, When he casts thee down   in the den of snakes.<sup>84</sup></p> <p>59. "But soon thereafter   Atli too His life, methinks,   as thou shalt lose, (His fortune lose   and the lives of his sons;)<sup>85</sup> <sup>86</sup>Him shall Guthrun,   grim of heart, With the biting blade   in his bed destroy.<sup>87</sup></p> <p>60. "It would better beseem   thy sister fair To follow her husband   first in death,<sup>88</sup> If counsel good   to her were given, Or a heart akin   to mine she had.</p> <p>61. "Slowly I speak,—   but for my sake Her life, methinks,   she shall not lose; She shall wander over   the tossing waves, To where Jonak<sup>89</sup> rules   his father's realm.</p> <p>62. "Sons to him   she soon shall bear, Heirs therewith   of Jonak's wealth; But Svanhild<sup>90</sup> far   away is sent, The child she bore   to Sigurth brave.</p> <p>63. "Bikki's<sup>91</sup> word   her death shall be, For dreadful the wrath   of Jormunrek; So slain is all   of Sigurth's race, And greater the woe   of Guthrun grows.</p> <p>64. "Yet one boon   I beg of thee, The last of boons   in my life it is:</p>	<p>54. "Is a maid child born—her mother she— Of hue whiter than the very heavens, Than the sun even, Svanhild<sup>138</sup> hight.</p> <p>55. "Wilt give Guthún to goodly hero— That bringeth sorrow<sup>139</sup> to sons of men— Nor will she wed whom wish she might: Will Atli wed her his wife to be— He, born to Buthli, my own brother.</p> <p>56. "Am I mindful much how with me ye dealt, How ye did wrong me wretched on: No hap was mine the while I lived.</p> <p>57. "Thou wilt Oddrún<sup>140</sup> then ask for wife, But Atli will not thy wishes heed; Still, under linen ye twain will lie: Will she hold thee dear, as I had done If kindlier weird had willed it so.</p> <p>58. "Will Atli then deal ill with thee, In dungeon wilt with worms be laid.</p> <p>59. "Will lose his life, not long thereafter, Atli, when all this ill is wrought— Lose his treasure and the life of his sons— For Gjúki's daughter,<sup>141</sup> grim in her mind, With sword full soon will slay him in bed.<sup>142</sup></p> <p>60. For thy sister more seeming were it To follow in death her first husband, If good counsel were given her, Or heart like mine she had in her breast.</p> <p>61. "Of what will be I speak—yet, spite of us, Her life she keepeth a long time after: Towering billows will toss Guthrún Beyond the sea to Jónakr's lands.<sup>143</sup></p> <p>62. "(Will she issue have, as heirs twain sons, As heirs twain sons,)<sup>144</sup> for Jónakr; O'er the sea Svanhild will she send abroad, Sigurth's daughter, to sorry fate.</p> <p>63. "Will be her bale Bikki's counsels, For Jormunrek will ill reward her. Slain are then all Sigurth's kin, But greater still are Guthrún's sorrows.<sup>145</sup></p> <p>64. "One boon shall I yet beg of thee, Which in this life my last will be:</p>
