

POETIC EDDA

OLD NORSE-ENGLISH DIGLOT



Poetic Edda

Old Norse–English diglot

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General Introduction

There is scarcely any literary work of great importance which has been less readily available for the general reader, or even for the serious student of literature, than the Poetic Edda. Translations have been far from numerous, and only in Germany has the complete work of translation been done in the full light of recent scholarship. In English the only versions were long the conspicuously inadequate one made by Thorpe, and published about half a century ago, and the unsatisfactory prose translations in Vigfusson and Powell's *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, reprinted in the Norrœna collection. An excellent translation of the poems dealing with the gods, in verse and with critical and explanatory notes, made by Olive Bray, was, however, published by the Viking Club of London in 1908. In French there exist only partial translations, chief among them being those made by Bergmann many years ago. Among the seven or eight German versions, those by the Brothers Grimm and by Karl Simrock, which had considerable historical importance because of their influence on nineteenth century German literature and art, and particularly on the work of Richard Wagner, have been largely superseded by Hugo Gering's admirable translation, published in 1892, and by the recent two volume rendering by Genzmer, with excellent notes by Andreas Heusler, 1834–1921. There are competent translations in both Norwegian and Swedish. The lack of any complete and adequately annotated English rendering in metrical form, based on a critical text, and profiting by the cumulative labors of such scholars as Mogk, Vigfusson, Finnur Jonsson, Grundtvig, Bugge, Gislason, Hildebrand, Lüning, Sweet, Niedner, Ettmüller, Müllenhoff, Edzardi, B. M. Olsen, Sievers, Sijmons, Detter, Heinzel, Falk, Neckel, Heusler, and Gering, has kept this extraordinary work practically out of the reach of those who have had neither time nor inclination to master the intricacies of the original Old Norse.

On the importance of the material contained in the *Poetic Edda* it is here needless to dwell at any length. We have inherited the Germanic traditions in our very speech, and the *Poetic Edda* is the original storehouse of Germanic mythology. It is, indeed, in many ways the greatest literary monument preserved to us out of the antiquity of the kindred races which we call Germanic. Moreover, it has a literary value altogether apart from its historical significance. The mythological poems include, in the *Voluspo*, one of the vastest conceptions of the creation and ultimate destruction of the world ever crystallized in literary form; in parts of the *Hovamol*, a collection of wise counsels that can bear comparison with most of the Biblical Book of Proverbs; in the *Lokasenna*, a comedy none the less full of vivid characterization because its humor is often broad; and in the *Thrymskvitha*, one of the finest ballads in the world. The hero poems give us, in its oldest and most vivid extant form, the story of Sigurth, Brynhild, and Atli, the Norse parallel to the German *Nibelungenlied*. The Poetic Edda is not only of great interest to the student of antiquity; it is a collection including some of the most remarkable poems which have been preserved to us from the period before the pen and the printing-press replaced the poet-singer and

oral tradition. It is above all else the desire to make better known the dramatic force, the vivid and often tremendous imagery, and the superb conceptions embodied in these poems which has called forth the present translation.

What is the Poetic Edda?

Even if the poems of the so-called Edda were not so significant and intrinsically so valuable, the long series of scholarly struggles which have been going on over them for the better part of three centuries would in itself give them a peculiar interest. Their history is strangely mysterious. We do not know who composed them, or when or where they were composed; we are by no means sure who collected them or when he did so; finally, we are not absolutely certain as to what an “Edda” is, and the best guess at the meaning of the word renders its application to this collection of poems more or less misleading.

A brief review of the chief facts in the history of the *Poetic Edda* will explain why this uncertainty has persisted. Preserved in various manuscripts of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries is a prose work consisting of a very extensive collection of mythological stories, an explanation of the important figures and tropes of Norse poetic diction,—the poetry of the Icelandic and Norwegian skalds was appallingly complex in this respect,—and a treatise on metrics. This work, clearly a handbook for poets, was commonly known as the “Edda” of Snorri Sturluson, for at the head of the copy of it in the *Uppsala* book, a manuscript written presumably some fifty or sixty years after Snorri’s death, which was in 1241, we find: “This book is called Edda, which Snorri Sturluson composed.” This work, well known as the *Prose Edda*, Snorri’s *Edda* or the *Younger Edda*, has recently been made available to readers of English in the admirable translation by Arthur G. Brodeur, published by the American-Scandinavian Foundation in 1916.

Icelandic tradition, however, persisted in ascribing either this *Edda* or one resembling it to Snorri’s much earlier compatriot, Sæmund the Wise (1056–1133). When, early in the seventeenth century, the learned Arngrimur Jonsson proved to everyone’s satisfaction that Snorri and nobody else must have been responsible for the work in question, the next thing to determine was what, if anything, Sæmund had done of the same kind. The nature of Snorri’s book gave a clue. In the mythological stories related a number of poems were quoted, and as these and other poems were to all appearances Snorri’s chief sources of information, it was assumed that Sæmund must have written or compiled a verse *Edda*—whatever an “Edda” might be—on which Snorri’s work was largely based.

So matters stood when, in 1643, Brynjolfur Sveinsson, Bishop of Skalholt, discovered a manuscript, clearly written as early as 1300, containing twenty-nine poems, complete or fragmentary, and some of them with the very lines and stanzas used by Snorri. Great was the joy of the scholars, for here, of course, must be at least a part of the long-sought *Edda* of Sæmund the Wise. Thus the good bishop promptly labeled his find, and as Sæmund’s *Edda*, the *Elder Edda* or the *Poetic Edda* it has been known to this day.

This precious manuscript, now in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, and known as the *Codex Regius* (R2365), has been the basis for all published editions of the Eddic poems. A few poems of similar character found elsewhere have subsequently been added to the collection, until now most editions include, as in this translation, a total of thirty-four. A

shorter manuscript now in the Arnarnagnæan collection in Copenhagen (AM748), contains fragmentary or complete versions of six of the poems in the *Codex Regius*, and one other, *Baldrs Draumar*, not found in that collection. Four other poems (*Rigsthula*, *Hyndluljóth*, *Grougaldr* and *Fjolsvinnsmol*, the last two here combined under the title of *Svipdagsmol*), from various manuscripts, so closely resemble in subject-matter and style the poems in the *Codex Regius* that they have been included by most editors in the collection. Finally, Snorri's *Edda* contains one complete poem, the *Grottasongr*, which many editors have added to the poetic collection; it is, however, not included in this translation, as an admirable English version of it is available in Mr. Brodeur's rendering of Snorri's work.

From all this it is evident that the *Poetic Edda*, as we now know it, is no definite and plainly limited work, but rather a more or less haphazard collection of separate poems, dealing either with Norse mythology or with hero-cycles unrelated to the traditional history of greater Scandinavia or Iceland. How many other similar poems, now lost, may have existed in such collections as were current in Iceland in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries we cannot know, though it is evident that some poems of this type are missing. We can say only that thirty-four poems have been preserved, twenty-nine of them in a single manuscript collection, which differ considerably in subject-matter and style from all the rest of extant Old Norse poetry, and these we group together as the *Poetic Edda*.

But what does the word "Edda" mean? Various guesses have been made. An early assumption was that the word somehow meant "Poetics," which fitted Snorri's treatise to a nicety, but which, in addition to the lack of philological evidence to support this interpretation, could by no stretch of scholarly subtlety be made appropriate to the collection of poems. Jacob Grimm ingeniously identified the word with the word "edda" used in one of the poems, the *Rigsthula*, where, rather conjecturally, it means "great-grand mother." The word exists in this sense nowhere else in Norse literature, and Grimm's suggestion of "Tales of a Grandmother," though at one time it found wide acceptance, was grotesquely inappropriate to either the prose or the verse work.

At last Eiríkr Magnússon hit on what appears the likeliest solution of the puzzle: that "Edda" is simply the genitive form of the proper name "Oddi." Oddi was a settlement in the southwest of Iceland, certainly the home of Snorri Sturluson for many years, and, traditionally at least, also the home of Sæmund the Wise. That Snorri's work should have been called "The Book of Oddi" is altogether reasonable, for such a method of naming books was common—witness the "Book of the Flat Island" and other early manuscripts. That Sæmund may also have written or compiled another "Oddi-Book" is perfectly possible, and that tradition should have said he did so is entirely natural.

It is, however, an open question whether or not Sæmund had anything to do with making the collection, or any part of it, now known as the *Poetic Edda*, for of course the seventeenth-century assignment of the work to him is negligible. We can say only that he may have made some such compilation, for he was a diligent student of Icelandic tradition and history, and was famed throughout the North for his learning. But otherwise no trace of his works survives, and as he was educated in Paris, it is probable that he wrote rather in Latin than in the vernacular.

All that is reasonably certain is that by the middle or last of the twelfth century there existed in Iceland one or more written collections of Old Norse mythological and heroic poems, that the *Codex Regius*, a copy made a hundred years or so later, represents at least

a considerable part of one of these, and that the collection of thirty-four poems which we now know as the *Poetic* or *Elder Edda* is practically all that has come down to us of Old Norse poetry of this type. Anything more is largely guesswork, and both the name of the compiler and the meaning of the title “Edda” are conjectural.

The origin of the Eddic poems

There is even less agreement about the birthplace, authorship and date of the Eddic poems themselves than about the nature of the existing collection. Clearly the poems were the work of many different men, living in different periods; clearly, too, most of them existed in oral tradition for generations before they were committed to writing. In general, the mythological poems seem strongly marked by pagan sincerity, although efforts have been made to prove them the results of deliberate archaizing; and as Christianity became generally accepted throughout the Norse world early in the eleventh century, it seems altogether likely that most of the poems dealing with the gods definitely antedate the year 1000. The earlier terminus is still a matter of dispute. The general weight of critical opinion, based chiefly on the linguistic evidence presented by Hoffory, Finnur Jonsson and others, has indicated that the poems did not assume anything closely analogous to their present forms prior to the ninth century. On the other hand, Magnus Olsen’s interpretation of the inscriptions on the Eggjum Stone, which he places as early as the seventh century, have led so competent a scholar as Birger Nerman to say that “we may be warranted in concluding that some of the Eddic poems may have originated, wholly or partially, in the second part of the seventh century.” As for the poems belonging to the hero cycles, one or two of them appear to be as late as 1100, but most of them probably date back at least to the century and a half following 900. It is a reasonable guess that the years between 850 and 1050 saw the majority of the Eddic poems worked into definite shape, but it must be remembered that many changes took place during the long subsequent period of oral transmission, and also that many of the legends, both mythological and heroic, on which the poems were based certainly existed in the Norse regions, and quite possibly in verse form, long before the year 900.

As to the origin of the legends on which the poems are based, the whole question, at least so far as the stories of the gods are concerned, is much too complex for discussion here. How much of the actual narrative material of the mythological lays is properly to be called Scandinavian is a matter for students of comparative mythology to guess at. The tales underlying the heroic lays are clearly of foreign origin: the Helgi story comes from Denmark, and that of Völund from Germany, as also the great mass of traditions centering around Sigurth (Siegfried), Brynhild, the sons of Gjuki, Atli (Attila), and Jormunrek (Ermanarich). The introductory notes to the various poems deal with the more important of these questions of origin. Of the men who composed these poems—“wrote” is obviously the wrong word—we know absolutely nothing, save that some of them must have been literary artists with a high degree of conscious skill. The Eddic poems are “folk-poetry,”—whatever that may be,—only in the sense that some of them strongly reflect racial feelings and beliefs; they are anything but crude or primitive in workmanship, and they show that

not only the poets themselves, but also many of their hearers, must have made a careful study of the art of poetry.

Where the poems were shaped is equally uncertain. Any date prior to 875 would normally imply an origin on the mainland, but the necessarily fluid state of oral tradition made it possible for a poem to be “composed” many times over, and in various and far-separated places, without altogether losing its identity. Thus, even if a poem first assumed something approximating its present form in Iceland in the tenth century, it may none the less embody language characteristic of Norway two centuries earlier. Oral poetry has always had an amazing preservative power over language, and in considering the origins of such poems as these, we must cease thinking in terms of the printing-press, or even in those of the scribe. The claims of Norway as the birthplace of most of the Eddic poems have been extensively advanced, but the great literary activity of Iceland after the settlement of the island by Norwegian emigrants late in the ninth century makes the theory of an Icelandic home for many of the poems appear plausible. The two *Atli* lays, with what authority we do not know, bear in the *Codex Regius* the superscription “the Greenland poem,” and internal evidence suggests that this statement may be correct. Certainly in one poem, the *Rígsthula*, and probably in several others, there are marks of Celtic influence. During a considerable part of the ninth and tenth centuries, Scandinavians were active in Ireland and in most of the western islands inhabited by branches of the Celtic race. Some scholars have, indeed, claimed nearly all the Eddic poems for these “Western Isles.” However, as Iceland early came to be the true cultural center of this Scandinavian island world, it may be said that the preponderant evidence concerning the development of the Eddic poems in anything like their present form points in that direction, and certainly it was in Iceland that they were chiefly preserved.

The Edda and Old Norse literature

Within the proper limits of an introduction it would be impossible to give any adequate summary of the history and literature with which the Eddic poems are indissolubly connected, but a mere mention of a few of the salient facts may be of some service to those who are unfamiliar with the subject. Old Norse literature covers approximately the period between 850 and 1300. During the first part of that period occurred the great wanderings of the Scandinavian peoples, and particularly the Norwegians. A convenient date to remember is that of the sea-fight of Håfrsford, 872, when Harald the Fair-Haired broke the power of the independent Norwegian nobles, and made himself overlord of nearly all the country. Many of the defeated nobles fled overseas, where inviting refuges had been found for them by earlier wanderers and plunder-seeking raiders. This was the time of the inroads of the dreaded Northmen in France, and in 885 Hrolf Gangr (Rollo) laid siege to Paris itself. Many Norwegians went to Ireland, where their compatriots had already built Dublin, and where they remained in control of most of the island till Brian Boru shattered their power at the battle of Clontarf in 1014.

Of all the migrations, however, the most important were those to Iceland. Here grew up an active civilization, fostered by absolute independence and by remoteness from the wars which wracked Norway, yet kept from degenerating into provincialism by the roving

life of the people, which brought them constantly in contact with the culture of the South. Christianity, introduced throughout the Norse world about the year 1000, brought with it the stability of learning, and the Icelanders became not only the makers but also the students and recorders of history. The years between 875 and 1100 were the great spontaneous period of oral literature. Most of the military and political leaders were also poets, and they composed a mass of lyric poetry concerning the authorship of which we know a good deal, and much of which has been preserved. Narrative prose also flourished, for the Icelander had a passion for story-telling and story-hearing. After 1100 came the day of the writers. These sagamen collected the material that for generations had passed from mouth to mouth, and gave it permanent form in writing. The greatest bulk of what we now have of Old Norse literature—and the published part of it makes a formidable library—originated thus in the earlier period before the introduction of writing, and was put into final shape by the scholars, most of them Icelanders, of the hundred years following 1150.

After 1250 came a rapid and tragic decline. Iceland lost its independence, becoming a Norwegian province. Later Norway too fell under alien rule, a Swede ascending the Norwegian throne in 1320. Pestilence and famine laid waste the whole North; volcanic disturbances worked havoc in Iceland. Literature did not quite die, but it fell upon evil days; for the vigorous native narratives and heroic poems of the older period were substituted translations of French romances. The poets wrote mostly doggerel; the prose writers were devoid of national or racial inspiration.

The mass of literature thus collected and written down largely between 1150 and 1250 maybe roughly divided into four groups. The greatest in volume is made up of the sagas: narratives mainly in prose, ranging all the way from authentic history of the Norwegian kings and the early Icelandic settlements to fairy-tales. Embodied in the sagas is found the material composing the second group: the skaldic poetry, a vast collection of songs of praise, triumph, love, lamentation, and so on, almost uniformly characterized by an appalling complexity of figurative language. There is no absolute line to be drawn between the poetry of the skalds and the poems of the *Edda*, which we may call the third group; but in addition to the remarkable artificiality of style which marks the skaldic poetry, and which is seldom found in the poems of the *Edda*, the skalds dealt almost exclusively with their own emotions, whereas the Eddic poems are quite impersonal. Finally, there is the fourth group, made up of didactic works, religious and legal treatises, and so on, studies which originated chiefly in the later period of learned activity.

Preservation of the Eddic poems

Most of the poems of the *Poetic Edda* have unquestionably reached us in rather bad shape. During the long period of oral transmission they suffered all sorts of interpolations, omissions and changes, and some of them, as they now stand, are a bewildering hodge-podge of little related fragments. To some extent the diligent twelfth century compiler to whom we owe the *Codex Regius*—Sæmund or another—was himself doubtless responsible for the patchwork process, often supplemented by narrative prose notes of his own; but in the days before written records existed, it was easy to lose stanzas and longer passages from their context, and equally easy to interpolate them where they did not by any means belong.

Some few of the poems, however, appear to be virtually complete and unified as we now have them.

Under such circumstances it is clear that the establishment of a satisfactory text is a matter of the utmost difficulty. As the basis for this translation I have used the text prepared by Karl Hildebrand (1876) and revised by Hugo Gering (1904). Textual emendation has, however, been so extensive in every edition of the *Edda*, and has depended so much on the theories of the editor, that I have also made extensive use of many other editions, notably those by Finnur Jonsson, Neckel, Sijmons, and Detter and Heinzel, together with numerous commentaries. The condition of the text in both the principal codices is such that no great reliance can be placed on the accuracy of the copyists, and frequently two editions will differ fundamentally as to their readings of a given passage or even of an entire-poem. For this reason, and because guesswork necessarily plays so large a part in any edition or translation of the Eddic poems, I have risked overloading the pages with textual notes in order to show, as nearly as possible, the exact state of the original together with all the more significant emendations. I have done this particularly in the case of transpositions, many of which appear absolutely necessary, and in the indication of passages which appear to be interpolations.

The verse-forms of the Eddic poems

The many problems connected with the verse-forms found in the Eddic poems have been analyzed in great detail by Sievers, Neckel, and others. The three verse-forms exemplified in the poems need only a brief comment here, however, in order to make clear the method used in this translation. All of these forms group the lines normally in four-line stanzas. In the so-called Fornyrthislag (“Old Verse”), for convenience sometimes referred to in the notes as four-four measure, these lines have all the same structure, each line being sharply divided by a cæsural pause into two half-lines, and each half-line having two accented syllables and two (sometimes three) unaccented ones. The two half-lines forming a complete line are bound together by the alliteration, or more properly initial-rhyme, of three (or two) of the accented syllables. The following is an example of the Fornyrthislag stanza, the accented syllables being in italics:

Vreiþr vas *Vingþōrr*, | *es vaknaþi*
ok sīns hamars | *of saknaþi*;
skegg nam *hrista*, | *skor* nam *dýja*,
rēþ Jarþar burr | *umb at þreifask*.

In the second form, the Ljothahattr (“Song Measure”), the first and third line of each stanza are as just described, but the second and fourth are shorter, have no cæsural pause, have three accented syllables, and regularly two initial-rhymed accented syllables, for which reason I have occasionally referred to Ljothahattr as four-three measure. The following is an example:

Ar skal rīsa | *sās annars vill*

*fē eþa fiȝr hafa;
 liggjandi ulfr | sjaldan lāer of getr
 nē sofandi maþr sigr.*

In the third and least commonly used form, the Malahattr (“Speech Measure”), a younger verse-form than either of the other two, each line of the four-line stanza is divided into two half-lines by a cæsural pause, each half line having two accented syllables and three (sometimes four) unaccented ones; the initial rhyme is as in the Fornyrthislag. The following is an example:

*Horsk vas hūsfreyja, | hugþi at mannviti,
 lag heyrþi orþa, | hvat ā laun māeltu;
 þā vas vant vitri, | vildi þeim hjaþa:
 skyldu of sāe sigla, | en sjølf nē kvamskat.*

A poem in Fornyrthislag is normally entitled *-kvitha* (*Thrymskvitha*, *Guthrunarkvitha*, etc.), which for convenience I have rendered as “lay,” while a poem in Ljothahattr is entitled *-mol* (*Grimnismol*, *Skirnismol*, etc.), which I have rendered as “ballad.” It is difficult to find any distinction other than metrical between the two terms, although it is clear that one originally existed.

Variations frequently appear in all three kinds of verse, and these I have attempted to indicate through the rhythm of the translation. In order to preserve so far as possible the effect of the Eddic verse, I have adhered, in making the English version, to certain of the fundamental rules governing the Norse line and stanza formations. The number of lines to each stanza conforms to what seems the best guess as to the original, and I have consistently retained the number of accented syllables. In translating from a highly inflected language into one depending largely on the use of subsidiary words, it has, however, been necessary to employ considerable freedom as to the number of unaccented syllables in a line. The initial-rhyme is generally confined to two accented syllables in each line. As in the original, all initial vowels are allowed to rhyme interchangeably, but I have disregarded the rule which lets certain groups of consonants rhyme only with themselves (e.g., I have allowed initial *s* or *st* to rhyme with *sk* or *sl*). In general, I have sought to preserve the effect of the original form whenever possible without an undue sacrifice of accuracy. For purposes of comparison, the translations of the three stanzas just given are here included:

Fornyrthislag:

*Wild was Vingthor | when he awoke,
 And when his mighty | hammer he missed;
 He shook his beard, | his hair was bristling,
 To groping set | the son of Jorth.*

Ljothahattr:

*He must early go forth | who fain the blood
 Or the goods of another would get;
 The wolf that lies idle | shall win little meat,
 Or the sleeping man success.*

Malahattr:

Wise was the woman, | she *fain* would use wisdom,
She saw well what *meant* | all they *said* in secret;
From her *heart* it was *hid* | how *help* she might render,
The sea they should sail, | while *herself* she should go not.

Proper Names

The forms in which the proper names appear in this translation will undoubtedly perplex and annoy those who have become accustomed to one or another of the current methods of anglicising Old Norse names. The nominative ending -r it has seemed best to, omit after consonants, although it has been retained after vowels; in Baldr the final -r is a part of the stem and is of course retained. I have rendered the Norse þ by “th” throughout, instead of spasmodically by “d,” as in many texts: e.g., Othin instead of Odin. For the Norse ø I have used its equivalent, “ö,” e.g., Völund; for the q I have used “o” and not “a,” e.g., Voluspo, not Valuspa or Voluspa. To avoid confusion with accents the long vowel marks of the Icelandic are consistently omitted, as likewise in modern Icelandic proper names. The index at the end of the book indicates the pronunciation in each case.

Conclusion

That this translation may be of some value to those who can read the poems of the *Edda* in the original language I earnestly hope. Still more do I wish that it may lead a few who hitherto have given little thought to the Old Norse language and literature to master the tongue for themselves. But far above either of these I place the hope that this English version may give to some, who have known little of the ancient traditions of what is after all their own race, a clearer insight into the glories of that extraordinary past, and that I may through this medium be able to bring to others a small part of the delight which I myself have found in the poems of the *Poetic Edda*.

Volume I.
Lays of the Gods

Voluspo

The Wise-Woman's Prophecy

Introductory Note

At the beginning of the collection in the *Codex Regius* stands the *Voluspo*, the most famous and important, as it is likewise the most debated, of all the Eddic poems. Another version of it is found in a huge miscellaneous compilation of about the year 1300, the *Hauksbok*, and many stanzas are included in the *Prose Edda* of Snorri Sturluson. The order of the stanzas in the *Hauksbok* version differs materially from that in the *Codex Regius*, and in the published editions many experiments have been attempted in further rearrangements. On the whole, however, and allowing for certain interpolations, the order of the stanzas in the *Codex Regius* seems more logical than any of the wholesale "improvements" which have been undertaken.

The general plan of the *Voluspo* is fairly clear. Othin, chief of the gods, always conscious of impending disaster and eager for knowledge, calls on a certain "Volva," or wise-woman, presumably bidding her rise from the grave. She first tells him of the past, of the creation of the world, the beginning of years, the origin of the dwarfs (at this point there is a clearly interpolated catalogue of dwarfs' names, stanzas 10–16), of the first man and woman, of the world-ash Yggdrasil, and of the first war, between the gods and the Vanir, or, in Anglicized form, the Wanes. Then, in stanzas 27–29, as a further proof of her wisdom, she discloses some of Othin's own secrets and the details of his search for knowledge. Rewarded by Othin for what she has thus far told (stanza 30), she then turns to the real prophesy, the disclosure of the final destruction of the gods. This final battle, in which fire and flood overwhelm heaven and earth as the gods fight with their enemies, is the great fact in Norse mythology; the phrase describing it, *ragna rök*, "the fate of the gods," has become familiar, by confusion with the word *rökkr*, "twilight," in the German *Göterdämmerung*. The wise-woman tells of the Valkyries who bring the slain warriors to support Othin and the other gods in the battle, of the slaying of Baldr, best and fairest of the gods, through the wiles of Loki, of the enemies of the gods, of the summons to battle on both sides, and of the mighty struggle, till Othin is slain, and "fire leaps high about heaven itself" (stanzas 31–58). But this is not all. A new and beautiful world is to rise on the ruins of the old; Baldr comes back, and "fields unsowed bear ripened fruit" (stanzas 59–66).

This final passage, in particular, has caused wide differences of opinion as to the date and character of the poem. That the poet was heathen and not Christian seems almost beyond dispute; there is an intensity and vividness in almost every stanza which no archaizing

Christian could possibly have achieved. On the other hand, the evidences of Christian influence are sufficiently striking to outweigh the arguments of Finnur Jonsson, Müllenhoff and others who maintain that the *Voluspo* is purely a product of heathendom. The roving Norsemen of the tenth century, very few of whom had as yet accepted Christianity, were nevertheless in close contact with Celtic races which had already been converted, and in many ways the Celtic influence was strongly felt. It seems likely, then, that the *Voluspo* was the work of a poet living chiefly in Iceland, though possibly in the "Western Isles," in the middle of the tenth century, a vigorous believer in the old gods, and yet with an imagination active enough to be touched by the vague tales of a different religion emanating from his neighbor Celts.

How much the poem was altered during the two hundred years between its composition and its first being committed to writing is largely a matter of guesswork, but, allowing for such an obvious interpolation as the catalogue of dwarfs, and for occasional lesser errors, it seems quite needless to assume such great changes as many editors do. The poem was certainly not composed to tell a story with which its early hearers were quite familiar; the lack of continuity which baffles modern readers presumably did not trouble them in the least. It is, in effect, a series of gigantic pictures, put into words with a directness and sureness which bespeak the poet of genius. It is only after the reader, with the help of the many notes, has familiarized himself with the names and incidents involved that he can begin to understand the effect which this magnificent poem must have produced on those who not only understood but believed it.

1. Hljōþs biþk allar	Hearing I ask
helgar kindir,	from the holy races,
meiri ok minni,	From Heimdall's sons,
mōgu Heimdallar:	both high and low;
vildu, Valfōþr!	Thou wilt, Valfather,
at vel teljak	that well I relate
forn spjōll fira	Old tales I remember
þaus fremst of mank.	of men long ago.

A few editors, following Bugge, in an effort to clarify the poem, place stanzas 22, 28 and 30 before stanzas 1–20, but the arrangement in both manuscripts, followed here, seems logical. In stanza 1 the Volva, or wise-woman, called upon by Othin, answers him and demands a hearing. Evidently she belongs to the race of the giants (cf. stanza 2), and thus speaks to Othin unwillingly, being compelled to do so by his magic power. *Holy*: omitted in *Regius*; the phrase "holy races" probably means little more than mankind in general. *Heimdall*: the watchman of the gods; cf. stanza 46 and note. Why mankind should be referred to as Heimdall's sons is uncertain, and the phrase has caused much perplexity. Heimdall seems

to have had various at tributes, and in the Rigsthula, wherein a certain Rig appears as the ancestor of the three great classes of men, a fourteenth century annotator identifies Rig with Heimdall, on what authority we do not know, for the Rig of the poem seems much more like Othin (cf. Rigsthula, introductory prose and note). *Valfather* ("Father of the Slain"): Othin, chief of the gods, so called because the slain warriors were brought to him at Valhall ("Hall of the Slain") by the Valkyries ("Choosers of the Slain").

2.	Ek man jōtna	I remember yet
	ā̃r of borna,	the giants of yore,
	þās forþum mik	Who gave me bread
	fōdda hōfþu,	in the days gone by;
	niu mank heima,	Nine worlds I knew,
	niu īviþi,	the nine in the tree
	mjōtviþ mæ̃ran	With mighty roots
	fyr mold neþan.	beneath the mold.

Nine worlds: the worlds of the gods (Asgarth), of the Wanes (Vanaheim, cf. stanza 21 and note), of the elves (Alfheim), of men (Mithgarth), of the giants (Jotunheim), of fire (Muspellsheim, cf. stanza 47 and note), of the dark elves (Svartalfaheim), of the dead (Niflheim), and presumably of the dwarfs (perhaps Nithavellir, cf. stanza 37 and note, but the ninth world is uncertain). *The tree*: the world-ash Yggdrasil, symbolizing the universe; cf. *Grimnismol*, 29–35 and notes, wherein Yggdrasil is described at length.

3.	Ā̃r vas alda	Of old was the age
	þars Ymir bygþi,	when Ymir lived;
	vasa sandr nē sār	Sea nor cool waves
	nē svalar unnir;	nor sand there were;
	jōrþ fannsk ā̃va	Earth had not been,
	nē upphiminn,	nor heaven above,
	gap vas ginnunga,	But a yawning gap,
	en gras hvergi.	and grass nowhere.

Ymir: the giant out of whose body the gods made the world; cf. *Vafþruthnismol*, 21. In this

stanza as quoted in Snorri's *Edda* the first line runs: "Of old was the age ere aught there was." *Yawning gap*: this phrase, "Ginnunga-gap," is sometimes used as a proper name.

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| <p>4. Āþr Burs synir
 bjǫþum of ypþu,
 þeir es miþgarþ
 māran skōpu;
 sōl skein sunnan
 ā salar steina,
 þa vas grund groin
 grōnum lauki.</p> | <p>Then Bur's sons lifted
 the level land,
 Mithgarth the mighty
 there they made;
 The sun from the south
 warmed the stones of earth,
 And green was the ground
 with growing leeks.</p> |
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Bur's sons: Othin, Vili, and Ve. Of Bur we know only that his wife was Bestla, daughter of Bolthorn; cf. *Hovamol*, 141. Vili and Ve are mentioned by name in the Eddic poems only in *Lokasenna*, 26. *Mithgarth* ("Middle Dwelling"): the world of men. *Leeks*: the leek was often used as the symbol of fine growth (cf. *Guthrunarkvitha* I, 17), and it was also supposed to have magic power (cf. *Sigrdrifumol*, 7).

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| <p>5. Sōl varp sunnan,
 sinni māna,
 hendi hōgri
 umb himinjǫþur;
 sōl nē vissi,
 hvar sali ātti,
 māni nē vissi,
 hvat megins ātti,
 stjornur nē vissu,
 hvar staþi ǫttu.</p> | <p>The sun, the sister
 of the moon, from the south
 Her right hand cast
 over heaven's rim;
 No knowledge she had
 where her home should be,
 The moon knew not
 what might was his,
 The stars knew not
 where their stations were.</p> |
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Various editors have regarded this stanza as interpolated; Hoffory thinks it describes the northern summer night in which the sun does not set. Lines 3–5 are quoted by Snorri. In

the manuscripts line 4 follows line 5. Regarding the sun and moon as daughter and son of Mundilferi, cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 23 and note, and *Grimnismol*, 37 and note.

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| <p>6. Gengu regin ǫll
 ā røkstōla,
 ginnheilug goṑ,
 ok of þat gættusk:
 nōtt ok niṑjum
 nōfn of gōfu,
 morgin hētu
 ok miṑjan dag,
 undorn ok aptan,
 ōrum at telja.</p> | <p>Then sought the gods
 their assembly-seats,
 The holy ones,
 and council held;
 Names then gave they
 to noon and twilight,
 Morning they named,
 and the waning moon,
 Night and evening,
 the years to number.</p> |
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Possibly an interpolation, but there seems no strong reason for assuming this. Lines 1–2 are identical with lines 1–2 of stanza 9, and line 2 may have been inserted here from that later stanza.

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| <p>7. Hittusk æsir
 ā Iṑavelli
 þeirs hōrg ok hof
 hōtimbruṑu;
 afla lōgṑu,
 auṑ smīṑuṑu,
 tangir skōṑu
 ok tōl gōrṑu.</p> | <p>At Ithavoll met
 the mighty gods,
 Shrines and temples
 they timbered high;
 Forges they set, and
 they smithied ore,
 Tongs they wrought,
 and tools they fashioned.</p> |
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Ithavoll (“Field of Deeds”?): mentioned only here and in stanza 60 as the meeting-place of the gods; it appears in no other connection.

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| <p>8. Tefldu ī tūni,
 teitir vōru,
 — var þeim vættergis
 vant ōr golli—
 unz þrīar kvōmu
 þursa meýjar,
 āmōtkar mjōk,
 ōr jōtunheimum.</p> | <p>In their dwellings at peace
 they played at tables,
 Of gold no lack
 did the gods then know,—
 Till thither came
 up giant-maids three,
 Huge of might,
 out of Jotunheim.</p> |
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Tables: the exact nature of this game, and whether it more closely resembled chess or checkers, has been made the subject of a 400-page treatise, Willard Fiske's "Chess in Iceland." *Giant-maids:* perhaps the three great Norns, corresponding to the three fates; cf. stanza 20 and note. Possibly, however, something has been lost after this stanza, and the missing passage, replaced by the catalogue of the dwarfs (stanzas 9–16), may have explained the "giant-maids" otherwise than as Norns. In *Vafþruthnismol*, 49, the Norms (this time "three throngs" instead of simply "three") are spoken of as giant-maidens; *Fafnismol*, 13, indicates the existence of many lesser Norns, belonging to various races. *Jotunheim:* the world of the giants.

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| <p>9. [Gengu regin ǫll
 ā rōkstōla,
 ginnheilug goþ,
 ok of þat gættusk:
 hverr skyldi dverga
 drōtt of skepja
 ōr Brimis blōþi
 ok ōr Bláins leggjum.</p> | <p>Then sought the gods
 their assembly-seats,
 The holy ones,
 and council held,
 To find who should raise
 the race of dwarfs
 Out of Brimir's blood
 and the legs of Blain.</p> |
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Here apparently begins the interpolated catalogue of the dwarfs, running through stanza 16; possibly, however, the interpolated section does not begin before stanza 11. Snorri quotes practically the entire section, the names appearing in a somewhat changed order. *Brimir* and *Blain:* nothing is known of these two giants, and it has been suggested that both are names for Ymir (cf. stanza 3). Brimir, however, appears in stanza 37 in connection with the home of the dwarfs. Some editors treat the words as common rather than proper nouns,

Brimir meaning “the bloody moisture” and Blain being of uncertain significance.

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| 10. Þar vas Mōtsognir
mæztr of orþinn
dverga allra,
en Durinn annarr;
þeir mannlikun
morg um gorpū
dvergar ī jorpū,
sem Durinn sagði. | There was Motsognir
the mightiest made
Of all the dwarfs,
and Durin next;
Many a likeness
of men they made,
The dwarfs in the earth,
as Durin said. |
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Very few of the dwarfs named in this and the following stanzas are mentioned elsewhere. It is not clear why Durin should have been singled out as authority for the list. The occasional repetitions suggest that not all the stanzas of the catalogue came from the same source. Most of the names presumably had some definite significance, as Northri, Suthri, Austri, and Vestri (“North,” “South,” “East,” and “West”), Althjof (“Mighty Thief”), Mjothvitnir (“Mead-Wolf”), Gandalf (“Magic Elf”), Vindalf (“Wind Elf”), Rathwith (“Swift in Counsel”), Eikinskjalði (“Oak Shield”), etc., but in many cases the interpretations are sheer guesswork.

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| 11. Nyi ok Niði,
Norþri ok Suþri,
Austri ok Vestri,
Alþjófr, Dvalinn,
Nār ok Nāinn,
Nīpingr, Dāinn,
Bīfurr, Bōfurr,
Bōmburr, Nōri,
Ānn ok Ōnarr,
Aī, Mjōþvitnir. | Nyi and Nithi,
Northri and Suthri,
Austri and Vestri,
Althjof, Dvalin,
Nar and Nain,
Niping, Dain,
Bifur, Bofur,
Bombur, Nori,
An and Onar,
Ai, Mjothvitnir. |
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| <p>12. Viggr ok Gandalf,
 Vindalfr, Þraïnn,
 Þekkr ok Þōrinn,
 Þrōr, Vittr ok Littr,
 Nȳr ok Nȳrāþr,
 nū hefk dverga
 — Reginn ok Rāþsviþr, —
 rētt of talþa.</p> | <p>Vigg and Gandalf,
 Vindalf, Thrain,
 Thekk and Thorin,
 Thror, Vit and Lit,
 Nyr and Nyrath, —
 now have I told —
 Regin and Rathsvith —
 the list aright.</p> |
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The order of the lines in this and the succeeding four stanzas varies greatly in the manuscripts and editions, and the names likewise appear in many forms. *Regin*: probably not identical with Regin the son of Hreithmar, who plays an important part in the *Reginmol* and *Fafnismol*, but cf. note on *Reginmol*, introductory prose.

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| <p>13. Fīli, Kīli,
 Fundinn, Nāli,
 Heptifili,
 Hannarr, Sviurr,
 Frār, Hornbori,
 Frægr ok Lōni,
 Aurvangr, Jari,
 Eikinskjalði.</p> | <p>Fili, Kili,
 Fundin, Nali,
 Heptifili,
 Hannar, Sviur,
 Frar, Hornbori,
 Fræg and Loni,
 Aurvang, Jari,
 Eikinskjalði.</p> |
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| <p>14. Māl es dverga
 ī Dvalins liþi
 ljōna kindum
 til Lofars telja;
 þeir es sōttu
 frā salar steini</p> | <p>The race of the dwarfs
 in Dvalin's throng
 Down to Lofar
 the list must I tell;
 The rocks they left,
 and through wet lands</p> |
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aurvanga sjöt |
til jöruvalla.

They sought a home |
in the fields of sand.

Dvalin: in *Hovamol*, 144, Dvalin seems to have given magic runes to the dwarfs, probably accounting for their skill in craftsmanship, while in *Fafnismol*, 13, he is mentioned as the father of some of the lesser Norns. The story that some of the dwarfs left the rocks and mountains to find a new home on the sands is mentioned, but unexplained, in Snorri's Edda; of *Lofar* we know only that he was descended from these wanderers.

15. Þar vas Draupnir |
ok Dolgþrasir,
Hōr, Haugspori, |
Hlēvangr, Gloinn,
Dōri, Ōri, |
Dūfr, Andvari,
Skirfir, Virfir, |
Skāfiþr, Aï.

There were Draupnir |
and Dolgthrasir,
Hor, Haugspori, |
Hlevang, Gloin,
Dori, Ori, |
Duf, Andvari,
Skirfir, Virfir, |
Skafith, Ai.

Andvari: this dwarf appears prominently in the *Reginismol*, which tells how the god Loki treacherously robbed him of his wealth; the curse which he laid on his treasure brought about the deaths of Sigurth, Gunnar, Atli, and many others.

16. Alfr ok Yngvi, |
Eikinskjaldi,
Fjalarr ok Frosti, |
Fiþr ok Ginnarr;
þat mun æ uppi, |
meþan ǫld lifir,
langniþja tal |
til Lofars hafat.]

Alf and Yngvi, |
Eikinskjaldi,
Fjalar and Frosti, |
Fith and Ginnar;
So for all time |
shall the tale be known,
The list of all |
the forbears of Lofar.

17. Unz þrīr kvōmu	Then from the throng
ōr þvī līpi	did three come forth,
oḟlgir ok oḟstkir	From the home of the gods,
æsir at hūmi;	the mighty and gracious;
fundu ā landi	Two without fate
litt megandi	on the land they found,
Ask ok Emblu	Ask and Embla,
ørloḡlausa.	empty of might.

Here the poem resumes its course after the interpolated section. Probably, however, something has been lost, for there is no apparent connection between the three giant-maids of stanza 8 and the three gods, Othin, Hönir and Lothur, who in stanza 17 go forth to create man and woman. The word “three” in stanzas 9 and 17 very likely confused some early reciter, or perhaps the compiler himself. *Ask* and *Embla*: ash and elm; Snorri gives them simply as the names of the first man and woman, but says that the gods made this pair out of trees.

18. Qnd nē oḡttu,	Soul they had not,
ōþ nē hoḟþu,	sense they had not,
lō nē læti	Heat nor motion,
nē litu gōþa;	nor goodly hue;
qnd gaf Oþinn,	Soul gave Othin,
ōþ gaf Hōnir,	sense gave Hönir,
lō gaf Lōþurr	Heat gave Lothur
ok litu gōþa.	and goodly hue.

Hōnir: little is known of this god, save that he occasionally appears in the poems in company with Othin and Loki, and that he survives the destruction, assuming in the new age the gift of prophesy (cf. stanza 63). He was given by the gods as a hostage to the Waners after their war, in exchange for Njorth (cf. stanza 21 and note). *Lothur*: apparently an older name for Loki, the treacherous but ingenious son of Laufey, whose divinity Snorri regards as somewhat doubtful. He was adopted by Othin, who subsequently had good reason to regret it. Loki probably represents the blending of two originally distinct figures, one of

them an old fire-god, hence his gift of heat to the newly created pair.

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| <p>19. Ask veitk standa,
 heitir Yggdrasils,
 hōr þaþmr ausinn
 hvīta auri;
 þaþan koma dōggvar
 es ī dali falla,
 stendr æ of grōnn
 Urþar brunni.</p> | <p>An ash I know,
 Yggdrasil its name,
 With water white
 is the great tree wet;
 Thence come the dews
 that fall in the dales,
 Green by Urth's well
 does it ever grow.</p> |
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Yggdrasil: cf. stanza 2 and note, and *Grimnismol*, 29–35 and notes. *Urth* (“The Past”): one of the three great Norns. The world-ash is kept green by being sprinkled with the marvelous healing water from her well.

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| <p>20. Þaþan koma meyjar,
 margs vitandi
 þriar ōr þeim sal
 es und þolli stendr;
 [Urþ hētu eina,
 aþra Verþandi,
 — skōru ā skīpi —
 Skuld ena þriþju;]
 þær lōg lōgþu,
 þær līf kuru
 alda bōrnum,
 ørlōg seggja.</p> | <p>Thence come the maidens
 mighty in wisdom,
 Three from the dwelling
 down 'neath the tree;
 Urth is one named,
 Verthandi the next,—
 On the wood they scored,—
 and Skuld the third.
 Laws they made there,
 and life allotted
 To the sons of men,
 and set their fates.</p> |
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The maidens: the three Norns; possibly this stanza should follow stanza 8. *Dwelling*: *Regius* has “sæ” (sea) instead of “sal” (hall, home), and many editors have followed this read-

ing, although Snorri's prose paraphrase indicates "sal." *Urth*, *Verthandi* and *Skuld*: "Past," "Present" and "Future." *Wood*, etc.: the magic signs (runes) controlling the destinies of men were cut on pieces of wood. Lines 3–4 are probably interpolations from some other account of the Norns.

21. Þat <i>mank</i> folkvīg	The war I remember,
fyrst ī heimi,	the first in the world,
er Gollveigu	When the gods with spears
geirum studdu	had smitten Gollveig,
ok ī hǫllo Hārs	And in the hall
hāna brendu,	of Hor had burned her,
þrysva brendu	Three times burned,
þrysva borna,	and three times born,
[opt ősjaldan — :	Oft and again,
þō enn lifir.]	yet ever she lives.

This follows stanza 20 in *Regius*; in the *Hauksbok* version stanzas 25, 26, 27, 40, and 41 come between stanzas 20 and 21. Editors have attempted all sorts of rearrangements. *The war*: the first war was that between the gods and the Wanes. The cult of the Wanes (Vanir) seems to have originated among the seafaring folk of the Baltic and the southern shores of the North Sea, and to have spread thence into Norway in opposition to the worship of the older gods; hence the "war." Finally the two types of divinities were worshipped in common; hence the treaty which ended the war with the exchange of hostages. Chief among the Wanes were Njorth and his children, Freyr and Freyja, all of whom became conspicuous among the gods. Beyond this we know little of the Wanes, who seem originally to have been water-deities. *I remember*: the manuscripts have "she remembers," but the Volva is apparently still speaking of her own memories, as in stanza 2. *Gollveig* ("Gold-Might"): apparently the first of the Wanes to come among the gods, her ill treatment being the immediate cause of the war. Müllenhoff maintains that Gollveig is another name for Freyja. Lines 5–6, one or both of them probably interpolated, seem to symbolize the refining of gold by fire. *Hor* ("The High One"): Othin.

22. Heiþi hētu	Heith they named her
hvars hūsa kvam,	who sought their home,

vølu velspaa,	The wide-seeing witch,
vitti ganda;	in magic wise;
seiþ hvars kunni,	Minds she bewitched
seiþ hug leikinn,	that were moved by her magic,
æ vas angan	To evil women
illrar brūþar.	a joy she was.

Heith (“Shining One?”): a name often applied to wise women and prophetesses. The application of this stanza to Gollveig is far from clear, though the reference may be to the magic and destructive power of gold. It is also possible that the stanza is an interpolation. Bugge maintains that it applies to the Volva who is reciting the poem, and makes it the opening stanza, following it with stanzas 28 and 30, and then going on with stanzas 1 ff. The text of line 2 is obscure, and has been variously emended.

23. Fleygþi Ōþinn	On the host his spear
ok ī folk um skaut:	did Othin hurl,
þat vas enn folkvīg	Then in the world
fyrst ī heimi;	did war first come;
brotinn vas borþveggr	The wall that girdled
borgar āsa,	the gods was broken,
knōttu vanir vīgskō	And the field by the warlike
vøllu sporna.	Wanes was trodden.

This stanza and stanza 24 have been transposed from the order in the manuscripts, for the former describes the battle and the victory of the Wanes, after which the gods took council, debating whether to pay tribute to the victors, or to admit them, as was finally done, to equal rights of worship.

24. Gengu regin ǫll	Then sought the gods
ā røkstōla,	their assembly-seats,
ginnheilug goþ,	The holy ones,
ok of þat gættusk:	and council held,

hvārt skyldu æsir |
 afrāþ gjalda
 eþa skyldu goþ ǫll |
 gildi eiga.

Whether the gods |
 should tribute give,
 Or to all alike |
 should worship belong.

25. Gengu regin ǫll |
 ā røkstōla,
 ginnheilug goþ, |
 ok of þat gættusk:
 hverr lopt hefþi |
 lævi blandit
 eþa ætt jǫtuns |
 Ōþs mey gefna.

Then sought the gods |
 their assembly-seats,
 The holy ones, |
 and council held,
 To find who with venom |
 the air had filled,
 Or had given Oth's bride |
 to the giants' brood.

Possibly, as Finn Magnusen long ago suggested, there is something lost after stanza 24, but it was not the custom of the Eddic poets to supply transitions which their hearers could generally be counted on to understand. The story referred to in stanzas 25–26 (both quoted by Snorri) is that of the rebuilding of Asgarth after its destruction by the Wanes. The gods employed a giant as builder, who demanded as his reward the sun and moon, and the goddess Freyja for his wife. The gods, terrified by the rapid progress of the work, forced Loki, who had advised the bargain, to delay the giant by a trick, so that the work was not finished in the stipulated time (cf. *Grimnismol*, 44, note). The enraged giant then threatened the gods, whereupon Thor slew him. *Oth's bride*: Freyja; of *Oth* little is known beyond the fact that Snorri refers to him as a man who “went away on long journeys.”

26. Þōrr einn þar vā |
 þrunginn mōþi,
 — hann sjaldan sitr |
 es slíkt of fregn —:
 ā gengusk eiþar, |
 orþ ok sōri,

In swelling rage |
 then rose up Thor,—
 Seldom he sits |
 when he such things hears,—
 And the oaths were broken, |
 the words and bonds,

mōl ǫll meginlig |
es ā meþal fōru.

The mighty pledges |
between them made.

Thor: the thunder-god, son of Othin and Jorth (Earth) cf. particularly *Harbarthsljóth* and *Thrymskvitha*, passim. *Oaths*, etc.: the gods, by violating their oaths to the giant who rebuilt Asgarth, aroused the undying hatred of the giants' race, and thus the giants were among their enemies in the final battle.

27. Veitk Heimdallar |
hljōþ of folgit
und heiþvǫnum |
helgum baþmi;
ā sēk ausask |
aurgum forsi
af veþi Valfǫþrs: |
vituþ enn eþa hvat?

I know of the horn |
of Heimdall, hidden
Under the high-reaching |
holy tree;
On it there pours |
from Valfather's pledge
A mighty stream: |
would you know yet more?

Here the Volva turns from her memories of the past to a statement of some of Othin's own secrets in his eternal search for knowledge (stanzas 27–29). Bugge puts this stanza after stanza 29. *The horn of Heimdall*: the Gjallarhorn ("Shrieking Horn"), with which Heimdall, watchman of the gods, will summon them to the last battle. Till that time the horn is buried under Yggdrasil. *Valfather's pledge*: Othin's eye (the sun?), which he gave to the water-spirit Mimir (or Mim) in exchange for the latter's wisdom. It appears here and in stanza 29 as a drinking-vessel, from which Mimir drinks the magic mead, and from which he pours water on the ash Yggdrasil. Othin's sacrifice of his eye in order to gain knowledge of his final doom is one of the series of disasters leading up to the destruction of the gods. There were several differing versions of the story of Othin's relations with Mimir; another one, quite incompatible with this, appears in stanza 47. In the manuscripts *I know* and *I see* appear as "she knows" and "she sees" (cf. note on 21).

28. Ein satk ūti, |
es enn aldni kvam
yggjungr āsa |
ok ī augu leit:

Alone I sat |
when the Old One sought me,
The terror of gods, |
and gazed in mine eyes:

“hvers fregniþ mik, |
 hvī freistiþ mīn?
 allt veitk, Ōþinn! |
 hvar auga falt.”

“What hast thou to ask? |
 why comest thou hither?
 Othin, I know |
 where thine eye is hidden.”

The *Hauksbok* version omits all of stanzas 28–34, stanza 27 being there followed by stanzas 40 and 41. *Regius* indicates stanzas 28 and 29 as a single stanza. Bugge puts stanza 28 after stanza 22, as the second stanza of his reconstructed poem. The Volva here addresses Othin directly, intimating that, although he has not told her, she knows why he has come to her, and what he has already suffered in his search for knowledge regarding his doom. Her reiterated “would you know yet more?” seems to mean: “I have proved my wisdom by telling of the past and of your own secrets; is it your will that I tell likewise of the fate in store for you?” *The Old One*: Othin.

29. Veit ek Ōþins |
 auga folgit
 ī enom mæra |
 Mīmis brunni;
 drekkur mjǫþ Mīmir |
 morgin hverjan
 af veþi Valfǫþrs: |
 vituþ enn eþa hvat?

I know where Othin's |
 eye is hidden,
 Deep in the wide-famed |
 well of Mimir;
 Mead from the pledge |
 of Othin each morn
 Does Mimir drink: |
 would you know yet more?

The first line, not in either manuscript, is a conjectural emendation based on Snorri's paraphrase. Bugge puts this stanza after stanza 20.

30. Valþi Herfǫþr |
 hringa ok men;
 fekk spjǫll spaklig |
 ok spǫ ganda.
 . . .

Necklaces had I |
 and rings from Heerfather,
 Wise was my speech |
 and my magic wisdom;
 . . .

sāk vitt ok vīt |
of verǫld hverja.

Widely I saw |
over all the worlds.

This is apparently the transitional stanza, in which the Volva, rewarded by Othin for her knowledge of the past (stanzas 1–29), is induced to proceed with her real prophecy (stanzas 31–66). Some editors turn the stanza into the third person, making it a narrative link. Bugge, on the other hand, puts it after stanza 28 as the third stanza of the poem. No lacuna is indicated in the manuscripts, and editors have attempted various emendations. *Heerfather* (“Father of the Host”): Othin.

31. Sāk valkyrjur |
vīt of komnar,
gǫrvar at rīpa |
til Gotþjǫðar:
Skuld helt skildi, |
en Skǫgul ǫnnur,
Guþr, Hildr, Gǫndul |
ok Geirskǫgul.
[Nū ’ru talþar |
nǫnnur Herjans,
gǫrvar at rīpa |
grund valkyrjur.]

On all sides saw I |
Valkyries assemble,
Ready to ride |
to the ranks of the gods;
Skuld bore the shield, |
and Skogul rode next,
Guth, Hild, Gondul, |
and Geirskogul.
Of Herjan’s maidens |
the list have ye heard,
Valkyries ready |
to ride o’er the earth.

Valkyries: these “Choosers of the Slain” (cf. stanza 1, note) bring the bravest warriors killed in battle to Valhall, in order to re-enforce the gods for their final struggle. They are also called “Wish-Maidens,” as the fulfillers of Othin’s wishes. The conception of the supernatural warrior-maiden was presumably brought to Scandinavia in very early times from the South-Germanic races, and later it was interwoven with the likewise South-Germanic tradition of the swan-maiden. A third complication developed when the originally quite human women of the hero-legends were endowed with the qualities of both Valkyries and swan-maidens, as in the cases of Brynhild (cf. *Gripisspo*, introductory note), Svava (cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, prose after stanza 5 and note) and Sigrun (cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 17 and note). The list of names here given may be an interpolation; a quite different list is given in *Grimnismol*, 36. *Ranks of the gods:* some editors regard the word thus translated as a specific place name. *Herjan* (“Leader of Hosts”): Othin. It is worth noting that the

name *Hild* ("Warrior") is the basis of Bryn-hild ("Warrior in Mail Coat").

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>32. Ek sǫ Baldri,
 blōþgum tīvur,
 Ōþins barni,
 ørløg folgin:
 stōþ of vaxinn
 vøllum hǣri
 mǣr ok mjøk fagr
 † mistilteinn.</p> | <p>I saw for Baldr,
 the bleeding god,
 The son of Othin,
 his destiny set:
 Famous and fair
 in the lofty fields,
 Full grown in strength
 the mistletoe stood.</p> |
|---|--|

Baldr: The death of Baldr, the son of Othin and Frigg, was the first of the great disasters to the gods. The story is fully told by Snorri. Frigg had demanded of all created things, saving only the mistletoe, which she thought too weak to be worth troubling about, an oath that they would not harm Baldr. Thus it came to be a sport for the gods to hurl weapons at Baldr, who, of course, was totally unharmed thereby. Loki, the trouble-maker, brought the mistletoe to Baldr's blind brother, Hoth, and guided his hand in hurling the twig. Baldr was slain, and grief came upon all the gods. Cf. *Baldrs Draumar*.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>33. Varþ af meiþi
 er mǣr sýndisk,
 harmflaug hættlig:
 Høþr nam skjōta;
 Baldrs brōþir vas
 of borinn snimma,
 sǫ nam Ōþins sunr
 einnǣttr vega.</p> | <p>From the branch which seemed
 so slender and fair
 Came a harmful shaft
 that Hoth should hurl;
 But the brother of Baldr
 was born ere long,
 And one night old
 fought Othin's son.</p> |
|---|--|

The lines in this and the following stanza have been combined in various ways by editors, lacunae having been freely conjectured, but the manuscript version seems clear enough. *The brother of Baldr*: Vali, whom Othin begot expressly to avenge Baldr's death. The day

after his birth he fought and slew Hoth.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>34. Þō hendr æva
 nē hōfoþ kembþi,
 āþr bar ā bāl
 Baldrs andskota;
 en Frigg of grēt
 ī Fensolum
 vō Valhallar:
 vituþ enn eþa hvat?</p> | <p>His hands he washed not,
 his hair he combed not,
 Till he bore to the bale-blaze
 Baldr's foe.
 But in Fensalir
 did Frigg weep sore
 For Valhall's need:
 would you know yet more?</p> |
|---|---|

Frigg: Othin's wife. Some scholars have regarded her as a solar myth, calling her the sun-goddess, and pointing out that her home in *Fensalir* ("the sea-halls") symbolizes the daily setting of the sun beneath the ocean horizon.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>35. Hapt sāk liggja
 und hvera lundi
 lægjarns líki
 Loka āþekkjan;
 þar sitr Sigyn,
 þeygi of sīnum
 ver vel glýjuþ:
 vituþ enn eþa hvat?</p> | <p>One did I see
 in the wet woods bound,
 A lover of ill,
 and to Loki like;
 By his side does Sigyn
 sit, nor is glad
 To see her mate:
 would you know yet more?</p> |
|--|---|

The translation here follows the *Regius* version. The *Hauksbok* has the same final two lines, but in place of the first pair has,

I know that Vali | his brother gnawed,
 With his bowels then | was Loki bound.
 (þā knā Vāla | vígbond snūa,
 heldr vōru harþgōr | hōpt ōr þōrmum.)

Many editors have followed this version of the whole stanza or have included these two lines, often marking them as doubtful, with the four from *Regius*. After the murder of Baldr,

the gods took Loki and bound him to a rock with the bowels of his son Narfi, who had just been torn to pieces by Loki's other son, Vali. A serpent was fastened above Loki's head, and the venom fell upon his face. Loki's wife, Sigyn, sat by him with a basin to catch the venom, but whenever the basin was full, and she went away to empty it, then the venom fell on Loki again, till the earth shook with his struggles. "And there he lies bound till the end." Cf. *Lokasenna*, concluding prose.

36. \bar{O} fellr austan	From the east there pours
of eitrdali	through poisoned vales
söxum ok sverþum:	With swords and daggers
Slīþr heitir sū.	the river Slith.
...	...
...	...

Stanzas 36–39 describe the homes of the enemies of the gods: the giants (36), the dwarfs (37), and the dead in the land of the goddess Hel (38–39). The *Hauksbok* version omits stanzas 36 and 37. *Regius* unites 36 with 37, but most editors have assumed a lacuna. *Slith* ("the Fearful"): a river in the giants' home. The "swords and daggers" may represent the icy cold.

37. Stōþ fyr norþan,	Northward a hall
ā Niþavøllum	in Nithavellir
salr ōr golli	Of gold there rose
Sindra ættar,	for Sindri's race;
en annarr stōþ	And in Okolnir
ā Ōkōlni	another stood,
bjōrsalr jōtuns,	Where the giant Brimir
sā Brimir heitir.	his beer-hall had.

Nithavellir ("the Dark Fields"): a home of the dwarfs. Perhaps the word should be "Nithafjoll" ("the Dark Craggs"). *Sindri*: the great worker in gold among the dwarfs. *Okolnir* ("the Not Cold"): possibly a volcano. *Brimir*: the giant (possibly Ymir) out of whose blood, according to stanza 9, the dwarfs were made; the name here appears to mean simply the

leader of the dwarfs.

38. Sal <i>sāk</i> standa	A hall I saw,
sōlu fjarri	far from the sun,
Nāströndu ā,	On Nastrond it stands,
norþr horfa dyrr;	and the doors face north,
fellu eitrdropar	Venom drops
inn of ljōra,	through the smoke-vent down,
sā 's undinn salr	For around the walls
orma hryggjum.	do serpents wind.

Stanzas 38 and 39 follow stanza 43 in the *Hauksbok* version. Snorri quotes stanzas 38, 39, 40 and 41, though not consecutively. *Nastrond* (“Corpse-Strand”): the land of the dead, ruled by the goddess Hel. Here the wicked undergo tortures. *Smoke vent*: the phrase gives a picture of the Icelandic house, with its opening in the roof serving instead of a chimney.

39. <i>sāk</i> þar vaða	I saw there wading
þunga strauma	through rivers wild
menn meinsvara	Treacherous men
ok morþvarga	and murderers too,
[ok þanns annars glepr	And workers of ill
eyrarūnu];	with the wives of men;
þar sō Nīþhoggr	There Nithhogg sucked
naï framgengna,	the blood of the slain,
sleit vargr vera:	And the wolf tore men;
vituþ enn eða hvat?	would you know yet more?

The stanza is almost certainly in corrupt form. The third line is presumably an interpolation, and is lacking in most of the late, paper manuscripts. Some editors, however, have called lines 1–3 the remains of a full stanza, with the fourth line lacking, and lines 4–5 the remains of another. The stanza depicts the torments of the two worst classes of crim-

inals known to Old Norse morality — oath-breakers and murderers. *Nithhogg* (“the Dread Biter”): the dragon that lies beneath the ash Yggdrasil and gnaws at its roots, thus symbolizing the destructive elements in the universe; cf. *Grimnismol*, 32, 35. *The wolf*: presumably the wolf Fenrir, one of the children of Loki and the giantess Angrbotha (the others being Mithgarthsorm and the goddess Hel), who was chained by the gods with the marvelous chain Gleipnir, fashioned by a dwarf “out of six things: the noise of a cat’s step, the beards of women, the roots of mountains, the nerves of bears, the breath of fishes, and the spittle of birds.” The chaining of Fenrir cost the god Tyr his right hand; cf. stanza 44.

40. Austr sat en aldna	The giantess old
ī Jarnviþi	in Ironwood sat,
ok fōddi þar	In the east, and bore
Fenris kindir;	the brood of Fenrir;
verþr af ǫllum	Among these one
einna nekkverr	in monster’s guise
tungls tjūgari	Was soon to steal
ī trolls hami.	the moon from the sky.

The *Hauksbok* version inserts after stanza 39 the refrain stanza 44, and puts stanzas 40 and 41 between 27 and 21. With this stanza begins the account of the final struggle itself. *The giantess*: her name is nowhere stated, and the only other reference to Ironwood is in *Grimnismol*, 39, in this same connection. The children of this giantess and the wolf Fenrir are the wolves Skoll and Hati, the first of whom steals the sun, the second the moon. Some scholars naturally see here an eclipse myth.

41. Fyllisk fjörvi	There feeds he full
feigra manna,	on the flesh of the dead,
rýþr ragna sjöt	And the home of the gods
rauþum dreyra;	he reddens with gore;
svört verþa sōlskin,	Dark grows the sun,
of sumur eptir	and in summer soon
veþr ǫll vālynd:	Come mighty storms:
vituþ enn eþa hvat?	would you know yet more?

In the third line many editors omit the comma after “sun,” and put one after “soon,” making the two lines run:

Dark grows the sun | in summer soon,
Mighty storms—etc.

Either phenomenon in summer would be sufficiently striking.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>42. Sat þar ā haugi
ok slō hǫrpu
gýgjar hirþir,
† glaþr Eggþēr;
gōl of hōnum
ī gaglviþi
fagrraupr hani
sās Fjalarr heitir.</p> | <p>On a hill there sat,
and smote on his harp,
Eggther the joyous,
the giants' warder;
Above him the cock
in the bird-wood crowed,
Fair and red
did Fjalar stand.</p> |
|--|---|

In the *Hauksbok* version stanzas 42 and 43 stand between stanzas 44 and 38. *Eggther*: this giant, who seems to be the watchman of the giants, as Heimdall is that of the gods and Surt of the dwellers in the fire-world, is not mentioned elsewhere in the poems. *Fjalar*: the cock whose crowing wakes the giants for the final struggle.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>43. Gōl of ōsum
Gollinkambi,
sā vegr hǫlþa
at Herjafǫþrs;
en annarr gelr
fyr jǫrþ neþan,
sōtraupr hani
at sǫlum Heljar.</p> | <p>Then to the gods
crowed Gollinkambi,
He wakes the heroes
in Othin's hall;
And beneath the earth
does another crow,
The rust-red bird
at the bars of Hel.</p> |
|---|---|

Gollinkambi (“Gold-Comb”): the cock who wakes the gods and heroes, as Fjalar does the giants. *The rust-red bird*: the name of this bird, who wakes the people of Hel's domain, is

nowhere stated.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>44. Geyr nū Garmr mjök
 fyr Gnipahelli,
 festr mun slitna,
 en freki rinna!
 fjölp veitk frōþa,
 fram sēk lengra
 umb ragna røk
 rōmm sigtīva.</p> | <p>Now Garm howls loud
 before Gnipahellir,
 The fetters will burst,
 and the wolf run free;
 Much do I know,
 and more can see
 Of the fate of the gods,
 the mighty in fight.</p> |
|--|---|

This is a refrain-stanza. In *Regius* it appears in full only at this point, but is repeated in abbreviated form before stanzas 50 and 59. In the *Hauksbok* version the full stanza comes first between stanzas 35 and 42, then, in abbreviated form, it occurs four times: before stanzas 45, 50, 55, and 59. In the *Hauksbok* line 3 runs:

Farther I see | and more can say.

(framm sē ek lengra, | fjölp kann ek segja.)

Garm: the dog who guards the gates of Hel's kingdom; cf. *Baldur's Draumar*, 2 ff., and *Grimnismol*, 44. *Gniparhellir* ("the Cliff-Cave"): the entrance to the world of the dead. *The wolf*: Fenrir; cf. stanza 39 and note.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>45. Brōþr munu berjask
 ok at bōnum verþask,
 munu systrungar
 sifjum spilla;
 hart's ī heimi,
 hōrdōmr mikill;
 [skeggjöld, skalmöld,
 skildir 'u klofnir,
 vindöld, vargöld,
 āþr veröld steypisk;]</p> | <p>Brothers shall fight
 and fell each other,
 And sisters' sons
 shall kinship stain;
 Hard is it on earth,
 with mighty whoredom;
 Axe-time, sword-time,
 shields are sundered,
 Wind-time, wolf-time,
 ere the world falls;</p> |
|---|--|

mun engi maþr |
 oþrum þyrma.

Nor ever shall men |
 each other spare.

From this point on through stanza 57 the poem is quoted by Snorri, stanza 49 alone being omitted. There has been much discussion as to the status of stanza 45. Lines 4 and 5 look like an interpolation. After line 5 the *Hauksbok* has a line running:

The world resounds, | the witch is flying.

(grundir gjalla, | gífr fljūgandi.)

Editors have arranged these seven lines in various ways, with lacunae freely indicated. *Sisters' sons*: in all Germanic countries the relations between uncle and nephew were felt to be particularly close.

46. Mīms synir leika, |
 en mjōtuþr kyndisk
 at enu gamla |
 Gjallarhorni;
 hōtt blāess Heimdallr, |
 horn's ā lopti,
 hræþask allir |
 ā helvegum.

Fast move the sons |
 of Mim, and fate
 Is heard in the note |
 of the Gjallarhorn;
 Loud blows Heimdall, |
 the horn is aloft,
 In fear quake all |
 who on Hel-roads are.

Regius combines the first three lines of this stanza with lines 3, 2, and 1 of stanza 47 as a single stanza. Line 4, not found in *Regius*, is introduced from the *Hauksbok* version, where it follows line 2 of stanza 47. *The sons of Mim*: the spirits of the water. On Mim (or Mimir) cf. stanza 27 and note. *Gjallarhorn*: the "Shrieking Horn" with which Heimdall, the watchman of the gods, calls them to the last battle.

47. Skelfr Yggdrasils |
 askr standandi,
 ymr aldit trē, |
 en jōtunn losnar;

Yggdrasil shakes, |
 and shiver on high
 The ancient limbs, |
 and the giant is loose;

mæliṛ Ōþinn	To the head of Mim
viþ Mīms hōfuþ,	does Othin give heed,
āþr Surtar hann	But the kinsman of Surt
sefi of gleypir.	shall slay him soon.

In *Regius* lines 3, 2, and 1, in that order, follow stanza 46 without separation. Line 4 is not found in *Regius*, but is introduced from the *Hauksbok* version. *Yggdrasil*: cf. stanza 19 and note, and *Grimnismol*, 29–35. *The giant*: Fenrir. *The head of Mim*: various myths were current about Mimir. This stanza refers to the story that he was sent by the gods with Hönir as a hostage to the Wanæs after their war (cf. stanza 21 and note), and that the Wanæs cut off his head and returned it to the gods. Othin embalmed the head, and by magic gave it the power of speech, thus making Mimir's noted wisdom always available. Of course this story does not fit with that underlying the references to Mimir in stanzas 27 and 29. *The kinsman of Surt*: the wolf Fenrir, who slays Othin in the final struggle; cf. stanza 53. Surt is the giant who rules the fire-world, Muspellsheim; cf. stanza 52.

48. Hvāt's meþ ōsum?	How fare the gods?
Hvāt's meþ ōlfum?	how fare the elves?
gn̄yr allr jōtunheimr,	All Jotunheim groans,
æsir'u ā þingi;	the gods are at council;
stynja dvergar	Loud roar the dwarfs
fyr steindurum,	by the doors of stone,
veggbergs vīsir:	The masters of the rocks:
vituþ enn eþa hvāt?	would you know yet more?

This stanza in *Regius* follows stanza 51; in the *Hauksbok* it stands, as here, after 47. *Jotunheim*: the land of the giants.

49. Geyr nū Garmr mjōk	Now Garm howls loud
fyr Gnīpahelli,	before Gnīpahelli,
festr mun slitna,	The fetters will burst,
en freki rinna!	and the wolf run free

fjølþ veitk frøþa, |
fram sēk lengra
umb ragna røk |
rømm sigtīva.

Much do I know, |
and more can see
Of the fate of the gods, |
the mighty in fight.

Identical with stanza 44. In the manuscripts it is here abbreviated.

50. Hrymr ekr austan, |
hefsk lind fyrir;
snýsk jormungandr |
ī jōtunmōþi;
ormr knýr unnir, |
en ari hlakkar,
slītr naī niþfōlr; |
Naglfar losnar.

From the east comes Hrym |
with shield held high;
In giant-wrath |
does the serpent writhe;
O'er the waves he twists, |
and the tawny eagle
Gnaws corpses screaming; |
Naglfar is loose.

Hrym: the leader of the giants, who comes as the helmsman of the ship Naglfar (line 4). *The serpent*: Mithgarthsorm, one of the children of Loki and Angrbotha (cf. stanza 39, note). The serpent was cast into the sea, where he completely encircles the land; cf. especially *Hymiskvitha*, passim. *The eagle*: the giant Hræsvelg, who sits at the edge of heaven in the form of an eagle, and makes the winds with his wings; cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 37, and *Skirnismol*, 27. *Naglfar*: the ship which was made out of dead men's nails to carry the giants to battle.

51. Kjöll ferr norþan; |
koma munu Heljar
of lōg lýþir, |
en Loki stýrir;
fara fiþmegir |
meþ freka allir,

O'er the sea from the north |
there sails a ship
With the people of Hel, |
at the helm stands Loki;
After the wolf |
do wild men follow,

þeim es brōþir |
Byleists ī fōr.

And with them the brother |
of Byleist goes.

North: a guess; the manuscripts have “east,” but there seems to be a confusion with stanza 50, line 1. *People of Hel:* the manuscripts have “people of Muspell,” but these came over the bridge Bifrost (the rainbow), which broke beneath them, whereas the people of Hel came in a ship steered by Loki. *The wolf:* Fenrir. *The brother of Byleist:* Loki. Of Byleist (or Byleipt) no more is known.

52. Surtr ferr sunnan |
meþ sviga lævi,
skīnn af sverþi |
sōl valtīva;
grjōtþjōrg gnata, |
en gīfr hrata,
troþa halir helveg, |
en himinn klofnar.

Surt fares from the south |
with the scourge of branches,
The sun of the battle-gods |
shone from his sword;
The crags are sundered, |
the giant-women sink,
The dead throng Hel-way, |
and heaven is cloven.

Surt: the ruler of the fire-world. *The scourge of branches:* fire. This is one of the relatively rare instances in the Eddic poems of the type of poetic diction which characterizes the skaldic verse.

53. Þā kōmr Hlīnar |
harmr annarr fram,
es Ōþinn ferr |
viþ ulf vega,
en bani Belja |
bjartr at Surti:
þā mun Friggjar |
falla angan.

Now comes to Hlin |
yet another hurt,
When Othin fares |
to fight with the wolf,
And Beli's fair slayer |
seeks out Surt,
For there must fall |
the joy of Frigg.

Hlin: apparently another name for Frigg, Othin's wife. After losing her son Baldr, she is fated now to see Othin slain by the wolf Fenrir. *Beli's slayer*: the god Freyr, who killed the giant Beli with his fist; cf. *Skirnismol*, 16 and note. On Freyr, who belonged to the race of the Wanæs, and was the brother of Freyja, see especially *Skirnismol*, passim. *The Joy of Frigg*: Othin.

54. Kømr enn mikli	Then comes Sigfather's
møgr Sigföður,	mighty son,
Víðarr, vega	Vithar, to fight
at valdýri;	with the foaming wolf;
lætr megi hveðrungs	In the giant's son
mund of standa	does he thrust his sword
hjórt til hjarta:	Full to the heart:
þá's hefnt föður.	his father is avenged.

As quoted by Snorri the first line of this stanza runs:

Fares Othin's son | to fight with the wolf.

(Gengr Öþins son(r) | við ulf vega.)

Sigfather ("Father of Victory"): Othin. His son, Vithar, is the silent god, famed chiefly for his great shield, and his strength, which is little less than Thor's. He survives the destruction. *The giant's son*: Fenrir.

55. Kømr enn mæri	Hither there comes
møgr Hlōþynjar;	the son of Hlothyn,
ginn lopt yfir	The bright snake gapes
liðr frānn neðan	to heaven above;
...	...
gengr Öþins sunn	Against the serpent
ormi mōta.	goes Othin's son.

This and the following stanza are clearly in bad shape. In *Regius* only lines 1 and 4 are found,

combined with stanza 56 as a single stanza. Line 1 does not appear in the *Hauksbok* version, the stanza there beginning with line 2. Snorri, in quoting these two stanzas, omits 55, 2–4, and 56, 3, making a single stanza out of 55, 1, and 56, 4, 2, 1, in that order. Moreover, the *Hauksbok* manuscript at this point is practically illegible. The lacuna (line 3) is, of course, purely conjectural, and all sorts of arrangements of the lines have been attempted by editors. *Hlothyn*: another name for Jorth (“Earth”), Thor’s mother; his father was Othin. *The snake*: Mithgarthsorm; cf. stanza 50 and note. *Othin’s son*: Thor. The fourth line in Regius reads “against the wolf,” but if this line refers to Thor at all, and not to Vithar, the *Hauksbok* reading, “serpent,” is correct.

56. Drepr af mōþi	In anger smites
miþgarþs vœur;	the warder of earth,—
munu halir allir	Forth from their homes
heimstøþ ryþja;	must all men flee;
gengr fet niu	Nine paces fares
Fjörgynjar burr	the son of Fjorgyn,
neppr frā naþri	And, slain by the serpent,
nīþs ökvīþnum.	fearless he sinks.

The warder of earth: Thor. *The son of Fjorgyn*: again Thor, who, after slaying the serpent, is overcome by his venomous breath, and dies. Fjorgyn appears in both a masculine and a feminine form. In the masculine it is a name for Othin; in the feminine, as here and in *Harbarthsljóth*, 56, it apparently refers to Jorth.

57. Söl tēr sortna,	The sun turns black,
sīgr fold ī mar,	earth sinks in the sea,
hverfa af himni	The hot stars down
heiþar stjörnur;	from heaven are whirled;
geisar eimi	Fierce grows the steam
ok aldrnari,	and the life-feeding flame,
leikr hōr hiti	Till fire leaps high
viþ himin sjalfan.	about heaven itself.

With this stanza ends the account of the destruction.

58. Geyr nū Garmr mjök fyr Gnipahelli, festr mun slitna, en freki rinna! fjølþ veitk frōþa, fram sēk lengra umb ragna røk rømm sigtīva.	Now Garm howls loud before Gnipahellir, The fetters will burst, and the wolf run free; Much do I know, and more can see Of the fate of the gods, the mighty in fight.
---	--

Again the refrain-stanza (cf. stanza 44 and note), abbreviated in both manuscripts, as in the case of stanza 49. It is probably misplaced here.

59. Sēk upp koma øþru sinni jorþ ör ægi iþjagrōna; falla forsar, flýgr ørn yfir, sās ā fjalli fiska veiþir.	Now do I see the earth anew Rise all green from the waves again; The cataracts fall, and the eagle flies, And fish he catches beneath the cliffs.
---	--

Here begins the description of the new world which is to rise out of the wreck of the old one. It is on this passage that a few critics have sought to base their argument that the poem is later than the introduction of Christianity (circa 1000), but this theory has never seemed convincing (cf. [introductory note](#)).

60. Finnask æsir ā Iþavelli	The gods in Ithavoll meet together,
---	--

ok of moldþinur |
 mōttkan dōma,
 ok minnask þar |
 ā megindōma
 ok ā Fimbultys |
 fornar rūnar.

Of the terrible girdler |
 of earth they talk,
 And the mighty past |
 they call to mind,
 And the ancient runes |
 of the Ruler of Gods.

The third line of this stanza is not found in *Regius*. *Ithavoll*: cf. stanza 7 and note. *The girdler of earth*: Mithgarthsorm:, who, lying in the sea, surrounded the land. *The Ruler of Gods*: Othin. The runes were both magic signs, generally carved on wood, and sung or spoken charms.

61. Þar munu eptir |
 undrsamligar
 gollnar tōflur |
 ī grasi finnask
 þærs ī ārdaga |
 āttar hōfpu.

...

In wondrous beauty |
 once again
 Shall the golden tables |
 stand mid the grass,
 Which the gods had owned |
 in the days of old,

...

The *Hauksbok* version of the first two lines runs:

The gods shall find there, | wondrous fair,
 The golden tables | amid the grass.

No lacuna (line 4) is indicated in the manuscripts. *Golden tables*: cf. stanza 8 and note.

62. Munu ōsānir |
 akrar vaxa,
 bōls mun alls batna, |
 mun Baldr koma;
 bua Hōþr ok Baldr |
 Hropts sigtoptir,

Then fields unsowed |
 bear ripened fruit,
 All ills grow better, |
 and Baldr comes back;
 Baldr and Hoth dwell |
 in Hropt's battle-hall,

<p>vē valtīva: vituþ enn eða hvat?</p>	<p>And the mighty gods: would you know yet more?</p>
--	--

Baldr: cf. stanza 32 and note. Baldr and his brother, Hoth, who unwittingly slew him at Loki's instigation, return together, their union being a symbol of the new age of peace. *Hropt*: another name for Othin. His "battle-hall" is Valhall.

<p>63. Þā knā Hōnir hlautviþ kjōsa ... ok burir byggva brōþra Tveggja vindheim vīþan: vituþ enn eða hvat?</p>	<p>Then Hōnir wins the prophetic wand, ... And the sons of the brothers of Tveggi abide In Vindheim now: would you know yet more?</p>
--	---

No lacuna (line 2) indicated in the manuscripts. *Hōnir*: cf. stanza 18 and note. In this new age he has the gift of foretelling the future. *Tveggi* ("The Twofold"): another name for Othin. His brothers are Vili and Ve (cf. *Lokasenna*, 26, and note). Little is known of them, and nothing, beyond this reference, of their sons. *Vindheim* ("Home of the Wind"): heaven.

<p>64. Sal sēk standa sōlu fegra, golli þakþan, ā Gimleī: þar skulu dyggvar drōttir byggva ok of aldrdaga ynþis njōta.</p>	<p>More fair than the sun, a hall I see, Roofed with gold, on Gimle it stands; There shall the righteous rulers dwell, And happiness ever there shall they have.</p>
---	--

This stanza is quoted by Snorri. *Gimle*: Snorri makes this the name of the hall itself, while here it appears to refer to a mountain on which the hall stands. It is the home of the happy,

as opposed to another hall, not here mentioned, for the dead. Snorri's description of this second hall is based on *Voluspo*, 38, which he quotes, and perhaps that stanza properly belongs after 64.

65. Kømr enn rīki	There comes on high,
at regindōmi	all power to hold,
øflugr ofan	A mighty lord,
sās øllu ræþr.	all lands he rules.
...	...
...	...

This stanza is not found in *Regius*, and is probably spurious. No lacuna is indicated in the *Hauksbok* version, but late paper manuscripts add two lines, running:

Rule he orders, | and rights he fixes,
Laws he ordains | that ever shall live.

(semr hann dōma | ok sakar legg
vēsķøp setr | þaus vesa skulu)

The name of this new ruler is nowhere given, and of course the suggestion of Christianity is unavoidable. It is not certain, however, that even this stanza refers to Christianity, and if it does, it may have been interpolated long after the rest of the poem was composed.

66. Kømr enn dimmi	From below the dragon
dreki fljūgandi,	dark comes forth,
naþr frānn neþan	Nithhogg flying
frā Nīþafjōllum;	from Nithafjoll;
bersk ī fjøþrum	The bodies of men on
— flýgr vøll yfir —	his wings he bears,
Nīþhøgggr nāi:	The serpent bright:
nū mun søkkvask.	but now must I sink.

This stanza, which fits so badly with the preceding ones, may well have been interpolated.

It has been suggested that the dragon, making a last attempt to rise, is destroyed, this event marking the end of evil in the world. But in both manuscripts the final half-line does not refer to the dragon, but, as the gender shows, to the Volva herself, who sinks into the earth; a sort of conclusion to the entire prophecy. Presumably the stanza (barring the last half-line, which was probably intended as the conclusion of the poem) belongs somewhere in the description of the great struggle. *Nithhogg*: the dragon at the roots of Yggdrasil; cf. stanza 39 and note. *Nithafjoll* ("the Dark Crag"); nowhere else mentioned. *Must I*: the manuscripts have "must she."

Hovamol

The Ballad of the High One

Introductory Note

This poem follows the *Voluspo* in the *Codex Regius*, but is preserved in no other manuscript. The first stanza is quoted by Snorri, and two lines of stanza 84 appear in one of the sagas.

In its present shape it involves the critic of the text in more puzzles than any other of the Eddic poems. Without going in detail into the various theories, what happened seems to have been somewhat as follows. There existed from very early times a collection of proverbs and wise counsels, which were attributed to Othin just as the Biblical proverbs were to Solomon. This collection, which presumably was always elastic in extent, was known as “The High One’s Words,” and forms the basis of the present poem. To it, however, were added other poems and fragments dealing with wisdom which seemed by their nature to imply that the speaker was Othin. Thus a catalogue of runes, or charms, was tacked on, and also a set of proverbs, differing essentially in form from those comprising the main collection. Here and there bits of verse more nearly narrative crept in; and of course the loose structure of the poem made it easy for any reciter to insert new stanzas almost at will. This curious miscellany is what we now have as the *Hovamol*.

Five separate elements are pretty clearly recognizable: (1) the *Hovamol* proper (stanzas 1–80), a collection of proverbs and counsels for the conduct of life; (2) the *Loddfafnismol* (stanzas 111–138), a collection somewhat similar to the first, but specifically addressed to a certain Loddfafnir; (3) the *Ljothatal* (stanzas 147–165), a collection of charms; (4) the love-story of Othin and Billing’s daughter (stanzas 96–102), with an introductory dissertation on the faithlessness of women in general (stanzas 81–95), which probably crept into the poem first, and then pulled the story, as an apt illustration, after it; (5) the story of how Othin got the mead of poetry—the draught which gave him the gift of tongues—from the maiden Gunnloth (stanzas 103–110). There is also a brief passage (stanzas 139–146) telling how Othin won the runes, this passage being a natural introduction to the *Ljothatal*, and doubtless brought into the poem for that reason.

It is idle to discuss the authorship or date of such a series of accretions as this. Parts of it are doubtless among the oldest relics of ancient Germanic poetry; parts of it may have originated at a relatively late period. Probably, however, most of its component elements go pretty far back, although we have no way of telling how or when they first became associated.

It seems all but meaningless to talk about “interpolations” in a poem which has developed almost solely through the process of piecing together originally unrelated odds and

ends. The notes, therefore, make only such suggestions as are needed to keep the main divisions of the poem distinct.

Few gnomic collections in the world's literary history present sounder wisdom more tersely expressed than the *Hovamol*. Like the Book of Proverbs it occasionally rises to lofty heights of poetry. If it presents the worldly wisdom of a violent race, it also shows noble ideals of loyalty, truth, and unfaltering courage.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Gāttir allar,
āþr gangi fram,
umb skoþask skyli,
umb skygansk skyli;
þvīt ōvist es,
hvar ōvinir
sitja ā fleti fyrir. | Within the gates
ere a man shall go,
[Full warily let him watch,]
Full long let him look about him;
For little he knows
where a foe may lurk,
And sit in the seats within. |
|--|--|

This stanza is quoted by Snorri, the second line being omitted in most of the *Prose Edda* manuscripts.

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|---|--|
| 2. Gefendr heilir!
gestr's inn kominn;
hvar skal sitja sjā?
mjøk es brāþr
sās ā brøndum skal
sīns of freista frama. | Hail to the giver!
a guest has come;
Where shall the stranger sit?
Swift shall he be who,
with swords shall try
The proof of his might to make. |
|---|--|

Probably the first and second lines had originally nothing to do with the third and fourth, the last two not referring to host or guest, but to the general danger of backing one's views with the sword.

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| 3. Elds es þqrf
þeims inn es kominn
auk ā knē kalinn; | Fire he needs
who with frozen knees
Has come from the cold without; |
|--|---|

matar ok vāþa |
es manni þorþ
þeims hefr of fjall farit.

Food and clothes |
must the farer have,
The man from the mountains come.

4. Vatns es þorþ |
þeims til verþar kōmr
þerru ok þjōþlaþar,
gōþs of ōþis |
ef sēr geta mætti
orþ, ok endrþøgu.

Water and towels |
and welcoming speech
Should he find who comes to the feast;
If renown he would get, |
and again be greeted,
Wisely and well must he act.

5. Vits es þorþ |
þeims vīþa ratar,
dælt es heima hvat;
at augabragþi |
verþr sās etki kann
auk meþ snotrum sitr.

Wits must he have |
who wanders wide,
But all is easy at home;
At the witless man |
the wise shall wink
When among such men he sits.

6. At hyggjandi sinni |
skylit maþr hrōsinn vesa,
heldr gætinn at geþi;
þās horskr ok þogull |
kōmr heimisgarþa til,
sjaldan verþr vīti vorum.
[þvīt ōbrigþra vin |
fær maþr aldriþi,
an mannvit mikit.]

A man shall not boast |
of his keenness of mind,
But keep it close in his breast;
To the silent and wise |
does ill come seldom
When he goes as guest to a house;
[For a faster friend |
one never finds
Than wisdom tried and true.]

Lines 5 and 6 appear to have been added to the stanza.

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|--|---|
| 7. Enn vari gestr,
es til verþar kómr,
þunnu hljóði þegir,
eyrum hlýðir,
en augum skoðar:
svā nýsisk fróðra hverr fyrir. | The knowing guest
who goes to the feast,
In silent attention sits;
With his ears he hears,
with his eyes he watches,
Thus wary are wise men all. |
| 8. Hinn es sæll
es sēr of getr
lof ok líknstafi;
ōdælla's vit
es maðr eiga skal
annars brjóstum ī. | Happy the one
who wins for himself
Favor and praises fair;
Less safe by far
is the wisdom found
That is hid in another's heart. |
| 9. [Sā es sæll
es sjalfr of ā
lof ok vit meðan lifir,
þvīt ill rōþ
hefr maðr opt þegit
annars brjóstum ōr.] | Happy the man
who has while he lives
Wisdom and praise as well,
For evil counsel
a man full oft
Has from another's heart. |
| 10. Byrði betri
berra maðr brautu at,
an sē mannvit mikit; | A better burden
may no man bear
For wanderings wide than wisdom; |

auði betra |
þykkir þat i okunnum stað,
slíkt es vālaþs vera.

It is better than wealth |
on unknown ways,
And in grief a refuge it gives.

11. Byrði betri |
berra maþr brautu at,
an sē manvit mikit;
vegnest verra |
vegra hann velli at,
an sē ofdrykkja ǫls.

A better burden |
may no man bear
For wanderings wide than wisdom;
Worse food for the journey |
he brings not afield
Than an over-drinking of ale.

12. Esa svā gott, |
sem gott kveða,
ǫl alda *sunum*,
þvīt fāera veit, |
es fleira drekkir,
sīns til geþs gumi.

Less good there lies |
than most believe
In ale for mortal men;
For the more he drinks |
the less does man
Of his mind the mastery hold.

Some editors have combined this stanza in various ways with the last two lines of stanza 11, as in the manuscript the first two lines of the latter are abbreviated, and, if they belong there at all, are presumably identical with the first two lines of stanza 10.

13. Ōminnis hegrī heitir |
sās of ǫlþrum þrumir,
hann stelr geþi guma;
þess fugls fjǫþrum |
ek fjǫtraþr vask
ī garpi Gunnlaþar.

Over beer the bird |
of forgetfulness broods,
And steals the minds of men;
With the heron's feathers |
fettered I lay
And in Gunnloth's house was held.

The heron: the bird of forgetfulness, referred to in line 1. *Gunnloth:* the daughter of the giant Suttung, from whom Othin won the mead of poetry. For this episode see stanzas 104–110.

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|---|---|
| 14. Qlr ek varþ,
varþ ofrqlvi
at ens frōþa Fjalars
þvi's qlþr bazt,
at aptr of heimtir
hverr sitt geþ gumi. | Drunk I was,
I was dead-drunk,
When with Fjalar wise I was;
'Tis the best of drinking
if back one brings
His wisdom with him home. |
|---|---|

Fjalar: apparently another name for Suttung. This stanza, and probably 13, seem to have been inserted as illustrative.

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|---|---|
| 15. Þagalt ok hugalt
skyli þjōþans barn
ok vīgdjarft vesa;
glap̃r ok reifr
skyli gumna hverr,
unz sinn bīþr bana. | The son of a king
shall be silent and wise,
And bold in battle as well;
Bravely and gladly
a man shall go,
Till the day of his death is come. |
| 16. Ōsnjallr maþr
hyggsk munu ey lifa,
ef viþ vīg varask,
en elli gefr
hōnum engi friþ,
þōt hōnum geirar gefi. | The sluggard believes
he shall live forever,
If the fight he faces not;
But age shall not grant him
the gift of peace,
Though spears may spare his life. |

17. Kōpir afglapi, |
 es til kynnis kōmr,
þylsk hann umb eða þrumir;
alt es senn, |
 ef hann sylg of getr
uppi geþ guma.
The fool is agape |
 when he comes to the feast,
He stammers or else is still;
But soon if he gets |
 a drink is it seen
What the mind of the man is like.
18. Sā einn veit |
 es vīþa ratar
auk hefr fjolþ of farit,
hverju geþi |
 stýrir gumna hverr
sās vitandi 's vits.
He alone is aware |
 who has wandered wide,
And far abroad has fared,
How great a mind |
 is guided by him
That wealth of wisdom has.
19. Haldit maþr ā kerī, |
 drekki þō at hōfi mjōþ,
mæli þarft eða þegi;
ōkynnis þess |
 vār þik engi maþr,
at þū gangir snimma at sofa.
Shun not the mead, |
 but drink in measure;
Speak to the point or be still;
For rudeness none |
 shall rightly blame thee
If soon thy bed thou seekest.
20. Grōþugr halr, |
 nema geþs viti,
etr sēr aldr trega;
opt fār hlōgis, |
 es meþ horskum kōmr,
manni heimskum magi.
The greedy man, |
 if his mind be vague,
Will eat till sick he is;
The vulgar man, |
 when among the wise,
To scorn by his belly is brought.

21. Hjarþir þat vitu, | The herds know well |
nær þær heim skulu, | when home they shall fare,
ok ganga þā af grasi; | And then from the grass they go;
en ōsviþr maþr | But the foolish man |
kann ævagi | his belly's measure
sīns of *māl* maga. | Shall never know aright.
22. Vesall maþr | A paltry man |
ok illa skapi | and poor of mind
hlær at hvīvetna; | At all things ever mocks;
hitki hann veit, | For never he knows, |
es hann vita þyrfti, | what he ought to know,
at hann *esa* vamma vanr. | That he is not free from faults.
23. Ōsviþr maþr | The witless man |
vakir of allar nætr | is awake all night,
ok hyggr at hvīvetna; | Thinking of many things;
þā es mōþr | Care-worn he is |
es at morni kōmr, | when the morning comes,
allt es vīl sem vas. | And his woe is just as it was.
24. Ōsnotr maþr | The foolish man |
hyggr sēr alla vesa | for friends all those
viþhlæjendr vini; | Who laugh at him will hold;
hitki hann fiþr, | When among the wise |
þōt of hann fār lesi, | he marks it not
ef meþ snotrum sitr. | Though hatred of him they speak.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 25. <i>Ōsnotr maþr</i>
hyggr sēr alla vesa
viþhlæjendr vini;
þā þat fiþr,
es at þingi kōmr,
at ā formælendr faa. | The foolish man
for friends all those
Who laugh at him will hold;
But the truth when he comes
to the council he learns,
That few in his favor will speak. |
|--|--|

The first two lines are abbreviated in the manuscript, but are doubtless identical with the first two lines of stanza 24.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 26. <i>Ōsnotr maþr</i>
þykkisk allt vita,
ef ā ser ī vō veru;
hitki hann veit,
hvat hann skal viþ kveþa,
ef hans freista firar. | An ignorant man
thinks that all he knows,
When he sits by himself in a corner;
But never what answer
to make he knows,
When others with questions come. |
|---|--|

- | | |
|---|---|
| 27. <i>Ōsnotr maþr</i> ,
es meþ aldir kōmr,
þat es bazt at þegi;
engi þat veit,
at hann etki kann,
nema hann mæli til mart.
[veita maþr
hinns vætki veit,
þōt hann mæli til mart.] | A witless man,
when he meets with men,
Had best in silence abide;
For no one shall find
that nothing he knows,
If his mouth is not open too much.
[But a man knows not,
if nothing he knows,
When his mouth has been open too
much.] |
|---|---|

The last two lines were probably added as a commentary on lines 3 and 4.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>28. Frōþr sá þykkisk
 es fregna kann
auk segja et sama;
eyvitu leyna
 megu yta synir
þvís gengr of guma.</p> | <p>Wise shall he seem
 who well can question,
And also answer well;
Nought is concealed
 that men may say
Among the sons of men.</p> |
| <p>29. Ørna mælr
 sās æva þegir
staþlausu stafi;
hrafmælt tunga,
 nema haldendr eigi,
opt sēr ògott of gelr.</p> | <p>Often he speaks
 who never is still
With words that win no faith;
The babbling tongue,
 if a bridle it find not,
Oft for itself sings ill.</p> |
| <p>30. At augabragði
 skala maþr annan hafa,
þót til kynnis komi;
margr þā frōþr þykkisk,
 ef hann freginn esat,
ok nāi hann þurrfjallr þruma.</p> | <p>In mockery no one
 a man shall hold,
Although he fare to the feast;
Wise seems one oft,
 if nought he is asked,
And safely he sits dry-skinned.</p> |
| <p>31. Frōþr þykkisk
 sās flōtta tekr
gestr at gest hāþinn;</p> | <p>Wise a guest holds it
 to take to his heels,
When mock of another he makes;</p> |

veita gǫrla |
sās of verði glissir,
þót meþ grǫmum glami.

But little he knows |
who laughs at the feast,
Though he mocks in the midst of his
foes.

32. Gumnar margir |
erusk gagnhollir,
en at virði vrekask;
aldar rōg |
þat mun æ vesa,
ōrir gestr víþ gest.

Friendly of mind |
are many men,
Till feasting they mock at their friends;
To mankind a bane |
must it ever be
When guests together strive.

33. Ārliga verþar |
skyli maþr opt faa,
nē ōn til kynnis komi:
sitr ok snōpir, |
lætr sem solginn sē,
ok kann fregna at fōu.

Oft should one make |
an early meal,
Nor fasting come to the feast;
Else he sits and chews |
as if he would choke,
And little is able to ask.

34. Afhvarf mikit |
es til ills vinar
þót ā brautu bui,
en til gōþs vinar |
liggja gagnvegir,
þót sē firr farinn.

Crooked and far |
is the road to a foe,
Though his house on the highway be;
But wide and straight |
is the way to a friend,
Though far away he fare.

35.	Ganga skal, skala gestr vesa ey ī einum staḃ; ljūfr verḃr leiḃr ef lengi sitr annars fletjum ā.	Forth shall one go, nor stay as a guest In a single spot forever; Love becomes loathing if long one sits By the hearth in another's home.
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36.	Bū es betra, ḃōt būkot sē, halr es heima hvern; ḃōt tvær geitr eigi ok taugreptan sal, ḃat's ḃō betra an bōn.	Better a house, though a hut it be, A man is master at home; A pair of goats and a patched-up roof Are better far than begging.
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The manuscript has “little” in place of “a hut” in line 1, but this involves an error in the initial-rhymes, and the emendation has been generally accepted.

37.	Bū es betra, ḃōt būkot sē, halr es heima hvern; blōḃust's hjarta ḃeims biḃja skal sēr ī māl hvert matar.	Better a house, though a hut it be, A man is master at home; His heart is bleeding who needs must beg When food he fain would have.
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Lines 1 and 2 are abbreviated in the manuscript, but are doubtless identical with the first two lines of stanza 56.

38.	Vōpnum sīnum skala maḃr velli ā	Away from his arms in the open field
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feti ganga framarr,
þvīt ōvist's at vita, |
nær verþr ā vegum ūti
geirs of þorþ guma.

A man should fare not a foot;
For never he knows |
when the need for a spear
Shall arise on the distant road.

39. Fear sīns |
es fengit hefr
skylit maþr þorþ þola;
opt sparir leiþum |
þats hefr ljūfum hugat,
mart gengr verr an varer.

If wealth a man |
has won for himself,
Let him never suffer in need;
Oft he saves for a foe |
what he plans for a friend,
For much goes worse than we wish.

In the manuscript this stanza follows stanza 40.

40. Fannkak mildan mann |
eþa svā matargōþan,
at vārit þiggja þegit,
eþa sīns fear |
svāgi gjōflan,
at leiþ sē laun ef þegi.

None so free with gifts |
or food have I found
That gladly he took not a gift,
Nor one who so widely |
scattered his wealth
That of recompense hatred he had.

The key-word in line 3 is missing in the manuscript, but editors have agreed in inserting a word meaning “generous.”

41. Vōpnum ok vōpum |
skulu vinir gleþjask,
þat's ā sjōlfum sýnst;
viþrgefendr |
erusk vinir lengst,

Friends shall gladden each other |
with arms and garments,
As each for himself can see;
Gift-givers' friendships |
are longest found,

ef þat biðr at verða vel.

If fair their fates may be.

In line 3 the manuscript adds “givers again” to “gift-givers.”

42. Vin sīnum |
skal maðr vinr vesa
ok gjalda gjöf við gjöf,
hlātr við hlātri |
skyli hólpar taka,
en lausung við lygi.

To his friend a man |
a friend shall prove,
And gifts with gifts requite;
But men shall mocking |
with mockery answer,
And fraud with falsehood meet.

43. Vin sīnum |
skal maðr vinr vesa,
þeim ok þess vin,
en övinar sīns |
skyli engi maðr
vinar vinr vesa.

To his friend a man |
a friend shall prove,
To him and the friend of his friend;
But never a man |
shall friendship make
With one of his foeman's friends.

44. Veiztu, ef vin ātt |
þanns þū vel truir,
ok vill af hōnum gott geta,
geði skalt við þann blanda |
ok gjöfum skipta,
fara at finna opt.

If a friend thou hast |
whom thou fully wilt trust,
And good from him wouldst get,
Thy thoughts with his mingle, |
and gifts shalt thou make,
And fare to find him oft.

45. Ef ātt annan |
þanns þū illa truir,

If another thou hast |
whom thou hardly wilt trust,

vill af hōnum þō gott geta,
fagrt skalt við þann mæla, |
 en flātt hyggja
ok gjalda lausung við lygi.

Yet good from him wouldst get,
Thou shalt speak him fair, |
 but falsely think,
And fraud with falsehood requite.

46. Þat's enn of þann |
 es þū illa truir
ok þēr's grunr at hans geði:
hlæja skalt við þeim |
 ok of hug mæla,
glík skulu gjöld gjofum.

So is it with him |
 whom thou hardly wilt trust,
And whose mind thou mayst not know;
Laugh with him mayst thou, |
 but speak not thy mind,
Like gifts to his shalt thou give.

47. Ungr vask forþum, |
 fōr ek einn saman,
þā varþk villr vega;
auþugr þóttumk |
 es ek annan fann:
maþr es manns gaman.

Young was I once, |
 and wandered alone,
And nought of the road I knew;
Rich did I feel |
 when a comrade I found,
For man is man's delight.

48. Mildir, frōknir |
 menn bazt lifa,
sjaldan sūt ala,
en ōsnjallr maþr |
 uggir hotvetna,
sýtir æ glöggr við gjofum.

The lives of the brave |
 and noble are best,
Sorrows they seldom feed;
But the coward fear |
 of all things feels,
And not gladly the niggard gives.

49. Vāpir mīnar |
gaf ek velli at
tveim trēmönnum;
rekkar þat þöttusk |
es þeir ript hōfu:
neiss es nøkkviþr halr.
My garments once |
in a field I gave
To a pair of carven poles;
Heroes they seemed |
when clothes they had,
But the naked man is nought.
50. Hrørnar þöll |
sūs stendr þorpi ā,
hlýrat þorkr nē barr;
svā es maþr |
sās manngi ann,
hvat skal hann lengi lifa?
On the hillside drear |
the fir-tree dies,
All bootless its needles and bark;
It is like a man |
whom no one loves,—
Why should his life be long?
51. Eldi heitari |
brinnr meþ illum vinum
friþr fimm daga,
en þā sloknar, |
es enn sētti kømr,
ok versnar vinskapr allr.
Hotter than fire |
between false friends
Does friendship five days burn;
When the sixth day comes |
the fire cools,
And ended is all the love.
52. Mikit eitt |
skala manni gefa,
opt kaupir ī litlu lof;
meþ hōlfum hleifi |
ok meþ hōllu kerī
fengumk fēlaga.
No great thing needs |
a man to give,
Oft little will purchase praise;
With half a loaf |
and a half-filled cup
A friend full fast I made.

53. Lītilla sanda |
lītilla sǣva:
lītil eru geþ guma;
þvī allir menn |
urþut jafnspakir,
hōlf es ǫld hvōr.
A little sand |
has a little sea,
And small are the minds of men;
Though all men are not |
equal in wisdom,
Yet half-wise only are all.
54. Meþalsnotr |
skyli manna hverr,
ǣva til snotr seī;
þeim es fyrþa |
fegrst at lifa,
es vel mart *vitut*.
A measure of wisdom |
each man shall have,
But never too much let him know;
The fairest lives |
do those men live
Whose wisdom wide has grown.
55. Meþalsnotr |
skyli manna hverr,
ǣva til snotr seī;
þvīt snotrs manns hjarta |
verþr sjaldan glatt,
ef sǣ's alsnotr es ā.
A measure of wisdom |
each man shall have,
But never too much let him know;
For the wise man's heart |
is seldom happy,
If wisdom too great he has won.

Here and in stanza 56, the first pairs of lines are abbreviated in the manuscript.

56. Meþalsnotr |
skyli manna hverr,
ǣva til snotr seī;
ørlog sīn |
viti engi fyrir,
A measure of wisdom |
each man shall have,
But never too much let him know;
Let no man the fate |
before him see,

þeim's sorgalausastr sefi.

For so is he freest from sorrow.

57. Brandr af brandi |
brinnr unz brunninn es,
funi kveykisk af funa;
maþr manni |
verþr af mǫli kuþr,
en til dǫlskr af dul.

A brand from a brand |
is kindled and burned,
And fire from fire begotten;
And man by his speech |
is known to men,
And the stupid by their stillness.

58. Ār skal rīsa |
sās annars vill
fē eþa fjǫr hafa;
liggjandi ulfr |
sjaldan lǣr of getr
nē sofandi maþr sigr.

He must early go forth |
who fain the blood
Or the goods of another would get;
The wolf that lies idle |
shall win little meat,
Or the sleeping man success.

59. Ār skal rīsa |
sās ā yrkjendr faa
ok ganga sīns verka ā vit;
mart of dvelr |
þanns of morgin sefr,
halfr es auþr und hvǫtum.

He must early go forth |
whose workers are few,
Himself his work to seek;
Much remains undone |
for the morning-sleeper,
For the swift is wealth half won.

60. Þurra skīþa |
ok þakinna nǣfra,
þess kann maþr mjǫt,

Of seasoned shingles |
and strips of bark
For the thatch let one know his need,

þess víðar |
es vinnask megi
mōl ok misseri.

And how much of wood |
he must have for a month,
Or in half a year he will use.

61. Þvegin ok mettr |
rīpi maþr þingi at,
þōt sēt vādr til vel;
skua ok brōka |
skammisk engi maþr,
nē hests in heldr,
[þōt hann hafit gōþan.]

Washed and fed |
to the council fare,
But care not too much for thy clothes;
Let none be ashamed |
of his shoes and hose,
Less still of the steed he rides,
[Though poor be the horse he has.]

The fifth line is probably a spurious addition.

62. Snapir ok gnafir, |
es til sǣvar kōmr,
or̃n ā aldinn mar;
svā es maþr |
es meþ mōrgum kōmr
ok ā formǣlendr faa.

When the eagle comes |
to the ancient sea,
He snaps and hangs his head;
So is a man |
in the midst of a throng,
Who few to speak for him finds.

This stanza follows stanza 63 in the manuscript, but there are marks therein indicating the transposition.

63. Fregna ok segja |
skal frōþra hverr,
sās vill heitinn horskr;
einn vita, |
nē annarr skal,

To question and answer |
must all be ready
Who wish to be known as wise;
Tell one thy thoughts, |
but beware of two,—

þjóð veit, ef þrír 'ū.

All know what is known to three.

64. Ríki sitt |
skyli ráðsnotra hverr
hafa höfi ī;
þā þat fiðr |
es með frōknum kōmr,
at engi's einna hvatastr.

The man who is prudent |
a measured use
Of the might he has will make;
He finds when among |
the brave he fares
That the boldest he may not be.

65. . . .
. . .
orða þeira, |
es maðr oðrum segir,
opt hann gjöld of getr.

. . .
. . .
Oft for the words |
that to others one speaks
He will get but an evil gift.

The manuscript indicates no lacuna (lines 1 and 2). Many editors have filled out the stanza with two lines from late paper manuscripts, the passage running:

A man must be watchful | and wary as well,
And fearful of trusting a friend.

(gættinn ok geyminn | skyli gumna hverr
ok varr at vintrausti.)

66. Mikilsti snimma |
kvamk ī marga staði,
en til sīð ī suma;
öl vas drukkit, |
sumt vas ōlagat:
hittira leiðr ī lið.

Too early to many |
a meeting I came,
And some too late have I sought;
The beer was all drunk, |
or not yet brewed;
Little the loathed man finds.

- 67.** Hēr ok hvar |
mundi mēr heim of bopit,
ef þyrftak at mōlungi mat
eða tvau lār hengi |
at ens tryggva vinar,
þars hafþak eitt etit.
To their homes men would bid |
me hither and yon,
If at meal-time I needed no meat,
Or would hang two hams |
in my true friend's house,
Where only one I had eaten.
- 68.** Eldr es baztr |
meþ yta sunum
auk sōlar sȳn,
heilyndi sitt |
ef maþr hafa nair,
ōn viþ lōst at lifa.
Fire for men |
is the fairest gift,
And power to see the sun;
Health as well, |
if a man may have it,
And a life not stained with sin.
- 69.** Esat maþr alls vesall, |
þōt sē illa heill;
sumr's af sunum sǣll,
sumr af frændum, |
sumr af fē ōrnu,
sumr af verkum vel.
All wretched is no man, |
though never so sick;
Some from their sons have joy,
Some win it from kinsmen, |
and some from their wealth,
And some from worthy works.
- 70.** Betra's lifpum |
an sē ōlifpum,
ey getr kvikr kū;
eld sāk upp brinna |
auþgum manni fyrir,
en ūti vas dauþr fyr durum.
It is better to live |
than to lie a corpse,
The live man catches the cow;
I saw flames rise |
for the rich man's pyre,
And before his door he lay dead.

The manuscript has “and a worthy life” in place of “than to lie a corpse” in line 1, but Rask suggested the emendation as early as 1818, and most editors have followed him.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>71. Haltr rīþr hrossi,
 hjørþ rekr handarvanr,
daufr vegr ok dugir;
blindr es betri
 an brendr seï,
nȳtr mangi nās.</p> | <p>The lame rides a horse,
 the handless is herdsman,
The deaf in battle is bold;
The blind man is better
 than one that is burned,
No good can come of a corpse.</p> |
| <p>72. Sunr es betri,
 þōt sē sīþ of alinn
ept genginn guma;
sjaldan bautarsteinar
 standa brautu nāer,
nema reisi niþr at niþ.</p> | <p>A son is better,
 though late he be born,
And his father to death have fared;
Memory-stones
 seldom stand by the road
Save when kinsman honors his kin.</p> |
| <p>73. [Tveir’u eins herjar,
 tunga’s hōfuþs bani;
erumk ī heþin hverjan
 handar vāeni.]</p> | <p>Two make a battle,
 the tongue slays the head;
In each furry coat
 a fist I look for.</p> |
| <p>74. Nōtt verþr feginn
 sās nesti truir,
[skammar’u skips raar]
hverf es haustgrīma;</p> | <p>He welcomes the night
 whose fare is enough,
[Short are the yards of a ship,]
Uneasy are autumn nights;</p> |

fjölþ of víþrir |
 ā fimm dögum,
 en meira ā mānaþi.

Full oft does the weather |
 change in a week,
 And more in a month's time.

These (73–74) seven lines are obviously a jumble. The two lines of stanza 73 not only appear out of place, but the verse form is unlike that of the surrounding stanzas. In 74, the second line is clearly interpolated, and line 1 has little enough connection with lines 3, 4 and 5. It looks as though some compiler (or copyist) had inserted here various odds and ends for which he could find no better place.

75. Veita maþr |
 hinns vātki veit:
 margr verþr af auþi of api;
 maþr es auþugr, |
 annarr ōauþugr,
 skylit þann vātkis vaa.

A man knows not, |
 if nothing he knows,
 That gold oft apes begets;
 One man is wealthy |
 and one is poor,
 Yet scorn for him none should know.

The word “gold” in line 2 is more or less conjectural, the manuscript being obscure. The reading in line 4 is also doubtful.

76. Fullar grindr |
 sāk fyr Fitjungs sunum,
 nū bera vānarvöl;
 svā es auþr |
 sem augabragþ,
 hann es valtastr vina.

Among Fitjung's sons |
 saw I well-stocked folds,—
 Now bear they the beggar's staff;
 Wealth is as swift |
 as a winking eye,
 Of friends the falsest it is.

In the manuscript this stanza follows 78, the order being: 77, 78, 76, 80, 79, 81. *Fitjung* (“the Nourisher”): Earth.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>77. Deyr fē,
 deyja frændr,
 deyrr sjalfr et sama,
 en orþstírr
 deyrr aldri
 hveims sēr gōþan getr.</p> | <p>Cattle die,
 and kinsmen die,
 And so one dies one's self;
 But a noble name
 will never die,
 If good renown one gets.</p> |
| <p>78. Deyr fē,
 deyja frændr,
 deyrr sjalfr et sama;
 ek veit einn
 at aldri deyrr:
 dōmr of dauþan hvern.</p> | <p>Cattle die,
 and kinsmen die,
 And so one dies one's self;
 One thing now
 that never dies,
 The fame of a dead man's deeds.</p> |
| <p>79. Þat's þā reynt,
 es at rūnum spyrr,
 þeims gørþu ginnregin
 ok fāþi fimbulþulr,
 þat's þā reynt
 es at rūnum spyrr,
 rūnum reginkunnum:
 þā hefr bazt ef þegir.</p> | <p>Certain is that
 which is sought from runes,
 That the gods so great have made,
 And the Master-Poet painted;
 . . .
 . . .
 . . . of the race of gods:
 Silence is safest and best.</p> |

This stanza is certainly in bad shape, and probably out of place here. Its reference to runes as magic signs suggests that it properly belongs in some list of charms like the *Ljothatal* (stanzas 147–165). The stanza-form is so irregular as to show either that something has been lost or that there have been interpolations. The manuscript indicates no lacuna; Gering fills out the assumed gap as follows:

Certain is that which is sought from runes,
 The runes—, etc.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>80. <i>Ösnotr maþr, </i>
 <i>ef eignask getr</i>
 <i>fē eþa fljōþs munugþ,</i>
 <i>metnaþr þroask, </i>
 <i>en manvit aldri,</i>
 <i>fram gengr hann drjūgt ī dul.</i></p> | <p>An unwise man,
 if a maiden's love
 Or wealth he chances to win,
 His pride will wax,
 but his wisdom never,
 Straight forward he fares in conceit.</p> |
|---|--|

* * *

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>81. <i>At kveldi skal dag leyfa, </i>
 <i>konu es brend es,</i>
 <i>mæki es reyndr es, </i>
 <i>mey es gefin es,</i>
 <i>īs es yfir kōmr, </i>
 <i>ql es drukkit es.</i></p> | <p>Give praise to the day at evening,
 to a woman on her pyre,
 To a weapon which is tried,
 to a maid at wed lock,
 To ice when it is crossed,
 to ale that is drunk.</p> |
|--|--|

With this stanza the verse-form, as indicated in the translation, abruptly changes to Malahattr. What has happened seems to have been something like this. Stanza 80 introduces the idea of man's love for woman. Consequently some reciter or compiler (or possibly even a copyist) took occasion to insert at this point certain stanzas concerning the ways of women. Thus stanza 80 would account for the introduction of stanzas 81 and 82, which, in turn, apparently drew stanza 83 in with them. Stanza 84 suggests the fickleness of women, and is immediately followed — again with a change of verse-form — by a list of things equally untrustworthy (stanzas 85–90). Then, after a few more stanzas on love in the regular measure of the *Hovamol* (stanza 91–95), is introduced, by way of illustration, Othin's story of his adventure with Billing's daughter (stanzas 96–102). Some such process of growth, whatever its specific stages may have been, must be assumed to account for the curious chaos of the whole passage from stanza 81 to stanza 102.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>82. <i>ī vindi skal vīþ hōggva, </i>
 <i>veþri ā sjō roa,</i>
 <i>myrkri vīþ man spjalla, </i>
 <i>mōrg 'ru dags augu;</i></p> | <p>When the gale blows hew wood,
 in fair winds seek the water;
 Sport with maidens at dusk,
 for day's eyes are many;</p> |
|---|--|

ā skip skal skripar orka, |
en ā skjöld til hlífar,
mæki høggs, |
en mey til kossa.

From the ship seek swiftness, |
from the shield protection,
Cuts from the sword, |
from the maiden kisses.

83. Við eld skal ǫl drekka, |
en ā ísi skríða,
magran mar kaupa, |
en mæki saurgan,
heima hest feita, |
en hund ā bui.

By the fire drink ale, |
over ice go on skates;
Buy a steed that is lean, |
and a sword when tarnished,
The horse at home fatten, |
the hound in thy dwelling.

* * *

84. Meyjar orþum |
skyli manngi trua,
nē þvīs kveþr kona;
þvīt ā hverfanda hvēli |
vǫru þeim hjǫrtu skǫpuþ
ok brigg þi brjǫst of lagip.

A man shall trust not |
the oath of a maid,
Nor the word a woman speaks;
For their hearts on a whirling |
wheel were fashioned,
And fickle their breasts were formed.

Lines 3 and 4 are quoted in the *Fostbræðrasaga*.

* * *

85. Brestanda boga, |
brinnanda loga,
gīnanda ulfi, |
galandi krōku,

In a breaking bow |
or a burning flame,
A ravening wolf |
or a croaking raven,

rýtanda svīni,	In a grunting boar,
rōtlausum vípi,	a tree with roots broken,
vaxanda vāgi,	In billowy seas
vellanda katli,	or a bubbling kettle,

Stanzas 85–88 and go are in Fornyrthislag, and clearly come from a different source from the rest of the *Hovamol*.

86. fljūganda fleini	In a flying arrow
fallandi bōru,	or falling waters,
īsi einnāttum,	In ice new formed
ormi hringlegnum,	or the serpent's folds,
brūþar beþmōlum	In a bride's bed-speech
eþa brotnu sverþi,	or a broken sword,
bjarnar leiki	In the sport of bears
eþa barni konungs,	or in sons of kings,

87. sjūkum kalfi,	In a calf that is sick
sjalfrāþa þræli,	or a stubborn thrall,
vølu vilmæli,	A flattering witch
val nýfeldum—	or a foe new slain.

The stanza is doubtless incomplete. Some editors add from a late paper manuscript two lines running:

In a light, clear sky | or a laughing throng,
In the bowl of a dog | or a harlot's grief!

(heiþríkum himni, | hlæjanda herra,
hunda gelti | ok harmi skōkju.)

- 88.** brōþurbana sīnum, | In a brother's slayer, |
þōt ā brautu mōti, | if thou meet him abroad,
hūsi halfbrunnu, | In a half-burned house, |
hesti alskjōtum— | in a horse full swift—
þā's jōr ōnȳtr, | One leg is hurt |
ef einn fōtr brotnar— | and the horse is useless—
verþit maþr svā tryggr, | None had ever such faith |
at þessu truī ǫllu. | as to trust in them all.

This stanza follows stanza 89 in the manuscript. Many editors have changed the order, for while stanza 89 is pretty clearly an interpolation wherever it stands, it seriously interferes with the sense if it breaks in between 87 and 88.

* * *

- 89.** Akri ārsōnum | Hope not too surely |
trui engi maþr | for early harvest,
nē til snimma syni: | Nor trust too soon in thy son;
veþr ræþr akri, | The field needs good weather, |
en vit syni, | the son needs wisdom,
hætt es þeira hvārt. | And oft is either denied.

* * *

- 90.** Svā's friþr kvenna | The love of women |
es flātt hyggja, | fickle of will
sem aki jō ōbryddum | Is like starting o'er ice |
ā īsi hōlum, | with a steed unshod,
[teitum, tvēvetrum, | A two-year-old restive |
ok sē tamr illa,] | and little tamed,

eða í byr óþum |
beiti stjörnlausu,
eða skyli haltr henda |
hrein í þāfjalli.

Or steering a rudderless |
ship in a storm,
Or, lame, hunting reindeer |
on slippery rocks.

* * *

91. Bert nū mælik, |
þvīt ek bæði veit,
brigþr es karla hugr konum;
þā vēr fegrst mælum, |
es vēr flāst hyggjum,
þat tælir horska hugi.

Clear now will I speak, |
for I know them both,
Men false to women are found;
When fairest we speak, |
then falsest we think,
Against wisdom we work with deceit.

92. Fagrt skal mæla |
ok fē bjōþa
sās vill fljōþs ōst faa,
líki leyfa |
ens ljōsa mans:
sā fæ̃r es friar.

Soft words shall he speak |
and wealth shall he offer
Who longs for a maiden's love,
And the beauty praise |
of the maiden bright;
He wins whose wooing is best.

93. Āstar firna |
skyli engi maþr
annan aldri;
opt fā ā horskan, |
es ā heimskan nē fā,
lostfagrir litir.

Fault for loving |
let no man find
Ever with any other;
Oft the wise are fettered, |
where fools go free,
By beauty that breeds desire.

- 94.** Eyvitar firna | Fault with another |
es maþr annan skal let no man find
þess's of margan gengr guma; For what touches many a man;
heimska ðr horskum | Wise men oft |
gørir hólþa sunu into witless fools
sā enn mōtki munr. Are made by mighty love.
- 95.** Hugr einn þat veit, | The head alone knows |
es býr hjarta nær, what dwells near the heart,
einn's hann sēr of sefa; A man knows his mind alone;
øng es sōtt verri | No sickness is worse |
hveim snotrum manni to one who is wise
an sēr øngu at una. Than to lack the longed-for joy.
- 96.** Þat þā reyndak, | This found I myself, |
es ī reyri satk when I sat in the reeds,
ok vættak mīns munar; And long my love awaited;
hold ok hjarta | As my life the maiden |
vorumk en horska mæ̃r, wise I loved,
þeygi at heldr hana hefik. Yet her I never had.

Here begins the passage (stanzas 96–102) illustrating the falseness of woman by the story of Othin's unsuccessful love affair with Billing's daughter. Of this person we know nothing beyond what is here told, but the story needs little comment.

- 97.** Billings mey | Billing's daughter |
ek fann beþjum ā I found on her bed,
sōlhvīta sofa; In slumber bright as the sun;

jarls ynþi |
þóttumk etki vesa,
nema við þat lík at lífa.

Empty appeared |
an earl's estate
Without that form so fair.

98. “Auk nār aptni |
skaltu, Óþinn! koma,
ef þú vill þér mæla man;
allt eru ósköp, |
nema einir víti
slíkan löst saman.”

“Othin, again |
at evening come,
If a woman thou wouldst win;
Evil it were |
if others than we
Should know of such a sin.”

99. Aptr ek hvarf |
ok unna þóttumk,
vísun vilja frā;
hitt ek hugða, |
at ek hafa mynda
geþ hennar allt ok gaman.

Away I hastened, |
hoping for joy,
And careless of counsel wise;
Well I believed |
that soon I should win
Measureless joy with the maid.

100. Svā kvam ek næst, |
at en nýta vas
vígdrótt ǫll of vakin;
meþ brinnǫndum ljōsum |
ok bornum við—
svā vǫrumk vilstigr of vitaþr.

So came I next |
when night it was,
The warriors all were awake;
With burning lights |
and waving brands
I learned my luckless way.

- 101.** Auk nār morni, | At morning then, |
es ek vas enn of kominn, when once more I came,
þā vas saldrōtt of sofin; And all were sleeping still,
grey eitt fannk þā | A dog found |
ennar gōþu konu in the fair one's place,
bundit beþjum ā. Bound there upon her bed.
- 102.** Mōrg es gōþ mār, | Many fair maids, |
ef gōrva kannar, if a man but tries them,
hugbrigþ víþ hali: False to a lover are found;
þā þat reyndak, | That did I learn |
es et rāþspaka when I longed to gain
teygþak ā flærþir fljōþ; With wiles the maiden wise;
hōþungar hverrar | Foul scorn was my meed |
leitapi mer et horska man, from the crafty maid,
ok hafþak þess vātki vīfs. And nought from the woman I won.

Rask adds at the beginning of this stanza two lines from a late paper manuscript, running:

Few are so good | that false they are never
To cheat the mind of a man.

(Fār er svā gōþr, | at ei gōra megi
hugi brigþa hals.)

He makes these two lines plus lines 1 and 2 a full stanza, and line 3, 4, 5, and 6 a second stanza.

* * *

- 103.** Heima glaþr gumi | Though glad at home, |
ok víþ gesti reifr and merry with guests,
sviþr skal of sik vesa; A man shall be wary and wise;

minnugr ok mōlugr,	The sage and shrewd,
ef hann vill margfrōþr vesa,	wide wisdom seeking,
opt skal gōþs geta;	Must see that his speech be fair;
fimbulfambi heitir	A fool is he named
sās fātt kann segja,	who nought can say,
þat's ōsnotrs aþal.	For such is the way of the witless.

With this stanza the subject changes abruptly, and apparently the virtues of fair speech, mentioned in the last three lines, account for the introduction, from what source cannot be known, of the story of Othin and the mead of song (stanzas 104–110).

104. Enn aldna jōtun sōttak,	I found the old giant,
nu emk aþtr of kominn,	now back have I fared,
fātt gatƿ þegjandi þar;	Small gain from silence I got;
mōrgum orþum	Full many a word,
mǣltak ī minn frama	my will to get,
ī Suttungs solum.	I spoke in Suttung's hall.

The giant *Suttung* (“the old giant”) possessed the magic mead, a draught of which conferred the gift of poetry. Othin, desiring to obtain it, changed himself into a snake, bored his way through a mountain into Suttung's home, made love to the giant's daughter, Gunnloth, and by her connivance drank up all the mead. Then he flew away in the form of an eagle, leaving Gunnloth to her fate. While with Suttung he assumed the name of Bolverk (“the Evil-Doer”).

105. Rata munn	The mouth of Rati
lētumk rūms of fā	made room for my passage,
auk of grjōt gnaga,	And space in the stone he gnawed;
yfir ok undir	Above and below
stōpumk jōtna vegir,	the giants' paths lay,
svā hǣttak hōfþi til.	So rashly I risked my head.

Rati (“the Traveller”): the gimlet with which Othin bored through the mountain to reach Suttung’s home.

106. Gunnloþ gøfumk gollnum stōli ā drykk ens dýra mjaþar; ill iþgjöld lētk hana eptir hafa sīns ens heila hugar, sīns ens svāra sefa.	Gunnloth gave on a golden stool A drink of the marvelous mead; A harsh reward did I let her have For her heroic heart, And her spirit troubled sore.
---	--

Probably either the fourth or the fifth line is a spurious addition.

107. Vel keypts litar hefk vel notit, fās es frōþum vant; þvīt Ōþrörir es nū upp kominn ā vē alda jaþars.	The well-earned beauty well I enjoyed, Little the wise man lacks; So Othrörir now has up been brought To the midst of the men of earth.
---	--

Othrörir: here the name of the magic mead itself, whereas in stanza 141 it is the name of the vessel containing it. Othin had no intention of bestowing any of the precious mead upon men, but as he was flying over the earth, hotly pursued by Suttung, he spilled some of it out of his mouth, and in this way mankind also won the gift of poetry.

108. Ifi ’rumk ā, at værak enn kominn jotna gørþum ōr, nema Gunnlaþar nytak, ennar gōþu konu,	Hardly, methinks, would I home have come, And left the giants’ land, Had not Gunnloth helped me, the maiden good,
--	---

þeirars lögþumk arm yfir.

Whose arms about me had been.

109. Ens hindra dags |

The day that followed, |

gengu hrīmpursar

the frost-giants came,

[Hōva rāþs at fregna]

[Some word of Hor to win,]

Hōva hōllu ī;

And into the hall of Hor;

at Bolverki spurðu, |

Of Bolverk they asked, |

ef væri með þöndum kominn were he back midst the gods,

eða hefði Suttungr of soitt.

Or had Suttung slain him there?

Hor: Othin (“the High One”). The frost-giants, Suttung’s kinsmen, appear not to have suspected Othin of being identical with Bolverk, possibly because the oath referred to in stanza 110 was an oath made by Othin to Suttung that there was no such person as Bolverk among the gods. The giants, of course, fail to get from Othin the information they seek concerning Bolverk, but Othin is keenly conscious of having violated the most sacred of oaths, that sworn on his ring.

110. Baugeiþ Ōþinn |

On his ring swore Othin |

hykk at unnit hafi,

the oath, methinks;

hvat skal hans trygðum trúa?

Who now his troth shall trust?

Suttung svikvinn |

Suttung’s betrayal |

hann lēt sumbli frā

he sought with drink,

ok grōtta Gunnlōðu.

And Gunnloth to grief he left.

* * *

111. Māl’s at þylja |

It is time to chant |

þular stōli ā:

from the chanter’s stool;

Urþar brunni at

By the wells of Urth I was,

sāk ok þagþak,	I saw and was silent,
sāk ok hugþak,	I saw and thought,
hlýddak ā Hōva mōl.	And heard the speech of Hor.
of rūnar heyrþak dōma,	[Of runes heard I words,
nē of rōþum þogþu	nor were counsels wanting,
Hōva hōllu at,	At the hall of Hor,
Hōva hōllu ī;	In the hall of Hor;
heyrþak segja svā:	Such was the speech I heard.]

With this stanza begins the *Loddfafnismol* (stanzas 111–138). Loddfafnir is apparently a wandering singer, who, from his “chanter’s stool,” recites the verses which he claims to have received from Othin. *Wells of Urth*: cf. *Voluspo*, 19 and note. *Urth* (“the Past”) is one of the three Norns. This stanza is apparently in corrupt form, and editors have tried many experiments with it, both in rejecting lines as spurious and in rearranging the words and punctuation. It looks rather as though the first four lines formed a complete stanza, and the last four had crept in later. The phrase translated “the speech of Hor” is “Hova mol,” later used as the title for the entire poem.

112. Rōþumk þēr, Loddfāfnir!	I rede thee, Loddfafnir!
en þū rōþ nemir,	and hear thou my rede,—
njōta mundu, ef nemr,	Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:	Great thy gain if thou learnest:
nōtt þū rīsat	Rise not at night,
nema ā njōsn seir	save if news thou seekest,
eþa leitir þer innan ūt staþar.	Or fain to the outhouse wouldst fare.

Lines 1–3 are the formula, repeated (abbreviated in the manuscript) in most of the stanzas, with which Othin prefaces his counsels to Loddfafnir, and throughout this section, except in stanzas 111 and 138, Loddfafnir represents himself as simply quoting Othin’s words. The material is closely analogous to that contained in the first eighty stanzas of the poem. In some cases (e. g., stanzas 117, 119, 121, 126 and 130) the formula precedes a full four-line stanza instead of two (or three) lines.

113. Rōpumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
fjōlkunnigri konu |
skalta ī faþmi sofa,
svāt hōn lyki þik lipum.

I rede thee, Loddafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
Beware of sleep |
on a witch's bosom,
Nor let her limbs ensnare thee.

114. Hōn svā gørir, |
at þū gair eigi
þings nē þjōþarmāls;
mat þū villat |
nē mannskis gaman,
ferr þū sorgafullr at sofa.

Such is her might |
that thou hast no mind
For the council or meeting of men;
Meat thou hatest, |
joy thou hast not,
And sadly to slumber thou farest.

115. Rōpumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
annars konu |
teyg þēr aldri
eyrarūnu at.

I rede thee, Loddafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
Seek never to win |
the wife of another,
Or long for her secret love.

116. Rōpumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:

I rede thee, Loddafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:

ā fjalli eða firði |
ef þik fara tíðir,
fāsktu at virði vel.

If o'er mountains or gulfs |
thou fain wouldst go,
Look well to thy food for the way.

117. Rōpumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
illan mann |
lāttu aldri
ōhopp at þēr vita,
þvīt af illum manni |
fær þū aldri
gjöld ens gōða hugar.

I rede thee, Loddafafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
An evil man |
thou must not let
Bring aught of ill to thee;
For an evil man |
will never make
Reward for a worthy thought.

118. Ofarla bīta |
ek sā einum hal
orþ illrar konu;
flārōþ tunga |
varþ hōnum at fjōrlagi,
ok þeygi of sanna sōk.

I saw a man |
who was wounded sore
By an evil woman's word;
A lying tongue |
his death-blow launched,
And no word of truth there was.

119. Rōpumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:

I rede thee, Loddafafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:

veiztu ef vin ātt |
þanns þū vel truir,
farðu at finna opt,
þvīt hrīsi vex |
ok hōvu grasi
vegr es vātki trøþr.

If a friend thou hast |
whom thou fully wilt trust,
Then fare to find him oft;
For brambles grow |
and waving grass
On the rarely trodden road.

120. Rōpumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
gōþan mann |
teyg þer at gamanrūnum
ok nem līknargaldr meþan lifir.

I rede thee, Loddafafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
A good man find |
to hold in friendship,
And give heed to his healing charms.

121. Rōpumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
vin þīnum |
ves þū aldrigi
fyrri at flaumslitum;
sorg etr hjarta, |
ef þū segja nē naïr
einhverjum allan hug.

I rede thee, Loddafafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
Be never the first |
to break with thy friend
The bond that holds you both;
Care eats the heart |
if thou canst not speak
To another all thy thought.

122. Rōþumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
orþum skipta |
þū skalt aldri
viþ ōsvinna apa;

I rede thee, Loddafafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
Exchange of words |
with a witless ape
Thou must not ever make.

123. þvīt af illum manni |
mundu aldri
gōþs laun of geta,
en gōþr maþr |
mun þik gōrva mega
līknfastan at lofi.

For never thou mayst |
from an evil man
A good requital get;
But a good man oft |
the greatest love
Through words of praise will win thee.

124. Sifjum's þā blandat, |
hverrs segja ræþr
einum allan hug;
allt es betra |
an sē brigþum at vesa,
esat vinr es vilt eitt segir.

Mingled is love |
when a man can speak
To another all his thought;
Nought is so bad |
as false to be,
No friend speaks only fair.

125. Rōþumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:

I rede thee, Loddafafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:

þrimr orþum senna |
skalta þēr viþ verra mann;
opt enn betri bilar,
þās enn verri vegr.

With a worse man speak not |
three words in dispute,
Ill fares the better oft
When the worse man wields a sword.

126. Rōpumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
skōsmiþr þū vesir |
nē skeptismiþr,
nema þēr sjōlfum sēr:
skōr's skapaþr illa |
eþa skapt sē rangt,
þā's þēr bōls beþit.

I rede thee, Loddafafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
A shoemaker be, |
or a maker of shafts,
For only thy single self;
If the shoe is ill made, |
or the shaft prove false,
Then evil of thee men think.

127. Rōpumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
hvars bōl kannt, |
kveþu þat bōlvi at
ok gefat fiōndum friþ.

I rede thee, Loddafafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
If evil thou knowest, |
as evil proclaim it,
And make no friendship with foes.

128. Rōpumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,

I rede thee, Loddafafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,

þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
illu feginn |
ves þū aldrigi,
en lāt þer at gōþu getit.

Great thy gain if thou learnest:
In evil never |
joy shalt thou know,
But glad the good shall make thee.

129. Rōþumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
upp lita |
skalattu ī orrostu—
gjalti glīkir |
verþa gumna synir—
sīþr þitt of heilli halir.

I rede thee, Loddafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
Look not up |
when the battle is on,—
[Like madmen the sons |
of men become,—]
Lest men bewitch thy wits.

Line 5 is apparently interpolated.

130. Rōþumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
ef vill þēr gōþa konu |
kveþja at gamanrūnum
ok fā fōgnuþ af,
fōgru skalt heita |
ok lāta fast vesa;
leiþisk manngi gott, ef getr.

I rede thee, Loddafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
If thou fain wouldst win |
a woman's love,
And gladness get from her,
Fair be thy promise |
and well fulfilled;
None loathes what good he gets.

131. Rōþumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
varan biþk þik vesa |
ok eigi ofvaran;
ves viþ ǫl varastr |
ok viþ annars konu
ok viþ þat et þriþja, |
at þik þjōfar nē leiki.

I rede thee, Loddafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
I bid thee be wary, |
but be not fearful;
[Beware most with ale |
or another's wife,
And third beware |
lest a thief outwit thee.]

Lines 5–6 probably were inserted from a different poem.

132. Rōþumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
at hāþi nē hlātri |
hafðu aldrigi
gest nē ganganda;

I rede thee, Loddafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
Scorn or mocking |
ne'er shalt thou make
Of a guest or a journey-goer.

133. opt vitu ōgǫrla |
þeirs sitja inni fyrir,
hvers þeir'u kyns es koma.
[Esat maþr svā gōþr, |
at galli nē fylgi,
nē svā illr, at einugi dugi.]

Oft scarcely he knows |
who sits in the house
What kind is the man who comes;
None so good is found |
that faults he has not,
Nor so wicked that nought he is worth.

Many editors reject the last two lines of this stanza as spurious, putting the first two lines at the end of the preceding stanza. Others, attaching lines 3 and 4 to stanza 132, insert as the first two lines of stanza 133 two lines from a late paper manuscript, running:

Evil and good | do men's sons ever
Mingled bear in their breasts.

(Lesti ok kosti | bera ljōþa synir
blandna brjōstum ī.)

134. Rōþumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |

en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
at hōrum þul |
hlæþu aldrigi,
opt's gott þats gamlir kveþa;
opt ōr skōrpum belg |
skilin orþ koma
þeims hangir meþ hōm
ok skollir meþ skrōm
ok vāfir meþ vilmōgum.

I rede thee, Loddfafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
Scorn not ever |
the gray-haired singer,
Oft do the old speak good;
[Oft from shrivelled skin |
come skillful counsels,
Though it hang with the hides,
And flap with the pelts,
And is blown with the bellies.]

Presumably the last four lines have been added to this stanza, for the parallelism in the last three makes it probable that they belong together. The wrinkled skin of the old man is compared with the dried skins and bellies of animals kept for various purposes hanging in an Icelandic house.

135. Rōþumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |

en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:

I rede thee, Loddfafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:

gest nē geyja |
ne ā grind hrökkvir,
get þū vōluþum vel.

Curse not thy guest, |
nor show him thy gate,
Deal well with a man in want.

136. Ramt's þat trē |
es rīþa skal
ollum at upploki:
baug þū gef, |
eþa þat biþja mun
þēr lās hvers ā liþu.

Strong is the beam |
that raised must be
To give an entrance to all;
Give it a ring, |
or grim will be
The wish it would work on thee.

This stanza suggests the dangers of too much hospitality. The beam (bolt) which is ever being raised to admit guests becomes weak thereby. It needs a ring to help it in keeping the door closed, and without the ability at times to ward off guests a man becomes the victim of his own generosity.

137. Rōþumk þēr, Loddfāfnir! |
en þū rōþ nemir,
njōta mundu, ef nemr,
þēr munu gōþ, ef getr:
hvars ǫl drekk, |
kjōstu þēr jarþarmegin—
[þvīt jorþ tekr viþ ǫlpri, |
en eldr viþ sōttum,
eik viþ abbindi, |
ax viþ fjǫlkyngi,
hǫll viþ hýrōgi, |
heiptum skal māna kveþja,

I rede thee, Loddafnir! |
and hear thou my rede,—
Profit thou hast if thou hearest,
Great thy gain if thou learnest:
When ale thou drinkest, |
seek might of earth,
[For earth cures drink, |
and fire cures ills,
The oak cures tightness, |
the ear cures magic,
Rye cures rupture, |
the moon cures rage,

beiti við bitsöttum, |
en við þólvi rúnar —]
fold skal við flōþi taka.

Grass cures the scab, |
and runes the sword-cut;]
The field absorbs the flood.

The list of “household remedies” in this stanza is doubtless interpolated. Their nature needs no comment here.

138. Nū 'ru Hōva mōl |
kveþin hōllu ī,
allþorf ýta sunum,
ōþorf jōtna sunum;
heill sās kvaþ! |
heill sās kann!
njōti sās nam!
heilir þeirs hlýddu ā!

Now are Hor's words |
spoken in the hall,
Kind for the kindred of men,
Cursed for the kindred of giants:
Hail to the speaker, |
and to him who learns!
Profit be his who has them!
Hail to them who hearken!

In the manuscript this stanza comes at the end of the entire poem, following stanza 165. Most recent editors have followed Müllenhoff in shifting it to this position, as it appears to conclude the passage introduced by the somewhat similar stanza 111.

* * *

139. Veitk at hekk |
vindga meiþi ā
nætr allar niu,
geiri undaþr |
ok gefinn Ōþni,
sjalfr sjölfum mēr,
[ā þeim meiþi, |
es manngi veit,

I ween that I hung |
on the windy tree,
Hung there for nights full nine;
With the spear I was wounded, |
and offered I was
To Othin, myself to myself,
On the tree that none |
may ever know

hvers hann af rōtum rinnr.]

What root beneath it runs.

With this stanza begins the most confusing part of the *Hovamol*: the group of eight stanzas leading up to the Ljothatal, or list of charms. Certain paper manuscripts have before this stanza a title: “Othin’s Tale of the Runes.” Apparently stanzas 139, 140 and 142 are fragments of an account of how Othin obtained the runes; 141 is erroneously inserted from some version of the magic mead story (cf. stanzas 104–110); and stanzas 143, 144, 145, and 146 are from miscellaneous sources, all, however, dealing with the general subject of runes. With stanza 147 a clearly continuous passage begins once more. *The windy tree*: the ash Yggdrasil (literally “the Horse of Othin,” so called because of this story), on which Othin, in order to win the magic runes, hanged himself as an offering to himself, and wounded himself with his own spear. Lines 5 and 6 have presumably been borrowed from *Svipdagsmol*, 30.

140. Viþ hleifi mik sældu |

nē viþ hornigi;

nȳstak niþr þaþan:

namk upp rūnar, |

ōpandi namk;

fell ek aptr ofan.

None made me happy |

with loaf or horn,

And there below I looked;

I took up the runes, |

shrieking I took them,

And forthwith back I fell.

141. Fimbulljōþ niu |

namk af enum frægja syni

Boþþorns, Bestlu foþur;

ok drykk of gatk, |

ens dýra mjaþar

ausenn Ōþrōri.

Nine mighty songs |

I got from the son

Of Bolthorn, Bestla’s father;

And a drink I got |

of the goodly mead

Poured out from Othrōrir.

This stanza, interrupting as it does the account of Othin’s winning the runes, appears to be an interpolation. The meaning of the stanza is most obscure. Bolthorn was Othin’s grandfather, and Bestla his mother. We do not know the name of the uncle here mentioned, but it has been suggested that this son of Bolthorn was Mimir (cf. *Voluspo*, 27 and note, and 47 and note). In any case, the nine magic songs which he learned from his uncle seem to have enabled him to win the magic mead (cf. stanzas 104–110). Concerning *Othrōrir*, here

used as the name of the vessel containing the mead, cf. stanza 107 and note.

142. Þā namk frǣvask	Then began I to thrive,
ok frōþr vesa	and wisdom to get,
ok vaxa ok vel hafask:	I grew and well I was;
orþ mēr af orþi	Each word led me on
orþs leitaþi,	to another word,
verk mēr af verki verks.	Each deed to another deed.

143. Rūnar munt finna	Runes shalt thou find,
ok rāþna stafi,	and fateful signs,
es gørþu ginnregin	That the king of singers colored,
ok fāþi fimbulþulr,	And the mighty gods have made;
mjok stōra stafi,	Full strong the signs,
mjok <i>stinnar rūnar</i>	full mighty the signs
es reist ragna hrōþr:	That the ruler of gods doth write.

This and the following stanza belong together, and in many editions appear as a single stanza. They presumably come from some lost poem on the authorship of the runes. Lines 2 and 3 follow line 4 in the manuscript; the transposition was suggested by Bugge. *The king of singers*: Othin. The magic signs (runes) were commonly carved in wood, then colored red.

144. Ōþinn meþ ōsum,	Othin for the gods,
en fyr ǫlfum Daïnn,	Dain for the elves,
Dvalinn dvergum fyrir,	And Dvalin for the dwarfs,
Alsviþr meþ jǫtnum,	Alsvith for giants
en fyr y̅ta sunum	and all mankind,
reistk sjalfr sumar.	And some myself I wrote.

Dain and *Dvalin*: dwarfs; cf. *Voluspo*, 14, and note. Dain, however, may here be one of the elves rather than the dwarf of that name. The two names also appear together in *Grimnismol*, 33, where they are applied to two of the four harts that nibble at the topmost twigs of Yggdrasil. *Alsvith* (“the All Wise”) appears nowhere else as a giant’s name. *Myself*: Othin. We have no further information concerning the list of those who wrote the runes for the various races, and these four lines seem like a confusion of names in the rather hazy mind of some reciter.

145. Veiztu hvē rīsta skal,	Knowest how one shall write,
veiztu hvē rāþa skal?	knowest how one shall rede?
veiztu hvē fā skal,	Knowest how one shall tint,
veiztu hvē freista skal?	knowest how one makes trial?
veiztu hvē biþja skal,	Knowest how one shall ask,
veiztu hvē blōta skal?	knowest how one shall offer?
veiztu hvē senda skal,	Knowest how one shall send,
veiztu hvē soa skal?	knowest how one shall sacrifice?

This Malahattr stanza appears to be a regular religious formula, concerned less with the runes which one “writes” and “tints” (cf. stanza 79) than with the prayers which one “asks” and the sacrifices which one “offers” and “sends.” Its origin is wholly uncertain, but it is clearly an interpolation here. In the manuscript the phrase “knowest?” is abbreviated after the first line.

146. Betra’s ōbeþit	Better no prayer
an sē ofblōtit,	than too big an offering,
ey sēr til gildis gjǫf;	By thy getting measure thy gift;
betra’s ōsent	Better is none
an sē ofsoit	than too big a sacrifice,
...	...
Svā Þundr of reist	So Thund of old wrote
fyr þjōþa røk,	ere man’s race began,

þar hann upp of reis,	Where he rose on high
es hann aptr of kwam.	when home he came.

This stanza as translated here follows the manuscript reading, except in assuming a gap between lines 3 and 5. In Vigfusson and Powell's *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* the first three lines have somehow been expanded into eight. The last two lines are almost certainly misplaced; Bugge suggests that they belong at the end of stanza 144. *Thund*: another name for Othin. *When home he came*: presumably after obtaining the runes as described in stanzas 139 and 140.

* * *

147. Þau ljōþ kannk	The songs I know
es kannat þjōþans kona	that king's wives know not,
nē mannskis mōgr:	Nor men that are sons of men;
hjōlp heitir eitt,	The first is called help,
en þat þēr hjalpa mun	and help it can bring thee
viþ sorgum ok sūtum ok sōkum.	In sorrow and pain and sickness.

With this stanza begins the Ljothatal, or list of charms. The magic songs themselves are not given, but in each case the peculiar application of the charm is explained. The passage, which is certainly approximately complete as far as it goes, runs to the end of the poem. In the manuscript and in most editions line 4 falls into two half-lines, running:

In sickness and pain | and every sorrow.

148. Þat kannk annat	A second I know,
es þurfu yta synir	that men shall need
þeirs vilja læknar lifa	Who leechcraft long to use;
...	...
...	...
...	...

Second, etc., appear in the manuscript as Roman numerals. The manuscript indicates no gap after line 2.

149. Þat kannk et þriþja, |
ef mēr verþr þorþ mikil
hapti við heiptmōgu:
eggjar deyfik |
minna andskota,
bītat þeim vōpn nē velir.

A third I know, |
if great is my need
Of fetters to hold my foe;
Blunt do I make |
mine enemy's blade,
Nor bites his sword or staff.

150. Þat kannk et fjōrþa, |
ef mēr fyrþar bera
bōnd at boglimum:
svā ek gel, |
at ek ganga mā,
sprettr af fōtum fjōturr,
en af hōndum hapt.

A fourth I know, |
if men shall fasten
Bonds on my bended legs;
So great is the charm |
that forth I may go,
The fetters spring from my feet,
Broken the bonds from my hands.

151. Þat kannk et fimta, |
ef sēk af fāri skotinn
flein ī folki vaþa:
flýgra svā stint, |
at ek stōþvigak,
ef ek hann sjōnum of sēk.

A fifth I know, |
if I see from afar
An arrow fly 'gainst the folk;
It flies not so swift |
that I stop it not,
If ever my eyes behold it.

152. Þat kannk et sētta, |
ef mik sārir þegn

A sixth I know, |
if harm one seeks

ā rōtum rās vípar:
ok þann hal, |
 es mik heipta kveþr,
eta mein heldr an mik.

With a sapling's roots to send me;
The hero himself |
 who wreaks his hate
Shall taste the ill ere I.

The sending of a root with runes written thereon was an excellent way of causing death. So died the Icelandic hero Grettir the Strong.

153. Þat kannk et sjaunda, |
 ef sēk sveipinn loga
sal of sessmögum
brinnrat svā breitt, |
 at ek bjargigak;
þann kannk galdr at gala.

A seventh I know, |
 if I see in flames
The hall o'er my comrades' heads;
It burns not so wide |
 that I will not quench it,
I know that song to sing.

154. Þat kannk et átta, |
 es ǫllum es
nytsamlikt at nema:
hvars hatr vex |
 meþ hildings sunum,
þat māk bōta brātt.

An eighth I know, |
 that is to all
Of greatest good to learn;
When hatred grows |
 among heroes' sons,
I soon can set it right.

155. Þat kannk et niunda, |
 ef mik nauþr of stendr
at bjarga fari ā floti:
vind ek kyrri |
 vāgi ā,
ok svæfik allan sæ.

A ninth I know, |
 if need there comes
To shelter my ship on the flood;
The wind I calm |
 upon the waves,
And the sea I put to sleep.

156. Þat kannk et tiunda, |
ef ek sē tūnriþur
leika lopti ā:
ek svā vinnk, |
at þær villar fara
sinna heimhama,
sinna heimhaga.

A tenth I know, |
what time I see
House-riders flying on high;
So can I work |
that wildly they go,
Showing their true shapes,
Hence to their own homes.

House-riders: witches, who ride by night on the roofs of houses, generally in the form of wild beasts. Possibly one of the last two lines is spurious.

157. Þat kannk et ellifta, |
ef skalk til orrostu
leiþa langvini:
und randir gelk, |
en þeir meþ rīki fara
heilir hildar til,
heilir hildi frā,
koma þeir heilir hvaþan.

An eleventh I know, |
if needs I must lead
To the fight my long-loved friends;
I sing in the shields, |
and in strength they go
Whole to the field of fight,
Whole from the field of fight,
And whole they come thence home.

The last line looks like an unwarranted addition, and line 4 may likewise be spurious.

158. Þat kannk et tolfata, |
ef sēk ā trē uppi
vāfa virgilnā:
svā ek rīst |
ok ī rūnum fāk,
at sā gengr gumi
ok mæilir viþ mik.

A twelfth I know, |
if high on a tree
I see a hanged man swing;
So do I write |
and color the runes
That forth he fares,
And to me talks.

Lines 4–5 are probably expanded from a single line.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 159. Þat kannk et þrettānda,
ef skalk þegn ungan
verpa vatni ā:
munat hann falla,
þōt ī folk komi,
hnīgra sā halr fyr hjōrum. | A thirteenth I know,
if athane full young
With water I sprinkle well;
He shall not fall,
though he fares mid the host,
Nor sink beneath the swords. |
|---|--|

The sprinkling of a child with water was an established custom long before Christianity brought its conception of baptism.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 160. Þat kannk et fjogrtānda,
ef skalk fyrþa liþi
telja tīva fyrir:
āsa ok alfa
ek kann allra skil,
fār kann ōsnotr svā. | A fourteenth I know,
if fain I would name
To men the mighty gods;
All know I well
of the gods and elves,
Few be the fools know this. |
|--|---|

- | | |
|---|---|
| 161. Þat kannk et fimtānda,
es gōl Þjōþrōrir
dvergr fyr Dellings durum:
afl gōl hann ōsum,
en qlfum frama,
hyggju Hrōptatȳ. | A fifteenth I know,
that before the doors
Of Delling sang Thjothrōrir the dwarf;
Might he sang for the gods,
and glory for elves,
And wisdom for Hroptatyr wise. |
|---|---|

This stanza, according to Müllenhoff, was the original conclusion of the poem, the phrase “a fifteenth” being inserted only after stanzas 162–165 had crept in. *Delling*: a seldom mentioned god who married Not (Night). Their son was Dag (Day). *Thjothrōrir*: not mentioned

elsewhere. *Hroptatyr*: Othin.

<p>162. Þat kannk et sextānda, ef vilk ens svinna mans hafa geþ allt ok gaman: hugi ek hverfi hvītarmri konu ok snýk hennar ǫllum sefa.</p>	<p>A sixteenth I know, if I seek delight To win from a maiden wise; The mind I turn of the white-armed maid, And thus change all her thoughts.</p>
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<p>163. Þat kannk et sjautjānda, at mik seint mun firrask et manunga man. </p>	<p>A seventeenth I know, so that seldom shall go A maiden young from me; </p>
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Some editors have combined these two lines with stanza 164. Others have assumed that the gap follows the first half-line, making “so that—from me” the end of the stanza.

<p>164. Ljōþa þessa mundu, Loddfāfnir! lengi vanr vesa, þōt þēr gōþ sei, ef geta mǣttir, nýt, ef þū nemr, þorf, ef þū þiggr.</p>	<p>Long these songs thou shalt, Loddfafnir, Seek in vain to sing; Yet good it were if thou mightest get them, Well, if thou wouldst them learn, Help, if thou hadst them.</p>
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This stanza is almost certainly an interpolation, and seems to have been introduced after the list of charms and the *Loddfafnismol* (stanzas 111–138) were combined in a single poem, for there is no other apparent excuse for the reference to Loddfafnir at this point. The words

“if thou mightest get them” are a conjectural emendation.

165. Þat kannk et áttjānda,	An eighteenth I know,
es ek æva kennik	that ne’er will I tell
mey nē manns konu —	To maiden or wife of man, —
allt es betra	The best is what none
es einn of kann,	but one’s self doth know,
þat fylgir ljōþa lokum —	So comes the end of the songs, —
nema þeiri einni,	Save only to her
es mik armi verr	in whose arms I lie,
eþa mīn systir seï	Or who else my sister is.

This stanza is almost totally obscure. The third and fourth lines look like interpolations.

Vafthruthnismol

The Ballad of Vafthruthnir

Introductory Note

The *Vafthruthnismol* follows the *Hovamol* in the Codex Regius. From stanza 20 on it is also included in the *Arnarnagnæan Codex*, the first part evidently having appeared on leaf now lost. Snorri quotes eight stanzas of it in the *Prose Edda*, and in his prose text closely paraphrases many others.

The poem is wholly in dialogue form except for a single narrative stanza (stanza 5). After a brief introductory discussion between Othin and his wife, Frigg, concerning the reputed wisdom of the giant Vafthruthnir, Othin, always in quest of wisdom, seeks out the giant, calling himself Gagnrath. The giant immediately insists that they shall demonstrate which is the wiser of the two, and propounds four questions (stanzas 11, 13, 15, and 17), each of which Othin answers. It is then the god's turn to ask, and he begins with a series of twelve numbered questions regarding the origins and past history of life. These Vafthruthnir answers, and Othin asks five more questions, this time referring to what is to follow the destruction of the gods, the last one asking the name of his own slayer. Again Vafthruthnir answers, and Othin finally propounds the unanswerable question: "What spake Othin himself in the ears of his son, ere in the bale-fire he burned?" Vafthruthnir, recognizing his questioner as Othin himself, admits his inferiority in wisdom, and so the contest ends.

The whole poem is essentially encyclopædic in character, and thus was particularly useful to Snorri in his preparation of the *Prose Edda*. The encyclopædic poem with a slight narrative outline seems to have been exceedingly popular; the *Grimnismol* and the much later *Alvissmol* represent different phases of the same type. The *Vafthruthnismol* and *Grimnismol* together, indeed, constitute a fairly complete dictionary of Norse mythology. There has been much discussion as to the probable date of the *Vafthruthnismol*, but it appears to belong to about the same period as the *Voluspo*: in other words, the middle of the tenth century. While there may be a few interpolated passages in the poem as we now have it, it is clearly a united whole, and evidently in relatively good condition.

Öþinn kvað:

1. "Rāþ mēr nū, Frigg! |
alls mik fara tīþir

Othin spake:

- "Counsel me, Frigg, |
for I long to fare,

at vitja Vafþrūþnis;	And Vafthruthnir fain would find;
forvitni mikla	fit wisdom old
kveþk mēr ā fornum stōfum	with the giant wise
viþ enn alsvinna jōtun.”	Myself would I seek to match.”

The phrases “Othin spake,” “Frigg spake,” etc., appear in abbreviated form in both manuscripts. *Frigg*: Othin’s wife; cf. *Voluspo*, 34 and note. *Vafthruthnir* (“the Mighty in Riddles”): nothing is known of this giant beyond what is told in this poem.

Frigg kvaþ:

2. “Heima letja |
mundak Herjafōþr
goþa gōrþum ī;
þvīt engi jōtun |
hugþak jafnramman
sem Vafþrūþni vesa.”

Frigg spake:

“Heerfather here |
at home would I keep,
Where the gods together dwell;
Amid all the giants |
an equal in might
To Vafthruthnir know I none.”

Heerfather (“Father of the Host”): Othin.

Ōþinn kvaþ:

3. “Fjōlþ ek fōr |
fjōlþ ek freistaþak,
fjōlþ of reyndak regin;
hitt viljak vita, |
hvē Vafþrūþnis
salakynni sei.”

Othin spake:

“Much have I fared, |
much have I found.
Much have I got from the gods;
And fain would I know |
how Vafthruthnir now
Lives in his lofty hall.”

Frigg kvað:

4. “Heill þū farir! |
 heill aptr komir!
 heill þu ā sinnum sēr!
 ðþi þēr dugi, |
 hvars skalt, Aldafǫþr!
 orþum mæla jǫtun.”

Frigg spake:

“Safe mayst thou go, |
 safe come again,
 And safe be the way thou wendest!
 Father of men, |
 let thy mind be keen
 When speech with the giant thou
 seekest.”

5. Fǫr þā Ōþinn |
 at freista orþspeki
 þess ens alsvinna jǫtuns:
 at hǫllu hann kvam |
 ok ātti † Ims faþir,
 inn gekk Yggr þegar.

The wisdom then |
 of the giant wise
 Forth did he fare to try;
 He found the hall |
 of the father of Im,
 And in forthwith went Ygg.

This single narrative stanza is presumably a later interpolation. *Im*: the name appears to be corrupt, but we know nothing of any son of Vafthruthnir. *Ygg* (“the Terrible”): Othin.

Ōþinn kvað:

6. “Heill þū, Valþrūþnir! |
 nū’mk ī hǫll kominn,
 ā þik sjalfan at sea;
 hitt viljak fyrst vita, |
 ef þū frǫþr seir
 eþa alsviþr, jǫtunn!”

Othin spake:

“Vafthruthnir, hail! |
 to thy hall am I come,
 For thyself I fain would see;
 And first would I ask |
 if wise thou art,
 Or, giant, all wisdom hast won.”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

7. “Hvat’s þat manna |
es ī mīnum sal
verpumpk orþi ā?
ūt nē kōmr |
ōrum hōllum frā,
nema þū enn snotrari seir.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Who is the man |
that speaks to me,
Here in my lofty hall?
Forth from our dwelling |
thou never shalt fare,
Unless wiser than I thou art.”

Öþinn kvað:

8. “Gagnrāþr heitik, |
nū’mk af gōngu kominn
þyrstr til þinna sala;
laþar þurfi |
hef ek lengi farit
ok andfanga, jötunn!”

Othin spake:

“Gagnrath they call me, |
and thirsty I come
From a journey hard to thy hall;
Welcome I look for, |
for long have I fared,
And gentle greeting, giant.”

Gagnrath (“the Gain-Counsellor”): Othin on his travels always assumes a name other than his own.

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

9. “Hvī þu þā, Gagnrāþr! |
mælisk af golfi fyrir?
farþu ī sess ī sal!
þā skal freista, |
hvaþarr fleira viti,
gestr eþa enn gamli þulr.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Why standest thou there |
on the floor whilst thou speakest?
A seat shalt thou have in my hall;
Then soon shall we know |
whose knowledge is more,
The guest’s or the sage’s gray.”

Öpinn kvað:

10. “Öaupugr maðr, |
 es til auþugs kómr,
 mæli þarft eða þegi!
 ofrmælgir mikil |
 hykk at illa geti
 hveims við kaldrifjaban kómr.”

Othin spake:

“If a poor man reaches |
 the home of the rich,
 Let him wisely speak or be still;
 For to him who speaks |
 with the hard of heart
 Will chattering ever work ill.”

This stanza sounds very much like many of those in the first part of the *Hovamol*, and may have been introduced here from some such source.

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

11. “Seg mér, Gagnrāþr! |
 alls þu ā golfi vill
 þíns of freista frama:

 hvē sá hestr heitir |
 es hverjan dregr
 dag of dröttmogu?”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Speak forth now, Gagnrath, |
 if there from the floor
 Thou wouldst thy wisdom make
 known:
 What name has the steed |
 that each morn anew
 The day for mankind doth draw?”

Öpinn kvað:

12. “Skinfaxi heitir |
 es enn skíra dregr
 dag of dröttmogu;
 hesta baztr |
 þykkir með Hreiðgotum,
 ey lýsir mōn af mari.”

Othin spake:

“Skinfaxi is he, |
 the steed who for men
 The glittering day doth draw;
 The best of horses |
 to heroes he seems,
 And brightly his mane doth burn.”

Skinfaxi: “Shining-Mane.”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

13. “Seg þat, Gagnrāþr! |
alls þu ā golfi vill
þíns of freista frama:

hvē sā jör heitir |
es austan dregr
nōtt of nýt regin?”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Speak forth now, Gagnrath, |
if there from the floor
Thou wouldst thy wisdom make
known:
What name has the steed |
that from East anew
Brings night for the noble gods?”

Here, and in general throughout the poem, the two-line introductory formulæ are abbreviated in the manuscripts.

Óþinn kvað:

14. “Hrīmfaxi heitir |
es hverja dregr
nōtt of nýt regin;
mēldropa fellir |
hann morgin hvern,
þaþan kōmr dōgg of dali.”

Othin spake:

“Hrimfaxi name they |
the steed that anew
Brings night for the noble gods;
Each morning foam |
from his bit there falls,
And thence come the dews in the
dales.”

Hrimfaxi: “Frosty-Mane.”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

15. “Seg þat, Gagnrāþr! |
alls þu ā golfi vill
þíns of freista frama:

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Speak forth now, Gagnrath, |
if there from the floor
Thou wouldst thy wisdom make
known:

hvē sū ō heitir |
 es deilir meþ jǫtna sunum
 grund auk meþ goþum?

What name has the river |
 that 'twixt the realms
 Of the gods and the giants goes?"

Ōþinn kvaþ:

16. "Ifing heitir ō |
 es deilir meþ jǫtna sunum
 grund auk meþ goþum;
 opin rinna |
 hōn skal of aldrdaga,
 verþrat īss ā ō."

Othin spake:

"Ifing is the river |
 that 'twixt the realms
 Of the gods and the giants goes;
 For all time ever |
 open it flows,
 No ice on the river there is."

Ifing: there is no other reference to this river, which never freezes, so that the giants cannot cross it.

Vafþrūþnir kvaþ:

17. "Seg þat, Gagnrāþr! |
 alls þu ā golfi vill
 þīns of freista frama:
 hvē sā vǫllr heitir |
 es finnask vīgi at
 Surtr ok en svǫsu goþ?"

Vafthruthnir spake:

"Speak forth now, Gagnrath, |
 if there from the floor
 Thou wouldst thy wisdom make
 known:
 What name has the field |
 where in fight shall meet
 Surt and the gracious gods?"

Surt: the ruler of the fire-world (Muspellsheim), who comes to attack the gods in the last battle; cf. *Voluspo*, 52.

Öpinn kvað:

18. “Vīgrīþr heitir vǫllr |
es finnask vīgi at
Surtr ok en svōsu goþ;
hundraþ rasta |
hann’s ā hverjan veg,
sā’s þeim vǫllr vitaþr.”

Othin spake:

“Vigrith is the field |
where in fight shall meet
Surt and the gracious gods;
A hundred miles |
each way does it measure.
And so are its boundaries set.”

Vigrith: “the Field of Battle.” Snorri quotes this stanza. *A hundred miles:* a general phrase for a vast distance.

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

19. “Frōþr est, gestr! |
farþu ā bekk jǫtuns,
ok mælumsk ī sessi saman!
hofþi veþja |
vit skulum hǫllu ī,
gestr! of geþspeki.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Wise art thou, guest! |
To my bench shalt thou go,
In our seats let us speak together;
Here in the hall |
our heads, O guest,
Shall we wager our wisdom upon.”

With this stanza Vafthruthnir, sufficiently impressed with his guest’s wisdom to invite him to share his own seat, resigns the questioning to Othin.

Öpinn kvað:

20. “Seg þat et eina, |
ef þitt ōþi dugir
ok þū, Vafþrūþnir! vitir:
hvaþan jǫrþ of kvam |
eþa upphiminn
fyrst, enn frōþi jǫtunn?”

Othin spake:

“First answer me well, |
if thy wisdom avails,
And thou knowest it, Vafthruthnir,
now:
In earliest time |
whence came the earth,
Or the sky, thou giant sage?”

The fragmentary version of this poem in the *Arnarnagnæan Codex* begins in the middle of the first line of this stanza.

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

21. “Ör Ymis holdi |
vas jörþ of sköpuþ
en ör beinum björg,
himinn ör hausi |
ens hrīmkalda jötuns,
en ör sveita sær.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Out of Ymir’s flesh |
was fashioned the earth,
And the mountains were made of his
bones;
The sky from the frost-cold |
giant’s skull,
And the ocean out of his blood.”

Ymir: the giant out of whose body the gods made the world; cf. *Voluspo*, 3 and note.

Öþinn kvað:

22. “Seg þat annat, |
ef þitt öþi dugir
ok þū, Vafþrūþnir! vitir:
hvaþan māni of kvam, |
sās ferr menn yfir,
eþa söl et sama?

Othin spake:

“Next answer me well, |
if thy wisdom avails,
And thou knowest it, Vafthruthnir,
now:
Whence came the moon, |
o’er the world of men
That fares, and the flaming sun?”

In this and in Othin’s following questions, both manuscripts replace the words “next,” “third,” “fourth,” etc., by Roman numerals.

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

23. “Mundilferi heitir, |
hann es Māna faþir
ok svā Sōlar et sama;

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Mundilferi is he |
who begat the moon,
And fathered the flaming sun;

<p>himin hverfa þau skulu hverjan dag öldum at ārtali.”</p>	<p>The round of heaven each day they run, To tell the time for men.”</p>
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Mundilferi (“the Turner”?): known only as the father of Mani (the Moon) and Sol (the Sun). Note that, curiously enough, Mani is the boy and Sol the girl. According to Snorri, Sol drove the horses of the sun, and Mani those of the moon, for the gods, indignant that they should have been given such imposing names, took them from their father to perform these tasks. Cf. *Grimnismol*, 37.

Öþinn kvað:

24. “Seg þat et þriþja, |
 alls þik svinnan kveþa,
 ef þū, Vafþrūþnir! vitir:
 hvaþan dagr of kwam, |
 sās ferr drōtt yfir,
 eþa nōtt meþ niþum?”

Othin spake:

“Third answer me well, |
 if wise thou art called,
 If thou knowest it, Vafthruthnir, now:
 Whence came the day, |
 o’er mankind that fares,
 Or night with the narrowing moon?”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

25. “Dellingr heitir, |
 hann es Dags faþir,
 en Nōtt vas Nqrvi borin;
 ný ok niþ |
 skōpu nýt regin
 öldum at ārtali.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“The father of day |
 is Delling called,
 And the night was begotten by Nor;
 Full moon and old |
 by the gods were fashioned,
 To tell the time for men.”

Delling (“the Dayspring”? Probably another form of the name, Dogling, meaning “Son of the Dew” is more correct): the husband of Not (Night); their son was Dag (Day); cf. *Hovamol*, 161. *Nor*: Snorri calls the father of Night Norvi or Narfi, and puts him among the giants. Lines 3–4: cf. *Voluspo*, 6.

Öpinn kvað:

26. “Seg þat et fjörþa, |
all þik frōþan kveþa,
ef þū, Vafþrūþnir! vitir:
hvaþan vetr of kwam |
eþa varmt sumar
fyrst meþ frōþ regin?”

Othin spake:

“Fourth answer me well, |
if wise thou art called,
If thou knowest it, Vafthruthnir, now:
Whence did winter come, |
or the summer warm,
First with the gracious gods?”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

27. “Vindsvalr heitir, |
hann es Vetrar faþir,
en Svōsuþr Sumars;”
... |
...
...

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Vindsval he was |
who was winter’s father,
And Svōsuth summer begat;”
... |
...
...

Neither the *Regius* nor the *Arnarnagnæan Codex* indicates a lacuna. Most editors have filled out the stanza with two lines from late paper manuscripts:

And both of these | shall ever be,
Till the gods to destruction go.

(ār of bæþi þau | skulu ey fara
unz rjūfask regin.)

Bugge ingeniously paraphrases Snorri’s prose:

Vindsval’s father | was Vosuth called,
And rough is all his race.

(Vindsvals faþir | vas Vōsuþr of heitinn
oll es sū ætt til qtul.)

Vindsval: “the Wind-Cold,” also called Vindljoni, “the Wind-Man.” *Svosuth*: “the Gentle.”

Ópinn kvað:

28. “Seg þat et fimta, |
alls þik frōþan kveða,
ef þū, Vafþrūþnir! vitir:
hverr jǫtna elztr |
eða Ymis niþja
yrþi í árdaga?”

Othin spake:

“Fifth answer me well, |
if wise thou art called,
If thou knowest it, Vafthruthnir, now:
What giant first |
was fashioned of old,
And the eldest of Ymir’s kin?”

Ymir’s kin: the giants.

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

29. “Ørōfi vetra, |
āþr vāri jǫrþ of skǫpuþ,
þā vas Bergelmir borinn;
Þrūþgelmir |
vas þess faþir,
en Aurgelmir afi.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Winters unmeasured |
ere earth was made
Was the birth of Bergelmir;
Thruthgelmir’s son |
was the giant strong,
And Aurgelmir’s grandson of old.”

Bergelmir: when the gods slew Ymir in order to make the world out of his body, so much blood flowed from him that all the frost-giants were drowned except Bergelmir and his wife, who escaped in a boat; cf. stanza 35. Of *Thruthgelmir* (“the Mightily Burning”) we know nothing, but Aurgelmir was the frost-giants’ name for Ymir himself. Thus Ymir was the first of the giants, and so Othin’s question is answered.

Ópinn kvað:

30. “Seg þat et sētta, |
alls þik svinnan kveða,
ef þū, Vafþrūþnir! vitir:
hvāþan Aurgelmir |
kvam meþ jǫtna sunum

Othin spake:

“Sixth answer me well, |
if wise thou art called,
If thou knowest it, Vafthruthnir, now:
Whence did Aurgelmir come |
with the giants’ kin,

fyrst, enn frōþi jötunn?”

Long since, thou giant sage?”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

31. “Ör Ēlivōgum |
stukku eitrdropar,
svā ōx unz ör varþ jötunn;
þar örar ættir |
kvōmu allar saman,
því’s þat æ allt til atalt.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Down from Elivagar |
did venom drop,
And waxed till a giant it was;
And thence arose |
our giants’ race,
And thus so fierce are we found.”

Snorri quotes this stanza, and the last two lines are taken from his version, as both of the manuscripts omit them. *Elivagar* (“Stormy Waves”): Mogk suggests that this river may have been the Milky Way. At any rate, the venom carried in its waters froze into ice-banks over Ginnunga-gap (the “yawning gap” referred to in *Voluspo*, 3), and then dripped down to make the giant Ymir.

Öpinn kvað:

32. “Seg þat et sjaunda, |
alls þik svinnan kveþa,
ef þū, Vafþrūþnir! vitir:
hvē sā bōrn of gat |
enn baldni jötunn,
es hann hafþit gýgjar gaman?”

Othin spake:

“Seventh answer me well, |
if wise thou art called,
If thou knowest it, Vafthruthnir, now:
How begat he children, |
the giant grim,
Who never a giantess knew?”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

33. “Und hendi vaxa |
kvōpu hrīmpursi
mey ok mōg saman;

Vafthruthnir spake:

“They say ’neath the arms |
of the giant of ice
Grew man-child and maid together;

fōtr við fōti |
 gat ens frōþa jötuns
 sexhöfðaðan sun.”

And foot with foot |
 did the wise one fashion
 A son that six heads bore.”

Snorri gives, without materially elaborating on it, the same account of how Ymir’s son and daughter were born under his left arm, and how his feet together created a son. That this offspring should have had six heads is nothing out of the ordinary, for various giants had more than the normal number, and Ymir’s mother is credited with a little matter of nine hundred heads; cf. *Hymiskvitha*, 8. Of the career of Ymir’s six headed son we know nothing; he may have been the Thruthgelmir of stanza 29.

Öpinn kvað:

34. “Seg þat et átta, |
 alls þik svinnan kveða,
 ef þū, Vafþrūþnir! vitir:
 hvat fyrst of mant |
 eða fremst of veizt?
 þū ’st alsviðr, jötunn!”

Othin spake:

“Eighth answer me well, |
 if wise thou art called,
 If thou knowest it, Vafthruthnir, now:
 What farthest back |
 dost thou bear in mind?
 For wide is thy wisdom, giant!”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

35. “Ørōfi vetra |
 āþr vāri jörð of sköpuð,
 þā vas Bergelmir borinn;
 þat ek fyrst of man, |
 es sa enn frōþi jötunn
 ā vas lūþr of lagiþr.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Winters unmeasured |
 ere earth was made
 Was the birth of Bergelmir;
 This first knew I well, |
 when the giant wise
 In a boat of old was borne.”

Snorri quotes this stanza. *Bergelmir*: on him and his boat cf. stanza 29 and note.

Öpinn kvað:

36. “Seg þat et niunda, |
 alls þik svinnan kveða,
 ef þū, Vafþrūþnir! vitir:
 hvaðan vindr of kōmr |
 sās ferr vāg yfir?
 æ menn hann sjalfan of sea.”

Othin spake:

“Ninth answer me well, |
 if wise thou art called
 If thou knowest it, Vafthruthnir, now:
 Whence comes the wind |
 that fares o’er the waves
 Yet never itself is seen?”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

37. “Hræsvelgr heitir |
 es sitr ā himins enda,
 jōtunn ī arnar ham;
 af hans vāngjum |
 kveða vind koma
 alla menn yfir.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“In an eagle’s guise |
 at the end of heaven
 Hræsvelg sits, they say;
 And from his wings |
 does the wind come forth
 To move o’er the world of men.”

Snorri quotes this stanza. *Hræsvelg* (“the Corpse-Eater”) on this giant in eagle’s form cf. *Voluspo*, 50, and *Skirnismol*, 27.

Öpinn kvað:

38. “Seg þat et tiunda, |
 alls þū tīva røk
 ǫll, Vafþrūþnir! vitir:
 hvaðan Njōrþr of kvam |
 meþ niþjum āsa—
 [hofum ok hōrgum |
 hann ræþr hundmōrgum—]
 ok vasat hann ǫsum alinn?”

Othin spake:

“Tenth answer me now, |
 if thou knowest all
 The fate that is fixed for the gods:
 Whence came up Njorth |
 to the kin of the gods,—
 [Rich in temples |
 and shrines he rules,—]
 Though of gods he was never begot?”

With this stanza the question-formula changes, and Othin's questions from this point on concern more or less directly the great final struggle. Line 4 is presumably spurious. *Njorth*: on Njorth and the Wanes, who gave him as a hostage to the gods at the end of their war, cf. *Voluspo*, 21 and note.

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

39. “Ī Vanaheimi |
 skōpu hann vīs regin
 ok seldu at gīslingu goþum;
 ī aldar røk |
 hann mun aptr koma
 heim meþ vīsum vønum.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“In the home of the Wanes |
 did the wise ones create him,
 And gave him as pledge to the gods;
 At the fall of the world |
 shall he fare once more
 Home to the Wanes so wise.”

Ōþinn kvað:

40. “Seg þat et ellifta, |
 alls þik svinnan kveþa,
 ef þū, Vafþrūþnir! vitir:
 hverir’u ytar |
 es ī Ōþins tūnum
 høggvask hverjan dag?”

Othin spake:

“Eleventh answer me well, |
 . . .
 . . .
 What men . . . |
 in . . . home
 Each day to fight go forth?”

In both manuscripts, apparently through the carelessness of some older copyist, stanzas 40 and 41 are run together: “Eleventh answer me well, what men in the home mightily battle each day? They fell each other, and fare from the fight all healed full soon to sit.” Luckily Snorri quotes stanza 41 in full, and the translation is from his version. Stanza 40 should probably run something like this:

Eleventh answer me well, | if thou knowest all
 The fate that is fixed for the gods:
 What men are they | who in Othin’s home
 Each day to fight go forth?

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

41. “Allir einherjar |
 ōþins tūnum ī
hoggvask hverjan dag;
val þeir kjōsa |
 ok rīpa vīgi frā,
sitja meirr of sáttir saman.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“The heroes all |
 in Othin’s hall
Each day to fight go forth;
They fell each other, |
 and fare from the fight
All healed full soon to sit.”

The heroes: those brought to Valhall by the Valkyries. After the day’s fighting they are healed of their wounds and all feast together.

ōþinn kvað:

42. “Seg þat et tolfta, |
 hvī þū tīva røk
oll, Vafþrūþnir! vitir?
frā jōtna rūnum |
 ok allra gōða
segir þu et sannasta,
enn alsvinni jōtunn!”

Othin spake:

“Twelfth answer me now |
 how all thou knowest
Of the fate that is fixed for the gods;
Of the runes of the gods |
 and the giants’ race
The truth indeed dost thou tell,
[And wide is thy wisdom, giant!]”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

43. “Frā jōtna rūnum |
 ok allra gōða
ek kann segja satt,
þvīt hvern hefk heim of komit:
niu kvamk heima |
 fyr Niflhel neþan,
hinig deyja [ōr helju] halir.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“Of the runes of the gods |
 and the giants’ race
The truth indeed can I tell,
[For to every world have I won;]
To nine worlds came I, |
 to Niflhel beneath,
The home where dead men dwell.”

Nine worlds: cf. *Voluspo*, 2. *Niflhel*: “Dark-Hell.”

Öþinn kvað:

44. “Fjǫlþ ek fōr, |
fjǫlþ ek freistaþak,
fjǫlþ of reyndak regin:
hvat lifir manna, |
þās enn mæra līþr
fimbulvetr meþ firum?”

Othin spake:

“Much have I fared, |
much have I found,
Much have I got of the gods:
What shall live of mankind |
when at last there comes
The mighty winter to men?”

The mighty winter: Before the final destruction three winters follow one another with no intervening summers.

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

45. “Līf ok Līfþrasir, |
en þau leynask munu
ī holti Hoddmimis;
morgindǫggvar |
þau ser at mat hafa
en þaþan af aldir alask.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“In Hoddmimir’s wood |
shall hide themselves
Lif and Lifthrasir then;
The morning dews |
for meat shall they have,
Such food shall men then find.”

Snorri quotes this stanza. *Hoddmimir’s wood*: probably this is the ash-tree Yggdrasil, which is sometimes referred to as “Mimir’s Tree,” because Mimir waters it from his well; cf. *Voluspo*, 27 and note, and *Svipdagsmol*, 30 and note. Hoddmimir is presumably another name for Mimir. *Lif* (“Life”) and *Lifthrasir* (“Sturdy of Life”?): nothing further is known of this pair, from whom the new race of men is to spring.

Öþinn kvað:

46. “Fjǫlþ ek fōr, |
fjǫlþ ek freistaþak,
fjǫlþ of reyndak regin:

Othin spake:

“Much have I fared, |
much have I found,
Much have I got of the gods:

hvaðan kómr sól |
 ā enn slēttu himin,
 þās þessi hefr Fenrir farit?”

Whence comes the sun |
 to the smooth sky back,
 When Fenrir has snatched it forth?”

Fenrir: there appears to be a confusion between the wolf Fenrir (cf. *Voluspo*, 39 and note) and his son, the wolf Skoll, who steals the sun (cf. *Voluspo*, 40 and note).

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

47. “Eina dóttur |
 berr Alfroþull,
 āþr henni Fenrir fari;
 sū skal rīða, |
 þās regin deyja,
 mǫður’ brautir mæðr.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“A daughter bright |
 Alfrothul bears
 Ere Fenrir snatches her forth;
 Her mother’s paths |
 shall the maiden tread
 When the gods to death have gone.”

Snorri quotes this stanza. *Alfrothul* (“the Elf-Beam”): the sun.

Óþinn kvað:

48. “Fjǫlþ ek fōr, |
 fjǫlþ ek freistaþak,
 fjǫlþ of reyndak regin:
 hverjar ’u meyjar |
 es līða mar yfir,
 frǫþgeþjapar fara?”

Othin spake:

“Much have I fared, |
 much have I found,
 Much have I got of the gods:
 What maidens are they, |
 so wise of mind.
 That forth o’er the sea shall fare?”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

49. “Þrjár þjóðir |
 falla þorp yfir
 meylla Mǫgþrasis,

Vafthruthnir spake:

“O’er Mogthrasir’s hill |
 shall the maidens pass,
 And three are their throngs that come;

hamingjur einar |
þærs í heimi 'rū,
þō þær meþ jōtnum alask.”

They all shall protect |
the dwellers on earth,
Though they come of the giants' kin.”

Mogthrasir (“Desiring Sons”): not mentioned elsewhere in the Eddic poems, or by Snorri. *The maidens*: apparently Norns, like the “giant-maids” in *Voluspo*, 8. These Norns, however, are kindly to men.

Öpinn kvað:

50. “Fjōlþ ek fōr, |
fjōlþ ek freistaþak,
fjōlþ of reyndak regin:
hverir rāþa æsir |
eignum goþa,
þās sloknar Surta logi?”

Othin spake:

“Much have I fared, |
much have I found,
Much have I got of the gods:
Who then shall rule |
the realm of the gods,
When the fires of Surt have sunk?”

Surt: cf. *Voluspo*, 52 and note.

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

51. “Vīþarr ok Vāli |
byggva vē goþa,
þās sloknar Surta logi;
Mōþi ok Magni |
skulu Mjōllni hafa
Vingnis at vīgþroti.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“In the gods' home Vithar |
and Vali shall dwell,
When the fires of Surt have sunk;
Mothi and Magni |
shall Mjollnir have
When Vingnir falls in fight.”