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<p>Let in the plain be raised a pile so spacious, That for us all like room may be, For those who shall have died with Sigurd.</p> <p>63. Bedeck the pile about with shields and hangings, A variegated corpse-cloth, and multitude of slain. Let them burn the Hun<sup>4</sup> on the one side of me;</p> <p>64. Let them with the Hun burn on the other side, My household slaves, with collars splendid, Two at our heads, and two hawks; Then will all be equally distributed.</p> <p>65. Let also lie between us both the sword with rings adorned, / The keen-edged iron, so again be placed, As when we both one couch ascended, And were then called by the name of consorts.</p> <p>66. Then will not clang against his heel the hall's bright gates, / With splendid ring, If my train him hence shall follow. Then will our procession appear not mean.</p> <p>67. For him will follow five female thralls, Eight male slaves of gentle birth, Fostered with me, and with my patrimony, Which to his daughter Budli gave.</p> <p>68. Much I have said, and more would say, If the sword would grant me power of speech. My voice fails, my wounds swell: Truth only I have uttered; so I will cease."</p>	<p>Let the pyre be built   so broad in the field That room for us all   will ample be, (For us who slain   with Sigurth are.)<sup>92</sup></p> <p>65. "With shields and carpets   cover the pyre, Shrouds full fair,   and fallen slaves, And besides the Hunnish   hero burn me."<sup>93</sup></p> <p>66. "Besides the Hunnish   hero there Slaves shall burn,   full bravely decked, Two at his head   and two at his feet, A brace of hounds   and a pair of hawks,<sup>94</sup> For so shall all   be seemly done.</p> <p>67.<sup>95</sup> "Let between us   lie once more The steel so keen,   as so it lay When both within   one bed we were, And wedded mates   by men were called.</p> <p>68. "The door<sup>96</sup> of the hall   shall strike not the heel Of the hero fair   with flashing rings, If hence my following   goes with him; Not mean our faring   forth shall be.</p> <p>69.<sup>97</sup> "Bond-women five   shall follow him, And eight of my thralls,   well-born are they, Children with me,   and mine they were As gifts that Buthli   his daughter gave.</p> <p>70. "Much have I told thee,   and more would say If fate more space   for speech had given; My voice grows weak,   my wounds are swelling; Truth I have said,   and so I die."</p>	<p>On meadow make thou of many logs A pyre reared, with room for all Who after Sigurth did seek their death.</p> <p>65. "Hide it wholly with hangings and shields, With well-dyed weeds and Welsh thralls<sup>146</sup> many: Let the Hunnish hero burn hard by me.</p> <p>66. "On the Hunnish hero's other hand let burn Of my bondmaids, bracelet-decked, Twain at his head, (twain at his feet, The hero's hounds)<sup>147</sup> and hawks eke twain; Then all is ordered evenly.</p> <p>67. "Let the wand-of-wounds<sup>148</sup> be once more laid Betwixt us twain truehearted ones, As when we both one bed did share, Though hight we were husband and wife.</p> <p>68. "On his heels fall not the shining hall's<sup>149</sup> Ring-handled gate, on hinges rolling, If him follow my faithful thralls: At our rich riding shall rail no man.</p> <p>69. "For he is followed by five bondmaids And eight henchmen of honest kin, My playmate<sup>150</sup> eke and all the dowry The which Buthli to Brynhild gave.</p> <p>70. "I told thee much, yet more would say But for my fate: my speech fails me, My voice weakens, my wounds do burn: But truth I told thee—my time is come."</p>
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<sup>1</sup> That is, Skogul with the necklace; Brynhild applies this name to herself, which is a compound of "men," *necklace*, *monile*, and "Skogul," the name of a Valkyria.

<sup>2</sup> Necklaces usually consisted in gold and silver chains or laces with ornaments attached to them; if these resembled the sun or moon they were called Sigi, *suns* (such were those here spoken of); and such was the necklace worn by Freyia, the bright goddess of the Vanir.

<sup>3</sup> Menia's meal, or flour, is gold.

<sup>4</sup> Sigurd.

<sup>5</sup> Gjuki: father of the brothers twain, Gunnar and Hogni, and of Guthrun. In this version of the story Sigurth goes straight to the home of the Gjukungs after his victory over the dragon Fafnir, without meeting Brynhild on the way (cf. *Gripisspo*, 13 and note).

<sup>6</sup> Volsung: Sigurth's grandfather was Volsung; cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note.

<sup>7</sup> Oaths: regarding the blood-brother hood sworn by Sigurth, Gunnar, and Hogni cf. *Brot*, 18 and note.

<sup>8</sup> Brynhild: on the winning of Brynhild by Sigurth in Gunnar's shape cf. *Gripisspo*, 37 and note. The poet here omits details, and in stanzas 32-39 appears a quite different tradition regarding the winning of Brynhild, which I suspect he had in mind throughout the poem.

<sup>9</sup> Southern hero: Sigurth, whose Frankish origin is seldom wholly lost sight of in the Norse versions of the story. On the episode of the sword cf. *Gripisspo*, 41 and note.

<sup>10</sup> Line 3 may well be an interpolation; both lines 4 and 5 have also been questioned, and some editions combine line 5 with lines 1-3 of stanza 5.

<sup>11</sup> Hunnish king: Sigurth, who was, of course, not a king of the Huns, but was occasionally so called in the later poems owing to the lack of ethnological distinction made by the Norse poets (cf. *Guthrunarkvitha I*, 24 and note).

<sup>12</sup> The manuscript marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza, and many editors combine it with stanza 6.

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<sup>13</sup> This stanza may refer, as Gering thinks, merely to the fact that Brynhild lived happy and unsuspecting as Gunnar's wife until the fatal quarrel with Guthrun (cf. *Gripisspo*, 45 and note) revealed to her the deceit whereby she had been won, or it may refer to the version of the story which appears in stanzas 32-39, wherein Brynhild lived happily with Atli, her brother, until he was attacked by Gunnar and Sigurth, and was compelled to give his sister to Gunnar, winning her consent thereto by representing Gunnar as Sigurth, her chosen hero (cf. *Guthrunarkviða I*, 24 and note).

<sup>14</sup> The hero: the manuscript originally had the phrase thus, then corrected it to "though I die," and finally crossed out the correction. Many editions have "I."

<sup>15</sup> Brynhild has now discovered the deceit that has been practised on her. That she had loved Sigurth from the outset (cf. stanza 40) fits well with the version of the story wherein Sigurth meets her before he comes to Gunnar's home (the version not used in this poem), or the one outlined in the note on stanza 5, but does not accord with the story of Sigurth's first meeting Brynhild in Gunnar's form—an added reason for believing that the poet in stanzas 5-6 had in mind the story represented by stanzas 32-39.

<sup>16</sup> Perhaps a line is missing after line 3.

<sup>17</sup> Glacier: a bit of Icelandic (or Greenland) local color.

<sup>18</sup> Line 1 does not appear in the manuscript, and is based on a conjecture by Bugge. Some editions add line 2 to stanza 8. The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza, and some editors assume a gap of two lines after line 4.

<sup>19</sup> Hunnish king: cf. stanza 4.

<sup>20</sup> Lands: Brynhild's wealth again points to the story represented by stanzas 32-39; elsewhere she is not spoken of as bringing wealth to Gunnar.

<sup>21</sup> Line 5, or perhaps line 3, may be interpolated.

<sup>22</sup> The son: the three-year-old son of Sigurth and Guthrun, Sigmund, who was killed at Brynhild's behest.

<sup>23</sup> Grief (line 1): the manuscript has "wrath," involving a metrical error.

<sup>24</sup> This stanza has been the subject of many conjectural emendations. Some editions assume a gap after line 2, and make a separate stanza of lines 3-7; others mark lines 5-7 as spurious. The stanza seems to have been expanded by repetition.

<sup>25</sup> Bugge and Gering transfer lines 4-5 to the beginning of stanza 16, on the basis of the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase, and assume a gap of one line after line 3. Line 5, which is in the nature of a stereotyped clause, may well be interpolated.

<sup>26</sup> After "Buthli" in line 2 the manuscript has "my brother," apparently a scribal error.

<sup>27</sup> In line 4 the manuscript has "wealth" instead of "love," apparently with stanza 10 in mind, but the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase has "love," and many editors have suspected an error.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. note on stanza 14. After thus adding lines 4-5 of stanza 14 at the beginning of stanza 16, Gering marks line 4 as probably spurious; others reject both lines 3 and 4 as mere repetitions.

<sup>29</sup> Rhine: the Rhine, the sands of which traditionally contained gold, was apparently the original home of the treasure of the Nibelungs, converted in the North to Andvari's treasure (cf. *Reginsmol*, 1-9). That greed for Sigurth's wealth was one of the motives for his slaying is indicated likewise in *Guthrunarkviða I*, 20, and in the German versions of the story.