Vithar: a son of Othin, who slays the wolf Fenrir; cf. *Voluspo*, 54 and note. *Vali*: the son whom Othin begot to avenge Baldr's death; cf. *Voluspo*, 33 and note. *Mothi* (“Wrath”) and *Magni* (“Might”): the sons of the god Thor, who after his death inherit his famous hammer, Mjollnir. Concerning this hammer cf. especially *Thrymskvitha*, passim. *Vingnir* (“the Hurler”): Thor. Concerning his death cf. *Voluspo*, 56. This stanza is quoted by Snorri.

Öpinn kvað:

52. “Fjǫlþ ek fōr, |
fjǫlþ ek freistaþak,
fjǫlþ of reyndak regin:
hvat verþr Öþni |
at aldragi,
þās of rjūfask regin?”

Othin spake:

“Much have I fared, |
much have I found,
Much have I got of the gods:
What shall bring the doom |
of death to Othin,
When the gods to destruction go?”

Vafþrūþnir kvað:

53. “Ulfr gleypa |
mun Aldafǫþr,
þess mun Viþarr vreaka;
kalda kjapta |
hann klyfja mun
vitnis vīgi at.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“The wolf shall fell |
the father of men,
And this shall Vithar avenge;
The terrible jaws |
shall he tear apart,
And so the wolf shall he slay.”

The wolf: Fenrir; cf. *Voluspo*, 53 and 54.

Öpinn kvað:

54. “Fjǫlþ ek fōr, |
fjǫlþ ek freistaþak,
fjǫlþ of reyndak regin:
hvat mælti Öþinn, |
āþr ā bāl stigi,
sjalfr ī eyra syni?”

Othin spake:

“Much have I fared, |
much have I found,
Much have I got from the gods:
What spake Othin himself |
in the ears of his son,
Ere in the bale-fire he burned?”

His son: Baldr. Bugge changes lines 3–4 to run:

What did Othin speak | in the ear of Baldr,
When to the bale-fire they bore him?

(. . . | ī eyra Baldri
āþr [hann] vas ā bāl of borinn?)

For Baldr's death cf. *Voluspo*, 32 and note. The question is, of course, unanswerable save by Othin himself, and so the giant at last recognizes his guest.

Vafþrūþnir kvaþ:

55. “Ey manni þat veit, |
hvat þu ī ārdaga
sagþir ī eyra syni:
feigum munni |
mæltak mīna forna stafi
auk of ragna røk.
Nū við Ōþin |
deildak orþspeki,
þū'st æ vīsastr vera.”

Vafthruthnir spake:

“No man can tell |
what in olden time
Thou spak'st in the ears of thy son;
With fated mouth |
the fall of the gods
And mine olden tales have I told;
With Othin in knowledge |
now have I striven,
And ever the wiser thou art.”

Fated: in stanza 19 Vafthruthnir was rash enough to wager his head against his guest's on the outcome of the contest of wisdom, so he knows that his defeat means his death.

Grimnismol

The Ballad of Grimnir

Introductory Note

The *Grimnismol* follows the *Vafthruthnismol* in the *Codex Regius* and is also found complete in the *Arnarnagnæan Codex*, where also it follows the *Vafthruthnismol*. Snorri quotes over twenty of its stanzas.

Like the preceding poem, the *Grimnismol* is largely encyclopedic in nature, and consists chiefly of proper names, the last forty-seven stanzas containing no less than two hundred and twenty-five of these. It is not, however, in dialogue form. As Müllenhoff pointed out, there is underneath the catalogue of mythological names a consecutive and thoroughly dramatic story. Othin, concealed under the name of Grimnir, is through an error tortured by King Geirröth. Bound between two blazing fires, he begins to display his wisdom for the benefit of the king's little son, Agnar, who has been kind to him. Gradually he works up to the great final moment, when he declares his true name, or rather names, to the terrified Geirröth, and the latter falls on his sword and is killed.

For much of this story we do not have to depend on guesswork, for in both manuscripts the poem itself is preceded by a prose narrative of considerable length, and concluded by a brief prose statement of the manner of Geirröth's death. These prose notes, of which there are many in the Eddic manuscripts, are of considerable interest to the student of early literary forms. Presumably they were written by the compiler to whom we owe the Eddic collection, who felt that the poems needed such annotation in order to be clear. Linguistic evidence shows that they were written in the twelfth or thirteenth century, for they preserve none of the older word-forms which help us to date many of the poems two or three hundred years earlier.

Without discussing in detail the problems suggested by these prose passages, it is worth noting, first, that the Eddic poems contain relatively few stanzas of truly narrative verse; and second, that all of them are based on narratives which must have been more or less familiar to the hearers of the poems. In other words, the poems seldom aimed to tell stories, although most of them followed a narrative sequence of ideas. The stories themselves appear to have lived in oral prose tradition, just as in the case of the sagas; and the prose notes of the manuscripts, in so far as they contain material not simply drawn from the poems themselves, are relics of this tradition. The early Norse poets rarely conceived verse as a suitable means for direct story telling, and in some of the poems even the simplest action is told in prose "links" between dialogue stanzas.

The applications of this fact, which has been too often overlooked, are almost limitless, for it suggests a still unwritten chapter in the history of ballad poetry and the so-called “popular” epic. It implies that narrative among early peoples may frequently have had a period of prose existence before it was made into verse, and thus puts, for example, a long series of transitional stages before such a poem as the *Iliad*. In any case, the prose notes accompanying the Eddic poems prove that in addition to the poems themselves there existed in the twelfth century a considerable amount of narrative tradition, presumably in prose form, on which these notes were based by the compiler.

Interpolations in such a poem as the *Grimnismol* could have been made easily enough, and many stanzas have undoubtedly crept in from other poems, but the beginning and end of the poem are clearly marked, and presumably it has come down to us with the same essential outline it had when it was composed, probably in the first half of the tenth century.

Hraupungr konungr ātti tvā sonu,
hēt annarr Agnarr, en annarr
Geirrøþr.

King Hrauthung had two sons: one was
called Agnar, and the other Geirröth.

Agnarr var tíu vetra, en Geirrøþr átta
vetra.

Agnar was ten winters old, and Geirröth
eight.

Þeir reru tveir ā bāti með dorgar sīn-
ar at smāfiski; vindr rak þā ī haf út.

Once they both rowed in a boat with
their fishing-gear to catch little fish;
and the wind drove them out into the
sea.

Ī nāttmyrkri brutu þeir við land ok
gengu upp, fundu kotbōnda einn; þar
vāru þeir um vetrinn.

In the darkness of the night they were
wrecked on the shore; and going up,
they found a poor peasant, with whom
they stayed through the winter.

Kerling fōstraþi Agnar, en karl fōstra-
þi Geirrøþ ok kendi honum rāþ.

The housewife took care of Agnar, and
the peasant cared for Geirröth, and
taught him wisdom.

At vāri fekk karl þeim skip; en er
þau kerling leiddu þā til strandar, þā
mælti karl einmæli við Geirrøþ.

In the spring the peasant gave him a
boat; and when the couple led them to
the shore, the peasant spoke secretly
with Geirröth.

Þeir fengu byr ok kōmu til stōþva fōþ-
ur sīns.

They had a fair wind, and came to their
father’s landing-place.

Geirrøþr var fram í skipi; hann hljöp upp á land, en hratt út skipinu ok mælti: “Farðu nú þar er smyl hafi þik!”

Skipit rak í haf út.

En Geirrøþr gekk upp til bæjar; honum var þar vel fagnat, en faðir hans var þá andaðr.

Var þá Geirrøþr til konungs tekinn, ok varþ maðr ágætr.

Óþinn ek Frigg sātu í Hliðskjálfu ok sá um heima alla.

Óþinn mælti: “Sér þu Agnar föstra þinn, hvar hann elr börn víð gýgi í hellinum?”

En Geirrøþr föstri minn er konungr ok sitr nú at landi.”

Frigg segir: “Hann er matnīþingr sá, at hann kvelr gesti sína, ef honum þykkja ofmargir koma.”

Óþinn segir, at þat er in mesta lygi; þau vepja um þetta mál.

Frigg sendi eskimey sína Fullu til Geirrøþar.

Hon bað konung varaz, at eigi fyrgørþi honum fjölkunnigr maðr sá er þar var kominn í land, ok sagði þat mark á, at engi hundr var svá ölmr, at á hann mundi hlaupa.

Geirröth was forward in the boat; he leaped up on land, but pushed out the boat and said, “Go thou now where evil may have thee!”

The boat drifted out to sea.

Geirröth, however, went up to the house, and was well received, but his father was dead.

Then Geirröth was made king, and became a renowned man.

Othin and Frigg sat in Hlithskjolf and looked over all the worlds.

Othin said: “Seest thou Agnar, thy fosterling, how he begets children with a giantess in the cave?”

But Geirröth, my fosterling, is a king, and now rules over his land.”

Frigg said: “He is so miserly that he tortures his guests if he thinks that too many of them come to him.”

Othin replied that this was the greatest of lies; and they made a wager about this matter.

Frigg sent her maid-servant, Fulla, to Geirröth.

She bade the king beware lest a magician who was come thither to his land should bewitch him, and told this sign concerning him, that no dog was so fierce as to leap at him.

En þat var enn mesti hēgōmi, at
Geirrøþr konungr væri eigi matgōþr;
ok þō lætr hann handtaka þann
mann er eigi vildu hundar ā rāþa.

Sā var ī feldi blām ok nefndiz Grimnir
ok sagþi ekki fleira frā sēr, þōtt hann
væri at spurþr.

Konungr lēt hann pīna til sagna ok
setja milli elda tveggja, ok sat hann
þar ātta nætr.

Geirrøþr konungr ātti þā son tīu
vetra gamlan ok hēt Agnarr eptir
brōþur hans.

Agnarr gekk at Grimni ok gaf honum
horn fullt at drekka ok sagþi, at kon-
ungr gōrþi illa, er hann lēt pīna hann
saklausan.

Grimnir drakk af; þā var eldrinn svā
kominn, at feldrinn brann af Grimni.

Hann kvaþ:

Now it was a very great slander that
King Geirröth was not hospitable; but
nevertheless he had them take the man
whom the dogs would not attack.

He wore a dark-blue mantle and called
himself Grimnir, but said no more about
himself, though he was questioned.

The king had him tortured to make him
speak, and set him between two fires,
and he sat there eight nights.

King Geirröth had a son ten winters
old, and called Agnar after his father's
brother.

Agnar went to Grimnir, and gave him a
full horn to drink from, and said that
the king did ill in letting him be tor-
mented without cause.

Grimnir drank from the horn; the fire
had come so near that the mantle
burned on Grimnir's back.

He spake:

The texts of the two manuscripts differ in many minor details. *Hrauthung*: this mythical king is not mentioned elsewhere. *Geirröth*: the manuscripts spell his name in various ways. *Frigg*: Othin's wife. She and Othin nearly always disagreed in some such way as the one outlined in this story. *Hlithskjolf* ("Gate-Shelf"): Othin's watch-tower in heaven, whence he can overlook all the nine worlds; cf. *Skirnismol*, introductory prose. *Grimnir*: "the Hooded One."

1. Heitr est, hripuþr! |
ok heldr til mikill;
gongumk firr, funi!
loþi sviþnar, |
þōt ā lopt berak,

Hot art thou, fire! |
too fierce by far;
Get ye now gone, ye flames!
The mantle is burnt, |
though I bear it aloft,

brinnumk feldr fyrir.

And the fire scorches the fur.

2. Ātta nǣtr |

'Twixt the fires now |

 satk milli elda hēr,

 eight nights have I sat,

svāt mēr manngi mat nē baup,

And no man brought meat to me,

nema einn Agnarr, |

Save Agnar alone, |

 es einn skal rāpa

 and alone shall rule

Geirrøþar sunr *Gotum*.

Geirröth's son o'er the Goths.

In the original lines 2 and 4 are both too long for the meter, and thus the true form of the stanza is doubtful. For line 4 both manuscripts have “the land of the Goths” instead of simply “the Goths.” The word “Goths” apparently was applied indiscriminately to any South-Germanic people, including the Burgundians as well as the actual Goths, and thus here has no specific application; cf. *Gripisspo*, 35 and note.

3. Heill skalt, Agnarr! |

Hail to thee, Agnar! |

 alls þik heilan biþr

 for hailed thou art

Veratyr vesa;

By the voice of Veratyr;

eins drykkjar |

For a single drink |

 þū skalt aldri

 shalt thou never receive

betri gjöld geta.

A greater gift as reward.

Veratyr (“Lord of Men”): Othin. The “gift” which Agnar receives is Othin’s mythological lore.

4. Land es heilagt |

The land is holy |

 es ek liggja sē

 that lies hard by

ōsum ok ǫlfum nǣr:

The gods and the elves together;

en ī Þrūpheimi |

And Thor shall ever |

 skal Þōrr vesa,

 in Thruthheim dwell,

unz of rjūfask regin.

Till the gods to destruction go.

Thruthheim (“the Place of Might”): the place where Thor, the strongest of the gods, has his hall, Bilskirnir, described in stanza 24.

5. Ydalir heita |
 þars Ullr hefr
 sēr of gǫrva sali;
 Alfheim Frey |
 gǫfu ī ārdaga
 tīvar at tannfeī.

Ydalir call they |
 the place where Ull
 A hall for himself hath set;
 And Alfheim the gods |
 to Freyr once gave
 As a tooth-gift in ancient times.

Ydalir (“Yew-Dales”): the home of Ull, the archer among the gods, a son of Thor’s wife, Sif, by another marriage. The wood of the yew-tree was used for bows in the North just as it was long afterwards in England. *Alfheim*: the home of the elves. *Freyr*: cf. *Skirnismol*, *introductory prose* and note. *Tooth-gift*: the custom of making a present to a child when it cuts its first tooth is, according to Vigfusson, still in vogue in Iceland.

6. Bǫr’s enn þriþi, |
 es blīþ regin
 silfri þokþu sali:
 Vālaskjalf heitir |
 es vēlti sēr
 ǫss ī ārdaga.

A third home is there, |
 with silver thatched
 By the hands of the gracious gods:
 Valaskjolf is it, |
 in days of old
 Set by a god for himself.

Valaskjolf (“the Shelf of the Slain”): Othin’s home, in which is his watch-tower, Hlithskjolf. Gering identifies this with Valhall, and as that is mentioned in stanza 8, he believes stanza 6 to be an interpolation.

7. Sökkvabekkr heitir enn fjörþi, |
 en þar svalar knegu
 unnir glymjā yfir:

Sökkvabekk is the fourth, |
 where cool waves flow,
 And amid their murmur it stands;

þar þau Æpinn ok Sāga	There daily do Othin
drekka of alla daga	and Saga drink
glöþ ör gollnum kerum.	In gladness from cups of gold.

Sökkvabekk (“the Sinking Stream”): of this spot and of Saga, who is said to live there, little is known. Saga may be an hypostasis of Frigg, but Snorri calls her a distinct goddess, and the name suggests some relation to history or story-telling.

8. Glap̄sheimr heitir enn fimti	The fifth is Glathsheim,
þars en gollbjarta	and gold-bright there
Valhöll víþ of þrumir;	Stands Valhall stretching wide;
en þar Hröþtr	And there does Othin
kýss hverjan dag	each day choose
vāpn̄daup̄a vera.	The men who have fallen in fight.

Glathsheim (“the Place of Joy”): Othin’s home, the greatest and most beautiful hall in the world. *Valhall* (“Hall of the Slain”): cf. *Voluspo*, 31 and note. Valhall is not only the hall whither the slain heroes are brought by the Valkyries, but also a favorite home of Othin.

9. Mjök es auþkent	Easy is it to know
þeims til Æpins koma	for him who to Othin
salkynni at sea:	Comes and beholds the hall;
skoþtum’s rann rept,	Its rafters are spears,
skjöldum’s salr þakiþr,	with shields is it roofed,
brynjum of bekki straît.	On its benches are breastplates strewn.

10. Mjök es auþkent	Easy is it to know
þeims til Æpins koma	for him who to Othin
salkynni at sea:	Comes and beholds the hall;

vargr hangir |
fyr vestan dyrr
ok drūpir ǫrn yfir.

There hangs a wolf |
by the western door,
And o'er it an eagle hovers.

The opening formula is abbreviated in both manuscripts. *A wolf*: probably the wolf and the eagle were carved figures above the door.

11. Þrymheimr heitir enn sētti, |
es Þjazi bjō,
sa enn āmōtki jōtunn;
en nū Skaði byggvir, |
skīr brūþr goða,
fornar toptir fōður.

The sixth is Thrymheim, |
where Thjazi dwelt,
The giant of marvelous might;
Now Skathi abides, |
the god's fair bride,
In the home that her father had.

Thrymheim (“the Home of Clamor”): on this mountain the giant Thjazi built his home. The god, or rather Wane, Njorth (cf. *Voluspo*, 21, note) married Thjazi's daughter, Skathi. She wished to live in her father's hall among the mountains, while Njorth loved his home, Noatun, by the sea. They agreed to compromise by spending nine nights at Thrymheim and then three at Noatun, but neither could endure the surroundings of the other's home, so Skathi returned to Thrymheim, while Njorth stayed at Noatun. Snorri quotes stanzas 11–15.

12. Breiðablik 'rū en sjaundu, |
en þar Baldr hefr
sēr of gǫrva sali:
ā þvī landi |
es ek liggja veit
fæsta feiknstafi.

The seventh is Breithablik; |
Baldr has there
For himself a dwelling set,
In the land I know |
that lies so fair,
And from evil fate is free.

Breithablik (“Wide-Shining”): the house in heaven, free from everything unclean, in which Baldr (cf. *Voluspo*, 32, note), the fairest and best of the gods, lived.

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|--|---|
| <p>13. Himinbjörg 'ru en ȝttu,
 en þar Heimdall kveþa
 vǫngum valda ok veum:
 þar vǫrþr gōþa
 drekkr ī vǣru ranni
 glǫþr enn gōþa mjōþ.</p> | <p>Himinbjörg is the eighth,
 and Heimdall there
 O'er men holds sway, it is said;
 In his well-built house
 does the warder of heaven
 The good mead gladly drink.</p> |
|--|---|

Himinbjörg ("Heaven's Cliffs"): the dwelling at the end of the bridge Bifröst (the rainbow), where Heimdall (cf. *Voluspo*, 27) keeps watch against the coming of the giants. In this stanza the two functions of Heimdall—as father of mankind (cf. *Voluspo*, 1 and note, and *Rígsthula*, introductory prose and note) and as warder of the gods—seem both to be mentioned, but the second line in the manuscripts is apparently in bad shape, and in the editions is more or less conjectural.

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| <p>14. Folkvangr 's enn niundi,
 en þar Freyja rǣþr
 sessa kostum ī sal:
 halfan val
 hōn kǣss hverjan dag,
 en halfan Ōþinn ā.</p> | <p>The ninth is Folkvang,
 where Freyja decrees
 Who shall have seats in the hall;
 The half of the dead
 each day does she choose,
 And half does Oðin have.</p> |
|--|---|

Folkvang ("Field of the Folk"): here is situated Freyja's hall, Sessrymnir ("Rich in Seats"). Freyja, the sister of Freyr, is the fairest of the goddesses, and the most kindly disposed to mankind, especially to lovers. *Half of the dead*: Mogk has made it clear that Freyja represents a confusion between two originally distinct divinities: the wife of Oðin (Frigg) and the northern goddess of love. This passage appears to have in mind her attributes as Oðin's wife. Snorri has this same confusion, but there is no reason why the Freyja who was Freyr's sister should share the slain with Oðin.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>15. Glitnir 's enn tiundi,
 hann es golli studdr
 ok silfri þakþr et sama:</p> | <p>The tenth is Glitnir;
 its pillars are gold,
 And its roof with silver is set;</p> |
|--|---|

en þar Forseti	There most of his days
byggvir flestan dag	does Forseti dwell,
ok svæfir allar sakar.	And sets all strife at end.

Glitnir (“the Shining”): the home of Forseti, a god of whom we know nothing beyond what Snorri tells us: “Forseti is the son of Baldr and Nanna, daughter of Nep. All those who come to him with hard cases to settle go away satisfied; he is the best judge among gods and men.”

16. Noatūn ’ru en elliftu,	The eleventh is Noatun;
en þar Njorþr hefr	there has Njorth
sēr of gǫrva sali:	For himself a dwelling set;
manna þengill	The sinless ruler
enn meinsvani	of men there sits
hōtimbruþum hǫrgi ræþr.	In his temple timbered high.

Noatun (“Ships’-Haven”): the home of Njorth, who calms the waves; cf. stanza 11 and *Voluspo*, 21.

17. Hrīsi vex	Filled with growing trees
ok hōvu grasi	and high-standing grass
Vīþars land Vīþi:	Is Vithi, Vithar’s land;
en þar mǫgr	But there did the son
of lǣzk af mars baki	from his steed leap down,
frōkn at hefna fǫþur.	When his father he fain would avenge.

Vithi: this land is not mentioned elsewhere. *Vithar* avenged his father, Othin, by slaying the wolf Fenrir.

18. Andhrimnir	In Eldhrimnir
lætr ī Eldhrimni	Andhrimnir cooks

Sæhrimni soþinn,
fleska bazt: |
en þat fair vitu,
viþ hvat einherjar alask.

Sæhrimnir's seething flesh, —
The best of food, |
but few men know
On what fare the warriors feast.

Stanzas 18–20 appear also in Snorri's *Edda*. Very possibly they are an interpolation here. *El-dhrimnir* ("Sooty with Fire"): the great kettle in Valhall, wherein the gods' cook, *Andhrimnir* ("The Sooty-Faced") daily cooks the flesh of the boar *Sæhrimnir* ("The Blackened"). His flesh suffices for all the heroes there gathered, and each evening he becomes whole again, to be cooked the next morning.

19. Gera ok Freka |
seþr gunntamiþr
hrōþugr Herjafōþr:
en viþ vīn eitt |
vāpnqōfugr
ōþinn æ lifir.

Freki and Geri |
does Heerfather feed,
The far-famed fighter of old:
But on wine alone |
does the weapon-decked god,
Othin, forever live.

Freki ("The Greedy") and *Geri* ("The Ravenous"): the two wolves who sit by Othin's side at the feast, and to whom he gives all the food set before him, since wine is food and drink alike for him. *Heerfather*: Othin.

20. Huginn ok Muninn |
fljūga hverjan dag
jǫrmungrund yfir:
oumk of Hugin, |
at hann aptr nē komi,
þō seumk meirr of Munin.

O'er Mithgarth Hugin |
and Munin both
Each day set forth to fly;
For Hugin I fear |
lest he come not home,
But for Munin my care is more.

Mithgarth ("The Middle Home"): the earth. *Hugin* ("Thought") and *Munin* ("Memory"): the two ravens who sit on Othin's shoulders, and fly forth daily to bring him news of the world.

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| <p>21. Þýtr Þund,
 unir Þjóðvitnis
 fiskr flōþi ī:
 ārstraumr
 þykkir ofmikill
 valglaumi at vaða.</p> | <p>Loud roars Thund,
 and Thjothvitnir's fish
 joyously fares in the flood;
 Hard does it seem
 to the host of the slain
 To wade the torrent wild.</p> |
|---|---|

Thund ("The Swollen" or "The Roaring"): the river surrounding Valhall. *Thjothvitnir's fish*: presumably the sun, which was caught by the wolf Skoll (cf. *Voluspo*, 40), Thjothvitnir meaning "the mighty wolf." Such a phrase, characteristic of all Skaldic poetry, is rather rare in the *Edda*. The last two lines refer to the attack on Valhall by the people of Hel; cf. *Voluspo*, 51.

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| <p>22. Valgrind heitir
 es stendr velli ā,
 heilōg fyr helgum durum;
 forn's sū grind,
 en þat faīr vitu,
 hvē's ī lās of lokin.</p> | <p>There Valgrind stands,
 the sacred gate,
 And behind are the holy doors;
 Old is the gate,
 but few there are
 Who can tell how it tightly is locked.</p> |
|---|--|

Valgrind ("The Death-Gate"): the outer gate of Valhall; cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 68 and note.

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| <p>23. Fimm hundruð dura
 ok of fjōrum tōgum
 hykk ā Valhōllu vesa;
 ātta hundruð einherja
 ganga ōr einum durum,
 þās þeir fara víþ vitni at vega.</p> | <p>Five hundred doors
 and forty there are,
 I ween, in Valhall's walls;
 Eight hundred fighters
 through one door fare
 When to war with the wolf they go.</p> |
|--|---|

This and the following stanza stand in reversed order in *Regius*. Snorri quotes stanza 23 as a proof of the vast size of Valhall. The last two lines refer to the final battle with Fenrir and the other enemies.

24. Fimm hundruþ golfa	Five hundred rooms
ok of fjōrum tøgum	and forty there are
hykk Bilskirni meþ bugum;	I ween, in Bilskirnir built;
ranna þeira	Of all the homes
es ek rept vita	whose roofs I beheld,
mīns veitk mest magar.	My son's the greatest meseemed.

This stanza is almost certainly an interpolation, brought in through a confusion of the first two lines with those of stanza 23. Its description of Thor's house, Bilskirnir (cf. stanza 4 and note) has nothing to do with that of Valhall. Snorri quotes the stanza in his account of Thor.

25. Heiþrūn heitir geit	Heithrun is the goat
es stendr hōllu ā	who stands by Heerfather's hall,
[Herjafōþrs]	
ok bītr af Lærāþs limum;	And the branches of Lærath she bites;
skapker fylla	The pitcher she fills
hōn skal ens skīra mjaþar,	with the fair, clear mead,
knaat sū veig vanask.	Ne'er fails the foaming drink.

The first line in the original is, as indicated in the translation, too long, and various attempts to amend it have been made. *Heithrun*: the she-goat who lives on the twigs of the tree *Lærath* (presumably the ash Yggdrasil), and daily gives mead which, like the boar's flesh, suffices for all the heroes in Valhall. In Snorri's *Edda* Gangleri foolishly asks whether the heroes drink water, whereto Har replies, "Do you imagine that Othin invites kings and earls and other noble men, and then gives them water to drink?"

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| <p>26. Hjǫrtr heitir Eikþyrnir
 es stendr hǫllu ā
 [Herjafoþrs]
 ok bītr af Lærāþs limum;
 en af hans hornum
 drýpr ī Hvergelmi,
 þaþan eigu vǫtn ǫll vega.</p> | <p>Eikthyrnir is the hart
 who stands by Heerfather's hall

 And the branches of Lærath he bites;
 From his horns a stream
 into Hvergelmir drops,
 Thence all the rivers run.</p> |
|--|---|

Eikthyrnir (“The Oak-Thorned,” i.e., with antlers, “thorns,” like an oak): this animal presumably represents the clouds. The first line, like that of stanza 25, is too long in the original. *Lærath*: cf. stanza 25, note. *Hvergelmir*: according to Snorri, this spring, “the Cauldron-Roaring,” was in the midst of Niflheim, the world of darkness and the dead, beneath the third root of the ash Yggdrasil. Snorri gives a list of the rivers flowing thence nearly identical with the one in the poem.

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| <p>27. Sīþ ok Vīþ,
 Sækin ok Ækin,
 Svǫl ok Gunnþrō,
 Fjorm ok Fimbulþul,
 Rīn ok Rinnandi,
 Gipul ok Gǫpul,
 Gǫmul ok Geirvimul,
 þær hverfa of hodd goþa;

 Þyn ok Vin,
 Þǫll ok Hǫll,
 Grōþ ok Gunnþorin.</p> | <p>Sith and Vith,
 Sækin and Ækin,
 Svol and Fimbulthul,
 Gunnthro, and Fjorm,
 Rin and Rinnandi,
 Gipul and Gopul,
 Gomul and Geirvimul,
 That flow through the fields of the
 gods;
 Thyn and Vin,
 Thol and Hol,
 Groth and Gunnthorin.</p> |
|--|--|

The entire passage from stanza 27 through stanza 35 is confused. The whole thing may well be an interpolation. Bugge calls stanzas 27–30 an interpolation, and editors who have accepted the passage as a whole have rejected various lines. The spelling of the names of the rivers varies greatly in the manuscripts and editions. It is needless here to

point out the many attempted emendations of this list. For a passage presenting similar problems, cf. *Voluspo*, 10–16. Snorri virtually quotes stanzas 27–29 in his prose, though not consecutively. The name *Rin*, in line 3, is identical with that for the River Rhine which appears frequently in the hero poems, but the similarity is doubtless purely accidental.

28. Vīnō heitir <i>ein</i> ,	Vino is one,
ḡnnur Vegsvinn,	Vegsvin another,
þriþja Þjōþnuma;	And Thjothnuma a third;
Nyt ok Nōt,	Nyt and Not,
Nōnn ok Hrōnn,	Non and Hron,
Slīþ ok Hrīþ,	Slith and Hrith,
Sylgr ok Ylgr,	Sylg and Ylg,
Vīl ok Vōn,	Vith and Von,
Vōnd ok Strōnd,	Vond and Strond,
Gjōll ok Leiptr,	Gjol and Leipt,
þær falla gumnum nāer,	that go among men,
en falla til Heljar heþan.	And hence they fall to Hel.

Slith may possibly be the same river as that mentioned in *Voluspo*, 36, as flowing through the giants' land. *Leipt*: in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*, 29, this river is mentioned as one by which a solemn oath is sworn, and Gering points the parallel to the significance of the Styx among the Greeks. The other rivers here named are not mentioned elsewhere in the poems.

29. Kōrmt ok Œrmt	Kormt and Ormt
ok Kerlaugar tvær,	and the Kerlaugs twain
þær skal Þōrr vaþa	Shall Thor each day wade through,
dag hverjan,	[When dooms to give
es hann dōma ferr	he forth shall go
at aski Yggdrasils;	To the ash-tree Yggdrasil;]

þvīt āsbrū	For heaven's bridge
brinnr ǫll loga,	burns all in flame,
heilǫg vǫtn hloa.	And the sacred waters seethe.

This stanza looks as though it originally had had nothing to do with the two preceding it. Snorri quotes it in his description of the three roots of Yggdrasil, and the three springs be neath them. “The third root of the ash stands in heaven and beneath this root is a spring which is very holy, and is called Urth’s well.” (Cf. *Voluspo*, 19) “There the gods have their judgment-seat, and thither they ride each day over Bifrost, which is also called the Gods’ Bridge.” Thor has to go on foot in the last days of the destruction, when the bridge is burning. Another interpretation, however, is that when Thor leaves the heavens (i.e., when a thunder-storm is over) the rainbow-bridge becomes hot in the sun. Nothing more is known of the rivers named in this stanza. Lines 3–4 are almost certainly interpolated from stanza 30.

30. Glaþr ok Gyllir,	Glath and Gyllir,
Gler ok Skeiþbrimir,	Gler and Skeithbrimir,
Silfrintopp ok Sinir,	Silfrintopp and Sinir,
Gisl ok Falhǫfnir,	Gisl and Falhofnir,
Golltoppr ok Lēttfeti,	Golltopp and Lettfeti,
þeim riþa æsir jǫum	On these steeds the gods shall go
dag hverjan,	When dooms to give
es dǫma fara	each day they ride
at aski Yggdrasils.	To the ash-tree Yggdrasil.

This stanza, again possibly an interpolation, is closely paraphrased by Snorri following the passage quoted in the previous note. *Glath* (“Joyous”): identified in the *Skaldskaparmal* with Skinfaxi, the horse of day; cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 12. *Gyllir*: “Golden.” *Gler*: “Shining.” *Skeithbrimir*: “Swift-Going.” *Silfrintopp*: “Silver-Topped.” *Sinir*: “Sinewy.” *Gisl*: the meaning is doubtful; Gering suggests “Gleaming.” *Falhofnir*: “Hollow-Hoofed.” *Golltopp* (“Gold-Topped”): this horse belonged to Heimdall (cf. *Voluspo*, 1 and 46). It is noteworthy that gold was one of the attributes of Heimdall’s belongings, and, because his teeth were of gold, he was also called Gullintanni (“Gold-Toothed”). *Lēttfeti*: “Light-Feet.” Othin’s eight footed horse, Sleipnir, is not mentioned in this list.

31. Þriar røtr	Three roots there are
standa ā þria vega	that three ways run
und aski Yggdrasils:	'Neath the ash-tree Yggdrasil;
Hel býr und einni,	'Neath the first lives Hel,
annarri hrīmþursar,	'neath the second the frost-giants,
þriþju menskir menn.	'Neath the last are the lands of men.

The first of these roots is the one referred to in stanza 26; the second in stanza 29 (cf. notes). Of the third root there is nothing noteworthy recorded. After this stanza it is more than possible that one has been lost, paraphrased in the prose of Snorri's Edda thus:

An eagle sits | in the branches of the ash tree,
and he is very wise;
and between his eyes | sits the hawk
who is called Vethrfofnir.

(Orn sitr | ā asks limum
es vel kveþa mart vita;
oglr einn | hōnum augna ī milli
Veþrfofnir vakir.)

32. Ratatoskr heitir īkorni	Ratatosk is the squirrel
es rinna skal	who there shall run
at aski Yggdrasils;	On the ash-tree Yggdrasil;
arnar orþ	From above the words
hann skal ofan bera	of the eagle he bears,
ok segja Nīþhoggi niþr.	And tells them to Nithhogg beneath.

Ratatosk ("The Swift-Tusked"): concerning this squirrel, the Prose Edda has to add only that he runs up and down the tree conveying the abusive language of the eagle (see note on stanza 31) and the dragon *Nithhogg* (cf. *Voluspo*, 39 and note) to each other. The hypothesis that Ratatosk "represents the undying hatred between the sustaining and the destroying elements-the gods and the giants," seems a trifle far-fetched.

33. Hirtir 'u auk fjörir	Four harts there are,
þeirs af hǫfingar ā	that the highest twigs
gaghalsir gnaga:	Nibble with necks bent back;
Dainn ok Dvalinn,	Dain and Dvalin,
...	...
Duneyrr ok Dyrarþrōr.	Duneyr and Dyrathror.

Stanzas 33–34 may well be interpolated, and are certainly in bad shape in the Mss. Bugge points out that they are probably of later origin than those surrounding them. Snorri closely paraphrases stanza 33, but without elaboration, and nothing further is known of the four harts. It may be guessed, however, that they are a late multiplication of the single hart mentioned in stanza 26, just as the list of dragons in stanza 34 seems to have been expanded out of Nithogg, the only authentic dragon under the root of the ash. *Highest twigs*: a guess; the Mss. words are baffling. Something has apparently been lost from lines 3–4, but there is no clue as to its nature.

34. Ormar fleiri liggja	More serpents there are
und aski Yggdrasils,	beneath the ash
an of hyggi hvern ösviþra apa:	Than an unwise ape would think;
Goinn ok Moinn,	Goin and Moin,
þeir'u Grafvitnis synir,	Grafvitnir's sons,
Grābakr ok Grafvöllur,	Grabak and Grafvolluth,
Ofnir ok Svafnir	Ofnir and Svafnir
hykk at æ skyli	shall ever, methinks,
meiþs kvistu maa.	Gnaw at the twigs of the tree.

Cf. note on previous stanza. Nothing further is known of any of the serpents here listed, and the meanings of many of the names are conjectural. Snorri quotes this stanza. Editors have altered it in various ways in an attempt to regularize the meter. *Goin and Moin*: meaning obscure. *Grafvitnir*: “The Gnawing Wolf.” *Grabak*: “Gray-Back.” *Grafvolluth*: “The Field Gnawer.” *Ofnir* and *Svafnir* (“The Bewilderer” and “The Sleep-Bringer”): it is noteworthy that in stanza 54 Othin gives himself these two names.

35. Askr Yggdrasils	Yggdrasil's ash
dr̥ygir erfibi	great evil suffers,
meira an menn viti:	Far more than men do know;
hjǫrtr bītr ofan,	The hart bites its top,
en ā hliðu fūnar,	its trunk is rotting,
skerpir Nīþhoggr neþan.	And Nithhogg gnaws beneath.

Snorri quotes this stanza, which concludes the passage, beginning with stanza 25, describing Yggdrasil. If we assume that stanzas 27–34 are later interpolations—possibly excepting 32—this section of the poem reads clearly enough.

36. Hrist ok Mist	Hrist and Mist
vilk at mēr horn beri,	bring the horn at my will,
Skeggjöld ok Skǫgul;	Skeggjöld and Skogul;
Hildr ok Þrūþr,	Hild and Thruth,
Hlökk ok Herfjotur,	Hlok and Herfjotur,
Göll ok Geirǫnul,	Gol and Geironul,
Randgrīþ ok Rāþgrīþ	Randgrith and Rathgrith
ok Reginleif,	and Reginleif
þær bera einherjum ǫl.	Beer to the warriors bring.

Snorri quotes this list of the Valkyries, concerning whom cf. *Voluspo*, 31 and note, where a different list of names is given. *Hrist*: “Shaker.” *Mist*: “Mist.” *Skeggjöld*: “Ax-Time.” *Skogul*: “Raging” (?). *Hild*: “Warrior.” *Thruth*: “Might.” *Hlok*: “Shrieking.” *Herfjotur*: “Host-Fetter.” *Gol*: “Screaming.” *Geironul*: “Spear-Bearer.” *Randgrith*: “Shield-Bearer.” *Rathgrith*: Gering guesses “Plan-Destroyer.” *Reginleif*: “Gods’-Kin.” Manuscripts and editions vary greatly in the spelling of these names, and hence in their significance.

37. Ārvakr ok Alsviþr	Arvak and Alsvith
þeir skulu upp heþan	up shall drag
svangir sōl draga;	Weary the weight of the sun;

en und þeira bōgum |
fōlu blīþ regin,
æsir, īsarn kōl.

But an iron cool |
have the kindly gods
Of yore set under their yokes.

Müllenhoff suspects stanzas 37–41 to have been interpolated, and Edzardi thinks they may have come from the *Vafthruthnismol*. Snorri closely paraphrases stanzas 37–39, and quotes 40–41. *Arvak* (“Early Waker”) and *Alsvith* (“All Swift”): the horses of the sun, named also in *Sigrdrifumol*, 15. According to Snorri: “There was a man called Mundilfari, who had two children; they were so fair and lovely that he called his son Mani and his daughter Sol. The gods were angry at this presumption, and took the children and set them up in heaven; and they bade Sol drive the horses that drew the car of the sun which the gods had made to light the world from the sparks which flew out of Muspellsheim. The horses were called Alsvith and Arvak, and under their yokes the gods set two bellows to cool them, and in some songs these are called ‘the cold iron.’ ”

38. Svalinn heitir, |

hann stendr sōlu fyrir,
skjōldr, skīnanda goþi:
björg ok brim |
veitk at brinna skulu,
ef hann fellr ī frā.

In front of the sun |

does Svalin stand,
The shield for the shining god;
Mountains and sea |
would be set in flames
If it fell from before the sun.

Svalin (“The Cooling”): the only other reference to this shield is in *Sigrdrifumol*, 15.

39. Sköll heitir ulfr |

es fylgir enu skīrleita goþi
til Īsarnviþar,
en annarr Hati, |
Hrōþvitnis sunr,
skal fyr heiþa brūþi himins.

Skoll is the wolf |

that to Ironwood
Follows the glittering god,
And the son of Hrothvitnir, |
Hati, awaits
The burning bride of heaven.

Skoll and *Hati*: the wolves that devour respectively the sun and moon. The latter is the son of Hrothvitnir (“The Mighty Wolf,” i. e. Fenrir); cf. *Voluspo*, 40, and *Vafthruthnismol*, 46–

47, in which Fenrir appears as the thief. *Ironwood*: a conjectural emendation of an obscure phrase; cf. *Voluspo*, 40.

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| <p>40. Ōr Ymis holdi
 vas jörþ of sköpuþ,
 en ōr sveita sǣr,
 björg ōr beinum,
 baþmr ōr hāri,
 en ōr hausi himinn.</p> | <p>Out of Ymir's flesh
 was fashioned the earth,
 And the ocean out of his blood;
 Of his bones the hills,
 of his hair the trees,
 Of his skull the heavens high.</p> |
|--|--|

This and the following stanza are quoted by Snorri. They seem to have come from a different source from the others of this poem; Edzardi suggests an older version of the *Vafthruthnismol*. This stanza is closely parallel to *Vafthruthnismol*, 21, which see, as also *Voluspo*, 3. Snorri, following this account, has a few details to add. The stones were made out of Ymir's teeth and such of his bones as were broken. Mithgarth was a mountain-wall made out of Ymir's eyebrows, and set around the earth because of the enmity of the giants.

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| <p>41. En ōr hans bröum
 gørþu blīþ regin
 miþgarþ manna sunum,
 en ōr hans heila
 vöru þau en harþmōþgu
 ský ǫll of sköpuþ.</p> | <p>Mithgarth the gods
 from his eyebrows made,
 And set for the sons of men;
 And out of his brain
 the baleful clouds
 They made to move on high.</p> |
| <p>42. Ullar hylli
 hefr ok allra goða
 hverrs tekr fyrstr ā funa;
 þvīt opnir heimar
 verða of āsa sunum,
 þās hefja af hvera.</p> | <p>His the favor of Ull
 and of all the gods
 Who first in the flames will reach;
 For the house can be seen
 by the sons of the gods
 If the kettle aside were cast.</p> |

With this stanza Othin gets back to his immediate situation, bound as he is between two fires. He calls down a blessing on the man who will reach into the fire and pull aside the great kettle which, in Icelandic houses, hung directly under the smoke vent in the roof, and thus kept anyone above from looking down into the interior. On [Ull](#), the archer-god, cf. stanza 5 and note. He is specified here apparently for no better reason than that his name fits the initial-rhyme.

43. Īvalda synir	In days of old
gengu Ī ārdaga	did Ivaldi's sons
Skīþblaðni at skapa,	Skithblathnir fashion fair,
skipa bazt	The best of ships
skīrum Frey,	for the bright god Freyr,
nýtum Njarþar bur.	The noble son of Njorth.

This and the following stanza are certainly interpolated, for they have nothing to do with the context, and stanza 45 continues the dramatic conclusion of the poem begun in stanza 42. This stanza is quoted by Snorri. [Ivaldi](#) ("The Mighty"): he is known only as the father of the craftsmen-dwarfs who made not only the ship Skithblathnir, but also Othin's spear Gungnir, and the golden hair for Thor's wife, Sif, after Loki had maliciously cut her own hair off. [Skithblathnir](#): this ship ("Wooden-Bladed") always had a fair wind, whenever the sail was set; it could be folded up at will and put in the pocket. [Freyr](#): concerning him and his father, see [Voluspo](#), 21, note, and [Skirnismol](#), introductory prose and note.

44. Askr Yggdrasils	The best of trees
hann es øztr víða,	must Yggdrasil be,
enn Skīþblaðnir skipa,	Skithblathnir best of boats;
Ōþinn āsa,	Of all the gods
en joa Sleipnir,	is Othin the greatest,
	And Sleipnir the best of steeds;
Bilrøst brua,	Bifrost of bridges,
en Bragi skalda,	Bragi of skalds,
Hōbrōk hauka,	Hobrok of hawks,
en hunda Garmr.	and Garm of hounds.

Snorri quotes this stanza. Like stanza 43 an almost certain interpolation, it was probably drawn in by the reference to Skithblathnir in the stanza interpolated earlier. It is presumably in faulty condition. One Ms. has after the fifth line half of a sixth, — “Brimir of swords.” *Yggdrasil*: cf. stanzas 25–35. *Skithblathnir*: cf. stanza 43, note. *Sleipnir*: Othin’s eight-legged horse, one of Loki’s numerous progeny, borne by him to the stallion Svathilfari. This stallion belonged to the giant who built a fortress for the gods, and came so near to finishing it, with Svathilfari’s aid, as to make the gods fear he would win his promised reward — Freyja and the sun and moon. To delay the work, Loki turned himself into a mare, whereupon the stallion ran away, and the giant failed to complete his task within the stipulated time. *Bilrost*: probably another form of Bifrost (which Snorri has in his version of the stanza), on which cf. stanza 29. *Bragi*: the god of poetry. He is one of the later figures among the gods, and is mentioned only three times in the poems of the *Edda*. In Snorri’s *Edda*, however, he is of great importance. His wife is Ithun, goddess of youth. Perhaps the Norwegian skald Bragi Boddason, the oldest recorded skaldic poet, had been traditionally apotheosized as early as the tenth century. *Hobrok*: nothing further is known of him. *Garm*: cf. *Voluspo*, 44.

45.	Svipum hefk nū ypt	To the race of the gods
	fyr sigtīva mōgum,	my face have I raised,
	viþ þat skal vilbjörg vaka:	And the wished-for aid have I waked;
	ollum ōsum	For to all the gods
	þat skal inn koma	has the message gone
	Ægis bekkī ā,	That sit in Ægir’s seats,
	Ægis drekku at.	That drink within Ægir’s doors.

With this stanza the narrative current of the poem is resumed. *Ægir*: the sea-god; cf. *Lokasenna*, introductory prose.

46.	Hētumk Grīmr,	Grim is my name,
	hētumk Gangleri,	Gangleri am I,
	Herjan ok Hjalmbéri,	Herjan and Hjalmbéri,
	Þekkr ok Þriði,	Thekk and Thrithi,
	Þuþr ok Uþr,	Thuth and Uth,
	Herblindi ok Hārr,	Helblindi and Hor;

Concerning the condition of stanzas 46–50, quoted by Snorri, nothing definite can be said. Lines and entire stanzas of this “catalogue” sort undoubtedly came and went with great freedom all through the period of oral transmission. Many of the names are not mentioned elsewhere, and often their significance is sheer guesswork. As in nearly every episode Othin appeared in disguise, the number of his names was necessarily almost limitless. *Grim*: “The Hooded.” *Gangleri*: “The Wanderer.” *Herjan*: “The Ruler.” *Hjalmberi*: “The Helmet-Bearer.” *Thekk*: “The Much-Loved.” *Thrithi*: “The Third” (in Snorri’s *Edda* the stories are all told in the form of answers to questions, the speakers being Har, Jafnhar and Thrithi. Just what this tripartite form of Othin signifies has been the source of endless debate. Probably this line is late enough to betray the somewhat muddled influence of early Christianity.) *Thuth* and *Uth*: both names defy guesswork. *Helblindi*: “Hel-Blinder” (two manuscripts have *Herblindi*—“Host-Blinder”). *Hor*: “The High One.”

47. Saþr ok Svipall	Sath and Svipal
ok Sanngetall,	and Sanngetal,
Herteitr ok Hnikarr,	Herteit and Hnikar,
[Bileygr, Bāleygr,	Bileyg, Baleyg,
Bolverkr, Fjólnir,	Bolverk, Fjólnir,
Grīmr ok Grimnir,	Grim and Grimnir,
Glapsviþr, Fjolsviþr,	Glapsvith, Fjolsvith.

Sath: “The Truthful.” *Svipal*: “The Changing.” *Sanngetal*: “The Truth-Teller.” *Herteit*: “Glad of the Host.” *Hnikar*: “The Overthrower.” *Bileyg*: “The Shifty-Eyed.” *Baleyg*: “The Flaming-Eyed.” *Bolverk*: “Doer of Ill” (cf. *Hovamol*, 104 and note). *Fjólnir*: “The Many-Shaped.” *Grimnir*: “The Hooded.” *Glapsvith*: “Swift in Deceit.” *Fjolsvith*: “Wide of Wisdom.”

48. Sīþhotttr, Sīþskeggr,	Sithhott, Sithskegg,
Sigfǫþr, Hnikuþr,	Sigfather, Hnikuth,
Alfǫþr, Valfǫþr,	Allfather, Valfather,
Atriþr, Farmatȳr:]	Atrith, Farmatyr:
einu nafni	A single name
hētumk aldrigi,	have I never had
sīz meþ folkum fōrk.	Since first among men I fared.

Sithhott: “With Broad Hat.” *Sithskegg*: “Long-Bearded.” *Sigfather*: “Father of Victory.” *Hnikuth*: “Overthrower.” *Valfather*: “Father of the Slain.” *Atrith*: “The Rider.” *Farmatyr*: “Helper of Cargoes” (i. e., god of sailors).

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| <p>49. Grimnir <i>hētumk</i>
 at Geirrøþar,
 en Jalkr at Āsmundar,
 en þā Kjalarr,
 es ek kjalka drō,
 [Þrōr þingum at,
 Viþurr at vīgum,
 Ōski ok Ōmi,
 Jafnhōr, Biflindi,]
 Gōndlir ok Hārbarþr meþ
 gōþum.</p> | <p>Grimnir they call me
 in Geirrōth’s hall,
 With Asmund Jalk am I;
 Kjalar I was
 when I went in a sledge,
 At the council Thror am I called,
 As Vithur I fare to the fight;
 Oski, Biflindi,
 Jafnhor and Omi,
 Gondlir and Harbarth midst gods.</p> |
|--|--|

Nothing is known of Asmund, of Othin’s appearance as Jalk, or of the occasion when he “went in a sledge” as Kjalar (“Ruler of Keels”?). *Thror* and *Vithur* are also of uncertain meaning. *Oski*: “God of Wishes.” *Biflindi*: the manuscripts vary widely in the form of this name. *Jafnhor*: “Equally High” (cf. note on stanza 46). *Omi*: “The Shouter.” *Gondlir*: “Wand Bearer.” *Harbarth*: “Graybeard” (cf. *Harbarthsljoth*, introduction).

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|--|---|
| <p>50. Sviþurr ok Sviþrir
 es ek hēt at Sōkkmīmis
 ok dulþak enn aldna jōtun,
 þās ek Miþvitnis
 vask ens mæra burar
 orþinn einbani.</p> | <p>I deceived the giant
 Sokkmimir old
 As Svithur and Svithrir of yore;
 Of Mithvitnir’s son
 the slayer I was
 When the famed one found his doom.</p> |
|--|---|

Nothing further is known of the episode here mentioned Sokkmimir is presumably Mithvitnir’s son. Snorri quotes the names Svithur and Svithrir, but omits all the remainder of the

stanza.

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| <p>51. Qlr est, Geirrøþr!
 hefr þū ofdrukkít,
 ...
 miklu'st hnugginn,
 es þū'st mīnu gengi
 ok allra einherja.</p> | <p>Drunk art thou, Geirröth,
 too much didst thou drink,
 ...
 Much hast thou lost,
 for help no more
 From me or my heroes thou hast.</p> |
|--|--|

Again the poem returns to the direct action, Othin addressing the terrified Geirröth. The manuscripts show no lacuna. Some editors supply a second line from paper manuscripts: "Greatly by me art beguiled." ("miklum ertu miþi tældr.")

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| <p>52. Fjølþ þēr sagþak,
 en þū fātt of mant:
 of þik vēla vinir;

 mæki liggja
 ek sē mīns vinar
 allan ī dreyra drifinn.</p> | <p>Small heed didst thou take
 to all that I told,
 And false were the words of thy
 friends;
 For now the sword
 of my friend I see,
 That waits all wet with blood.</p> |
| <p>53. Eggmōþan val
 nū mun Yggr hafa,
 þitt veitk líf of liþit;
 ūfar'u dīsir,
 nū knātt Ōþinn sea,
 nālgaþk þū mik, ef megir!</p> | <p>Thy sword-pierced body
 shall Ygg have soon,
 For thy life is ended at last;
 The maids are hostile;
 now Othin behold!
 Now come to me if thou canst!</p> |

Ygg: Othin (“The Terrible”). *The maids*: the three Norns.

54. Óþinn nū heitik,	Now am I Othin,
Ygggr āþan hētk,	Ygg was I once,
hētumk þundr fyr þat,	Ere that did they call me Thund;
Vakr ok Skilfingr,	Vak and Skilfing,
Vōfufþr ok Hrōptatyr,	Vofuth and Hroptatyr,
Gautr ok Jalkr meþ goþum,	Gaut and Jalk midst the gods;
Ofnir ok Svafnir,	Ofnir and Svafnir,
es hykk at orþnir sē	and all, methinks,
allir at einum mēr.	Are names for none but me.

Possibly out of place, and probably more or less corrupt. *Thund*: “The Thunderer.” *Vak*: “The Wakeful.” *Skilfing*: “The Shaker.” *Vofuth*: “The Wanderer.” *Hroptatyr*: “Crier of the Gods.” *Gaut*: “Father.” *Ofnir* and *Svafnir*: cf. stanza 34.

Geirrøþr konungr sat ok hafði sverþ um knē sēr ok þrugþit til miþs.	King Geirröth sat and had his sword on his knee, half drawn from its sheath.
En er hann heyrði at Óþinn var þar kominn, þā stōþ hann upp ok vildi taka Óþin frā eldinum.	But when he heard that Othin was come thither, then he rose up and sought to take Othin from the fire.
Sverþit slapp ór hendi honum ok vissu hjóltin niþr.	The sword slipped from his hand, and fell with the hilt down.
Konungr drap foeti ok steyptiz āfram, en sverþit stōþ ī gøgnum hann, ok fekk hann bana.	The king stumbled and fell forward, and the sword pierced him through, and slew him.
Óþinn hvarf þā, en Agnarr var þar konungr lengi sīþan.	Then Othin vanished, but Agnar long ruled there as king.

Skirnismol

The Ballad of Skirnir

Introductory Note

The *Skirnismol* is found complete in the *Codex Regius*, and through stanza 27 in the *Arnarnagæan Codex*. Snorri quotes the concluding stanza. In *Regius* the poem is entitled “For Scirnis” (“Skirnir’s journey”).

The *Skirnismol* differs sharply from the poems preceding it, in that it has a distinctly ballad quality. As a matter of fact, however, its verse is altogether dialogue, the narrative being supplied in the prose “links,” concerning which cf. introductory note to the *Grimnismol*. The dramatic effectiveness and vivid characterization of the poem seem to connect it with the *Thrymskvitha*, and the two may possibly have been put into their present form by the same man. Bugge’s guess that the *Skirnismol* was the work of the author of the *Lokasenna* is also possible, though it has less to support it.

Critics have generally agreed in dating the poem as we now have it as early as the first half of the tenth century; Finnur Jonsson puts it as early as 900, and claims it, as usual, for Norway. Doubtless it was current in Norway, in one form or another, before the first Icelandic settlements, but his argument that the thistle (stanza 31) is not an Icelandic plant has little weight, for such curse-formulas must have traveled freely from place to place. In view of the evidence pointing to a western origin for many or all of the Eddic poems, Jonsson’s reiterated “Digtet er sikkert norsk og ikke islandsk” is somewhat exasperating. Wherever the *Skirnismol* was composed, it has been preserved in exceptionally good condition, and seems to be practically devoid of interpolations or lacunæ.

Freyr sonr Njarþar hafði einn dag sez
í Hliþskjǫlf ok sǫ um heima alla;

hann sǫ í Jötunheima ok sǫ þar mey
fagra, þá er hon gekk frá skála fǫður
síns til skemmu.

Þar af fekk hann hugsóttir miklar.

Freyr, the son of Njorth, had sat one day
in Hlithskjolf, and looked over all the
worlds.

He looked into Jotunheim, and saw
there a fair maiden, as she went from
her father’s house to her bower.

Forthwith he felt a mighty love-sick-
ness.

Skirnir hēt skōsveinn Freys; Njorppr
baþ hann kveþja Frey mǣls.

Hann mælti:

Skirnir was the name of Freyr's servant;
Njorth bade him ask speech of Freyr.

He said:

Freyr: concerning his father, Njorth, and the race of the Wanes in general, cf. *Voluspo*, 21 and note. Snorri thus describes Njorth's family: "Njorth begat two children in Noatun; the son was named Freyr, and the daughter Freyja; they were fair of aspect and mighty. Freyr is the noblest of the gods; he rules over rain and sunshine, and therewith the fruitfulness of the earth; it is well to call upon him for plenty and welfare, for he rules over wealth for mankind. Freyja is the noblest of the goddesses. When she rides to the fight, she has one-half of the slain, and Othin has half. When she goes on a journey, she drives her two cats, and sits in a cart. Love-songs please her well, and it is good to call on her in love-matters." *Hlithskjolf*: Othin's watch-tower; cf. *Grimnismol*, introductory prose. *He said*: both manuscripts have "Then Skathi said:" (Skathi was Njorth's wife), but Bugge's emendation, based on Snorri's version, is doubtless correct.

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| <p>1. "Rīs nū, Skirnir!
ok rāþ at beiþa
minn mǣla mōg,
ok þess at fregna,
hveim enn frōþi sē
ofreiþi afi."</p> | <p>"Go now, Skirnir!
and seek to gain
Speech from my son;
And answer to win,
for whom the wise one
Is mightily moved."</p> |
|--|--|

My son: both manuscripts, and many editors, have "our son," which, of course, goes with the introduction of Skathi in the prose. As the stanza is clearly addressed to Skirnir, the change of pronouns seems justified. The same confusion occurs in stanza 2, where Skirnir in the manuscripts is made to speak of Freyr as "your son" (plural). The plural pronoun in the original involves a metrical error, which is corrected by the emendation.

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| <p><i>Skirnir kvaþ:</i></p> <p>2. "Illra orþa
erumk ōn at þinum syni,
ef gengk at mǣla viþ mōg,</p> | <p><i>Skirnir spake:</i></p> <p>"Ill words do I now
await from thy son,
If I seek to get speech with him,</p> |
|---|---|

ok þess at fregna, |
hveim enn frōþi sē
ofreiþi afi.”

And answer to win, |
for whom the wise one
Is mightily moved.”

Skirnir kvað:

3. “Segðu þat, Freyr, |
folkvaldi goða!
auk ek vilja vita:
hvī einn sitr |
endlanga sali,
minn dróttinn! of daga?

Skirnir spake:

- “Speak prithee, Freyr, |
foremost of the gods,
For now I fain would know;
Why sittest thou here |
in the wide halls,
Days long, my prince, alone?”

Freyr kvað:

4. “Hvi of segjak þēr, |
seggr enn ungi!
mikinn möþtrega?
þvīt alfrøpull |
l̥ysir of alla daga,
ok þeygi at mīnum munum.”

Freyr spake:

- “How shall I tell thee, |
thou hero young,
Of all my grief so great?
Though every day |
the elfbeam dawns,
It lights my longing never.”

Elfbeam: the sun, so called because its rays were fatal to elves and dwarfs; cf. *Alvissmol*, 35.

Skirnir kvað:

5. “Muni þīna |
hykkak svā mikla vesa,
at mēr, seggr! nē segir;

Skirnir spake:

- “Thy longings, methinks, |
are not so large
That thou mayst not tell them to me;

þvīt ungir saman |
vōrum ī ārdaga,
vel mættim tveir truask.”

Since in days of yore |
we were young together,
We two might each other trust.”

Freyr kvap:

6. “Ī Gymis gōrþum |
ek sā ganga
mēr tīþa mey;
armar l̥ystu, |
en af þāþan
allt lopt ok lōgr.

Freyr spake:

“From Gymir’s house |
I beheld go forth
A maiden dear to me;
Her arms glittered, |
and from their gleam
Shone all the sea and sky.

Gymir: a mountain-giant, husband of Aurbotha, and father of Gerth, fairest among women. This is all Snorri tells of him in his paraphrase of the story.

7. Mær’s mēr tīþari |
an manni hveim
ungum ī ārdaga;
āsa ok alfa |
þat vil engi maþr,
at vit samt seīm.”

To me more dear |
than in days of old
Was ever maiden to man;
But no one of gods |
or elves will grant
That we both together should be.”

Snorri’s paraphrase of the poem is sufficiently close so that his addition of another sentence to Freyr’s speech makes it probable that a stanza has dropped out between 7 and 8. This has been tentatively reconstructed, thus:

Hither to me | shalt thou bring the maid,
And home shalt thou lead her here,
If her father wills it | or wills it not,
And good reward shalt thou get.

(Hennar skalt biþja | til handa mēr
ok hafa heim hinig,

hvārð synjar faðir | eða samþykkir —
göð skalt laun geta.)

Finn Magnúsen detected the probable omission of a stanza here as early as 1821.

Skirnir kvað:

8. “Mar gef mér þā, |
þanns mik of myrkvan beri
vīsan vafrloga,
ok þat sverþ, |
es sjalft vegisk
vīgi við jötna ætt.”

Skirnir spake:

- “Then give me the horse |
that goes through the dark
And magic flickering flames;
And the sword as well |
that fights of itself
Against the giants grim.”

The sword: Freyr’s gift of his sword to Skirnir eventually proves fatal, for at the last battle, when Freyr is attacked by Beli, whom he kills bare-handed, and later when the fire-demon, Surt, slays him in turn, he is weaponless; cf. *Voluspo*, 53 and note. *Against the giants grim:* the condition of this line makes it seem like an error in copying, and it is possible that it should be identical with the fourth line of the next stanza.

Freyr kvað:

9. “Mar þēr þann gefk, |
es þik of myrkvan berr
vīsan vafrloga,
ok þat sverþ, |
es sjalft mun vegask,
ef sā’s horskr es hefr.”

Freyr spake:

- “The horse will I give thee |
that goes through the dark
And magic flickering flames,
And the sword as well |
that will fight of itself
If a worthy hero wields it.”

Skirnir mælti við hestinn:

10. “Myrkt es ūti, |
māl kveþk okkr fara
ūrig fjöll yfir,

Skirnir spake to the horse:

- “Dark is it without, |
and I deem it time
To fare through the wild fells,

þursa þjōþ yfir;
bāþir vit komumk, |
eþa okkr bāþa tekr
enn āmōtki jōtunn.”

[To fare through the giants’ fastness;]
We shall both come back, |
or us both together
The terrible giant will take.”

Some editors reject line 3 as spurious.

Skirnir reiþ ī jōtunheima til Gymis
garþa.

Þar vāru hundar ōlmir ok bundnir fyr
skīþsgarþs hliþi þess er um sal Gerþ-
ar var.

Hann reiþ at þar er fēhirþir sat ā
haugi ok kvaddi hann:

Skirnir rode into Jotunheim to Gymir’s
house.

There were fierce dogs bound before
the gate of the fence which was around
Gerth’s hall.

He rode to where a herdsman sat on a
hill, and said:

11. “Seg þat, hirþir! |
es þu ā haugi sitr
ok varþar alla vega:
hve at andspilli |
komumk ens unga mans
greyjum Gymis fyrir?”

“Tell me, herdsman, |
sitting on the hill,
And watching all the ways,
How may I win |
a word with the maid
Past the hounds of Gymir here?”

Hirþir kvað:

12. “Hvārt est feigr |
eþa estu framgenginn.
maþr ā mars baki?
andspillis vanr |
þū skalt æ vesa
gōþrarr meýjar Gymis.”

The herdsman spake:

“Art thou doomed to die |
or already dead,
Thou horseman that ridest hither?
Barred from speech |
shalt thou ever be
With Gymir’s daughter good.”

Line 2 is in neither manuscript, and no gap is indicated. I have followed Grundtvig's conjectural emendation.

Skirnir kvað:

13. “Kostir’u betri |
heldr an at klökkva sē
hveims fūss es fara;
einu dōgri |
vorumk aldr of skapaþr
ok allt lif of lagit.”

Skirnir spake:

“Boldness is better |
than plaints can be
For him whose feet must fare;
To a destined day |
has mine age been doomed,
And my life’s span thereto laid.”

This stanza is almost exactly like many in the first part of the *Hovamol*, and may well have been a separate proverb. After this stanza the scene shifts to the interior of the house.

Gerþr kvað:

14. “Hvat’s þat hlymja |
es ek heyri til
ossum rōnnum ī?
jorþ bifask, |
en allir fyrir
skjalfa garþar Gymis.”

Gerth spake:

“What noise is that |
which now so loud
I hear within our house?
The ground shakes, |
and the home of Gymir
Around me trembles too.”

Ambōtt kvað:

15. “Maþr’s hēr ūti, |
stiginn af mars baki,
jō lætr til jarþar taka.”
... |
...
...

The Serving-Maid spake:

“One stands without |
who has leapt from his steed,
And lets his horse loose to graze;”
... |
...
...

No gap indicated in either manuscript. Bugge and Niedner have attempted emendations, while Hildebrand suggests that the last two lines of stanza 14 are spurious, 14, 12, and 15 thus forming a single stanza, which seems doubtful.

Gerþr kvað:

16. “Inn bið hann ganga |
 ī okkarn sal
 ok drekka enn mæra mjöð;
 þo ek hitt ousk, |
 at hēr ūti sē
 minn brōþurbani.

Gerth spake:

“Bid the man come in, |
 and drink good mead
 Here within our hall;
 Though this I fear, |
 that there without
 My brother’s slayer stands.

Brother’s slayer: perhaps the brother is Beli, slain by Freyr; the only other references are in *Voluspo*, 53, and in Snorri’s paraphrase of the *Skirnismol*, which merely says that Freyr’s gift of his sword to Skirnir “was the reason why he was weaponless when he met Beli, and he killed him bare-handed.” Skirnir himself seems never to have killed anybody.

17. Hvat’s þat alfa |
 nē āsa suna
 nē vīssa vana?
 hvi einn of kvamt |
 of eikinn fūr yfir
 ōr salkynni at sea?”

Art thou of the elves |
 or the offspring of gods,
 Or of the wise Wanes?
 How camst thou alone |
 through the leaping flame
 Thus to behold our home?”

Wise Wanes: Cf. *Voluspo*, 21 and note.

Skirnir kvað:

18. “Emkak alfa |
 nē āsa suna
 nē vīssa vana:

Skirnir spake:

“I am not of the elves, |
 nor the offspring of gods,
 Nor of the wise Wanes;

þō einn of kvamk |
of eikinn fūr
yður salkynni at sea.

Though I came alone |
through the leaping flame
Thus to behold thy home.

The *Arnarnagæan Codex* omits this stanza.

19. Epli ellilyfs |
hēr hefk algollin,
þau munk þēr, Gerþr! gefa,
friþ at kaupa, |
at þu þēr Frey kveþir
ōleiþastan lifa.”

Eleven apples, |
all of gold,
Here will I give thee, Gerth,
To buy thy troth |
that Freyr shall be
Deemed to be dearest to you.”

Apples: the apple was the symbol of fruitfulness, and also of eternal youth. According to Snorri, the goddess Ithun had charge of the apples which the gods ate whenever they felt themselves growing old.

Gerþr kvaþ:

20. “Epli ellilyfs |
ek þigg aldrigi
at manns enskis munum;
nē vitt Freyr, |
meþan okkart fjor lifir,
byggum bæþi saman.”

Gerth spake:

“I will not take |
at any man’s wish
These eleven apples ever;
Nor shall Freyr and I |
one dwelling find
So long as we two live.”

Skirnir kvaþ:

21. “Baug þēr þā gefk |
þanns brendr vas
meþ ungum Ōþins syni;

Skirnir spake:

“Then do I bring thee |
the ring that was burned
Of old with Othin’s son;

ātta 'ru jafnhöfgir |
 es af drjúpa
 ena niundu hverju nótt."

From it do eight |
 of like weight fall
 On every ninth night."

Ring: the ring Draupnir ("Dropper") was made by the dwarfs for Othin, who laid it on Baldr's pyre when the latter's corpse was burned (Cf. *Voluspo*, 32 and note, and *Baldrs Draumar*). Baldr, however, sent the ring back to Othin from hell. How Freyr obtained it is nowhere stated. Andvari's ring (Andvaranaut) had a similar power of creating gold; cf. *Reginmol*, prose after stanza 4 and note. Lines 3 and 4 of this stanza, and the first two of stanza 22, are missing in the *Arnarnagænan Codex*.

Gerþr kvað:

22. "Baug ek þikkak, |
 þót brendr sē
 meþ ungum Ōþins syni;
 ī gōrþum Gymis |
 erumka golls of vant,
 at deila fē fōþur."

Gerth spake:

"The ring I wish not, |
 though burned it was
 Of old with Othin's son;
 In Gymir's home |
 is no lack of gold
 In the wealth my father wields."

Skirnir kvað:

23. "Sēr þū mæki mjōvan, |
 mālþān, Gerþr!
 es hefk ī hendi hēr?
 haufuþ höggva |
 munk þēr halsi af,
 nema mēr sætt segir."

Skirnir spake:

"Seest thou, maiden, |
 this keen, bright sword
 That I hold here in my hand?
 Thy head from thy neck |
 shall I straightway hew,
 If thou wilt not do my will."

Gerþr kvað:

24. “Ānaup þola |
viljak aldrigi
at manns enskis munum;
þō hins getk, |
ef it Gymir finnisk,
at ykkir tīpi vega.

Gerth spake:

“For no man’s sake |
will I ever suffer
To be thus moved by might;
But gladly, methinks, |
will Gymir seek
To fight if he finds thee here.”

Skirnir kvað:

25. “Sēr þū mæki mjōvan, |
mālfān, *Gerþr!*
es hefk ī hendi hēr?
fyr þessum eggjum |
hnīgr sa enn aldni þurs,
verþr þinn feigr faþir.

Skirnir spake:

“Seest thou, maiden, |
this keen, bright sword
That I hold here in my hand?
Before its blade the |
old giant bends,—
Thy father is doomed to die.

The first two lines are abbreviated in both manuscripts.

26. Tamsvendi þik drepk, |
en ek þik temja mun,
māer! at mīnum munum;
þar skalt ganga, |
es þik gumna synir
sīpan æva sea.

I strike thee, maid, |
with my magic staff,
To tame thee to work my will;
There shalt thou go |
where never again
The sons of men shall see thee.

With this stanza, bribes and threats having failed, Skirnir begins a curse which, by the power of his magic staff, is to fall on Gerth if she refuses Freyr.

27. Ara þūfu ā | On the eagle's hill |
 skaltu ār sitja, shalt thou ever sit,
 horfa heljar til; And gaze on the gates of Hel;
 matr sē þer leiþari | More loathsome to thee |
 an manna hveim than the light-hued snake
 enn frāni ormr meþ firum. To men, shall thy meat become.

Eagle's hill: the hill at the end of heaven, and consequently overlooking hell, where the giant Hræsvelg sits “in an eagle’s guise,” and makes the winds with his wings; cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 37, also *Voluspo*, 50. The second line is faulty in both manuscripts; Hildebrand’s emendation corrects the error, but omits an effective touch; the manuscript line may be rendered “And look and hanker for hell.” The *Arnarnagæan Codex* breaks off with the fourth line of this stanza.

28. At undrsjōnum verþir, | Fearful to see, |
 es þū ūt kōmr, if thou comest forth,
 ā þik Hrimnir hari, Hrimnir will stand and stare,
 [ā þik hotvetna stari;] [Men will marvel at thee;]
 vīþkunnari verþir | More famed shalt thou grow |
 an vōrþr meþ goþum; than the watchman of the gods!
 gapi þū grindum frā. Peer forth, then, from thy prison,

Hrimnir: a frost-giant, mentioned elsewhere only in *Hyndluljóth*, 33. Line 3 is probably spurious. *Watchman of the gods:* Heimdall; cf. *Voluspo*, 46.

29. Tōpi ok ōpi, | Rage and longing, |
 tjōsull ok ōþoli fetters and wrath,
 vaxi þer tōr meþ trega; Tears and torment are thine;
 sezktu niþr, | Where thou sittest down |
 mun ek segja þēr my doom is on thee
 svāran sūsbreka Of heavy heart

auk tvinnan trega.

And double dole.

Three nouns of doubtful meaning, which I have rendered *rage*, *longing*, and *heart* respectively, make the precise force of this stanza obscure. Niedner and Sijmons mark the entire stanza as interpolated, and Jonsson rejects line 5.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>30. <i>Gramir gneypa </i>
 <i>þik skulu gørdan dag</i>
 <i>jötta gørdum i;</i>
 <i>grát at gamni </i>
 <i>skaltu i gøgn hafa</i>
 <i>ok leiða með tōrum trega.</i></p> | <p>In the giants' home
 shall vile things harm thee
 Each day with evil deeds;
 Grief shalt thou get
 instead of gladness,
 And sorrow to suffer with tears.</p> |
|--|--|

In *Regius* and in nearly all the editions the first two lines of this stanza are followed by lines 3–5 of stanza 35. I have followed Niedner, Sijmons, and Gering. The two words here translated *vile things* are obscure; Gering renders the phrase simply “Kobolde.”

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>31. <i>Með þursi þriðþupum </i>
 <i>þū skalt æ nara</i>
 <i>eða verlauss vesa;</i>
 <i>[þik geþ grīþi, </i>
 <i>þik morn morni!]</i>
 <i>ves sem þistill </i>
 <i>sās þrunginn vas</i>
 <i>i önn ofanverða.</i></p> | <p>With three-headed giants
 thou shalt dwell ever,
 Or never know a husband;
 [Let longing grip thee,
 let wasting waste thee,—]
 Be like to the thistle
 that in the loft
 Was cast and there was crushed.</p> |
|--|--|

The confusion noted as to the preceding stanza, and a metrical error in the third line, have led to various rearrangements and emendations; line 3 certainly looks like an interpolation. *Three-headed giants*: concerning giants with numerous heads, cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 33, and *Hymiskvitha*, 8.

32. Til holts ek gekk	I go to the wood,
ok til hrās víðar,	and to the wet forest,
gambantein at geta:	To win a magic wand;
...	...
...	...
gambantein ek gat.	I won a magic wand.

No gap indicated in the manuscript; Niedner makes the line here given as 4 the first half of line 3, and fills out the stanza thus:

with which I will tame you,
Maid, to work my will.

(es þik gǫrva temr
mærl at mīnum munum.)

The whole stanza seems to be either interpolated or out of place; it would fit better after stanza 25.

33. Vreiðr's þēr Ōþinn,	Othin grows angry,
vreiðr's þēr āsa bragr,	angered is the best of the gods,
þik skal Freyr fiask,	Freyr shall be thy foe,
en firinilla mærl	Most evil maid,
es þū fengit hefr	who the magic wrath
gambanvreiði gōða.	Of gods hast got for thyself.

Jonsson marks this stanza as interpolated. The word translated *most evil* is another case of guesswork.

34. Heyri hrīmbursar,	Give heed, frost-rulers,
heyri jǫtnar,	hear it, giants.
Suttunga synir,	Sons of Suttung,
[sjalfir āslīpar:]	And gods, ye too,

hvē fyrbýðk,	How I forbid
hvē fyrbannak	and how I ban
manna glaum mani,	The meeting of men with the maid,
manna nyt mani.	[The joy of men with the maid.]

Most editors reject line 3 as spurious, and some also reject line 6. Lines 2 and 3 may have been expanded out of a single line running approximately “Ye gods and Suttung’s sons.” *Suttung*: concerning this giant cf. *Hovamol*, 104 and note.

35. Hrīmgrimnir heitir þurs	Hrimgrimmir is he,
es þik hafa skal	the giant who shall have thee
fyr nāgrindr neþan:	In the depth by the doors of Hel;
til hrīmþursa hallar	To the frost-giants’ halls
þū skalt hverjan dag	each day shalt thou fare,
kranga kostalaus,	Crawling and craving in vain,
kranga kostavon.	[Crawling and having no hope.]

Most editors combine lines 1–2 with stanza 36 (either with the first two lines thereof or the whole stanza), as lines 3–5 stand in the manuscript after line 2 of stanza 30. *Hrimgrimmir* (“The Frost-Shrouded”): a giant not elsewhere mentioned. Line 5, as a repetition of line 4, is probably a later addition.

36. Þar þēr vīlmegir	Base wretches there
ā viþar rōtum	by the root of the tree
geita hland gefi:	Will hold for thee horns of filth;
ōþri drykkju	A fairer drink
fā þū aldrigi,	shalt thou never find,
mæ̃r! af þīnum munum,	Maid, to meet thy wish,
mæ̃r! at mīnum munum!	[Maid, to meet my wish.]

For the combination of this stanza with the preceding one, cf. note on stanza 35. The scribe

clearly did not consider that the stanza began with line 1, as the first word thereof in the manuscript does not begin with a capital letter and has no period before it. The first word of line 3, however, is so marked. Line 5 may well be spurious.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>37. þurs rīstk þēr
 ok þria stafi:
 ergi ok øþi ok øþola;
 svā af rīstk,
 sem þat ā reistk,
 ef gørvask þarfar þess.”</p> | <p>I write thee a charm
 and three runes therewith,
 Longing and madness and lust;
 But what I have writ
 I may yet unwrite
 If I find a need therefor.”</p> |
|---|--|

Again the scribe seems to have been uncertain as to the stanza divisions. This time the first line is preceded by a period, but begins with a small letter. Many editors have made line 2 into two half-lines. *A charm:* literally, the rune Thurs (þ); the runic letters all had magic attributes; cf. *Sigrdrifumol*, 6–7 and notes.

Gerþr kvað:

- 38.** “Heill ves heldr, sveinn! |
 ok tak við hrīmkalki
 fullum forns mjaðar:
 þō hafþak ætlat, |
 at myndak aldri
 unna vaningja vel.”

Gerth spake:

- “Find welcome rather, |
 and with it take
 The frost-cup filled with mead;
 Though I did not believe |
 that I should so love
 Ever one of the Wanes.”

Skirnir kvað:

- 39.** “Eyrindi mīn |
 viljak ǫll vita,
 āþr rīþak heim heþan:
 nāer at þingi munt |
 enum þroskamikla

Skirnir spake:

- “My tidings all |
 must I truly learn
 Ere homeward hence I ride:
 How soon thou wilt |
 with the mighty son

nenna Njarþar syni.”

Of Njorth a meeting make.”

Gerþr kvað:

40. “Barri heitir, |
es vit bæði vitum,
lundr lognfara:
en ept nætr niu |
þar mun Njarþar syni
Gerþr unna gamans.”

Gerth spake:

“Barri there is, |
which we both know well,
A forest fair and still;
And nine nights hence |
to the son of Njorth
Will Gerth there grant delight.”

Barri: “The Leafy.”

Þá reið Skirnir heim.
Freyr stōþ ūti ok kvaddi hann ok
spurði tīþinda:

Then Skirnir rode home.
Freyr stood without, and spoke to him,
and asked for tidings:

41. “Seg mer þat, Skirnir! |
āþr verpir sōpli af mar
ok stīgir feti framarr:
hvat þu ārnaþir |
ī jōtunheima
þīns eða mīns munar?”

“Tell me, Skimir, |
ere thou take off the saddle,
Or farest forward a step:
What hast thou done |
in the giants’ dwelling
To make glad thee or me?”

Skirnir kvað:

42. “Barri heitir, |
es vit báðir vitum,
lundr lognfara:

Skirnir spoke:

“Barri there is, |
which we both know well,
A forest fair and still;

en ept nǣtr niu	And nine nights hence
þar mun Njarþar syni	to the son of Njorth
Gerþr unna gamans.”	Will Gerth there grant delight.”

Abbreviated to initial letters in the manuscript.

Freyr kvaþ:

43. “Lǫng es nǫtt, |
 langar’u tvǣr,
 hvē of þreyjak þriar?
 oft mēr mǫnuþr |
 minni þōtti
 an sjā hýnǫtt hǫlf.”

Freyr spake:

“Long is one night, |
 longer are two;
 How then shall I bear three?
 Often to me |
 has a month seemed less
 Than now half a night of desire.”

The superscription is lacking in *Regius*. Snorri quotes this one stanza in his prose paraphrase, *Gylfaginning*, chapter 37. The two versions are substantially the same, except that Snorri makes the first line read,

Long is one night, | long is the second.

(Lǫng es nǫtt, | lǫng es ǫnnur.)

Harbarthsljóth

The Poem of Harbarth

Introductory Note

The *Harbarthsljóth* is found complete in the *Codex Regius*, where it follows the *Skirnismol*, and from the fourth line of stanza 19 to the end of the poem in the *Arnarnagnæan Codex*, of which it occupies the first page and a half.

The poem differs sharply from those which precede it in the *Codex Regius*, both in metrical form and in spirit. It is, indeed, the most nearly formless of all the Eddic poems. The normal metre is the Malahattr (cf. *General Introduction*, where an example is given). The name of this verse-form means “in the manner of conversation,” and the *Harbarthsljóth’s* verse fully justifies the term. The Atli poems exemplify the conventional use of Malahattr, but in the *Harbarthsljóth* the form is used with extraordinary freedom, and other metrical forms are frequently employed. A few of the speeches of which the poem is composed cannot be twisted into any known Old Norse metre, and appear to be simply prose.

How far this confusion is due to interpolations and faulty transmission of the original poem is uncertain. Finnur Jonsson has attempted a wholesale purification of the poem, but his arbitrary condemnation of words, lines, and entire stanzas as spurious is quite unjustified by any positive evidence. I have accepted Mogk’s theory that the author was “a first-rate psychologist, but a poor poet,” and have translated the poem as it stands in the manuscripts. I have preserved the metrical confusion of the original by keeping throughout so far as possible to the metres found in the poem; if the rhythm of the translation is often hard to catch, the difficulty is no less with the original Norse.

The poem is simply a contest of abuse, such as the early Norwegian and Iclander delighted in, the opposing figures being Thor and Othin, the latter appearing in the disguise of the ferryman Harbarth. Such billingsgate lent itself readily to changes, interpolations and omissions, and it is little wonder that the poem is chaotic. It consists mainly of boasting and of references, often luckily obscure, to disreputable events in the life of one or the other of the disputants. Some editors have sought to read a complex symbolism into it, particularly by representing it as a contest between the noble or warrior class (Othin) and the peasant (Thor). But it seems a pity to take such a vigorous piece of broad farce too seriously.

Verse-form, substance, and certain linguistic peculiarities, notably the suffixed articles, point to a relatively late date (eleventh century) for the poem in its present form. Probably it had its origin in the early days, but its colloquial nature and its vulgarity made it readily susceptible to changes.

Owing to the chaotic state of the text, and the fact that none of the editors or commentators have succeeded in improving it much, I have not in this case attempted to give all the important emendations and suggestions. The stanza-divisions are largely arbitrary.

Þórr fór ór austrvegi ok kom at sundi
einu; qþrum megum sundsins var
ferjukarlinn með skipit.

Thor was on his way back from a jour-
ney in the East, and came to a sound; on
the other side of the sound was a ferry-
man with a boat.

Þórr kallði:

Thor called out:

Harbarth (“Gray-Beard”): Othin. On the nature of the prose notes found in the manuscripts, cf. *Grimnismol*, introduction. *Thor*: the journeys of the thunder-god were almost as numerous as those of Othin; cf. *Thrymskvitha* and *Hymiskvitha*. Like the Robin Hood of the British ballads, Thor was often temporarily worsted, but always managed to come out ahead in the end. His “Journey in the East” is presumably the famous episode, related in full by Snorri, in the course of which he encountered the giant Skrymir, and in the house of Utgartha-Loki lifted the cat which turned out to be Mithgarthsorm. The *Hymiskvitha* relates a further incident of this journey.

1. “Hverr es sá sveinn sveina, |
es stendr fyr sundit
handan?”

“Who is the fellow yonder, |
on the farther shore of the sound?”

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

The ferryman spake:

2. “Hverr es sá karl karla, |
es kallar of vāginn?”

“What kind of a peasant is yon, |
that calls o’er the bay?”

The superscriptions to the speeches are badly confused in the manuscripts, but editors have agreed fairly well as to where they belong.

Þórr kvað:

3. “Ferðu mik of sundit! |
föþik þik á morgin:
meis hefk á baki, |
verþra matr enn betri.
Át ek í hvílf, |
áþr ek heiman fōr,
sildr ok hafra: |
saþr emk enn þess.”

Thor spake:

- “Ferry me over the sound; |
I will feed thee therefor in the
morning;
A basket I have on my back, |
and food therein, none better;
At leisure I ate, |
ere the house I left,
Of herrings and porridge, |
so plenty I had.”

From the fact that in *Regius* line 3 begins with a capital letter, it is possible that lines 3–4 constitute the ferryman’s reply, with something lost before stanza 4.

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

4. “Ārligum verkum hrōsar þū
verþinum; |
veiztattu fyrir gōrla:
dōpr eru þín heimkynni, |
daup hykk at þín mōþir sē.”

The ferryman spake:

- “Of thy morning feats art thou proud, |
but the future thou knowest not
wholly;
Doleful thine home-coming is: |
thy mother, me thinks, is dead.”

Thy mother: Jorth (Earth).

Þórr kvað:

5. “Þat segir þū nū, |
es hverjum þykkir
mest at vita, |
at mīn mōþir daup sē.”

Thor spake:

- “Now hast thou said |
what to each must seem
The mightiest grief, |
that my mother is dead.”

Some editors assume a lacuna after this stanza.

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

6. “Þeygi es sem þū |
 þrjú bū gōþ eigir;
 berbeinn þū stendr |
 ok hefr brautinga gōrvi;
 þatki at þū hafir brōkr þīnar!”

The ferryman spake:

“Three good dwellings, |
 methinks, thou hast not;
 Barefoot thou standest, |
 and wearest a beggar’s dress;
 Not even hose dost thou have.”

Three good dwellings: this has been generally assumed to mean three separate establishments, but it may refer simply to the three parts of a single farm, the dwelling proper, the cattle barn and the storehouse; i.e., Thor is not even a respectable peasant.

Þōrr kvað:

7. “Stýrðu hingat eikjunni! |
 ek mun þér stöðna kenna;
 eða hverr ā skipit |
 es þū heldr víð landit?”

Thor spake:

“Steer thou hither the boat; |
 the landing here shall I show thee;
 But whose the craft |
 that thou keepest on the shore?”

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

8. “Hildolfr sá heitir, |
 es mik halda bað,
 rekr enn ráðsvinni, |
 es býr í Ráðseyjarsundi;
 baðat hann hlennimenn flytja |
 eða hrossa þjófa,
 gōða eina |
 ok þás ek gōrva kunna.

The ferryman spake:

“Hildolf is he |
 who bade me have it,
 A hero wise; |
 his home is at Rathsey’s sound.
 He bade me no robbers to steer, |
 nor stealers of steeds,
 But worthy men, |
 and those whom well do I know.

Segðu til nafns þíns, |
ef þú vill of sundit fara.”

Say now thy name, |
if over the sound thou wilt fare.”

Þórr kvað:

9. “Segja munk til nafns míns, |
þót ek sekr seak,
ok til alls øplis: |
ek em Óþins sunr,
Meila bróðir, |
en Magna faðir,
þrúðvaldr goða; |
við þór knáttu hér dōma.

Hins viljak nū spyrja, |
hvat þú heitir.”

Thor spake:

“My name indeed shall I tell, |
though in danger I am,
And all my race; |
I am Othin’s son,
Meili’s brother, |
and Magni’s father,
The strong one of the gods; |
with Thor now speech canst thou
get.
And now would I know |
what name thou hast.”

In danger: Thor is “sekr,” i.e., without the protection of any law, so long as he is in the territory of his enemies, the giants. *Meili:* a practically unknown son of Othin, mentioned here only in the Edda. *Magni:* son of Thor and the giantess Jarnsaxa; after Thor’s fight with Hrungnir (cf. stanza 14, note) Magni, though but three days old, was the only one of the gods strong enough to lift the dead giant’s foot from Thor’s neck. After rescuing his father, Magni said to him: “There would have been little trouble, father, had I but come sooner; I think I should have sent this giant to hell with my fist if I had met him first.” Magni and his brother, Mothi, inherit Thor’s hammer.

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

10. “Hārbarðr ek heiti, |
hylk of nafn sjaldan.”

The ferryman spake:

“Harbarth am I, |
and seldom I hide my name.”

Þórr kvað:

11. “Hvat skaltu of nafn hylja, |
nema þū sakar eigir?”

Thor spake:

“Why shouldst thou hide thy name, |
if quarrel thou hast not?”

Hārbarðr kvað:

12. “En þót ek sakar eiga, |
fyr slíkum sem þū est
munk forþa þō |
fjörvi mínu,
nema ek feigr sē.”

Harbarth spake:

“And though I had a quarrel, |
from such as thou art
Yet none the less |
my life would I guard,
Unless I be doomed to die.”

This stanza is hopelessly confused as to form, but none of the editorial rearrangements have materially altered the meaning. *Doomed to die:* the word “feigr” occurs constantly in the Old Norse poems and sagas; the idea of an inevitable but unknown fate seems to have been practically universal throughout the pre-Christian period. On the concealment of names from enemies, cf. *Fafnismol*, prose after stanza 1.

Þórr kvað:

13. “Harm ljōtan |
hykk mēr ī þvī vesa,
at vaða of vāginna til þīn |
ok vāeta ǫgur minn;
skyldak launa ǫgursveini
þīnum |
kanginyrþi,
ef ek komumk of sundit.”

Thor spake:

“Great trouble, methinks, |
would it be to come to thee,
To wade the waters across, |
and wet my middle;
Weakling, well shall I pay |
thy mocking words,
if across the sound I come.”

This stanza, like the preceding one, is peculiarly chaotic in the manuscript, and has been variously emended.

Hārbarðr kvað:

14. “Hēr munk standa |
ok þín heðan bīða;
fanntattu mann enn harþara |
at Hrungni dauðan.”

Harbarth spake:

“Here shall I stand |
and await thee here;
Thou hast found since Hrungnir died |
no fiercer man.”

Hrungnir: this giant rashly wagered his head that his horse, Gullfaxi, was swifter than Othin’s Sleipnir. In the race, which Hrungnir lost, he managed to dash uninvited into the home of the gods, where he became very drunk. Thor ejected him, and accepted his challenge to a duel. Hrungnir, terrified, had a helper made for him in the form of a dummy giant nine miles high and three miles broad. Hrungnir himself had a three-horned heart of stone and a head of stone; his shield was of stone and his weapon was a grindstone. But Thjalfi, Thor’s servant, told him the god would attack him out of the ground, wherefore Hrungnir laid down his shield and stood on it. The hammer Mjollnir shattered both the grindstone and Hrungnir’s head, but part of the grindstone knocked Thor down, and the giant fell with his foot on Thor’s neck (cf. note on stanza 9). Meanwhile Thjalfi dispatched the dummy giant without trouble.

Þórr kvað:

15. “Hins vildu nū geta, |
es vit Hrungnir deildum,
sā enn stōrūþgi jōtunn, |
es ōr steini vas hōfupit ā;
þō lētk hann falla |
ok fyrir hnīga.
Hvat vanntu þā meðan,
Hārbarðr?”

Thor spake:

“Fain art thou to tell |
how with Hrungnir I fought,
The haughty giant, |
whose head of stone was made;
And yet I felled him, |
and stretched him before me.
What, Harbarth, didst thou the while?”