<sup>30</sup> We four: if line 1 of stanza 19 is spurious, or the reference therein to "five" is a blunder, as may well be the case, then the "four" are Sigurth and the three brothers, Gunnar, Hogni, and Gotthorm. But it may be that the poet had in mind a tradition which, as in the *Thithrekssaga*, gave Gjuki a fourth son, in which case the "four" refers only to the four Gjukungs.

<sup>31</sup> Hunnish hero: Sigurth; cf. stanza 4 and note.

<sup>32</sup> Some editions put line 4 between lines 1 and 2. Some add lines 1-2 of stanza 19 to stanza 18, marking them as spurious.

<sup>33</sup> We five: see note on preceding stanza. Some editors mark lines 1-2 as spurious, and either assume a gap of two lines after line 4 or combine lines 5-4 with stanza 20.

<sup>34</sup> Whence lead the ways: a proverbial expression signifying "whence the trouble comes."

<sup>35</sup> The manuscript does not name the speaker.

<sup>36</sup> Gotthorm (the name is variously spelt): half-brother of Gunnar and Hogni (cf. *Hyndluljóth*, 27 and note, and *Brot*, 4 and note). The name is the northern form of Gundomar; a prince of this name is mentioned in the *Lex Burgundionum*, apparently as a brother of Gundahari (Gundicarius). In the *Nibelungenlied* the third brother is called Gernot.

<sup>37</sup> No gap is indicated in the manuscript, and many editors combine stanza 21 with stanza 22, but it seems likely that not only two lines, but one or more stanzas in addition, have been lost; cf. *Brot*, 4, and also the detailed account of the slaying of Sigurth in the *Volsungasaga*, wherein, as here, Sigurth is killed in his bed (cf. stanza 24) and not in the forest.

<sup>38</sup> Gram: Sigurth's sword (cf. *Reginsmol*, prose after stanza 14); the word here, however, may not be a proper name, but may mean "the hero."

<sup>39</sup> Some editions combine lines 3-4 with stanza 23.

<sup>40</sup> A line may well have been lost from this stanza.

<sup>41</sup> Freyr: if the phrase "the friend of Freyr" means anything more than "king" (cf. *Rígsthula*, 46 etc.), which I doubt, it has reference to the late tradition that Freyr, and not Othin, was the ancestor of the Volsungs (cf. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, 57 and note).

<sup>42</sup> Mullenhoff thinks this stanza, or at any rate lines 1-2, a later addition based on stanza 29.

<sup>43</sup> My son: Sigmund; cf. stanza 12 and note, and also *Brot*, 9 and note.

<sup>44</sup> Thing: council.

<sup>45</sup> Sigurth means that although Guthrun may have seven sons by a later marriage, none of them will equal Sigmund, "son of their (i.e., Gunnar's and Hogni's) sister."

<sup>46</sup> Sigurth's protestation of guiltlessness fits perfectly with the story of his relations with Brynhild used in this poem, but not, of course, with the alternative version, used in the *Gripisspo* and elsewhere, wherein Sigurth meets Brynhild before he woos her for Gunnar, and they have a daughter, Aslaug.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Guthrunarkviða I*, 115.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Brot*, 10.

<sup>49</sup> Line 1 may well be a mere expansion of "Gunnar spake."

<sup>50</sup> The manuscript marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza, and some editions combine lines 4-5 with stanza 32.

<sup>51</sup> This stanza, which all editors have accepted as an integral part of the poem, apparently refers to the same story represented by stanzas 37-39, which most editors have (I believe mistakenly) marked as interpolated. As is pointed out in the notes on stanzas 3, 5, 6 and 10, the poet throughout seems to have accepted the version of the story wherein Gunnar and Sigurth besiege Atli, and are bought off by the gift of Atli's sister, Brynhild, to Gunnar as wife, her consent being won by Atli's representation that Gunnar is Sigurth (cf. also *Guthrunarkviða I*, 24 and note).