Hārbarðr kvað:

16. “Vask með Fjōlvvari |
fimm vetr alla

Harbarth spake:

“Five full winters |
with Fjolvar was I,

ī eyju þeiri	And dwelt in the isle
es Algrön heitir;	that is Algrön called;
vega vēr þar knōttum	There could we fight,
ok val fella,	and fell the slain,
margs at freista,	Much could we seek,
mans at kosta.”	and maids could master.”

Fjolvar: not elsewhere mentioned in the poems; perhaps the father of the “seven sisters” referred to in stanza 18. *Algrön*: “The All-Green”: not mentioned elsewhere in the Edda.

Þōrr kvað:

17. “Hversu snūnuþu yþr konur
yþrar?”

Thor spake:

“How won ye success with your
women?”

Thor is always eager for stories of this sort; cf. stanzas 31 and 33.

Hārbarþr kvað:

18. “Sparkar ōttum vēr konur, |
ef oss at spökum yrþi;
horskar ōttum vēr konur, |
ef oss hollar væri:
þær ōr sandi |
sīma undu
ok grund ōr dali |
djūpum grōfu.
Varþk þeim einn ōllum |
øfri at rōþum,
hvīldak hjā |
þeim systurum sjau

Harbarth spake:

“Lively women we had, |
if they wise for us were;
Wise were the women we had, |
if they kind for us were;
For ropes of sand |
they would seek to wind,
And the bottom to dig |
from the deepest dale.
Wiser than all |
in counsel I was,
And there I slept |
by the sisters seven,

ok hafþak geþ |
þeira allt ok gaman.
Hvat vanntu þā meþan, Þōrr?”

And joy full great |
did I get from each.
What, Thor, didst thou the while?”

Þōrr kvað:

19. “Ek drap Þjaza, |
enn þrūþmōþga jōtun,
upp ek varp augum |
Alvalda sunar
ā þann enn heiþa himin;
þau eru merki mest |
minna verka,
þaus allir menn sīþan of sē.
Hvat vanntu meþan, Hārbarþr?”

Thor spake:

“Thjazi I felled, |
the giant fierce,
And I hurled the eyes |
of Alvaldi’s son
To the heavens hot above;
Of my deeds the mightiest |
marks are these,
That all men since can see.
What, Harbarth, didst thou the while?”

Thjazi: this giant, by a trick, secured possession of the goddess Ithun and her apples (cf. *Skirnismol*, 19, note), and carried her off into Jotunheim. Loki, through whose fault she had been betrayed, was sent after her by the gods. He went in Freyja’s “hawk’s-dress” (cf. *Thrymskvitha*, 3), turned Ithun into a nut, and flew back with her. Thjazi, in the shape of an eagle, gave chase. But the gods kindled a fire which burnt the eagle’s wings, and then they killed him. Snorri’s prose version does not attribute this feat particularly to Thor. Thjazi’s daughter was Skathi, whom the gods permitted to marry Njorth as a recompense for her father’s death. *Alvaldi:* of him we know only that he was the father of Thjazi, Ithi and Gang, who divided his wealth, each taking a mouthful of gold. The name is variously spelled. It is not known which stars were called “Thjazi’s Eyes.” In the middle of line 4 begins the fragmentary version of the poem found in the *Arnarnagmæan Codex*.

Hārbarþr kvað:

20. “Miklar manvēlar |
ek hafþa við myrkriþur,
þās ek vēlta þær frā verum;

Harbarth spoke:

“Much love-craft I wrought |
with them who ride by night,
When I stole them by stealth from
their husbands;

harþan jötun	A giant hard
hugþak Hlēbarþ vesa:	was Hlebarth, methinks:
gaf hann mēr gambantein,	His wand he gave me as gift,
en ek vēlta hann ōr viti.”	And I stole his wits away.”

Riders by night: witches, who were supposed to ride on wolves in the dark. Nothing further is known of this adventure.

<i>Þōrr kvað:</i>	<i>Thor spake:</i>
21. “Illum huga launaþir þū þā gōþar gjafar.”	“Thou didst repay good gifts with evil mind.”

<i>Hārbarþr kvað:</i>	<i>Harbarth spake:</i>
22. “Þat hefr eik es af annarri skefr: of sik es hverr ī slīku. Hvat vanntu meþan, Þōrr?”	“The oak must have what it shaves from another; In such things each for himself. What, Thor, didst thou the while?”

The oak, etc.: this proverb is found elsewhere (e.g., *Grettissaga*) in approximately the same words. Its force is much like our “to the victor belong the spoils.”

<i>Þōrr kvað:</i>	<i>Thor spake:</i>
23. “Ek vas austr ok jötna barþak brūþir þōlvīsar es til bjargs gengu: mikil mundi ætt jötna, ef allir lifði,	“Eastward I fared, of the giants I felled Their ill-working women who went to the mountain; And large were the giants’ throng if all were alive;

vætr mundi manna	No men would there be
und miþgarpi.	in Mithgarth more.
Hvat vanntu meþan, Hārbarþr?”	What, Harbarth, didst thou the while?”

Thor killed no women of the giants’ race on the “journey to the East” so fully described by Snorri, his great giant-killing adventure being the one narrated in the *Thrymskvitha*.

Hārbarþr kvaþ:

24. “Vask ā Vallandi |
 ok vīgum fylgþak,
 attak jofrum, |
 en aldri sættak.
 Ōþinn ā jarla |
 þās ī val falla,
 en Þōrr ā þræla kyn.”

Harbarth spake:

“In Valland I was, |
 and wars I raised,
 Princes I angered, |
 and peace brought never;
 The noble who fall |
 in the fight hath Othin,
 And Thor hath the race of the thralls.”

Valland: this mythical place (“Land of Slaughter”) is elsewhere mentioned, but not further characterised; cf. prose introduction to *Völundarkvitha*, and *Helreith Brynhildar*, 2. On the bringing of slain heroes to Othin, cf. *Voluspo*, 31 and note, and, for a somewhat different version, *Grimnismol*, 14. Nowhere else is it indicated that Thor has an asylum for dead peasants.

Þōrr kvaþ:

25. “Ōjafnt skipta |
 es þū mundir meþ ǫsum liþi,
 ef þū ættir vilgi mikils vald.”

Thor spake:

“Unequal gifts |
 of men wouldst thou give to the
 gods,
 If might too much thou shouldst have.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

26. “Þórr á afl þrit, |
 en etki hjarta:
 af hræzlu ok hugbleyði |
 vas þēr ī hanzka troþit
 [ok þóttiska þū þā Þórr vesa;]
 hvārki þū þā þorþir |
 fyr hræzlu þinni
 físa nē hnjōsa, |
 svāt Fjalarr heyrþi.”

Harbarth spake:

“Thor has might enough, |
 but never a heart;
 For cowardly fear |
 in a glove wast thou fain to crawl,
 And there forgot thou wast Thor;
 Afraid there thou wast, |
 thy fear was such,
 To fart or sneeze |
 lest Fjalar should hear.”

The reference here is to one of the most familiar episodes in Thor’s eastward journey. He and his companions came to a house in the forest, and went in to spend the night. Being disturbed by an earthquake and a terrific noise, they all crawled into a smaller room opening from the main one. In the morning, however, they discovered that the earthquake had been occasioned by the giant Skrymir’s lying down near them, and the noise by his snoring. The house in which they had taken refuge was his glove, the smaller room being the thumb. Skrymir was in fact Utgartha-Loki himself. That he is in this stanza called Fjalar (the name occurs also in *Hovamol*, 14) is probably due to a confusion of the names by which Utgartha-Loki went. Loki taunts Thor with this adventure in *Lokasenna*, 60 and 62, line 3 of this stanza being perhaps interpolated from *Lokasenna*, 60, 4.

Þórr kvað:

27. “Hārbarþr enn ragi! |
 ek munda þik ī hel drepa,
 ef ek mætta seilask of sund.”

Thor spake:

“Thou womanish Harbarth, |
 to hell would I smite thee straight,
 Could mine arm reach over the sound.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

28. “Hvat skyldir þū of sund seilask, |
 es sakar’u alls øngvar?
 Hvat vanntu þā, Þórr?”

Harbarth spake:

“Wherefore reach over the sound, |
 since strife we have none?
 What, Thor, didst thou do then?”

Þórr kvað:

29. “Ek vas austr |
 ok ǫna varðak,
 þás mik sǫttu |
 þeir Svārangs synir;
 grjóti þeir mik þorðu, |
 gagni urðu þeir þō lítt fegnir,
 urðu þeir mik fyrri |
 friðar at biðja.
 Hvat vanntu þā meðan,
 Hārbarðr?”

Thor spake:

“Eastward I was, |
 and the river I guarded well,
 Where the sons of Svarang |
 sought me there;
 Stones did they hurl; |
 small joy did they have of winning;
 Before me there |
 to ask for peace did they fare.
 What, Harbarth, didst thou the while?”

The river: probably Ifing, which flows between the land of the gods and that of the giants; cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 16. *Sons of Svarang:* presumably the giants; Svarang is not elsewhere mentioned in the poems, nor is there any other account of Thor’s defense of the passage.

Hārbarðr kvað:

30. “Ek vas austr |
 ok við einhverja dǫmþak,
 lēk ek við ena línhvītu |
 ok launþing háþak,
 gladdak ena gollbjörtu, |
 gamni mæðr unni.”

Harbarth spake:

“Eastward I was, |
 and spake with a certain one,
 I played with the linen-white maid, |
 and met her by stealth;
 I gladdened the gold-decked one, |
 and she granted me joy.”

Othin’s adventures of this sort were too numerous to make it possible to identify this particular person. *By stealth:* so the *Arnarnagnæan Codex*; *Regius*, followed by several editors, has “long meeting with her.”

Þórr kvað:

31. “Göð ǫttuð ēr mankynni þar þā.”

Thor spake:

“Full fair was thy woman-finding.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

32. “Liþs þíns værak þā þurfi, Þōrr! |
at ek helda þeiri enni
línhvītu mey.”

Harbarth spake:

“Thy help did I need then, Thor, |
to hold the white maid fast.”

Þōrr kvað:

33. “Ek munda þēr þā þat veita, |
ef ek viðr of kvæmumk.”

Thor spake:

“Gladly, had I been there, |
my help to thee had been given.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

34. “Ek munda þēr þā trua, |
nema þū mik í trygð veltir.”

Harbarth spake:

“I might have trusted thee then, |
didst thou not betray thy troth.”

Þōrr kvað:

35. “Emkat ek sá hælbitr |
sem hūpskōr forn ā vār.”

Thor spake:

“No heel-biter am I, in truth, |
like an old leather shoe in spring.”

Heel-biter: this effective parallel to our “back-biter” is not found elsewhere in Old Norse.

Hārbarþr kvað:

36. “Hvat vanntu meðan, Þōrr?”

Harbarth spoke:

“What, Thor, didst thou the while?”

Þōrr kvað:

37. “Brūþir berserkja |
barþak í Hlēseyju,
þær hōfðu verst unnit, |
viltu þjōþ alla.”

Thor spake:

“In Hlesey the brides |
of the Berserkers slew I;
Most evil they were, |
and all they betrayed.”

Hlesey: “the Island of the Sea-God” (Hler = Ægir), identified with the Danish island Läsö, in the Kattegat. It appears again, much out of place, in *Oddrunargratr*, 28. *Berserker*s: originally men who could turn themselves into bears, hence the name, “bear-shirts”; cf. the werewolf or loup-garou. Later the name was applied to men who at times became seized with a madness for bloodshed; cf. *Hyndluljóth*, 23 and note. The women here mentioned are obviously of the earlier type.

Hārbarþr kvað:

38. “Klæki vanntu þā, Þōrr! |
es þū ā konum barþir.”

Harbarth spake:

“Shame didst thou win, |
that women thou slewest, Thor.”

Þōrr kvað:

39. “Vargynjur vōru þær, |
en varla konur;
skeldu skip mitt |
es ek skorþat hafþak;
ōgþu mēr iarnlurki, |
en eltu Þjalfa.
Hvat vanntu meþan, Hārbarþr?”

Thor spake:

“She-wolves they were like, |
and women but little;
My ship, which well |
I had trimmed, did they shake;
With clubs of iron they threatened, |
and Thjalfi they drove off.
What, Harbarth, didst thou the while?”

Thjalfi: Thor’s servant; cf. note on stanza 14.

Hārbarþr kvað:

40. “Ek vask ī hernum |
es hingat gōrþisk
gnæfa gunnfana, |
geir at rjōþa.”

Harbarth spake:

“In the host I was |
that hither fared,
The banners to raise, |
and the spear to redden.”

To what expedition this refers is unknown, but apparently Othin speaks of himself as allied

to the foes of the gods.

Þórr kvað:

41. “Þess vildu nū geta, |
es þū fōrt oss ōljūfan at
bjōþa.”

Thor spake:

“Wilt thou now say |
that hatred thou soughtest to
bring us?”

Hatred: so *Regius*; the other manuscript has, apparently, “sickness.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

42. “Bōta skal þēr þat þā |
baugi *mundar*,
sem jafnendr unnu |
þeirs okkr vilja sǣtta.”

Harbarth spake:

“A ring for thy hand |
shall make all right for thee,
As the judge decides |
who sets us two at peace.”

Just what Othin means, or why his words should so have enraged Thor, is not evident, though he may imply that Thor is open to bribery. Perhaps a passage has dropped out before stanza 43.

Þórr kvað:

43. “Hvar namtu |
þessi en hnōfiligu orþ,
es ek heyrþa aldri |
in hnōfiligri?”

Thor spake:

“Where foundest thou |
so foul and scornful a speech?
More foul a speech |
I never before have heard.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

44. “Nam ek at mōnnum |
þeim enum aldrōnum
es bua ī heimis *haugum*.”

Harbarth spake:

“I learned it from men, |
the men so old,
Who dwell in the hills of home.”

Othin refers to the dead, from whom he seeks information through his magic power.

Þórr kvað:

45. “Þā gefr þū |
gott nafn dysjum,
es þū kallar þær heimis hauga.”

Thor spake:

“A name full good |
to heaps of stones thou givest
When thou callest them hills of home.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

46. “Svā dōmi ek slíkt far.”

Harbarth spake:

“Of such things speak I so.”

Þórr kvað:

47. “Orþkringi þín |
mun þēr illa koma,
ef ek ræþ ā vāg at vaða;
ulfi hāera |
hykk þik ōpa munu,
ef þū hlýtr af hamri hogg.”

Thor spake:

“Ill for thee comes |
thy keenness of tongue,
If the water I choose to wade;
Louder, I ween, |
than a wolf thou cryest,
If a blow of my hammer thou hast.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

48. “Sif ā hōr heima, |
hans mundu fund vilja,
þann mundu þrek drýgja, |
þat es þēr skyldara.”

Harbarth spake:

“Sif has a lover at home, |
and him shouldst thou meet;
More fitting it were |
on him to put forth thy strength.”

Sif: Thor’s wife, the lover being presumably Loki; cf. *Lokasenna*, 54.

Þórr kvað:

49. “Mælr þū at munns rāpi, |
svāt mēr skyldi verst þykkja,
halr enn hugblaupi! |
hykk at þū ljūgir.”

Thor spake:

“Thy tongue still makes thee say |
what seems most ill to me,
Thou witless man! |
Thou liest, I ween.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

50. “Satt hykk mik segja; |
seinn estu at fōr þinni;
langt mundir þū nū kominn,
Þórr! |
ef þū liþ of fōrir.”

Harbarth spake:

“Truth do I speak, |
but slow on thy way thou art;
Far hadst thou gone |
if now in the boat thou hadst
fared.”

Þórr kvað:

51. “Hārbarþr enn ragi! |
heldr hefr þū nū mik
dvalþan.”

Thor spake:

“Thou womanish Harbarth! |
here hast thou held me too long.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

52. “Āsaþōri |
hugþak aldri mundu
glepja farhirþi farar.”

Harbarth spake:

“I thought not ever |
that Asathor would be hindered
By a ferryman thus from faring.”

Asathor: Thor goes by various names in the poems: e.g., Vingthor, Vingnir, Hlorrithi. Asathor means “Thor of the Gods.”

Þórr kvað:

53. “Rāþ munk þēr nū rāþa: |
rō þū hingat bātinum;
hættum hōtingi, |
hittu fōþur Magna!”

Thor spake:

“One counsel I bring thee now: |
row hither thy boat;
No more of scoffing; |
set Magni’s father across.”

Magni: Thor’s son; cf. stanza 9 and note.

Hārbarþr kvað:

54. “Farþu firr sundi! |
þēr skal fars synja.”

Harbarth spake:

“From the sound go hence; |
the passage thou hast not.”

Þórr kvað:

55. “Vīsa þū mēr nū leiþina, |
alls þū vill mik eigi of vāginn
ferja!”

Thor spake:

“The way now show me, |
since thou takest me not o’er the
water.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

56. “Lītít es at synja, |
langt es at fara:
stund es til stokksins, |
önnur til steinsins,
haltu svā til vinstra veggins, |
unz þū hittir Verland.
Þar mun Fjörgyn |
hitta Þór sun sinn

Harbarth spake:

“To refuse it is little, |
to fare it is long;
A while to the stock, |
and a while to the stone;
Then the road to thy left, |
till Verland thou reachest;
And there shall Fjorgyn |
her son Thor find,

ok mun hōn kenna hōnum
ōttunga brautir |
til Ōþins landa.”

And the road of her children |
she shows him to Othin’s realm.”

Line 2: the phrases mean simply “a long way”; cf. “over stock and stone.” *Verland:* the “Land of Men” to which Thor must come from the land of the giants. The *Arnarnagnæan Codex* has “Valland” (cf. stanza 24 and note), but this is obviously an error. *Fjorgyn:* a feminine form of the same name, which belongs to Othin (cf. *Voluspo*, 56 and note); here it evidently means Jorth (Earth), Thor’s mother. *The road:* the rainbow bridge, Bifrost; cf. *Grimnismol*, 29 and note.

Þōrr kvað:

57. “Mun ek taka þangat ī dag?”

Thor spake:

“May I come so far in a day?”

Hārbarþr kvað:

58. “Taka við vīl ok erfípi
at uppvesandi sōlu, |
es ek get þāna.”

Harbarth spake:

“With toil and trouble perchance,
While the sun still shines, |
or so I think.”

Line 2: so *Regius*; the other manuscript has “ere sunrise.”

Þōrr kvað:

59. “Skamt mun nū māl okkat, |
alls þū mēr skōtingu einni
svarar;
launa munk þēr farsynjun, |
ef vit finnumsk ī sinn annat.”

Thor spake:

“Short now shall be our speech, |
for thou speakest in mockery only;
The passage thou gavest me not |
I shall pay thee if ever we meet.”

Hārbarþr kvað:

60. “Farðu nū þars þik hafi allan
gramir!”

Harbarth spake:

“Get hence where every evil thing shall
have thee!”

The *Arnarnagnæan Codex* clearly indicates Harbarth as the speaker of this line, but *Regius* has no superscription, and begins the line with a small letter not preceded by a period, thereby assigning it to Thor.

Hymiskvitha

The Lay of Hymir

Introductory Note

The *Hymiskvitha* is found complete in both manuscripts; in *Regius* it follows the *Harbarthsljóth*, while in the *Arnarnagnæan Codex* it comes after the *Grimnismol*. Snorri does not quote it, although he tells the main story involved.

The poem is a distinctly inferior piece of work, obviously based on various narrative fragments, awkwardly pieced together. Some critics, Jessen and Edzardi for instance, have maintained that the compiler had before him three distinct poems, which he simply put together; others, like Finnur Jonsson and Mogk, think that the author made a new poem of his own on the basis of earlier poems, now lost. It seems probable that he took a lot of odds and ends of material concerning Thor, whether in prose or in verse, and worked them together in a perfunctory way, without much caring how well they fitted. His chief aim was probably to impress the credulous imaginations of hearers greedy for wonders.

The poem is almost certainly one of the latest of those dealing with the gods, though Finnur Jonsson, in order to support his theory of a Norwegian origin, has to date it relatively early. If, as seems probable, it was produced in Iceland, the chances are that it was composed in the first half of the eleventh century. Jessen, rather recklessly, goes so far as to put it two hundred years later. In any case, it belongs to a period of literary decadence,—the great days of Eddic poetry would never have permitted the nine hundred headed person found in Hymir's home—and to one in which the usual forms of diction in mythological poetry had yielded somewhat to the verbal subtleties of skaldic verse.

While the skaldic poetry properly falls outside the limits of this book, it is necessary here to say a word about it. There is preserved, in the sagas and elsewhere, a very considerable body of lyric poetry, the authorship of each poem being nearly always definitely stated, whether correctly or otherwise. This type of poetry is marked by an extraordinary complexity of diction, with a peculiarly difficult vocabulary of its own. It was to explain some of the "kennings" which composed this special vocabulary that Snorri wrote one of the sections of the *Prose Edda*. As an illustration, in a single stanza of one poem in the *Egilssaga*, a sword is called "the halo of the helm," "the wound-hoe," "the blood-snake" (possibly; no one is sure what the compound word means) and "the ice of the girdle," while men appear in the same stanza as "Othin's ash-trees," and battle is spoken of as "the iron game." One of the eight lines has defied translation completely.

Skaldic diction made relatively few inroads into the earlier Eddic poems, but in the *Hymiskvitha* these circumlocutions are fairly numerous. This sets the poem somewhat apart

from the rest of the mythological collection. Only the vigor of the two main stories—Thor’s expedition after Hymir’s kettle and the fishing trip in which he caught Mithgarthsorm—saves it from complete mediocrity.

1.	Ār valtīvar veiþar nōmu ok sumblsamir, āþr saþir yrþi, hristu teina ok ā hlaut sǫu: fundu at Ægis ørkost hverjan.	Of old the gods made feast together, And drink they sought ere sated they were; Twigs they shook, and blood they tried: Rich fare in Ægir’s hall they found.
----	--	---

Twigs: Vigfusson comments at some length on “the rite practised in the heathen age of inquiring into the future by dipping bunches of chips or twigs into the blood (of sacrifices) and shaking them.” But the two operations may have been separate, the twigs being simply “divining-rods” marked with runes. In either case, the gods were seeking information by magic as to where they could find plenty to drink. *Ægir:* a giant who is also the god of the sea; little is known of him outside of what is told here and in the *introductory prose* to the *Lokasenna*, though Snorri has a brief account of him, giving his home as Hlesey (Läsö, cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 37). *Grimnismol*, 45, has a reference to this same feast.

2.	Sat bergbui barnteitr fyrir mjök glikr megi miskorblinda; leit ī augu Yggs barn ī þrō: “Þū skalt ǫsum opt sumbl gørva.”	The mountain-dweller sat merry as boyhood, But soon like a blinded man he seemed; The son of Ygg gazed in his eyes: “For the gods a feast shalt thou forthwith get.”
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Mountain-dweller: the giant (Ægir). *Line 2:* the principal word in the original has defied interpretation, and any translation of the line must be largely guesswork. *Ygg:* Othin; his

son is Thor. Some editors assume a gap after this stanza.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>3. Önn fekk jötni
 orþbæginna halr,
 hugði at hefndum
 hann næst við goð;
 bað Sifjar ver
 sēr fœra hver,
 “þannu öllum yðr
 öf of heitak.”</p> | <p>The word-wielder toil
 for the giant worked,
 And so revenge
 on the gods he sought;
 He bade Sif’s mate
 the kettle bring:
 “Therein for ye all
 much ale shall I brew.”</p> |
|--|---|

Word-wielder: Thor. *The giant:* Ægir. *Sif:* Thor’s wife; cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 48. *The kettle:* Ægir’s kettle is possibly the sea itself.

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|---|--|
| <p>4. Nē þat möttu
 mærir tívar
 ok ginnregin
 of geta hvergi,
 unz af trygðum
 Týr Hlörriþa
 āstrāð mikit
 einu sagði:</p> | <p>The far-famed ones
 could find it not,
 And the holy gods
 could get it nowhere;
 Till in truthful wise
 did Týr speak forth,
 And helpful counsel
 to Hlorrithi gave.</p> |
|---|--|

Týr: the god of battle; his two great achievements were thrusting his hand into the mouth of the wolf Fenrir so that the gods might bind him, whereby he lost his hand (cf. *Voluspö*, 39, note), and his fight with the hound Garm in the last battle, in which they kill each other. *Hlorrithi:* Thor.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>5. “Býr fyr austan
 Elivāga</p> | <p>“There dwells to the east
 of Elivagar</p> |
|--|--|

hundvīss Hymir |
 at himins enda:
 ā minn faðir |
 mōþugr ketil,
 rūmbrugþinn hver, |
 rastar djūpan.”

Hymir the wise |
 at the end of heaven;
 A kettle my father |
 fierce doth own,
 A mighty vessel |
 a mile in depth.”

Elivagar (“Stormy Waves”): possibly the Milky Way; cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 31, note. *Hymir*: this giant figures only in this episode. It is not clear why Tyr, who is elsewhere spoken of as a son of Othin, should here call Hymir his father. Finnur Jonsson, in an attempt to get round this difficulty, deliberately changed the word “father” to “grandfather,” but this does not help greatly.

Þórr kvað:

6. “Veiztu ef þiggjum |
 þann lögveli?”

Týr kvað:

“Ef, vinr! vēlar |
 vit gœrvum til.”

Thor spake:

“May we win, dost thou think, |
 this whirler of water?”

Tyr spake:

“Aye, friend, we can, |
 if cunning we are.”

Neither manuscript has any superscriptions, but most editors have supplied them as above. From this point through stanza it the editors have varied considerably in grouping the lines into stanzas. The manuscripts indicate the third lines of stanzas 7, 8, 9, and to as beginning stanzas, but this makes more complications than the present arrangement. It is possible that, as Sijmons suggests, two lines have been lost after stanza 6.

7. Fōru drjūgum |
 dag þann *framan*
 Āsgarði frā, |
 unz til Egils kvōmu;
 hirði hafra |
 hornqōfgasta;

Forward that day |
 with speed they fared,
 From Asgarth came they |
 to Egil’s home;
 The goats with horns |
 bedecked he guarded;

hurfu at hǫllu |
es Hymir ātti.

Then they sped to the hall |
where Hymir dwelt.

Egil: possibly, though by no means certainly, the father of Thor's servant, Thjalfi, for, according to Snorri, Thor's first stop on this journey was at the house of a peasant whose children, Thjalfi and Roskva, he took into his service; cf. stanza 38, note. The *Arnarnagnæan Codex* has "Ægir" instead of "Egil," but, aside from the fact that Thor had just left Ægir's house, the sea-god can hardly have been spoken of as a goat-herd.

8. Mǫgr fann ǫmmu |
mjök leiða sēr,
hafði hǫfða |
hundruð niu;
en ǫnnur gekk |
algollin fram
brúnhvit bera |
björveig syni:

The youth found his grandam, |
that greatly he loathed,
And full nine hundred |
heads she had;
But the other fair |
with gold came forth,
And the bright-browed one |
brought beer to her son.

The youth: Tyr, whose extraordinary grandmother is Hymir's mother. We know nothing further of her, or of the other, who is Hymir's wife and Tyr's mother. It may be guessed, however, that she belonged rather to the race of the gods than to that of the giants.

9. "Āttniðr jǫtna! |
ek viljak ykkr
hugfulla tvā |
und hvera setja:
es minn fríi |
mǫrgu sinni
glöggr við gesti, |
gǫrr ills hugar."

"Kinsman of giants, |
beneath the kettle
Will I set ye both, |
ye heroes bold;
For many a time |
my dear-loved mate
To guests is wrathful |
and grim of mind."

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>10. En vāskapar
 varþ sīþbuinn
 harþrāþr Hymir
 heim af veiþum:
 gekk inn ī sal,
 glumþu jōklar,
 vas karls es kvam
 kinnskōgr frōrinn.</p> | <p>Late to his home
 the misshapen Hymir,
 The giant harsh,
 from his hunting came;
 The icicles rattled
 as in he came,
 For the fellow's chin-forest
 frozen was.</p> |
| <p>11. “Ves heill, Hymir!
 ī hugum gōþum:
 nū's sunr kominn
 til sala þinna
 [sās vit vāttum
 af vegi lōngum;]
 fylgir hōnum
 Hrōþrs andskoti,
 vinr verliþa,
 Vēurr heitir sā.</p> | <p>“Hail to thee, Hymir!
 good thoughts mayst thou have;
 Here has thy son
 to thine hall now come;
 [For him have we waited,
 his way was long;]
 And with him fares
 the foeman of Hroth,
 The friend of mankind,
 and Veur they call him.</p> |

Two or three editors give this stanza a superscription (“The concubine spake” — “Frilla kvaþ”, “The daughter spake” — “Dōttir kvaþ”). Line 3 is commonly regarded as spurious. *The foeman of Hroth*: of course this means Thor, but nothing is known of any enemy of his by this name. Several editors have sought to make a single word meaning “the famous enemy” out of the phrase. Concerning Thor as the friend of man, particularly of the peasant class, cf. introduction to *Harbarthsljóth*. *Veur*: another name, of uncertain meaning, for Thor.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>12. Seþu hvar sitja
 und salar gafli!</p> | <p>See where under
 the gable they sit!</p> |
|---|---|

svā forþa sēr, |
stendr sūl fyrir.”
Sundr stōkk sūla |
fyr sjōn jōtuns,
en afr ī tvau |
āss brotnaþi.

Behind the beam |
do they hide themselves.”
The beam at the glance |
of the giant broke,
And the mighty pillar |
in pieces fell.

13. Stukku ātta, |
en einn af þeim
hverr harþsleginn |
heill, af þolli;
fram gengu þeir, |
en forn jōtunn
sjōnum leiddi |
sinn andskota.

Eight fell from the ledge, |
and one alone,
The hard-hammered kettle, |
of all was whole;
Forth came they then, |
and his foes he sought,
The giant old, |
and held with his eyes.

Eight: the giant’s glance, besides breaking the beam, knocks down all the kettles with such violence that all but the one under which Thor and Tyr are hiding are broken.

14. Sagþit hōnum |
hugr vel þās sā
gýgjar grōti |
ā golf kominn;
þar vōru þjōrar |
þrīr of teknir,
baþ senn jōtunn |
sjōþa ganga.

Much sorrow his heart |
foretold when he saw
The giantess’ foeman |
come forth on the floor;
Then of the steers |
did they bring in three;
Their flesh to boil |
did the giant bid.

Hymir’s wrath does not permit him to ignore the duties of a host to his guests, always

strongly insisted on.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>15. <i>Hverjan</i> lētu
 høfði skemra
 auk ā seyði
 sīpan bōru:
 āt Sifjar verr,
 āþr sofa gengi,
 einn með ǫllu
 yxn tvā Hymis.</p> | <p>By a head was each
 the shorter hewed,
 And the beasts to the fire
 straight they bore;
 The husband of Sif,
 ere to sleep he went,
 Alone two oxen
 of Hymir's ate.</p> |
|--|---|

Thor's appetite figures elsewhere; cf. *Thrymskvitha*, 24.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>16. Þótti hōrum
 Hrungnis spjalla
 verþr Hlōrriða
 vel fullmikill:
 “Munum at apni
 ǫprum verða
 við veiðimat
 vēr þrír lifa.”</p> | <p>To the comrade hoary
 of Hrungnir then
 Did Hlorrithi's meal
 full mighty seem;
 “Next time at eve
 we three must eat
 The food we have
 s the hunting's spoil.”</p> |
|--|---|

The comrade of Hrungnir: Hymir, presumably simply because both are giants; cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 14 and note.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>17. ...
 ...
 Vëurr kvazk vilja
 ā vāg roa,</p> | <p>...
 ...
 Fain to row on the sea
 was Veur, he said,</p> |
|---|---|

ef ballr jötunn |
beitur gæfi.

If the giant bold |
would give him bait.

The manuscripts indicate no lacuna, and many editors unite stanza 17 with lines 1 and 2 of 18. Sijmons and Gering assume a gap after these two lines, but it seems more probable that the missing passage, if any, belonged before them, supplying the connection with the previous stanza.

Hymir kvað:

18. “Hverf til hjarpar, |
ef hug truir,
brjōtr bergdana! |
beitur sōkja:
þess vāntir mik, |
at þēr myni
ogn af oxa |
aupfeng vesa.”

Hymir spake:

“Go to the herd, |
if thou hast it in mind,
Thou slayer of giants, |
thy bait to seek;
For there thou soon |
mayst find, methinks,
Bait from the oxen |
easy to get.”

The manuscripts have no superscription. Many editors combine lines 3 and 4 with lines 1 and 2 of stanza 19. In Snorri’s extended paraphrase of the story, Hymir declines to go fishing with Thor on the ground that the latter is too small a person to be worth bothering about. “You would freeze,” he says, “if you stayed out in mid-ocean as long as I generally do.” *Bait* (line 4): the word literally means “chaff,” hence any small bits; Hymir means that Thor should collect dung for bait.

19. Sveinn sýsliga |
sveif til skōgar,
þars uxi stōþ |
alsvartr fyrir:
braut af þjōri |
þurs rāþbani

Swift to the wood |
the hero went,
Till before him an ox |
all black he found;
From the beast the slayer |
of giants broke

hōtūn ofan |
horna tveggja.

The fortress high |
of his double horns.

Many editors combine lines 3 and 4 with stanza 20. *Fortress*, etc.: the ox's head; cf. [introductory note](#) concerning the diction of this poem. Several editors assume a lacuna after stanza 19, but this seems unnecessary.

Hymir kvað:

20. “Verk þykkja þīn |
verri miklu
kjōla valdi, |
an kyrr sitir.”
... |
...
... |
...

Hymir spake:

“Thy works, methinks, |
are worse by far,
Thou steerer of ships, |
than when still thou sittest.”
... |
...
... |
...

The manuscripts have no superscription. *Steerer of ships*: probably merely a reference to Thor's intention to go fishing. The lacuna after stanza 20 is assumed by most editors.

21. Bað hlunngota |
hafra drōttinn
ātrunn apa |
ūtar fōra;
en sā jōtunn |
sīna talþi
litla fýsi |
lengra at roa.

The lord of the goats |
bade the ape-begotten
Farther to steer |
the steed of the rollers;
But the giant said |
that his will, forsooth,
Longer to row |
was little enough.

Lord of the goats: Thor, because of his goat-drawn chariot. *Ape-begotten*: Hymir; the word “api,” rare until relatively late times in its literal sense, is fairly common with the meaning

of “fool.” Giants were generally assumed to be stupid. *Steed of the rollers*: a ship, because boats were pulled up on shore by means of rollers.

<p>22. Drō mǣrr Hymir mōþugr hvali einn ā ǫngli upp senn tvaá; en aþr ī skut Ōþni sífjaþr Vëurr víþ vēlar vaþ gørþi sēr.</p>	<p>Two whales on his hook did the mighty Hymir Soon pull up on a single cast; In the stern the kinsman of Othin sat, And Veur with cunning his cast prepared.</p>
--	--

<p>23. Egndi ā ǫngul sās ǫldum bergr orms einbani oxa hǫfþi: gein víþ agni sūs gøþ fia umbgjørþ neþan allra landa.</p>	<p>The warder of men, the worm’s destroyer, Fixed on his hook the head of the ox; There gaped at the bait the foe of the gods, The girdler of all the earth beneath.</p>
--	---

Warder of men: Thor; cf. stanza 11. *Worm’s destroyer*: likewise Thor, who in the last battle slays, and is slain by, Mithgarthsorm; cf. *Voluspo*, 56. *The foe of the gods*: Mithgarthsorm, who lies in the sea, and surrounds the whole earth.

<p>24. Drō djarfliga dāþrakkr Þōrr orm eitrfaan upp at borþi;</p>	<p>The venomous serpent swiftly up To the boat did Thor, the bold one, pull;</p>
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hamri knīþi |
hōfjall skarar
ofljōtt ofan |
ulfs hnitbrōþur.

With his hammer the loathly |
hill of the hair
Of the brother of Fenrir |
he smote from above.

Hill of the hair: head, — a thoroughly characteristic skaldic phrase. *Brother of Fenrir:* Mithgarthsorm was, like the wolf Fenrir and the goddess Hel, born to Loki and the giantess Angrbotha (cf. *Voluspo*, 39 and note), and I have translated this line accordingly; but the word used in the text has been guessed as meaning almost anything from “comrade” to “enemy.”

25. Hreingolkn hlumþu, |
en hōlkn þutu,
fōr en forna |
fold ǫll saman:
... |
...
søkpisk sīþan |
sā fiskr ī mar.

The monsters roared, |
and the rocks resounded,
And all the earth |
so old was shaken;
... |
...
Then sank the fish |
in the sea forthwith.

No gap is indicated in the manuscripts, but that a line or more has been lost is highly probable. In Snorri’s version, Thor pulls so hard on the line that he drives both his feet through the flooring of the boat, and stands on bottom. When he pulls the serpent up, Hymir cuts the line with his bait-knife, which explains the serpent’s escape. Thor, in a rage, knocks Hymir overboard with his hammer, and then wades ashore. The lines of stanzas 25 and 26 have been variously grouped.

26. ... |
...
ōteitr jōtunn, |
es aptr røru:

... |
...
Joyless as back |
they rowed was the giant;

svāt at ȝr Hymir |
etki mǣliti,
veifþi rǽþi |
veþrs annars til.

Speechless did Hymir |
sit at the oars,
With the rudder he sought |
a second wind.

No gap is indicated in the manuscripts, but line 2 begins with a small letter. *A second wind:* another direction, i. e., he put about for the shore.

Hymir kvaþ:

27. “Mundu of vinna |
verk halft við mik,
at flotbrūsa |
festir okkarn?
eþa heim hvali |
haf til bǽjar
ok holtriþa |
hver ī ȝognum.”

Hymir spake:

“The half of our toil |
wilt thou have with me,
And now make fast |
our goat of the flood;
Or home wilt thou bear |
the whales to the house,
Across the gorge |
of the wooded glen?”

No superscription in the manuscripts. In its place Bugge supplies a line—

These words spake Hymir, | the giant wise.

(þā kvaþ þat Hymir, | hundvīss ȝotunn.)

The manuscripts reverse the order of lines 2 and 3, and in both of them line 4 stands after stanza 28. *Goat of the flood:* boat.

28. Gekk Hlōrriþi, |
greip ā stafni,
vatt meþ austri |
upp ȝogfāki;
einn meþ ȝrum |
ok austskotu

Hlorrithi stood |
and the stem he gripped,
And the sea-horse with water |
awash he lifted;
Oars and bailer |
and all he bore

bar til bōjar |
brimsvīn jōtuns.

With the surf-swine home |
to the giant's house.

Sea-horse: boat. *Surf-swine:* the whales.

29. Ok enn jōtunn |
of afrendi
þrāgirni vanr |
viþ þōr senti:
kvaþat mann ramman, |
þōt roa kynni
krōpturligan, |
nema kalk bryti.

His might the giant |
again would match,
For stubborn he was, |
with the strength of Thor;
None truly strong, |
though stoutly he rowed,
Would he call save one |
who could break the cup.

Snorri says nothing of this episode of Hymir's cup. The glass which cannot be broken appears in the folklore of various races.

30. En Hlōrriþi, |
es at hōndum kvam,
brātt lēt bresta |
brattstein gleri;
slō sitjandi |
sūlur ī gøgnum,
bōro þō heilan |
fyr Hymi sīþan.

Hlorrithi then, |
when the cup he held,
Struck with the glass |
the pillars of stone;
As he sat the posts |
in pieces he shattered,
Yet the glass to Hymir |
whole they brought.

31. Unz þat en frīþa |
frilla kendi

But the loved one fair |
of the giant found

āstrāþ mikit	A counsel true,
eitt es vissi:	and told her thought:
“Drep við haus Hymis!	“Smite the skull of Hymir,
hann’s harþari	heavy with food,
kostmōþs jōtuns	For harder it is
kalki hverjum.”	than ever was glass.”

The loved one: Hymir’s wife and Tyr’s mother; cf. stanza 8 and note. The idea that a giant’s skull is harder than stone or anything else is characteristic of the later Norse folk-stories, and in one of the so-called “mythical sagas” we find a giant actually named Hard-Skull.

32. Harþr reis ā knē	The goats’ mighty ruler
hafra drōttinn,	then rose on his knee,
fōrþisk allra	And with all the strength
ī āsmegin:	of a god he struck;
heill vas karli	Whole was the fellow’s
hjalmstofn ofan,	helmet-stem,
en vīnferill	But shattered the wine-cup
valr rifnaði.	rounded was.

Helmet-stem: head.

<i>Hymir kvað:</i>	<i>Hymir spake:</i>
33. “Morg veitk mæti	“Fair is the treasure
mēr gengin frā,	that from me is gone,
es kalki sēk	Since now the cup
ōr knēum hrundit;”	on my knees lies shattered;”
karl orþ of kvað:	So spake the giant:
“knākak segja	“No more can I say

aptr ævagi: |
þū'st, ǫlþr! of heitt.

In days to be, |
'Thou art brewed, mine ale.'

The manuscripts have no superscription. Line 4 in the manuscripts is somewhat obscure, and Bugge, followed by some editors, suggests a reading which may be rendered (beginning with the second half of line 3):

No more can I speak
Ever again | as I spoke of old.

(knākat ek segja
aptr ævagi | þvī er ek āþr of hēt.)

34. Þat's til kostar, |
ef koma mættiþ
ūt ōr ōru |
ǫlkjōl hofi."
Týr leitapi |
tysvar hrōra,
stōþ at hvōru |
hverr kyrr fyrir.

Enough shall it be |
if out ye can bring
Forth from our house |
the kettle here."
Tyr then twice |
to move it tried,
But before him the kettle |
twice stood fast.

35. Faþir Mōþa |
fekk ā þremi
ok ī gøgnum stē |
golf niþr ī sal;
hōfsk ā haufuþ |
hver Sifjar verr,
en ā hælum hōtt |
hringar skullu.

The father of Mothi |
the rim seized firm,
And before it stood |
on the floor below;
Up on his head |
Sif's husband raised it,
And about his heels |
the handles clattered.

The father of Mothi and Sif's husband: Thor.

36. Fōrut lengi,	Not long had they fared,
āþr līta nam	ere backwards looked
aptr Ōþins sunr	The son of Othin,
einu sinni:	once more to see;
sā ōr hreysum	From their caves in the east
meþ Hymi austan	beheld he coming
folkdrōtt fara	With Hymir the throng
fjōlhōfpaþa.	of the many-headed.

The many-headed: The giants, although rarely designated as a race in this way, sometimes had two or more heads; cf. stanza 8, *Skirnismol*, 31 and *Vafthruthnismol*, 33. Hymir's mother is, however, the only many-headed giant actually to appear in the action of the poems, and it is safe to assume that the tradition as a whole belongs to the period of Norse folk-tales of the *märchen* order.

37. Hōfsk af herþum	He stood and cast
hver standandi,	from his back the kettle,
veifþi Mjöllni	And Mjollnir, the lover
morþgjörnum fram;	of murder, he wielded;
...	...
...	...
ok hraunhvali	So all the whales
hann alla drap.	of the waste he slew.

No gap is indicated in the manuscripts. Some editors put the missing line as 2, some as 3, and some, leaving the present three lines together, add a fourth, and metrically incorrect, one from late paper manuscripts:

Who with Hymir | followed after.

(er meþ Hymi | eptir fōru.)

Whales of the waste: giants.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>38. Fōrut lengi,
 āþr liggja nam
 hafr Hlōrriþa
 halfdaupr fyrir;
 vas skær skökuls
 slakkr ā beini:
 þvi enn lævīsi
 Loki of olli.</p> | <p>Not long had they fared
 ere one there lay
 Of Hlorrithi's goats
 half-dead on the ground;
 In his leg the pole-horse
 there was lame;
 The deed the evil
 Loki had done.</p> |
|---|--|

According to Snorri, when Thor set out with Loki (not Tyr) for the giants' land, he stopped first at a peasant's house (cf. stanza 7 and note). There he proceeded to cook his own goats for supper. The peasant's son, Thjalfi, eager to get at the marrow, split one of the leg-bones with his knife. The next morning, when Thor was ready to proceed with his journey, he called the goats to life again, but one of them proved irretrievably lame. His wrath led the peasant to give him both his children as servants (cf. stanza 39). Snorri does not indicate that Loki was in any way to blame.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>39. En ēr heyrt hafīþ—
 hverr kann of þat
 goþmōlugra
 gørr at skilja?—
 hver af hraunbua
 hann laun of fekk,
 es bæþi galt
 bōrn sīn fyrir.</p> | <p>But ye all have heard,—
 for of them who have
 The tales of the gods,
 who better can tell?
 What prize he won
 from the wilderness-dweller,
 Who both his children
 gave him to boot.</p> |
|--|---|

This deliberate introduction of the story-teller is exceedingly rare in the older poetry.

40. Þrōttǫflugr kwam	The mighty one came
ā þing goða	to the council of gods,
ok hafði hver	And the kettle he had
þanns Hymir ātti;	that Hymir's was;
en veir hverjan	So gladly their ale
vel skulu drekka	the gods could drink
ǫlþr at Ægis	In Ægir's hall
eitrhǫrmeiti.	at the autumn-time.

The translation of the last two lines is mostly guesswork, as the word rendered “gods” is uncertain, and the one rendered “at the autumn-time” is quite obscure.

Lokasenna

Loki's Wrangling

Introductory Note

The *Lokasenna* is found only in *Regius*, where it follows the *Hymiskvitha*; Snorri quotes four lines of it, grouped together as a single stanza.

The poem is one of the most vigorous of the entire collection, and seems to have been preserved in exceptionally good condition. The exchange or contest of insults was dear to the Norse heart, and the *Lokasenna* consists chiefly of Loki's taunts to the assembled gods and goddesses, and their largely ineffectual attempts to talk back to him. The author was evidently well versed in mythological lore, and the poem is full of references to incidents not elsewhere recorded. As to its date and origin there is the usual dispute, but the latter part of the tenth century and Iceland seem the best guesses.

The prose notes are long and of unusual interest. The introductory one links the poem closely to the *Hymiskvitha*, much as the *Reginismol*, *Fafnismol* and *Sigrdrifumol* are linked together; the others fill in the narrative gaps in the dialogue—very like stage directions,—and provide a conclusion by relating Loki's punishment, which, presumably, is here connected with the wrong incident. It is likely that often when the poem was recited during the two centuries or so before it was committed to writing, the speaker inserted some such explanatory comments, and the compiler of the collection followed this example by adding such explanations as he thought necessary. The *Lokasenna* is certainly much older than the *Hymiskvitha*, the connection between them being purely one of subject-matter; and the twelfth-century compiler evidently knew a good deal less about mythology than the author whose work he was annotating.

Ægir, er qpru nafni hēt Gymir, hann
hafpi būit āsum ql, þā er hann hafpi
fengit ketil enn mikla, sem nū er sagt.

Til þeirar veizlu kom Ōþinn ok Frigg
kona hans.

Ægir, who was also called Gymir, had
prepared ale for the gods, after he had
got the mighty kettle, as now has been
told.

To this feast came Othin and Frigg, his
wife.

Þórr kom eigi, þvíat hann var í austr-
vegi.

Sif var þar, kona Þórs; Bragi ok Íþunn
kona hans.

Týr var þar, hann var einhendr:
Fenrisúlfr sleit hönd af honum, þá er
hann var bundinn.

Þar var Njörðr ok kona hans Skaði,
Freyr ok Freya, Víðarr sonr Óðins.

Loki var þar, ok þjónustumenn Freys
Byggvir ok Beyla.

Mart var þar ása ok alfa.

Thor came not, as he was on a journey
in the East.

Sif, Thor's wife, was there, and Brag,
with Ithun, his wife.

Tyr, who had but one hand, was there;
the wolf Fenrir had bitten off his other
hand when they had bound him.

There were Njorth and Skathi his wife,
Freyr and Freyja, and Vithar, the son of
Othin.

Loki was there, and Freyr's servants
Byggvir and Beyla.

Many were there of the gods and elves.

Ægir átti tvā þjónustumenn: Fima-
fengr ok Eldir.

Þar var lýsigull haft fyrir elds ljós;
sjálft barz þar ǫl; þar var gripastaðr
mikill.

Menn lofuðu mjök hversu góðir þjón-
ustumenn Ægis vāru.

Loki mǣtti eigi heyra þat, ok drap
hann Fimafeng.

Þā skōku æsir skjöldu sīna ok æppu
at Loka ok eltu hann braut til skōgar,
en þeir fóru at drekka.

Loki hvarf aptr ok hitti ūti Eldi;

Loki kvaddi hann:

Ægir had two serving-men, Fimafeng
and Eldir.

Glittering gold they had in place of fire-
light; the ale came in of itself; and great
was the peace.

The guests praised much the ability of
Ægir's serving-men.

Loki might not endure that, and he slew
Fimafeng.

Then the gods shook their shields and
howled at Loki and drove him away to
the forest, and thereafter set to drink-
ing again.

Loki turned back, and outside he met El-
dir.

Loki spoke to him:

Ægir: the sea-god; Snorri gives Hler as another of his names, but he is not elsewhere called Gýmí, which is the name of the giant, Gerth's father, in the Skirnismol. On Ægir cf. *Grimnis-*

mol, 45, and *Hymiskvitha*, 1. *Frigg*: though Othin's wife is often mentioned, she plays only a minor part in the Eddic poems; cf. *Voluspo*, 34, *Vafthruthnismol*, 1, and *Grimnismol*, introductory prose. *Thor*: the compiler is apparently a trifle confused as to Thor's movements; the "Journey in the East" here mentioned cannot be the one described in the *Hymiskvitha*, nor yet the one narrated by Snorri, as Loki was with Thor throughout that expedition. He probably means no more than that Thor was off killing giants. *Sif*: concerning Thor's wife the chief incident is that Loki cut off her hair, and, at the command of the wrathful Thor, was compelled to have the dwarfs fashion her a new supply of hair out of gold; cf. *Harbarthsljoth*, 48. *Bragi*: the god of poetry; cf. *Grimnismol*, 44 and note. *Ithun*: the goddess of youth; cf. note on *Skirnismol*, 19. Ithun is not mentioned by name in any other of the Eddic poems, but Snorri tells in detail how the giant Thjazi stole her and her apples, explaining the reference in *Harbarthsljoth*, 19 (q. v.). *Tyr*: the god of battle; cf. *Hymiskvitha*, 4, and (concerning his dealings with the wolf Fenrir) *Voluspo*, 39, note. *Njorth*: the chief of the Waners, and father of Freyr and Freyja; cf. (concerning the whole family) *Skirnismol*, introductory prose and note, also *Voluspo*, 21 and note. *Skathi*: Njorth's wife was the daughter of the giant Thjazi; cf. *Harbarthsljoth*, 19, note, and *Grimnismol*, 17. *Vithar*: the silent god, the son of Othin who avenged his father by slaying the wolf Fenrir; cf. *Voluspo*, 54, *Vafthruthnismol*, 51, and *Grimnismol*, 17. *Loki*: the mischief-making fire-god; in addition to the many references to his career in the *Lokasenna*, cf. particularly *Voluspo*, 32 and 35, and notes. *Byggvir* and *Beyla*: not mentioned elsewhere in the poems; Freyr's conspicuous servant is Skirnir, hero of the *Skirnismol*. *Fimafeng* ("The Swift Handler") and *Eldir* ("The Man of the Fire"): mentioned only in connection with this incident. *Glittering gold*: Ægir's use of gold to light his hall, which was often thought of as under the sea, was responsible for the phrase "flame of the flood," and sundry kindred phrases, meaning "gold."

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. "Seg þat, Eldir!
 svāt þū einugi
 feti gangir framarr:
 hvat hēr inni
 hafa at ǫlmǫlum
 sigtīva synir?"</p> | <p>"Speak now, Eldir,
 for not one step
 Farther shalt thou fare;
 What ale-talk here
 do they have within,
 The sons of the glorious gods?"</p> |
|---|--|

Eldir kvað:

Eldir spake:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>2. "Of vōpn sīn dōma
 ok of vīgrisni sīna
 sigtīva synir:</p> | <p>"Of their weapons they talk,
 and their might in war,
 The sons of the glorious gods;</p> |
|--|--|

āsa ok alfa |
es hēr inni 'rū
þēr's manngi ī orþi vinr."

From the gods and elves |
who are gathered here
No friend in words shalt thou find."

Loki kvað:

3. "Inn skal ganga |
Ægis hallir ī
ā þat sumbl at sea;
joll ok q̄fu |
fōrik āsa sunum
ok blentk þeim meini mjōþ."

Loki spake:

"In shall I go |
into Ægir's hall,
For the feast I fain would see;
Bale and hatred |
I bring to the gods,
And their mead with venom I mix."

Eldir kvað:

4. "Veiztu, ef inn gengr |
Ægis hallir ī
ā þat sumbl at sea,
hrōpi ok rōgi |
ef þū eyss ā holl regin,
ā þēr munu þerra þat."

Eldir spake:

"If in thou goest |
to Ægir's hall,
And fain the feast wouldst see,
And with slander and spite |
wouldst sprinkle the gods,
Think well lest they wipe it on thee."

Loki kvað:

5. "Veizt þat, Eldir! |
ef vit einir skulum
sāryrþum sakask,
auþugr verþa |
munk ī andsvorum,
ef þū mælir til mart."

Loki spake:

"Bethink thee, Eldir, |
if thou and I
Shall strive with spiteful speech;
Richer I grow |
in ready words
If thou speakest too much to me."

Sīpan gekk Loki inn ī hōllina, en er þeir sǫ, er fyrir vǫru, hverr inn var kominn, þōgnuþu þeir allir.

Then Loki went into the hall, but when they who were there saw who had entered, they were all silent.

Loki kvap:

6. “Þyrstr ek kōm |
þessar hallar til,
Loptr, of langan veg,
ōsu at biþja, |
at mēr einn gefi
māeran drykk mjaþar.

Loki spake:

“Thirsty I come |
into this thine hall,
I, Loptr, from a journey long,
To ask of the gods |
that one should give
Fair mead for a drink to me.

Lopt: like Lothur (cf. *Voluspo*, 18) another name for Loki; cf. *Hyndluljóth*, 43, and *Svipdagsmol*, 42.

7. Hvī þegiþ ēr svā, |
þrunġin gōþ!
at ēr māēla nē meguþ?
sessa ok staþi |
veliþ mēr sumbli at,
eþa heitiþ mik heþan.”

Why sit ye silent, |
swollen with pride,
Ye gods, and no answer give?
At your feast a place |
and a seat prepare me,
Or bid me forth to fare.”

In the manuscript this stanza begins with a small letter, and Heinzl unites it with stanza 6.

Bragi kvap:

8. “Sessa ok staþi |
velja þēr sumbli at
āsir aldriġi;

Bragi spake:

“A place and a seat |
will the gods prepare
No more in their midst for thee;

þvīt æsir vitu, |
hveim þeir alda skulu
gambansumbl of geta.”

For the gods know well |
what men they wish
To find at their mighty feasts.”

Loki kvað:

9. “Mant þat, Óþinn! |
es vit ī ārdaga
blendum blōþi saman?
ǫlvi bergja |
lēzt eigi mundu,
nema okkr vāri bōþum borit.”

Loki spake:

“Remember, Othin, |
in olden days
That we both our blood have mixed;
Then didst thou promise |
no ale to pour,
Unless it were brought for us both.”

There exists no account of any incident in which Othin and Loki thus swore blood-brotherhood, but they were so often allied in enterprises that the idea is wholly reasonable. The common process of “mingling blood” was carried out quite literally, and the promise of which Loki speaks is characteristic of those which, in the sagas, often accompanied the ceremony; cf. *Brot af Sigurtharkvithu*, 18 and note.

Óþinn kvað:

10. “Rīs þā, Vīþarr! |
ok lāt ulfs fǫður
sitja sumbli at,
sīþr oss Loki kveþi |
lastastǫfum
Ægis hǫllu ī.”

Othin spake:

“Stand forth then, Vithar, |
and let the wolf's father
Find a seat at our feast;
Lest evil should Loki |
speak aloud
Here within Ægir's hall.”

In stanzas 10–31 the manuscript has nothing to indicate the identity of the several speakers, but these are uniformly clear enough through the context. *Vithar*: cf. note on *introductory prose*. *The wolf's father*: Loki; cf. *Voluspo*, 39 and note.

Þā stōþ Vīþarr upp ok skenkþi Loka;
en āþr hann drykki, kvaddi hann ās-
una:

Then Vithar arose and poured drink for
Loki; but before he drank he spoke to
the gods:

11. “Heilir æsir, |
heilar āsynjur
ok ǫll ginnheilug goþ!
nema einn ǫss |
es innar sitr,
Bragi, bekkjum ā.”

“Hail to you, gods! |
ye goddesses, hail!
Hail to the holy throng!
Save for the god |
who yonder sits,
Bragi there on the bench.”

Bragi kvaþ:

12. “Mar ok mæki |
gefk þer mīns fear
ok bōtir svā baugi Bragi,
sīþr þū ǫsum |
ǫfund of gjaldir;
gremjat goþ at þēr!”

Bragi spake:

“A horse and a sword |
from my hoard will I give,
And a ring gives Bragi to boot,
That hatred thou makst not |
among the gods;
So rouse not the great ones to wrath.”

Loki kvaþ:

13. “Jōs ok armbauga |
mundu æ vesa
beggja vanr, Bragi!
āsa ok alfa |
es hēr inni ’rū
þū’st vīþ vīg varastr
ok skjarrastr vīþ skot.”

Loki spake:

“In horses and rings |
thou shalt never be rich,
Bragi, but both shalt thou lack;
Of the gods and elves |
here together met
Least brave in battle art thou,
[And shyest thou art of the shot.]”

Sijmons makes one line of lines 4–5 by cutting out a part of each; Finnur Jonsson rejects 5 as spurious.

Bragi kvað:

14. “Veitk, ef fyr ūtan vǣrak, |
sem fyr innan emk
Hlēs hōll of kominn,
haufuþ þitt |
bǣrak ī hendi mēr:
lētak þēr þat fyr lygi.”

Bragi spake:

“Now were I without |
as I am within,
And here in Ægir's hall,
Thine head would I bear |
in mine hands away,
And pay thee the price of thy lies.”

The text of line 4 is somewhat obscure, and has been variously emended, one often adopted suggestion making the line read, “Little is that for thy lies.”

Loki kvað:

15. “Snjallr est ī sessi, |
skalta svā gōra,
Bragi, bekkskrautuþr!
vega þū gakk, |
ef þū vreiþr seir!
hyggsk vǣtr hvatr fyrir.”

Loki spake:

“In thy seat art thou bold, |
not so are thy deeds,
Bragi, adorning of benches!
Go out and fight |
if angered thou feelest,
No hero such forethought has.”

Adorning of benches: this epithet presumably implies that Bragi is not only slothful, but also effeminate, for a very similar word, “pride of the benches,” means a bride.

Īþunn kvað:

16. “Biþk þik, Bragi! |
barna sifjar duga
ok allra ōskmaga,

Īþun spake:

“Well, prithee, Bragi, |
his kinship weigh,
Since chosen as wish-son he was;

at þū Loka kveþjat |
lastastofum
Ægis hǫllu ī.”

And speak not to Loki |
such words of spite
Here within Ægir's hall.”

Ithun: Bragi's wife; cf. note on *introductory prose*. The goddesses who, finding that their husbands are getting the worst of it, take up the cudgels with Loki, all find themselves confronted with undeniable facts in their own careers; cf. stanzas 26 (Frigg), 52 (Skathi) and 54 (Sif). Gefjun and Freyja are silenced in similar fashion. *Wish-son*: adopted son; Loki was the son of the giant Farbauti and the giantess Laufey, and hence was not of the race of the gods, but had been virtually adopted by Othin, who subsequently had good reason to regret it.

Loki kvaþ:

17. “Þegi þū, ĩþunn! |
þik kveþk allra kvenna
vergjarnasta vesa,
sĩztu arma þīna |
lagþir ĩtrþvegna
umb þinn brōþurbana.”

Loki spake:

“Be silent, Ithun! |
thou art, I say,
Of women most lustful in love,
Since thou thy washed-bright |
arms didst wind
About thy brother's slayer.”

We do not even know who Ithun's brother was, much less who slew him.

Īþunn kvaþ:

18. “Loka ek kveþka |
lastastofum
Ægis hǫllu ī;
Braga ek kyrri |
bjōrreifan:
vilkak at vreĩþir vegisk.”

Ithun spake:

“To Loki I speak not |
with spiteful words
Here within Ægir's hall;
And Bragi I calm, |
who is hot with beer,
For I wish not that fierce they should
fight.”

Gefjun kvað:

19. “Hvi it æsir tveir |
 skuluþ inni hēr
 sāryrþum sakask?
 Loka þat veit, |
 at hann leikinn es
 ok hann fjörg qll *fiar*.”

Gefjun spake:

“Why, ye gods twain, |
 with bitter tongues
 Raise hate among us here?
 Loki is famed |
 for his mockery foul,
 And the dwellers in heaven he hates.”

Gefjun: a goddess, not elsewhere mentioned in the poems, who, according to Snorri, was served by the women who died maidens. Beyond this nothing is known of her. Lines 3–4 in the manuscript are puzzling, and have been freely emended.

Loki kvað:

20. “Þegi þū, Gefjun! |
 þess munk nū geta,
 hverr þik glapþi at geþi:
 sveinn enn hvīti |
 þēr sigli gaf
 ok þū lagþir lær yfir.”

Loki spake:

“Be silent, Gefjun! |
 for now shall I say
 Who led thee to evil life;
 The boy so fair |
 gave a necklace bright,
 And about him thy leg was laid.”

Nothing is known of the incident here mentioned. There is a good deal of confusion as to various of the gods and goddesses, and it has been suggested that Gefjun is really Frigg under an other name, with a little of Freyja—whose attributes were frequently confused with Frigg’s—thrown in. Certainly Othin’s answer (stanza 21, lines 3–4) fits Frigg perfectly, for she shared his knowledge of the future, whereas it has no relation to any thing known of Gefjun. As for the necklace (line 3), it may be the Brisings’ necklace, which appears in the *Thrymskvitha* as Freyja’s, but which, in some mythological writings, is assigned to Frigg.

Öþinn kvað:

21. Ærr est, Loki! |
 ok ørviti,

Othin spake:

“Mad art thou, Loki, |
 and little of wit,

es þū fār þēr Gefjun at gremi:	The wrath of Gefjun to rouse;
þvīt aldar ørlög	For the fate that is set
hykk at ǫll of viti	for all she sees,
jafngörla sem ek.”	Even as I, methinks.”

Snorri quotes line 1; cf. note on stanza 29.

Loki kvað:

22. “Þegi þū, Ōþinn! |
 þū kunnir aldri
 deila vīg meþ verum:
 opt þū gaft |
 þeims gefa nē skyldir
 enum slævurum sigr.”

Loki spake:

“Be silent, Othin! |
 not justly thou settest
 The fate of the fight among men;
 Oft gavst thou to him |
 who deserved not the gift,
 To the baser, the battle's prize.”

Ōþinn kvað:

23. “Veizt, ef ek gaf |
 þeims gefa nē skyldak,
 enum slævurum sigr:
 ātta vetr |
 vastu fyr jörþ neþan
 kūr molkandi ok kona
 ok hefr þar bōrn of borit,
 ok hugþak þat args aþal.”

Othin spake:

“Though I gave to him |
 who deserved not the gift,
 To the baser, the battle's prize;
 Winters eight |
 wast thou under the earth,
 Milking the cows as a maid,
 [Ay, and babes didst thou bear;
 Unmanly thy soul must seem.]”

There is no other reference to Loki's having spent eight years underground, or to his cow-milking. On one occasion, however, he did bear offspring. A giant had undertaken to build the gods a fortress, his reward being Freyja and the sun and moon, provided the work was done by a given time. His sole helper was his horse, Svathilfari. The work being nearly done, and the gods fearing to lose Freyja and the sun and moon, Loki turned himself into

a mare, and so effectually distracted Svathilfari from his task that shortly afterwards Loki gave birth to Othin's eight-legged horse, Sleipnir. In such contests of abuse a man was not infrequently taunted with having borne children; cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 39–45. One or two of the last three lines may be spurious.

Loki kvað:

24. “En þik sīþa |
kvōþu Sāmseyju ī,
ok drapt ā vētt sem vōlur:

vitka līki |
fōrtu verþjōþ yfir,
ok hugþak þat args aþal.”

Loki spake:

“They say that with spells |
in Samsey once
Like witches with charms didst thou
work;
And in witch's guise |
among men didst thou go;
Unmanly thy soul must seem.”

Samsey: perhaps the Danish island of Samsö. Othin was the god of magic, but there is no other reference to his ever having disguised himself as a witch.

Frigg kvað:

25. “Ørlōgum ykkrum |
skyliþ aldri
segja seggjum frā:
hvat it æsir tveir |
drýgþuþ ī ārdaga,
firrisk æ forn røk firar.”

Frigg spake:

“Of the deeds ye two |
of old have done
Ye should make no speech among men;
Whate'er ye have done |
in days gone by,
Old tales should ne'er be told.”

Frigg: Othin's wife; cf. note to [introductory prose](#).

Loki kvað:

26. “Þegi þū, Frigg! |
þū'st Fjorgyns mæR

Loki spake:

“Be silent, Frigg! |
thou art Fjorgyn's wife,

ok hefr æ vergjörn verit,	But ever lustful in love;
es þā Veia ok Vilja	For Vili and Ve,
lēztu þēr, Viþris kvæn!	thou wife of Vithrir,
bāþa i baþm of tekit."	Both in thy bosom have lain."

Fjorgyn: Othin; cf. *Voluspo*, 56 and note. *Vili* and *Ve*: Othin's brothers, who appear merely as, with Othin, the sons of Bur and Bestla; cf. *Voluspo*, 4. The *Ynglingasaga* says that, during one of Othin's protracted absences, his two brothers took Frigg as their mistress. *Vithrir*: another name for Othin.

Frigg kvap:

27. "Veizt, ef inni ættak |
 Ægis hollum i
 Baldri glíkan bur,
 út nē kvæmir |
 frā āsa sunum,
 ok vāri at þēr vreiþum vegit."

Frigg spake:

"If a son like Baldr |
 were by me now,
 Here within Ægir's hall,
 From the sons of the gods |
 thou shouldst go not forth
 Till thy fierceness in fight were tried."

On the death of Baldr, slain through Loki's cunning by the blind Hoth, cf. *Voluspo*, 32 and note.

Loki kvap:

28. "Enn vill þū, Frigg! |
 at ek fleiri telja
 mīna meinstafi:
 ek þvī rāþ, |
 es þū rīþa sērat
 sīþan Baldr at solum."

Loki spake:

"Thou wilt then, Frigg, |
 that further I tell
 Of the ill that now I know;
 Mine is the blame |
 that Baldr no more
 Thou seest ride home to the hall."

Freyja kvað:

29. “Ærr est, Loki! |
 es þū yþra telr
 ljōta leiþstafi:

 ørløg Frigg |
 hykk at ǫll viti,
 þōt hōn sjǫlfgi segi.”

Freyja spake:

“Mad art thou, Loki, |
 that known thou makest
 The wrong and shame thou hast
 wrought;
 The fate of all |
 does Frigg know well,
 Though herself she says it not.”

Freyja: daughter of Njorth and sister of Freyr; cf. note on [introductory prose](#). Snorri, in speaking of Frigg’s knowledge of the future, makes a stanza out of Lokasenna, 21, 1; 47, 2; 29, 3–4, thus:

“Mad art thou, Loki, | and little of wit,
 Why, Loki, leavst thou this not?
 The fate of all | does Frigg know well,
 Though herself she says it not.”

Loki kvað:

30. “Þegi þū, Freyja! |
 þik kannk fullgørva,
 esa þēr vamma vant:
 āsa ok alfa |
 es hēr inni ’rū
 hverr hefr hōrr þinn verit.”

Loki spake:

“Be silent, Freyja! |
 for fully I know thee,
 Sinless thou art not thyself;
 Of the gods and elves |
 who are gathered here,
 Each one as thy lover has lain.”

According to Snorri, Freyja was a model of fidelity to her husband, Oth.

Freyja kvað:

31. “Flō’s þēr tunga, |
 hykk at þēr fremr myni

Freyja spake:

“False is thy tongue, |
 and soon shalt thou find

ōgott of gala;
vreiþir'u þēr æsir, |
 vreiþar āsynjur,
hryggr munt heim fara.”

That it sings thee an evil song;
The gods are wroth, |
 and the goddesses all,
And in grief shalt thou homeward go.”

Loki kvap:

32. “Þegi þū, Freyja! |
 þū'st fordæþa
ok meini blandin mjök:
þik at brōþr þīnum |
 stōþu blīþ regin,
ok mundir þā, Freyja! frata.”

Loki spake:

“Be silent, Freyja! |
 thou foulest witch,
And steeped full sore in sin;
In the arms of thy brother |
 the bright gods caught thee
When Freyja her wind set free.”

Before each of stanzas 32–42 the manuscript indicates the speaker, through the initial letter of the name written in the margin. *Thy brother:* Freyr; there is no other indication that such a relation existed between these two, but they themselves were the product of such a union; cf. stanza 36 and note.

Njorþr kvap:

33. “Þat's vō litil, |
 þōt sēr vers fai
varþir, hōss eþa hvārs;
undr's at ōss ragr |
 es hēr inn of kominn
ok hefr sā bōrn of borit.”

Njorth spake:

“Small ill does it work |
 though a woman may have
A lord or a lover or both;
But a wonder it is |
 that this womanish god
Comes hither, though babes he has
borne.”

Njorth: father of Freyr and Freyja, and given by the Wanæs as a hostage, in exchange for Hönir, at the close of the first war; Cf. *Voluspo*, 21 and note, also *Skirnismol*, introductory prose and note. *Babes:* cf. stanza 23 and note. Bugge suggests that this clause may have

been a late insertion.

Loki kvaþ:

34. “Þegi þū, Njorþr! |
þū vast austr heþan
gīsl of sendr at goþum;
Hymis meyjar |
hoþu þik at hlandtrogi
ok þēr ī munn migu.”

Loki spake:

“Be silent, Njorth; |
thou wast eastward sent,
To the gods as a hostage given;
And the daughters of Hymir |
their privy had
When use did they make of thy
mouth.”

Daughters of Hymir: we have no clue to who these were, though Hymir is doubtless the frost-giant of the *Hymiskvitha* (q. v.). Loki's point is that Njorth is not a god, but the product of an inferior race (the Waness).

Njorþr kvaþ:

35. “Sū erumk līkn, |
es vask langt heþan
gīsl of sendr at goþum:
þa ek mōg gat |
þanns manngi fiar,
ok þykkir sā āsa jaþarr.”

Njorth spake:

“Great was my gain, |
though long was I gone,
To the gods as a hostage given;
The son did I have |
whom no man hates,
And foremost of gods is found.”

The son: Freyr.

Loki kvaþ:

36. “Hætt nū, Njorþr! |
haf ā hōfi þik!
munkak þvī leyna lengr:

Loki spake:

“Give heed now, Njorth, |
nor boast too high,
No longer I hold it hid;

viþ systur þinni |
gastu slíkan mög
ok esa þō ōnu verr.”

With thy sister hadst thou |
so fair a son,
Thus hadst thou no worse a hope.”

Thy sister: the *Ynglingasaga* supports this story of Njorth's having had two children by his sister before he came among the gods. Snorri, on the other hand, specifically says that Freyr and Freyja were born after Njorth came to the gods.

Týrr kvað:

37. “Freyr es baztr |
allra ballriða
āsa gǫrþum ī;
mey nē grōtir |
nē manns konu,
ok leysir ōr hǫptum hvern.”

Tyr spake:

“Of the heroes brave |
is Freyr the best
Here in the home of the gods;
He harms not maids |
nor the wives of men,
And the bound from their fetters he
frees.”

Tyr: the god of battle; cf. notes on *Hymiskvitha*, 4, and *Voluspo*, 39. *Freyr:* concerning his noble qualities cf. *Skirnismol*, introductory prose and note.

Loki kvað:

38. “Þegi þū, Týr! |
þū kunnir aldri
bera tilt meþ tveim:
handar hǫgri |
munk hinnar geta
es þēr sleit Fenrir frā.”

Loki spake:

“Be silent, Tyr! |
for between two men
Friendship thou ne'er couldst fashion;
Fain would I tell |
how Fenrir once
Thy right hand rent from thee.”

Snorri mentions Tyr's incompetence as a peacemaker. *Fenrir:* the wolf, Loki's son; cf. *Voluspo*, 39.

Týrr kvað:

39. “Handar emk vanr, |
 en þū Hrōþvitnis,
 bōl es beggja þrō:
 ulfgi hefr ok vel |
 es ījǫrnum skal
 bīþa ragna røkks.”

Tyr spake:

“My hand do I lack, |
 but Hrothvitnir thou,
 And the loss brings longing to both;
 Ill fares the wolf |
 who shall ever await
 In fetters the fall of the gods.”

Hrothvitnir (“The Mighty Wolf”): Fenrir, who awaits in chains the final battle and death at the hands of Vithar. The manuscript has a metrical error in line 3, which has led to various emendations, all with much the same meaning.

Loki kvað:

40. “Þegi þū, Týr! |
 þat varþ þinni konu,
 at hōn ātti mōg við mēr;
 oln nē penning |
 hafþir þū þess aldrigi
 vanrēttis, vesall!”

Loki spake:

“Be silent, Tyr! |
 for a son with me
 Thy wife once chanced to win;
 Not a penny, methinks, |
 wast thou paid for the wrong,
 Nor wast righted an inch, poor
 wretch.”

Thy wife: there is no other reference to Tyr’s wife, nor do we know who was the son in question.

Freyr kvað:

41. “Ulf sēk liggja |
 ārōsi fyrir,
 unz of rjūfask regin;
 þvī munt nāest, |
 nema nū þegir,

Freyr spake:

“By the mouth of the river |
 the wolf remains
 Till the gods to destruction go;
 Thou too shalt soon, |
 if thy tongue is not stilled,

bundinn, þólvasmiþr!”

Be fettered, thou forger of ill.”

The mouth of the river: according to Snorri, the chained Fenrir “roars horribly, and the slaver runs from his mouth, and makes the river called Vam; he lies there till the doom of the gods.” Freyr’s threat is actually carried out; cf. [concluding prose](#).

Loki kvap:

42. “Golli keypta |
lēztu Gymis dōttur
ok seldir þitt svā sverþ;
en es Mūspells synir |
rīþa Myrkviþ yfir,
veizta þā, vesall! hvē vegr.”

Loki spake:

“The daughter of Gymir |
with gold didst thou buy,
And sold thy sword to boot;
But when Muspell’s sons |
through Myrkwood ride,
Thou shalt weaponless wait, poor
wretch.”

The daughter of Gymir: Gerth, heroine of the *Skirnismol*, which gives the details of Freyr’s loss of his sword. *Muspell’s sons:* the name Muspell is not used elsewhere in the poems; Snorri uses it frequently, but only in this same phrase, “Muspell’s sons.” They are the dwellers in the fire-world, Muspellsheim, led by Surt against the gods in the last battle; cf. *Voluspo*, 47 and 52 and notes. *Myrkwood:* here the dark forest bounding the fire-world; in the *Atlakvitha* (stanza 3) the name is used of another boundary forest.

Byggvir kvap:

43. “Veizt, ef øpli ættak |
sem Ingunar-Freyr,
ok svā sǣllíkt setr,
mergi smæra mǽlpak |
þā meinkrōku
ok lempa alla ī liþu.”

Byggvir spake:

“Had I birth so famous |
as Ingunar-Freyr,
And sat in so lofty a seat,
I would crush to marrow |
this croaker of ill,
And beat all his body to bits.”

Byggvir: one of Freyr’s two servants; cf. [introductory prose](#). *Ingunar-Freyr:* the name is not used elsewhere in the poems, or by Snorri; it may be the genitive of a woman’s name, Ingun, the unknown sister of Njorth who was Freyr’s mother (cf. stanza 36), or a corruption of the

name Ingw, used for Freyr (Fro) in old German mythology.

Loki kvaþ:

44. "Hvat's þat et litla, |
 es ek þat löggra sēk,
 ok snapvīst snapir?
 at eyrum Freys |
 mundu æ vesa
 auk und kvernum klaka."

Loki spake:

"What little creature |
 goes crawling there,
 Snuffling and snapping about?
 At Freyr's ears ever |
 wilt thou be found,
 Or muttering hard at the mill."

Beginning with this stanza, the names of the speakers are lacking in the manuscript. *The mill:* i.e., at slaves' tasks.

Byggvir kvaþ:

45. "Byggvir heitik, |
 en mik brāþan kveþa
 goþ ǫll ok gumar;
 þvī emk hēr hrōþugr, |
 at drekka Hrōpts megir
 allir ǫl saman."

Byggvir spake:

"Byggvir my name, |
 and nimble am I,
 As gods and men do grant;
 And here am I proud |
 that the children of Hropt
 Together all drink ale."

Nothing further is known of either Byggvir's swiftness or his cowardice. *Hropt:* Othin.

Loki kvaþ:

46. "Þegi þū, Byggvir! |
 þū kunnir aldri
 deila meþ mōnnum mat;
 þik ī flets strai |
 finna nē mōttu,

Loki spake:

"Be silent, Byggvir! |
 thou never couldst set
 Their shares of the meat for men;
 Hid in straw on the floor, |
 they found thee not

þā es vōgu verar.”

When heroes were fain to fight.”

Heimdallr kvaþ:

Heimdall spake:

47. “Qlr est, Loki! |
svāt þū’st ørviti,
hvī nē lezkat, Loki?
þvīt ofdrykkja |
velðr alda hveim,
es sīna mælgī nē manat.”

“Drunk art thou, Loki, |
and mad are thy deeds,
Why, Loki, leavst thou this not?
For drink beyond measure |
will lead all men
No thought of their tongues to take.”

Heimdall: besides being the watchman of the gods (cf. *Voluspo*, 27), he appears also as the god of light (cf. *Thrymskvitha*, 14), and possibly also as a complex cultural deity in the *Rigsthula*. He was a son of Othin, born of nine sisters; cf. *Hyndluljoth*, 37–40. In the last battle he and Loki slay one another. Line 2 is quoted by Snorri; cf. stanza 29, note.

Loki kvaþ:

Loki spake:

48. “Þegi þū, Heimdallr! |
þēr vas ī ārdaga
et ljōta lif of lagit:
orþgu baki |
þū munt æ vesa
ok vaka vörþr goþa.”

“Be silent, Heimdall! |
in days long since
Was an evil fate for thee fixed;
With back held stiff |
must thou ever stand,
As warder of heaven to watch.”

Skapi kvaþ:

Skathi spake:

49. “Lētt’s þēr, Loki! |
munattu lengi svā
leika lausum hala;
þvīt þik ā hjörvi skulu |
ens hrīmkalda magar

“Light art thou, Loki, |
but longer thou mayst not
In freedom flourish thy tail;
On the rocks the gods bind thee |
with bowels torn

gønum binda goþ.”

Forth from thy frost-cold son.”

Skathi: the wife of Njorth, and daughter of the giant Thjazi, concerning whose death cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 19, note. *Bowels*, etc.: according to the *prose note* at the end of the *Lokasenna*, the gods bound Loki with the bowels of his son Vali, and changed his other son, Narfi, into a wolf. Snorri turns the story about Vali being the wolf, who tears his brother to pieces, the gods then using Narfi's intestines to bind Loki. Narfi—and presumably Vali—were the sons of Loki and his wife, Sigyn. They appear only in this episode, though Narfi (or Nari) is named by Snorri in his list of Loki's children. Cf. *concluding prose*, and note.

Loki kvap:

50. “Veizt, ef ā hjørvi skulumk |
ens hrīmkalda magar
gønum binda goþ:
fyrstr ok øfstr |
vask at fjørlagi,
þars ver ā þjaza þrifum.”

Loki spake:

“Though on rocks the gods bind me |
with bowels torn
Forth from my frost-cold son,
I was first and last |
at the deadly fight
There where Thjazi we caught.”

Skapi kvap:

51. “Veizt, ef fyrstr ok øfstr |
vast at fjørlagi,
þās er ā þjaza þrifuþ:
frā vëum mīnum |
ok vøngum skulu
þēr æ kold røþ koma.”

Skathi spake:

“Wert thou first and last |
at the deadly fight
There where Thjazi was caught,
From my dwellings and fields |
shall ever come forth
A counsel cold for thee.”

Loki kvap:

52. “Lëttari ī mōlum |
vastu viþ Laufeyjar sun,
þās þū lëzt mer ā beþ þinn boþit:

Loki spake:

“More lightly thou spakest |
with Laufey's son,
When thou badst me come to thy bed;

getit verþr oss slíks, |
 ef vēr gǫrva skulum
 telja vǫmm enn vǫr.”

Such things must be known |
 if now we two
 Shall seek our sins to tell.”

Laufey's son: Loki; not much is known of his parents beyond their names. His father was the giant Farbauti, his mother Laufey, sometimes called Nal. There is an elaborate but far-fetched hypothesis explaining these three on the basis of a nature-myth. There is no other reference to such a relation between Skathi and Loki as he here suggests.

Þā gekk Sif fram ok byrlaþi Loka ī
 hrīmkalki mjǫþ ok mælti:

Then Sif came forward and poured
 mead for Loki in a crystal cup, and said:

53. “Heill ves nū, Loki! |
 ok tak við hrīmkalki
 fullum forns mjǫþar,
 heldr hana eina |
 lātir meþ āsa sunum
 vammalausa vesa.”

“Hail to thee, Loki, |
 and take thou here
 The crystal cup of old mead;
 For me at least, |
 alone of the gods,
 Blameless thou knowest to be.”

Sif: Thor's wife; cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 48, where her infidelity is again mentioned. The manuscript omits the proper name from the preceding prose, and a few editors have, obviously in error, attributed the speech to Beyla.

Hann tók við horni ok drakk af:

He took the horn, and drank therefrom:

54. “Ein þū vārir, |
 ef þū svā vārir
 vǫr ok grǫm at veri:
 einn ek veit, |
 svāt ek vita þykkjumk
 hōr ok af Hlōrriþa

“Alone thou wert |
 if truly thou wouldst
 All men so shyly shun;
 But one do I know |
 full well, methinks,
 Who had thee from Hlorrithi's arms,—

[ok vas þat sa enn lævīsi Loki.]” [Loki the crafty in lies.]”

Hlorrithi: Thor. Line 5 is probably spurious.

Beyla kvaþ:

55. “Fjöll ǫll skjalfa, |
hykk ā fǫr vesa
heiman Hlōrriþa;
hann ræþr rō |
þeims rōgir hēr
goþ ǫll ok guma.”

Beyla spake:

“The mountains shake, |
and surely I think
From his home comes Hlorrithi now;
He will silence the man |
who is slandering here
Together both gods and men.”

Beyla: Freyr’s servant, wife of Byggvir; cf. [introductory prose](#) and note.

Loki kvaþ:

56. “Þegi þū, Beyla! |
þū’st Byggvis kvæn
ok meini blandin mjök;
ōkynjan meira |
kvama meþ āsa sunum,
ǫll est, deigja! dritin.”

Loki spake:

“Be silent, Beyla! |
thou art Byggvir’s wife,
And deep art thou steeped in sin;
A greater shame |
to the gods came ne’er,
Befouled thou art with thy filth.”

Þā kom Þōrr at ok kvaþ:

Then came Thor forth, and spake:

57. “Þegi þū, rǫg vættr! |
þēr skal minn þrūþhamarr
Mjöllnir māl fyrnema;

“Unmanly one, cease, |
or the mighty hammer,
Mjollnir, shall close thy mouth;

herþaklett	Thy shoulder-cliff
dreþk þēr halsi af,	shall I cleave from thy neck,
ok verþr þā þīnu fjörvi of farit.”	And so shall thy life be lost.”

Mjöllnir: concerning Thor's famous hammer see particularly *Thrymskvitha*, 1 and note. *Shoulder-cliff*: head; concerning the use of such diction in the Edda, cf. *introductory note* to *Hymiskvitha*. The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza, but this is apparently a scribal error.

Loki kvap:

Loki spake:

58. “Jarþar burr	“Lo, in has come
es hēr nū inn kominn:	the son of Earth:
hvī þrasir þū svā, þōrr?	Why threaten so loudly, Thor?
en þā þorir þū etki,	Less fierce thou shalt go
es skalt víþ ulf vega,	to fight with the wolf
ok svelgr hann allan Sigfōþur.”	When he swallows Sigfather up.”

Son of Earth: Thor, son of Othin and Jorth (Earth). The manuscript omits the word “son,” but all editors have agreed in supplying it. *The wolf*: Fenrir, Loki's son, who slays Othin (*Sigfather*: “Father of Victory”) in the final battle. Thor, according to Snorri and to the *Voluspo*, 56, fights with Mithgarthsorm and not with Fenrir, who is killed by Vithar.

Þōrr kvap:

Thor spake:

59. “Þegi þū, rōg vættr!	“Unmanly one, cease,
þēr skal minn þrūþhamarr	or the mighty hammer,
Mjöllnir māl fyrnema;	Mjöllnir, shall close thy mouth;
upp þēr verþk	I shall hurl thee up
ok ā austrvega,	and out in the East,
sīþan þik manngi sēr.”	Where men shall see thee no more.”

Lines 1–2 are abbreviated in the manuscript, as also in stanzas 61 and 63.

Loki kvað:

60. “Austrföllum þínum |
skaltu aldri
segja seggjum frá:
síz í hanzka þumlungi |
hnúkþir þū, einheri!
ok þöttiska Þórr vesa.”

Loki spake:

“That thou hast fared |
on the East-road forth
To men shouldst thou say no more;
In the thumb of a glove |
didst thou hide, thou great one,
And there forgot thou wast Thor.”

Loki's taunt that Thor hid in the thumb of Skrymir's glove is similar to that of Othin, *Harbarthsljóth*, 26, in the note to which the story is outlined. Line 4 is identical with line 5 of *Harbarthsljóth*, 26.

Þórr kvað:

61. “Þegi þū, rög vættr! |
þér skal minn þrūþhamarr
Mjöllnir māl fyrnema;
hendi hōgri |
drepk þik Hrungnis bana,
svāt þer brotnar beina hvat.”

Thor spake:

“Unmanly one, cease, |
or the mighty hammer,
Mjollnir, shall close thy mouth;
My right hand shall smite thee |
with Hrungnir's slayer,
Till all thy bones are broken.”

Hrungnir's slayer: the hammer; the story of how Thor slew this stone-headed giant is indicated in *Harbarthsljóth*, 14–15, and outlined in the note to stanza 14 of that poem.

Loki kvað:

62. “Lifa ætlak mēr |
langan aldr,
þöttu hōtir hamri mēr;

Loki spake:

“Along time still |
do I think to live,
Though thou threatenest thus with thy
hammer;

skarpar ālar |
 þōttu þer Skrȳmis vesa
 ok māttira nesti naa
 [ok svalztu hungri heill.]”

Rough seemed the straps |
 of Skrymir's wallet,
 When thy meat thou mightest not get,
 [And faint from hunger didst feel.]”

On the day following the adventure of the glove, Thor, Loki and Thor's servants proceed on their way in company with Skrymir, who puts all their food in his wallet. At evening Skrymir goes to sleep, and Thor tries to get at the food, but cannot loosen the straps of the wallet. In a rage he smites Skrymir three times on the head with his hammer, but the giant—who, it subsequently appears, deftly dodges the blows—is totally undisturbed. Line 5 may well be spurious.

Dōrr kvaþ:

63. “Þegi þū, rōg vættr! |
 þer skal minn þrūþhamarr
 Mjöllnir māl fyrnema;
 Hrungris bani |
 mun þer ī hel koma
 fyr nāgrindr neþan.”

Thor spake:

“Unmanly one, cease, |
 or the mighty hammer,
 Mjollnir, shall close thy mouth;
 The slayer of Hrungrir |
 shall send thee to hell,
 And down to the gate of death.”

Loki kvaþ:

64. “Kvaþk fyr ōsum, |
 kvaþk fyr āsynjum
 þats mik hvatti hugr;
 en fyr þēr einum |
 munk ūt ganga,
 þvīt ek veit at vegr.

Loki spake:

“I have said to the gods |
 and the sons of the god,
 The things that whetted my thoughts;
 But before thee alone |
 do I now go forth,
 For thou fightest well, I ween.

65. ǫl gørþir, Ægir! |
 en þū aldri munt
 sīþan sumbl of gøra:
 eiga þīn ǫll, |
 es hēr inni es,
 leiki yfir logi
 ok brinni þēr ā baki!”

Ale hast thou brewed, |
 but, Ægir, now
 Such feasts shalt thou make no more;
 O'er all that thou hast |
 which is here within
 Shall play the flickering flames,
 [And thy back shall be burnt with
 fire.]”

The flames: the fire that consumes the world on the last day; cf. *Voluspo*, 57. Line 5 may be spurious.

En eptir þetta falz Loki ī Frānangrs
 forsi ī lax liki, þar tōku æsir hann.

And after that Loki hid himself in
 Franang's waterfall in the guise of a
 salmon, and there the gods took him.

Hann var bundinn með þørmum son-
 ar sīns Vāla, en Narfi sonr hans varþ
 at vargi.

He was bound with the bowels of his
 son Vali, but his son Narfi was changed
 to a wolf.

Skapi tōk eitorm ok festi upp yfir
 annlit Loka; draup þar ōr eitr.

Skathi took a poison-snake and fas-
 tened it up over Loki's face, and the poi-
 son dropped thereon.

Sigyn kona Loka sat þar ok helt
 munnlaug undir eitrit, en er munn-
 laugin var full, bar hon ūt eitrit; en
 meðan draup eitrit ā Loka.

Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat there and held a
 shell under the poison, but when the
 shell was full she bore away the poison,
 and meanwhile the poison dropped on
 Loki.

Þā kiptiz hann svā hart við, at þāþan
 af skalf jörþ ǫll: þat eru nū kallapir
 landskjálftar.

Then he struggled so hard that the
 whole earth shook therewith; and now
 that is called an earthquake.

Snorri tells the same story, with minor differences, but makes it the consequence of Lo-
 ki's part in the slaying of Baldr, which undoubtedly represents the correct tradition. The
 compiler of the poems either was confused or thought the incident was useful as indicat-
 ing what finally happened to Loki. Possibly he did not mean to imply that Loki's fate was

brought upon him by his abuse of the gods, but simply tried to round out the story. *Franang*: “Gleaming Water.” *Vali* and *Narfi*: cf. stanza 49 and note. *Sigyn*: cf. *Voluspo*, 35, the only other place where she is mentioned in the poems. Snorri omits the naive note about earthquakes, his narrative ending with the words, “And there he lies till the destruction of the gods.”