<sup>52</sup> The manuscript does not name the speaker, and some editions add a first line: "Then Brynhild, daughter | of Buthli, spake."

<sup>53</sup> Cf. stanza 5.

<sup>54</sup> Three kings: Gunnar, Hogni, and Sigurth.

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- <sup>55</sup> Some editions place this stanza after stanza 39, on the theory that stanzas 37-39 are interpolated. Line 4, as virtually a repetition of line 3, has generally been marked as spurious. In this version of the winning of Brynhild it appears that Atli pointed out Sigurth as Gunnar, and Brynhild promptly fell in love with the hero whom, as he rode on Grani and was decked with some of the spoils taken from Fafnir, she recognized as the dragon's slayer. Thus no change of form between Sigurth and Gunnar was necessary. The oath to marry Gunnar had to be carried out even after Brynhild had discovered the deception.
- <sup>56</sup> Most editors mark stanzas 37-39 as interpolated, but cf. note on stanza 32. Stanza 37 has been variously emended. Lines 4 and 6 look like interpolated repetitions, but many editors make two stanzas, following the manuscript in beginning a new stanza with line 4. After line 1 Grundtvig adds: "Son of Buthli, | and brother of mine." After line 6 Bugge adds: "Not thou was it, Gunnar, | who Grani rode, / Though thou my brother | with rings didst buy." Regarding Brynhild's wealth cf. stanza 10 and note.
- <sup>57</sup> Brynhild here again appears as a Valkyrie. The manuscript marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza. Any one of the last three lines may be spurious.
- <sup>58</sup> Some editions combine this stanza with lines 4-5 of stanza 38, with lines 1-2 of stanza 40, or with the whole of stanza 40.
- <sup>59</sup> The bond: Brynhild thought she was marrying Sigurth, owner of the treasure, whereas she was being tricked into marrying Gunnar.
- <sup>60</sup> At this point there seem to be several emissions. Brynhild's statement in lines 1-2 seems to refer to the episode, not here mentioned but told in detail in the *Volsungasaga*, of Sigurth's effort to repair the wrong that has been done her by himself giving up Guthrun in her favor, an offer which she refuses. The lacuna here suggested, which is not indicated in the manuscript, may be simply a single line (line 1) or a stanza or more. After line 2 there is almost certainly a gap of at least one stanza, and possibly more, in which Brynhild states her determination to die.
- <sup>61</sup> Hardly any two editions agree as to the arrangement of the lines in stanzas 42-44. I have followed the manuscript except in transposing line 4 of stanza 43 to this position from the place it holds in the manuscript after line 4 of stanza 14. All the other involve the rejection of two or more lines as spurious and the assumption of various gaps. Gering and Sijmons both arrange the lines thus: 42, 1-2; two-line gap; 43, 3 (marked probably spurious); 44, 1-4; 43-4 (marked probably spurious); 42, 3-4; 43, 1-2.
- <sup>62</sup> Cf. note on preceding stanza.
- <sup>63</sup> Cf. note on stanza 42.
- <sup>64</sup> Perhaps the remains of two stanzas; the manuscript marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza, and after line 4 an added line has been suggested: "She was ever known for evil thoughts." On the other hand, line 1, identical with line 1 of stanza 17, may well be a mere expansion of "Hogni spake," and line 6 may have been introduced, with a slight variation, from line 5 of stanza 38.
- <sup>65</sup> Born again: this looks like a trace of Christian influence (the poem was composed well after the coming of Christianity to Iceland) in the assumption that if Brynhild killed herself she could not be "born again" (cf. concluding prose to *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*).
- <sup>66</sup> The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a stanza; some editions treat lines 1-2 as a separate stanza, and combine lines 3-4 with lines 1-2 of stanza 47.
- <sup>67</sup> Jewel-bearer (literally "land of jewels"): woman, here Brynhild.
- <sup>68</sup> Bond-women, etc.: in stanza 69 we learn that five female slaves and eight serfs were killed to be burned on the funeral pyre, and thus to follow Sigurth in death.
- <sup>69</sup> The manuscript marks line 3, and not line 1, as beginning a stanza, and some editions treat lines 3-4 as a separate stanza, or combine them with stanza 48.
- <sup>70</sup> Brynhild means, as stanzas 49-51 show, that those of her women who wish to win rewards must be ready to follow her in death. The word translated "women" in line 1 is conjectural, but the general meaning is clear enough.
- <sup>71</sup> In place of "as so she spake" in line 1 the manuscript has "of their plans they thought," which involves a metrical error.
- <sup>72</sup> No gap indicated in the manuscript; many editions place it between lines 3 and 4.
- <sup>73</sup> Menja's wealth: gold; the story of the mill Grotti, whereby the giantesses Menja and Fenja ground gold for King Frothi, is told in the *Grottasongr*.
- <sup>74</sup> With this stanza begins Brynhild's prophesy of what is to befall Gunnar, Guthrun, Atli, and the many others involved in their fate.
- <sup>75</sup> Line 3 is a proverbial expression meaning simply "your troubles are not at an end."
- <sup>76</sup> No gap is indicated in the manuscript; one suggestion for line 2 runs: "Grimhild shall make her | to laugh once more." Gering suggests a loss of three lines, and joins lines 3-4 with stanza 54.
- <sup>77</sup> Probably a line has been lost from this stanza. Grundtvig adds as a new first line: "Her shalt thou find in the hall of Half." Some editions query line 3 as possibly spurious.
- <sup>78</sup> Svanhild: the figure of Svanhild is exceedingly old. The name means "Swan-Maiden-Warrior," applying to just such mixtures of swan-maiden and Valkyrie as appear in the *Volundarkvitha*. Originally part of a separate tradition, Svanhild appears first to have been incorporated in the Jormunrek (Ermanarich) story as the unhappy wife of that monarch, and much later to have been identified as the daughter of Sigurth and Guthrun, thus linking the two sets of legends.
- <sup>79</sup> Line 2 in the original is almost totally obscure. Line 4 should very possibly precede line 2, while line 5 looks like an unwarranted addition.
- <sup>80</sup> This stanza probably ought to follow stanza 52, as it refers solely to the winning of Brynhild by Gunnar and Sigurth. Mullenhoff regards stanzas 53-55 as interpolated. The manuscript indicates no gap after line 3.
- <sup>81</sup> Stanzas 57-58 seem to be the remains of two stanzas, but the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase follows closely the form here given. Line 3 may well be spurious; line 5 has likewise been questioned.
- <sup>82</sup> Oddrun: this sister of Atli and Brynhild, known mainly through the *Oddrunargratr*, is a purely northern addition to the cycle, and apparently one of a relatively late date. She figures solely by reason of her love affair with Gunnar.
- <sup>83</sup> Possibly two lines have been lost; many editions combine the two remaining lines with lines 1-3 of stanza 59.
- <sup>84</sup> Concerning the manner of Gunnar's death cf. *Drap Niflunga*.
- <sup>85</sup> Line 3 may well be spurious, as it is largely repetition. The manuscript has "sofa" ("sleep") in place of "sona" ("sons"), but the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase says clearly "sons."
- <sup>86</sup> The manuscript marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza, and some editions make a separate stanza out of lines 4-5, or else combine them with stanza 60.
- <sup>87</sup> The slaying of Atli by Guthrun in revenge for his killing of her brothers is told in the two Atli lays.
- <sup>88</sup> To follow in death: this phrase is not in *Regius*, but is included in late paper manuscripts, and has been added in most editions.
- <sup>89</sup> Jonak: this king, known only through the *Hamthesmol* and the stories which, like this one, are based thereon, is another purely northern addition to the legend. The name is apparently of Slavic origin. He appears solely as Guthrun's third husband and the father of Hamther, Sorli, and Erp (cf. introductory prose to *Guthrunarhvot*).
- <sup>90</sup> Svanhild: cf. stanza 54 and note.
- <sup>91</sup> Bikki: Svanhild is married to the aged Jormunrek (Ermanarich), but Bikki, one of his followers, suggests that she is unduly intimate with Jormunrek's son, Randver. Thereupon Jormunrek has Randver hanged, and Svanhild torn to pieces by wild horses. Ermanarich's cruelty and his barbarous slaying of his wife and son were familiar traditions long before they became in any way connected with the Sigurth cycle (cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*).
- <sup>92</sup> Line 5 is very probably spurious.
- <sup>93</sup> The manuscript indicates no gap; a suggested addition runs "Gold let there be, and jewels bright." Fallen slaves: cf. stanzas 66 and 69. Hunnish hero: cf. stanza 4 and note.