Thrymskvitha

The Lay of Thrym

Introductory Note

The *Thrymskvitha* is found only in the *Codex Regius*, where it follows the *Lokasenna*. Snorri does not quote from it, nor, rather oddly, does the story occur in the *Prose Edda*.

Artistically the *Thrymskvitha* is one of the best, as it is, next to the *Voluspo*, the most famous, of the entire collection. It has, indeed, been called “the finest ballad in the world,” and not without some reason. Its swift, vigorous action, the sharpness of its characterization and the humor of the central situation combine to make it one of the most vivid short narrative poems ever composed. Of course we know nothing specific of its author, but there can be no question that he was a poet of extraordinary ability. The poem assumed its present form, most critics agree, somewhere about 900, and thus it is one of the oldest in the collection. It has been suggested, on the basis of stylistic similarity, that its author may also have composed the *Skirnismol*, and possibly *Baldurs Draumar*. There is also some resemblance between the *Thrymskvitha* and the *Lokasenna* (note, in this connection, Bugge’s suggestion that the *Skirnismol* and the *Lokasenna* may have been by the same man), and it is not impossible that all four poems have a single authorship.

The *Thrymskvitha* has been preserved in excellent condition, without any serious gaps or interpolations. In striking contrast to many of the poems, it contains no prose narrative links, the story being told in narrative verse—a rare phenomenon in the poems of the *Edda*.

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- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Vreiþr vas Vingþōrr, | Wild was Vingthor |
| es vaknaði | when he awoke, |
| ok sīns hamars | And when his mighty |
| of saknaði; | hammer he missed; |
| skegg nam hrista, | He shook his beard, |
| skor nam dýja, | his hair was bristling, |
| rēþ Jarþar burr | As the son of Jorth |
| umb at þreifask. | about him sought. |

Vingthor (“Thor the Hurler”): another name for Thor, equivalent to Vingnir (*Vafthruthnismol*, 51). Concerning Thor and his hammer, Mjollnir, cf. *Hymiskvitha*, *Lokasenna*, and *Harbarthsljoth*, *passim*. *Jorth*: Earth, Thor’s mother, Othin being his father.

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|--|---|
| <p>2. Auk þat orþa
 alls fyrst of kvaþ:
 “Heyr nū, Loki!
 hvat nū mælik,
 es engi veit
 jarþar hvergi
 nē upphimins:
 ōss’s stolinn hamri!”</p> | <p>Hear now the speech
 that first he spake:
 “Harken, Loki,
 and heed my words,
 Nowhere on earth
 is it known to man,
 Nor in heaven above:
 our hammer is stolen.”</p> |
|--|---|

Loki: cf. *Lokasenna*, *passim*.

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|--|--|
| <p>3. Gengu fagra
 Freyju tūna,
 auk þat orþa
 alls fyrst of kvaþ:
 “Munt mēr, Freyja!
 fjaþrhams lea,
 ef minn hamar
 mættak hitta?”</p> | <p>To the dwelling fair
 of Freyja went they,
 Hear now the speech
 that first he spake:
 “Wilt thou, Freyja,
 thy feather-dress lend me,
 That so my hammer
 I may seek?”</p> |
|--|--|

Freyja: Njorth’s daughter, and sister of Freyr; cf. *Lokasenna*, *introductory prose* and note, also *Skirnismol*, *introductory prose*. Freyja’s house was Sessrymnir (“Rich in Seats”) built in Folkvang (“Field of the Folk”); cf. *Grimnismol*, 14. *Feather-dress*: this flying equipment of Freyja’s is also used in the story of Thjazi, wherein Loki again borrows the “hawk’s dress” of Freyja, this time to rescue Ithun; cf. *Harbarthsljoth*, 19 and note.

Freyja kvað:

4. “Mundak selja, |
 þōt vāri or silfri,
 ok þō gefa, |
 at or golli vāri.”
 Flō þā Loki, |
 fjaþrhamr dunþi,
 unz fyr ūtan kvam |
 āsa garþa
 ok fyr innan kvam |
 jōtna heima.

Freyja spake:

- “Thine should it be |
 though of silver bright,
 And I would give it |
 though ’twere of gold.”
 Then Loki flew, |
 and the feather-dress whirred,
 Till he left behind him |
 the home of the gods,
 And reached at last |
 the realm of the giants.

The manuscript and most editions have lines 1–2 in inverse order. Several editors assume a lacuna before line 1, making a stanza out of the two conjectural lines (Bugge actually supplies them) and lines 1–2 of stanza 4. Thus they either make a separate stanza out of lines 3–5 or unite them in a six-line stanza with 5. The manuscript punctuation and capitalization—not wholly trustworthy guides—indicate the stanza divisions as in this translation.

5. Þrymr sat ā haugi, |
 þursa drōttinn,
 greyjum sīnum |
 gollbōnd snøri
 ok mōrum sīnum |
 mōn jafnaþi.

- Thrym sat on a mound, |
 the giants’ master,
 Leashes of gold |
 he laid for his dogs,
 And stroked and smoothed |
 the manes of his steeds.

Thrym: a frost-giant. Gering declares that this story of the theft of Thor’s hammer symbolizes the fact that thunderstorms rarely occur in winter.

Drymr kvað:

6. “Hvat’s meþ ṡsum, |
 hvat’s meþ ṡlfum?
 hvī’st einn kominn |
 ī jṡtunheima?”

Loki kvað:

- “Illt’s meþ ṡsum, |
 illt’s meþ ṡlfum!
 hefr Hlōrriþa |
 hamar of folginn?”

Thrym spake:

- “How fare the gods, |
 how fare the elves?
 Why comst thou alone |
 to the giants’ land?”

Loki spake:

- “Ill fare the gods, |
 ill fare the elves!
 Hast thou hidden |
 Hlorrithi’s hammer?”

Line 1: cf. *Voluspo*, 48, 1. The manuscript does not indicate Loki as the speaker of lines 3–4. *Hlorrithi:* Thor.

Drymr kvað:

7. “Hefk Hlōrriþa |
 hamar of folginn
 ātta rṡstum |
 fyr jṡrþ neþan;
 hann engi maþr |
 aptr of heimtir,
 nema fōri mēr |
 Freyju at kvæn.”

Thrym spake:

- “I have hidden |
 Hlorrithi’s hammer,
 Eight miles down |
 deep in the earth;
 And back again |
 shall no man bring it
 If Freyja I win not |
 to be my wife.”

No superscription in the manuscript. Vigfusson made up and inserted lines like

Then spake Loki | the son of Laufey

whenever he thought they would be useful.

8. Flō þā Loki, | Then Loki flew, |
 fjaþrhamr dunþi, and the feather-dress whirred,
 unz fyr ūtan kvam | Till he left behind him |
 jǫtna heima the home of the giants,
 ok fyr innan kvam | And reached at last |
 āsa garþa; the realm of the gods.
 mōtti þōri | There in the courtyard |
 miþra garþa, Thor he met:
 auk þat orþa | Hear now the speech |
 alls fyrst of kvap: that first he spake:
9. “Hefr eyrindi | “Hast thou found tidings |
 sem erfiþi? as well as trouble?
 segþu ā lopti | Thy news in the air |
 lǫng tiþindi! shalt thou utter now;
 opt sitjanda | Oft doth the sitter |
 sǫgur of fallask his story forget,
 ok liggjandi | And lies he speaks |
 lygi of bellir.” who lays himself down.”

The manuscript marks line 2, instead of line 1, as the beginning of a stanza, which has caused editors some confusion in grouping the lines of stanzas 8 and 9.

Loki kvap:

10. “Hefk erfiþi |
 ok eyrindi:
 Þrymr hefr hamar, |
 þursa drōttinn;

Loki spake:

- “Trouble I have, |
 and tidings as well:
 Thrym, king of the giants, |
 keeps thy hammer,

hann engi maþr |
 aþtr of heimtir,
 nema hǫnum fǫri |
 Freyju at kvæn.”

And back again |
 shall no man bring it
 If Freyja he wins not |
 to be his wife.”

No superscription in the manuscript.

11. *Gengu fagra* |
 Freyju at hitta,
 auk þat orþa |
 alls fyrst of kvaþ:
 “Bitt þik, Freyja! |
 brūþar līni,
 vit skulum aka tvau |
 ī jǫtunheima.”

Freyja the fair |
 then went they to find
 Hear now the speech |
 that first he spake:
 “Bind on, Freyja, |
 the bridal veil,
 For we two must haste |
 to the giants’ home.”

12. *Vreiþ varþ Freyja* |
 ok fnāsaþi,
 allr āsa salr |
 undir bifþisk,
 stǫkk þat et mikla |
 men Brīsinga:
 “Mik veizt verþa |
 vergjarnasta,
 ef ekk meþ þēr |
 ī jǫtunheima.”

Wrathful was Freyja, |
 and fiercely she snorted,
 And the dwelling great |
 of the gods was shaken,
 And burst was the mighty |
 Brisings’ necklace:
 “Most lustful indeed |
 should I look to all
 If I journeyed with thee |
 to the giants’ home.”

Many editors have rejected either line 2 or line 3. Vigfusson inserts one of his own lines before line 4. *Brisings’ necklace*: a marvelous necklace fashioned by the dwarfs, here called

Brisings (i.e., “Twiners”); cf. *Lokasenna*, 20 and note.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>13. Senn vǫru æsir
 allir ā þingi
 ok āsynjur
 allar ā māli,
 ok of þat rēpu
 rīkir tīvar,
 hvē Hlōrriþa
 hamar of sōtti.</p> | <p>Then were the gods
 together met,
 And the goddesses came
 and council held,
 And the far-famed ones
 a plan would find,
 How they might Hlorrithi’s
 hammer win.</p> |
|---|--|

Lines 1–3 are identical with *Baldurs Draumar*, 1, 1–3.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>14. Þā kvaþ Heimdallr,
 hvītastr āsa
 — vissi vel fram
 sem vanir aþrir—:
 “Bindum Þōr þā
 brūþar līni,
 hafi et mikla
 men Brīsinga!</p> | <p>Then Heimdall spake,
 whitest of the gods,
 Like the Wanes he knew
 the future well:
 “Bind we on Thor
 the bridal veil,
 Let him bear the mighty
 Brisings’ necklace;</p> |
|---|---|

Heimdall: the phrase “whitest of the gods” suggests that Heimdall was the god of light as well as being the watchman. His wisdom was probably connected with his sleepless watching over all the worlds; cf. *Lokasenna*, 47 and note. On the Wanes Cf. *Voluspo*, 21 and note. They are not elsewhere spoken of as peculiarly gifted with knowledge of future events.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>15. Lōtum und hōnum
 hrynja lukla</p> | <p>Keys around him
 let there rattle,</p> |
|---|---|

ok kvennvāþir |
of knē falla,
en ā brjōsti |
breiþa steina,
ok hagliga |
of hōfuþ typpum!”

And down to his knees |
hang woman’s dress;
With gems full broad |
upon his breast,
And a pretty cap |
to crown his head.”

16. Þā kvaþ þat Þōrr, |
þrūþugr ōss:
“Mik munn æsir |
argan kalla,
ef bindask lætk |
brūþar līni.”

Then Thor the mighty |
his answer made:
“Me would the gods |
unmanly call
If I let bind |
the bridal veil.”

Possibly a line has been lost from this stanza.

17. Þā kvaþ þat Loki, |
Laufeyjar sunr:
“Þegi þū, Þōrr! |
þeira orþa:
þegar munu jōtnar |
Āsgarþ bua,
nema þinn hamar |
þēr of heimtir.”

Then Loki spake, |
the son of Laufey:
“Be silent, Thor, |
and speak not thus;
Else will the giants |
in Asgarth dwell
If thy hammer is brought not |
home to thee.”

Laufey: Loki’s mother, cf. *Lokasenna*, 52 and note.

- 18.** Bundu Þór þā | Then bound they on Thor |
brūþar līni the bridal veil,
auk enu miklu | And next the mighty |
meni Brīsinga. Brisings' necklace.
- 19.** Lētu und hōnum | Keys around him |
hrynja lukla let they rattle,
ok kvennvāþir | And down to his knees |
of knē falla, hung woman's dress;
en ā brjōsti | With gems full broad |
breiþa steina, upon his breast,
ok hagliga | And a pretty cap |
of hōfuþ typþu. to crown his head.

18–19. The manuscript abbreviates all six lines, giving only the initial letters of the words. The stanza division is thus arbitrary; some editors have made one stanza of the six lines, others have combined the last two lines of stanza 19 with stanza 20. It is possible that a couple of lines have been lost.

- 20.** Þā kvaþ þat Loki, | Then Loki spake, |
Laufeyjar sunr: the son of Laufey:
“Munk auk meþ þēr | “As thy maid-servant thither |
ambōtt vesa, I go with thee;
vit skulum aka tvær | We two shall haste |
ī jōtunheima.” to the giants' home.”
- 21.** Senn vōru hafrar | Then home the goats |
heim of vrekniir, to the hall were driven,

skyndir at skōklum, |
 skyldu vel rinna:
 björg brotnuþu, |
 brann jörþ loga,
 ōk Ōþins sunr |
 ī jōtunheima.

They wrenched at the halters, |
 swift were they to run;
 The mountains burst, |
 earth burned with fire,
 And Othin's son |
 sought Jotunheim.

Goats: Thor's wagon was always drawn by goats; cf. *Hymiskvitha*, 38 and note. *Jotunheim:* the world of the giants.

22. Þā kvaþ þat Þrymr, |
 þursa drōttinn:
 “Standiþ upp, jōtnar! |
 ok staiþ bekki:
 nū fōra mēr |
 Freyju at kvæn,
 Njarþar dōttur |
 ōr Noatūnum.

Then loud spake Thrym, |
 the giants' leader:
 “Bestir ye, giants, |
 put straw on the benches;
 Now Freyja they bring |
 to be my bride,
 The daughter of Njorth |
 out of Noatun.

Njorth: cf. *Voluspo*, 21, and *Grimnismol*, 11 and 16. *Noatun* (“Ships'-Haven”): Njorth's home, where his wife, Skathi, found it impossible to stay; cf. *Grimnismol*, 11 and note.

23. Ganga at garþi |
 gollhyrndar kȳr,
 øxn alsvartir, |
 jōtni at gamni:
 fjōlþ āk meiþma, |
 fjōlþ āk menja,

Gold-horned cattle |
 go to my stables,
 Jet-black oxen, |
 the giant's joy;
 Many my gems, |
 and many my jewels,

einnar Freyju |
āvant þykkjumk.”

Freyja alone |
did I lack, methinks.”

24. Vas þar at kveldi |
of komit snimma
auk fyr jǫtna |
ǫl fram borit;
einn āt oxa, |
ātta laxa,
krāsir allar |
þāers konur skyldu,
drakk Sifjar verr |
sōld þriu mjaþar.

Early it was |
to evening come,
And forth was borne |
the beer for the giants;
Thor alone ate an ox, |
and eight salmon,
All the dainties as well |
that were set for the women;
And drank Sif’s mate |
three tuns of mead.

Grundtvig thinks this is all that is left of two stanzas describing Thor’s supper. Some editors reject line 4. In line 3 the manuscript has “he,” the reference being, of course, to Thor, on whose appetite cf. *Hymiskvitha*, 15. *Sif*: Thor’s wife; cf. *Lokasenna*, note to *introductory prose* and stanza 53.

25. Þā kvaþ þat Þrymr, |
þursa drōttinn:
“Hvar sāt brūþir |
bīta hvassara?
sākak brūþir |
bīta breiþara,
ne enn meira mjǫþ |
mey of drekka.”

Then loud spake Thrym, |
the giants’ leader:
“Who ever saw bride |
more keenly bite?
I ne’er saw bride |
with a broader bite,
Nor a maiden who drank |
more mead than this!”

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>26. Sat en alsnotra
 ambōtt fyrir,
 es orþ of fann
 við jötuns máli:
 “Át vætr Freyja
 átta nōttum,
 svā vas öpfūs
 í jötunheima.”</p> | <p>Hard by there sat
 the serving-maid wise,
 So well she answered
 the giant’s words:
 “From food has Freyja
 eight nights fasted,
 So hot was her longing
 for Jotunheim.”</p> |
| <p>27. Laut und līnu,
 lysti at kyssa,
 en ūtan stōkk
 endlangan sal:
 “Hvī ’ru öndōtt
 augu Freyju?
 þykkjumk ör augum
 eldr of brinna.”</p> | <p>Thrym looked ’neath the veil,
 for he longed to kiss,
 But back he leaped
 the length of the hall:
 “Why are so fearful
 the eyes of Freyja?
 Fire, methinks,
 from her eyes burns forth.”</p> |

For clearness I have inserted Thrym’s name in place of the pronoun of the original. *Fire:* the noun is lacking in the manuscript; most editors have inserted it, however, following a late paper manuscript.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>28. Sat en alsnotra
 ambōtt fyrir,
 es orþ of fann
 við jötuns máli:
 “Svaf vætr Freyja
 átta nōttum,</p> | <p>Hard by there sat
 the serving-maid wise,
 So well she answered
 the giant’s words:
 “No sleep has Freyja
 for eight nights found,</p> |
|---|---|

svā vas öþfūs |
ī jötunheima.”

So hot was her longing |
for Jotunheim.”

In the manuscript the whole stanza is abbreviated to initial letters, except for “sleep,” “Freyja,” and “found.”

29. Inn kwam en arma |
jötna systir,
hins brūpfear |
biþja þorþi:
“Lāt þer af höndum |
hringa rauða,
ef öþlask vill |
āstir mīnar,
āstir mīnar, |
alla hylli.”

Soon came the giant’s |
luckless sister,
Who feared not to ask |
the bridal fee:
“From thy hands the rings |
of red gold take,
If thou wouldst win |
my willing love,
[My willing love |
and welcome glad.]”

Luckless: so the manuscript, but many editors have altered the word “arma” to “aldna,” meaning “old,” to correspond with line 1 of stanza 32. Line 5 may well be spurious.

30. Þā kvaþ þat Þrymr, |
þursa dröttinn:
“Berīþ inn hamar |
brūþi at vīgja,
leggīþ Mjöllni |
ī meýjar knē,
vīgīþ okkr saman |
Vārar hendi!”

Then loud spake Thrym, |
the giants’ leader:
“Bring in the hammer |
to hallow the bride;
On the maiden’s knees |
let Mjollnir lie,
That us both the band |
of Vor may bless.”

Hallow: just what this means is not clear, but there are references to other kinds of con-

secration, though not of a bride, with the “sign of the hammer.” According to Vigfusson, “the hammer was the holy sign with the heathens, answering to the cross of the Christians.” In Snorri’s story of Thor’s resuscitation of his cooked goat (cf. *Hymiskvitha*, 38, note) the god “hallows” the goat with his hammer. One of the oldest runic signs, supposed to have magic power, was named Thor’s-hammer. *Vor*: the goddess of vows, particularly between men and women; Snorri lists a number of little-known goddesses similar to Vor, all of them apparently little more than names for Frigg.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>31. Hlō Hlōrriþa
 hugr ī brjōsti,
 es harþhugaþr
 hamar of þātti;
 Þrym drap fyrstan,
 þursa drōttin,
 ok ætt jōtuns
 alla lamþi.</p> | <p>The heart in the breast
 of Hlorrithi laughed
 When the hard-souled one
 his hammer beheld;
 First Thrym, the king
 of the giants, he killed,
 Then all the folk
 of the giants he felled.</p> |
| <p>32. Drap ena ǫldnu
 jōtna systur
 hinas brūpfear
 of beþit hafþi:
 hōn skell of hlaut
 fyr skillinga,
 en hōgg hamars
 fyr hringa fjōlþ.</p> | <p>The giant’s sister
 old he slew,
 She who had begged
 the bridal fee;
 A stroke she got
 in the shilling’s stead,
 And for many rings
 the might of the hammer.</p> |
| <p>33. Sva kwam Ōþins sunr
 endr at hamri.</p> | <p>And so his hammer
 got Othin’s son.</p> |

Some editors reject this line, which, from a dramatic standpoint, is certainly a pity. In the

manuscript it begins with a capital letter, like the opening of a new stanza.

Alvissmol

The Ballad of Alvis

Introductory Note

No better summary of the *Alvissmol* can be given than Gering's statement that "it is a versified chapter from the skaldic Poetics." The narrative skeleton, contained solely in stanzas 1–8 and in 35, is of the slightest; the dwarf Alvis, desirous of marrying Thor's daughter, is compelled by the god to answer a number of questions to test his knowledge. That all his answers are quite satisfactory makes no difference whatever to the outcome. The questions and answers differ radically from those of the *Vafthruthnismol*. Instead of being essentially mythological, they all concern synonyms. Thor asks what the earth, the sky, the moon, and so on, are called "in each of all the worlds," but there is no apparent significance in the fact that the gods call the earth one thing and the giants call it another; the answers are simply strings of poetic circumlocutions, or "kennings." Concerning the use of these "kennings" in skaldic poetry, cf. introductory note to the *Hymiskvitha*.

Mogk is presumably right in dating the poem as late as the twelfth century, assigning it to the period of "the Icelandic renaissance of skaldic poetry." It appears to have been the work of a man skilled in poetic construction, — Thor's questions, for instance, are neatly balanced in pairs, — and fully familiar with the intricacies of skaldic diction, but distinctly weak in his mythology. In other words, it is learned rather than spontaneous poetry. Finnur Jonsson's attempt to make it a tenth century Norwegian poem baffles logic. Vigfusson is pretty sure the poem shows marked traces of Celtic influence, which is by no means incompatible with Mogk's theory (cf. introductory note to the *Rigsthula*).

The poem is found only in *Regius*, where it follows the *Thrymskvitha*. Snorri quotes stanzas 20, and 30, the manuscripts of the *Prose Edda* giving the name of the poem as *Alvissmol*, *Alsvinnsmol* or *Olvismol*. It is apparently in excellent condition, without serious errors of transmission, although interpolations or omissions in such a poem might have been made so easily as to defy detection.

The translation of the many synonyms presents, of course, unusual difficulties, particularly as many of the Norse words can be properly rendered in English only by more or less extended phrases. I have kept to the original meanings as closely as I could without utterly destroying the metrical structure.

Alviss kvað:

1. “Bekki breiða |
 nū skal brūpr meþ mēr,
 heim ī sinni snuask;
 hratat of mægi |
 mun hverjum þykkja,
 heima skalat hvīlþ nema.”

Alvis spake:

- “Now shall the bride |
 my benches adorn,
 And homeward haste forthwith;
 Eager for wedlock |
 to all shall I seem,
 Nor at home shall they rob me of rest.”

Alvis (“All-Knowing”): a dwarf, not elsewhere mentioned. The manuscript nowhere indicates the speakers’ name. The bride in question is Thor’s daughter; Thruth (“Might”) is the only daughter of his whose name is recorded, and she does not appear elsewhere in the poems. Her mother was Sif, Thor’s wife, whereas the god’s sons were born of a giantess. *Benches*: cf. *Lokasenna*, 15 and note.

Þōrr kvað:

2. “Hvat’s þat fira? |
 hvī ’stu svā fōlr umb nasar?
 vastu ī nōtt meþ nai?
 þursa līki |
 þykkjumk ā þēr vesa,
 estat þū til brūpar borinn.”

Thor spake:

- “What, pray, art thou? |
 Why so pale round the nose?
 By the dead hast thou lain of late?
 To a giant like |
 dost thou look, methinks;
 Thou wast not born for the bride.”

The dwarfs, living beyond the reach of the sun, which was fatal to them (cf. stanzas 16 and 35), were necessarily pale. Line 3 is, of course, ironical.

Alviss kvað:

3. “Alviss heitik, |
 býk fyr jorþ neþan,
 āk und steini staþ;

Alvis spake:

- “Alvis am I, |
 and under the earth
 My home ’neath the rocks I have;

vāpna verþs	With the wagon-guider
emk ā vit kominn:	a word do I seek,
bregþit fōstu heiti firar.”	Let the gods their bond not break.”

Wagon-guider: Thor, who travels habitually on his goat drawn wagon. Bugge changes “Vagna vers” to “Vapna verþs,” rendering the line

I am come to seek | the cost of the weapons.

In either case, Alvis does not as yet recognize Thor.

<i>Dōrr kvaþ:</i>	<i>Thor spake:</i>
4. “Ek mun bregþa,	“Break it shall I,
þvīt ek brūþar ā	for over the bride
flest of rōþ sem faþir;	Her father has foremost right;
vaskak heima,	At home was I not
þās þēr heitit vas,	when the promise thou hadst,
sā einn es gjoþ’s meþ goþum.”	And I give her alone of the gods.”

Apparently the gods promised Thor’s daughter in marriage to Alvis during her father’s absence, perhaps as a reward for some craftsmanship of his (cf. Bugge’s suggestion as to stanza 3). The text of line 4 is most uncertain.

<i>Alviss kvaþ:</i>	<i>Alvis spake:</i>
5. “Hvat’s þat rekka	“What hero claims
es ī rōþum telisk	such right to hold
fljōþs ens fagrgloa?	O’er the bride that shines so bright?
fjarrafleina þik	Not many will know thee,
munu fair kunna:	thou wandering man!
hver hefr бага þik borit?”	Who was bought with rings to bear thee?”

Hero: ironically spoken; Alvis takes Thor for a tramp, the god’s uncouth appearance often

leading to such mistakes; cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 6. Line 4 is a trifle uncertain; some editors alter the wording to read “What worthless woman bore thee?”

Þórr kvað:

6. “Vingþórr heitik, |
ek hef víða ratat,
sunr emk Sípgrana;
at ósött minni |
skaltu þat et unga man hafa
ok þat gjaforþ geta.”

Thor spake:

- “Vingthor, the wanderer |
wide, am I,
And I am Sithgrani’s son;
Against my will |
shalt thou get the maid,
And win the marriage word.”

Vingthor (“Thor the Hurler”): cf. *Thrymskvitha*, 1. *Sithgrani* (“Long-Beard”): Othin.

Alviss kvað:

7. “Sáttir þínar |
es vilk snimma hafa
ok þat gjaforþ geta;
eiga viljak |
heldr an ōn vesa
þat et mjallhvíta man.”

Alvis spake:

- “Thy good-will now |
shall I quickly get,
And win the marriage word;
I long to have, |
and I would not lack,
This snow-white maid for mine.”

Þórr kvað:

8. “Meyjar ōstum |
muna þér verða,
vísi gestr! of varit,
ef ōr heimi kannt |
hverjum at segja
allt þats viljak vita.

Thor spake:

- “The love of the maid |
I may not keep thee
From winning, thou guest so wise,
If of every world |
thou canst tell me all
That now I wish to know.

Every world: concerning the nine worlds, cf. *Voluspo*, 2 and note. Many editors follow this stanza with one spoken by Alvis, found in late paper manuscripts, as follows:

Ask then, Vingthor, | since eager thou art
The lore of the dwarf to learn;
Oft have I fared | in the nine worlds all,
And wide is my wisdom of each.

(Freista mätta, Vingþórr! | alls þū frekr ert,
dvergs at reyna dug;
heima alla niu | hefik of farit
ok vitat vætna hvat.)

9. Seg mer þat, Alvīss! |
oll of røk fira
vorumk, dvergr! at vitir:
hvē sū jorþ heitir, |
es liggr fyr alda sunum,
heimi hverjum ī?”

Answer me, Alvis! |
thou knowest all,
Dwarf, of the doom of men:
What call they the earth, |
that lies before all,
In each and every world?”

Alvīss kvað:

10. “Jorþ heitir meþ mǫnnum, |
en meþ ǫsum fold,
kalla vega vanir,
īgrǫn jotnar, |
alfar groandi,
kalla aur uppregin.”

Alvis spake:

“ ‘Earth’ to men, ‘Field’ |
to the gods it is,
‘The Ways’ is it called by the Wanes;
‘Ever Green’ by the giants, |
‘The Grower’ by elves,
‘The Moist’ by the holy ones high.”

Men, etc.: nothing could more clearly indicate the author’s mythological inaccuracy than his confusion of the inhabitants of the nine worlds. Men (dwellers in Mithgarth) appear in each of Alvis’s thirteen answers; so do the gods (Asgarth) and the giants (Jotunheim). The elves (Alfheim) appear in eleven answers, the Wanes (Vanaheim) in nine, and the dwarfs (who occupied no special world, unless one identifies them with the dark elves of Svartalfaheim) in seven. The dwellers “in hell” appear in six stanzas; the phrase probably

refers to the world of the dead, though Mogk thinks it may mean the dwarfs. In stanzas where the gods are already listed appear names else where applied only to them, — “holy ones,” “sons of the gods” and “high ones,” — as if these names meant beings of a separate race. “Men” appears twice in the same stanza, and so do the giants, if one assumes that they are “the sons of Suttung.” Altogether it is useless to pay much attention to the mythology of Alvis’s replies.

Þórr kvað:

11. “Seg mer þat, Alviss! |
 ǫll of røk fira
 vǫrumk, dvergr! at vitir:
 hvē sã himinn heitir |
 † erakendi,
 heimi hverjum ī?”

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
 thou knowest all,
 Dwarf, of the doom of men:
 What call they the heaven, |
 beheld of the high one,
 In each and every world?”

Lines 1, 2, and 4 of Thor’s questions are regularly abbreviated in the manuscript. *Beheld*, etc.: the word in the manuscript is almost certainly an error, and all kinds of guesses have been made to rectify it. All that can be said is that it means “beheld of” or “known to” somebody.

Alviss kvað:

12. “Himinn heitir meþ mǫnnum, |
 en hlyrnir meþ goþum,
 kalla vindofni vanir,
 uppheim jǫtnar, |
 alfar fagra ræfr,
 dvergar drjúpan sal.”

Alvis spake:

“ ‘Heaven’ men call it, |
 ‘The Height’ the gods,
 The Wanes ‘The Weaver of Winds’;
 Giants ‘The Up-World,’ |
 elves ‘The Fair-Roof,’
 The dwarfs ‘The Dripping Hall.’ ”

Þórr kvað:

13. “Seg mer þat, Alviss! |
 ǫll of røk fira

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
 thou knowest all,

vorumk, dvergr! at vitir:
hversu mǎni heitir, |
sās menn sea,
heimi hverjum ī?”

Dwarf, of the doom of men:
What call they the moon, |
that men behold,
In each and every world?”

Alviss kvað:

14. “Mǎni heitir meþ mǫnnum, |
en mýlinn meþ goðum,
kalla hvél helju ī,
skyndi jǫtnar, |
en skin dvergar,
kalla alfar ārtala.”

Alvis spake:

“ ‘Moon’ with men, ‘Flame’ |
the gods among,
‘The Wheel’ in the house of hell;
‘The Goer’ the giants, |
‘The Gleamer’ the dwarfs,
The elves ‘The Teller of Time.’ ”

Flame: a doubtful word; Vigfusson suggests that it properly means a “mock sun.” *Wheel:* the manuscript adds the adjective “whirling,” to the destruction of the metre; cf. *Hovamol*, 84, 3.

Þórr kvað:

15. “Seg mer þat, Alviss! |
oll of røk fira
vorumk, dvergr! at vitir:
hvē sū sōl heitir, |
es sea alda synir,
heimi hverjum ī?”

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
thou knowest all,
Dwarf, of the doom of men:
What call they the sun, |
that all men see,
In each and every world?”

Alviss kvað:

16. “Sōl heitir meþ mǫnnum, |
en sunna meþ goðum,

Alvis spake:

“Men call it ‘Sun,’ |
gods ‘Orb of the Sun,’

kalla dvergar Dvalins leika,
eyglō jǫtnar, |
alfar fagra hvēl,
alskīr āsa synir.”

‘The Deceiver of Dvalin’ the dwarfs;
The giants ‘The Ever-Bright,’ |
elves ‘Fair Wheel,’
‘All-Glowing’ the sons of the gods.”

Deceiver of Dvalin: Dvalin was one of the foremost dwarfs; cf. *Voluspo*, 14, *Fafnismol*, 13, and *Hovamol*, 144. The sun “deceives” him because, like the other dwarfs living under ground, he cannot live in its light, and always fears lest sunrise may catch him unaware. The sun’s rays have power to turn the dwarfs into stone, and the giantess Hrimgerth meets a similar fate (cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 30). Alvis suffers in the same way; cf. stanza 35.

Þórr kvað:

17. “Seg mer þat, Alvīss! |
 ǫll of røk fira
vorumk, dvergr! at vitir:
hvē þau ský heita, |
 es skūrum blandask,
heimi hverjum ī?”

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
 thou knowest all,
Dwarf, of the doom of men:
What call they the clouds, |
 that keep the rains,
In each and every world?”

Alvīss kvað:

18. “Ský heita meþ mǫnnum, |
 en skūrvǫn meþ goðum,
kalla vindflot vanir,
 ūrvǫn jǫtnar, |
 alfar veþrmegin,
kalla ī helju hjalm hulips.”

Alvis spake:

“ ‘Clouds’ men name them, |
 ‘Rain-Hope’ gods call them,
The Wanes call them ‘Kites of the
Wind’;
‘Water-Hope’ giants, |
 ‘Weather-Might’ elves,
‘The Helmet of Secrets’ in hell.”

Þórr kvað:

19. “Seg mer þat, Alvīss! |
 ǫll of røk fira
 vǫrumk, dvergr! at vitir:
 hvē sǫ vindr heitir, |
 es vīþast ferr,
 heimi hverjum ī?”

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
 thou knowest all,
 Dwarf, of the doom of men:
 What call they the wind, |
 that widest fares,
 In each and every world?”

Alvīss kvað:

20. “Vindr heitir meþ mǫnnum, |
 en vǫfuþr meþ goþum,
 kalla gneggjuþ ginnregin,
 ǫpi jǫtnar, |
 alfar dynfara,
 kalla ī helju hviþuþ.”

Alvis spake:

“ ‘Wind’ do men call it, |
 the gods ‘The Waverer,’
 ‘The Neigher’ the holy ones high;
 ‘The Wailer’ the giants, |
 ‘Roaring Wender’ the elves,
 In hell ‘The Blustering Blast.’ ”

Snorri quotes this stanza in the *Skaldskaparmal*. *Waverer*: the word is uncertain, the *Prose Edda* manuscripts giving it in various forms. *Blustering Blast*: two *Prose Edda* manuscripts give a totally different word, meaning “The Pounder.”

Þórr kvað:

21. “Seg mer þat, Alvīss! |
 ǫll of røk fira
 vǫrumk, dvergr! at vitir:
 hvē þat logn heitir, |
 es liggja skal,
 heimi hverjum ī?”

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
 thou knowest all
 Dwarf, of the doom of men:
 What call they the calm, |
 that quiet lies,
 In each and every world?”

Alviss kvað:

22. “Logn heitir meþ mǫnnum, |
 en lōgi meþ goþum,
 kalla vindsloṭ vanir,
 ofhlȳ jǫtnar, |
 alfar dagsefa,
 kalla dvergar dags veru.”

Alvis spake:

“ ‘Calm’ men call it, |
 ‘The Quiet’ the gods,
 The Wanes ‘The Hush of the Winds’;
 ‘The Sultry’ the giants, |
 elves ‘Day’s Stillness,’
 The dwarfs ‘The Shelter of Day.’ ”

Hush, etc.: the manuscript, by inserting an additional letter, makes the word practically identical with that translated “Kite” in stanza 18. Most editors have agreed as to the emendation.

Þórr kvað:

23. “Seg mer þat, Alviss! |
 ǫll of røk fira
 vǫrumk, dvergr! at vitir:
 hvē sā marr heitir, |
 es menn roa,
 heimi hverjum ī?”

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
 thou knowest all,
 Dwarf, of the doom of men:
 What call they the sea, |
 whereon men sail,
 In each and every world?”

Alviss kvað:

24. “Sær heitir meþ mǫnnum, |
 en silægja meþ goþum,
 kalla vāg vanir,
 ālheim jǫtnar, |
 alfar lāgastaf,
 kalla dvergar djūpan mar.”

Alvis spake:

“ ‘Sea’ men call it, |
 gods ‘The Smooth-Lying,’
 ‘The Wave’ is it called by the Wanes;
 ‘Eel-Home’ the giants, |
 ‘Drink-Stuff’ the elves,
 For the dwarfs its name is ‘The Deep.’ ”

Drink-Stuff: Gering translates the word thus; I doubt it, but can suggest nothing better.

Þōrr kvað:

25. “Seg mer þat, Alvīss! |
 ǫll of røk fira
 vǫrumk, dvergr! at vitir:
 hvē sǫ eldr heitir, |
 es brinnr fyr alda sunum,
 heimi hverjum ī?”

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
 thou knowest all,
 Dwarf, of the doom of men:
 What call they the fire, |
 that flames for men,
 In each of all the worlds?”

Alvīss kvað:

26. “Eldr heitir meþ mǫnnum, |
 en meþ ǫsum funi,
 kalla vægin vanir,
 freka jǫtnar, |
 en forbrenni dvergar,
 kalla ī helju hrǫpuð.”

Alvis spake:

“ ‘Fire’ men call it, |
 and ‘Flame’ the gods,
 By the Wanes is it ‘Wildfire’ called;
 ‘The Biter’ by giants, |
 ‘The Burner’ by dwarfs,
 ‘The Swift’ in the house of hell.”

Wildfire: the word may mean any one of various things, including “Wave,” which is not unlikely.

Þōrr kvað:

27. “Seg mer þat, Alvīss! |
 ǫll of røk fira
 vǫrumk, dvergr! at vitir:
 hvē sǫ viðr heitir, |
 es vex fyr alda sunum,
 heimi hverjum ī?”

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
 thou knowest all,
 Dwarf, of the doom of men:
 What call they the wood, |
 that grows for mankind,
 In each and every world?”

Alviss kvað:

28. “Viðr heitir með mönnum, |
 en vallar fax með goðum,
 kalla hlíðþang halir,
 eldi jötnar, |
 alfar fagrlima,
 kalla vönd vanir.”

Alvis spake:

“Men call it ‘The Wood,’ |
 gods ‘The Mane of the Field,’
 ‘Seaweed of Hills’ in hell;
 ‘Flame-Food’ the giants, |
 ‘Fair-Limbed’ the elves,
 ‘The Wand’ is it called by the Wanes.”

In hell: the word simply means “men,” and it is only a guess, though a generally accepted one, that here it refers to the dead.

Þórr kvað:

29. “Seg mer þat, Alviss! |
 öll of røk fira
 vörumk, dvergr! at vitir:
 hvē sū nōtt heitir, |
 en Nörvi kenda,
 heimi hverjum ī?”

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
 thou knowest all,
 Dwarf, of the doom of men:
 What call they the night, |
 the daughter of Nor,
 In each and every world?”

Nor: presumably the giant whom Snorri calls Norvi or Narfi, father of Not (Night) and grandfather of Dag (Day). Cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 25.

Alviss kvað:

30. “Nōtt heitir með mönnum, |
 en njöl með goðum,
 kalla grīmu ginnregin,
 öljōs jötnar, |
 alfar svefngaman,
 kalla dvergar draumnjörun.”

Alvis spake:

“ ‘Night’ men call it, |
 ‘Darkness’ gods name it,
 ‘The Hood’ the holy ones high;
 The giants ‘The Lightless,’ |
 the elves ‘Sleep’s joy,’
 The dwarfs ‘The Weaver of Dreams.’ ”

Snorri quotes this stanza in the *Skaldskaparmal*. The various Prose Edda manuscripts differ considerably in naming the gods, the giants, etc. *Lightless*: some manuscripts have “The Unsorrowing.”

Dōrr kvaþ:

31. “Seg mer þat, Alvīss! |
 ǫll of røk fira
 vǫrumk, dvergr! at vitir:
 hvē þat sǫþ heitir, |
 es sǫ alda synir,
 heimi hverjum ī?”

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
 thou knowest all,
 Dwarf, of the doom of men:
 What call they the seed, |
 that is sown by men,
 In each and every world?”

Alvīss kvaþ:

32. “Bygg heitir meþ mǫnnum, |
 en barr meþ goþum,
 kalla vǫxt vanir,
 æti ȝotnar, |
 alfar lāgastaf,
 kalla ī helju hnipinn.”

Alvis spake:

“Men call it ‘Grain,’ |
 and ‘Corn’ the gods,
 ‘Growth’ in the world of the Wanes;
 ‘The Eaten’ by giants, |
 ‘Drink-Stuff’ by elves,
 In hell ‘The Slender Stem.’ ”

Grain: the two words translated “grain” and “corn” apparently both meant primarily barley, and thence grain in general, the first being the commoner term of the two. *Drink-Stuff*: the word is identical with the one used, and commented on, in stanza 24, and again I have followed Gering’s interpretation for want of a better one. If his guess is correct, the reference here is evidently to grain as the material from which beer and other drinks are brewed.

Dōrr kvaþ:

33. “Seg mer þat, Alvīss! |
 ǫll of røk fira
 vǫrumk, dvergr! at vitir:

Thor spake:

“Answer me, Alvis! |
 thou knowest all,
 Dwarf, of the doom of men:

hvē þat ǫl heitir, |
 es drekka alda synir,
 heimi hverjum ī?”

What call they the ale, |
 that is quaffed of men,
 In each and every world?”

Alviss kvað:

34. “ǫl heitir meþ mǫnnum, |
 en meþ ǫsum bjǫrr,
 kalla veig vanir,
 hreina lǫg jǫtnar, |
 en ī helju mjǫþ,
 kalla sumbl Suttungs synir.”

Alvis spake:

“ ‘Ale’ among men, |
 ‘Beer’ the gods among,
 In the world of the Wanæs ‘The
 Foaming’;
 ‘Bright Draught’ with giants, |
 ‘Mead’ with dwellers in hell,
 ‘The Feast-Draught’ with Suttung’s
 sons.”

Suttung’s sons: these ought to be the giants, but the giants are specifically mentioned in line 3. The phrase “Suttung’s sons” occurs in *Skirnismol*, 34, clearly meaning the giants. Concerning Suttung as the possessor of the mead of poetry, cf. *Hovamol*, 104.

Þórr kvað:

35. “ī einu brjǫsti |
 ek sāk aldrigi
 fleiri forna stafi;
 tǫlum miklum |
 ek kveþ tældan þik:
 uppi est, dvergr! of dagapr,
 nū skīnn söl ī sali.”

Thor spake:

“In a single breast |
 I never have seen
 More wealth of wisdom old;
 But with treacherous wiles |
 must I now betray thee:
 The day has caught thee, dwarf!
 [Now the sun shines here in the hall.]”

Concerning the inability of the dwarfs to endure sunlight, which turns them into stone,

cf. stanza 16 and note. Line 5 may be spurious.

Baldrs Draumar

Baldr's Dreams

Introductory Note

Baldrs Draumar is found only in the *Arnarnagnæan Codex*, where it follows the *Harbarthsljóth* fragment. It is preserved in various late paper manuscripts, with the title *Vegtamskvitha* (The Lay of Vegtam), which has been used by some editors.

The poem, which contains but fourteen stanzas, has apparently been preserved in excellent condition. Its subject-matter and style link it closely with the *Voluspo*. Four of the five lines of stanza 11 appear, almost without change, in the *Voluspo*, 32–33, and the entire poem is simply an elaboration of the episode outlined in those and the preceding stanzas. It has been suggested that *Baldrs Draumar* and the *Voluspo* may have been by the same author. There is also enough similarity in style between *Baldrs Draumar* and the *Thrymskvitha* (note especially the opening stanza) to give color to Vigfusson's guess that these two poems had a common authorship. In any case, *Baldrs Draumar* presumably assumed its present form not later than the first half of the tenth century.

Whether the Volva (wise-woman) of the poem is identical with the speaker in the *Voluspo* is purely a matter for conjecture. Nothing definitely opposes such a supposition. As in the longer poem she foretells the fall of the gods, so in this case she prophesies the first incident of that fall, the death of Baldr. Here she is called up from the dead by Othin, anxious to know the meaning of Baldr's evil dreams; in the *Voluspo* it is likewise intimated that the Volva has risen from the grave.

The poem, like most of the others in the collection, is essentially dramatic rather than narrative, summarizing a story which was doubtless familiar to every one who heard the poem recited.

-
- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Senn vǫru æsir | Once were the gods |
| allir ā þingi | together met, |
| ok ásynjur | And the goddesses came |
| allar ā mǫli, | and council held, |

ok of þat rēpu |
 rīkir tīvar,
 hvī væri Baldri |
 ballir draumar.

And the far-famed ones |
 the truth would find,
 Why baleful dreams |
 to Baldr had come.

Lines 1–3 are identical with *Thrymskvitha*, 13, 1–3. *Baldr*: concerning this best and noblest of the gods, the son of Othin and Frigg, who comes again among the survivors after the final battle, cf. *Voluspo*, 32 and 62, and notes. He is almost never mentioned anywhere except in connection with the story of his death, though Snorri has one short passage praising his virtue and beauty. After stanza 1 two old editions, and one later one, insert four stanzas from late paper manuscripts.

2. Upp reis Ōþinn, |
 aldinn gautr,
 auk ā Sleipni |
 sǫþul of lagði;
 reiþ niþr þāþan |
 Niflheljar til,
 mōtti hvelpi |
 es ōr helju kvam.

Then Othin rose, |
 the enchanter old,
 And the saddle he laid |
 on Sleipnir's back;
 Thence rode he down |
 to Niflhel deep,
 And the hound he met |
 that came from hell.

Sleipnir: Othin's eight-legged horse, the son of Loki and the stallion Svathilfari; cf. *Lokasenna*, 23, and *Grimnismol*, 44, and notes. *Niflhel*: the murky (“nifl”) dwelling of Hel, goddess of the dead. *The hound*: Garm; cf. *Voluspo*, 44.

3. Sā vas blōþugr |
 of brjōst framan
 ok galdrs fǫþur |
 gō of lengi;
 fram reiþ Ōþinn, |
 foldvegr dunði,

Bloody he was |
 on his breast before,
 At the father of magic |
 he howled from afar;
 Forward rode Othin, |
 the earth resounded

hann kwam at hōvu |
Heljar ranni.

Till the house so high |
of Hel he reached.

Father of magic: Othin appears constantly as the god of magic. *Hel:* offspring of Loki and the giantess Angrbotha, as were the wolf Fenrir and Mithgarthsorm. She ruled the world of the unhappy dead, either those who had led evil lives or, according to another tradition, those who had not died in battle. The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a stanza, and thus the editions vary in their grouping of the lines of this and the succeeding stanzas.

4. Þā reiþ Ōþinn |
fyr austan dyrr,
þars hann vissi |
vōlvu leiþi,
nam vittugri |
valgaldr kveþa,
unz nauþug reis, |
nās orþ of kvap:

Then Othin rode |
to the eastern door,
There, he knew well, |
was the wise-woman's grave;
Magic he spoke |
and mighty charms,
Till spell-bound she rose, |
and in death she spoke:

5. “Hvat's manna þat |
mēr ōkunnra
es hōfumk aukit |
erfitt sinni?
vask snivin snjōvi |
ok slegin regni
ok drifin dōggu, |
daup vask lengi.”

“What is the man, |
to me unknown,
That has made me travel |
the troublous road?
I was snowed on with snow, |
and smitten with rain,
And drenched with dew; |
long was I dead.”

Öpinn kvað:

6. “Vegtamr heitik, |
 sunr emk Valtams;
 seg mer ör helju, |
 ek mun ör heimi:
 hveim eru bekkir |
 baugum sánir,
 flet fagrliga |
 flōiþ gulli?”

Othin spake:

- “Vegtam my name, |
 I am Valtam's son;
 Speak thou of hell, |
 for of heaven I know:
 For whom are the benches |
 bright with rings,
 And the platforms gay |
 bedecked with gold?”

The manuscript has no superscriptions indicating the speakers. *Vegtam* (“The Wanderer”): Othin, as usual, conceals his identity, calling himself the son of Valtam (“The Fighter”). In this instance he has unusual need to do so, for as the wise-woman belongs apparently to the race of the giants, she would be unwilling to answer a god's questions. *Heaven*: the word used includes all the upper worlds, in contrast to hell. *Benches*, etc.: the adornment of the benches and raised platforms, or elevated parts of the house, was a regular part of the preparation for a feast of welcome. The text of the two last lines is somewhat uncertain.

Völva kvað:

7. “Hēr stendr Baldri |
 of brugginn mjōþr,
 skīrar veigar, |
 liggr skjōldr yfir;
 en āsmegir |
 ī ofvāni.
 Nauþug sagþak, |
 nū munk þegja.”

The Wise-Woman spake:

- “Here for Baldr |
 the mead is brewed,
 The shining drink, |
 and a shield lies o'er it;
 But their hope is gone |
 from the mighty gods.
 Unwilling I spake, |
 and now would be still.”

Grundtvig, followed by Edzardi, thinks a line has been lost between lines 3 and 4.

Öþinn kvað:

8. “Þegjat, vǫlva! |
þik vilk fregna,
unz alkunna, |
vilk enn vita:
hverr mun Baldri |
at bana verða
ok Öþins sun |
aldri ræna?”

Vǫlva kvað:

9. “Hǫþr berr hǫvan |
hröþrbaþm þinig,
hann mun Baldri |
at bana verða
ok Öþins sun |
aldri ræna.
Naupug sagþak, |
nū munk þegja.”

Othin spake:

- “Wise-woman, cease not! |
I seek from thee
All to know |
that I fain would ask:
Who shall the bane |
of Baldr become,
And steal the life |
from Othin's son?”

The Wise-Woman spake:

- “Hoth thither bears |
the far-famed branch,
He shall the bane |
of Baldr become,
And steal the life |
from Othin's son.
Unwilling I spake, |
and now would be still.”

Concerning the blind Hoth, who, at Loki's instigation, cast the fatal mistletoe at Baldr, cf. *Voluspo*, 32–33 and notes. In the manuscript the last line is abbreviated, as also in stanza 11.

Öþinn kvað:

10. “Þegjat, vǫlva! |
þik vilk fregna,
unz alkunna, |
vilk enn vita:

Othin spake:

- “Wise-woman, cease not! |
I seek from thee
All to know |
that I fain would ask:

hverr mun *heiptar* [Heþi] |
hefnt of vinna
eþa Baldrs bana |
ā bāl vega?"

Who shall vengeance win |
for the evil work,
Or bring to the flames |
the slayer of Baldr?"

In the manuscript lines 1–2 are abbreviated, as also in stanza 12.

Vølva kvaþ:

11. "Vrindr berr *Vāla* |
ī vestrsølum,
sa mun Ōþins sunr |
einnættir vega;
hond of þværat |
nē hōfuþ kembir,
āþr berr ā bāl |
Baldrs andskota.
Naufug sagþak, |
nū munk þegja."

The Wise-Woman spake:

"Rind bears Vali |
in Vestrsalir,
And one night old |
fights Othin's son;
His hands he shall wash not, |
his hair he shall comb not,
Till the slayer of Baldr |
he brings to the flames.
Unwilling I spake, |
and now would be still."

Rind: mentioned by Snorri as one of the goddesses. Concerning her son Vali, begotten by Othin for the express purpose of avenging Baldr's death, and his slaying of Hoth the day after his birth, cf. *Voluspo*, 33–34, where the lines of this stanza appear practically verbatim. *Vestrsalir* ("The Western Hall"): not else where mentioned in the poems.

Ōþinn kvaþ:

12. "Þegjat, vølva! |
þik vilk fregna,
unz alkunna, |
vilk enn vita:

Othin spake:

"Wise-woman, cease not! |
I seek from thee
All to know |
that I fain would ask:

hverjar'u meyjar |
 es at muni grāta
 ok ā himin verpa |
 halsa skautum?"

What maidens are they |
 who then shall weep,
 And toss to the sky |
 the yards of the sails?"

The manuscript marks the third line as the beginning of a stanza; something may have been lost. Lines 3–4 are thoroughly obscure. According to Bugge the maidens who are to weep for Baldr are the daughters of the sea-god Ægir, the waves, whose grief will be so tempestuous that they will toss the ships up to the very sky. "Yards of the sails" is a doubtfully accurate rendering; the two words, at any rate in later Norse nautical speech, meant respectively the "tack" and the "sheet" of the square sail.

Völva kvað:

13. "Estat Vegtamr, |
 sem ek hugða,
 heldr est Òþinn, |
 aldinn gautr!"

Òþinn kvað:

"Estat vqlva |
 nē vīs kona,
 heldr est þriggja |
 þursa mōþir!"

The Wise-Woman spake:

"Vegtam thou art not, |
 as erstwhile I thought;
 Othin thou art, |
 the enchanter old."

Othin spake:

"No wise-woman art thou, |
 nor wisdom hast;
 Of giants three |
 the mother art thou."

Possibly two separate stanzas. *Enchanter*: the meaning of the original word is most uncertain.

Völva kvað:

14. "Heim rīþ, Òþinn! |
 ok ves hrōþugr:
 svā komir manna |
 meirr aptr ā vit,

The Wise-Woman spake:

"Home ride, Othin, |
 be ever proud;
 For no one of men |
 shall seek me more

es lauss Loki |
līpr ōr bōndum
ok ī ragna røk |
rjūfendr koma.”

Till Loki wanders |
loose from his bonds,
And to the last strife |
the destroyers come.”

Concerning Loki's escape and his relation to the destruction of the gods, cf. [Voluspo, 35](#) and [51](#), and notes. While the wise-woman probably means only that she will never speak again till the end of the world, it has been suggested, and is certainly possible, that she intends to give Loki her counsel, thus revenging herself on Othin.

Rigsthula

The Song of Rig

Introductory Note

The *Rigsthula* is found in neither of the principal codices. The only manuscript containing it is the so-called *Codex Wormanius*, a manuscript of Snorri's *Prose Edda*. The poem appears on the last sheet of this manuscript, which unluckily is incomplete, and thus the end of the poem is lacking. In the *Codex Wormanius* itself the poem has no title, but a fragmentary parchment included with it calls the poem the *Rigsthula*. Some late paper manuscripts give it the title of *Rigsmol*.

The *Rigsthula* is essentially unlike anything else which editors have agreed to include in the so-called *Edda*. It is a definitely cultural poem, explaining, on a mythological basis, the origin of the different castes of early society: the thralls, the peasants, and the warriors. From the warriors, finally, springs one who is destined to become a king, and thus the whole poem is a song in praise of the royal estate. This fact in itself would suffice to indicate that the *Rigsthula* was not composed in Iceland, where for centuries kings were regarded with profound disapproval.

Not only does the *Rigsthula* praise royalty, but it has many of the earmarks of a poem composed in praise of a particular king. The manuscript breaks off at a most exasperating point, just as the connection between the mythical "Young Kon" (Konr ungr, konungr, "king"; but cf. stanza 44, note) and the monarch in question is about to be established. Owing to the character of the Norse settlements in Iceland, Ireland, and the western islands generally, search for a specific king leads back to either Norway or Denmark; despite the arguments advanced by Edzardi, Vigfusson, Powell, and others, it seems most improbable that such a poem should have been produced elsewhere than on the Continent, the region where Scandinavian royalty most flourished. Finnur Jonsson's claim for Norway, with Harald the Fair-Haired as the probable king in question, is much less impressive than Mogk's ingenious demonstration that the poem was in all probability composed in Denmark, in honor of either Gorm the Old or Harald Blue-Tooth. His proof is based chiefly on the evidence provided by stanza 49, and is summarized in the note to that stanza.

The poet, however, was certainly not a Dane, but probably a wandering Norse singer, who may have had a dozen homes, and who clearly had spent much time in some part of the western island world chiefly inhabited by Celts. The extent of Celtic influence on the Eddic poems in general is a matter of sharp dispute. Powell, for example, claims almost all the poems for the "Western Isles," and attributes nearly all their good qualities to Celtic

influence. Without here attempting to enter into the details of the argument, it may be said that the weight of authoritative opinion, while clearly recognizing the marks of Celtic influence in the poems, is against this view; contact between the roving Norsemen of Norway and Iceland and the Celts of Ireland and the “Western Isles,” and particularly the Orkneys, was so extensive as to make the presumption of an actual Celtic home for the poems seem quite unnecessary.

In the case of the *Rigsthula* the poet unquestionably had not only picked up bits of the Celtic speech (the name Rig itself is almost certainly of Celtic origin, and there are various other Celtic words employed), but also had caught something of the Celtic literary spirit. This explains the cultural nature of the poem, quite foreign to Norse poetry in general. On the other hand, the style as a whole is vigorously Norse, and thus the explanation that the poem was composed by an itinerant Norse poet who had lived for some time in the Celtic islands, and who was on a visit to the court of a Danish king, fits the ascertainable facts exceedingly well. As Christianity was introduced into Denmark around 960, the *Rigsthula* is not likely to have been composed much after that date, and probably belongs to the first half of the tenth century. Gorm the Old died about the year 935, and was succeeded by Harald Blue-Tooth, who died about 985.

The fourteenth (or late thirteenth) century annotator identifies Rig with Heimdall, but there is nothing in the poem itself, and very little anywhere else, to warrant this, and it seems likely that the poet had Othin, and not Heimdall, in mind, his purpose being to trace the origin of the royal estate to the chief of the gods. The evidence bearing on this identification is briefly summed up in the note on the introductory prose passage, but the question involves complex and baffling problems in mythology, and from very early times the status of Heimdall was unquestionably confusing to the Norse mind.

Svā segja menn ī fornum sǫgum, at
einhverr af āsum, sā er Heimdallr
hēt, fōr ferþar sinnar ok fram meþ
sjōvarströndu nǫkkurri, kom at ein-
um hūsabœ ok nefndiz Rīgr.

Eptir þeiri sǫgu er kvæþi þetta:

They tell in old stories that one of the
gods, whose name was Heimdall, went
on his way along a certain seashore,
and came to a dwelling, where he called
himself Rig.

According to these stories is the follow-
ing poem:

It would be interesting to know how much the annotator meant by the phrase *old stories*. Was he familiar with the tradition in forms other than that of the poem? If so, his introductory note was scanty, for, outside of identifying *Rig* as *Heimdall*, he provides no information not found in the poem. Probably he meant simply to refer to the poem itself as a relic of antiquity, and the identification of Rig as Heimdall may well have been an attempt at constructive criticism of his own. The note was presumably written somewhere about 1300, or even later, and there is no reason for crediting the annotator with any considerable knowledge of mythology. There is little to favor the identification of Rig with Heimdall, the watchman of the gods, beyond a few rather vague passages in the other poems. Thus

in *Voluspo*, 1, the Volva asks hearing “from Heimdall’s sons both high and low”; in *Grimnismol*, 13, there is a very doubtful line which may mean that Heimdall “o’er men holds sway, it is said,” and in “the Short Voluspo” (*Hyndluljóth*, 40) he is called “the kinsman of men.” On the other hand, everything in the *Rigsthula*, including the phrase “the aged and wise” in stanza 1, and the references to runes in stanzas 36, 44, and 46, fits Othin exceedingly well. It seems probable that the annotator was wrong, and that Rig is Othin, and not Heimdall. *Rig*: almost certainly based on the Old Irish word for “king,” “ri” or “rig.”

1.	Ār kvøþu ganga	Men say there went
	grōnar brautir	by ways so green
	øflgan ok aldinn	Of old the god,
	ōs kunnigan,	the aged and wise,
	ramman ok rōskvan	Mighty and strong
	Rīg stīganda,	did Rig go striding.

No gap is indicated, but editors have generally assumed one. Some editors, however, add line 1 of stanza 2 to stanza 1.

2.	Gekk meirr at þat	Forward he went
	miþrar brautar;	on the midmost way,
	kvam hann at hūsi,	He came to a dwelling,
	hurþ vas ā gætti;	a door on its posts;
	inn nam ganga,	In did he fare,
	eldr vas ā golfi,	on the floor was a fire,
	hjōn sōtu þar	Two hoary ones
	hōr at arni.	by the hearth there sat,
	Ai ok Edda	Ai and Edda,
	aldinfalda.	in olden dress.

Most editions make line 5 a part of the stanza, as here, but some indicate it as the sole remnant of one or more stanzas descriptive of Ai and Edda, just as Afi and Amma, Fathir and Mothir, are later described. *Ai and Edda*: Great-Grandfather and Great-Grandmother; the latter name was responsible for Jakob Grimm's famous guess at the meaning of the word "Edda" as applied to the whole collection (cf. [Introduction](#)).

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>3. Rīgr kunni þeim
 rǫþ at segja,
 meirr settisk hann
 miþra fletja,
 en ā hliþ hvāra
 hjōn salkynna.</p> | <p>Rig knew well
 wise words to speak,
 Soon in the midst
 of the room he sat,
 And on either side
 the others were.</p> |
|---|--|

A line may have been lost from this stanza.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>4. Þā tōk Edda
 økkvinn hleif,
 þungan ok þykkvan,
 þrunginn sōþum;
 bar meirr at þat
 miþra skutla,
 soþ vas ī bolla,
 setti ā bjōþ.
 [vas kalfr soþinn
 krāsa baztr.]</p> | <p>A loaf of bread
 did Edda bring,
 Heavy and thick
 and swollen with husks;
 Forth on the table
 she set the fare,
 And broth for the meal
 in a bowl there was.
 [Calf's flesh boiled
 was the best of the dainties.]</p> |
|---|--|

Line 5 has generally been rejected as spurious.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>5. Rīgr kunni þeim
 rǫþ at segja,</p> | <p>Rig knew well
 wise words to speak,</p> |
|---|--|

reis upp þáðan,	Thence did he rise,
rēzk at sofna;	made ready to sleep;
meirr lagþisk hann	Soon in the bed
míðrar rekkju,	himself did he lay,
en ā hlið hvāra	And on either side
hjóñ salkynna.	the others were.

The manuscript has lines 1–2 in inverse order, but marks the word “Ríg” as the beginning of a stanza.

6. Þar vas at þat	Thus was he there
þriar nætr saman,	for three nights long,
gekk meirr at þat	Then forward he went
míðrar brautar,	on the midmost way,
liðu meirr at þat	And so nine months
mōnuþr niu.	were soon passed by.

The manuscript does not indicate that these lines form a separate stanza, and as only one line and a fragment of another are left of stanza 7, the editions have grouped the lines in all sorts of ways, with, of course, various conjectures as to where lines may have been lost.

7. Jóð ol Edda,	A son bore Edda,
jōsu vatni,	with water they sprinkled him,
sveip hōrvi fljóð	With a cloth his hair
hōrundsvartan;	so black they covered;
hētu Þræll	Thræll they named him,
...	...

After line 1 the manuscript has only four words: “cloth,” “black,” “named,” and “Thræll.” No gap is anywhere indicated. Editors have pieced out the passage in various ways. [Water](#),

etc.: concerning the custom of sprinkling water on children, which long antedated the introduction of Christianity, cf. *Hovamol*, 159 and note. *Black*: dark hair, among the blond Scandinavians, was the mark of a foreigner, hence of a slave. *Thræll*: Thrall or Slave.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>8. Vas ā hōndum þar
 hrokkit skinn,
 kropnir knuar,
 . . .
 fingr digrir,
 fūlligt andlit,
 lūtr hryggr,
 langir hēlar.</p> | <p>The skin was wrinkled
 and rough on his hands,
 Knotted his knuckles,
 . . .
 Thick his fingers,
 and ugly his face,
 Twisted his back,
 and big his heels.</p> |
|--|--|

In the manuscript line 1 of stanza 9 stands before stanza 8, neither line being capitalized as the beginning of a stanza. I have followed Bugge's rearrangement. The manuscript indicates no gap in line 2, but nearly all editors have assumed one, Grundtvig supplying "and rough his nails."

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>9. Hann nam at vaxa
 ok vel dafna,
 nam meirr at þat
 megins of kosta,
 bast at binda,
 byrþar gørva,
 bar heim at þat
 hrīs gørstan dag.</p> | <p>He began to grow,
 and to gain in strength,
 Soon of his might
 good use he made;
 With bast he bound,
 and burdens carried,
 Home bore faggots
 the whole day long.</p> |
|--|---|

The manuscript marks line 2 as the beginning of a stanza.

- 10.** Þar kwam at garði | One came to their home, |
 gengilbeina, crooked her legs,
 aurr vas ā iljum, | Stained were her feet, |
 armr sölbrunnin, and sunburned her arms,
 niþrbjúgt es nef, | Flat was her nose; |
 nefndisk Þír. her name was Thir.

A line may well have dropped out, but the manuscript is too uncertain as to the stanza-divisions to make any guess safe. *Crooked*: the word in the original is obscure. *Stained*: literally, “water was on her soles.” *Thir*: “Serving-Woman.”

- 11.** Meirr settisk hōn | Soon in the midst |
 miþra fletja, of the room she sat,
 sat hjā henni | By her side there sat |
 sunr hūss, the son of the house;
 rōddu ok rýndu, | They whispered both, |
 rekkju gørþu and the bed made ready,
 Þræll ok Þír | Thræll and Thir, |
 þrungin dōgr. till the day was through.

- 12.** Børn ōlu þau, | Children they had, |
 bjuggu ok unþu; they lived and were happy,
 hykk at hēti | Fjosnir and Klur |
 Hreimr ok Fjōsnir, they were called, methinks,
 Klūrr ok Kleggi, | Hreim and Kleggi, |
 Kefsir, Fulnir, Kefsir, Fulnir,
 Drumbr, Digraldi, | Drumb, Digraldi, |
 Drōttr ok Hōsvir, Drott and Leggjaldi,

Lūtr, Leggjalði: |
 lögðu garða,
 akra tǫddu, |
 unnu at svīnum,
 geita gættu, |
 grǫfu torf.

Lut and Hosvir; |
 the house they cared for,
 Ground they dunged, |
 and swine they guarded,
 Goats they tended, |
 and turf they dug.

There is some confusion as to the arrangement of the lines and division into stanzas of 12 and 13. The names mean: *Fjosnir*, “Cattle-Man”; *Klur*, “The Coarse”; *Hreim*, “The Shouter”; *Kleggi*, “The Horse-Fly”; *Kefsir*, “Concubine-Keeper”; *Fulnir*, “The Stinking”; *Drumb*, “The Log”; *Digraldi*, “The Fat”; *Drott*, “The Sluggard”; *Leggjaldi*, “The Big-Legged”; *Lut*, “The Bent”; *Hosvir*, “The Grey.”

13. Dǫtr vǫru þær |
 Drumba ok Kumba,
 Ökkvinkalfa |
 ok Arinnefja,
 Ysja ok Ambǫtt, |
 Eikintjasna,
 Tǫtrughypja |
 ok Trǫnubeina:
 þá þan eru komnar |
 þræla ættir.

Daughters had they, |
 Drumba and Kumba,
 Ökkvinkalfa, |
 Arinnefla,
 Ysja and Ambott, |
 Eikintjasna,
 Totrughypja |
 and Tronubeina;
 And thence has risen |
 the race of thralls.

The names mean: *Drumba*, “The Log”; *Kumba*, “The Stumpy”; *Ökkvinkalfa*, “Fat-Legged”; *Arinnefla*, “Homely Nosed”; *Ysja*, “The Noisy”; *Ambott*, “The Servant”; *Eikintjasna*, “The Oaken Peg” (?); *Totrughypja*, “Clothed in Rags”; *Tronubeina*, “Crane-Legged.”

14. Gekk Rīgr at þat |
 rēttar brautir;

Forward went Rig, |
 his road was straight,

kvam hann at hǫllu,	To a hall he came,
hurð vas ā skípi;	and a door there hung;
inn nam ganga,	In did he fare,
eldr vas ā golfi:	on the floor was a fire:
Afi ok Amma	Afi and Amma
ǫttu hūs.	owned the house.

In the manuscript line 4 stands after line 4 of stanza 16, but several editors have rearranged the lines, as here. *Afi and Amma*: Grandfather and Grandmother.

15. Hjōn sōtu þar,	There sat the twain,
heldu ā sýslu:	and worked at their tasks:
maðr telgþi þar	The man hewed wood
meið til rifjar;	for the weaver's beam;
vas skegg skapat,	His beard was trimmed,
skor vas fyr enni,	o'er his brow a curl,
skyrtu þrōngva,	His clothes fitted close;
skokkr vas ā golfi.	in the corner a chest.

There is considerable confusion among the editors as to where this stanza begins and ends.

16. Sat þar kona,	The woman sat
sveigþi rokk,	and the distaff wielded,
breiddi faðm,	At the weaving with arms
bjō til vāþar;	outstretched she worked;
sveigr vas ā hofþi,	On her head was a band,
smokkr vas ā bringu,	on her breast a smock;

dūkr vas ā halsi, |
dvergar ā ǫxlum.

On her shoulders a kerchief |
with clasps there was.

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

17. Rīgr kunni þeim |
rǫþ at segja,
meirr settisk hann |
miþra fletja,
en ā hliþ hvāra |
hjōn salkynna.

Rig knew well |
wise words to speak,
Soon in the midst |
of the room he sat,
And on either side |
the others were.

The manuscript jumps from stanza 17, line 1, to stanza 19, line 2. Bugge points out that the copyist's eye was presumably led astray by the fact that 17, 1, and 19, 1, were identical. Lines 2–3 of 17 are supplied from stanzas 3 and 29.

18. Þā tōk Amma |
...
fram setti hōn |
fulla skutla,
vas kalfr soþinn |
krāsa baztr.

Then took Amma |
...
The vessels full |
with the fare she set,
Calf's flesh boiled |
was the best of the dainties.

I have followed Bugge's conjectural construction of the missing stanza, taking lines 2 and 3 from stanzas 31 and 4.

19. Rīgr kunni þeim |
rǫþ at segja,
reis frā borþi, |
rēzk at sofna,

Rig knew well |
wise words to speak,
He rose from the board, |
made ready to sleep;

meirr lagþisk hann |
 miþrar rekkju,
 en ā hliþ hvāra |
 hjōn salkynna.

Soon in the bed |
 himself did he lay,
 And on either side |
 the others were.

The manuscript marks line 2 as the beginning of a stanza.

20. Þar vas at þat |
 þriar nætr saman,
 gekk meirr at þat |
 miþrar brautar,
 liðu meirr at þat |
 mōnuþr niu.

Thus was he there |
 for three nights long,
 Then forward he went |
 on the midmost way,
 And so nine months |
 were soon passed by.

The manuscript omits line 2, supplied by analogy with stanza 6.

21. Jōþ ōl Amma, |
 jōsu vatni,
 kōlluþu Karl; |
 kona sveip ripti
 rauþan ok rjōþan, |
 riþuþu augu.

A son bore Amma, |
 with water they sprinkled him,
 Karl they named him; |
 in a cloth she wrapped him,
 He was ruddy of face, |
 and flashing his eyes.

Most editors assume a lacuna, after either line 2 or line 3. Sijmons assumes, on the analogy of stanza 8, that a complete stanza describing *Karl* (“Yeoman”) has been lost between stanzas 21 and 22.

22. Hann nam at vaxa |
 ok vel dafna,

He began to grow, |
 and to gain in strength,

øxn nam temja,	Oxen he ruled,
orþr at gørva,	and plows made ready,
hūs at timbra	Houses he built,
ok hløþur smīþa,	and barns he fashioned,
karta at gørva	Carts he made,
ok keyra plōg.	and the plow he managed.

No line indicated in the manuscript as beginning a stanza. *Cart*: the word in the original, “kartr,” is one of the clear signs of the Celtic influence noted in the introduction.

23. Heim ōku þā	Home did they bring
hanginluklu,	the bride for Karl,
geitakyrtlu,	In goatskins clad,
giptu Karli;	and keys she bore;
Snør heitir sū,	Snör was her name,
settisk und ripti,	’neath the veil she sat;
bjuggu hjōn,	A home they made ready,
bauga deildu,	and rings exchanged,
breiddu blæjur	The bed they decked,
ok bū gørþu.	and a dwelling made.

Bring: the word literally means “drove in a wagon” — a mark of the bride’s social status.
Snör: “Daughter-in-Law.” Bugge, followed by several editors, maintains that line 4 was wrongly interpolated here from a missing stanza describing the marriage of Kon.

24. Børn ōlu þau,	Sons they had,
bjuggu ok unþu;	they lived and were happy:
hēt Halr ok Drengr,	Hal and Dreng,
Høþr, Þegn ok Smiþr,	Holth, Thegn and Smith,

Breiþr, Bōndi, |
 Bundinskeggi,
 Bui ok Boddi, |
 Brattskeggr ok Seggr.

Breith and Bondi, |
 Bundinskeggi,
 Bui and Boddi, |
 Brattskegg and Segg.

No line indicated in the manuscript as beginning a stanza. The names mean: *Hal*, “Man”; *Dreng*, “The Strong”; *Holth*, “The Holder of Land”; *Thegn*, “Freeman”; *Smith*, “Craftsman”; *Breith*, “The Broad-Shouldered”; *Bondi*, “Yeoman”; *Bundinskeggi*, “With Beard Bound” (i.e., not allowed to hang unkempt); *Bui*, “Dwelling-Owner”; *Boddi*, “Farm-Holder”; *Brattskegg*, “With Beard Carried High”; *Segg*, “Man.”

25. Enn hētu svā |
 ōþrum nofnum:
 Snōt, Brūþr, Svanni, |
 Svarri, Sprakki,
 Fljōþ, Sprund ok Vif, |
 Feima, Ristill:
 þāþan eru komnar |
 karla ættir.

Daughters they had, |
 and their names are here:
 Snot, Bruth, Svanni, |
 Svarri, Sprakki,
 Fljoth, Sprund and Vif, |
 Feima, Ristil:
 And thence has risen |
 the yeomen’s race.

No line indicated in the manuscript as beginning a stanza. The names mean: *Snot*, “Worthy Woman”; *Bruth*, “Bride”; *Svanni*, “The Slender”; *Svarri*, “The Proud”; *Sprakki*, “The Fair”; *Fljoth*, “Woman” (?); *Sprund*, “The Proud”; *Vif*, “Wife”; *Feima*, “The Bashful”; *Ristil*, “The Graceful.”

26. Gekk Rīgr þāþan |
 rēttar brautir,
 kvam hann at sal, |
 suþr horfðu dyrr;
 vas hurþ hnigin, |
 hringr vas ī gætti,

Thence went Rig, |
 his road was straight,
 A hall he saw, |
 the doors faced south;
 The portal stood wide, |
 on the posts was a ring,

gekk inn at þat: |
golf vas straît.

Then in he fared; |
the floor was strewn.

Many editors make a stanza out of line 4 and lines 1–2 of the following stanza. *Strewn:* with fresh straw in preparation for a feast; cf. *Thrymskvitha*, 22.

27. Sōtu hjōn, |
squsk ī augu,
Faþir ok Mōþir, |
fingrum at leika;
sat hūs-gumi |
ok snōri streng,
alm of bendi, |
orvar skepti.

Within two gazed |
in each other's eyes,
Fathir and Mothir, |
and played with their fingers;
There sat the house-lord, |
wound strings for the bow,
Shafts he fashioned, |
and bows he shaped.

Fathir and Mothir: Father and Mother. Perhaps lines 3–4 should form a stanza with 28, 1–3.

28. En hūskona |
hugþi at or-mum,
strauk of ripti, |
sterti ermar,
keistr vas faldr, |
kinga ā bringu,
sīþar slōþur, |
serk blāfaan,
brūn bjartari, |
brjōst ljōsara,

The lady sat, |
at her arms she looked,
She smoothed the cloth, |
and fitted the sleeves;
Gay was her cap, |
on her breast were clasps,
Broad was her train, |
of blue was her gown,
Her brows were bright, |
her breast was shining,

hals hvítari |
hreinni mjöllu.

Whiter her neck |
than new-fallen snow.

Bugge thinks lines 5–6, like 23, 4, got in here from the lost stanzas describing Kon's bride and his marriage.

29. Rīg kunni þeim |
rōþ at segja,
meirr settisk hann |
mípra fletja,
en ā hliþ hvāra |
hjōn salkynna.

Rig knew well |
wise words to speak,
Soon in the midst |
of the room he sat,
And on either side |
the others were.

30. Þā tōk Mōþir |
merkþan dūk,
hvītan af hōrvi, |
hulþi bjōþ;
hōn tōk at þat |
hleifa þunna,
hvīta af hveiti, |
ok hulþi dūk.

Then Mothir brought |
a broidered cloth,
Of linen bright, |
and the board she covered;
And then she took |
the loaves so thin,
And laid them, white |
from the wheat, on the cloth.

31. Fram bar at þat |
fulla skutla
silfri varþa, |
setti ā bjōþ,
faīn fleski, |
fogla steikþa;

Then forth she brought |
the vessels full,
With silver covered, |
and set before them,
Meat all browned, |
and well-cooked birds;

vīn vas ī kōnnu,	In the pitcher was wine,
varþir kalkar,	of plate were the cups,
drukku ok dōmþu,	So drank they and talked
dagr vas ā sinnum.	till the day was gone.

The manuscript of lines 1–3 is obviously defective, as there are too many words for two lines, and not enough for the full three. The meaning, however, is clearly very much as indicated in the translation. Gering’s emendation, which I have followed, consists simply in shifting “set before them” from the first line to the second—where the manuscript has no verb,—and supplying the verb “brought” in line 1. The various editions contain all sorts of suggestions.

32. Rīgr kunni þeim	Rig knew well
rōþ at segja,	wise words to speak,
reis hann at þat,	Soon did he rise,
rekkju gōrþi;	made ready to sleep;
meirr lagþisk hann	So in the bed
mīþrar rekkju,	himself did he lay,
en ā hliþ hvāra	And on either side
hjóñ salkynna.	the others were.

The manuscript begins both line 1 and line 2 with a capital preceded by a period, which has led to all sorts of strange stanza-combinations and guesses at lost lines in the various editions. The confusion includes stanza 33, wherein no line is marked in the manuscript as beginning a stanza.

33. Þar vas at þat	Thus was he there
þriar nætr saman,	for three nights long,
gekk meirr at þat	Then forward he went
mīþrar brautar,	on the midmost way,
liþu meirr at þat	And so nine months
mōnuþr niu.	were soon passed by.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>34. Svein ōl Mōþir,
 silki vafþi,
 jōsu vatni,
 Jarl lētu heita;
 bleikt vas hār,
 bjartir vangar,
 ǫtul vǫru augu
 sem yrmlingi.</p> | <p>A son had Mothir,
 in silk they wrapped him,
 With water they sprinkled him,
 Jarl he was;
 Blond was his hair,
 and bright his cheeks,
 Grim as a snake's
 were his glowing eyes.</p> |
|---|---|

Jarl: “Nobly-Born.”

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>35. Upp ōx þar
 Jarl ā fletjum,
 lind nam skelfa,
 leggja strengi,
 alm at beygja,
 ǫrvar skepta,
 fleini fleygja,
 frökkur dýja,
 hestum rīþa,
 hundum verpa,
 sverþum bregþa,
 sund at fremja.</p> | <p>To grow in the house
 did Jarl begin,
 Shields he brandished,
 and bow-strings wound,
 Bows he shot,
 and shafts he fashioned,
 Arrows he loosened,
 and lances wielded,
 Horses he rode,
 and hounds unleashed,
 Swords he handled,
 and sounds he swam.</p> |
|--|--|

Various lines have been regarded as interpolations, 3 and 6 being most often thus rejected.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>36. Kvam þar ōr runni
 Rīgr gangandi,</p> | <p>Straight from the grove
 came striding Ríg,</p> |
|---|--|

Rígr gangandi, |
 rūnar kendi;
 sitt gaf heiti, |
 sun *kvazk* eiga,
 þann þaþ eignask |
 ōþalvøllu,
 ōþalvøllu, |
 aldnar bygþir.

Rig came striding, |
 and runes he taught him;
 By his name he called him, |
 as son he claimed him,
 And bade him hold |
 his heritage wide,
 His heritage wide, |
 the ancient homes.

Lines 1, 2, and 5 all begin with capitals preceded by periods, a fact which, taken in conjunction with the obviously defective state of the following stanza, has led to all sorts of conjectural emendations. The exact significance of Ríg's giving his own name to Jarl (cf. stanza 46), and thus recognizing him, potentially at least, as a king, depends on the conditions under which the poem was composed (cf. [Introductory Note](#)). The whole stanza, particularly the reference to the teaching of magic (runes), fits Othin far better than Heimdall.

37. ... |
 ...
 reiþ meirr þaþan |
 myrkvan við,
 hēlug fjøll, |
 unz at høllu kvam.

... |
 ...
 Forward he rode |
 through the forest dark,
 O'er the frosty crags, |
 till a hall he found.

Something — one or two lines, or a longer passage — has clearly been lost, describing the beginning of Jarl's journey. Yet many editors, relying on the manuscript punctuation, make 37 and 38 into a single stanza.

38. Skapt nam dýja, |
 skelfþi lind,
 hesti hleypþi |
 ok hjørví brā;

His spear he shook, |
 his shield he brandished,
 His horse he spurred, |
 with his sword he hewed;

vīg nam vekja, |
 vǫll nam rjōþa,
 val nam fella, |
 vā til landa.

Wars he raised, |
 and reddened the field,
 Warriors slew he, |
 and land he won.

39. Rēþ einn at þat |
 ātjān buum,
 auþi nam skipta, |
 ǫllum veita:
 meiþmar ok mǫsma, |
 mara svangrifja;
 hringum hreytti, |
 hjō sundr baug.

Eighteen halls |
 ere long did he hold,
 Wealth did he get, |
 and gave to all,
 Stones and jewels |
 and slim-flanked steeds,
 Rings he offered, |
 and arm-rings shared.

The manuscript marks both lines 1 and 2 as beginning stanzas.

40. Ōku ærir |
 ūrgar brautir,
 kvǫmu at hǫllu |
 þars Hersir bjō;
 mey ātti hann |
 mjōfingraþa,
 hvīta ok horska: |
 hētu Ernu.

His messengers went |
 by the ways so wet,
 And came to the hall |
 where Hersir dwelt;
 His daughter was fair |
 and slender-fingered,
 Erna the wise |
 the maiden was.

Hersir: “Lord”; the hersir was, in the early days before the establishment of a kingdom in Norway, the local chief, and hence the highest recognized authority. During and after the time of Harald the Fair-Haired the name lost something of its distinction, the hersir coming

to take rank below the jarl. *Erna*: “The Capable.”

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>41. Bōþu hennar
 ok heim ōku,
 giptu Jarli,
 gekk und līni;
 saman bjuggu þau
 ok sēr unþu,
 ættir jōku
 ok aldrs nutu.</p> | <p>Her hand they sought,
 and home they brought her,
 Wedded to Jarl
 the veil she wore;
 Together they dwelt,
 their joy was great,
 Children they had,
 and happy they lived.</p> |
| <p>42. Burr vas enn elzti,
 en Barn annat,
 Jōþ ok Aþal,
 Arfi, Mōgr,
 Nīþr ok Nīþjungr
 (nōmu leika)
 Sunr ok Sveinn
 (sund ok tafl);
 Kundr hēt einn,
 Konr vas enn yngsti.</p> | <p>Bur was the eldest,
 and Barn the next,
 Joth and Athal,
 Arfi, Mog,
 Nith and Svein,
 soon they began—
 Sun and Nithjung—
 to play and swim;
 Kund was one,
 and the youngest Kon.</p> |

The names mean: *Bur*, “Son”; *Barn*, “Child”; *Joth*, “Child”; *Athal*, “Offspring”; *Arfi*, “Heir”; *Mog*, “Son”; *Nith*, “Descendant”; *Svein*, “Boy”; *Sun*, “Son”; *Nithjung*, “Descend ant”; *Kund*, “Kinsman”; *Kon*, “Son” (of noble birth). Concerning the use made of this last name, see note on stanza 44. It is curious that there is no list of the daughters of Jarl and Erna, and accordingly Vigfusson inserts here the names listed in stanza 25. Grundtvig rearranges the lines of stanzas 42 and 43.

<p>43. Upp ǫxu þar Jarli bornir, hesta tǫmþu, hlīfar bendu, skeyti skōfu, skelfþu aska.</p>	<p>Soon grew up the sons of Jarl, Beasts they tamed, and bucklers rounded, Shafts they fashioned, and spears they shook.</p>
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<p>44. En Konr ungr kunni rúnar, æfinrúnar ok aldrúnar; meirr kunni hann mǫnnum bjarga, eggjar deyfa, ægi lægja.</p>	<p>But Kon the Young learned runes to use, Runes everlasting, the runes of life; Soon could he well the warriors shield, Dull the swordblade, and still the seas.</p>
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The manuscript indicates no line as beginning a stanza. *Kon the Young*: a remarkable bit of fanciful etymology; the phrase is “Konr ungr,” which could readily be contracted into “Konungr,” the regular word meaning “king.” The “kon” part is actually not far out, but the second syllable of “konungr” has nothing to do with “ungr” meaning “young.” *Runes*: a long list of just such magic charms, dulling swordblades, quenching flames, and so on, is given in *Hovamol*, 147–163.

<p>45. Klōk nam fogla, kyrra elda, sefa of svefja, sorgir lægja; </p>	<p>Bird-chatter learned he, flames could he lessen., Minds could quiet, and sorrows calm; </p>
--	--

afl ok eljun |
ātta manna.

The might and strength |
of twice four men.

The manuscript indicates no line as beginning a stanza. *Minds*: possibly “seas,” the word being doubtful. Most editors assume the gap as indicated.

46. Hann við Rīg Jarl |
rūnar deildi,
brøgbum beitti |
ok betr kunni;
þā øþlaþisk |
ok eiga gat
Rīgr at heita, |
rūnar kunna.

With Rig-Jarl soon |
the runes he shared,
More crafty he was, |
and greater his wisdom;
The right he sought, |
and soon he won it,
Rig to be called, |
and runes to know.

The manuscript indicates no line as beginning a stanza. *Rig-Jarl*: Kon’s father; cf. stanza 36.

47. Reiþ Konr ungr |
kjorr ok skōga,
kolfi fleygþi, |
kyrþi fogla;
þā kvaþ þat krāka, |
sat ā kvisti ein:
“hvat skalt, Konr ungr! |
kyrra fogla?

Young Kon rode forth |
through forest and grove,
Shafts let loose, |
and birds he lured;
There spake a crow |
on a bough that sat:
“Why lurest thou, Kon, |
the birds to come?

This stanza has often been combined with 48, either as a whole or in part. *Crow*: birds frequently play the part of mentor in Norse literature; cf., for example, *Helgakvitha Hund-*

ingsbana I, 5, and *Fafnismol*, 32.

48.	Heldr mættiþ ēr	'Twere better forth
	hestum rīþa	on thy steed to fare,

	ok her fella.	and the host to slay.

This fragment is not indicated as a separate stanza in the manuscript. Perhaps half a line has disappeared, or, as seems more likely, the gap includes two lines and a half. Sijmons actually constructs these lines, largely on the basis of stanzas 35 and 38, Bugge fills in the half-line lacuna as indicated above with “The sword to wield.”

49.	Ā Danr ok Danpr	The halls of Dan
	dýrar hallir,	and Danp are noble,
	øþra øþal	Greater their wealth
	an ēr hafíþ;	than thou bast gained;
	þeir kunnu vel	Good are they
	kjōli at rīþa,	at guiding the keel,
	egg at kenna,	Trying of weapons,
	undir rjūfa.”	and giving of wounds.”

Dan and Danp: These names are largely responsible for the theory that the *Rigsthula* was composed in Denmark. According to the Latin epitome of the *Skjöldungasaga* by Arngrimur Jonsson, “Rig (Rigus) was a man not the least among the great ones of his time. He married the daughter of a certain Danp, lord of Danpsted, whose name was Dana; and later, having won the royal title for his province, left as his heir his son by Dana, called Dan or Danum, all of whose subjects were called Danes.” This may or may not be conclusive, and it is a great pity that the manuscript breaks off abruptly at this stanza.

Hyndluljóth

The Poem of Hyndla

Introductory Note

The *Hyndluljóth* is found in neither of the great manuscripts of the *Poetic Edda*, but is included in the so-called *Flateyjarbók* (Book of the Flat Island), an enormous compilation made somewhere about 1400. The lateness of this manuscript would of itself be enough to cast a doubt upon the condition in which the poem has been preserved, and there can be no question that what we have of it is in very poor shape. It is, in fact, two separate poems, or parts of them, clumsily put together. The longer one, the *Poem of Hyndla* proper, is chiefly a collection of names, not strictly mythological but belonging to the semi-historical hero-sagas of Norse tradition. The wise-woman, Hyndla, being asked by Freyja to trace the ancestry of her favorite, Ottar, for the purpose of deciding a wager, gives a complex genealogy including many of the heroes who appear in the popular sagas handed down from days long before the Icelandic settlements. The poet was learned, but without enthusiasm; it is not likely that he composed the *Hyndluljóth* much before the twelfth century, though the material of which it is compounded must have been very much older. Although the genealogies are essentially continental, the poem seems rather like a product of the archæological period of Iceland.

Inserted bodily in the *Hyndluljóth* proper is a fragment of fifty-one lines, taken from a poem of which, by a curious chance, we know the name. Snorri quotes one stanza of it, calling it “the short *Voluspo*.” The fragment preserved gives, of course, no indication of the length of the original poem, but it shows that it was a late and very inferior imitation of the great *Voluspo*. Like the *Hyndluljóth* proper, it apparently comes from the twelfth century; but there is nothing whatever to indicate that the two poems were the work of the same man, or were ever connected in any way until some blundering copyist mixed them up. Certainly the connection did not exist in the middle of the thirteenth century, when Snorri quoted “the short *Voluspo*.”

Neither poem is of any great value, either as mythology or as poetry. The author of “the short *Voluspo*” seems, indeed, to have been more or less confused as to his facts; and both poets were too late to feel anything of the enthusiasm of the earlier school. The names of Hyndla’s heroes, of course, suggest an unlimited number of stories, but as most of these have no direct relation to the poems of the *Edda*, I have limited the notes to a mere record of who the persons mentioned were, and the saga-groups in which they appeared.

Freyja kvað:

1. “Vaki, mæðr meyja! |
 vaki, mīn vina!
 Hyndla systir, |
 es ī helli býr!
 nū’s røkkkr røkkra: |
 rīpa vit skulum
 til Valhallar, |
 til vēs heilags.

Freyja spake:

- “Maiden, awake! |
 wake thee, my friend,
 My sister Hyndla, |
 in thy hollow cave!
 Already comes darkness, |
 and ride must we
 To Valhall to seek |
 the sacred hall.

Freyja: The names of the speakers do not appear in the manuscripts. On Freyja cf. *Voluspō*, 21 and note; *Skirnismol*, introductory prose and note; *Lokasenna*, introductory prose and note. As stanzas 9–10 show, Ottar has made a wager of his entire inheritance with Angantyr regarding the relative loftiness of their ancestry, and by rich offerings (Hyndla hints at less commendable methods) has induced Freyja to assist him in establishing his genealogy. Freyja, having turned Ottar for purposes of disguise into a boar, calls on the giantess *Hyndla* (“She-Dog”) to aid her. Hyndla does not appear elsewhere in the poems.

2. Biðjum Heerföðr |
 ī hugum sitja;
 hann geldr ok gefr |
 goll verþungu:
 gaf Hermōði |
 hjalm ok brynju,
 en Sigmundi |
 sverþ at þiggja.

- The favor of Heerfather |
 seek we to find,
 To his followers gold |
 he gladly gives;
 To Hermoth gave he |
 helm and mail-coat,
 And to Sigmund he gave |
 a sword as gift.

Heerfather: Othin; cf. *Voluspō*, 30. *Hermoth:* mentioned in the *Prose Edda* as a son of Othin who is sent to Hel to ask for the return of the slain Baldr. *Sigmund:* according to the *Volsungasaga* Sigmund was the son of Volsung, and hence Othin’s great-great-grandson (note that Wagner eliminates all the intervening generations by the simple expedient of using Volsung’s name as one of Othin’s many appellations). Sigmund alone was able to draw from the tree the sword which a mysterious stranger (Othin, of course) had thrust

into it (compare the first act of Wagner's *Die Walküre*).

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>3. Gefr sigr <i>sumum</i>,
 en <i>sumum</i> aura,
 mælsku mǫrgum
 ok mannvit firum;
 byri gefr brǫgnum
 en brag skǫldum,
 gefr mannsemi
 mǫrgum rekki.</p> | <p>Triumph to some,
 and treasure to others,
 To many wisdom
 and skill in words,
 Fair winds to the sailor,
 to the singer his art,
 And a manly heart
 to many a hero.</p> |
|--|--|

Sijmons suggests that this stanza may be an interpolation.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>4. Þór munk blōta,
 þess munk biþja,
 at æ viþ þik
 einart lāti;
 ...
 ...
 þō's hǫnnum ōtitt
 viþ jǫtuns brūþir.</p> | <p>Thor shall I honor,
 and this shall I ask,
 That his favor true
 mayst thou ever find;
 ...
 ...
 Though little the brides
 of the giants he loves.</p> |
|---|--|

No lacuna after line 2 is indicated in the manuscript. Editors have attempted various experiments in rearranging this and the following stanza.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>5. Nū tak ulf þinn
 einn af stalli,
 lāt hann rinna
 meþ runa mīnum:</p> | <p>From the stall now
 one of thy wolves lead forth,
 And along with my boar
 shalt thou let him run;</p> |
|--|---|

seinn es góltr minn |
 goðveg troða,
 vilkak mar minn |
 mætan hlōþa.”

For slow my boar goes |
 on the road of the gods,
 And I would not weary |
 my worthy steed.”

Some editors, following Simrock, assign this whole stanza to Hyndla; others assign to her lines 3–4. Giving the entire stanza to Freyja makes better sense than any other arrangement, but is dependent on changing the manuscript’s “thy” in line 3 to “my”, as suggested by Bugge. The boar on which Freyja rides (“my worthy steed”) is, of course, Ottar.

Hyndla kvað:

6. “Flō est, Freyja! |
 es freistar mīn,
 vīsar augum |
 ā oss þanig,
 es hefr ver þinn |
 ī valsinni,
 Ōttar unga, |
 Innsteins bur.”

Hyndla spake:

“Falsely thou askest me, |
 Freyja, to go,
 For so in the glance |
 of thine eyes I see;
 On the way of the slain |
 thy lover goes with thee.
 Ottar the young, |
 the son of Instein.”

Hyndla detects Ottar, and accuses Freyja of having her lover with her. Unless Ottar is identical with Oth (cf. *Voluspo*, 25 and note), which seems most unlikely, there is no other reference to this love affair. *The way of the slain*: the road to Valhall.

Freyja kvað:

7. “Dulī est, Hyndla! |
 draums ætlak þēr,
 es kveþr ver minn |
 ī valsinni,

Freyja spake:

“Wild dreams, methinks, |
 are thine when thou sayest
 My lover is with me |
 on the way of the slain;

þars góltr gloar |
 gollinbursti,
 Hildisvīni, |
 es mer hagir gørþu
 dvergar tveir |
 Däinn ok Nabbi.

There shines the boar |
 with bristles of gold,
 Hildisvini, |
 he who was made
 By Dain and Nabbi, |
 the cunning dwarfs.

Various experiments have been made in condensing the stanza into four lines, or in combining it with stanza 8. *Hildisvini* (“Battle-Swine”): perhaps Freyja refers to the boar with golden bristles given, according to Snorri, to her brother Freyr by the dwarfs. *Dain*: a dwarf; cf. *Voluspo*, 11. *Nabbi*: a dwarf nowhere else mentioned.

8. Senn nu ör sǫplum |
 sīgask lǫtum
 auk of jǫfra |
 ættir dǫma;
 gumna þeira |
 es frā goðum kvǫmu
 ... |
 ...

Now let us down |
 from our saddles leap,
 And talk of the race |
 of the heroes twain;
 The men who were born |
 of the gods above,
 ... |
 ...

The first line is obviously corrupt in the manuscript, and has been variously emended. The general assumption is that in the interval between stanzas 7 and 8 Freyja and Hyndla have arrived at Valhall. No lacuna is indicated in the manuscript.

9. Þeir hafa veþjat |
 Vāla malmi,
 Öttarr ungi |
 ok Angantyr:

A wager have made |
 in the foreign metal
 Ottar the young |
 and Angantyr;

skylt's at veita, |
svāt skati enn ungi
föðurleifð hafi |
ept frændr sīna.

We must guard, for the hero |
young to have,
His father's wealth, |
the fruits of his race.

Foreign metal: gold. The word *valr*, meaning “foreign,” and akin to “Welsh,” is interesting in this connection, and some editors interpret it frankly as “Celtic,” i.e., Irish.

10. Horg mēr gørði |
of hlaðinn steinum
— nū es grjōt þat |
at gleri orþit—,
rauð ī nýju |
nauta blōði;
æ trūði Öttarr |
ā āsynjur.

For me a shrine |
of stones he made,—
And now to glass |
the rock has grown;—
Oft with the blood |
of beasts was it red;
In the goddesses ever |
did Ottar trust.

To glass: i.e., the constant fires on the altar have fused the stone into glass. Glass beads, etc., were of very early use, though the use of glass for windows probably did not begin in Iceland much before 1200.

11. Nū lāt forna |
niþja talða
ok upp bornar |
ættir manna:
hvat's Skjöldunga, |
hvat's Skilfinga,
hvat's Öþlinga, |
hvat's Ylfinga,

Tell to me now |
the ancient names,
And the races of all |
that were born of old:
Who are of the Skjoldungs, |
who of the Skilfings,
Who of the Othlings, |
who of the Ylfings,

hvat's hǫlþborit, |
 hvat's hersborit,
 mest manna val |
 und miþgarþi?"

Who are the free-born, |
 who are the high-born,
 The noblest of men |
 that in Mithgarth dwell?"

Possibly two stanzas, or perhaps one with interpolations. The manuscript omits the first half of line 4, here filled out from stanza 16, line 2. *Skjoldungs*: the descendants of Skjold, a mythical king who was Othin's son and the ancestor of the Danish kings; cf. *Snorri's Edda*, *Skaldskaparmál*, 43. *Skilfings*: mentioned by Snorri as descendants of King Skelfir, a mythical ruler in "the East." In *Grimnismol*, 54, the name Skilfing appears as one of Othin's many appellations. *Othlings*: Snorri derives this race from Authi, the son of Halfdan the Old (cf. stanza 14). *Ylfings*: some editors have changed this to "Ynglings," as in stanza 16, referring to the descendants of Yng or Yngvi, another son of Halfdan, but the reference may be to the same mythical family to which Helgi Hundingsbane belonged (cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 5).

Hyndla kvað:

12. "Þū est, Öttarr! |
 borinn Innsteini,
 en Innsteinn vas |
 Alfi gamla,
 Alfr vas Ulfi, |
 Ulfr Sæfara,
 en Sæfari |
 Svan enum rauða.

Hyndla spake:

"Thou art, Ottar, |
 the son of Instein,
 And Instein the son |
 of Alf the Old,
 Alf of Ulf, |
 Ulf of Sæfari,
 And Sæfari's father |
 was Svan the Red.

Instein: mentioned in the Halfssaga as one of the warriors of King Half of Horthaland (the so-called Halfsrekkar). The others mentioned in this stanza appear in one of the later mythical accounts of the settlement of Norway.

13. Mōþur āttir |
 menjum gōfga,

Thy mother, bright |
 with bracelets fair,

hykk at hēti |
 Hlēdīs gyþja;
 Frōþi vas faþir, |
 en † Friauf mōþir:
 ǫll þōtti ætt sū |
 meþ yfirmōnnum.

Hight, methinks, |
 the priestess Hledis;
 Frothi her father, |
 and Friauf her mother;—
 Her race of the mightiest |
 men must seem.

14. Āli vas āþr |
 ǫflgastr manna,
 Halfdanr fyrri |
 hāestr Skjoldunga;
 fræg vǫru folkvīg |
 þaus framr gørþi,
 hvǫrfluþu hans verk |
 meþ himins skautum.

Of old the noblest |
 of all was Ali,
 Before him Halfdan, |
 foremost of Skjoldungs;
 Famed were the battles |
 the hero fought,
 To the corners of heaven |
 his deeds were carried.

Stanzas 14–16 are clearly interpolated, as Friauf (stanza 13, line 3) is the daughter of Hildigun (stanza 17, line 1). *Halfdan* the Old, a mythical king of Denmark, called by Snorri “the most famous of all kings,” of whom it was foretold that “for three hundred years there should be no woman and no man in his line who was not of great repute.” After the slaying of Sigtrygg he married Almveig (or Alvig), daughter of King Eymund of Holmgarth (i.e., Russia), who bore him eighteen sons, nine at one birth. These nine were all slain, but the other nine were traditionally the ancestors of the most famous families in Northern hero lore.

15. Efldisk við Eymund, |
 ǫztan manna,
 en Sigtrygg slō |
 meþ svǫlum eggjum;
 ātti Almveigu, |
 ǫzta kvenna,

Strengthened by Eymund, |
 the strongest of men,
 Sigtrygg he slew |
 with the ice-cold sword;
 His bride was Almveig, |
 the best of women,

ōlu ok ǫttu |
āťjān sunu.

And eighteen boys |
did Almveig bear him.

16. Þaþan Skjǫldungar, |
þaþan Skilfingar,
þaþan Ǫþlingar, |
þaþan Ynglingar,
þaþan hǫlþborit, |
þaþan hersborit,
mest manna val |
und miþgarþi;
allt's þat ætt þīn, |
Ǫttarr heimski!

Hence come the Skjoldungs, |
hence the Skilfings,
Hence the Othlings, |
hence the Ynglings,
Hence come the free-born, |
hence the high-born,
The noblest of men |
that in Mithgarth dwell:
And all are thy kinsmen, |
Ottar, thou fool!

Compare stanza 11. All or part of this stanza may be interpolated.

17. Vas Hildiguþr |
hennar mōþir,
Svǫvu barn |
ok Sækonungs;
allt's þat ætt þīn, |
Ǫttarr heimski!
varþar at viti svā, |
vilt enn lengra?

Hildigun then |
her mother hight,
The daughter of Svava |
and Sækonung;
And all are thy kinsmen, |
Ottar, thou fool!
It is much to know,– |
wilt thou hear yet more?

Hildigun (or Hildiguth): with this the poem returns to Ottar's direct ancestry, Hildigun being Friauf's mother. *Line 4*: cf. the refrain-line in the *Voluspo* (stanzas 27, 29, etc.).

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>18. Dagr ātti þōru
 drengjamōþur,
 ōlusk ī ætt þar
 ōztir kappar:
 Frapmarr ok Gyrþr
 ok Frekar bāþir,
 Āmr ok Jofurmarr,
 Alfr enn gamli;
 varþar at viti svā,
 vilt enn lengra?</p> | <p>The mate of Dag
 was a mother of heroes,
 Thora, who bore him
 the bravest of fighters,
 Frathmar and Gyrth
 and the Frekis twain,
 Am and Jofurmar,
 Alf the Old;
 It is much to know,–
 wilt thou hear yet more?</p> |
|---|---|

Another interpolation, as Ketil (stanza 19, line 1) is the husband of Hildigun (stanza 17). *Dag*: one of Halfdan's sons, and ancestor of the Döglings. Line 5 may be a late addition.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>19. Ketill vas vinr þeirar,
 Klypps arfþegi,
 vas mōþurfapir
 mōþur þinnar;
 þar vas Frōþi
 fyrr an Kāri,
 en Hildi vas
 Hōalfr of getinn.</p> | <p>Her husband was Ketil,
 the heir of Klypp,
 He was of thy mother
 the mother's-father;
 Before the days
 of Kari was Frothi,
 And horn of Hild
 was Hoalf then.</p> |
|--|--|

Ketil: the semi-mythical Ketil Hortha-Kari, from whom various Icelandic families traced their descent. *Hoalf*: probably King Half of Horthaland, hero of the *Halfssaga*, and son of Hjorleif and Hild (cf. stanza 12, note).

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>20. Nanna vas næst þar
 Nōkkva dōttir,</p> | <p>Next was Nanna,
 daughter of Nokkvi,</p> |
|--|---|

vas mögr hennar	Thy father's kinsman
māgr þíns fǫður;	her son became;
fyrnd es sū mægþ,	Old is the line,
fram telk lengra:	and longer still,
allt's þat ætt þín,	And all are thy kinsmen,
Öttarr heimski!	Ottar, thou fool!

Nanna: the manuscript has “Manna.” Of Nanna and her father, Nokkvi, we know nothing, but apparently Nanna's son married a sister of Instein, Ottar's father.

21. Īsolfr ok Qsolfr	Isolf and Osof,
Qlmōþs synir	the sons of Olmoth,
ok Skūrhildar	Whose wife was Skurhild,
Skekkils dōttur,	the daughter of Skekkil,
skalt til telja	Count them among
skatna margra:	the heroes mighty,
allt's þat ætt þín,	And all are thy kinsmen,
Öttarr heimski!	Ottar, thou fool!

Olmoth: one of the sons of Ketil Hortha-Kari. *Line 4*: here, and generally hereafter when it appears in the poem, this refrain-line is abbreviated in the manuscript to the word “all.”

22. Gunnarr balkr,	Gunnar the Bulwark,
Grīmr <i>harþskafi</i> ,	Grim the Hardy,
jarnskjöldr Þōrir,	Thorir the Iron-shield,
Ulfr gīnandi;	Ulf the Gaper,
kunnak bāþa	Brodd and Hörvir
Brodd ok Hørvi,	both did I know;

vǫru þeir í hirþ |
Hrolfs ens gamla.

In the household they were |
of Hrolf the Old.

An isolated stanza, which some editors place after stanza 24, others combining lines 1–2 with the fragmentary stanza 23. In the manuscript lines 3–4 stand after stanza 24, where they fail to connect clearly with anything. *Hrolf the Old*: probably King Hrolf Gautreksson of Gautland, in the saga relating to whom (*Fornaldar sögur* III, 57 ff.) appear the names of Thorir the iron-shield and Grim Thorkelsson.

23. *Hervarþr, Hjørvarþr, |*
Hrani, Angantyr,
Bui ok Brāmi, |
Barri ok Reifnir,
Tindr ok Tyrfingr, |
tveir Haddingjar:
allt's þat ætt þīn, |
Öttarr heimski!

Hervarth, Hjørvarth, |
Hrani, Angantyr,
Bui and Brami, |
Barri and Reifnir,
Tind and Tyrfing, |
the Haddings twain,–
And all are thy kinsmen, |
Ottar, thou fool!

Stanzas 23 and 24 name the twelve Berserkers, the sons of Arngrim and Eyfura, the story of whom is told in the *Hervararsaga* and the *Orvar-Oddssaga*. Saxo Grammaticus tells of the battle between them and Hjalmar and Orvar-Odd. Line 1 does not appear in the manuscript, but is added from the list of names given in the sagas. The Berserkers were wild warriors, distinguished above all by the fits of frenzy to which they were subject in battle; during these fits they howled like wild beasts, foamed at the mouth, and gnawed the iron rims of their shields. At such times they were proof against steel or fire, but when the fever abated they were weak. The etymology of the word *berserk* is disputed; probably, however, it means “bear-shirt.”

24. *Þeir í Bolm austr |*
bornir vǫru
Arngrīms synir |
ok Eyfuru;

Eastward in Bolm |
were born of old
The sons of Arngrim |
and Eyfura;

brókun berserkja	With berserk-tumult
ból margskonar,	and baleful deed
of lönd ok of lög	Like fire o'er land
sem logi fōri:	and sea they fared,
allt's þat ætt þīn,	And all are thy kinsmen,
Öttarr heimski!	Ottar, thou fool!

The manuscript omits the first half of line 1, here supplied from the *Orvar-Oddssaga*. *Bolm*: probably the island of Bolmsö, in the Swedish province of Smaland. In the manuscript and in most editions stanza 24 is followed by lines 3–4 of stanza 22. Some editors reject line 5 as spurious.

25. Þeir vǫru gumnar	The sons of Jormunrek
goðum signaþir,	all of yore
allir bornir	To the gods in death
Jormunreki,	were as offerings given;
Sigurþar māgi,	He was kinsman of Sigurth, —
— hlýþ sǫgu minni! —	hear well what I say, —
folkum grims	The foe of hosts,
es Fāfni vā.	and Fafnir's slayer.

In the manuscript line 1 stands after line 4 of stanza 29. Probably a stanza enumerating Jormunrek's sons has been lost. Many editors combine lines 3–4 of stanza 22 and lines 2–4 of stanza 25 into one stanza. *Jormunrek*: the historical Ermanarich, king of the Goths, who died about 376. According to Norse tradition, in which Jormunrek played a large part, he slew his own sons (cf. *Guthrunarhvot* and *Hamthesmol*). In the saga Jormunrek married Sigurth's daughter, Svanhild. Stanzas 25–27 connect Ottar's descent with the whole Volsung-Sigurth-Jormunrek-Gjuki genealogy. The story of *Sigurth* is the basis for most of the heroic poems of the *Edda*, of the famous *Volsungasaga*, and, in Germany, of the *Nibelungenlied*. On his battle with the dragon *Fafnir* cf. *Fafnismol*.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>26. Sā vas vīsir
 frā Vǫlsungi
 ok Hjǫrdīs
 frā Hraupungi,
 en Eylimi
 frā Ǫþlingum:
 allt's þat ætt þīn,
 Öttarr heimski!</p> | <p>From Volsung's seed
 was the hero sprung,
 And Hjordis was born
 of Hrauthung's race,
 And Eylimi
 from the Othlings came,—
 And all are thy kinsmen,
 Ottar, thou fool!</p> |
|--|---|

Volsung: Sigurth's grandfather and Othin's great-grand son. *Hjordis*: daughter of King Eylimi, wife of Sigmund and mother of Sigurth. *Othlings*: cf. stanza 11.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>27. Gunnarr ok Hǫgni
 Gjūka arfar
 ok et sama Guþrūn,
 systir þeira:
 eigi vas Gotþormr
 Gjūka ættar,
 þō vas brōþir
 beggja þeira:
 allt's þat ætt þīn,
 Öttarr heimski!</p> | <p>Gunnar and Hogni,
 the heirs of Gjuki,
 And Guthrun as well,
 who their sister was;
 But Gotthorm was not
 of Gjuki's race,
 Although the brother
 of both he was:
 And all are thy kinsmen,
 Ottar, thou fool!</p> |
|---|--|

Gunnar, *Hogni*, and *Guthrun*: the three children of the Burgundian king *Gjuki* and his wife Grimhild (Kriemhild); Guthrun was Sigurth's wife. *Gotthorm*, the third brother, who killed Sigurth at Brynhild's behest, was Grimhild's son, and thus a step-son of Gjuki. These four play an important part in the heroic cycle of Eddic poems. Cf. *Gripisspo*, introductory note.

28. Haki vas Hveþnu	Of Hvethna's sons
hōti baztr sona,	was Haki the best,
en Hveþnu vas	And Hjorvarth the father
Hjorvarþr faþir	of Hvethna was;
...	...
...	...

In the manuscript and in many editions these two lines stand between stanzas 33 and 34. The change here made follows Bugge. The manuscript indicates no gap between stanzas 27 and 29. *Hvethna*: wife of King Halfdan of Denmark.

29. Haraldr hilditǫnn	Harald Battle-tooth
borinn Hrǫreki	of Auth was born,
slongvanbauga,	Hrörek the Ring-giver
sunr vas hann Auþar,	her husband was;
Auþr djūpūþga	Auth the Deep-minded
Īvars dōttir,	was Ivar's daughter,
en Rāþbarþr vas	But Rathbarth the father
Randvēs faþir:	of Randver was:
allt's þat ætt þīn,	And all are thy kinsmen,
Ottarr heimski!"	Ottar, thou fool!"

The manuscript and many editions include line 1 of stanza 25 after line 4 of stanza 29. The story of *Harald Battle-tooth* is told in detail by Saxo Grammaticus. Harald's father was *Hrörek*, king of Denmark; his mother was *Auth*, daughter of Ivar, king of Sweden. After Ivar had treacherously destroyed Hrörek, Auth fled with Harald to Russia, where she married King *Rathbarth*. Harald's warlike career in Norway, and his death on the Bravalla-field at the hands of his nephew, Sigurth Ring, son of *Randver* and grandson of Rathbarth and Auth, were favorite saga themes.

* * *

Voluspo en skamma

Fragment of “The Short Voluspo”

30. Vōru ellifu	Eleven in number
ǣsir talþir,	the gods were known,
Baldr es hnē	When Baldr o’er the hill
viþ banaþūfu;	of death was bowed;
þess lēzk Vāli	And this to avenge
verþr at hefna,	was Vali swift,
es sīns brōþur	When his brother’s slayer
slō handbana.	soon he slew.

At this point begins the fragmentary and interpolated “short *Voluspo*” identified by Snorri. The manuscript gives no indication of the break in the poem’s continuity. *Eleven*: there are various references to the “twelve” gods (including Baldr) Snorri (*Gylfaginning*, 20–33) lists the following twelve in addition to Othin: Thor, Baldr, Njorth, Freyr, Tyr, Bragi, Heimdall, Hoth, Vithar, Vali, Ull and Forseti; he adds Loki as of doubtful divinity. *Baldr* and *Vali*: cf. *Voluspo*, 32–33.

31. Vas Baldrs faþir	The father of Baldr
Burs arfþegi	was the heir of Bur,
...	...
...	...

The fragmentary stanzas 31–34 have been regrouped in various ways, and with many conjectures as to omissions, none of which are indicated in the manuscript. The order here is as in the manuscript, except that lines 1–2 of stanza 28 have been transposed from after line 2 of stanza 33. *Bur’s heir*: Othin; cf. *Voluspo*, 4.

32. Freyr ātti Gerþi,	Freyr’s wife was Gerth,
vas Gymis dōttir,	the daughter of Gymir,

jǫtna ættar |
ok Aurboðu:
þā vas Þjazi |
þeira frændi,
skautgjarn jǫtunn, |
vas Skapi dóttir.

Of the giants' brood, |
and Aurbotha bore her;
To these as well |
was Thjazi kin,
The dark-loving giant; |
his daughter was Skathi.

Freyr, Gerth, Gymir: cf. *Skirnismol*. *Aurbotha*: a giantess, mother of Gerth. *Thjazi* and *Skathi*: cf. *Lokasenna*, 49, and *Harbarthsljóth*, 19.

33. Mart segjum þér |
ok munum fleira;
vorumk at viti svā, |
vilt enn lengra?

Much have I told thee, |
and further will tell;
There is much that I know;– |
wilt thou hear yet more?

Cf. *Voluspo*, 44 and 27.

34. Heiþr ok Hrossþjófr |
Hrimnis kindar.
... |
...

Heith and Hrossthjof, |
the children of Hrimnir.
... |
...

Heith (“Witch”) and *Hrossthjof* (“Horse-thief”): the only other reference to the giant *Hrimnir* (*Skirnismol*, 28) makes no mention of his children.

35. Eru vǫlur allar |
frā Vīþolfi,
vitkar allir |
frā Vilmeiþi,

The sybils arose |
from Vitholf's race,
From Vilmeith all |
the seers are,

en seiþberendr |
frā Svarthofþa,
jotnar allir |
frā Ymi komnir.

And the workers of charms |
are Svarthofthi's children,
And from Ymir sprang |
the giants all.

This stanza is quoted by Snorri (*Gylfaginning*, 5). Of *Vitholf* ("Forest Wolf"), *Vilmeith* ("Wish-Treē") and *Svarthofthi* ("Black Head") nothing further is known. *Ymir*: cf. *Voluspo*, 3.

36. Mart segjum þēr |
ok munum fleira;
vorumk at viti svā, |
vilt enn lengra?

Much have I told thee, |
and further will tell;
There is much that I know;— |
wilt thou hear yet more?

37. Varþ einn borinn |
ī ārdaga
rammaukinn mjök |
ragna kindar;
niu bōru þann, |
naddgofgan mann,
jotna meyjar |
viþ jarþar þrom.

One there was born |
in the bygone days,
Of the race of the gods, |
and great was his might;
Nine giant women, |
at the world's edge,
Once bore the man |
so mighty in arms.

According to Snorri (*Gylfaginning*, 27) Heimdall was the son of Othin and of nine sisters. As Heimdall was the watch man of the gods, this has given rise to much "solar myth" discussion. The names of his nine giantess mothers are frequently said to denote attributes of the sea.

38. Hann Gjōlp of bar, |
hann Greip of bar,

Gjōlp there bore him, |
Greip there bore him,

bar hann Eistla |
ok Eyrgjafa,
hann bar Ulfrūn |
ok Angeyja,
Imþr ok Atla |
ok I::arnsaxa.

Eistla bore him, |
and Eyrgjafa,
Ulfrun bore him, |
and Angeyja,
Imth and Atla, |
and Jarnsaxa.

The names of Heimdall's mothers may be rendered "Yelper," "Griper," "Foamer," "Sand-Strewer," "She-Wolf," "Sorrow-Whelmer," "Dusk," "Fury," and "Iron-Sword."

39. Sā vas aukinn |
jarþar megni,
svalköldum sǣ |
ok sonardreyra.

Strong was he made |
with the strength of earth,
With the ice-cold sea, |
and the blood of swine.

It has been suggested that these lines were interpolated from *Guthrunarkvitha II, 22*. Some editors add the refrain of stanza 36. *Swine's blood*: to Heimdall's strength drawn from earth and sea was added that derived from sacrifice.

40. Varþ einn borinn |
qllum meiri,
sā vas aukinn |
jarþar megni;
þann kveþa stilli |
stōrūþgastan,
Sif sifjapan, |
sjotum gōrvqllum.

One there was born, |
the best of all,
And strong was he made |
with the strength of earth;
The proudest is called |
the kinsman of men
Of the rulers all |
throughout the world.

In the manuscript this stanza stands after stanza 44. Regarding Heimdall's kinship to the three great classes of men, cf. *Rigsthula*, introductory note, wherein the apparent confusion

of his attributes with those of Othin is discussed.

41. Mart segjum þēr ok munum fleira; vorumk at viti svā, vilt enn lengra?	Much have I told thee, and further will tell; There is much that I know;— wilt thou hear yet more?
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42. Ōl ulf Loki viþ Angrboþu, en Sleipni gat viþ Svathilfera; eitt þōtti skars allra feiknast, þat vas brōþur frā Býleists komit.	The wolf did Loki with Angrbotha win, And Sleipnir bore he to Svathilfari; The worst of marvels seemed the one That sprang from the brother of Byleist then.
---	---

Probably a lacuna before this stanza. Regarding the *wolf* Fenrir, born of *Loki* and the giantess *Angrbotha*, cf. *Voluspo*, 39 and note. *Sleipnir*: Othin's eight-legged horse, born of the stallion *Svathilfari* and of Loki in the guise of a mare (cf. *Grimnismol*, 44). *The worst*: doubtless referring to Mithgarthsorm, another child of Loki. *The brother of Byleist*: Loki; cf. *Voluspo*, 51.

43. Loki āt hjarta— lindi brendu fann halfsviþinn hugstein konu—; varþ Loptr kviþugr af konu illri:	A heart ate Loki,— in the embers it lay, And half-cooked found he the woman's heart;— With child from the woman Lopt soon was,
---	---

þápan's ā foldu |
flagþ hvert komit.

And thence among men |
came the monsters all.

Nothing further is known of the myth here referred to, wherein Loki (Lopt) eats the cooked heart of a woman and thus himself gives birth to a monster. The reference is not likely to be to the serpent, as, according to Snorri (*Gylfaginning*, 34), the wolf, the serpent, and Hel were all the children of Loki and Angrbotha.

44. Haf gengr hrīpum |
viþ himin sjalfan,
līþr lōnd yfir, |
en lopt bilar;
þápan koma snjōvar |
ok snarir vindar,
þā's ī rāþi, |
at *regin of* þrjōti.

The sea, storm-driven, |
seeks heaven itself,
O'er the earth it flows, |
the air grows sterile;
Then follow the snows |
and the furious winds,
For the gods are doomed, |
and the end is death.

Probably an omission, perhaps of considerable length, before this stanza. For the description of the destruction of the world, cf. *Voluspo*, 57.

45. Þā kōmr annarr |
enn mōtkari,
þō þorik eigi |
þann at nefna;
faīr sea nū |
fram *of* lengra,
an Ōþinn mun |
ulfi mōta.

Then comes another, |
a greater than all,
Though never I dare |
his name to speak;
Few are they now |
that farther can see
Than the moment when Othin |
shall meet the wolf.

Cf. *Voluspo*, 65, where the possible reference to Christianity is noted. With this stanza the fragmentary “short *Voluspo*” ends, and the dialogue between Freyja and Hyndla continues.

* * *

Freyja kvað:

46. “Ber minnisql |
mīnum gelti,
svāt qll muni |
orþ at tīna,
þessa rōþu, |
ā þriþja morni,
þās þeir Angantyr |
ættir rekja.”

Freyja spake:

“To my boar now bring |
the memory-beer,
So that all thy words, |
that well thou hast spoken,
The third morn hence |
he may hold in mind,
When their races Ottar |
and Angantyr tell.”

Freyja now admits the identity of her boar as Ottar, who with the help of the “memory-beer” is to recall the entire genealogy he has just heard, and thus win his wager with Angantyr.

Hyndla kvað:

47. “Snuþu braut hepan! |
sofa lystir mik,
fær fātt af mēr |
frīþra kosta:
hleypr, eþlvina! |
ūti ā nōttum,
sem meþ hōfrum |
Heiþrūn fari.

Hyndla spake:

“Hence shalt thou fare, |
for fain would I sleep,
From me thou gettest |
few favors good;
My noble one, out |
in the night thou leapest
As Heithrun goes |
the goats among.

Heithrun: the she-goat that stands by Valhall (cf. *Grimnismol*, 25), the name being here used simply of she-goats in general, in caustic comment on Freyja’s morals. Of these Loki

entertained a similar view; cf. *Lokasenna*, 30.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 48. Rannt at <i>ōþi</i>
ey þreyjandi:
skutusk þēr fleiri
und fyrirskyrta;
hleypr, eþlvina!
ūti ā nōttum,
sem meþ hōfrum
Heiþrūn fari.” | To Oth didst thou run,
who loved thee ever,
And many under
thy apron have crawled;
My noble one, out
in the night thou leapest,
As Heithrun goes
the goats among.” |
|--|---|

Oth: cf. stanza 6 and note, and *Voluspo*, 25 and note. Lines 3–4, abbreviated in the manuscript, are very likely repeated here by mistake.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <i>Freyja kvað</i> :
49. “Ek slæ eldi
of īviþju,
svāt eigi kōmsk
ōbrend heþan;” | <i>Freyja spake</i> :
“Around the giantess
flames shall I raise,
So that forth unburned
thou mayst not fare.” |
|--|---|

The manuscript repeats once again lines 3–4 of stanza 47 as the last two lines of this stanza. It seems probable that two lines have been lost, to the effect that Freyja will burn the giantess alive

If swiftly now | thou dost not seek,
And hither bring | the memory-beer.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <i>Hyndla kvað</i> :
50. “Hyr sēk brinna
en hauþr loga, | <i>Hyndla spake</i> :
“Flames I see burning,
the earth is on fire, |
|--|--|

verða flestir |
fjörlausn þola:
ber Öttari |
björ at hendi
eitrblandinn mjök, |
illu heilli!”

Freyja kvað:

51. “Orpheill þín skal |
øngu ráða,
þót, brūþr jötuns! |
bölvi heitir;
hann skal drekka |
dýrar veigar,
biðk Öttari |
öll goð duga.”

And each for his life |
the price must lose;
Bring then to Ottar |
the draught of beer,
Of venom full |
for an evil fate.”

Freyja spake:

“Thine evil words |
shall work no ill,
Though, giantess, bitter |
thy baleful threats;
A drink full fair |
shall Ottar find,
If of all the gods |
the favor I get.”

Svipdagsmol

The Ballad of Svipdag

Introductory Note

The two poems, *Grougaldr* (*Groa's Spell*) and *Fjolsvinnsmol* (*the Ballad of Fjolsvith*), which many editors have, very wisely, united under the single title of *Svipdagsmol*, are found only in paper manuscripts, none of them antedating the seventeenth century. Everything points to a relatively late origin for the poems: their extensive use of “kennings” or poetical circumlocutions, their romantic spirit, quite foreign to the character of the unquestionably older poems, the absence of any reference to them in the earlier documents, the frequent errors in mythology, and, finally, the fact that the poems appear to have been preserved in unusually good condition. Whether or not a connecting link of narrative verse joining the two parts has been lost is an open question; on the whole it seems likely that the story was sufficiently well known so that the reciter of the poem (or poems) merely filled in the gap with a brief prose summary in pretty much his own words. The general relationship between dialogue and narrative in the Eddic poems is discussed in the introductory note to the *Grimnismol*, in connection with the use of prose links.

The love story of Svipdag and Mengloth is not referred to elsewhere in the *Poetic Edda*, nor does Snorri mention it; however, Groa, who here appears as Svipdag's mother, is spoken of by Snorri as a wise woman, the wife of Orvandil, who helps Thor with her magic charms. On the other hand, the essence of the story, the hero's winning of a bride ringed about by flames, is strongly suggestive of parts of the Sigurth-Brynhild traditions. Whether or not it is to be regarded as a nature or solar myth depends entirely on one's view of the whole “solar myth” school of criticism, not so highly esteemed today as formerly; such an interpretation is certainly not necessary to explain what is, under any circumstances, a very charming romance told, in the main, with dramatic effectiveness.

In later years the story of Svipdag and Mengloth became popular throughout the North, and was made the subject of many Danish and Swedish as well as Norwegian ballads. These have greatly assisted in the reconstruction of the outlines of the narrative surrounding the dialogue poems here given.

I. Grougaldr

Groa's Spell

Svipdagr kvað:

1. “Vaki þū, Groa! |
vaki þū, gōþ kona!
vekk þik dauþra dura:
ef þat mant, |
at þinn mōg bæþir
til kumbldysjar koma.”

Svipdag spake:

“Wake thee, Groa! |
wake, mother good!
At the doors of the dead I call thee;
Thy son, bethink thee, |
thou badst to seek
Thy help at the hill of death.”

Svipdag (“Swift Day”): the names of the speakers are lacking in the manuscripts.

Grōa kvað:

2. “Hvat's nū ant |
mīnum einga syni,
hverju 'st bōlvi borinn:
es þū mōþur kallar |
þās til moldar es komin
ok ōr ljōþheimum lipin?”

Groa spake:

“What evil vexes |
mine only son,
What baleful fate hast thou found,
That thou callest thy mother, |
who lies in the mould,
And the world of the living has left?”

Svipdagr kvað:

3. “Ljōtu leikborþi |
skaut fyr mik en lævīsa kona
sūs faþmaþi minn fōþur:
þar baþ mik koma, |
es kvæmtki veit,
mōti Menglōþu.”

Svipdag spake:

“The woman false |
whom my father embraced
Has brought me a baleful game;
For she bade me go forth |
where none may fare,
And Mengloth the maid to seek.”

The woman: Svipdag's stepmother, who is responsible for his search for *Mengloth* ("Necklace-Glad"). This name has suggested that Mengloth is really Frigg, possessor of the famous Brisings' necklace, or else Freyja (cf. *Lokasenna*, 20, note).

Grōa kvað:

4. "Lōng es fōr, |
 langir'u farvegar,
 langir'u manna munir;
 ef þat verþr, |
 at þu þinn vilja biþr,
 ok skeikar þō *Skuldar* at skōpum." If the fates their favor will give."

Groa spake:

- "Long is the way, |
 long must thou wander,
 But long is love as well;
 Thou mayst find, perchance, |
 what thou fain wouldst have,
 If the fates their favor will give."

Svipdagr kvað:

5. "Galdra mer gal |
 þās gōþir'ū,
 bjarg þū, mōþir! megi:
 ā vegum allr |
 hykk at ek verþa muna,
 þykkjumk til ungr afi."

Svipdag spake:

- "Charms full good |
 then chant to me, mother,
 And seek thy son to guard;
 For death do I fear |
 on the way I shall fare,
 And in years am I young, methinks."

Grōa kvað:

6. "Þann gelk þēr fyrstan, |
 þann kveþa fjōlnýtan,
 þann gōl Rindr Rani:
 at of ǫxl skjōtir |
 þvīs þēr atalt þykkir;
 sjalfr leiþ sjalfan þik!

Groa spake:

- "Then first I will chant thee |
 the charm oft-tried,
 That Rani taught to Rind;
 From the shoulder whate'er |
 mislikes thee shake,
 For helper thyself shalt thou have.

For this catalogue of charms (stanzas 6–14) cf. the *Ljothatal* (*Hovamol*, 147–165). *Rani*

and *Rind*: the manuscripts have these words in inverse relation; I have followed Neckel's emendation. Rind was the giantess who became the mother of Vali, Othin's son, the one-night-old avenger of Baldr (cf. *Voluspo*, 33–34, and *Baldre Draumar*, 11 and note). Rani is presumably Othin, who, according to a skaldic poem, won Rind by magic.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>7. Þann gelk þēr annan,
 ef þū ārna skalt
 viljalauss ā vegum:
 Urþar lokur
 haldi þēr ǫllum megu,
 þās þu ā sinnum sēr!</p> | <p>Then next I will chant thee,
 if needs thou must travel,
 And wander a purposeless way:
 The bolts of Urth
 shall on every side
 Be thy guards on the road thou goest.</p> |
|---|---|

Urth: one of the three Norns, or Fates; Cf. *Voluspo*, 20.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>8. Þann gelk þer enn þriþja,
 ef þēr þjōþaar
 falla at fjǫrlukum:
 til heljar heþan
 snuisk Horn ok Ruþr,
 en þverri æ fyr þēr.</p> | <p>Then third I will chant thee,
 if threatening streams
 The danger of death shall bring:
 Yet to Hel shall turn
 both Horn and Ruth,
 And before thee the waters shall fail.</p> |
|--|--|

Horn and *Ruth*: these two rivers, here used merely to symbolize all dangerous streams, are not included in the catalogue of rivers given in *Grimnismol*, 27–29, for which reason some editors have changed the names to Hron and Hrith.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>9. Þann gelk þer enn fjōrþa,
 ef þik fiandr standa
 gǫrvir ā galgvegi:
 hugr þeim hverfi
 til handa þēr
 ok snuisk tl sätta sefi.</p> | <p>Then fourth I will chant thee,
 if come thy foes
 On the gallows-way against thee:
 Into thine hands
 shall their hearts be given,
 And peace shall the warriors wish.</p> |
|--|---|

10. Þann gelk þer enn fimta, ef þēr fjöturr verþr borinn at boglimum: <i>leysigaldr</i> lætk þer fyr legg of kveþinn, ok stökk þā lāss af limum, [en af fōtum fjöturr.]	Then fifth I will chant thee, if fetters perchance Shall bind thy bending limbs: O'er thy thighs do I chant a loosening-charm, And the lock is burst from the limbs, And the fetters fall from the feet.
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This stanza is a close parallel to *Hovamol*, 150, and the fifth line may well be an interpolation from line 4 of that stanza.

11. Þann gelk þer enn sētta, ef ā sjō kōmr meira an menn viti: <i>lopt</i> ok lōgr gangi þer ī lūþr saman ok lē þer æ friþdrjūgrar farar.	Then sixth I will chant thee, if storms on the sea Have might unknown to man: Yet never shall wind or wave do harm, And calm is the course of thy boat.
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12. Þann gelk þer enn sjaunda, ef þik sōkja kōmr frost ā fjalli hō: <i>hrævakulpi</i> megit þīnu holdi fara, ok <i>haldi</i> þēr līk at lipum.	Then seventh I chant thee, if frost shall seek To kill thee on lofty crags: The fatal cold shall not grip thy flesh, And whole thy body shall be.
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13. Þann gelk þer enn ātta, ef þik ūti nemr nōtt ā niflvegi:	Then eighth will I chant thee, if ever by night Thou shalt wander on murky ways:
---	--

at þvī mīþr megi |
þēr til meins gørva
kristin dauþ kona.

Yet never the curse |
of a Christian woman
From the dead shall do thee harm.

A dead Christian woman: this passage has distressed many editors, who have sought to emend the text so as to make it mean simply “a dead witch.” The fact seems to be, however, that this particular charm was composed at a time when Christians were regarded by all conservative pagans as emissaries of darkness. A dead woman’s curse would naturally be more potent, whether she was Christian or otherwise, than a living one’s. Presumably this charm is much older than the poem in which it here stands.

14. Þann gelk þer enn niunda, |
ef við enn naddgøfga
orþum skiptir jøtun:
māls ok mannvits |
sē þer ā munn ok hjarta
gnōga of gefit.

Then ninth will I chant thee, |
if needs thou must strive
With a warlike giant in words:
Thy heart good store |
of wit shall have,
And thy mouth of words full wise.

15. Før þīn nu æva |
þēr forap þykki
ok standit þer mein fyr munum!
ā jarþføstum steini |
stōþk innan dura,
meþan þēr galdra gōlk.

Now fare on the way |
where danger waits,
Let evils not lessen thy love!
I have stood at the door |
of the earth-fixed stones,
The while I chanted thee charms.

16. Mōþur orþ |
berþu, mōgr! heþan
ok lāt þer ī brjōsti bua!

Bear hence, my son, |
what thy mother hath said,
And let it live in thy breast;

íþgnōga heill |
skalt of aldr hafa,
mēþan mīn orþ of mant.”

Thine ever shall be the |
best of fortune,
So long as my words shall last.”

At this point Groa’s song ends, and Svipdag, thus fortified, goes to seek Mengloth. All the link that is needed between the poems is approximately this: “Then Svipdag searched long for Mengloth, and at last he came to a great house set all about with flames. And before the house there was a giant.”

II. Fjolsvinnsmol

The Lay of Fjolsvith

17. Ūtan garþa |
sā hann upp of koma
þursa þjōþar sjōt.

Svipdagr kvap:

“Hvat’s þat flagþa, |
es stendr fyr forgørþum
ok hvarflar umb hættan loga?”

Before the house |
he beheld one coming
To the home of the giants high.

Svipdag spake:

“What giant is here, |
in front of the house,
And around him fires are flaming?”

Most editors have here begun a new series of stanza numbers, but if the *Grougaldr* and the *Fjolsvinnsmol* are to be considered as a single poem, it seems more reasonable to continue the stanza numbers consecutively. Bugge thinks a stanza has been lost before 17, including Fjolsvith’s name, so that the “he” in line 1 might have something to refer to. However, just such a prose link as I have suggested in the note on stanza 16 would serve the purpose. Editors have suggested various rearrange merits in the lines of stanzas 17–19. The substance, however, is clear enough. The giant *Fjolsvith* (“Much-Wise”), the warder of the house in which Mengloth dwells, sees Svipdag coming and stops him with the customary threats. The assignment of the speeches in stanzas 17–20, in the absence of any indications in the manuscripts, is more or less guesswork.

Fjolsviþr kvaþ:

18. “Hvers þū leitar |
eþa hvers ā leitum est,
eþa hvat vilt, vinlauss! vita?
ūrgar brautir |
ārnaþu aptr heþan!
āttat hēr, verndarvanr! veru.”

Svipdagr kvaþ:

19. “Hvat’s þat flagþa, |
es stendr fyr forgarþi
ok býþrat līþondum lōþ?”

Fjolsviþr kvaþ:

- “Sōmþarorþa lauss |
hefr þū, seggr! of lifat,
ok haltu heim heþan!

20. Fjolsviþr ek heiti, |
en ek ā frōþan sefa,
þeygi emk mīns mildr matar:
innan garþa |
þū kōmr aldrigi,
ok drīf þu nū vargr at vegi!”

Fjolsvith spake:

- “What seekest thou here? |
for what is thy search?
What, friendless one, fain wouldst
thou know?
By the ways so wet |
must thou wander hence,
For, weakling, no home hast thou
here.”

Svipdag spake:

- “What giant is here, |
in front of the house,
To the wayfarer welcome denying?”

Fjolsvith spake:

- “Greeting full fair |
thou never shalt find,
So hence shalt thou get thee home.

- Fjolsvith am I, |
and wise am I found,
But miserly am I with meat;
Thou never shalt enter |
within the house,—
Go forth like a wolf on thy way!”

Svipdagr kvað:

21. “Augna gamans |
fýsir aptr flestan,
hvars getr svāst at sea:
garðar gloa |
þykkjumk of gollna sali,
hēr mundak øpli una.”

Svipdag spake:

“Few from the joy |
of their eyes will go forth,
When the sight of their loves they seek;
Full bright are the gates |
of the golden hall,
And a home shall I here enjoy.”

Fjolsviðr kvað:

22. “Seg mēr, hverjum |
estu, sveinn! of borinn
eða hverra’st manna mögr?”

Svipdagr kvað:

“Vindkaldr heitik, |
Vārkaldr hēt minn faðir,
þess vas Fjolkaldr faðir.

Fjolsviðh spake:

“Tell me now, fellow, |
what father thou hast,
And the kindred of whom thou camst.”

Svipdag spake:

“Vindkald am I, |
and Varkald’s son,
And Fjolkald his father was.

Vindkald (“Wind-Cold”), *Varkald* (“Cold of Early Spring”) and *Fjolkald* (“Much Cold”): Svipdag apparently seeks to persuade Fjolsviðh that he belongs to the frost giants.

23. Seg mer þat, Fjolsviðr! |
es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hverr hēr ræðr |
— ok ríki hefr —
eign ok auðsólum?”

Now answer me, Fjolsviðh, |
the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
Who is it that holds |
and has for his own
The rule of the hall so rich?”

Fjolsviþr kvaþ:

24. “Mengloþ of heitir, |
en hana mōþir of gat
viþ Svafþorins syni:
hōn hēr ræþr |
— ok rīki hefr —
eign ok auþsolum.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Mengloth is she, |
her mother bore her
To the son of Svafrthorin;
She is it that holds |
and has for her own
The rule of the hall so rich.”

Svafrthorin: who he was, or what his name means, or who his son was, are all unknown.

Svipdagr kvaþ:

25. “Seg mer þat, Fjolsviþr! |
es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvat sū grind heitir, |
es meþ goþum sǫt
menn et meira forað?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
What call they the gate? |
for among the gods
Ne’er saw man so grim a sight.”

Fjolsviþr kvaþ:

26. “Þrymgjöll hōn heitir, |
en hana þrīr gǫrþu
Sōlblinda synir;
fjǫturr fastr |
verþr viþ faranda hverjan,
es hana hefr frā hliþi.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Thrymgjol they call it; |
’twas made by the three,
The sons of Solblindi;
And fast as a fether |
the farer it holds,
Whoever shall lift the latch.”

Thrymgjol (“Loud-Clanging”): this gate, like the gate of the dead, shuts so fast as to trap those who attempt to use it (cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 68 and note). It was made by the dwarfs, sons of *Solblindi* (“Sun-Blinded”), the traditional crafts men, who could not endure

the light of day.

Svipdagr kvað:

27. “Seg mer þat, Fjolsviðr! |
 es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvat sá garðr heitir, |
 es með goðum sǫut
menn et meira forað?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
 the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
What call they the house? |
 for no man beheld
'Mongst the gods so grim a sight.”

Fjolsviðr kvað:

28. “Gastropnir heitir, |
 en ek hann gǫrvan hefk
ór Leirbrimis limum;
svá hefk studdan, |
 at hann standa mun
æ meðan ǫld lifir.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Gastropnir is it, |
 of old I made it
From the limbs of Leirbrimir;
I braced it so strongly |
 that fast it shall stand
So long as the world shall last.”

Gastropnir: “Guest-Crusher.” *Leirbrimir’s* (“Clay-Giant’s”) *limbs*: a poetic circumlocution for “clay”; cf. the description of the making of earth from the body of the giant Ymir, *Vafthruthnismol*, 21.

Svipdagr kvað:

29. “Seg mér þat, Fjolsviðr! |
 es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvat þat barr heitir, |
 es breiðask sēk
of lönd ǫll limar?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
 the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
What call they the tree |
 that casts abroad
Its limbs o’er every land?”

Fjolsviþr kvað:

30. “Mimameiþr hann heitir, |
en þat mangi veit,
hvers hann af rötum rinnr;
viþ þat hann fellr, |
es fæstan varir:
fellir hann eldr nē jarn.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Mimameith its name, |
and no man knows
What root beneath it runs;
And few can guess |
what shall fell the tree,
For fire nor iron shall fell it.”

Mimameith (“Mimir’s Tree”): the ash Yggdrasil, that overshadows the whole world. The well of Mimir was situated at its base; Cf. *Voluspo*, 27–29.

Svipdagr kvað:

31. “Seg mēr þat, Fjolsviþr! |
es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvat af moði verþr |
þess ens mæra viþar,
es hann fellir eldr nē jarn?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
What grows from the seed |
of the tree so great,
That fire nor iron shall fell?”

Fjolsviþr kvað:

32. “Ūt af hans aldni |
skal ā eld bera
fyr kvellisjūkar konur:
ūtar hverfa |
þats es innar skal,
sās hann meþ mōnnum
mjōtuþr.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Women, sick |
with child, shall seek
Its fruit to the flames to bear;
Then out shall come |
what within was hid,
And so is it mighty with men.”

Gering suggests that two stanzas have been lost between stanzas 31 and 32, but the giant’s

answer fits the question quite well enough. The fruit of Yggdrasil, when cooked, is here assumed to have the power of assuring safe childbirth.

Svipdagr kvað:

33. “Seg mer þat, Fjolsviðr! |
 es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvat sá hani heitir, |
 es sitr í enum hōva viði,
allr við goll gloir?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
 the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
What cock is he |
 on the highest bough,
That glitters all with gold?”

Fjolsviðr kvað:

34. “Viðofnir heitir, |
 en hann stendr veðrglasi
á meiðs kvistum Mima:
einum ekka |
 þryngr hann øröfsaman
Surt ok Sinmora.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Vithofnir his name, |
 and now he shines
Like lightning on Mimameith’s limbs;
And great is the trouble |
 with which he grieves
Both Surt and Sinmora.”

Vithofnir (“Tree-Snake”): apparently identical with either the cock Gollinkambi (cf. *Voluspo*, 43) or Fjalar (cf. *Voluspo*, 42), the former of which wakes the gods to battle, and the latter the giants. *Surt*: the giant mentioned in *Voluspo*, 52, as ruler of the fire-world; here used to represent the giants in general, who are constantly in terror of the cock’s eternal watchfulness. *Sinmora*: presumably Surt’s wife, the giantess who possesses the weapon by which alone the cock Vithofnir may be slain.

Svipdagr kvað:

35. “Seg mér þat, Fjolsviðr! |
 es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
 the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:

hvat þeir garmar heita, |
es gǫrþum fyrir
lyndi lymsku rata?”

What call they the hounds, |
that before the house
So fierce and angry are?”

The last two lines have been variously emended.

Fjolsviþr kvað:

36. “Gífr heitir annarr, |
en Geri annarr,
ef þū vill þat vita:
verþir’u oflgir, |
en þeir varða,
unz of rjúfask regin.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Gif call they one, |
and Geri the other,
If now the truth thou wouldst know;
Great they are, |
and their might will grow,
Till the gods to death are doomed.”

Gif and *Geri*: both names signify “Greedy.” The first part of line 3 is conjectural; the manuscripts indicate the word “eleven,” which clearly fails to make sense.

Svipdagr kvað:

37. “Seg mér þat, Fjolsviþr! |
es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvārt sē manna nekkvat |
þats megi inn koma,
meðan sōkndjarfir sofa?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
May no man hope |
the house to enter,
While the hungry hounds are
sleeping?”

Fjolsviþr kvað:

38. “Missvefni mikit |
vas þeim mjök of lagit,

Fjolsvith spake:

“Together they sleep not, |
for so was it fixed

sīþans þeim vas varzla vituþ:
annarr of nætr sefr, |
en annarr of daga,
ok kǫmsk þā vǣtr, ef kwam.”

When the guard to them was given;
One sleeps by night, |
the next by day,
So no man may enter ever.”

Svipdagr kvaþ:

39. “Seg mēr þat, Fjolsviþr! |
es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvárt sē matar nekkvat |
þats þeim menn gefi,
ok hlaupi inn, meþan eta?”

Svipdag spake:

- “Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
Is there no meat |
that men may give them,
And leap within while they eat?”

Fjolsviþr kvaþ:

40. “Vængbrāþir tvær |
liggja ī Viþofnis liþum,
ef þū vill þat vita:
þat eitt’s svā matar, |
at þeim menn of gefi,
ok hlaupi inn, meþan eta.”

Fjolsvith spake:

- “Two wing-joints there be |
in Vithofnir’s body,
If now the truth thou wouldst know;
That alone is the meat |
that men may give them,
And leap within while they eat.”

Svipdagr kvaþ:

41. “Seg met þat, Fjolsviþr! |
es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvárt sē vǫpna nekkvat, |
þats knegi Viþofnir fyrir

Svipdag spake:

- “Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
What weapon can send |
Vithofnir to seek

hnīga ā Heljar sjöt?”

The house of Hel below?”

Fjolsviþr kvaþ:

42. “Lævateinn heitir, |
es gørþi Loptr rūnum
fyr nāgrindr neþan;
ī seigjarns kerī |
liggr hjā Sinmōru,
ok halda njarþlāsar niu.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Lævatein is there, |
that Lopt with runes
Once made by the doors of death;
In Lægjarn’s chest |
by Sinmora lies it,
And nine locks fasten it firm.”

Lævetein (“Wounding Wand”): the manuscripts differ as to the form of this name. The suggestion that the reference is to the mistletoe with which Baldr was killed seems hardly reasonable. *Lopt*: Loki. *Lægjarn* (“Lover of Ill”): Loki; cf. *Voluspo*, 35, where the term appears as an adjective applied to Loki. This is Falk’s emendation for the manuscripts’ “Sægjarn,” meaning “Sea Lover.” *Sinmora*: cf. stanza 34.

Svipdagr kvaþ:

43. “Seg mer þat, Fjolsviþr! |
es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvārt aptr kōmr |
sās eptir ferr
ok vill þann tein taka?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
May a man come thence, |
who thither goes,
And tries the sword to take?”

Fjolsviþr kvaþ:

44. “Aptr mun koma |
sās eptir ferr
ok vill þann tein taka,

Fjolsvith spake:

“Thence may he come |
who thither goes,
And tries the sword to take,

ef þat fōrir, |
sem faïr eigu,
eiri aurglasis.”

If with him he carries |
what few can win,
To give to the goddess of gold.”

Goddess of gold: poetic circumlocution for “woman,” here meaning Sinmora.

Svipdagr kvað:

45. “Seg mer þat, Fjolsviþr! |
es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvārt sē mæta nekkvat, |
þats menn hafi,
ok verþr þvī en fōlva gýgr
fegin?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
What treasure is there |
that men may take
To rejoice the giantess pale?”

Fjolsviþr kvað:

46. “Ljōsan lea |
skaltu ī lūþri bera
þanns liggr ī Viþofnis vōlum,
Sinmōru at selja, |
āþr hōn sōm telisk
vāpn til vīgs at lea.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“The sickle bright |
in thy wallet bear,
Mid Vithofnir’s feathers found;
To Sinmora give it, |
and then shall she grant
That the weapon by thee be won.”

Sickle: i.e., tail feather. With this the circle of impossibilities is completed. To get past the dogs, they must be fed with the wing-joints of the cock Vithofnir; the cock can be killed only with the sword in Sinmora’s possession, and Sinmora will give up the sword only in return for the tail feather of the cock.

Svipdagr kvað:

47. “Seg mer þat, Fjolsviðr! |
 es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvat sá salr heitir, |
 es slunginn es
vísun vafrloga?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
 the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
What call they the hall, |
 encompassed here
With flickering magic flames?”

Fjolsviðr kvað:

48. “Lýr hann heitir, |
 en hann lengi mun
á brodds oddi bifask;
auþranns þess |
 munu of aldr hafa
frétt eina firar.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Lyr is it called, |
 and long it shall
On the tip of a spear-point tremble;
Of the noble house |
 mankind has heard,
But more has it never known.”

Lyr (“Heat-Holding”): just what the spear-point reference means is not altogether clear. Presumably it refers to the way in which the glowing brightness of the lofty hall makes it seem to quiver and turn in the air, but the tradition, never baffled by physical laws, may have actually balanced the whole building on a single point to add to the difficulties of entrance.

Svipdagr kvað:

49. “Seg mer þat, Fjolsviðr! |
 es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hverr þat gørfi, |
 es fyr garþ sāk
innan āsmaga?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
 the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
What one of the gods |
 has made so great
The hall I behold within?”

Fjolsviþr kvaþ:

50. “Uni ok Iri, |
Jari ok Bari,
Varr ok Vegdrasil,
Dōri ok Ōri, |
Dellingr, at vas þar
līpskjalfir at Loki.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Uni and Iri, |
Bari and Jari,
Var and Vegdrasil,
Dori and Ori, |
Delling, and there
Was Loki, the fear of the folk.”

Loki, the one god named, was the builder of the hall, with the aid of the nine dwarfs. *Jari*, *Dori*, and *Ori* appear in the *Voluspo* catalogue of the dwarfs (stanzas 13 and 15); *Delling* appears in *Hovamol*, 161, and *Vafthruthnismol*, 25, in the latter case, however, the name quite possibly referring to someone else. The other dwarfs’ names do not appear elsewhere. The manuscripts differ as to the forms of many of these names.

Svipdagr kvaþ:

51. “Seg mer þat, Fjolsviþr! |
es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvat þat bjarg heitir, |
es ek sē brūþi ā
þjōþmæra þruma?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
What call they the mountain |
on which the maid
Is lying so lovely to see?”

Fjolsviþr kvaþ:

52. “Lyfjaberg heitir, |
en þat hefr lengi verit
sjūkum ok sōrum gaman:
heil verþr hver, |
þōt hafi † ārs sōtt,
ef þat klīfr, kona.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Lyfjaberg is it, |
and long shall it be
A joy to the sick and the sore;
For well shall grow |
each woman who climbs it,
Though sick full long she has lain.”

Lyfjaberg (“Hill of Healing”): the manuscripts vary as to this name; I have followed Bugge’s suggestion. This stanza implies that Mengloth is a goddess of healing, and hence, perhaps, an hypostasis of Frigg, as already intimated by her name (cf. stanza 3, note). In stanza 54 Eir appears as one of Mengloth’s handmaidens, and Eir, according to Snorri (*Gylfaginning*, 35) is herself the Norse Hygeia. Compare this stanza with stanza 32.

Svipdagr kvap:

53. “Seg mer þat, Fjolsviþr! |
 es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvat þær meyjar heita, |
 es fyr Menglaþar knëum
sitja sáttar saman?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
 the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
What maidens are they |
 that at Mengloth’s knees
Are sitting so gladly together?”

Fjolsviþr kvap:

54. “Hlíf heitir ein, |
 önnur Hlífþrasa,
þriþja Þjóþvara,
Björt ok Bleik, |
 Blīþ ok Frīþ,
Eir ok Aurböþa.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Hlif is one named, |
 Hlifþrasa another,
Thjothvara call they the third;
Bjort and Bleik, |
 Blith and Frith,
Eir and Aurbotha.”

The manuscripts and editions show many variations in these names. They may be approximately rendered thus: Helper, Help-Breather, Folk-Guardian, Shining, White, Blithe, Peaceful, Kindly (?), and Gold-Giver.

Svipdagr kvap:

55. “Seg mer þat, Fjolsviþr! |
 es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
 the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:

hvārt þær bjarga |
þeims blōta þær,
ef gōrvask þarfar þess?”

Aid bring they to all |
who offerings give,
If need be found therefor?”

One of the manuscripts omits stanzas 55 and 56.

Fjolsviþr kvap:

56. “Bjarga svinnar, |
hvars menn blōta þær
ā stallhelgum staþ:
ey svā hōtt forap |
kōmr at hōlþa sunum,
hverjan ōr nauþum nema.”

Fjolsvith spake:

“Soon aid they all |
who offerings give
On the holy altars high;
And if danger they see |
for the sons of men,
Then each from ill do they guard.”

The first line is based on a conjectural emendation.

Svipdagr kvap:

57. “Seg mer þat, Fjolsviþr! |
es ek þik fregna mun
auk ek vilja vita:
hvārt sē manna nekkvat, |
þats knegi ā Menglaþar
svōsum armi sofa?”

Svipdag spake:

“Now answer me, Fjolsvith, |
the question I ask,
For now the truth would I know:
Lives there the man |
who in Mengloth’s arms
So fair may seek to sleep?”

Fjolsviþr kvap:

58. “Vætr’s þat manna, |
es knegi ā Menglaþar
svōsum armi sofa,

Fjolsvith spake:

“No man there is |
who in Mengloth’s arms
So fair may seek to sleep,

nema Svipdagr einn, |
hōnum vas en sōlbjarta
brūþr at kvōn of kveþin.”

Svipdagr kvaþ:

59. “Hritt ā hurþir, |
lāttu hliþ rūm!
hēr mātþ Svipdag sea;
þō vita far, |
ef vilja muni
Menglōþ mitt gaman.”

Fjolsviþr kvaþ:

60. “Heyrþu, Menglōþ! |
hēr es maþr kominn,
gakk ā gest sea!
hundar fagna, |
hūs hefr upp lokizk:
hykk at Svipdagr sei.”

Menglōþ kvaþ:

61. “Horskir hrafnar |
skulu þer ā hōm galga
slīta sjōnir ōr,
ef þat lýgr, |
at hēr sē langt kominn
mōgr til minna sala.

Save Svipdag alone, |
for the sun-bright maid
Is destined his bride to be.”

Svipdag spake:

- “Fling back the gates! |
make the gateway wide!
Here mayst thou Svipdag see!
Hence get thee to find |
if gladness soon
Mengloth to me will give.”

Fjolsvith spake:

- “Hearken, Mengloth, |
a man is come;
Go thou the guest to see!
The hounds are fawning, |
the house bursts open,—
Svipdag, methinks, is there.”

Mengloth spake:

- “On the gallows high |
shall hungry ravens
Soon thine eyes pluck out,
If thou liest in saying |
that here at last
The hero is come to my hall.

62. Hvaðan þū fōrt, hvaðan þū fōr gōrþir, hvē þik hētu hiu? at ætt ok nafni skalk jartegn vita, ef ek vas þer at kvōn of kveþin.”	Whence camest thou hither? how camest thou here? What name do thy kinsmen call thee? Thy race and thy name as a sign must I know, That thy bride I am destined to be.”
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Svipdagr kvað:

63. “Svipdagr heitik, Sōlbjartr hēt faþir, þaþan vrōkumk vindkalda vegu; Urþar orþi viþr engi maþr, þōt sē viþ lōst lagit.”	<i>Svipdag spake:</i> “Svipdag am I, and Solbjart’s son; Thence came I by wind-cold ways; With the words of Urth shall no man war, Though unearned her gifts be given.”
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Solbjart (“Sun-Bright”): not elsewhere mentioned. *The words of Urth*: i.e., the decrees of fate; cf. stanza 7.

Mengloþ kvað:

64. “Vel þū nū kominn! hefk minn vilja beþit, fylgja skal kveþju koss; forkunnar sýn mun flestan glaða, es hefr viþ annan ōst.	<i>Mengloth spake:</i> “Welcome thou art, for long have I waited; The welcoming kiss shalt thou win! For two who love is the longed-for meeting The greatest gladness of all.
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65. Lengi satk Lyfjabergi ā,	Long have I sat on Lyfjaberg here,
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beiþk þín dōgr ok daga:
nū þat varþ |
 es ek vætta lengi,
at kvamt, mögr! til minna sala.

Awaiting thee day by day;
And now I have |
 what I ever hoped,
For here thou art come to my hall.

Lyfjaberg: cf. stanza 52 and note.

66. Þrār hafþar |
 es ek hef til þíns gamans,
en þū til mīns munar;
nū's þat satt, |
 es vit slīta skulum
ævi ok aldri saman."

Alike we yearned; |
 I longed for thee,
And thou for my love hast longed;
But now henceforth |
 together we know
Our lives to the end we shall live."

Volume II.

Lays of the Heroes

Völundarkvitha

The Lay of Völund

Introductory Note

Between the *Thrymskvitha* and the *Alvissmol* in the *Codex Regius* stands the *Völundarkvitha*. It was also included in the *Arnarnagnæan Codex*, but unluckily it begins at the very end of the fragment which has been preserved, and thus only a few lines of the opening prose remain. This is doubly regrettable because the text in *Regius* is unquestionably in very bad shape, and the other manuscript would doubtless have been of great assistance in the reconstruction of the poem.

There has been a vast amount written regarding the Weland tradition as a whole, discussing particularly the relations between the *Völundarkvitha* and the Weland passage in *Deor's Lament*. There can be little question that the story came to the North from Saxon regions, along with many of the other early hero tales. In stanza 16 the Rhine is specifically mentioned as the home of treasure; and the presence of the story in Anglo-Saxon poetry probably as early as the first part of the eighth century proves beyond a doubt that the legend cannot have been a native product of Scandinavia. In one form or another, however, the legend of the smith persisted for centuries throughout all the Teutonic lands, and the name of Wayland Smith is familiar to all readers of Walter Scott, and even of Rudyard Kipling's tales of England.

In what form this story reached the North is uncertain. Sundry striking parallels between the diction of the *Völundarkvitha* and that of the Weland passage in *Deor's Lament* make it distinctly probable that a Saxon song on this subject had found its way to Scandinavia or Iceland. But the prose introduction to the poem mentions the "old sagas" in which Völund was celebrated, and in the *Thithrekssaga* we have definite evidence of the existence of such prose narrative in the form of the *Velentssaga* (Velent, Völund, Weland, and Wayland all being, of course, identical), which gives a long story for which the *Völundarkvitha* can have supplied relatively little, if any, of the material. It is probable, then, that Weland stories were current in both prose and verse in Scandinavia as early as the latter part of the ninth century.

Once let a figure become popular in oral tradition, and the number and variety of the incidents connected with his name will increase very rapidly. Doubtless there were scores of Weland stories current in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, many of them with very little if any traditional authority. The main one, however, the story of the laming of the smith by King Nithuth (or by some other enemy) and of Weland's terrible revenge, forms the basis of the *Völundarkvitha*. To this, by way of introduction, has been added the

story of Völund and the wan-maiden, who, to make things even more complex, is likewise said to be a Valkyrie. Some critics maintain that these two sections were originally two distinct poems, merely strung together by the compiler with the help of narrative prose links; but the poem as a whole has a kind of dramatic unity which suggests rather that an early poet—for linguistically the poem belongs among the oldest of the Eddic collection—used two distinct legends, whether in prose or verse, as the basis for the composition of a new and homogeneous poem.

The swan-maiden story appears, of course, in many places quite distinct from the Weland tradition, and, in another form, became one of the most popular of German folk tales. Like the story of Weland, however, it is of German rather than Scandinavian origin, and the identification of the swan-maidens as Valkyries, which may have taken place before the legend reached the North, may, on the other hand, have been simply an attempt to connect southern tradition with figures well known in northern mythology.

The *Völundarkvitha* is full of prose narrative links, including an introduction. The nature of such prose links has already been discussed in the introductory note to the *Grimnismol*; the *Völundarkvitha* is a striking illustration of the way in which the function of the earlier Eddic verse was limited chiefly to dialogue or description, the narrative outline being provided, if at all, in prose. This prose was put in by each reciter according to his fancy and knowledge, and his estimate of his hearers' need for such explanations; some of it, as in this instance, eventually found its way into the written record.

The manuscript of the *Völundarkvitha* is in such bad shape, and the conjectural emendations have been so numerous, that in the notes I have attempted to record only the most important of them.

Nīpuþr hēt konungr ī Svīþjōþ.

There was a king in Sweden named Nithuth.

Hann ātti tvā sonu ok eina dōttur;
hon hēt Bōþvildr.

He had two sons and one daughter; her name was Bothvild.

Brœþr vāru þrīr, synir Finnakonungs:
hēt einn Slagfiþr, annarr Egill, þriþi
Vœlundr.

There were three brothers, sons of a king of the Finns: one was called Slagfith, another Egil, the third Völund.

Þeir skriðu ok veiddu dýr.

They went on snowshoes and hunted wild beasts.

Þeir kōmu ī Ūlfdali ok gōrðu sēr þar
hūs; þar er vatn er heitir Ūlfsjár.

They came into Ulfdalir and there they built themselves a house; there was a lake there which is called Ulfsjar.

Snemma of morgin fundu þeir ā vatnsströndu konur þrjár, ok spunnu lín.

Þar vāru hjā þeim ālptarhamir þeira: þat vāru valkyrjur.

Þar vāru tvær døtr Hlōþves konungs, Hlāþguþr svanhvīt ok Hervōr alvitr, en þriþja var Œlrūn Kjārs dōttir af Vallandi.

Þeir hōfðu þær heim til skāla meþ sēr.

Fekk Egill Œlrūnar, en Slagfiþr Svanhvītrar, en Vœlundr Alvitrar.

Þau bjuggu sjau vetr; þā flugu þær at vitja vīga ok kōmu eigi aptr.

Þā skreiþ Egill at leita Œlrūnar, en Slagfiþr leitaði Svanhvītrar, en Vœlundr sat ī Ūlfdōlum.

Hann var hagrastr maþr, svā at menn viti ī fornum sōgum.

Nīþuþr konungr lēt hann hōndum taka, svā sem hēr er um kveþit.

Early one morning they found on the shore of the lake three women, who were spinning flax.

Near them were their swan garments, for they were Valkyries.

Two of them were daughters of King Hlothver, Hlathguth the Swan-White and Hervor the All-Wise, and the third was Orlun, daughter of Kjar from Valland.

These did they bring home to their hall with them.

Egil took Orlun, and Slagfith Swan-White, and Völund All-Wise.

There they dwelt seven winters; but then they flew away to find battles, and came back no more.

Then Egil set forth on his snowshoes to follow Orlun, and Slagfith followed Swan-White, but Völund stayed in Ulf-dalir.

He was a most skillful man, as men know from old tales.

King Nithuth had him taken by force, as the poem here tells.

Nithuth (“Bitter Hater”): here identified as a king of Sweden, is in the poem (stanzas 9, 15 and 32) called lord of the Njars, which may refer to the people of the Swedish district of Nerike. In any case, the scene of the story has moved from Saxon lands into the Northeast. The first and last sentences of the introduction refer to the second part of the poem; the rest of it concerns the swan-maidens episode. *Bothvild* (“Warlike Maid”): Völund’s victim in the latter part of the poem. *King of the Finns*: this notion, clearly later than the poem, which calls Völund an elf, may perhaps be ascribed to the annotator who composed the prose introduction. The Finns, meaning the dwellers in Lapland, were generally credited with magic powers. Egil appears in the *Thithrekssaga* as Völund’s brother, but Slagfith is not elsewhere mentioned. *Ulfadalir* (“Wolf-Dale”), *Ulfjar* (“Wolf-Sea”), *Valland* (“Slaughter-Land”): mythical places without historical identification. *Valkyries*: cf. *Voluspo*, 31 and

note; there is nothing in the poem to identify the three swan maidens as Valkyries except one obscure word in line 2 of stanza 1 and again in line 5 of stanza 5, which may mean, as Gering translates it, “helmed,” or else “fair and wise.” I suspect that the annotator, anxious to give the Saxon legend as much northern local color as possible, was mistaken in his mythology, and that the poet never conceived of his swan-maidens as Valkyries at all. However, this identification of swan-maidens with Valkyries was not uncommon; cf. *Helreith Brynhildar*, 7. The three maidens’ names, *Hlathguth*, *Hervor*, and *Olrún*, do not appear in the lists of Valkyries. *King Hlothver*: this name suggests the southern origin of the story, as it is the northern form of Ludwig; the name appears again in *Guthrunarkvitha II*, 26, and that of *Kjar* is found in *Atlakvitha*, 7, both of these poems being based on German stories. It is worth noting that the composer of this introductory note seems to have had little or no information beyond what was actually contained in the poem as it has come down to us; he refers to the “old stories” about Völund, but either he was unfamiliar with them in detail or else he thought it needless to make use of them. His note simply puts in clear and connected form what the verse tells somewhat obscurely; his only additions are making Nithuth a king of Sweden and Völund’s father a king of the Finns, supplying the name Ulfsjar for the lake, identifying the swan-maidens as Valkyries, and giving Kjar a home in Valland.

1.	Meyjar flugu sunnan	Maids from the south
	myrkviþ í gøgnum,	through Myrkwood flew,
	alvitr ungar,	Fair and young,
	ørlog drýgja;	their fate to follow;
	þær ā sævarströnd	On the shore of the sea
	settusk at hvílask,	to rest them they sat,
	drösir suþrōnar	The maids of the south,
	dýrt lín spunnu.	and flax they spun.

The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza; two lines may have been lost before or after lines 1–2, and two more, or even six, with the additional stanza describing the theft of the swan-garments, after line 4. *Myrkwood*: a stock name for a magic, dark forest; cf. *Lokasenna*, 42.

2.

Hlaðguðr ok Hervor, |
Hlǫðvē bornar,
 kunn vas Qlrūn |
 Kīars dōttir.

Hlathguth and Hervor, |
 Hlothver's children,
 And Orlun the Wise |
 Kjar's daughter was.

In the manuscript these two lines stand after stanza 16; editors have tried to fit them into various places, but the prose indicates that they belong here, with a gap assumed.

3. ... |
 ...
 ein nam þeira |
 Egil at verja,
 fǫgr mār fira, |
 faðmi ljōsum.

... |
 ...
 One in her arms |
 took Egil then
 To her bosom white, |
 the woman fair.

In the manuscript these two lines follow stanza 1, with no gap indicated, and the first line marked as the beginning of a stanza. Many editors have combined them with stanza 4.

4. Qnnur vas svanhvīt, |
 svanfjaprar drō
 ... |
 ...
 en en þriþja, |
 þeira systir,
 varþi hvītan |
 hals Vǫlundar.

Swan-White second,— |
 swan-feathers she wore,
 ... |
 ...
 And her arms the third |
 of the sisters threw
 Next round Völund's |
 neck so white.

No lacuna indicated in the manuscript; one editor fills the stanza out with a second line running:

Then to her breast | Slagfith embraced.
 (es Slagfinni | hendr um slongþi.)

5.	Sōtu sīpan sjau vetr at þat, en enn ātta allan þrōþu, [en enn niunda nauþr of skilþi;] meyjar fýstusk ā myrkvan við, alvitr <i>ungar</i> , ørløg drýgja.	There did they sit for seven winters, In the eighth at last came their longing again, [And in the ninth did need divide them.] The maidens yearned for the murky wood, The fair young maids, their fate to follow.
----	---	---

Line 3 looks like an interpolation, but line 5, identical with line 2 of stanza 1, may be the superfluous one.

6.	Kvam þar af veiþi veþreygr skyti, Vælundr líþandi of langan veg, Slagfiþr ok Egill, sali fundu aupa, gengu út ok inn ok umb sǫusk.	Völund home from his hunting came, From a weary way, the weather-wise bowman, Slagfith and Egil the hall found empty, Out and in went they, everywhere seeking.
----	---	--

The phrase “Völund home from a weary way” is an emendation of Bugge’s, accepted by many editors. Some of those who do not include it reject line 4, and combine the remainder of the stanza with all or part of stanza 7.

7.	Austr skreiþ Egill at Ǫlrūnu,	East fared Egil after Olrún,
----	------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

en suþr Slagfiþr |
 at Svanhvītu,
 en einn Völundr |
 sat ī Ulfdǫlum.
 . . . |
 . . .

And Slagfith south |
 to seek for Swan-White;
 Völund alone |
 in Ulfdalir lay,
 . . . |
 . . .

The manuscript marks the second, and not the first, line as the beginning of a stanza. Some editors combine lines 2–3 with all or part of stanza 8. No gap is indicated in the manuscript, but many editors have assumed one, some of them accepting Bugge's suggested

Till back the maiden | bright should come.

(unz Alvittr unga | aptr kōmi.)

8. Hann slō gull rautt |
 við gim fāstan,
 lukði hann alla |
 lind bauga vel;
 svā beið *lengi* |
 ljōssar sinnar
 kvānar, ef hōnum |
 of koma gørði.

Red gold he fashioned |
 with fairest gems,
 And rings he strung |
 on ropes of bast;
 So for his wife |
 he waited long,
 If the fair one home |
 might come to him.

No line in this stanza is indicated in the manuscript as beginning a new stanza; editors have tried all sorts of experiments in regrouping the lines into stanzas with those of stanzas 7 and 9. In line 3 the word *long* is sheer guesswork, as the line in the manuscript contains a metrical error.

9. Þat spyrr Nīþoþr, |
 Nīara drōttinn,

This Nithuth learned, |
 the lord of the Njars,

at einn Völundr	That Völund alone
sat í Ulfdöllum:	in Ulfdalir lay;
nóttum fóru seggir,	By night went his men,
negldar vöru brynjur,	their mail-coats were studded,
skildir bliku þeira	Their shields in the waning
við enn skarþa mána.	moonlight shone.

Some editors combine the first two lines with parts of stanza 8, and the last two with the first half of stanza 10. *Njars*: there has been much, and inconclusive, discussion as to what this name means; probably it applies to a semi-mythical people somewhere vaguely in “the East.”

10. Stigu ór sǫplum	From their saddles the gable
at salar gafli,	wall they sought,
gengu inn þá þan	And in they went
endlangan sal;	at the end of the hall;
squ þeir á basti	Rings they saw there
bauga dregna,	on ropes of bast,
sjau hundruð allra	Seven hundred
es sá seggr átti.	the hero had.

Some editors combine lines 3–4 with the fragmentary stanza 11.

11. Ok þeir af tōku	Off they took them,
ok þeir á lētu	but all they left
fyr einn ūtan,	Save one alone
es þeir af lētu;	which they bore away.
...	...
...	...

... |

...

... |

...

No gap indicated in the manuscript; some editors combine these lines with lines 3–4 of stanza 10, while others combine them with the first two lines of stanza 12. The one ring which Nithuth's men steal is given to Bothvild, and proves the cause of her undoing.

12. Kvam þar af veiði |
 veðreygr skyti,
 Völundr liðandi |
 of langan veg;
 gekk brúnnar |
 beru hold steikja,
 ār brann hrīsi |
 allþurru fūrr,
 [viðr enn vindþurri |
 fyr Völundi.]

Völund home |
 from his hunting came,
 From a weary way, |
 the weather-wise bowman;
 A brown bear's flesh |
 would he roast with fire;
 Soon the wood so dry |
 was burning well,
 [The wind-dried wood |
 that Völund's was.]

The manuscript indicates line 3, and not line 1, as the beginning of a stanza, which has given rise to a large amount of conjectural rearrangement. Line 2 of the original is identical with the phrase added by Bugge in stanza 6. Line 5 may be spurious, or lines 4–5 may have been expanded out of a single line running

The wind-dried wood for | Völund burned well.

13. Sat ā berfjalli, |
 bauga talði
 alfa ljōði, |
 eins saknaði;
 hugði at hefði |
 Hlōþvēs dōttir,

On the bearskin he rested, |
 and counted the rings,
 The master of elves, |
 but one he missed;
 That Hlothver's daughter |
 had it he thought,

alvītr unga, |
væri aptr komin.

And the all-wise maid |
had come once more.

Elves: the poem here identifies Völund as belonging to the race of the elves. *Hlothver's daughter:* Hervor; many editors treat the adjective “all-wise” here as a proper name.

14. Sat svā lengi, |
at sofnapi,
ok vaknapi |
viljalauss:
vissi ser ā hōndum |
hōfgar nauþir,
en ā fōtum |
fjōtur of spentan.

So long he sat |
that he fell asleep,
His waking empty |
of gladness was;
Heavy chains |
he saw on his hands,
And fetters bound |
his feet together.

Vølundr kvaþ:

15. “Hverir’u jōfrar |
þeirs ā lōgþu
bestisīma |
ok mik bundu?”
[Kallapi Nīþōþr, |
Nīara drōttinn:]
“Hvar gæzt, Vølundr, |
vīsi alfa!
ōra aura |
ī Ulfdolum?”

Vølund spake:

“What men are they |
who thus have laid
Ropes of bast |
to bind me now?”
Then Nithuth called, |
the lord of the Njars:
“How gottest thou, Vølund, |
greatest of elves,
These treasures of ours |
in Ulfdalir?”

In this poem the manuscript indicates the speakers. Some editors make lines 1–2 into a separate stanza, linking lines 3–5 (or 4–5) with stanza 16. Line 3 is very possibly spurious, a mere expansion of “Nithuth spake.” Nithuth, of course, has come with his men to capture

Völund, and now charges him with having stolen his treasure.

Vælundr kvað:

16. “Goll vas þar eigi |
 ā Grana leiðu,
 fjarri hykk vārt land |
 fjōllum Rīnar;
 mank at meiri |
 mæti ōttum,
 es heil hiu |
 heima vōrum.”

Völund spake:

“The gold was not |
 on Grani’s way,
 Far, methinks, is our realm |
 from the hills of the Rhine;
 I mind me that treasures |
 more we had
 When happy together |
 at home we were.”

The manuscript definitely assigns this stanza to Völund, but many editors give the first two lines to Nithuth. In the manuscript stanza 16 is followed by the two lines of stanza 2, and many editions make of lines 3–4 of stanza 16 and stanza 2 a single speech by Völund. *Grani’s way*: Grani was Sigurth’s horse, on which he rode to slay Fafnir and win Andvari’s hoard; this and the reference to the *Rhine* as the home of wealth betray the southern source of the story. If lines 1–2 belong to Völund, they mean that Nithuth got his wealth in the Rhine country, and that Völund’s hoard has nothing to do with it; if the speaker is Nithuth, they mean that Völund presumably has not killed a dragon, and that he is far from the wealth of the Rhine, so that he must have stolen his treasure from Nithuth himself.

17. Ūti stendr kunnig |
 kvōn Nīþaþar,
 hōn inn of gekk |
 endlangan sal,
 stōþ ā golfi, |
 stilti rōddu:
 “Esa sā nū hýrr |
 es ōr holti ferr.”

Without stood the wife |
 of Nithuth wise,
 And in she came |
 from the end of the hall;
 On the floor she stood, |
 and softly spoke:
 “Not kind does he look |
 who comes from the wood.”

Line 1 is lacking in the manuscript, lines 2–4 following immediately after the two lines

here given as stanza 2. Line 1, borrowed from line 1 of stanza 32, is placed here by many editors, following Bugge's suggestion. Certainly it is Nithuth's wife who utters line 4. *Who comes from the wood*: Völund, noted as a hunter. Gering assumes that with the entrance of Nithuth's wife the scene has changed from Völund's house to Nithuth's, but I cannot see that this is necessary.

Nīpuþr konungr gaf dōttur sinni
Bōþvildi gullhring þann er hann tōk
af bastinu at Vœlundar, en hann
sjālfr bar sverþit er Vœlundr ātti.

King Nithuth gave to his daughter Both-
vild the gold ring that he had taken
from the bast rope in Völund's house,
and he himself wore the sword that
Völund had had.

En drottning kvaþ:

The queen spake:

The annotator inserted this note rather clumsily in the midst of the speech of Nithuth's wife.

18. "Āmun eru augu |

ormi frāna,

tenn hōnum teygjask, |

es tēt es sverþ

ok Bōþvildar |

baug of þekkir;

snīþiþ ēr hann |

sinva magni

ok setiþ sīþan |

ī Sævarstōþ."

"The glow of his eyes |

is like gleaming snakes,

His teeth he gnashes |

if now is shown

The sword, or Bothvild's |

ring he sees;

Let them straightway cut |

his sinews of strength,

And set him then |

in Sævarstath."

In the manuscript lines 2–3 stand before line 1; many editors have made the transposition here indicated. Some editors reject line 3 as spurious. *Sævarstath*: "Sea-Stead."

Svā var gort, at skornar vāru sinar ī
knēsfōtum, ok settr ī hōlm einn er
þar var fyr landi, er hēt Sævarstaþr.

Þar smīþaþi hann konungi allskyns
gørsimar.

Engi maþr þorþi at fara til hans nema
konungr einn.

Vølundr kvaþ:

So was it done: the sinews in his knee-
joints were cut, and he was set in an is-
land which was near the mainland, and
was called Sævarstath.

There he smithied for the king all kinds
of precious things.

No man dared to go to him, save only
the king himself.

Völund spake:

19. “Skīnn Nīþaþi |
narr ā linda
sās ek hvesta |
sem hagast kunnak
[ok ek herþak |
sem hōgst þōttumk;]
sā’s mēr frānn mækir |
æ fjarri borinn,
[sēkka þann Vølundr |
til smīþju borinn,]
nū berr Bøþvildr |
[brūþar minnar
— bīþka þess bōt—] |
bauga rauþa.”

“At Nithuth’s girdle |
gleams the sword
That I sharpened keen |
with cunningest craft,
[And hardened the steel |
with highest skill;]
The bright blade far |
forever is borne,
[Nor back shall I see it |
borne to my smithy;]
Now Bothvild gets |
the golden ring
[That was once my bride’s,— |
ne’er well shall it be.]”

This stanza is obviously in bad shape. Vigfusson makes two stanzas of it by adding a first line:

Then did Völund speak, | sagest of elves.

(þā kvaþ þat Vølundr, | vīsi alfa.)

Editors have rejected various lines, and some have regrouped the last lines with the first two of stanza 20. The elimination of the passages in parenthesis produces a four-line stanza which is metrically correct, but it has little more than guesswork to support it.

20. Sat, nē svaf, ofvalt	He sat, nor slept,
ok slō hamri,	and smote with his hammer,
vēl gørþi heldr	Fast for Nithuth
hvatt Nīþaþi;	wonders he fashioned;
drifu ungir tveir	Two boys did go
ā dyrr sea	in his door to gaze,
synir Nīþaþar	Nithuth's sons,
ī Sævarstōþ.	into Sævarstath.

The editions vary radically in combining the lines of this stanza with those of stanzas 19 and 21, particularly as the manuscript indicates the third line as the beginning of a stanza. The meaning, however, remains unchanged.

21. Kvōmu til kistu,	They came to the chest,
krōfðu lukla,	and they craved the keys,
opin vas illūþ	The evil was open
es ī sōu;	when in they looked;
vas þar menja fjōlþ,	To the boys it seemed
es mōgum sýndisk	that gems they saw,
goll rautt vesa	Gold in plenty
ok gørsimar.	and precious stones.

Several editions make one stanza out of lines 1–4 of stanza 20 and lines 1–2 of stanza 21, and another out of the next four lines. *The evil was open:* i.e., the gold in the chest was destined to be their undoing.

Vælundr kvað:

22. “Komiþ einir tveir, |
 komiþ annars dags!
 lætk goll þat ykkir |
 of gefit verða;
 segir þa meyjum |
 nē salþjóðum,
 manni øngum, |
 at mik fyndiþ.”

Völund spake:

“Come ye alone, |
 the next day come,
 Gold to you both |
 shall then be given;
 Tell not the maids |
 or the men of the hall,
 To no one say |
 that me you have sought.”

The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza, and several editors have adopted this grouping. In the *Thithrekssaga* Völund sends the boys away with instructions not to come back until just after a fall of snow, and then to approach his dwelling walking backward. The boys do this, and when, after he has killed them, Völund is questioned regarding them, he points to the tracks in the snow as evidence that they had left his house.

23. ... |
 ...
 snimma kallapi |
 seggr ā annan,
 brōþir ā brōþur: |
 “gøngum baug sea!”

... |
 ...
 Early did brother |
 to brother call:
 “Swift let us go |
 the rings to see.”

No gap indicated in the manuscript. Some editors assume it, as here; some group the lines with lines 3–4 of stanza 22, and some with lines 1–2 of stanza 24.

24. Kvōmu til kistu, |
 krøfðu lukla,
 opin vas illūþ |
 es ī litu;

They came to the chest, |
 and they craved the keys,
 The evil was open |
 when in they looked;

sneiþ af haufuþ	He smote off their heads,
hūna þeira	and their feet he hid
ok und fen fjöturs	Under the sooty
fōtr of lagþi.	straps of the bellows.

Some editions begin a new stanza with line 3.

25. En skālar þær,	Their skulls, once hid
es und skǫrum vōru,	by their hair, he took,
sveip ūtan silfri,	Set them in silver
seldi Nīþaþi,	and sent them to Nithuth;
en ōr augum	Gems full fair
jarknasteina,	from their eyes he fashioned,
sendi kunnigri	To Nithuth's wife
kvōn Nīþaþar.	so wise he gave them.

The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza, and many editors have adopted this grouping.

26. En ōr tǫnnum	And from the teeth
tveggja þeira	of the twain he wrought
slō brjōstkringlur,	A brooch for the breast,
sendi Bǫþvildi;	to Bothvild he sent it;
...	...
...	...