<sup>94</sup> In place of lines 3-4 the manuscript has one line "Two at his head, and a pair of hawks"; the addition is made from the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase. The burning or burying of slaves or beasts to accompany their masters in death was a general custom in the North. The number of slaves indicated in this stanza does not tally with the one given in stanza 69, wherefore Vigfusson rejects most of this stanza.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Gripisspo*, 41 and note. After line 1 the manuscript adds the phrase "bright, ring-decked," referring to the sword, but it is metrically impossible, and many editions omit it.

<sup>96</sup> The door: The gate of Hel's domain, like that of Mengloth's house (cf. *Svipdagsmol*, 26 and note), closes so fast as to catch anyone attempting to pass through. Apparently the poet here assumes that the gate of Valhall does likewise, but that it will be kept open for Sigurth's retinue.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. stanza 66.

<sup>98</sup> Gunnar and Hogni. See *Brot af Sigurþarkviðu*, St.18 and note.

<sup>99</sup> In this version, then, Sigurth's marriage does not take place simultaneously with that of Gunnar (as it does in *Gripisspá*, St.43).

<sup>100</sup> Inserted by the Translator: no sea journey (like that in the *Nibelungenlied*) is indicated in the original.

<sup>101</sup> This adjective has been taken to indicate the German origin of this version of the legend. However, like "Hunnish" below, it is an honorific epithet.

<sup>102</sup> "She asked what that signified. He said it had been decreed that thus must he wed his wife or else suffer death." (the *Volsunga saga*, Ch.27).

<sup>103</sup> Fate, not any fault of her own, is the cause for his refraining from her. He is bound by his oath to Gunnar and by his marriage with Guthrún; moreover, he has been weaned of his love for Brynhild by the magic potion. See *Gripisspá*, St.33.

<sup>104</sup> "Sitting outside" at eventide (to be by herself) suggests her sinister purpose.

<sup>105</sup> Accepting Gering's emendation.

<sup>106</sup> I follow B. M. Olsen's and Bugge's interpretation.

<sup>107</sup> Supplied by Bugge.

<sup>108</sup> See *Brot af Sigurþarkviðu*, Sts.8ff.

<sup>109</sup> Of all the slain one's kin, no one is more likely to seek revenge than his son; but the passage is doubtful. For that matter, Sigurth's son (Sigmund) plays no role whatever in the legends. See St.26 below.

<sup>110</sup> Accepting Bugge's emendation.

<sup>111</sup> Thus the original. A number of editors, misled by our more sentimental taste, have emended the word in question to "love"; but see Stanzas 10, 36, 39, 51. Gunnar's avarice is plainly shown in the next stanza.

<sup>112</sup> The order of Sts.15 and 16 is changed, following Bugge.

<sup>113</sup> Sigurth's treasure was later thrown into the Rhine in order to hide it (*Atlakviða*, St.29); hence this—or any other treasure—is the "hoard-of-the-Rhine."

<sup>114</sup> Gunnar, Hogni, Sigurth, Guthorm.

<sup>115</sup> There is here an implied criticism of Gunnar: he has never accomplished Brynhild's love.

<sup>116</sup> No doubt several lines are missing here. In the *Volsunga saga*, Ch.30, Hogni continues, "and her counsels will bring us shame and harm."

<sup>117</sup> "He Who Reveres the Gods." He is Gjúki's stepson. See *Hyndluljóð*, St.27 and note.