These two lines have been grouped in various ways, either with lines 3–4 of stanza 25 or with the fragmentary stanza 27. No gap is indicated in the manuscript, but the loss of something is so obvious that practically all editors have noted it, although they have

differed as to the number of lines lost.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>27. þā nam Bǫþvildr
 baugi at hrōsa
 ...
 ...
 ...
 es brotit hafði:
 “Þorigak segja
 nema þēr einum.”</p> | <p>Bothvild then
 of her ring did boast,
 ...
 ...
 ...
 “The ring I have broken,
 I dare not say it
 save to thee.”</p> |
|--|--|

No gap indicated in the manuscript; the line and a half might be filled out (partly with the aid of late paper manuscripts) thus:

But soon it broke, | and swiftly to Völund
 She bore it and said—

Vælundr kvap:

- 28.** “Ek bōti svā |
 brest ā golli,
 at feþr þīnum |
 fegri þykkir,
 ok mōþr þinni |
 miklu betri,
 ok sjalfri þēr |
 at sama hōfi.”

Völund spak:

- “I shall weld the break |
 in the gold so well
 That fairer than ever |
 thy father shall find it,
 And better much |
 thy mother shall think it,
 And thou no worse |
 than ever it was.”

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>29. Bar hana bjōri,
 þvīt hann betr kunni,</p> | <p>Beer he brought,
 he was better in cunning,</p> |
|--|--|

svāt ī sessi hōn |

of sofnapi:

Vælundr kvaþ:

“Nū hefk of hefnt |

harma minna

allra nema eins |

īviþgjarnri.”

Until in her seat |

full soon she slept.

Völund spake:

“Now vengeance I have |

for all my hurts,

Save one alone, |

on the evil woman.”

The manuscript does not name Völund as the speaker before line 3; Vigfusson again inserts his convenient line,

Then Völund spake, | sagest of elves.

(Þā kvaþ þat Vølundr, vīsi alfa.)

A few editions combine lines 3–4 with the two lines of stanza 30.

30. ... |

...

... |

...

“Vel ek,” kvaþ Vølundr, |

“verþak ā fitjum

þeims mik Nīþaþar |

nōmu rekkar.”

... |

...

... |

...

Quoth Völund: “Would |

that well were the sinews

Maimed in my feet |

by Nithuth’s men.”

No gap indicated in the manuscript; some editors combine the two lines with lines 3–4 of stanza 29, and many with the three lines of stanza 31.

31. Hlæjandi Vølundr, |

hōfsk at lopti,

Laughing Völund |

rose aloft,

grātandi Bǫþvildr |
gekk ór eyju;
tregði fǫr friþils |
ok fǫður vreiði.

Weeping Bothvild |
went from the isle,
For her lover's flight |
and her father's wrath.

Something has probably been lost before this stanza, explaining how Völund made himself wings, as otherwise, owing to his lameness, he could not leave the island. The *Thithrekssaga* tells the story of how Völund's brother, Egil, shot birds and gave him the feathers, out of which he made a feather-garment. This break in the narrative illustrates the lack of knowledge apparently possessed by the compiler who was responsible for the prose notes; had he known the story told in the *Thithrekssaga*, it is hardly conceivable that he would have failed to indicate the necessary connecting link at this point. Some editors reject line 3 as spurious. The manuscript does not indicate any lacuna.

32. Ūti stendr kunnig |
kvōn Nīþapar,
hōn inn of gekk |
endlangan sal;
en hann ā salgarþ |
settisk at hvīlask:
“Vakir þū, Nīþoþr, |
Nīara dröttinn?”

Without stood the wife |
of Nithuth wise,
And in she came |
from the end of the hall;
But he by the wall |
in weariness sat:
“Wakest thou, Nithuth, |
lord of the Njars?”

The manuscript indicates line 4 as the beginning of a stanza, and many editors have followed this arrangement.

Nīþuþr kvaþ:

33. “Vaki ek ofvalt |
viljalauss,
sofna ek minst |
sīz sunu dauða;

Nithuth spake:

“Always I wake, |
and ever joyless,
Little I sleep |
since my sons were slain;

<i>kølumk</i> ī haufuþ,	Cold is my head,
<i>køld erumk</i> rōþ þīn,	cold was thy counsel,
<i>vilnumk</i> þess nū,	One thing, with Völund
at við Völund dōmak.	to speak, I wish.

The manuscript does not name the speaker. It indicates line 3 as the beginning of a new stanza. Vigfusson adds before line 1,

Then spake Nithuth, | lord of the Njars.

(Þā kvaþ þat Nīþoþr, | Nīara drōttinn.)

34.
...	...
Seg mer þat, Völundr,	Answer me, Völund,
vīsi alfa!	greatest of elves,
hvat af heilum varþ	What happed with my boys
<i>hūnum</i> mīnum?"	that hale once were?"

No gap indicated in the manuscript, but it seems clear that something has been lost. Some editors combine these two lines with lines 3–4 of stanza 33. Völund is now flying over Nithuth's hall.

Vælundr kvaþ:

35. “Eiþa skalt āþr |
 alla vinna
 at skips borþi |
 ok at skjaldar rōnd,
 at mars bōgi |
 ok at mækis egg:

Völund spake:

“First shalt thou all |
 the oaths now swear,
 By the rail of ship, |
 and the rim of shield,
 By the shoulder of steed, |
 and the edge of sword,

at þū kveljat |
 kvōn Vōlundar
 nē brūþi minni |
 at bana verþir,
 þōt kvōn eigim |
 þās ēr kunnub,
 eþa jōþ eigim |
 innan hallar.

That to Völund's wife |
 thou wilt work no ill,
 Nor yet my bride |
 to her death wilt bring,
 Though a wife I should have |
 that well thou knowest,
 And a child I should have |
 within thy hall.

The manuscript does not name the speaker; Vigfusson again makes two full stanzas with the line,

Then did Völund speak, | sagest of elves.

(Þā kvaþ þat Vōlundr, vīsi alfa.)

Some editors begin a new stanza with line 4, while others reject as interpolations lines 2–3 or 5–7. *Völund's wife*: the reference is to Bothvild, as Völund wishes to have his vengeance fall more heavily on her father than on her.

36. Gakk til smiþju |
 es þū gørþir,
 þar fiþr belgi |
 blōþi stokkna;
 sneiþk af haufuþ |
 hūna þinna
 ok und fen fjōturs |
 fōtr of lagþak.

Seek the smithy |
 that thou didst set,
 Thou shalt find the bellows |
 sprinkled with blood;
 I smote off the heads |
 of both thy sons,
 And their feet 'neath the sooty |
 straps I hid.

Lines 3–4 are nearly identical with lines 3–4 of stanza 24.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>37. En skālar þær
 es und skorum vōru
 sveipk ūtan silfri,
 <i>seldak</i> Nīþaþi,
 en ōr augum
 jarknasteina
 sendak kunnigri
 kvōn Nīþaþar.</p> | <p>Their skulls, once hid
 by their hair, I took,
 Set them in silver
 and sent them to Nithuth;
 Gems full fair
 from their eyes I fashioned,
 To Nithuth's wife
 so wise I gave them.</p> |
|--|---|

Identical, except for the pronouns, with stanza 25.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>38. En ōr tǫnnum
 tveggja þeira
 slōk brjōstkringlur,
 sendak Bǫþvildi;
 nū gengr Bǫþvildr
 barni aukin,
 eingadōttir
 ykkur beggja.”</p> | <p>And from the teeth
 of the twain I wrought
 A brooch for the breast,
 to Bothvild I gave it;
 Now big with child
 does Bothvild go,
 The only daughter
 ye two had ever.”</p> |
|---|--|

Lines 1–2: Cf. stanza 26.

Nīþuþr kvaþ:

- 39.** “Mæltira māl |
 es mik meirr tregi,
 nē þik viljak, Vōlundr! |
verr of njōta:
 esat svā maþr hōr, |
 at þik af hesti taki,

Nithuth spake:

- “Never spakest thou word |
 that worse could hurt me,
 Nor that made me, Völund, |
 more bitter for vengeance;
 There is no man so high |
 from thy horse to take thee,

nē svā ǫflugr,	Or so doughty an archer
at þik neþan skjōti,	as down to shoot thee,
þars þū skollir	While high in the clouds
viþ ský uppi.”	thy course thou takest.”

The manuscript does not name the speaker. Either line 4 or line 5 may be an interpolation; two editions reject lines 3–5, combining lines 1–2 with stanza 40. In the *Thithrekssaga* Nithuth actually compels Egil, Völund’s brother, to shoot at Völund. The latter has concealed a bladder full of blood under his left arm, and when his brother’s arrow pierces this, Nithuth assumes that his enemy has been killed. This episode likewise appears among the scenes from Völund’s career rudely carved on an ancient casket of ivory, bearing an Anglo-Saxon inscription in runic letters, which has been preserved.

40. Hlæjandi Völundr	Laughing Völund
hōfsk at lopti,	rose aloft,
en ōkātr Nīþǫþr	But left in sadness
sat þā eptir.	Nithuth sat.
...	...
...	...

Line 1: cf. stanza 31. The manuscript indicates no lacuna.

* * *

41. Þā kvaþ þat Nīþǫþr,	Then spake Nithuth,
Niara drōttinn:	lord of the Njars:
“Upp rīs, Þakkrāþr,	“Rise up, Thakkrath,
þræll minn bazti!	best of my thralls,
biþ Bǫþvildi	Bid Bothvild come,
ena brāhvītu,	the bright-browed maid,
gangi fagrvariþ	Bedecked so fair,
viþ fǫður røþa.”	with her father to speak.”

The first line is a conjectural addition. *Thakkrath* is probably the northern form of the Middle High German name Dancrat.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>42. ...
 ...
 “Es þat satt, Bøþvildr!
 es sǫgðu mēr:
 sǫtuþ it Vǫlundr
 saman ī holmi?”</p> | <p>...
 ...
 “Is it true, Bothvild,
 that which was told me;
 Once in the isle
 with Völund wert thou?”</p> |
|---|---|

The manuscript indicates no gap, but indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza; Vigfusson’s added

Then Nithuth spake, | lord of the Njars
 (Þā kvaþ þat Nīþǫþr, | Nīara dróttinn)

seems plausible enough.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Bøþvildr kvaþ:</i>
 43. “Satt’s þat, Nīþǫþr!
 es sagði þēr:
 sǫtum vit Vǫlundr
 saman ī holmi
 eina ǫgurstund,
 ǣva skyldi!
 ek vætr hǫnum
 vinna kunnak,
 ek vætr hǫnum
 vinna māttak.”</p> | <p><i>Bothvild spake:</i>
 “True is it, Nithuth,
 that which was told thee,
 Once in the isle
 with Völund was I,
 An hour of lust,
 alas it should be!
 Nought was my might
 with such a man,
 Nor from his strength
 could I save myself.”</p> |
|---|--|

The manuscript does not name the speaker. Different editors have rejected one or another of the last three lines, and as the manuscript indicates line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza,

the loss of two or three lines has likewise been suggested. According to the *Thithrekssaga*, the son of Völund and Bothvild was Vithga, or Witege, one of the heroes of Dietrich of Bern.

Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar

The Lay of Helgi the Son of Hjorvarth

Introductory Note

The three Helgi lays, all found in the *Codex Regius*, have been the subjects of a vast amount of discussion, in spite of which many of the facts regarding them are still very far from settled. It is, indeed, scarcely possible to make any unqualified statement regarding these three poems for which a flat contradiction cannot be found in the writings of some scholar of distinction. The origin of the Helgi tradition, its connection with that of Sigurth, the authorship, date and home of the poems, the degree to which they have been altered from their original forms, the status of the composer of the copious prose notes: these and many other allied questions have been and probably always will be matters of dispute among students of the *Edda's* history.

Without attempting to enter into the discussion in detail, certain theories should be noted. Helgi appears originally to have been a Danish popular hero, the son of King Halfdan. Saxo Grammaticus has a good deal to say about him in that capacity, and it has been pointed out that many of the place names in the Helgi lays can be pretty clearly identified with parts of Denmark and neighboring stretches of the Baltic. The Danish Helgi, according to Saxo, was famed as the conqueror of Hunding and Hothbrodd, the latter as the result of a naval expedition at the head of a considerable fleet.

From Denmark the story appears to have spread northward into Norway and westward into the Norse settlements among the islands. Not many of its original features remained, and new ones were added here and there, particularly with regard to Helgi's love affair with Sigrun. The victories over Hunding and Hothbrodd, however, were generally retained, and out of material relating to these two fights, and to the Helgi-Sigrun story, were fashioned the two lays of Helgi Hundingsbane.

How the Helgi legend became involved with that of the Volsungs is an open question. Both stories travelled from the South, and presumably about the same time, so it is not unnatural that some confusion should have arisen. At no time, however, was the connection particularly close so far as the actual episodes of the two stories were concerned. In the two lays of Helgi Hundingsbane the relationship is established only by the statement that Helgi was the son of Sigmund and Borghild; Sigurth is not mentioned, and in the lay of Helgi the son of Hjorvarth there is no connection at all. On the other hand, Helgi does not appear in any of the Eddic poems dealing directly with the Volsung stories, although in one passage of doubtful authenticity (cf. *Reginsmol*, introductory note) his traditional enemy, Hunding,

does, represented by his sons. In the *Volsungasaga* the story of Helgi, including the fights with Hunding and Hothbrodd and the love affair with Sigrun, is told in chapters 8 and 9 without otherwise affecting the course of the narrative. Here, as in the Helgi lays, Helgi is the son of Sigmund Volsungsson and Borghild; Sigurth, on the other hand, is the son of Sigmund and Hjordis, the latter being the daughter of King Eylimi. Still another son, who complicates both stories somewhat, is Sinfjotli, son of Sigmund and his own sister, Signy. Sinfjotli appears in both of the Helgi Hundingsbane lays and in the *Volsungasaga*, but not in any of the Eddic poems belonging to the Volsung cycle (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note).

There is a certain amount of resemblance between the story of Helgi and Sigrun and that of Sigurth and Brynhild, particularly as the annotator responsible for the prose notes insists that Sigrun was a Valkyrie. Whether this resemblance was the cause of bringing the two stories together, or whether the identification of Helgi as Sigmund's son resulted in alterations of the love story in the Helgi poems, cannot be determined.

The first of the three Helgi poems, the lay of Helgi the son of Hjorvarth, is a somewhat distant cousin of the other two. The Helgi in question is apparently the same traditional figure, and he leads a naval expedition, but he is not the son of Sigmund, there is no connection with the Volsung cycle, and his wife is Svava, not Sigrun. At the same time, the points of general resemblance with the two Helgi Hundingsbane lays are such as to indicate a common origin, provided one goes far enough back. The annotator brings the stories together by the naive expedient of having Helgi "born again," and not once only, but twice.

The first Helgi lay, is manifestly in bad shape, and includes at least two distinct poems, differentiated not only by subject matter but by metrical form. Although the question is debatable, the longer of these poems (stanzas 1–11 and 31–43) seems in turn to have been compounded out of fragments of two or more Helgi poems. The first five stanzas are a dialogue between a bird and Atli, one of Hjorvarth's followers, concerning the winning of Sigrlin, who is destined to be Hjorvarth's wife and Helgi's mother. Stanzas 6–11 are a dialogue between Helgi and a Valkyrie (the accompanying prose so calls her, and identifies her as Svava, but there is nothing in the verse to prove this). Stanzas 12–30 form a fairly consecutive unit, in which Atli, on guard over Helgi's ship, has a vigorous argument with a giantess, Hrimgerth, whence this section has sometimes been called the *Hrimgertharmol* (*Lay of Hrimgerth*). The last section, stanzas 31–43, is, again fairly consecutive, and tells of the death of Helgi following the rash oath of his brother, Hethin, to win Svava for himself.

Parts I, II, and IV may all have come from the same poem or they may not; it is quite impossible to tell surely. All of them are generally dated by commentators not later than the first half of the tenth century, whereas the *Hrimgertharmol* (section III) is placed considerably later. When and by whom these fragments were pieced together is another vexed question, and this involves a consideration of the prose notes and links, of which the *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar* has a larger amount than any other poem in the *Edda*. These prose links contain practically all the narrative, the verse being almost exclusively dialogue. Whoever composed them seems to have been consciously trying to bring his chaotic verse material into some semblance of unity, but he did his work pretty clumsily, with manifest blunders and contradictions. Bugge has advanced the theory that these prose passages are to be regarded as an original and necessary part of the work, but this hardly squares with the evidence.

It seems probable, rather, that as the Helgi tradition spread from its native Denmark through the Norse regions of the North and West, and became gradually interwoven, although not in essentials, with the other great hero cycle from the South, that of the Volsungs, a considerable number of poems dealing with Helgi were composed, at different times and in different places, reflecting varied forms of the story. Many generations afterwards, when Iceland's literary period had arrived, some zealous scribe committed to writing such poems or fragments of poems as he knew, piecing them together and annotating them on the basis of information which had reached him through other channels. The prose notes to *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II* frankly admit this patchwork process: a section of four stanzas (13–16) is introduced with the phrase, “as is said in the Old Volsung Lay”; the final prose note cites an incident “told in the *Karuljoth (Lay of Kara)*,” and a two-line speech is quoted “as it was written before in the *Helgakvitha*.”

The whole problem of the origin, character and home of the Helgi poems has been discussed in great detail by Bugge in his *Helge-Digtene i den Ældre Edda, Deres Hjem og Forbindelser*, which, as translated by W. H. Schofield under the title *The Home of the Eddic Poems*, is available for readers of English. This study is exceedingly valuable, if not in all respects convincing. The whole matter is so complex and so important in the history of Old Norse literature, and any intelligent reading of the Helgi poems is so dependent on an understanding of the conditions under which they have come down to us, that I have here discussed the question more extensively than the scope of a mere introductory note to a single poem would warrant.

(I) Fra Hjorvarthi ok Sigrlinn

Of Hjorvarth and Sigrlin

Hjorvarþr hēt konungr, hann ātti
fjōrar konur: ein hēt Ālfhildr, sonr
þeira hēt Hefinn; qnnur hēt Særeifr,
þeira sonr hēt Humlungr; en þriþja
hēt Sinrjōþ, þeira sonr hēt Hymlingr.

Hjorvarþr konungr hafði þess heit
strengt at eiga þā konu er hann vissi
vænsta.

Hann spurði at Svāfnir konungr ātti
dōttur allra fegrsta, sū hēt Sigrlinn.

Hjorvarth was the name of a king, who
had four wives: one was called Alfhild,
and their son was named Hethin; the
second was called Særeith, and their
son was named Humlung; the third
was called Sinrjoth, and their son was
named Hymling.

King Hjorvarth had made a great vow
to have as wife whatsoever woman he
knew was fairest.

He learned that King Svafnir had a
daughter fairer than all others, whose
name was Sigrlin.

Iþmundr hēt jarl hans; Atli var hans sonr, er fōr at biþja Sigrlinnar til handa konungi.

Hann dvalþiz vetrangt meþ Svāfni konungi.

Frānmarr hēt þar jarl, fōstri Sigrlinnar; dōttir hans hēt Ālof.

Jarlinn rēþ at meyjar var synjat, ok fōr Atli heim.

Atli jarls sonr stōþ einn dag við lund nokkurn, en fugl sat í limunum uppi yfir honum ok hafði heyrt til, at hans menn kōllupu vānstar konur þær er Hjørvarþr konungr ātti.

Fuglinn kvakaði, en Atli hlýddi hvat hann sagði;

hann kvað:

Ithmund was the name of one of his jarls; he had a son called Atli, who went to woo Sigrlin on behalf of the king.

He dwelt the winter long with King Svafnir.

There was a jarl called Franmar, Sigrlin's foster-father; his daughter was named Alof.

The jarl told him that the maiden's hand was denied, and Atli went home.

Atli, the jarl's son, stood one day in a certain wood; a bird sat in the branches up over him, and it had heard that his men called Hjørvarth's wives the fairest of women.

The bird twittered, and Atli hearkened to what it spoke.

It said:

In the manuscript the sub-title, "Of Hjørvarth and Sigrlin," stands as the title for the whole poem, though it clearly applies only to the first five stanzas. Most editions employ the title here given. *Hjørvarth*: the name is a not uncommon one; there are two men of that name mentioned in the mythical heroic genealogies of the *Hyndluljóth* (stanzas 23 and 28), and Hjørvarth appears in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I (stanza 14) and II (prose after stanza 12) as a son of Hunding. This particular Hjørvarth is called by the annotator, but not directly so in the verse, a king of Norway. The name means "Sword-Guardian." *Four wives*: polygamy, while very infrequent, appears occasionally in the Norse sagas. *Alfild*: "Elf-Warrior." *Hethin*: "Fur-Clothed" (?). *Særeith*: "Sea-Rider." *Sinrjoth*: "Ever-Red." The fourth wife, not here named, may be Sigrlin. It has been suggested that Særeith and Sinrjoth may be northern and southern forms of the same name, as also *Humlung* and *Hymling*, their sons. *Svafnir*: the annotator calls him king of Svavaland, apparently a place on the mainland which could be reached from Norway either by land or by sea. *Sigrlin*: "The Conquering Serpent." *Atli*: Norse form of the Gothic Attila (Etzel). *Alof*: perhaps a feminine form of Olaf. *A bird*: compare the counsel given by the birds to Sigurth after the slaying of Fafnir (*Fafnismol*, stanzas 32–38). This is one of the many curious resemblances between the Helgi and the Sigurth stories.

1. “Sáttu Sigrlinn |
Svafnis dóttur,
meyja fegrsta |
í munarheimi?
þót hagligar |
Hjörvarps konur
gumnum þykki |
at Glasislundi.”

“Sawest thou Sigrlin, |
Svafnir’s daughter,
The fairest maid |
in her home-land found?
Though Hjorvath’s wives |
by men are held
Goodly to see |
in Glasir’s wood.”

Glasir’s wood: Snorri in the *Skaldskaparmál* quotes a half stanza to the effect that “Glasir stands with golden leaves before Othin’s hall,” and calls it “the fairest wood among gods and men.” The phrase as used here seems to mean little.

Atli kvað:

2. “Munt við Atla |
Iþmundar sun,
fogl fróþhugaþr! |
fleira mæla?”

Fuglinn kvað:

“Munk, ef mik buþlungur |
blóta vildi,
ok kýsk þats vilk |
ór konungs garði.”

Atli kvað:

3. “Kjōsat Hjōrvarþ |
nē hans sunu,
nē enar fōgru |
fylkis brūþir,

Atli spake:

“Now with Atli, |
Ithmund’s son,
Wilt thou say more, |
thou bird so wise?”

The bird spake:

“I may if the prince |
an offering makes,
And I have what I will |
from the house of the king.”

Atli spake:

“Choose not Hjorvarth, |
nor sons of his,
Nor the wives so fair |
of the famous chief;

eigi brūpir |
þærs buþlungr ā;
vel saman kaupum! |
þat's vina kynni.”

Ask not the brides |
that the prince's are;
Fair let us deal |
in friendly wise.”

Fuglinn kvað:

4. “Hof munk kjōsa, |
hōrga marga,
gollhyrndar kȳr |
frā grams buī,
ef hōnum Sigrlinn |
sefr ā armi
ok ōnaupug |
jōfri fylgir.”

The bird spake:

“A fane will I ask, |
and altars many,
Gold-horned cattle |
the prince shall give me,
If Sigrlin yet |
shall sleep in his arms,
Or free of will |
the hero shall follow.”

The bird's demands would indicate that it is in reality one of the gods. *Gold-horned cattle:* cf. *Thrymskvitha*, 23. There are other references to gilding the horns of cattle, particularly for sacrificial purposes.

Þetta var āþr Atli fœri; en er hann
kom heim ok konungr spurði hann
tīþinda, kvað hann:

This was before Atli went on his jour-
ney; but when he came home, and the
king asked his tidings, he said:

The annotator contradicts himself here, as he had already stated that Atli was on his way home.

5. “Hōfum erfīþi, |
etki eyrindi,
mara þraut ōra |
ā meginfjalli;

“Trouble we had, |
but tidings none,
Our horses failed |
in the mountains high,

urpum sīþan |
Sæmorn vafa;
þā vas oss synjat |
Svafnis dōttur,
hringum gōddrar, |
es hafa vildum.”

The waters of Sæmorn |
we needs must wade;
Svafnir’s daughter, |
with rings bedecked,
She whom we sought, |
was still denied us.”

Possibly the remains of two stanzas, or perhaps a line has been added. *Sæmorn*: this river is nowhere else mentioned.

Konungr bað at þeir skyldu fara
annat sinn; fōr hann sjālf.

The king bade that they should go an-
other time, and he went with them him-
self.

En er þeir kōmu upp ā fjall, ok sā
ā Svāvaland landsbruna ok jōreyki
stōra.

But when they came up on the moun-
tain, they saw Svavaland burning and
mighty dust-clouds from many steeds.

Reið konungr af fjallinu fram ī landit
ok tōk nātþōl við ā eina.

The king rode from the mountain for-
ward into the land, and made a night’s
stay hard by a stream.

Atli helt vörð ok fōr yfir āna; hann
fann eitt hūs.

Atli kept watch and went over the
stream; he found there a house.

Fugl mikill sat ā hūsinu ok gætti, ok
var sofnaðr.

A great bird sat on the housetop to
guard it, but he was asleep.

Atli skaut spjōti fuglinn til bana, en
ī hūsinu fann hann Sigrlinn konungs
dōttur ok Ālǫfu jarls dōttur ok hafði
þær bāðar braut með sēr.

Atli hurled his spear at the bird and
slew it, and in the house he found Sigr-
lin the king’s daughter and Alop the
jarl’s daughter, and he brought them
both thence with him.

Frānmarr jarl hafði hamaz ī arnar líki
ok varit þær fyr hernum með fjöl-
kyngi.

Jarl Franmar had changed himself into
the likeness of an eagle, and guarded
them from the enemy host by magic.

Hrōþmarr hēt konungr, biþill Sigrlinnar; hann drap Svāvakonung ok hafði rænt ok brent landit.

Hjorvarþr konungr fekk Sigrlinnar, en Atli Ālofar.

Hrothmar was the name of a king, a wooer of Sigrlin; he slew the king of Svavaland and had plundered and burned his land.

King Hjorvarth took Sigrlin, and Atli took Alof.

(II)

Hjorvarþr ok Sigrlinn āttu son mikinn ok vænan; hann var þogull, ekki nafn festiz við hann.

Hann sat ā haugi, hann sǫ rīða valkyrjur nīu, ok var ein gōfugligust;

hon kvað:

Hjorvarth and Sigrlin had a son, mighty and of noble stature; he was a silent man, and no name stuck fast to him.

He sat on a hill, and saw nine Valkyries riding; one of them was the fairest of all.

She spake:

Sigrlin and Alof, protected by the latter's father, Franmar, have fled before the ravaging army of Sigrlin's rejected suitor, Hrothmar. The beginning of a new section (II) is indicated in the manuscript only by the unusually large capital letter with which "Hjorvarth" begins. *No name*, etc.: this probably means that Helgi had always been so silent that he would answer to no name, with the result that he had none. *Valkyries*: cf. *Voluspo*, 31 and note. The annotator insists here and in the prose after stanza 9 that Svava was a Valkyrie, but there is nothing in the verse to prove it, or, indeed, to identify the Svava of the last section of the poem with the person who gave Helgi his name. In the *Volsungasaga* Sigmund himself names his son Helgi, and gives him a sword, following *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I.

6. "Sīþ munt, Helgi! |
hringum rāða,
rīkr rōgapaldr, |
nē Rōþulsvōllum
— ǫrn gōl ārla — |
ef āe þegir,

"Late wilt thou, Helgi, |
have hoard of rings,
Thou battle-tree fierce, |
or of shining fields,—
The eagle screams soon,— |
if never thou speakest,

þōt harþan hug, |
hilmir! gjaldir.”

Though, hero, hard |
thy heart may cry.”

Battle-free: poetic phrase for “warrior.” *Shining fields:* the words in the manuscript may form a proper name, Rothulsvoll, having this meaning.

Helgi kvaþ:

7. “Hvat lætr fylgja |
Helga nafni,
brūþr bjartlituþ! |
alls bjōþa ræþr?
Hygg fyr ǫllum |
atkvæþum vell!
þikk eigi þat, |
nema þik hafak.”

Helgi spake:

“What gift shall I have |
with Helgi’s name,
Glorious maid, |
for the giving is thine?
All thy words |
shall I think on well,
But I want them not |
if I win not thee.”

Gift: not only was it customary to give gifts with the naming of a child, but the practice frequently obtained when a permanent epithet was added to the name of an adult.

Valkyrja kvaþ:

8. “Sverþ veitk liggja |
ī Sigarsholmi
fjōrum færi |
an fimm tōgu;
eitt es þeira |
ǫllum betra,
vīgnesta bōl, |
ok varit gulli.

The Valkyrie spake:

“Swords I know lying |
in Sigarsholm,
Fifty there are |
save only four;
One there is |
that is best of all,
The shield-destroyer, |
with gold it shines.

Sigarsholm (“Isle of Sigar”): a place not identified, but probably related to the Sigarsvoll

where Helgi was slain (stanza 35).

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| 9. <i>Hrōþr's ī hjalti, </i>
<i>hugr's ī miþju,</i>
<i>ōgn's ī oddi </i>
<i>þeims eiga getr;</i>
<i>liggr meþ eggju </i>
<i>ormr dreyrfaiþr,</i>
<i>en ā valbōstu </i>
<i>verpr naþr hala."</i> | <i>In the hilt is fame, </i>
<i>in the haft is courage,</i>
<i>In the point is fear, </i>
<i>for its owner's foes;</i>
<i>On the blade there lies </i>
<i>a blood-flecked snake,</i>
<i>And a serpent's tail </i>
<i>round the flat is twisted."</i> |
|---|---|

The sword is carved with magic runes and with snakes. *Fame*: the original word is uncertain.

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|--|---|
| Eylimi hēt konungr, dōttir hans var
Svāva, hon var valkyrja ok reiþ lopt
ok lōg.
Hon gaf Helga nafn þetta ok hlīfpi
honum opt siþan ī orrostum.
Helgi kvaþ: | Eylimi was the name of a king, whose
daughter was Svava; she was a Valkyrie,
and rode air and sea.
She gave Helgi this name, and shielded
him oft thereafter in battle.
Helgi spake: |
|--|---|

Eylimi: this name is another link with the Sigurth story, as it is likewise the name of the father of Sigurth's mother, Hjordis.

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| 10. <i>"Estat, Hjørvarþr! </i>
<i>heilrāþr konungr,</i>
<i>folks oddviti, </i>
<i>þōt frægr seir;</i>
<i>lēzt eld eta </i>
<i>jōfra bygþir,</i> | <i>"Hjørvarth, king, </i>
<i>unwholesome thy counsels,</i>
<i>Though famed thou art </i>
<i>in leading the folk,</i>
<i>Letting fire the homes </i>
<i>of heroes eat,</i> |
|--|---|

en angr við þik |
etki gørbu.

Who evil deed |
had never done thee.

With this stanza begins a new episode, that of Helgi's victory over King Hrothmar, who had killed his mother's father (cf. [prose after stanza 5](#)). It has been suggested, in consequence, that stanzas 10–11 may be a separate fragment. The verse tells nothing of the battle, merely giving Helgi's reproaches to his father for having left Svafnir's death and the burning of Svavaland unavenged.

11. En Hrōþmarr skal |
hringum rāþa
þeim es ǫttu |
ōrir niþjar;
sā sēs fylkir |
fæst at lífi,
hyggsk aldaþra |
arfi rāþa.”

Yet Hrothmar still |
the hoard doth hold,
The wealth that once |
our kinsmen wielded;
Full seldom care |
the king disturbs,
Heir to dead men |
he deems himself.”

Hjorvarþr svarði at hann mundi
fā liþ Helga, ef hann vill hefna
mōþurfǫður síns.

Þā sōtti Helgi sverþit er Svāva vīsaði
honum til.

Þā fōr hann ok Atli ok feldu Hrōþmar
ok unnu mǫrg þrekvirki.

Hjorvarth answered that he would give
Helgi a following if he fain would
avenge his mother's father.

Then Helgi got the sword that Svava
had told him of.

So he went, and Atli with him, and
they slew Hrothmar, and they did many
great deeds.

(III)

Hann drap Hata jǫtun, er hann sat ā
bergi nǫkkuru.

He slew the giant Hati, whom he found
sitting on a certain mountain.

Helgi ok Atli lāgu skipum ī Hatafirþi.

Helgi and Atli lay with their ships in Hatafjord.

Atli helt vǫrþ enn fyrri hlut nætrinnar.

Atli kept watch during the first part of the night.

Hrīmgerþr Hatadōttir kvað:

Hrimgerth, Hati's daughter, spake:

The manuscript does not indicate any break, but the episode which forms the basis of the *Hrimgertharmol* (stanzas 12–30) clearly begins with the slaying of the giant Hati (“The Hateful”). *Hatafjord*: “Hati’s Fjord.” *Hrimgerth*: “Frost-Shrouded” (?).

12. “Hverir’u hǫlþar |
 ī Hatafirþi?
skjǫldum’s tjaldat ā skipum;
frǫknla lātíþ, |
 fātt hykk yþr seask:
kenniþ mēr nafn konungs.”

“Who are the heroes |
 in Hatafjord?
The ships are covered with shields;
Bravely ye look, |
 and little ye fear,
The name of the king would I know.”

Atli kvað:

Atli spake:

13. “Helgi hann heitir, |
 en þū hvergi māt
vinna grand grami;
jarnborgir’ū |
 of ǫþlings flota,
knegut oss fǫlur fara.”

“Helgi his name, |
 and never thou mayst
Harm to the hero bring;
With iron is fitted |
 the prince’s fleet,
Nor can witches work us ill.”

Iron: the keels of Norse ships were sometimes fitted with iron “shoes” at bow and stern, but it is not certain that this practice much antedated the year 1000, and thus this line has raised some question as to the antiquity of this stanza, if not of the entire *Hrimgertharmol*, which may have been composed as late as the eleventh century.

Hrīmgerþr kvað:

14. “Hvē þū heitir, |
halr enn āmōtki?
hvē þik kalla konir?
fylkir þēr truir, |
es þik ī fōgrum lætr
beits stafni bua.”

Hrimgerth spake:

- “Who now, thou mighty |
man, art thou?
By what name art thou known to men?
He trusts thee well, |
the prince who wills
That thou stand at the stem of his
ship.”

Atli kvað:

15. “Atli heitik, |
atall skalk þēr vesa,
mjök emk gīfrum gramastr;
ūrgan stafn |
ek hef opt buīt
ok kvalþar kveldriþur.

Atli spake:

- “Atli am I, |
and ill shalt thou find me,
Great hate for witches I have;
Oft have I been |
in the dripping bows,
And to dusk-riders death have
brought.

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker. The pun on “Atli” and “atall” (meaning “ill”) is untranslatable.

16. Hvē þū heitir, |
hāla nāgrōþug?
nefndu þinn, fāla, fōþur!
niu rōstum |
es skyldir neþarr vesa,
ok vaxi ā baþmi barr!”

- Corpse-hungry giantess, |
how art thou called?
Say, witch, who thy father was!
Nine miles deeper |
down mayst thou sink,
And a tree grow tall on thy bosom.”

Hrīmgerþr kvað:

17. “Hrīmgerþr heitik, |
Hati nefndisk faðir,
þann vissak āmōtkastan jōtun:
brūþir margar |
hann lēt frā bui teknar,
unz hann Helgi hjō.”

Hrimgerth spake:

“Hrimgerth am I, |
my father was Hati,
Of giants the most in might;
Many a woman |
he won from her home,
Ere Helgi hewed him down.”

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker.

Atli kvað:

18. “Þū vast, hāla! |
fyr hildings skipum
ok lātt ī fjarþar mynni fyrir;
rāesis rekka |
es vildir Rōn gefa,
ef kvāemit ī þverst þvari.”

Atli spake:

“Witch, in front |
of the ship thou wast,
And lay before the fjord;
To Ron wouldst have given |
the ruler’s men,
If a spear had not stuck in thy flesh.”

From this point to the end the manuscript does not indicate the speakers. *Ron:* wife of the sea-god Ægir, who draws drowning men into the sea with her net. There is no other reference to the wounding of Hrimgerth.

Hrīmgerþr kvað:

19. “Dulīþr est, Atli! |
draums kveþk þēr vesa,
sīga lāetr brýnn fyr braar;
mōþir mīn |
lā fyr mildings skipum,
ek drekþa Hlōþvarþs sunum ī
hafi.

Hrimgerth spake:

“Dull art thou, Atli, |
thou dreamest, methinks,
The lids lie over thine eyes;
By the leader’s ships |
my mother lay,
Hlothvarth’s sons on the sea I slew.

Apparently both Hrimgerth and her mother, Hati's wife, had sought to destroy Helgi's ships, and had actually killed some of his companions, the sons of *Hlothvarth*, concerning whom nothing more is known. Many editors assume that a stanza containing a speech by Atli has been lost after stanza 19.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 20. Gneggja myndir, Atli!
ef geldr nē vāerir,
brettir sinn Hrimgerþr hala;
aptarla hjarta
hykk at þitt, Atli! sei,
þōt hafir <i>reina</i> rōdd.” | Thou wouldst neigh, Atli,
but gelded thou art,
See, Hrimgerth hoists her tail;
In thy hinder end
is thy heart, methinks,
Though thy speech is a stallion's cry.” |
|--|---|

Apparently Hrimgerth has assumed the form of a mare.

Atli kvaþ:

- 21.** “*Reini* munk þēr þykkja, |
ef þū reyna knātt
ok stīgak land af legi;
ōll munt lemjask, |
ef mēr's alhugat,
ok sveigja þinn, Hrimgerþr!
hala.”

Atli spake:

- “A stallion I seem |
if thou seekest to try me,
And I leap to land from the sea;
I shall smite thee to bits, |
if so I will,
And heavy sinks Hrimgerth's tail.”

Hrimgerþr kvaþ:

- 22.** “Atli! gakk ā land, |
ef afli treystisk,
ok hittumk ī vīk Varins;
rifja rētti |
es munt, rekk! faa,

Hrimgerth spake:

- “Go ashore then, Atli, |
if sure of thy might,
Let us come to Varin's cove;
Straight shall thy rounded |
ribs be made

ef þū mēr ī krummur kōmr.”

If thou comest within my claws.”

Varin's cove: the name of Varin appears twice in place names in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I* (stanzas 27 and 39). The sagas mention a mythical King Varin who lived at Skorustrond in Rogaland (Norway).

Atli kvaþ:

23. “Munkak ganga, |
āþr gumnar vakna,
ok halda of vīsa vǫrþ;
esa mēr ørvænt |
nær ōru komir,
skars! upp und skipi.”

Atli spake:

“I will not go |
till the warriors wake,
Again their chief to guard;
I should wonder not, |
foul witch, if up
From beneath our keel thou shouldst
come.”

Hrīmgerþr kvaþ:

24. “Vaki þū, Helgi! |
ok bōt við Hrīmgerþi,
es lēzt hǫggvinn Hata;
eina nōtt |
knā hōn hjā jǫfri sofa,
þā hefr hōn bǫlva bōtr.”

Hrimgerth spake:

“Awake now, Helgi, |
and Hrimgerth requite,
That Hati to death thou didst hew;
If a single night |
she can sleep by the prince,
Then requited are all her ills.”

Helgi kvaþ:

25. “Loþinn heitir es þik skal eiga — |
leiþ est mannkyni —
sā býr ī Þolleyju þurs,
hundvīss jǫtunn, |
hraunbua verstr:

Helgi spake:

“’Tis Lothin shall have thee, — |
thou’rt loathsome to men, —
His home in Tholley he has;
Of the wild-dwellers worst |
is the giant wise,

sā's þēr makligr maþr.”

He is meet as a mate for thee.”

Of the giant *Lothin* (“The Shaggy”) and his home in *Tholley* (“Pine Island”) nothing is known. Cf. *Skirnismol*, 35.

Hrīngerþr kvaþ:

26. “Hina vilt heldr, Helgi! |
es rēþ hafnir skoþa
fyrri nōtt meþ firum;
[marggollin mæþ |
þōttumk magni bera;
hēr stē hōn land af legi

ok festi yþvarn flota;]
hōn ein þvī veldr, |
es ek eigi māk
buþlungs mōnnum bana.”

Hrimgerth spake:

“More thou lovest her |
who scanned the harbor,
Last night among the men;
[The gold-decked maid |
bore magic, methinks,
When the land from the sea she
sought,
And fast she kept your fleet;]
She alone is to blame |
that I may not bring
Death to the monarch’s men.”

Something is clearly wrong with this stanza, and the manuscript indicates line 6 as the beginning of a new one. Perhaps a line (between lines 4 and 5) has been lost, or perhaps the lines in parenthesis are interpolations. Hrimgerth here refers to Svava, or to the protectress with whom the annotator has identified her, as having saved Helgi and his, ships from the vengeance of the giantesses. In the original line 1 includes Helgi’s name, which makes it metrically incorrect.

Helgi kvaþ:

27. “Heyr nū, Hrīngerþr! |
ef ek bōti harma þēr,
seg þū gørr grami:
vas sū ein vætr |
es barg oþlings skipum,

Helgi spake:

“Hrimgerth, mark, |
if thy hurts I requite,
Tell now the truth to the king;
Was there one who the ships |
of the warrior warded,

eþa fóru þær fleiri saman?”

Or did many together go?”

Hrīmgerþr kvað:

28. “Þrinnar niundir meyja, |
þō reið ein fyrir
hvīt und hjalmi mæð;
marir hristusk, |
stōþ af mōnum þeira
dōgg ī djūpa dali,
[hagl ī hōva við,
þaþan kōmr með ǫldum ā,
allt vǫrumk leitt es leitik.]”

Hrimgerth spake:

“Thrice nine there were, |
but one rode first,
A helmed maid white of hue;
Their horses quivered, |
there came from their manes
Dew in the dales so deep,
[Hail on the woods so high,
Thence men their harvest have,
But ill was the sight I saw.]”

Again something is clearly wrong, and the last three lines look like interpolations, though some editors have tried to reconstruct two full stanzas. The passage suggests the identification of the Valkyries with the clouds.

Atli kvað:

29. “Līt nū austr, Hrīmgerþr! |
en þik lostna hefr
Helgi helstōfum:
vatni ā |
borgit’s ǫþlings flota
ok siklings mōnnum et sama.”

Atli spake:

“Look eastward, Hrimgerth, |
for Helgi has struck thee
Down with the runes of death;
Safe in harbor floats |
the prince’s fleet,
And safe are the monarch’s men.”

Some editions give this speech to Helgi. *Eastward*: Atli and Helgi have held Hrimgerth in talk till sunrise, and the sun’s rays turn her into stone. But dwarfs rather than giants were the victims of sunlight; cf. *Alvissmol*, stanzas 16 and 35.

Helgi kvað:

30. “Dagr’s nū, Hrīngerþr! |
en þik dvalþa hefr
Atli til aldrлага;
hafnarmark |
þykkir hlōgligt vesa,
þars ī steins līki stendr.”

Helgi spake:

“It is day, Hrimgerth, |
for Atli held thee
Till now thy life thou must lose;
As a harbor mark |
men shall mock at thee,
Where in stone thou shalt ever stand.”

Most editions give this stanza to Atli. With this the *Hrimgertharmol* ends, and after the next prose passage the meter reverts to that of the earlier sections.

(IV)

Helgi konungr var allmikill hermaþr.

Hann kom til Eylima konungs ok baþ Svāvu dōttur hans.

Þau Helgi ok Svāva veittuz vārar ok unnuz furþu mikit.

Svāva var heima með sīnum, en Helgi ī hernaði; var Svāva valkyrja enn sem fyrr.

Hefinn var heima með fōþur sīnum, Hjørvarþi konungi, ī Nōregi.

Hefinn fōr einn saman heim ōr skōgi jōlaaptan ok fann trollkonu; sū reiþ vargi ok hafþi orma at taumum ok baup fylgþ sīna Hefni.

“Nei” sagþi hann.

Hon sagþi: “Þess saltu gjalda at brag-arfulli.”

King Helgi was a mighty warrior.

He came to King Eylimi and sought the hand of his daughter, Svava.

Then Helgi and Svava exchanged vows, and greatly they loved each other.

Svava was at home with her father, while Helgi was in the field; Svava was still a Valkyrie as before.

Hethin was at home with his father, King Hjørvarth, in Norway.

Hethin was coming home alone from the forest one Yule-eve, and found a troll-woman; she rode on a wolf, and had snakes in place of a bridle. She asked Hethin for his company.

“Nay,” said he.

She said, “Thou shalt pay for this at the king’s toast.”

Um kveldit vāru heitstrengingar: var
framleiddr sonargoltr, lōgþu menn
þar ā hendr sīnar ok strengþu menn
þā heit at bragarfulli.

Hepinn strengþi heit til Svāvu Eylima
dōttur, unnustu Helga brōþur sīns,
ok iþraþiz svā mjōk, at hann gekk ā
braut villistīgu suþr ā lōnd, ok fann
Helga brōþur sinn.

Helgi kvaþ:

That evening the great vows were tak-
en; the sacred boar was brought in, the
men laid their hands thereon, and took
their vows at the king's toast.

Hethin vowed that he would have Sva-
va, Eylimi's daughter, the beloved of
his brother Helgi; then such great grief
seized him that he went forth on wild
paths southward over the land, and
found Helgi, his brother.

Helgi said:

The manuscript does not indicate a new section of the poem. *Eylimi*: cf. note on *prose after stanza 9*. *Valkyrie*: here, as before, the annotator has apparently nothing but his own imagination on which to base his statement. Svava in the ensuing stanzas certainly does not behave like a Valkyrie. *Norway*: the annotator doubtless based this statement on the reference to Norway in line 2 of stanza 31. *Yule-eve*: the Yule feast, marking the new year, was a great event in the heathen North. It was a time of feasting and merrymaking, vows ("New Year's resolutions"), ghosts and witches; the spirits had their greatest power on Yule-eve. *The king's toast*: vows made at the passing of the king's cup at the Yule feast were particularly sacred. *Sacred boar*: a boar consecrated to Freyr, an integral part of the Yule rites. Hethin's vow, which is, of course, the vengeance of the troll-woman, is too sacred to be broken, but he immediately realizes the horror of his oath.

31. "Kom heill, Hepinn! |
hvat kant segja
nȳra spjalla |
ōr Nōregi?
hvī's þēr, stillir! |
stōkt ōr landi,
ok est einn kominn |
oss at finna?"

"Welcome, Hethin! |
what hast thou to tell
Of tidings new |
that from Norway come?
Wherefore didst leave |
thy land, O prince,
And fared alone |
to find us here?"

From Norway: Bugge uses this phrase as evidence that the poem was composed in one of the Icelandic settlements of the western islands, but as the annotator himself seems to have

thought that Hethin came to Helgi by land (“on wild paths southward”), this argument does not appear to have much weight.

Hefinn kvað:

32. “*Høfumk miklu glōpr |*
meiri sōttan,
an, brōpir! þēr |
bæta mættak:
ek hef kørna |
ena konungbornu,
brūpi þīna |
at bragarfulli.”

Hethin spake:

“A deed more evil |
I have done
Than, brother mine, |
thou e’er canst mend;
For I have chosen |
the child of the king,
Thy bride, for mine |
at the monarch’s toast.”

The second line is conjectural; a line has clearly been lost from this stanza, and various emendations have been suggested.

Helgi kvað:

33. “*Sakask eigi þū! |*
sōnn munu verþa
ølmōl, Hefinn! |
ykkur beggja:
mēr hefr stillir |
stefnt til eyrar,
[þriggja nātta |
skylak þar koma;]
erumk if ā þvī, |
at aptr komak.
[þā ma at gōpu |
gørask slíkt, ef skal.]”

Helgi spake:

“Grieve not, Hethin, |
for true shall hold
The words we both |
by the beer have sworn;
To the isle a warrior |
wills that I go,
[There shall I come |
the third night hence;]
And doubtful must be |
my coming back,
[So may all be well, |
if fate so wills.]”

Perhaps this is the remnant of two stanzas, or perhaps two lines (probably the ones in parenthesis) have been interpolated. *The isle*: duels were commonly fought on islands, probably to guard against treacherous interference, whence the usual name for a duel was “isle-going.” A duel was generally fought three days after the challenge. Reckoning the lapse of time by nights instead of days was a common practice throughout the German and Scandinavian peoples.

Hefinn kvað:

34. “Sagþir, Helgi! |
 at Hefinn væri
 gōps verþr frā þēr |
 ok gjafa stōrra:
 þēr es sōmra |
 sverþ at rjōþa,
 an friþ gefa |
 fiqndum þīnum.”

Hethin spake:

“Thou saidst once, Helgi, |
 that Hethin was
 A friend full good, |
 and gifts didst give him;
 More seemly it were |
 thy sword to redden,
 Than friendship thus |
 to thy foe to-give.”

Þat kvað Helgi, þvīat hann grunapi
 um feigþ sīna, ok þat at fylgþur hans
 hōfpu vitjat Hefins, þā er hann sā
 konuna rīþa varginum.

Ālfr hēt konungr, sonr Hrōþmars, er
 Helga hafþi vōll haslaþan ā Sigar-
 svelli ā þriggja nātta fresti.

[Þā kvað Helgi:

Helgi spoke thus because he foresaw his
 death, for his following-spirits had met
 Hethin when he saw the woman riding
 on the wolf.

Alf was the name of a king, the son of
 Hrothmar, who had marked out a bat-
 tle-place with Helgi at Sigarsvoll after a
 stay of three nights.

Then Helgi spake:

Some editors place all or part of this prose passage after stanza 35. *Following-spirits*: the “fylgja” was a female guardian spirit whose appearance generally betokened death. The belief was common throughout the North, and has come down to recent times in Scottish and Irish folk-lore. Individuals and sometimes whole families had these following-spirits, but it was most unusual for a person to have more than one of them. *Alf*: son of the Hrothmar who killed Helgi’s grandfather, and who was in turn later killed by Helgi. *Sigarsvoll* (“Sigar’s Field”): cf. stanza 8 and note; the Sigar in question may be the man who appears

as Helgi's messenger in stanzas 36–39.

35. “Reiþ ā vargi, |
 es røkvit vas,
fljōþ eitt es hann |
 fylgju beiddi;
hōn vissi þat, |
 at veginn mundi
Sigrlinnar sunr |
 ā Sigarsvøllum.”]

“On a wolf there rode, |
 when dusk it was,
A woman who fain |
 would have him follow;
Well she knew |
 that now would fall
Sigrlin's son |
 at Sigarsvoll.”

Þar var orrosta mikil ok fekk þar
Helgi banasār.

There was a great battle, and there Hel-
gi got a mortal wound.

36. Sendi Helgi |
 Sigar at rīþa
ept Eylima |
 eingadōttur:
“Biþ brāþliga |
 būna verþa,
ef vill finna |
 fylki kvikvan.”

Sigar riding |
 did Helgi send
To seek out Eylimi's |
 only daughter:
“Bid her swiftly |
 ready to be,
If her lover |
 alive she would find.”

Sigar (“The Victorious”): cf. the foregoing note.

Sigarr kvaþ:

37. “Mik hefr Helgi |
 hingat sendan,

Sigar spake:

“Hither now |
 has Helgi sent me,

viþ þik, Svāva! |
sjalfa at mæla;
þik kvazk hilmir |
hitta vilja,
āþr ītrborinn |
ǫndu tȳndi.”

Svāva kvaþ:

38. “Hvat varþ Helga |
Hjorvarþs syni?
mēr’s harþliga |
harma leitat;
ef hann sār of lēk |
eþa sverþ of beit,
þeim skalk gumna |
grand of vinna.”

Sigarr kvaþ:

39. “Fell ī morgun |
at Frekasteini
buþlungr sās vas |
baztr und sōlu;
Alfr mun sigri |
ǫllum rāþa,
þōt þetta sinn |
þorfgi vāri.”

With thee, Svava, |
thyself to speak;
The hero said |
he fain would see thee
Ere life the nobly |
born should leave.”

Svava spake:

- “What chanced with Helgi, |
Hjorvarth’s son?
Hard to me |
is harm now come;
If the sea smote him, |
or sword bit him,
Ill shall I bring |
to all his foes.”

Sigar spake:

- “In the morn he fell |
at Frekastein,
The king who was noblest |
beneath the sun;
Alf has the joy |
of victory all,
Though need therefor |
is never his.”

Frekastein (“Wolf-Crag”): the name appears several times in the Helgi lays applied to battle-

fields; cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 46 and 55, and II, 18 and 24. *Need*: i. e., Alf deserves no credit for the victory, which was due to the troll woman's magic.

Helgi kvaþ:

40. “Heil ves, Svāva! |
hug skalt deila,
sjā mun ī heimi |
hinztr fundr vesa;
tea buþlungi |
blōþa unþir,
hofumk hjorr komit |
hjarta et nāsta.

Helgi spake:

“Hail to thee, Svava! |
thy sorrow rule,
Our meeting last |
in life is this;
Hard the wounds |
of the hero bleed,
And close to my heart |
the sword has come.

41. Biþk þik, Svāva! |
—brūþr, grāttattu! —
ef vill mīnu |
māli hlýþa:
at þū Hefni |
hvīlu gørvir
ok jøfur ungan |
ōstum leiþir.”

I bid thee, Svava,— |
weep not, bride,—
If thou wilt hearken |
to these my words,
The bed for Hethin |
have thou ready,
And yield thy love |
to the hero young.”

One or two editors ascribe this stanza to Hethin.

Svāva kvaþ:

42. “Mælt hafþak þat |
ī munarheimi,

Svava spake:

“A vow I had |
in my dear-loved home,

þās mēr Helgi |
hringa valþi;
myndiga lostig |
at liþinn fylki
jǫfur ǫkunnan |
armi verja.”

When Helgi sought |
with rings to have me,
That not of my will, |
if the warrior died,
Would I fold in my arms |
a man unfamed.”

Hefinn kvað:

43. “Kyss mik, Svāva! |
kømk eigi āþr
Rogheims ā vit |
nē Rǫþulsfjalla,
āþr hefnt hafak |
Hjǫrvarþs sonar,
es buþlungr vas |
baztr und sǫlu.”

Hethin spake:

“Kiss me, Svava, |
I come not back,
Rogheim to see, |
or Rothulsfjoll,
Till vengeance I have |
for the son of Hjorvarth,
The king who was noblest |
beneath the sun.”

A few editions make the extraordinary blunder of ascribing this speech to the dying Helgi. The point, of course, is that Hethin will satisfy Svava’s vow by becoming famous as the slayer of Alf. *Rogheim* (“Rome of Battle”) and *Rothulsfjoll* (“Sun-Mountain”): nowhere else mentioned; Hethin means simply that he will not come back to Svava till he has won fame.

Helgi ok Svāva er sagt at væri endr-
borin.

Of Helgi and Svava it is said that they
were born again.

Regarding this extraordinary bit see the [prose note](#) at the end of *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*. Gering thinks the reborn Helgi Hjorvarthsson was Helgi Hundingsbane, while Svava, according to the annotator himself, became Sigrun. The point seems to be simply that there were so many Helgi stories current, and the hero died in so many irreconcilable ways, that tradition had to have him born over again, not once only but several times, to accommodate his many deaths, and to avoid splitting him up into several Helgis. Needless to say, the poems themselves know nothing of this rebirth, and we owe the suggestion

entirely to the annotator, who probably got it from current tradition.

Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I

The First Lay of Helgi Hundingsbane

Introductory Note

The general subject of the Helgi lays is considered in the introduction to *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, and it is needless here to repeat the statements there made. *The first lay of Helgi Hundingsbane* is unquestionably one of the latest of the Eddic poems, and was composed probably not earlier than the second quarter of the eleventh century. It presents several unusual characteristics. For one thing, it is among the few essentially narrative poems in the whole collection, telling a consecutive story in verse, and, except for the abusive dialogue between Sinfjotli and Gothmund, which clearly was based on another and older poem, it does so with relatively little use of dialogue. It is, in fact, a ballad, and in the main an exceedingly vigorous one. The annotator, who added his prose narrative notes so freely in the other Helgi poems, here found nothing to do. The available evidence indicates that narrative verse was a relatively late development in Old Norse poetry, and it is significant that most of the poems which consist chiefly, not of dialogue, but of narrative stanzas, such as *the first Helgi Hundingsbane lay* and *the two Atli lays*, can safely be dated, on the basis of other evidence, after the year 1000.

The first Helgi Hundingsbane lay is again differentiated from most of the Eddic poems by the character of its language. It is full of those verbal intricacies which were the delight of the Norse skalds, and which made Snorri's dictionary of poetic phrases an absolute necessity. Many of these I have paraphrased in the translation; some I have simplified or wholly avoided. A single line will serve to indicate the character of this form of complex diction (stanza 56, line 4):

And the horse of the giantess | raven's-food had.

This means simply that wolves (giantesses habitually rode on wolves) ate the bodies of the dead.

Except for its intricacies of diction, and the possible loss of a stanza here and there, the poem is comparatively simple. The story belongs in all its essentials to the Helgi tradition, with the Volsung cycle brought in only to the extent of making Helgi the son of Sigmund, and in the introduction of Sinfjotli, son of Sigmund and his sister Signy, in a passage which has little or nothing to do with the course of the narrative, and which looks like an expansion of a passage from some older poem, perhaps from the "old Volsung lay" to which the annotator of *the second Helgi Hundingsbane lay* refers (*prose after stanza 12*). There

are many proper names, some of which betray the confusion caused by the blending of the two sets of traditions; for example, Helgi appears indiscriminately as an Ylfing (which presumably he was before the Volsung story became involved) and as a Volsung. Granmar and his sons are called Hniflungs (Nibelungen) in stanza 50, though they seem to have had no connection with this race. The place names have aroused much debate as to the localization of the action, but while some of them probably reflect actual places, there is so much geographical confusion, and such a profusion of names which are almost certainly mythical, that it is hard to believe that the poet had any definite locations in mind.

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Ār vas alda | In olden days, |
| | þats arar gullu, | when eagles screamed, |
| | hnigu heilög vötn | And holy streams |
| | af Himinfjöllum: | from heaven's crags fell, |
| | þa hafði Helga | Was Helgi then, |
| | enn hugumstōra | the hero-hearted, |
| | Borghildr borit | Borghild's son, |
| | ī Brālundi. | in Bralund born. |

The manuscript contains the superscription: "Here begins the lay of Helgi Hundingsbane and h. (Hothbrodd?) The lay of the Volsungs." *Eagles*, etc.: the screaming of eagles and water pouring from heaven were portents of the birth of a hero. *Borghild*: Sigmund's first wife; Bralund was her home, not Sigmund's.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 2. | Nōtt varþ ī bō, | 'Twas night in the dwelling, |
| | nornir kvōmu, | and Norns there came, |
| | þærs qþlingi | Who shaped the life |
| | aldr of skōpu; | of the lofty one; |
| | bōþu fylki | They bade him most famed |
| | frægstan verþa | of fighters all |
| | ok buþlunga | And best of princes |
| | baztan þykkja. | ever to be. |

Norns: cf. *Voluspo*, 20 and note. Here it is the Norns who preside over Helgi's early destiny,

and not a Valkyrie, as in *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*.

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|------------------------|
| 3. | Snøru af afli | Mightily wove they |
| | ørloḡþōttu, | the web of fate, |
| | † þās borgir braut | While Bralund's towns |
| | ī Brālundi; | were trembling all; |
| | þær of greiddu | And there the golden |
| | gollin sīmu | threads they wove, |
| | ok und mānasal | And in the moon's hall |
| | mipjan festu. | fast they made them. |

Line 2 is largely guesswork, the manuscript being obscure. *Moon's hall*: the sky.

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|------------------------|
| 4. | Þær austr ok vestr | East and west |
| | enda fōlu, | the ends they hid, |
| | ātti lofþungr | In the middle the hero |
| | land ā milli; | should have his land; |
| | brā nipt Nera | And Neri's kinswoman |
| | ā norþrvega | northward cast |
| | einni festi, | A chain, and bade it |
| | ey baþ halda. | firm ever to be. |

East, etc.: the Norns give Helgi fame in the East, West, and North; in the North his renown is particularly to endure. This suggests that the poet was aware of the spread of the Helgi story over many lands. *Neri's kinswoman*: evidently one of the Norns, but nothing further is known of Neri, and the word may not be a proper name at all.

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|-------------------|
| 5. | Eitt vas at angri | Once sorrow had |
| | Ylfinga niþ | the Ylfings' son, |

ok þeiri meyju	And grief the bride
es munugþ fōddi:	who the loved one had borne.
* * *	* * *
Hrafn kvaþ at hrafni —	Quoth raven to raven,
sat ā hōm meiþi	on treetop resting,
andvanr ōtu — :	Seeking for food,
“ek veit nekkvat.	“There is something I know.

The manuscript indicates no gap, but it looks as though something had been lost after line 2. *Ylfings' son*: Sigmund is evidently meant, though calling him an Ylfing (cf. *Hyndluljóth*, 11 and note) is a manifest error. Helgi, in the tradition as it came from Denmark, was undoubtedly an Ylfing, and the poet, in order to combine the two legends, has to treat the Ylfings and Volsungs as if they were the same family.

6. Stendr ī brynju	In mail-coat stands
burr Sigmundar	the son of Sigmund,
dōgrs eins gamall,	A half-day old;
nū's dagr kominn!	now day is here;
hvessir augu	His eyes flash sharp
sem hildingar,	as the heroes' are,
sā's varga vinr:	He is friend of the wolves;
vit skulum teitir.”	full glad are we.”

Sigmund: the chief link between the Helgi and Sigurth stories. He was the son of Volsung, great-grandson of Othin. His children by his first wife, Borghild, were Helgi and Hamund (belonging to the Helgi cycle); his son by his second wife, Hjordis, was Sigurth. An incestuous connection with his sister, Signy (cf. Wagner's Siegmund and Sieglinde) resulted in the birth of Sinfjotli (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note).

7. Drōtt þōtti sā	The warrior throng
dōglingr vesa,	a ruler thought him,

kvōþu meþ gumnum gōþ q̄r komin; sjalfr gekk vīsi ōr vīgþrimu ungum fōra ītrlauk grami.	Good times, they said, mankind should see; The king himself from battle-press came, To give the prince a leek full proud.
---	--

The king: Sigmund, who gives his son a symbol of the lands which he bestows on him. Regarding the leek, cf. *Voluspo*, 4; *Guthrunarkvitha* I, 17, and *Sigrdrifumol*, 7.

8. Gaf Helga nafn ok Hringstaþi, Sōlfjoll, Snæfjoll ok Sigarsvōllu, Hringstoþ, Hōtūn ok Himinvanga, blōþorm buinn brōþr Sinfjotla.	Helgi he named him, and Hringstathir gave him, Solfjoll, Snæfjoll, and Sigarsvoll, Hringstoth, Hotun, and Himinvangar, And a blood-snake bedecked to Sinfjotli's brother.
---	--

Hringstathir ("Ring-Stead"): quite possibly the historical Ringsted, long a possession of the Danish kings, and thus a relic of the old Helgi tradition. *Hringstoth* may be another form of the same name. *Solfjoll* ("Sun-Mountain") and *Snæfjoll* ("Snow-Mountain") are fictitious names. Regarding *Sigarsvoll* cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, stanzas 8 and 35. Saxo mentions a Danish king named Sigar, and the frequency with which the name appears in the Helgi poems may be taken as a reminiscence of Denmark. *Hotun* ("High Place"): possibly the village of Tune in Seeland. *Himinvangar* ("Heaven's Field"): an imaginary place. *Blood-snake*: a sword. *Sinfjotli*: cf. note on stanza 6.

9. Þā nam at vaxa fyr vina brjōsti almr ītrborinn ynþis ljōma;	Mighty he grew in the midst of his friends, The fair-born elm, in fortune's glow;
---	--

hann galt ok gaf	To his comrades gold
goll verþungu,	he gladly gave,
sparþit hilmir	The hero spared not
hodd blōþrekin.	the blood-flecked hoard.

Elm: a not uncommon word for “man.” *Blood-flecked*: i.e., won in battle.

10. Skamt lēt vīsi	Short time for war
vīgs at bīþa,	the chieftain waited,
þās fylkir vas	When fifteen winters
fimtān vetra;	old he was;
hann harþan lēt	Hunding he slew,
Hunding veginn,	the hardy wight
þanns lengi rēþ	Who long had ruled
lōndum ok þegnum.	o’er lands and men.

Fifteen: until early in the eleventh century a Norwegian or Icelandic boy became “of age” at twelve, and Maurer cites this passage as added proof of the poem’s lateness. *Hunding*: the annotator (introductory prose to *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*) calls him king of Hundland, which shows no great originality. Saxo mentions a Hunding who was a Saxon king ruling in Jutland, probably the origin of Helgi’s traditional foe.

11. Kvøddu sīþan	Of Sigmund’s son
Sigmundar bur	then next they sought
auþs ok hringa	Hoard and rings,
Hundings arfar,	the sons of Hunding;
þvīt þeir ōttu	They bade the prince
jōfri at gjalda	requital pay
fjārnām mikit	For booty stolen
ok fōþur dauþa.	and father slain.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 12. Lētat buþlungr
bōtir uppi
nē niþja in heldr
nefgjǫld faa;
vōn kvaþ mundu
veþrs ens mikla
grāra geira
ok gremi Ōþins. | The prince let not
their prayers avail,
Nor gold for their dead
did the kinsmen get;
Waiting, he said,
was a mighty storm
Of lances gray
and Othin's grimness. |
|--|---|

Storm, etc.: war.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 13. Fara hildingar
hjørstefnu til
þeirars lögðu
at Logafjǫllum;
sleit Frōþa friþ
fianda ā milli,
fara Viþris grey
valgjørn of ey. | The warriors forth
to the battle went,
The field they chose
at Logafjoll;
Frothi's peace
midst foes they broke,
Through the isle went hungrily
Vithrir's hounds. |
|---|---|

Logafjoll ("Flame-Mountain"): a mythical name. *Frothi*: a traditional king of Denmark, whose peaceful reign was so famous that "Frothi's peace" became a by-word for peace of any kind. *Vithrir's hounds*: wolves; Vithrir is Othin, and his hounds are the wolves Freki and Geri.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 14. Settisk vīsi,
þās vegit hafði
Alf ok Eyjolf,
und arasteini, | The king then sat,
when he had slain
Eyjolf and Alf,
'neath the eagle-stone; |
|---|---|

Hjorvarþ ok Hōvarþ |
 Hundings sunu:
 farit hafði allri |
 ætt geirmīmis.

Hjorvarth and Hovarth, |
 Hunding's sons,
 The kin of the spear-wielder, |
 all had he killed.

In this poem Helgi kills all the sons of Hunding, but in the poems of the Sigurth cycle, and the prose notes attached thereto, Sigmund and his father-in-law, Eylimi, are killed by Hunding's sons, on whom Sigurth subsequently takes vengeance (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and *Reginsmol*).

15. Þā brā ljōma |
 af Logafjōllum
 en af ljōma þeim |
 leiptrir kvōmu
 ... |
 ...

Then glittered light |
 from Logafjoll,
 And from the light |
 the flashes leaped;
 ... |
 ...

No gap indicated in the manuscript, but almost certainly something has been lost mentioning more specifically the coming of the Valkyries. The lightning which accompanies them suggests again their identification with the clouds (cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 28).

16. ... |
 ...
 hōvar und hjōlmum |
 ā himinvanga;
 brynjur vōru |
 blōþi stokknar,
 en af geirum |
 geislar stōþu.

... |
 ...
 High under helms |
 on heaven's field;
 Their byrnies all |
 with blood were red,
 And from their spears |
 the sparks flew forth.

Some editions fill out the first line:

He saw there mighty | maidens riding.

(Sā þar mildingr | meyjar rīþa.)

The manuscript indicates line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 17. Frā ārliga
ōr ulfiþi
døglingr at þvī
dīs suþrōna,
ef heim vildi
meþ hildingum
þā nōtt fara;
þrymr vas alma. | Early then
in wolf-wood asked
The mighty king
of the southern maid,
If with the hero
home would she
Come that night;
the weapons clashed. |
|---|--|

Wolf-wood: dark forest; the original word is not altogether clear. *Southern*: this variety of Valkyrie, like the swan maidens of the *Völundarkvitha*, was clearly regarded as of southern (i.e., German) origin. Here again there is a confusion of traditions; the Valkyries of the *Voluspo* were as essentially Norse as any part of the older mythology. I doubt if a poet much earlier than the author of *the first Helgi Hundingsbane lay* would have made his Sigrun, daughter of Hogni, a Valkyrie. It is to be noted that the same complication appears in the Sigurth story, where the undoubted Valkyrie, Brynhild-Sigrdrifa (the latter name is really only an epithet) is hopelessly mixed up with the quite human Brynhild, daughter of Buthli.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 18. En af hesti
Hogna dōttir
— leiþ randa rym—
rāesi sagþi:
“Hykk at eigim
aþrar sýslur,
an baugbrota
bjōr at drekka. | Down from her horse
sprang Hogni’s daughter,—
The shields were still,—
and spake to the hero:
“Other tasks
are ours, methinks,
Than drinking beer
with the breaker of rings. |
|---|---|

Breaker of rings: generous prince, because the breaking of rings was the customary form of distributing gold.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 19. Hefr minn faðir
meyju sinni
grimmum heitit
Granmars syni;
en ek hef, Helgi!
Höþbrodd kveþinn
konung óneisan
sem kattar sun. | My father has pledged
his daughter fair
As bride to Granmar's
son so grim;
But, Helgi, I
once Hothbrodd called
As fine a king
as the son of a cat. |
|---|---|

Granmar: the annotator gives an account of him and his family in the prose following stanza 12 of *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 20. Þō kōmr fylkir
fāra nātta
...
...
nema hōnum vīsir
valstefnu til
eþa mey nemir
frā mildingi.” | Yet the hero will come
a few nights hence,
...
...
Unless thou dost bid him
the battle-ground seek,
Or takest the maid
from the warrior mighty.” |
|---|---|

No gap indicated in the manuscript; some editors combine the stanza with the fragmentary stanza 21, and others fill in with

And home will carry | Hogni's daughter.

(ok hefr heim meþ sēr | Hōgna dōttur.)

Helgi kvaþ:

21. “Uggi eigi þū |
 īsung banal
 fyrr munum reyna |
 frōknleik okkarn,
 an nīþingi |
 nauþug fylgir;
 mun dolga dynr, |
 nema dauþr seek.”

Helgi spake:

“Fear him not, |
 though Isung he felled,
 First must our courage |
 keen be tried,
 Before unwilling |
 thou fare with the knave;
 Weapons will clash, |
 if to death I come not.”

The manuscript has only lines 1 and 4 with the word “first” of line 2, and does not indicate Helgi as the speaker. The *Volsungasaga*, which follows this poem pretty closely, expands Helgi’s speech, and lines 2–3 are conjectural versifications of the saga’s prose. *Isung*: nothing is known of him beyond the fact, here indicated, that Hothbrodd killed him.

22. Sendi ōru |
 allvaldr þapan
 of land ok of lōg |
 leiþar at biþja
 ok iþgnōgan |
 ōgnar ljōma
 brōgnum bjōþa |
 ok burum þeira.

Messengers sent |
 the mighty one then,
 By land and by sea, |
 a host to seek,
 Store of wealth |
 of the water’s gleam,
 And men to summon, |
 and sons of men.

Water’s gleam: gold.

23. “Biþiþ skjōtliga |
 til skipa ganga
 ok ōr Brandeyju |
 būna verþa!”

“Bid them straightway |
 seek the ships,
 And off Brandey |
 ready to be!”

þápan beiþ þengill, |
unz þinig kvōmu
halir hundmargir |
ōr Heþinseyju.

There the chief waited |
till thither were come
Men by hundreds |
from Hethinsey.

Brandy (“Brand-Isle”): not mentioned elsewhere. *Hethinsey* (“Hethin’s Isle”): possibly the island of Hiddensee, east of Rügen.

24. Auk þar af stundu |
ōr Stafnsnesi
beit svōrt skriðu |
ok buin golli;
spurði Helgi |
Hjorleif at því:
“Hefr kannaða |
koni ōneisa?”

Soon off Stafnsnes |
stood the ships,
Fair they glided |
and gay with gold;
Then Helgi spake |
to Hjorleif asking:
“Hast thou counted |
the gallant host?”

Stafnsnes (“Steersman’s Cape”): an unidentifiable promontory. *Fair*: a guess, as the adjective in the manuscript is obscure. *Hjorleif* does not appear elsewhere, and seems to be simply one of Helgi’s lieutenants.

25. En ungr konungr |
qprum sagði,
“seint kvað at telja |
af Tronueyri
langhofþuð skip |
und liþondum,
es i Orvasund |
utan fōru.

The young king answered |
the other then:
“Long were it to tell |
from Tronueyr
The long-stemmed ships |
with warriors laden
That come from without |
into Orvasund.

Tronueyr: “Crane-Strand.” *Long-stemmed*: literally “long-headed,” as the high, curving stem of a Norse ship was often carved to represent a head and neck. *Orvasund*: almost certainly the Danish Öresund, off Seeland. Such bits of geography as this followed Helgi persistently.

26.
...	...
eru tolf hundrup	There are hundreds twelve
tryggra manna;	of trusty men,
þō's ī Hōtūnum	But in Hotun lies
hōlfu fleira	the host of the king,
vīgliþ konungs:	Greater by half;
vōn erum rōmu.”	I have hope of battle.”

No gap indicated in the manuscript. *Hotun*: cf. stanza 8 and note.

27. Svā brā stýrir	The ship's-tents soon
stafntjōldum af,	the chieftain struck,
at mildinga	And waked the throng
mengi vakþi,	of warriors all;
[ok dōglingar	[The heroes the red
dagsbrūn sea,]	of dawn beheld;]
ok siklingar	And on the masts
snøru upp við trē	the gallant men
vefnistingum	Made fast the sails
ā Varinsfirþi.	in Varinsfjord.

Line 3 seems to have been interpolated from line 4 of *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*, 42. *Ship's-tents*: the awnings spread over the deck to shelter the crews from sun and rain when

the ships were at anchor. *Varinsfjord*: cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 22 and note.

28. Varþ āra ymr	There was beat of oars
ok jarna glymr,	and clash of iron,
brast rōnd við rōnd,	Shield smote shield
rōru víkingar;	as the ships'-folk rowed;
eisandi gekk	Swiftly went
und oþlingum	the warrior-laden
lofpungs floti	Fleet of the ruler
lōndum fjarri.	forth from the land.

The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a new stanza, and some editions follow this arrangement, making lines 1–2 a separate stanza.

29. Svā vas at heyra,	So did it sound,
es saman kvōmu	when together the sisters
Kolgu systir	Of Kolga struck
ok kilir langir,	with the keels full long,
sem björg við brim	As if cliffs were broken
brotna mundi	with beating surf,
...	...
...	...

The manuscript indicates no gap, and some editions combine the stanza with lines 3–4 of stanza 28. *Sisters of Kolga*: the waves, Kolga (“The Gold”) being one of the daughters of the sea-god, Ægir. As the *Volsungasaga* says, “Now there was a great storm.”

30. Draga baþ Helgi	Helgi bade higher
hōsegl ofarr,	hoist the sails,

varþat hrønnum	Nor did the ships'-folk
höfn þingloga,	shun the waves,
þās ōgurlig	Though dreadfully
Ægis dōttir	did Ægir's daughters
stagstjörnmörum	Seek the steeds
steypa vildi.	of the sea to sink.

Helgi demonstrates his courage, whatever one may think of his seamanship. *Ægir's daughters*: the waves; cf. stanza 29 and note.

31. En sjölfum þeim	But from above
Sigrūn ofan	did Sigrun brave
folkdjörf of barg	Aid the men and
ok fari þeira;	all their faring;
snørisk ramliga	Mightily came
Rōn ōr hendi	from the claws of Ron
gjalfrdýr konungs	The leader's sea-beast
at Gnipalundi.	off Gnipalund.

Sigrun here appears again as a Valkyrie. *Ron*: Ægir's wife; cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 18 and note. *Sea-beast*: ship. *Gnipalund*: "Crag-Wood."

32. Svā þar of aptan	At evening there
ī Unavōgum	in Unavagar
flaust fagrþuīn	Floated the fleet
fljōta knōttu;	bedecked full fair;
en sjalfir þeir	But they who saw
frā Svarinshaugi	from Svarin's hill,

með hermþarhug |
her kǫnnuþu.

Bitter at heart |
the host beheld.

Unavagar: “Friendly Waves.” *Svarin’s hill*: the hill where Grammar had his dwelling.

33. Frā gǫþborinn |
Gǫþmundr at þvī:
... |
...

“Hverr’s landreki |
sās liþi stýrir
ok feiknalip |
fǫrir at landi?”

Then Gothmund asked, |
goodly of birth,
... |
...

“Who is the monarch |
who guides the host,
And to the land |
the warriors leads?”

Here begins the long dialogue between *Gothmund*, one of Gramnar’s sons, and *Sinfjotli*, Helgi’s half-brother. Two lines (stanza 33, lines 3–4) are quoted by the annotator in the *prose note following stanza 16* of the *second Helgi Hundingsbane lay*, and the dialogue, in much abbreviated form, together with Helgi’s admonition to Sinfjotli to cease talking, is closely paralleled in stanzas 22–27 of that poem. It has been suggested that this whole passage (stanzas 33–48) is an interpolation, perhaps from “the Old Volsung lay.” This may be, but it seems more probable that the poet used an older poem simply as the basis for this passage, borrowing a little but making up a great deal more. The manuscript indicates no gap in stanza 33.

34. Sinfjotli kvað |
— slong upp við rō
rauðum skildi, |
rōnd vas ōr golli;
þar vas sundvǫrþr |
sās svara kunni
ok við ǫþlinga |
orðum skipta—:

Sinfjotli answered, |
and up on an oar
Raised a shield all red |
with golden rim;
A sea-sentry was he, |
skilled to speak,
And in words with princes |
well to strive.

Sinfjotli: cf. note on stanza 6. *Red*: raising a red shield was the signal for war.

35. “Seg þat ī aptan, | “Say tonight |
 es svīnum gefr when you feed the swine,
ok tīkr yþrar | And send your bitches |
 teygir at solli: to seek their swill,
at sē Ylfingar | That out of the East |
 austan komnir have the Ylfings come,
gunnargjarnir | Greedy for battle, |
 fyr Gnipalundi. to Gnipalund.

Ylfings: cf. stanza 5 and note.

36. Þar mun Høþbroddr | There will Hothbrodd |
 Helga finna, Helgi find,
flugtrauþan gram | In the midst of the fleet, |
 ī flota miþjum; and flight he scorns;
sā es opt hefr | Often has he |
 ørnu sadda, the eagles gorged,
meþan þū ā kvernum | Whilst thou at the quern |
 kystir þýjar.” wert slave-girls kissing.”

Quern: turning the hand mill was, throughout antiquity, the task of slaves.

Gupmundr kvaþ:

37. “Fātt mant, fylkir! |
 fornra spjalla,
es øþlingum |
 ōsønnu bregþr

Gothmund spake:

- “Hero, the ancient |
 sayings heed,
And bring not lies |
 to the nobly born.

...	...
...	...
...	...
...	...

The manuscript does not name the speakers in this dialogue. No gap indicated in the manuscript, and editors have attempted various combinations of stanzas 37 and 38.

38. Þū hefr etnar	Thou hast eaten
ulfa krāsir	the entrails of wolves,
ok brøþr þīnum	And of thy brothers
at bana orþit,	the slayer been;
opt sōr sogin	Oft wounds to suck
meþ svølum munni,	thy cold mouth sought,
hefr ī hreysi	And loathed in rocky
hvarleiþr skriþit.”	dens didst lurk.”

Wolves: the *Volsungasaga* tells that Sigmund and Sinfjotli lived in the woods for a time as werewolves. *Brothers:* Sinfjotli killed the two sons of his mother, Signy, and her husband, Siggeir, as part of the vengeance wreaked on Siggeir for the treacherous murder of Sigmund’s father, Volsung, and nine of his brothers (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note). The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a new stanza.

Sinfjotli kvap:

39. “Þū vast vōlva |
 ī Varinseyju,
 skollvīs kona, |
 bart skrōk saman;
 kvazk engi mann |
 eiga vilja,

Sinfjotli spake:

“A witch in Varin’s |
 isle thou wast,
 A woman false, |
 and lies didst fashion;
 Of the mail-clad heroes |
 thou wouldst have

segg brynjaþan nema Sinfjotla.	No other, thou saidst, save Sinfjotli only.
-------------------------------------	--

Varin's isle: cf. stanza 27 and note, and *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 22. Reproaching a man with having been a woman and borne children was not uncommon.

40. [Þū vast, et skōþa skars! valkyrja, ǫtul, āmātlig, at Alfǫþur; mundu einherjar allir berjask svēvīs kona! of sakar þīnar.]	A Valkyrie wast thou, loathly Witch, Evil and base, in Allfather's home; The warriors all must ever fight, Woman subtle, for sake of thee.
---	---

This stanza may be an interpolation in the dialogue passage. *Allfather*: Othin. We have no information regarding Gothmund's career, but it looks as though Sinfjotli were drawing solely on his imagination for his taunts, whereas Gothmund's insults have a basis in Sinfjotli's previous life.

41. niu ǫttum vit ā nesi Sōgu ulfa alna, vask einn faþir." Nine did we in Sogunes Of wolf-cubs have; I their father was."
---	---

No gap indicated in the manuscript; some editors combine the two lines with stanza 40, some regard them as the first instead of the last lines of a separate stanza, and some assume

the lacuna here indicated. *Sogunes* (“Saga’s Cape”): of the goddess Saga little is known; cf. *Grimnismol*, 7.

Gupmundr kvað:

42. “Faðir vastattu |
 fenrisulfa
 ollum ellri, |
 svāt ek muna:
 sīz þik geldu |
 fyr Gnipalundi
 þursameyjar |
 ā Þōrsnesi.

Gothmund spake:

“Thou didst not father |
 Fenrir’s-wolves,
 Though older thou art |
 than all I know;
 For they gelded thee |
 in Gnipalund,
 The giant-women |
 at Thorsnes once.

Fenrir’s-wolves: wolves in general. *Thorsnes:* “Thor’s Cape.”

43. Stjūpr lātt Siggeirs |
 und stoðum heina,
 vargljōðum vanr, |
 ā viðum ūti;
 kvōmu þer ōgogn |
 oll at hendi,
 [þās brōðr þīnum |
 brjōst raufaþir,]
 gørþir þik frægjan |
 af firinverkum.

Under houses the stepson |
 of Siggeir lay,
 Fain of the wolf’s cry |
 out in the woods;
 Evil came then all |
 to thy hands,
 When thy brothers’ |
 breasts thou didst redden,
 Fame didst thou win |
 for foulest deeds.

The phrase “under houses,” which follows the manuscript, may be an error for “in wolf-caves.” Line 3 (or 4) may be an interpolation. The manuscript indicates line 5 as the beginning of a new stanza. *Siggeir:* cf. stanza 38, note.

44. Þū brūþr Grana	In Bravoll wast thou
ā Brāvelli	Grani's bride,
gollbitluþ vast,	Golden-bitted
gǫr til rāsar;	and ready to gallop;
hefk þēr mōþri	I rode thee many
mart skeiþ riþit	a mile, and down
svangri und sǫpli,	Didst sink, thou giantess,
simul! forbergis.”	under the saddle.”

Several editions assign this stanza to Sinfjotli instead of to Gothmund. *Bravoll* (“Field of the Brow”): not elsewhere mentioned in the poems. *Grani*: Sigurth’s horse (cf. *Völundarkvitha*, 16 and note); Gothmund means that Sinfjotli had turned into a mare, after the fashion of Loki (cf. *Grimnismol*, 44, note). The meaning of line 4 in the original is uncertain.

Sinfjotli kvæþ:

45. “Sveinn þóttir þū
síþlauss vesa,
þās þū Gollnis
geitr molkaþir,
en ī annat sinn
Imþar dōttir
tǫtrughypja;
vill tǫlu lengri?”

Sinfjotli spake:

“A brainless fellow
didst seem to be,
When once for Gollnir
goats didst milk,
And another time
when as Imth’s daughter
In rags thou wentest;
wilt longer wrangle?”

A few editions give this stanza to Gothmund. *Gollnir*: possibly a giant. *Imth*: nothing is known of him or his daughter.

Gupmundr kvæþ:

46. “Fyrr vilda ek
at Frekasteini

Gothmund spake:

“Sooner would I
at Frekastein

hrafna seþja	Feed the ravens
ā hræum þīnum,	with flesh of thine
an tīkr yþrar	Than send your bitches
teygja at solli	to seek their swill,
eþa gefa gøltum!	Or feed the swine;
deili grøm við þik!”	may the fiends take you!”

A few editions give this stanza to Sinfjotli. *Frekastein*: cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 39 and note. A stanza may have been lost after stanza 46, parallel to stanza 25 of the second *Helgi Hundingsbane* lay.

Helgi kvæþ:

47. “Ykkr’s, Sinfjotli! |
sōmra miklu
gunni at heyja |
ok glaþa ornu,
an ōnýtum |
orþum at bregþask,
þōt hringbrotar |
heiptir deili.

Helgi spake:

“Better, Sinfjotli, |
thee ’twould beseem
Battle to give |
and eagles to gladden,
Than vain and empty |
words to utter,
Though ring-breakers oft |
in speech do wrangle.

Ring-breakers: cf. stanza 18 and note.

48. Þykkjumat gōþir |
Granmars synir,
þō dugir seggjum |
satt at mæla;
þeir hafa markat |
ā Moinsheimum,

Good I find not |
the sons of Granmar,
But for heroes ’tis seemly |
the truth to speak;
At Moinsheimar |
proved the men

at hug hafa |
hjórum at bregða.”

That hearts for the wielding |
of swords they had.”

Moinsheimar: a battlefield of which nothing is known, where, however, the sons of Granmar appear to have fought bravely.

49. Þeir af ríki |
rinna lētu
Svipuþ ok Sveggjuþ |
Sólheima til
[dala dögðotta, |
dökkvar hlípir,
skalf mistar marr |
hvars megir föru;]
møttu tyggja |
ī tūnhlípi,
sogðu strípla |
stilli kvømu.

Mightily then |
they made to run
Sviputh and Sveggjuth |
to Solheimar;
[By dewy dales |
and chasms dark,
Mist’s horse shook |
where the men went by;]
The king they found |
at his courtyard gate,
And told him the foeman |
fierce was come.

Here the scene shifts to the shore among Hothbrodd’s followers. *Sviputh* and *Sveggjuth* (“Swift” and “Lithe”): horses’ names. *Mist’s horse*: the Valkyrie’s name is the same as the English word “mist,” and the “horse” on which the mist rides is the earth. The two lines in parenthesis may be interpolated, or line 5 may begin a new stanza, as the manuscript indicates.

50. Ūti stōþ Hōþbroddr |
hjalmi faldinn,
hugþi jōreiþ |
ættar sinnar;
... |
...

Forth stood Hothbrodd, |
helmed for battle,
Watched the riding |
of his warriors;
... |
...

“hvī’s hermþarlitr |
ā Hniflungum?”

“Why are the Hniflungs |
white with fear?”

No gap indicated in the manuscript. *Hniflungs*: cf. [introductory note](#).

Gupmundr kvap:

51. “Snuask at sandi |
snæfgir kjōlar,
[rakkahirtir |
ok raar langar,
skildir margir, |
skafnar ārar,]
gōfugt liþ gylfa, |
glapir Ylfingar;
ganga fimtān |
folk upp ā land,
þō’s ī Sogn ūt |
sjau þūsundir.

Gothmund spake:

“Swift keels lie |
hard by the land,
[Mast-ring harts |
and mighty yards,
Wealth of shields |
and well-planed oars;]
The king’s fair host, |
the Ylfings haughty;
Fifteen bands |
to land have fared,
But out in Sogn |
are seven thousand.

Lines 2–3 may be interpolated, or a new stanza may begin, as the manuscript indicates, with line 5. Many editors combine lines 5–6 with all or part of stanza 52. Possibly Gothmund is not the speaker. *Mast-ring harts*: ships, so called from the ring attaching the yard to the mast. *Ylfings*: cf. stanza 5 and note. *Sogn*: this name, which actually belongs in western Norway, seems to have been used here with no particular significance.

52. Liggja ī grindum |
fyr Gnipalundi
brimdȳr blāsvort |
ok buin golli;

At anchor lying |
off Gnipalund
Are fire-beasts black, |
all fitted with gold;

þar's miklu mest |
 mengi þeira,
 muna nū Helgi |
 hjoŕþing dvala."

There wait most |
 of the foeman's men,
 Nor will Helgi long |
 the battle delay."

The manuscript indicates line 3 as beginning a new stanza; some editors combine lines 3–4 with all or part of stanza 53, while others assume the loss of two lines following line 4. *Fire-beasts*: dragons, i.e., ships. The Norse ships of war, as distinguished from merchant vessels, were often called dragons because of their shape and the carving of their stems.

Höbbroddr kvæð:

53. "Rinni raukn bitluþ |
 til Reginþinga,
 Mēlnir ok Mýlnir |
 til Myrkviþar;
 [en Sporvitnir |
 at Sparinsheiþi;]
 lātiþ engi mann |
 eptir sitja
 es benlogum |
 bregþa kunni!

Hothbrodd spake:

"Bid the horses run |
 to the Reginthing,
 Melnir and Mylnir |
 to Myrkwood now,
 [And Sporvitnir |
 to Sparinsheith;]
 Let no man seek |
 henceforth to sit
 Who the flame of wounds |
 knows well to wield.

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker, and a few editors assume the loss of one or two lines embodying the phrase "Hothbrodd spake." In the manuscript line 3, which many editors have suspected of being spurious, stands before line 2. Possibly lines 4–5 are the remains of a separate stanza. *Reginthing* ("The Great Council"): apparently the council-place for the whole country, as distinct from the local council, or "herathsting." *Melnir* ("Bit-Bearer"), *Mylnir* ("The Biter") and *Sporvitnir* ("Spur-Wolf"): horses' names. *Myrkwood*: a not uncommon name for a dark forest; cf. *Lokasenna*, 42, and *Atlakvitha*, 3. *Sparinsheith* ("Sparin's Heath"): nothing more is known of Sparin or his heath. *Flame of wounds*: sword.

54. Bjōþiþ Hōgna | Summon Hogni, |
ok Hrings sunum, the sons of Hring,
Atla ok Yngva, | Atli and Yngvi |
Alf enum gamla! and Alf the Old;
þeir'u gjarnir | Glad they are |
gunni at heyja; of battle ever;
lōtum Vōlsunga | Against the Volsungs |
viþrnām faa!" let us go."