<sup>118</sup> Here, too, we must assume a considerable gap. In the *Volsunga saga*, Ch.30 we read, "They called him to them and offered him gold and great power if he would do this; they took a serpent and some wolf's meat, and had it cooked, and gave it to him to eat—as the skald has it:

A worm they took, of wolf's meat others,  
And thereof gave Guthorm to eat,  
With drink of mead and many other  
Magic matter . . . . .  
(Ere, eager of evil, the angry men  
On highborn hero their hands could lay)."

(The lines in parentheses are supplied after Bugge's suggestion from the corresponding Stanza in *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu*). He is won over, and twice approaches the bed where lie Guthrún and Sigurth, but is frightened off both times by Sigurth's penetrating glance. Only at the third attempt does he slay the hero.

<sup>119</sup> Only in a transferred sense: the god Frey is the progenitor of the royal race of Sweden, the Ynglings. See *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, St.55.

<sup>120</sup> He speaks as though, at first, he knows not who are the perpetrators of the deed: on her brothers devolves the duty of revenge.

<sup>121</sup> According to the *Volsunga saga*, Ch.31, his son Sigmund was only three years old when he also was slain at Brynhild's bidding.

<sup>122</sup> That is, in a later marriage.

<sup>123</sup> "According to Scotch tradition, men became violently hilarious, 'fey,' just before a violent death." (Bugge)

<sup>124</sup> Irony?

<sup>125</sup> Conjectural.

<sup>126</sup> Supplied with all editors.

<sup>127</sup> When the Gjúkungs rode into Atli's hall she had the choice to remain a free Valkyrie and wage wars but forego her dowry, or else to marry Gunnar (in Sigurth's guise) and gain both dowry and the Niflung hoard. This variant of the legend occurs only here.

<sup>128</sup> That is, Gunnar's.

<sup>129</sup> Striving to avert the catastrophe, Sigurth had offered to lie with her. This she rejected: "I will not have two kings in one hall; and rather will I die than deceive King Gunnar." (*Volsunga saga*, Ch.29). See also "The Great Lacuna," Stanza D.

<sup>130</sup> Supplied after Heusler's suggestion.

<sup>131</sup> No doubt a number of lines have dropped out here.

<sup>132</sup> Gunnar.

<sup>133</sup> The slaves who had been slain to be burned on the funeral pile with her. She then asks, in St.48, who might of their own free will wish to follow her in death.

<sup>134</sup> Uncertain.

<sup>135</sup> "Menja's meal" is a kenning for "gold"; see *Grottasöngur*, Introductory Prose.

<sup>136</sup> That is, "when you ultimately die and join me in Hel you will have fewer ornaments burned with you than I would have given you."

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<sup>137</sup> According to the *Völsunga saga*, Ch.31, by Queen Grimhild's magic; whereafter, against her wishes, Guthrún is married to King Atli.

<sup>138</sup> See *Guðrúnarhvøpt*, Introductory Prose and St.15.

<sup>139</sup> Conjectural.

<sup>140</sup> "Knowing Weapon Runes," Brynhild's sister. For the story, see *Oddrúnargrátr*.

<sup>141</sup> Guthrún.

<sup>142</sup> This is told in *Dráp Niflunga* and the succeeding lays.

<sup>143</sup> As is related in *Guðrúnarhvøpt*, and *Hamðismál*.

<sup>144</sup> Supplied after Bugge from *Guðrúnarhvøpt*, St.14.

<sup>145</sup> See her lament in *Guðrúnarhvøpt*.

<sup>146</sup> Many slaves were made in Celtic lands. According to Old Germanic custom not only a man's property, but also his slaves and favorite animals followed him in death: he had to maintain his standing in the world beyond.

See Sts. 68-69.

<sup>147</sup> After the paper manuscripts and the *Völsunga saga*, Ch.31.

<sup>148</sup> Kenning for "sword."

<sup>149</sup> Of Hel, probably. A difficult passage.

<sup>150</sup> Or "nurse."