Hogni: the father of Sigrun; cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*, 18. Of *Hring* and his sons nothing further is known. *Volsungs*: here for the first time the poet gives Helgi and Sinfjotli the family name to which, as sons of Sigmund Volsungsson, they are entitled.

55. Svipr einn vas þat, | Swift as a storm |
es saman kvōmu there smote together
fōlvir oddar | The flashing blades |
at Frekasteini: at Frekastein;
ey vas Helgi | Ever was Helgi, |
Hundingsbani Hunding's slayer,
fyrstr ī folki | First in the throng |
þars firar bōrþusk; where warriors fought;
[ōstr ā īmu, | [Fierce in battle, |
alltrauþr flugar, slow to fly,
hafþi hilmir | Hard the heart |
hart mōþakarn.] of the hero was.]

The manuscript indicates line 5 as the beginning of a new stanza, but many editors have rejected lines 5–6 as spurious, while others regard them as the first half of a stanza the last two lines of which have been lost.

56. Kvōmu ōr himni | From heaven there came |
 hjalmvītr ofan the maidens helmed,—
 — ōx geira gn̄yr— | The weapon-clang grew,— |
 þāers grami hlifþu; who watched o’er the king;
 þā kvaþ þat Sigrūn | Spake Sigrun fair,— |
 — sārviþr flugu, the wound-givers flew,
 āt hōlu skær | And the horse of the giantess |
 af hugins barri— : raven’s-food had:—

Wound-givers: probably this means “Valkyries,” but there is considerable doubt as to the original word. *Horse*, etc.: i.e., the wolf (because giantesses customarily had wolves for their steeds) ate corpses (the food of birds of prey).

57. “Heill skalt, vīsi! | “Hail to thee, hero! |
 virþa njōta, full happy with men,
 āttstafr Yngva, | Offspring of Yngvi, |
 ok una līfi, shalt ever live,
 es feldan hefr | For thou the fearless |
 enn flugartrauþa foe hast slain
 jōfur þanns olli | Who to many the dread |
 ōgis dauþa. of death had brought.

Yngvi: one of the sons of Halfdan the Old, and traditional ancestor of the Ynglings, with whom the Ylfings seem to have been confused (cf. *Hyndluljóth*, 11 and note). The confusion between the Ylfings (or Ynglings) and Volsungs was carried far enough so that Sigurth himself is once called a descendant of Yngvi (*Reginismol*, 14). Gering identifies the name of Yngvi with the god Freyr, but the Volsungs certainly claimed descent from Othin, not Freyr, and there is nothing to indicate that Helgi in the Danish tradition was supposed to be descended from Freyr, whereas his descent from Yngvi Halfdansson fits well with the rest of his story. However, cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 24 and note.

58. [Ok þēr, buþlungr! samir bæþi vel rauþir baugar ok en rīkja mār; heill skalt, buþlungr! bæþi njōta Hōgna dōttur ok Hringstaþa, sigrs ok landa.” — þā’s sōkn lokit.]	Warrior, well for thyself hast won Red rings bright and the noble bride; Both now, warrior, thine shall be, Hogni’s daughter and Hringstathir, Wealth and triumph; the battle wanes.”
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This entire stanza may be an interpolation; nearly every edition has a different way of dealing with it. *Hringstathir*: as this place had been given to Helgi by his father (cf. stanza 8 and note), the poet has apparently made a mistake in naming it here as a conquest from Granmar’s sons, unless, indeed, they had previously captured it from Helgi, which seems unlikely.

Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II

The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingsbane

Introductory Note

As the general nature of the Helgi tradition has been considered in the introductory note to *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, it is necessary here to discuss only the characteristics of this particular poem. The second Helgi Hundingsbane lay is in most respects the exact opposite of the first one: it is in no sense consecutive; it is not a narrative poem, and all or most of it gives evidence of relatively early composition, its origin probably going well back into the tenth century.

It is frankly nothing but a piece of, in the main, very clumsy patchwork, made up of eight distinct fragments, pieced together awkwardly by the annotator with copious prose notes. One of these fragments (stanzas 13–16) is specifically identified as coming from “the old Volsung lay.” What was that poem, and how much more of the extant Helgi-lay compilation was taken from it, and did the annotator know more of it than he included in his patchwork? Conclusive answers to these questions have baffled scholarship, and probably always will do so. My own guess is that the annotator knew little or nothing more than he wrote down; having got the first Helgi Hundingsbane lay, which was obviously in fairly good shape, out of the way, he proceeded to assemble all the odds and ends of verse about Helgi which he could get hold of, putting them together on the basis of the narrative told in the first Helgi lay and of such stories as his knowledge of prose sagas may have yielded.

Section I (stanzas 1–4) deals with an early adventure of Helgi’s, in which he narrowly escapes capture when he ventures into Hunding’s home in disguise. Section II (stanzas 5–12) is a dialogue between Helgi and Sigrun at their first meeting. Section III (stanzas 13–16, the “old Volsung lay” group) is another dialogue between Helgi and Sigrun when she invokes his aid to save her from Hothbrodd. Section IV (stanzas 17–20, which may well be from the same poem as Section III, is made up of speeches by Helgi and Sigrun after the battle in which Hothbrodd is killed; stanza 21, however, is certainly an interpolation from another poem, as it is in a different meter. Section V (stanzas 22–27) is the dispute between Sinfjotli and Gothmund, evidently in an older form than the one included in the first Helgi Hundingsbane lay. Section VI (stanzas 28–37) gives Dag’s speech to his sister, Sigrun, telling of Helgi’s death, her curse on her brother and her lament for her slain husband. Section VII (stanza 38) is the remnant of a dispute between Helgi and Hunding, here inserted absurdly out of place. Section VIII (stanzas 39–50) deals with the return of the dead Helgi and Sigrun’s visit to him in the burial hill.

Sijmons maintains that sections I and II are fragments of the Kara lay mentioned by the annotator in his [concluding prose note](#), and that sections IV, VI, and VIII are from a lost Helgi-Sigrun poem, while Section III comes, of course, from the “old Volsung lay.” This seems as good a guess as any other, conclusive proof being quite out of the question.

Were it not for sections VI and VIII the poem would be little more than a battle-ground for scholars, but those two sections are in many ways as fine as anything in Old Norse poetry. Sigrun’s curse of her brother for the slaying of Helgi and her lament for her dead husband, and the extraordinary vividness of the final scene in the burial hill, have a quality which fully offsets the baffling confusion of the rest of the poem.

Sigmundr konungr Volsungs son ātti
Borghildi af Brālundi.

King Sigmund, the son of Volsung, had
as wife Borghild, from Bralund.

Þau hētu son sinn Helga, ok eptir
Helga Hjorvarþssyni; Helga fōstraþi
Hagall.

They named their son Helgi, after Helgi
Hjorvarthsson; Hagal was Helgi’s foster-
father.

Hundingr hēt rīkr konungr, viþ hann
er Hundland kent.

Hunding was the name of a powerful
king, and Hundland is named from him.

Hann var hermaþr mikill ok ātti
marga sonu þā er ī hernaði vāru.

He was a mighty warrior, and had many
sons with him on his campaigns.

Öfriþr ok dylgjur vāru ā milli þeira
Hundings konungs ok Sigmundar
konungs, drāpu hvārir annarra
frændr.

There was enmity and strife between
these two, King Hunding and King Sig-
mund, and each slew the other’s kins-
men.

Sigmundr konungr ok hans ættmenn
hētu Volsungar ok Ylfingar.

King Sigmund and his family were
called Volsungs and Ylfings.

Helgi fōr ōk njōsnaþi til hirþar Hund-
ings konungs ā laun.

Helgi went as a spy to the home of King
Hunding in disguise.

Hæmingr son Hundings konungs var
heima.

Hæming, a son of King Hunding’s, was
at home.

En er Helgi fōr ī brott, þā hitti hann
hjarþarsvein ok kvaþ:

When Helgi went forth, then he met a
young herdsman, and said:

In the manuscript the poem is headed “Of the Volsungs,” but most editions give it the title used here. [Sigmund](#): cf. [Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I, 6](#) and note, which also mentions

Volsung, *Borghild* and *Bralund*: cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 1 and note. *Helgi*: the annotator's explanation that the child was named after Helgi Hjorvarthsson is a naive way of getting around the difficulties created by the two sets of Helgi stories. He might equally well have said that the new Helgi was the old one born again, as he accounts for Sigrun in this way ("she was Svava reborn"). *Hagal*: not elsewhere mentioned; it was a common custom to have boys brought up by foster-parents. *Hunding* and *Hundland*: cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 10 and note. *Volsungs* and *Ylfings*: regarding this confusion of family names cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 5 and note. *Hæming*: his name does not appear in the list of Hunding's sons. It is quite possible that these opening stanzas (1–4) do not refer to Hunding at all.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. “Seg Hæmingi,
 at Helgi man,
 hvern ī brynju
 bragnar feldu:
 ēr ulf graan
 inni hofþuð,
 þars Hamal hugði
 Hundingr konungr.”</p> | <p>“Say to Hæming
 that Helgi knows
 Whom the heroes
 in armor hid;
 A gray wolf had they
 within their hall,
 Whom King Hunding
 Hamal thought.”</p> |
|--|---|

Helgi appears to have stayed with Hunding under the name of Hamal, but now, thinking himself safe, he sends word of who he really is. *Hunding*: it has been suggested that the compiler may have inserted this name to fit what he thought the story ought to be, in place of Hæming, or even Hadding. If stanzas 1–4 are a fragment of the *Karuljóth* (Lay of Kara), this latter suggestion is quite reasonable, for in that poem, which we do not possess, but which supplied material for the compilers of the *Hromundar saga Greipssonar*, Helgi appears as Helgi Haddingjaskati (cf. [final prose note](#)). Nothing beyond this one name connects stanzas 1–4 with Hunding.

Hamall hēt son Hagals.

Hundingr konungr sendi menn til Hagals at leita Helga, en Helgi mætti eigi forþaz annan veg, en tók klæði ambáttar ok gekk at mala.

Hamal was the name of Hagal's son.

King Hunding sent men to Hagal to seek Helgi, and Helgi could not save himself in any other way, so he put on the clothes of a bond-woman and set to work at the mill.

Þeir leituðu ok fundu eigi Helga. They sought Helgi but found him not.

Hagal: Helgi's foster-father, who naturally protects him.

2. Þā kvap þat Blindr enn bōlvīsi: “Hvōss eru augu ī Hagals þýju, esa þat karls ætt es ā kvernum stendr: steinar rifna, stökkur lūpr fyrir.	Then Blind spake out, the evil-minded: “Of Hagal's bond-woman bright are the eyes; Yon comes not of churls who stands at the quern; The millstones break, the boards are shattered.
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The manuscript indicates line 2 as the beginning of the stanza, the copyist evidently regarding line 1 as prose. This has caused various rearrangements in the different editions. *Blind*: leader of the band sent to capture Helgi.

3. Hefr hōrþ dōmi hildingr þegit, es vīsi skal valbygg <i>mala</i> ; heldr es sōmri hendi þeiri † meþalkafli an mōndultrē.”	The hero has a doom full hard, That barley now he needs must grind; Better befits his hand to feel The hilt of the sword than the millstone's handle.”
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The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a stanza. *Barley*: the word literally means “foreign grain,” and would afford an interesting study to students of early commerce.

Hagall svarap ok kvap: Hagal answered and said:

4. “Þat’s lītil vō,	“Small is the wonder
þōt lūþr þrumi,	if boards are splintered
es mǣr konungs	By a monarch’s daughter
mōndul hrōrir;	the mill is turned;
hōn skǣvaþi	Once through clouds
skýjum øfri	she was wont to ride,
ok vega þorþi	And battles fought
sem víkingar,	like fighting men,
[ǣþr hana Helgi	[Till Helgi a captive
hoptu gørþi;	held her fast;
systir’s þeira	Sister she is
Sigars ok Hōgna,	of Sigar and Hogni,
þvi hefr ȝtul augu	Thus bright are the eyes
Ylfinga man.]”	of the Ylfings’ maid.]”

Possibly two stanzas with one line lost, or perhaps the lines in parenthesis are spurious; each editor has his own guess. *Sigar* and *Hogni*: it seems unlikely that Hagal refers to the Hogni who was Sigrun’s father, for this part of the story has nothing whatever to do with Sigrun. As Hagal is, of course, deliberately lying, it is useless to test any part of his speech for accuracy.

Undan komz Helgi ok fōr ā herskip.	Helgi escaped and went to a fighting ship.
Hann feldi Hunding konung ok var sīþan kallaþr Helgi Hundingsbani.	He slew King Hunding, and thenceforth was called Helgi Hundingsbane.

(II)

Hann lā meþ her sinn ī Brunavāgum ok hafþi þar strandhōgg, ok ātu þar rātt.	He lay with his host in Brunavagar, and they had there a strand-slaughtering, and ate the flesh raw.
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Hogni hēt konungr;	Hogni was the name of a king.
hans dóttir var Sigrūn, hon var val- kyrja ok reiþ lopt ok lög; hon var Svāva endrborin.	His daughter was Sigrun; she was a Valkyrie and rode air and water; she was Svava reborn.
Sigrūn reiþ at skipum Helga ok kvaþ:	Sigrun rode to Helgi's ship and said:

No division indicated in the manuscript. *Brunavagar* ("Bruni's Sea"): mentioned only in this section. *Strand-slaughtering*: a killing on the shore of cattle stolen in a raid. *Hogni* and *Sigrun*: cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 17 and note; the annotator's notion of Sigrun as the reincarnated Svava (cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, concluding prose note) represents a naive form of scholarship. There is nothing in stanzas 5–12 which clearly identifies Sigrun as a Valkyrie, or which, except for the last line of stanza 12, identifies the speaker as Sigrun. Some editors, therefore, call her simply "the Valkyrie," while Vigfusson, who thinks this section is also a remnant of the *Karuljoth*, calls her Kara.

5. "Hverr lætr fljōta fley við bakka, hvar, hermegir! heima eiguþ? hvers biþiþ ēr ī Brunavōgum, hvert lystir yþr leiþ at kannu?"	"Who rules the ship by the shore so steep? Where is the home ye warriors have? Why do ye bide in Brunavagar, Or what the way that ye wish to try?"
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Helgi kvaþ:

6. "Hamall lætr fljōta fley við bakka, eigum heima ī Hlēseyju; biþum byrjar ī Brunavōgum,
--

Helgi spake:

"Hamal's the ship by the shore so steep, Our home in Hlesey do we have; For fair wind bide we in Brunavagar,

lystir oss austr |
leiþ at kannu.”

Eastward the way |
that we wish to try.”

The manuscript does not indicate the speakers. *Hamal*: Helgi’s assumption of this name seems to link this section (stanzas 5–12) with stanza 1. *Hlesey* (“Island of Hler”—i.e., Ægir, the sea-god): generally identified as the Danish island of Läsö; cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 37 and note.

Valkyrja kvað:

7. “Hvar hefr, hilmir! |
hildi vakþa
eþa gögl alin |
Gunnar systra?
hvī’s brynja þín |
blōþi stokkin,
hvī skal und hjólum |
hrætt kjöt eta?”

Sigrun spake:

“Where hast thou, warrior, |
battle wakened,
Or gorged the birds |
of the sisters of Guth?
Why is thy byrnie |
spattered with blood,
Why helmed dost feast |
on food uncooked?”

Guth: a Valkyrie (cf. *Voluspo*, 31) the birds of her sisters are the kites and ravens.

Helgi kvað:

8. “[Næst vann þat nýs |
niþr Ylfinga
fyr vestan ver, |
ef vita lystir,
es] ek björnu tók |
ī Bragalundi
ok ætt ara |
oddum saddak:

Helgi spake:

“Latest of all, |
the Ylfings’ son
On the western sea, |
if know thou wilt,
Captured bears |
in Bragalund,
And fed the eagles |
with edge of sword.

sagt es nū, mǣr! |

hvaþan *serkr gurbisk*,

þvī vas ā lōgi |

litt steikt etit.”

Now is it shown |

why our shirts are bloody,

And little our food |

with fire is cooked.”

The manuscript indicates line 5 as the beginning of a new stanza; some editors reject lines 1–2, while others make lines 5–6 into a fragmentary stanza. *Ylfings*: cf. [introductory prose](#) and note. *Bragalund* (“Bragi’s Wood”): a mythical place. *Bears*: presumably Berserkers, regarding whom cf. [Hyndluljóth](#), 23.

Valkyrja kvaþ:

9. “Vīg l̥ysir þū, |
varþ fyr Helga
Hundingr konungr |
hnīga at velli;
bar sōkn saman, |
es sefa hefnduþ,
ok busti blōþ |
ā brimis eggjar.”

Sigrun spake:

- “Of battle thou tellest, |
and there was bent
Hunding the king |
before Helgi down;
There was carnage when thou |
didst avenge thy kin,
And blood flowed fast |
on the blade of the sword.”

Helgi kvaþ:

10. “Hvat vissir þū, |
at vēr seīm,
snōt svinnhuguþ! |
es sefa hefndum?
margir’u hvassir |
hildings synir
ok āmunir |
ossum niþjum.”

Helgi spake:

- “How didst thou know |
that now our kin,
Maiden wise, |
we have well avenged?
Many there are |
of the sons of the mighty
Who share alike |
our lofty race.”

Helgi's meaning in lines 3–4 is that, although he has already declared himself an Ylfing (stanza 8, line 1), there are many heroes of that race, and he does not understand how Sigrun knows him to be Helgi.

Valkyrja kvað:

11. “Vaska fjarri, |
folks oddviti!
gær ā morgin |
grams aldrlokum;
þō telk slōgjan |
Sigmundar bur,
es ī valrūnum |
vīgspjöll segir.

Sigrun spake:

“Not far was I |
from the lord of the folk,
Yester morn, |
when the monarch was slain;
Though crafty the son |
of Sigmund, methinks,
When he speaks of the fight |
in slaughter-runes.

Slaughter-runes: equivocal or deceptive speech regarding the battle. The word “rune” had the meaning of “magic” or “mystery” long before it was applied to the signs or characters with which it was later identified.

12. Leitk þik of sinn |
ā langskipum,
þās þū byggþir |
blōþga stafna
[ok ūrsvalar |
unnir lēku;]
nū vill dyljask |
dōglingr fyr mēr,
en Hōgna mār |
Helga kennir.”

On the long-ship once |
I saw thee well,
When in the blood-stained |
bow thou wast,
[And round thee icy |
waves were raging;]
Now would the hero |
hide from me,
But to Hogni's daughter |
is Helgi known.”

Some editors reject line 3, others line 5. The manuscript omits Helgi's name in line 5, thereby destroying both the sense and the meter. Vigfusson, following his *Karuljóth* theory

(cf. note on [prose following stanza 4](#)), changes Hogni to Halfdan, father of Kara.

(III)

Granmarr hēt rīkr konungr, er bjō at
Svarinshaugi;

hann ātti marga sonu: hēt einn
Hōþbroddr, annarr Guþmundr, þriði
Starkaðr.

Hōþbroddr var ī konungastefnu,
hann fastnaði sēr Sigrūnu Hōgna-
dóttur.

En er hon spyrr þat, þā reiþ hon með
valkyrjur um lopt ok um lōg at leita
Helga.

Helgi var þā at Logafjōllum ok haf-
ði bariz við Hundings sonu; þar feldi
hann þā Ālf ok Eyjōlf, Hjørvarþ ok
Hervarþ,

ok var hann allvīgmōþr ok sat undir
Arasteini.

Þar hitti Sigrūn hann ok rann ā
hāls honum ok kysti hann ok sagði
honum erendi sitt, svā sem segir ī
Vōlsungakviðu enni fornu:

Granmar was the name of a mighty
king, who dwelt at Svarin's hill.

He had many sons; one was named
Hothbrodd, another Gothmund, a third
Starkath.

Hothbrodd was in a kings' meeting, and
he won the promise of having Sigrun,
Hogni's daughter, for his wife.

But when she heard this, she rode with
the Valkyries over air and sea to seek
Helgi.

Helgi was then at Logafjoll, and had
fought with Hunding's sons; there he
killed Alf and Eyolf, Hjorvarth and Her-
varth.

He was all weary with battle, and sat un-
der the eagle-stone.

There Sigrun found him, and ran to
throw her arms about his neck, and
kissed him, and told him her tidings, as
is set forth in the old Volsung lay:

The manuscript indicates no division. Most of this prose passage is evidently based on [Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I](#); the only new features are the introduction of [Starkath](#) as a third son of Granmar, which is clearly an error based on a misunderstanding of stanza 19, and the reference to the [kings' meeting](#), based on stanza 15. Kings' meetings, or councils, were by no means unusual; the North in early days was prolific in kings. For the remaining names, cf. [Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I](#): [Granmar](#), stanza 19; [Hothbrodd](#), stanza 33; [Gothmund](#), stanza 33; [Svarin's hill](#), stanza 32; [Logafjoll](#), stanza 13; [Alf](#), [Eyjolf](#), [Hjorvarth](#) and [Hervarth](#), stanza 14. [The old Volsung lay](#): cf. [Introductory Note](#).

13. Sōtti Sigrūn	Sigrun the joyful
sikling glapan,	chieftain sought,
heim nam Helga	Forthwith Helgi's
hond at sōkja;	hand she took;
kysti ok kvaddi	She greeted the hero
konung und hjalmi,	helmed and kissed him,
þā varþ hilmi	The warrior's heart
hugr ā vīfi.	to the woman turned.

Some editions combine lines 3–4, or line 4, with part of stanza 14.

14. Nama Hōgna mæ̃r	From her heart the daughter
of hug mæ̃la,	of Hogni spake,
hafa kvazk Helga	Dear was Helgi,
hylli skyldu;	she said, to her;
“fyr̃r lēzk unna	“Long with all
af ǫllum hug	my heart I loved
syni Sigmundar,	Sigmund's son
an sēt hafpi.	ere ever I saw him.

The lines of stanzas 14 and 15 are here rearranged in accordance with Bugge's emendation; in the manuscript they stand as follows: lines 3–4 of stanza 14; stanza 15; lines 1–2 of stanza 14. This confusion has given rise to various editorial conjectures.

15. Vask Hōþbroddi	At the meeting to Hothbrodd
ī her fōstnuþ,	mated I was,
en jōfur annan	But another hero
eiga vildak;	I fain would have;

þō sēumk, fylkir! |
frǣnda reiði,
hefk mīns fōþur |
munrāþ brotit.”

Though, king, the wrath |
of my kin I fear,
Since I broke my father’s |
fairest wish.”

Helgi kvað:

16. “Hirþ eigi þū |
Hogna reiði
nē illan hug |
ættar þinnar!
þū skalt, mǣr ung! |
at mēr lifa;
ætt átt, en gōþa! |
es eigi sēumk.”

Helgi spake:

“Fear not ever |
Hogni’s anger,
Nor yet thy kinsmen’s |
cruel wrath;
Maiden, thou |
with me shalt live,
Thy kindred, fair one, |
I shall not fear.”

(IV)

Helgi samnaði þā miklum skipaher
ok fōr til Frekasteins,

ok fengu ī hafi ofviþri mannhætt; þā
kōmu leiptr yfir þā ok stōpu geislar ī
skipin.

Þeir sǣ ī loptinu at valkyrjur nīu riðu,
ok kendu þeir Sigrūnu;

þā lægði storminn, ok kōmu þeir heil-
ir til lands.

Granmars synir sātu ā bjargi nōkk-
uru, er skipin sigldu at landi.

Helgi then assembled a great sea-host
and went to Frekastein.

On the sea he met a perilous storm;
lightning flashed overhead and the
bolts struck the ship.

They saw in the air that nine Valkyries
were riding, and recognized Sigrun
among them.

Then the storm abated, and they came
safe and sound to land.

Granmar’s sons sat on a certain moun-
tain as the ships sailed toward the land.

Guðmundr hljöp ā hest ok reið ā
njōsn ā bergit við höfnina; þā hlōpu
Volsungar seglum.

Þā kvað Guðmundr, svā sem fyrr er
ritat ī Helgakviðu:

“Hverr es fylkir |
sās flota stýrir
ok feiknalíð |
fōrir at landi?”

Sinfjotli Sigmundarson svaraði, ok er
þat enn ritat.

Guðmundr reið heim með hersögu;
þā sömnuðu Granmars synir her.

Kōmu þar margir konungar: þar var
Hogni faðir Sigrūnar ok synir hans
Bragi ok Dag.

Þar var orrosta mikil, ok fellu all-
ir Granmars synir ok allir þeira höf-
þingjar, nema Dag Hognason fekk
grið ok vann eiða Volsungum.

Sigrūn gekk ī valinn ok hitti Höp-
brodd at kominn dauða.

Hon kvað:

Gothmund leaped on a horse and rode
for news to a promontory near the har-
bor; the Volsungs were even then low-
ering their sails.

Then Gothmund said, as is written be-
fore in the Helgi lay:

“Who is the king |
who captains the fleet,
And to the land |
the warriors leads?”

Sinfjotli, Sigmund’s son, answered him,
and that too is written.

Gothmund rode home with his tidings
of the host; then Granmar’s sons sum-
moned an army.

Many kings came there; there were
Hogni, Sigrun’s father, and his sons Bra-
gi and Dag.

There was a great battle, and all Gran-
mar’s sons were slain and all their allies;
only Dag, Hogni’s son, was spared, and
he swore loyalty to the Volsungs.

Sigrun went among the dead and found
Hothbrodd at the coming of death.

She said:

The manuscript indicates no division. Here again, the annotator has drawn practically all his information from *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, which he specifically mentions and even quotes. The only new features are the names of Hogni’s sons, *Bragi* and *Dag*. Bragi is mentioned in stanza 19, though it is not there stated that he is Hogni’s son. Dag, who figures largely in stanzas 28–34, is a puzzle, for the verse never names him, and it is an open ques-

tion where the annotator got his name. *Frekastein*: cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 39 and note. *As is written*: the two lines are quoted, with a change of two words, from *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 33. *Sinfjotli*: cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 6 and note, and stanzas 33–48, in which the whole dialogue is given. *Loyalty*: apparently the annotator got this bit of information out of stanza 29, in which Sigrun refers to the oaths which her brother had sworn to Helgi.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>17. “Muna þēr Sigrūn
 fra Sevafjōllum,
 Hōþbroddr konungr!
 hnīga at armi;
 liþin es ævi
 — opt nair hrævi
 grānstōþ grīþar —
 Granmars sona.”</p> | <p>“Never shall Sigrun
 from Sevafjoll,
 Hothbrodd king,
 be held in thine arms;
 Granmar’s sons
 full cold have grown,
 And the giant-steeds gray
 on corpses gorge.”</p> |
|--|--|

Sevafjoll (“Wet Mountain”): mentioned only in this poem. *Giant-steeds*: wolves, the usual steeds of giantesses; cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 56.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>Þā hitti hon Helga ok varþ allfegin.

 Hann kvaþ:</p> | <p>Then she sought out Helgi, and was full
 of joy.

 He said:</p> |
|--|--|

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>18. “Esat þer at ǫllu,
 alvītr! gefit,
 þō kveþk nekkvi
 nornir valda;
 fellu ī morgin
 at Frekasteini
 Bragi ok Hōgni,
 varþk bani þeira.</p> | <p>“Maid, not fair
 is all thy fortune,
 The Norns I blame
 that this should be;
 This morn there fell
 at Frekastein
 Bragi and Hogni
 beneath my hand.</p> |
|--|--|

Maid: the word thus rendered is the same doubtful one which appears in *Völundarkvitha*, 1 and 5, and which may mean specifically a Valkyrie (Gering translates it “helmed” or “heroic”) or simply “wise.” Cf. *Völundarkvitha*, note on *introductory prose*. *Norns*: cf. *Voluspo*, 20 and note. In stanza 33 Dag similarly lays the blame for the murder he has committed on Othin. *Bragi*: probably Sigrun’s brother.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>19. [En at Hlēbjörgum
 Hrollaugs synir,
 en at Styrkleifum
 Starkaþr konungr:
 þann sāk gylfa
 grimmūþgastan,
 es barþisk bolr —
 vas ā braut hofuþ.]</p> | <p>At Hlebjorg fell
 the sons of Hrollaug,
 Starkath the king
 at Styrkleifar;
 Fighters more noble
 saw I never,
 The body fought
 when the head had fallen.</p> |
|---|---|

This stanza looks like an interpolation, and there is little or nothing to connect it with the slaying of Gramnar’s sons. In the manuscript line 2, indicated as the beginning of a stanza, precedes line 1. *Hlebjorg* (“Sea-Mountain”) and *Styrkleifar* (“Battle-Cliffs”): place names not elsewhere mentioned. Of *Hrollaug’s sons* nothing further is known. *Starkath*: this name gives a hint of the origin of this stanza, for Saxo Grammaticus tells of the slaying of the Swedish hero Starkath (“The Strong”) the son of Storverk, and describes how his severed head bit the ground in anger (cf. line 4). In all probability this stanza is from an entirely different poem, dealing with the Starkath story, and the annotator’s attempt to identify the Swedish hero as a third son of Gramnar is quite without foundation.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>20. Liggja at jorðu
 allra flestir
 niþjar þínir
 at nǫm orþnir;
 vanntat vígi,
 vas þer vō skǫpuþ,
 es at rōgi þū
 ríkmenni vast.”</p> | <p>On the ground full low
 the slain are lying,
 Most are there
 of the men of thy race;
 Nought hast thou won,
 for thy fate it was
 Brave men to bring
 to the battle-field.”</p> |
|---|---|

Þā grēt Sigrūn.

Then Sigrun wept.

Hann kvaþ:

Helgi said:

21. “Huggask þū, Sigrūn! |
Hildir hefr oss verit;
vinnat skjöldungar sköpum.”

Sigrūn kvaþ:

“Lifna mundak kjōsa |
es liþnir ’rū,
knættak þō þēr ī faþmi felask.”

“Grieve not, Sigrun, |
the battle is gained,
The fighter can shun not his fate.”

Sigrun spake:

“To life would I call |
them who slaughtered lie,
If safe on thy breast I might be.”

The difference of meter would of itself be enough to indicate that this stanza comes from an entirely different poem. A few editions assign the whole stanza to Helgi, but lines 3–4 are almost certainly Sigrun’s, and the manuscript begins line 3 with a large capital letter following a period.

(V)

[Þetta kvaþ Guþmundr Granmarsson:

This Gothmund the son of Granmar spoke:

22. “Hverr es skjöldungr |
sās skipum stýrir,
lætr gunnfana |
gollinn fyr stafni?
þykkjumka friþr |
ī farar broddi,
verpr vīgroþa |
of vīkinga.”

“What hero great |
is guiding the ships?
A golden flag |
on the stem he flies;
I find not peace in |
the van of your faring,
And round the fighters |
is battle-light red.”

With this stanza begins the dispute between Gothmund and Sinfjotli which, together with

Helgi's rebuke to his half brother, appears at much greater length in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 33–48. It is introduced here manifestly in the wrong place. The version here given is almost certainly the older of the two, but the resemblance is so striking, and in some cases (notably in Helgi's rebuke) the stanzas are so nearly identical, that it seems probable that the composer of the first Helgi Hundingsbane lay borrowed directly from the poem of which the present dialogue is a fragment. *Flag*: the banner ("gunnfani," cf. "gonfalon") here serves as the signal for war instead of the red shield mentioned in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 34. *Battle-light*: perhaps the "northern lights."

Sinfjötli kvað:

23. "Hēr mā Høþbroddr |
 Helga kenna
 flōtta traupan |
 i flota miþjum;
 hann hefr øpli |
 ættar þinnar,
 arf fjorsunga, |
 undir þrungizk."

Sinfjotli spake:

"Here may Hothbrodd |
 Helgi find,
 The hater of flight, |
 in the midst of the fleet;
 The home of all |
 thy race he has,
 And over the realm |
 of the fishes he rules."

Lines 3–4 are obscure, and in the manuscript show signs of error. Helgi had not at this time, so far as we know, conquered any of Hothbrodd's land. *The realm of the fishes*, in line 4, presumably means the sea, but the word here translated "fishes" is obscure, and many editors treat it as a proper name, "the realm of the Fjorsungs," but without further suggestion as to who or what the Fjorsungs are.

Gupmundr kvað:

24. "Því fyrr skulu |
 at Frekasteini
 sārskīþ saman |
 of sakar dōma;
 māl es, Høþbroddr! |
 hefnd at vinna,

Gothmund spake:

"First shall swords |
 at Frekastein
 Prove our worth |
 in place of words;
 Time is it, Hothbrodd, |
 vengeance to have,

ef lægra hlut |
lengi bōrum.”

If in battle worsted |
once we were.”

The word here translated *swords* is a conjectural emendation; the manuscript implies merely an invitation to continue the quarrel at Frekastein. *Hothbrodd*: apparently he is here considered as present during the dispute; some editors, in defiance of the meter, have emended the line to mean

Time is it for Hothbrodd | vengeance to have.

Sinfjötli kvað:

25. “Fyrr munt, Goðmundr! |
geitr of halda
ok bergskorar |
brattar klīfa,
hafa þer ī hendi |
heslikylfu:
þat’s blīþara |
an brimis dōmar.”

Sinfjotli spake:

“Better, Gothmund, |
to tend the goats,
And climb the rocks |
of the mountain cliffs;
A hazel switch |
to hold in thy hand
More seemly were |
than the hilt of a sword.”

Helgi kvað:

26. “Þēr’s, Sinfjötli! |
sōmra miklu
gunni at heyja |
ok glaða ornu,
an ōnýtum |
orþum at *bregða*,
þōt hildingar |
heiptir deili.

Helgi spake:

“Better, Sinfjotli, |
thee ’twould beseem
Battles to give, |
and eagles to gladden,
Than vain and empty |
speech to utter,
Though warriors oft |
with words do strive.

27. Þykkjumat gōþir	Good I find not
Granmars synir,	the sons of Granmar,
þō dugir seggjum	But for heroes 'tis seemly
satt at mæla;	the truth to speak;
þeir merkt hafa	At Moinsheimar
ā Moinsheimum,	proved the men
at hug hafa	That hearts for the wielding
hǫrum at bregða;	of swords they had,
[eru hildingar	[And ever brave
hølti snjallir.]]	the warriors are.]]

26–27. Cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 47–48, which are nearly identical. Stanza 27 in the manuscript is abbreviated to the first letters of the words, except for line 5, which does not appear in the other poem, and which looks like an interpolation.

(VI)

Helgi fekk Sigrūnar, ok āttu þau sonu.	Helgi took Sigrun to wife, and they had sons.
Var Helgi eigi gamall.	Helgi did not reach old age.
Dagr Hognason blōtaði Ōþin til fǫður- hefnda; Ōþinn lēði Dag geirs sīns.	Dag, the son of Hogni, offered sacrifice to Othin to be avenged for his father's death; Othin gave Dag his spear.
Dagr fann Helga mǫg sinn þar sem heitir at Fjoturlundi.	Dag found Helgi, his brother-in-law, at a place which is called Fjoturlund.
Hann lagði ī gǫgnum Helga með geirnum.	He thrust the spear through Helgi's body.
Þar fell Helgi, en Dagr reið til Sevafjalla ok sagði Sigrūnu tíðindi.	Then Helgi fell, and Dag rode to Sevafjoll and told Sigrun the tidings:

Here begins a new section of the poem, dealing with Helgi's death at the hands of *Dag*, Sigrun's brother. The note is based wholly on stanzas 28–34, except for the introduction

of Dag's name (cf. note on [prose following stanza 16](#)), and the reference to *Othin's spear*, the weapon which made victory certain, and which the annotator brought in doubtless on the strength of Dag's statement that Othin was responsible for Helgi's death (stanza 33). *Fjoturlund* ("Fetter-Wood"): mentioned only here and in stanza 28.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>28. "Trauþr emk, systir!
 trega þer at segja,
 þvīt hefk nauþugr
 nipti grōtta:
 fell ī morgin
 und Fjoturlundi
 buþlungr sās vas
 baztr ī heimi
 [ok hildingum
 ā halsi stōþ.]"</p> | <p>"Sad am I, sister,
 sorrow to tell thee,
 Woe to my kin
 unwilling I worked;
 In the morn there fell
 at Fjoturlund
 The noblest prince
 the world has known,
 [And his heel he set
 on the heroes' necks.]"</p> |
|--|---|

Line 5 looks like an interpolation.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p style="color: red;"><i>Sigrūn kvaþ:</i></p> <p>29. "Þik skyli allir
 eiþar bīta,
 þeir es Helga
 hafþir unna
 at enu ljōsa
 Leiþtrar vatni
 ok at ūrsvqlum
 Unnar steini.</p> | <p style="color: red;"><i>Sigrun spake:</i></p> <p>"Now may every
 oath thee bite
 That with Helgi
 sworn thou hast,
 By the water
 bright of Leipt,
 And the ice-cold
 stone of Uth.</p> |
|---|---|

Leipt: this river is mentioned in *Grimnismol*, 29. *Uth*: a daughter of the sea-god Ægir; regarding her sacred stone we know nothing. According to the annotator, Dag's life had

been spared because he swore loyalty to Helgi.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 30. Skríþia þat skip
es und þēr skríþi,
þōt ōskabyrr
eptir leggisk!
rinnia sā marr
es und þēr rinni,
þōt fiandr þīna
forþask eigir! | The ship shall sail not
in which thou sailest,
Though a favoring wind
shall follow after;
The horse shall run not
whereon thou ridest,
Though fain thou art
thy foe to flee. |
|---|---|

- | | |
|--|--|
| 31. ...
...
...
...
bītia þat sverþ
es þū bregþir,
nema sjōlfum þēr
syngvi of hōfþe! | ...
...
...
...
The sword shall bite not
which thou bearest,
Till thy head itself
it sings about. |
|--|--|

No gap indicated in the manuscript, but most editors have assumed that either the first or the last two lines have been lost. Bugge adds a line:

The shield shall not help thee | which thou holdest.

(Hlīfia þēr sā skjōldr | es þū hafisk fyr.)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 32. Þā væri hefnt þēr
Helga dauþa, | Vengeance were mine
for Helgi's murder, |
|--|--|

ef vǣrir vargr |
ā viþum ūti,
auþs andvani |
ok alls gamans,
hefþir *matki*, |
nema ā hræum spryngir.”

Wert thou a wolf |
in the woods without,
Possessing nought |
and knowing no joy,
Having no food |
save corpses to feed on.”

Dagr kvaþ:

33. “Ær est, systir! |
ok ørvita,
es brōþr þīnum |
biþr forskapa:
einn veldr Ōþinn |
øllu bølvi,
þvīt meþ sifjungum |
sagrūnar bar.

Dag spake:

“Mad art thou, sister, |
and wild of mind,
Such a curse |
on thy brother to cast;
Othin is ruler |
of every ill,
Who sunders kin |
with runes of spite.

34. Þēr bȳþr brōþir |
bauga rauþa,
øll Vandilsvē |
ok Vīgdala;
haf halfan heim |
harms at gjøldum,
brūþr baugvariþ! |
ok burir þīnir.”

Thy brother rings |
so red will give thee,
All Vandilsve |
and Vigdalir;
Take half my land |
to pay the harm,
Ring-decked maid, |
and as meed for thy sons.”

Vandilsve (“Vandil’s Shrine): who Vandil was we do not know; this and *Vigdalir* (“Battle-

Dale”) are purely mythical places.

Sigrūn kvað:

35. “Sitka svā sæl |
at Sevafjöllum
ār nē of nætr, |
at unak lífi,
nema at lífi lofpungs |
ljōma bregði,
rinni und vīsa |
Vīgblær þiníg,
[gollbitli vanr, |
knegak grami fagna.]

Sigrun spake:

“I shall sit not happy |
at Sevafjoll,
Early or late, |
my life to love,
If the light cannot show, |
in the leader’s band,
Vigblær bearing him |
back to his home,
[The golden-bitted; |
I shall greet him never.]

Line 5 may be spurious. *Vigblær* (“Battle-Breather”) Helgi’s horse.

36. Sva hafði Helgi |
hrædda gǫrva
fiandr sīna alla |
ok frændr þeira,
sem fyr ulfi |
ōpar rynni
geitr af fjalli |
geiskafullar.

Such the fear |
that Helgi’s foes
Ever felt, |
and all their kin,
As makes the goats |
with terror mad
Run from the wolf |
among the rocks.

37. Svā bar Helgi |
af hildingum,

Helgi rose |
above heroes all

sem ĩtrskapr |
askr af þyrni,
eþa sã dýrkalfr |
döggu slunginn,
es øfri ferr |
øllum dýrum
[ok horn gloa |
viþ himin sjalfan.]”

Like the lofty ash |
above lowly thorns,
Or the noble stag, |
with dew besprinkled,
Bearing his head |
above all beasts,
[And his horns gleam bright |
to heaven itself.]”

Line 5 (or possibly line 4) may be spurious. Cf. *Guthrunarkvitha I, 17*, and *Guthrunarkvitha II, 2*.

Haugr var gørr eptir Helga.

[En er hann kom til Valhallar, þã bauþ
Øþinn honum øllu at rãþa meþ sēr.

A hill was made in Helgi’s memory.

And when he came to Valhall, then Oth-
in bade him rule over everything with
himself.

Valhall, etc.: there is no indication as to where the annotator got this notion of Helgi’s sharing Othin’s rule. It is most unlikely that such an idea ever found place in any of the Helgi poems, or at least in the earlier ones; probably it was a late development of the tradition in a period when Othin was no longer taken seriously.

(VII)

Helgi kvaþ:

38. “Þū skalt, Hundingr! |
hverjum manni
fōtlaug geta |
ok funa kynda,

Helgi said:

“Thou shalt, Hunding, |
of every hero
Wash the feet, |
and kindle the fire,

hunda binda, |
hesta gæta,
gefa svīnum soþ, |
āþr sofa gangir.”]

Tie up dogs, |
and tend the horses,
And feed the swine |
ere to sleep thou goest.”

This stanza apparently comes from an otherwise lost passage containing a contest of words between Helgi and Hunding; indeed the name of Hunding may have been substituted for another one beginning with “H,” and the stanza originally have had no connection with Helgi at all. The annotator inserts it here through an obvious misunderstanding, taking it to be Helgi’s application of the power conferred on him by Othin.

(VIII)

Ambōtt Sigrūnar gekk um aptan hjā
haugi Helga ok sǫ at Helgi reiþ til
haugsins meþ marga menn.

Ambōtt kvaþ:

One of Sigrun’s maidens went one
evening to Helgi’s hill, and saw that Hel-
gi rode to the hill with many men.

The maiden said:

39. “Eru þat svik ein, |
es sea þykkjumk
eþa ragna røk |
— rīþa menn dauþir —,
es joa yþra |
oddum keyriþ,
eþa’s hildingum |
heimfōr gefin?”

“Is this a dream |
that methinks I see,
Or the doom of the gods, |
that dead men ride,
And hither spurring |
urge your steeds,
Or is home-coming now |
to the heroes granted?”

Here begins the final section (stanzas 39–50), wherein Sigrun visits the dead Helgi in his burial hill. *Doom of the gods*: the phrase “ragna røk” has been rather unfortunately Anglicized into the work “ragnarok” (the Norse term is not a proper name), and *røk*, “doom,” has been confused with *rökkr*, “darkness,” and so translated “dusk of the Gods,” or “Götter-

dämmerung.”

Helgi kvaþ:

40. “Esa þat svik ein, |
 es sea þykkisk,
nē aldar rof, |
 þōt oss lītir,
þōt joa ōra |
 oddum keyrim,
nē’s hildingum |
 heimfōr gefin.”

Helgi spake:

“No dream is this |
 that thou thinkest to see,
Nor the end of the world, |
 though us thou beholdest,
And hither spurring |
 we urge our steeds,
Nor is home-coming now |
 to the heroes granted.”

In the manuscript most of this stanza is abbreviated to the first letters of the words.

Heim gekk ambōtt ok sagði Sigrūnu:

The maiden went home and said to
Sigrun:

41. “Ūt gakk, Sigrūn |
 frā Sevafjōllum!
ef folks jaþar |
 finna lystir:
[upp’s haugr lokinn, |
 kominn es Helgi,]
dolgspor dreyma; |
 dōglingr baþ þik,
at sārdropa |
 svefja skyldir.”

“Go forth, Sigrun, |
 from Sevafjoll,
If fain the lord |
 of the folk wouldst find;
[The hill is open, |
 Helgi is come;]
The sword-tracks bleed; |
 the monarch bade
That thou his wounds |
 shouldst now make well.”

Line 5 (or possibly line 2) may be spurious. *Sword-tracks:* wounds. One edition places

stanza 48 after stanza 42, and an other does the same with stanza 50.

Sigrūn gekk ī hauginn til Helga ok
kvaþ:

Sigrun went in the hill to Helgi, and
said:

42. “Nū’mk svā fegin |
fundi okkrum,
sem ātfrekir |
Ōþins haukar,
es val vitu, |
varmar brāþir,
eþa dögglitir |
dagsbrūn sea.

“Now am I glad |
of our meeting together,
As Othin’s hawks, |
so eager for prey,
When slaughter and flesh |
all warm they scent,
Or dew-wet see |
the red of day.

43. Fyrr vilk kyssa |
konung ōlifþan,
an blōþugri |
brynju kastir;
hār’s þitt, Helgi! |
hēlu þrungit,
allr es vīsi |
valdögg sleginn,
[hendr ūrsvalar |
Hogna māgi;
hvē skalk þēr, buþlungr! |
þess bōt of vinna?]

First will I kiss |
the lifeless king,
Ere off the bloody |
byrnie thou cast;
With frost thy hair |
is heavy, Helgi,
And damp thou art |
with the dew of death;
[Ice-cold hands |
has Hogni’s kinsman,
What, prince, can I |
to bring thee ease?]

Possibly lines 5–6 are spurious, or part of a stanza the rest of which has been lost. It has also been suggested that two lines may have been lost after line 2, making a new stanza of

lines 3–6. *Kinsman*: literally “son-in-law.”

Helgi kvaþ:

44. “Ein veldr, Sigrūn |
frā Sevafjōllum!
es Helgi es |
harmdōgg sleginn:
grætr, gollvariþ! |
grimmum tōrum,
[sōlbjōrt, suþrōn! |
āþr sofa gangir;]
hvert fell blōþugt |
ā brjōst grami
[ūrsvalt, innfjalgt, |
ekka þrungit.]

Helgi spake:

“Thou alone, Sigrun |
of Sevafjoll,
Art cause that Helgi |
with dew is heavy;
Gold-decked maid, |
thy tears are grievous,
[Sun-bright south-maid, |
ere thou sleepest;]
Each falls like blood |
on the hero’s breast,
[Burned-out, cold, |
and crushed with care.]

Lines 4 and 6 have been marked by various editors as probably spurious. Others regard lines 1–2 as the beginning of a stanza the rest of which has been lost, or combine lines 5–6 with lines 5–6 of stanza 45 to make a new stanza. *South-maid*: cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 17 and note.

45. Vel skulum drekka |
dýrar veigar,
þōt mist hafim |
munar ok landa;
skal engi maþr |
angrljōþ kveþa,
þōt mer ā brjōsti |
benjar líti;

Well shall we drink |
a noble draught,
Though love and lands |
are lost to me;
No man a song |
of sorrow shall sing,
Though bleeding wounds |
are on my breast;

nū 'ru brūþir |
byrgþar ī haugi,
lofþa dīsir, |
hjā oss liþnum.”

Now in the hill |
our brides we hold,
The heroes' loves, |
by their husbands dead.”

Both lines 3–4 and lines 5–6 have been suspected by editors of being interpolated, and the loss of two lines has also been suggested. *Brides*: the plural here is perplexing. Gering insists that only Sigrun is meant, and translates the word as singular, but both “brides” and “loves” are uncompromisingly plural in the text. Were the men of Helgi's ghostly following likewise visited by their wives? The annotator may have thought so, for in the prose he mentions the “women” returning to the house, al though, of course, this may refer simply to Sigrun and the maid.

Sigrūn bjō sæing ī hauginum:

Sigrun made ready a bed in the hill.

46. “Hefk þēr, Helgi! |
hvīlu gōrva
angrlausa mjōk, |
Ylfinga niþr!
vilc þer ī faþmi, |
fylkir! sofna,
sem lofþungi |
lifnum myndak.”

“Here a bed |
I have made for thee, Helgi,
To rest thee from care, |
thou kin of the Ylfings;
I will make thee sink |
to sleep in my arms,
As once I lay |
with the living king.”

Helgi kvaþ:

47. “Nū kveþk enskis |
ørvænt vesa
sīþ nē snimma |
at Sevafjōllum,

Helgi spake:

“Now do I say |
that in Sevafjoll
Aught may happen, |
early or late,

es ā armi þū |
ōlifþum sefr
hvīt ī haugi, |
Hogna dōttir!
[ok estu kvik, |
en konungborna!]

Since thou sleepest clasped |
in a corpse's arms,
So fair in the hill, |
the daughter of Hogni!
[Living thou comest, |
a daughter of kings.]

Line 5 (or possibly line 4) may be interpolated.

48. Māl's mer at rīpa |
roþnar brautir,
lāta fōlván jō |
flugstīg troþa;
skalk fyr vestan |
vindhjalms bruar,
āþr Salgofnir |
sigrþjōþ vekí."

Now must I ride |
the reddened ways,
And my bay steed set |
to tread the sky;
Westward I go |
to wind-helm's bridges,
Ere Salgofnir wakes |
the warrior throng."

Wind-helm: the sky; the bridge is Bifrost, the rainbow (cf. *Grimnismol*, 29). *Salgofnir* ("Hall-Crower"): the cock Gollinkambi who awakes the gods and warriors for the last battle.

Þeir Helgi rípu leiþ sīna, en þær fōru
heim til bæjar.

Then Helgi and his followers rode on
their way, and the women went home
to the dwelling.

Annan aptan lēt Sigrūn ambōtt halda
vōrþ ā hauginum.

Another evening Sigrun bade the maid-
en keep watch at the hill.

En at dagsetri er Sigrūn kom til
haugsins, kvaþ hon:

And at sunset when Sigrun came to the
hill she said:

49. “Kominn væri nū, |
ef koma hygði,
Sigmundar burr |
frā solum Ōþins;
kveþk grams þinig |
grænask vānir,
es ā asklimum |
ernir sitja
ok drífr drōtt qll |
draumþinga til.”

“Now were he come, |
if come he might,
Sigmund’s son, |
from Othin’s seat;
Hope grows dim |
of the hero’s return
When eagles sit |
on the ash-tree boughs,
And men are seeking |
the meeting of dreams.”

Many editors assign this speech to the maid. Line 5 (or 4) may be spurious. *Meeting of dreams* (“Dream-Thing”): sleep.

Ambōtt kvæþ:

50. “Vesattu svā ør, |
at ein farir,
ðis skjoldunga! |
draughūsa til:
oþlgari verþa |
allir ā nōttum
daupir dolgar |
an of daga ljōsa.”

The Maiden said:

“Mad thou wouldst seem |
alone to seek,
Daughter of heroes, |
the house of the dead;
For mightier now |
at night are all
The ghosts of the dead |
than when day is bright.”

Sigrūn varþ skammlíf af harmi ok trega.

Þat var trúa i fornaskju, at menn væri endrbornir, en þat er nū kōlluþ kerlinga villa.

Sigrun was early dead of sorrow and grief.

It was believed in olden times that people were born again, but that is now called old wives’ folly.

Helgi ok Sigrūn er kallat at væri endrborin; hēt hann þā Helgi Haddingjaskati, en hon Kāra Hālfðanar-dóttir, svā sem kvepit er ī Kāruljōþum, ok var hon valkyrja.

Of Helgi and Sigrun it is said that they were born again; he became Helgi Haddingjaskati, and she Kara the daughter of Halfdan, as is told in the Lay of Kara, and she was a Valkyrie.

The attitude of the annotator is clearly revealed by his contempt for those who put any faith in such “old wives’ folly” as the idea that men and women could be reborn. As in the case of Helgi Hjorvarthsson, the theory of the hero’s rebirth seems to have developed in order to unite around a single Helgi the various stories in which the hero is slain. The *Lay of Kara (Karuljoth)* is lost, although, as has been pointed out, parts of the *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II* may be remnants of it, but we find the main outlines of the story in the *Hromundar saga Greipssonar*, whose compilers appear to have known the *Karuljoth*. In the saga Helgi Haddingjaskati (Helgi the Haddings’ Hero) is protected by the Valkyrie Kara, who flies over him in the form of a swan (note once more the Valkyrie swan-maiden confusion); but in his fight with Hromund he swings his sword so high that he accidentally gives Kara a mortal wound, where upon Hromund cuts off his head. As this makes the third recorded death of Helgi (once at the hands of Alf, once at those of Dag, and finally in the fight with Hromund), the phenomenon of his rebirth is not surprising. The points of resemblance in all the Helgi stories, including the one told in the lost *Karuljoth*, are sufficiently striking so that it is impossible not to see in them a common origin, and not to believe that Helgi the son of Hjorvarth, Helgi the son of Sigmund and Helgi the Haddings’-Hero (not to mention various other Helgis who probably figured in songs and stories now lost) were all originally the same Helgi who appears in the early traditions of Denmark.

Fra Dautha Sinfjotla

Of Sinfjotli's Death

Introductory Note

It has been pointed out that the Helgi tradition, coming originally from Denmark, was early associated with that of the Volsungs, which was of German, or rather of Frankish, origin (cf. Introductory Note to *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*). The connecting links between these two sets of stories were few in number, the main point being the identification of Helgi as a son of Sigmund Volsungsson. Another son of Sigmund, however, appears in the Helgi poems, though not in any of the poems dealing with the Volsung cycle proper. This is Sinfjotli, whose sole function in the extant Helgi lays is to have a wordy dispute with Gothmund Granmarsson.

Sinfjotli's history is told in detail in the early chapters of the *Volsungasaga*. The twin sister of Sigmund Volsungsson, Signy, had married Siggeir, who hated his brother-in-law by reason of his desire to possess a sword which had belonged to Othin and been won by Sigmund. Having treacherously invited Volsung and his ten sons to visit him, Siggeir slew Volsung and captured his sons, who were set in the stocks. Each night a wolf ("some men say that she was Siggeir's mother") came out of the woods and ate up one of the brothers, till on the tenth night Sigmund alone was left. Then, however, Signy aided him to escape, and incidentally to kill the wolf. He vowed vengeance on Siggeir, and Signy, who hated her husband, was determined to help him. Convinced that Sigmund must have a helper of his own race, Signy changed forms with a witch, and in this guise sought out Sigmund, who, not knowing who she was, spent three nights with her. Thereafter she gave birth to a boy, whom she named Sinfjotli ("The Yellow-Spotted"?), whom she sent to Sigmund. For a time they lived in the woods, occasionally turning into wolves (whence perhaps Sinfjotli's name). When Sinfjotli was full grown, he and his father came to Siggeir's house, but were seen and betrayed by the two young sons of Signy and Siggeir, whereupon Sinfjotli slew them. Siggeir promptly had Sigmund and Sinfjotli buried alive, but Signy managed to smuggle Sigmund's famous sword into the grave, and with this the father and son dug themselves out. The next night they burned Siggeir's house, their enemy dying in the flames, and Signy, who had at the last refused to leave her husband, from a sense of somewhat belated loyalty, perishing with him.

Was this story, which the *Volsungasaga* relates in considerable detail, the basis of an old poem which has been lost? Almost certainly it was, although, as I have pointed out, many if not most of the old stories appear to have been handed down rather in prose than in verse,

for the *Volsungasaga* quotes two lines of verse regarding the escape from the grave. At any rate, Sinfjotli early became a part of the Volsung tradition, which, in turn, formed the basis for no less than fifteen poems generally included in the Eddic collection. Of this tradition we may recognize three distinct parts: the Volsung-Sigmund-Sinfjotli story; the Helgi story, and the Sigurth story, the last of these three being by far the most extensive, and suggesting an almost limitless amount of further subdivision. With the Volsung-Sigmund-Sinfjotli story the Sigurth legend is connected only by the fact that Sigurth appears as Sigmund's son by his last wife, Hjordis; with the Helgi legend it is not connected directly at all. Aside from the fact that Helgi appears as Sigmund's son by his first wife, Borghild, the only link between the Volsung story proper and that of Helgi is the appearance of Sinfjotli in two of the Helgi poems. Originally it is altogether probable that the three stories, or sets of stories, were entirely distinct, and that Sigurth (the familiar Siegfried) had little or nothing more to do with the Volsungs of northern mythological-heroic tradition than he had with Helgi.

The annotator or compiler of the collection of poems preserved in the *Codex Regius*, having finished with the Helgi lays, had before him the task of setting down the fifteen complete or fragmentary poems dealing with the Sigurth story. Before doing this, however, he felt it incumbent on him to dispose of both Sigmund and Sinfjotli, the sole links with the two other sets of stories. He apparently knew of no poem or poems concerning the deaths of these two; perhaps there were none, though this is unlikely. Certainly the story of how Sinfjotli and Sigmund died was current in oral prose tradition, and this story the compiler set forth in the short prose passage entitled *Of Sinfjotli's Death* which, in *Regius*, immediately follows [the second lay of Helgi Hundingsbane](#). The relation of this passage to the prose of the *Reginismol* is discussed in the introductory note to that poem.

Sigmundr Volsungs son var konungr
ā Frakklandi; Sinfjotli var elztr hans
sona, annarr Helgi, þriði Hāmundr.

Sigmund, the son of Volsung, was a king
in the land of the Franks; Sinfjotli was
his eldest son, the second was Helgi,
and the third Hamund.

Borghildr, kona Sigmundar, ātti
brōþur er hēt ———.

Borghild, Sigmund's wife, had a brother
who was named ———.

En Sinfjotli, stjūpson hennar, ok ———
b'āpu einnar konu bāþir, ok fyr þā sōk
drap Sinfjotli hann.

Sinfjotli, her stepson, and ——— both
wooed the same woman, wherefore Sin-
fjotli slew him.

En er hann kom heim, þā baþ Borg-
hildr hann fara ā brot, en Sigmundr
baup henni fēboetr, ok þat varþ hon
at þiggja.

And when he came home, Borghild
bade him depart, but Sigmund offered
her atonement-money, and this she
had to accept.

En at erfinu bar Borghildr ǫl; hon tók eitr, mikit horn fullt, ok bar Sinfjotla.

En er hann sá í hornit, skilði hann at eitr var í ok mælti til Sigmundar: “Gjörōttr er drykkinn, ái!”

Sigmundr tók hornit ok drakk af.

Svá er sagt at Sigmundr var harþgǫrr, at hvárki mátti honum eitr granda utan nē innan, en allir synir hans stōþuz eitr ā hǫrund utan.

Borghildr bar annat horn Sinfjotla ok bað drekka, ok fōr allt sem fyrr.

Ok enn et þriðja sinn bar hon honum hornit ok þō āmælisorþ meþ, ef hann drykki eigi af.

Hann mælti enn sem fyrr við Sigmund.

Hann sagði: “Láttu grön sía þā, sonr!”

Sinfjotli drakk ok varþ þegar dauðr.

Sigmundr bar hann langar leiðir í fangi sēr ok kom at firði einum mjövu-um ok löngum, ok var þar skip eitt lítit ok maðr einn ā.

Hann bað Sigmundi far of fjörðinn.

At the funeral feast Borghild brought in ale; she took poison, a great horn full, and brought it to Sinfjotli.

But when he looked into the horn, he saw that it was poison, and said to Sigmund: “Muddy is the drink, Father!”

Sigmund took the horn and drank therefrom.

It is said that Sigmund was so hardy that poison might not harm him, either outside or in, but all his sons could withstand poison only without on their skin.

Borghild bore another horn to Sinfjotli and bade him drink, and all happened as before.

And yet a third time she brought him a horn, and spoke therewith scornful words of him if he should not drink from it.

He spoke as before with Sigmund.

The latter said: “Let it trickle through your beard, Son!”

Sinfjotli drank, and straight way was dead.

Sigmund bore him a long way in his arms, and came to a narrow and long fjord, and there was a little boat and a man in it.

He offered to take Sigmund across the fjord.

En er Sigmundr bar likit út ā skipit,
þā var bātrinn hlaðinn.

Karl mælti at Sigmundr skyldi fara
fyr innan fjörðinn.

Karl hratt út skīpinu ok hvarf þegar.

But when Sigmund had borne the
corpse out into the boat, then the craft
was full.

The man told Sigmund to go round the
inner end of the fjord.

Then the man pushed the boat off, and
disappeared.

Sigmundr konungr dvalþiz lengi ī
Danmǫrk ī rīki Borghildar, sīþan er
hann fekk hennar.

För Sigmundr þā suþr ī Frakkland til
þess rīkis er hann ātti þar.

Þā fekk hann Hjördisar dóttur Eylima
konungs; þeira son var Sigurþr.

Sigmundr konungr fell ī orrostu fyr
Hundings sonum, en Hjördis giptiz
þā Ālfi syni Hjālpreks konungs.

Ōx Sigurþr þar upp ī barnœsku.

Sigmundr ok allir synir hans vāru
langt umfram alla menn āþra um afl
ok vǫxt ok hug ok alla atgervi.

Sigurþr var þō allra framastr, ok hann
kalla allir menn ī fornfrœpum um
alla menn fram ok gǫfgastan herkon-
unga.

King Sigmund dwelt long in Denmark
in Borghild's kingdom after he had mar-
ried her.

Thereafter Sigmund went south into
the land of the Franks, to the kingdom
which he had there.

There he married Hjordis, the daughter
of King Eylimi; their son was Sigurth.

King Sigmund fell in a battle with the
sons of Hunding, and Hjordis then mar-
ried Alf the son of King Hjalprek.

There Sigurth grew up in his boyhood.

Sigmund and all his sons were far above
all other men in might and stature and
courage and every kind of ability.

Sigurth, however, was the fore most of
all, and all men call him in the old tales
the noblest of mankind and the mighti-
est leader.

Regarding *Sigmund*, *Sinfjotli*, and *Volsung* see *Introductory Note*. *The Franks*: although the Sigurth story had reached the North as early as the sixth or seventh century, it never lost all the marks of its Frankish origin. *Helgi* and *Hamund*: sons of Sigmund and Borghild; Helgi is, of course Helgi Hundingsbane; of Hamund nothing further is recorded. *Borghild*: the manuscript leaves a blank for the name of her brother; evidently the compiler hoped some day to discover it and write it in, but never did. A few editions insert wholly unauthorized names from late paper manuscripts, such as Hroar, Gunnar, or Borgar. In the *Volsungasaga*

Borghild bids Sinfjotli drink “if he has the courage of a Volsung.” Sigmund gives his advice because “the king was very drunk, and that was why he spoke thus.” Gering, on the other hand, gives Sigmund credit for having believed that the draught would deposit its poisonous contents in Sinfjotli’s beard, and thus do him no harm. *Boat*: the man who thus carries off the dead Sinfjotli in his boat is presumably Othin. *Denmark*: Borghild belongs to the Danish Helgi part of the story. *The Franks*: with this the Danish and Norse stories of Helgi and Sinfjotli come to an end, and the Frankish story of Sigurth begins. Sigmund’s two kingdoms are an echo of the blended traditions. *Hjordis*: just where this name came from is not clear, for in the German story Siegfried’s mother is Sigelint, but the name of the father of Hjordis, *Eylimi*, gives a clue, for Eylimi is the father of Svava, wife of Helgi Hjorvarthsson. Doubtless the two men are not identical, but it seems likely that both Eylimi and Hjordis were introduced into the Sigmund-Sigurth story, the latter replacing Sigelint, from some version of the Helgi tradition. *Hunding*: in the Helgi lays the sons of Hunding are all killed, but they reappear here and in two of the poems (*Gripisspo*, 9, and *Reginsmol*, 15), and the *Volsungasaga* names Lyngvi as the son of Hunding who, as the rejected lover of Hjordis, kills Sigmund and his father-in-law, Eylimi, as well. The episode of Hunding and his sons belongs entirely to the Danish (Helgi) part of the story; the German legend knows nothing of it, and permits the elderly Sigmund to outlive his son. There was doubtless a poem on this battle, for the *Volsungasaga* quotes two lines spoken by the dying Sigmund to Hjordis before he tells her to give the pieces of his broken sword to their unborn son. *Alf*: after the battle, according to the *Volsungasaga*, Lyngvi Hundingsson tried to capture Hjordis, but she was rescued by the sea-rover Alf, son of King Hjalprek of Denmark, who subsequently married her. Here is another trace of the Danish Helgi tradition. The *Nornageststhattr* briefly tells the same story.

Gripisspo

Gripir's Prophecy

Introductory Note

The *Gripisspo* immediately follows the prose *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* in the *Codex Regius*, and is contained in no other early manuscript. It is unquestionably one of the latest of the poems in the Eddic collection; most critics agree in calling it the latest of all, dating it not much before the year 1200. Its author (for in this instance the word may be correctly used) was not only familiar with the other poems of the Sigurth cycle, but seems to have had actual written copies of them before him; it has, indeed, been suggested, and not without plausibility, that the *Gripisspo* may have been written by the very man who compiled and annotated the collection of poems preserved in the *Codex Regius*.

In form the poem is a dialogue between the youthful Sigurth and his uncle, Gripir, but in substance it is a condensed outline of Sigurth's whole career as told piecemeal in the older poems. The writer was sufficiently skillful in the handling of verse, but he was utterly without inspiration; his characters are devoid of vitality, and their speeches are full of conventional phrases, with little force or incisiveness. At the same time, the poem is of considerable interest as giving, in brief form, a summary of the story of Sigurth as it existed in Iceland (for the *Gripisspo* is almost certainly Icelandic) in the latter half of the twelfth century.

It is not desirable here to go in detail into the immensely complex question of the origin, growth, and spread of the story of Sigurth (Siegfried). The volume of critical literature on the subject is enormous, and although some of the more patently absurd theories have been eliminated, there are still wide divergencies of opinion regarding many important points. At the same time, a brief review of the chief facts is necessary in order to promote a clearer understanding of the poems which follow, and which make up more than a third of the Eddic collection.

That the story of Sigurth reached the North from Germany, having previously developed among the Franks of the Rhine country, is now universally recognized. How and when it spread from northwestern Germany into Scandinavia are less certainly known. It spread, indeed, in every direction, so that traces of it are found wherever Frankish influence was extensively felt; but it was clearly better known and more popular in Norway, and in the settlements established by Norwegians, than anywhere else. We have historical proof that there was considerable contact, commercial and otherwise, between the Franks of northwestern Germany and the Norwegians (but not the Swedes or the Danes) throughout the

period from 600 to 800; coins of Charlemagne have been found in Norway, and there is other evidence showing a fairly extensive interchange of ideas as well as of goods. Presumably, then, the story of the Frankish hero found its way into Norway in the seventh century. While, at this stage of its development, it may conceivably have included a certain amount of verse, it is altogether probable that the story as it came into Norway in the seventh century was told largely in prose, and that, even after the poets had got hold of it, the legend continued to live among the people in the form of oral prose saga.

The complete lack of contemporary material makes it impossible for us to speak with certainty regarding the character and content of the Sigurth legend as it existed in the Rhine country in the seventh century. It is, however, important to remember the often overlooked fact that any popular traditional hero became a magnet for originally unrelated stories of every kind. It must also be remembered that in the early Middle Ages there existed no such distinction between fiction and history as we now make; a saga, for instance, might be anything from the most meticulously accurate history to the wildest of fairy tales, and a single saga might (and sometimes did) combine both elements. This was equally true of the Frankish traditions, and the two principles just stated account for most of the puzzling phenomena in the growth of the Sigurth story.

Of the origin of Sigurth himself we know absolutely nothing. No historical analogy can be made to fit in the slightest degree. If one believes in the possibility of resolving hero stories into nature myths, he may be explained in that fashion, but such a solution is not necessary. The fact remains that from very early days Sigurth (Sifrit) was a great traditional hero among the Franks. The tales of his strength and valor, of his winning of a great treasure, of his wooing a more or less supernatural bride, and of his death at the hands of his kinsmen, probably were early features of this legend.

The next step was the blending of this story with one which had a clear basis in history. In the year 437 the Burgundians, under their king, Gundicarius (so the Latin histories call him), were practically annihilated by the Huns. The story of this great battle soon became one of the foremost of Rhineland traditions; and though Attila was presumably not present in person, he was quite naturally introduced as the famous ruler of the invading hordes. The dramatic story of Attila's death in the year 453 was likewise added to the tradition, and during the sixth century the chain was completed by linking together the stories of Sigurth and those of the Burgundian slaughter. Gundicarius becomes the Gunther of the *Nibelungenlied* and the Gunnar of the Eddic poems; Attila becomes Etzel and Atli. A still further development came through the addition of another, and totally unrelated, set of historical traditions based on the career of Ermanarich, king of the Goths, who died about the year 376. Ermanarich figures largely in many stories unconnected with the Sigurth cycle, but, with the zeal of the medieval story-tellers for connecting their heroes, he was introduced as the husband of Sigurth's daughter, Svanhild, herself originally part of a separate narrative group, and as Jormunrek he plays a considerable part in a few of the Eddic poems.

Such, briefly, appears to have been the development of the legend before it came into Norway. Here it underwent many changes, though the clear marks of its southern origin were never obliterated. The names were given Scandinavian forms, and in some cases were completely changed (e.g., Kriemhild becomes Guthrun). New figures, mostly of secondary importance, were introduced, and a large amount of purely Northern local color was added.

Above all, the earlier part of the story was linked with Northern mythology in a way which seems to have had no counterpart among the southern Germanic peoples. The Volsungs become direct descendants of Othin; the gods are closely concerned with Fafnir's treasure, and so on. Above all, the Norse story-tellers and poets changed the figure of Brynhild. In making her a Valkyrie, sleeping on the flame-girt rock, they were never completely successful, as she persisted in remaining, to a considerable extent, the entirely human daughter of Buthli whom Sigurth woos for Gunnar. This confusion, intensified by a mixing of names (cf. *Sigrdrifumol*, introductory note), and much resembling that which existed in the parallel cases of Svava and Sigrun in the Helgi tradition, created difficulties which the Norse poets and story-tellers were never able to smooth out, and which have perplexed commentators ever since.

Those who read the Sigurth poems in the *Edda*, or the story told in the *Volsungasaga*, expecting to find a critically accurate biography of the hero, will, of course, be disappointed. If, however, they will constantly keep in mind the general manner in which the legend grew, its accretions ranging all the way from the Danube to Iceland, they will find that most of the difficulties are simply the natural results of conflicting traditions. Just as the Danish Helgi had to be "reborn" twice in order to enable three different men to kill him, so the story of Sigurth, as told in the Eddic poems, involves here and there inconsistencies explicable only when the historical development of the story is taken into consideration.

Grīpir het sonr Eylima, brōþir Hjor-
dīsar; hann rēþ lōndum ok var allra
manna vitrastr ok framvīss.

Gripir was the name of Eylimi's son, the
brother of Hjordis; he ruled over lands
and was of all men the wisest and most
forward-seeing.

Sigurþr reiþ einn saman ok kom til
hallar Grīpis.

Sigurth once was riding alone and came
to Gripir's hall.

Sigurþr var auþkendr; hann hitti
mann at māli ūti fyr hōllinni, sā
nefndiz Geitir.

Sigurth was easy to recognize; he found
out in front of the hall a man whose
name was Geitir.

Þā kvaddi Sigurþr hann māl̥s ok
spyrr:

Then Sigurth questioned him and
asked:

The manuscript gives the poem no title. *Gripir*: this uncle of Sigurth's was probably a pure invention of the poet's. The *Volsungasaga* mentions him, but presumably only because of his appearance here. On *Eylimi* and *Hjordis* see *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note. *Geitir*, the serving-man, is likewise apparently an invention of the poet's.

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| <p>1. “Hverr byggvir hēr
 borgir þessar,
 hvat þjóþkonung
 þegnar nefna?”</p> <p><i>Geitir kvaþ:</i></p> <p>“Grīpir heitir
 gumna stjōri,
 sās fastri ræþr
 foldu ok þegnum.”</p> | <p>“Who is it has
 this dwelling here,
 Or what do men call
 the people’s king?”</p> <p><i>Geitir spake:</i></p> <p>“Gripir the name
 of the chieftain good
 Who holds the folk
 and the firm-ruled land.”</p> |
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The manuscript does not indicate the speakers anywhere in the poem. Some editors have made separate stanzas out of the two-line speeches in stanzas 1, 3 and 6.

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| <p><i>Sigurþr kvaþ:</i></p> <p>2. “Es horskr konungr
 heima ī landi,
 mun gramr við mik
 ganga at mæla?
 māl̥s es þarfi
 maþr ōkunnigr,
 vilk fljōtliga
 finna Grīpi.”</p> | <p><i>Sigurth spake:</i></p> <p>“Is the king all-knowing
 now within,
 Will the monarch come
 with me to speak?
 A man unknown
 his counsel needs,
 And Gripir fain
 I soon would find.”</p> |
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| <p><i>[Geitir kvaþ:</i></p> <p>3. “Þess mun glaþr konungr
 Geiti spyrja,
 hverr sā maþr sē,
 es māl̥s kveþr Grīpi.”</p> | <p><i>Geitir spake:</i></p> <p>“The ruler glad
 of Geitir will ask
 Who seeks with Gripir
 speech to have.”</p> |
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Sigurþr kvað:

“Sigurþr heitik, |
 borinn Sigmundi,
 en Hjordís es |
 hilmis mōþir.”]

Sigurth spake:

“Sigurth am I, |
 and Sigmund's son,
 And Hjordis the name |
 of the hero's mother.”

Sigurth: a few editions use in the verse the older form of this name, “Sigvorth,” though the manuscript here keeps to the form used in this translation. The Old High German “Sigifrid” (“Peace-Bringer through Victory”) became the Norse “Sigvorth” (“Victory-Guarder”), this, in turn, becoming “Sigurth.”

4. Þā gekk Geitir |
 Grīpi at segja:
 “Hēr's maþr ūti |
 ōkuþr kominn,
 hann's itarligr |
 at āliti,
 sā vill, fylkir! |
 fund þinn hafa.”

Then Geitir went |
 and to Gripir spake:
 “A stranger comes |
 and stands without;
 Lofty he is |
 to look upon,
 And, prince, thyself |
 he fain would see.”

Bugge thinks a stanza has been lost after stanza 4, in which Geitir tells Gripir who Sigurth is.

5. Gengr ōr skāla |
 skatna drōttinn
 ok heilsar vel |
 hilmi komnum:
 “Þigg hēr, Sigurþr! |
 væri sōmra fyrr;

From the hall the ruler |
 of heroes went,
 And greeted well |
 the warrior come:
 “Sigurth, welcome |
 long since had been thine;

en, Geitir! tak |
viþ Grana sjölfum.”

Now, Geitir, shalt thou |
Grani take.”

Grani: Sigurth's horse. According to the *Volsungasaga* his father was Sleipnir, Othin's eight-legged horse, and Othin himself gave him to Sigurth. The introductory note to the *Reginismol* tells a different story.

6. Mæla nōmu |
ok mart hjala,
þās rāþspakir |
rekkar fundusk.

Sigurþr kvaþ:

“Seg mēr, ef veizt, |
mōþurbrōþir!
hvē mun Sigurþi |
snūna ævi?”

Then of many |
things they talked,
When thus the men |
so wise had met.

Sigurth spake:

“To me, if thou knowest, |
my mother's brother,
Say what life |
will Sigurth's be.”

Grīpir kvaþ:

7. “Þū munt maþr vesa |
mæztr und sōlu
ok hæstr borinn |
hverjum jōfri,
gjōfull af golli, |
en glōggr flugar,
ītr āliti |
ok ī orþum spakr.”

Gripir spake:

“Of men thou shalt be |
on earth the mightiest,
And higher famed |
than all the heroes;
Free of gold-giving, |
slow to flee,
Noble to see, |
and sage in speech.”

Sigurþr kvað:

8. “Seg, gegn konungr! |
gørr an spyrjak,
snotr, Sigurþi, |
ef sea þykkisk:
hvat mun fyrst gørask |
til farnaþar,
es ðr garþi emk |
genginn þinum?”

Sigurth spake:

- “Monarch wise, |
now more I ask;
To Sigurth say, |
if thou thinkest to see,
What first will chance |
of my fortune fair,
When hence I go |
from out thy home?”

Grīpir kvað:

9. “Fyrst munt, fylkir! |
fōþur of hefna
ok Eylima, |
alls harms reka;
þū munt harþa |
Hundings sunu
snjalla fella, |
munt sigr hafa.”

Gripir spake:

- “First shalt thou, prince, |
thy father avenge,
And Eylimi, |
their ills requiting;
The hardy sons |
of Hunding thou
Soon shalt fell, |
and victory find.”

Thy father: on the death of Sigmund and *Eylimi* at the hands of *Hunding's sons* see *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note.

Sigurþr kvað:

10. “Seg, ðtr konungr! |
ættingi, mēr
heldr horskliga, |
es hugat mælum:

Sigurth spake:

- “Noble king, |
my kinsman, say
Thy meaning true, |
for our minds we speak:

sēr Sigurþar |
 snor brøgþ fyrir,
 þaus hæst fara |
 und himins skautum?"

For Sigurth mighty |
 deeds dost see,
 The highest beneath |
 the heavens all?"

Grīpir kvað:

11. "Munt einn vega |
 orm enn frāna,
 þanns grōþugr liggr |
 ā Gnitahēiþi;
 þū munt bōþum |
 at bana verþa,
 Regin ok Fāfni; |
 rētt segir Grīpir."

Gripir spake:

"The fiery dragon |
 alone thou shalt fight
 That greedy lies |
 at Gnitahēith;
 Thou shalt be of Regin |
 and Fafnir both
 The slayer; truth |
 doth Gripir tell thee."

The dragon: Fafnir, brother of the dwarf Regin, who turns himself into a dragon to guard Andvari's hoard; cf. *Reginmol* and *Fafnismol*. *Gnitahēith:* a relic of the German tradition; it has been identified as lying south of Paderborn.

Sigurþr kvað:

12. "Auþr mun ørinn, |
 ef eflik svā
 vīg meþ virþum, |
 sem vist segir;
 leiþ at huga |
 ok lengra seg:
 hvat mun enn vesa |
 ævi minnar?"

Sigurth spake:

"Rich shall I be |
 if battles I win
 With such as these, |
 as now thou sayest;
 Forward look, |
 and further tell:
 What the life |
 that I shall lead?"

Grīpir kvað:

13. “Þū munt finna |
 Fāfnis bōli
 ok upp taka |
 auð enn fagra,
 golli hlōþa |
 ā Grana bōgu:
 rīþr til Gjūka, |
 gramr vīgrisinn!”

Gripir spake:

“Fafnir's den |
 thou then shalt find,
 And all his treasure |
 fair shalt take;
 Gold shalt heap |
 on Grani's back,
 And, proved in fight, |
 to Gjuki fare.”

Gjuki: the Norse form of the name Gibeche (“The Giver”). Gjuki is the father of Gunnar, Hogni, and Guthrun, the family which reflects most directly the Burgundian part of the tradition (cf. [Introductory Note](#)). The statement that Sigurth is to go direct from the slaying of Fafnir to Gjuki's hall involves one of the confusions resulting from the dual personality of Brynhild. In the older (and the original South Germanic) story, Sigurth becomes a guest of the Gjukungs before he has ever heard of Brynhild, and first sees her when, having changed forms with Gunnar, he goes to woo her for the latter. In an other version he finds Brynhild before he visits the Gjukungs, only to forget her as the result of the magic-draught administered by Guthrun's mother. Both these versions are represented in the poems of which the author of the *Gripisspo* made use, and he tried, rather clumsily, to combine them, by having Sigurth go to Gjuki's house, then find the unnamed Valkyrie, and then return to Gjuki, the false wooing following this second visit.

Sigurþr kvað:

14. “Enn skalt hilmi |
 ī hugaþsrōþu,
 framlyndr jofurr! |
 fleira segja:
 gestr emk Gjūka |
 ok gengk þapan—
 hvat mun enn vesa |
 ævi minnar?”

Sigurth spake:

“To the warrior now |
 in words so wise,
 Monarch noble, |
 more shalt tell;
 I am Gjuki's guest, |
 and thence I go:
 What the life |
 that I shall lead?”

Grīpir kvað:

15. “Sefr ā fjalli |
 fylkis dōttir
 björt ī brynju |
 ept bana Helga;
 þū munt hoggva |
 hvōssu sverþi,
 brynju rista |
 meþ bana Fāfnis.”

Gripir spake:

“On the rocks there sleeps |
 the ruler's daughter,
 Fair in armor, |
 since Helgi fell;
 Thou shalt cut |
 with keen-edged sword,
 And cleave the byrnie |
 with Fafnir's killer.”

Basing his story on the *Sigrdrifumol*, the poet here tells of Sigurth's finding of the Valkyrie, whom he does not identify with Brynhild, daughter of Buthli (stanza 27), at all. His error in this respect is not surprising, in view of Brynhild's dual identity (cf. *Introductory Note*, and *Fafnismol*, 44 and note). *Helgi*: according to *Helreith Brynhildar* (stanza 8), with which the author of the *Gripisspo* was almost certainly familiar, the hero for whose death Brynhild was punished was named Hjalmgunnar. Is Helgi here identical with Hjalmgunnar, or did the author make a mistake? Finnur Jonsson thinks the author regarded Sigurth's Valkyrie as a fourth incarnation of Svava Sigrun-Kara, and wrote Helgi's name in deliberately. Many editors, following Bugge, have tried to reconstruct line 2 so as to get rid of Helgi's name.

Sigurþr kvað:

16. “Brotin es brynja, |
 brūþr mæla tekr,
 es vaknaþi |
 víf ór svefni;
 hvat mun snōt at heldr |
 við Sigurþ mæla,
 es at farnaþi |
 fylki verþi?”

Sigurth spake:

“The mail-coat is broken, |
 the maiden speaks,
 The woman who |
 from sleep has wakened;
 What says the maid |
 to Sigurth then
 That happy fate |
 to the hero brings?”

Grīpir kvað:

17. “Mun rīkjum þēr |
 rūnar kenna,
 allar es aldir |
 eignask vildu,
 ok ā manns tungu |
 māla hverja,
 lyf meþ lækning: |
 lif heill, konungr!”

Gripir spake:

“Runes to the warrior |
 will she tell,
 All that men |
 may ever seek,
 And teach thee to speak |
 in all men's tongues,
 And life with health; |
 thou'rt happy, king!”

Sigurþr kvað:

18. “Nū's þvī lokit, |
 numin eru frōþi,
 ok em braut þapan |
 buinn at rīþa;
 leiþ at huga |
 ok lengra seg:
 hvat mun meirr vesa |
 minnar ævi?”

Sigurth spake:

“Now is it ended, |
 the knowledge is won,
 And ready I am |
 forth thence to ride;
 Forward look |
 and further tell:
 What the life |
 that I shall lead?”

Grīpir kvað:

19. “Þū munt hitta |
 Heimis bygþir
 ok glaþr vesa |
 gestr þjōþkonungs;—
 farit es, Sigurþr! |
 þats fyrir vissak,

Gripir spake:

“Then to Heimir's |
 home thou comest,
 And glad shalt be |
 the guest of the king;
 Ended, Sigurth, |
 is all I see,

skala fremr an svā |
fregna Grīpi.”

No further aught |
of Gripir ask.”

Heimir: the *Volsungasaga* says that Heimir was the husband of Brynhild's sister, Bekkhild. Brynhild's family connections involve a queer mixture of northern and southern legend. Heimir and Bekkhild are purely of northern invention; neither of them is mentioned in any of the earlier poems, though Brynhild speaks of her “foster-father” in *Helreith Brynhildar*. In the older Norse poems Brynhild is a sister of Atli (Attila), a relationship wholly foreign to the southern stories, and the father of this strangely assorted pair is Buthli, who in the *Nibelungenlied* is apparently Etzel's grandfather. Add to this her role of Valkyrie, and it is small wonder that the annotator himself was puzzled.

Sigurþr kvað:

20. “Fær mēr ekka |
orþ þats mæltir,
þvīt fram of sēr |
fylkir! lengra;
veizt ofmikit |
angr Sigurþi,
þvī, Grīpir! þat |
gørra segja.”

Sigurth spake:

“Sorrow brings me |
the word thou sayest,
For, monarch, forward |
further thou seest;
Sad the grief |
for Sigurth thou knowest,
Yet nought to me, Gripir, |
known wilt make.”

Grīpir kvað:

21. “Lā mer of øsku |
ævi þinnar
ljōsast fyrir |
līta eptir;
rētt emkat ek |
rāþspakr talipr

Gripir spake:

“Before me lay |
in clearest light
All of thy youth |
for mine eyes to see;
Not rightly can I |
wise be called,

ne in heldr framvīss, |
farit þats vissak."

Nor forward-seeing; |
my wisdom is fled."

Sigurþr kvað:

22. "Mann veitk engi |
fyr mold ofan,
þanns fleira sē |
fram an þū, Grīpir!
skaltat leyna, |
þōt ljōtt sei,
eþa mein gōrisk |
ā mīnum hag."

Sigurth spake:

"No man, Gripir, |
on earth I know
Who sees the future |
as far as thou;
Hide thou nought, |
though hard it be,
And base the deeds |
that I shall do."

Grīpir kvað:

23. "Esa meþ lōstum |
lōþ ævi þēr,
lāt, enn ītri, þat, |
qþlingr! nemask:
þvīt uppi mun, |
meþan qld lifir,
naddēls boþi! |
nafn þitt vesa."

Gripir spake:

"With baseness never |
thy life is burdened,
Hero noble, |
hold that sure;
Lofty as long |
as the world shall live,
Battle-bringer, |
thy name shall be."

Sigurþr kvað:

24. "Verst hyggjum þvī, |
verþr at skiljask

Sigurth spake:

"Nought could seem worse, |
but now must part

Sigurþr við fylki |
at svāgǫru;
leiþ vīsa þū |
— lagt's allt fyrir —
mēr, mærr, ef vill, |
mōþurbrōþir!”

Grīpir kvað:

25. “Nu skal Sigurþi |
segja gǫrva,
alls þengill mik |
til þess neyþir:
— munt vist vita, |
at vætki lýgr —
dōgr eitt es þēr |
daupi ætlaþr.”

Sigurþr kvað:

26. “Vilkak reiþi |
rīks þjóþkonungs,
gōþ rōþ at heldr |
Grīpis þiggja;
vill vist vita, |
þōt viltki sē,
hvat ā sýnt Sigurþr |
sēr fyr hōndum.”

The prince and Sigurth, |
since so it is,
My road I ask,— |
the future lies open,—
Mighty one, speak, |
my mother's brother.”

Gripir spake:

“Now to Sigurth |
all shall I say,
For to this the warrior |
bends my will;
Thou knowest well |
that I will not lie,—
A day there is |
when thy death is doomed.”

Sigurth spake:

“No scorn I know |
for the noble king,
But counsel good |
from Gripir I seek;
Well will I know, |
though evil awaits,
What Sigurth may |
before him see.”

Grīpir kvað:

27. “Fljōþ’s at Heimis |
 fagrt ālitum,
 hana Brynhildi |
 bragnar nefna,
 dóttir Buþla, |
 en dýrr konungr
 harþūþigt man |
 Heimir fōþir.”

Gripir spake:

“A maid in Heimir’s |
 home there dwells,
 Brynhild her name |
 to men is known,
 Daughter of Buthli, |
 the doughty king,
 And Heimir fosters |
 the fearless maid.”

Brynhild (“Armed Warrior”): on her and her family see [Introductory Note](#) and note to stanza 19.

Sigurþr kvað:

28. “Hvat’s mik at þvī, |
 þōt mæR seī
 fōgr āliti |
 fōdd at Heimis?
 þat skalt, Grīpir! |
 gōrva segja,
 þvīt qll of sēr |
 ørlog fyrir.”

Sigurth spake:

“What is it to me, |
 though the maiden be
 So fair, and of Heimir |
 the fosterling is?
 Gripir, truth |
 to me shalt tell,
 For all of fate |
 before me thou seest.”

Grīpir kvað:

29. “Hōn firrir þik |
 flestu gamni,
 fōgr āliti |
 fōstra Heimis;

Gripir spake:

“Of many a joy |
 the maiden robs thee,
 Fair to see, |
 whom Heimir fosters;

svefn nē sefrat |
 nē of sakar dōmir,
 gārat manna, |
 nema mey of sēr.”

Sleep thou shalt find not, |
 feuds thou shalt end not,
 Nor seek out men, |
 if the maid thou seest not.”

Sigurþr kvað:

30. “Hvat mun til líkna |
 lagt Sigurþi?
 seg, Grīpir! þat, |
 ef sea þykkisk;
 munk mey naa |
 mundi kaupa,
 þā ena fōgru |
 fylkis dōttur?”

Sigurth spake:

“What may be had |
 for Sigurth's healing?
 Say now, Gripir, |
 if see thou canst;
 May I buy the maid |
 with the marriage-price,
 The daughter fair |
 of the chieftain famed?”

Grīpir kvað:

31. “It munuþ alla |
 eiþa vinna
 fullfastliga, |
 fā munuþ halda;
 verit hefr Gjūka |
 gestr eina nōtt—
 mantat horska |
 Heimis fōstru.”

Gripir spake:

“Ye twain shall all |
 the oaths then swear
 That bind full fast; |
 few shall ye keep;
 One night when Gjuki's |
 guest thou hast been,
 Will Heimir's fosterling |
 fade from thy mind.”

Sigurþr kvaþ:

32. “Hvārt’s þā, Grīpir? |
 get þess fyr mēr!
 sēr geþleysi |
 ī grams skapi?
 skalk við mey þā |
 mōlum slīta,
 es alls hugar |
 unna þōttumk?”

Sigurth spake:

“What sayst thou, Gripir? |
 give me the truth,
 Does fickleness hide |
 in the hero’s heart?
 Can it be that troth |
 I break with the maid,
 With her I believed |
 I loved so dear?”

Grīpir kvaþ:

33. “Þū verþr, siklingr! |
 fyr svikum annars,
 munt Grīmhildar |
 gjalda rāþa:
 mun bjōþa þēr |
 bjarthaddat man,
 dōttur sīna, |
 dregr vėl at gram.”

Gripir spake:

“Tricked by another, |
 prince, thou art,
 And the price of Grimhild’s |
 wiles thou must pay;
 Fain of thee |
 for the fair-haired maid,
 Her daughter, she is, |
 and she drags thee down.”

Most editions have no comma after line 3, and change the meaning to

Fain of thee | the fair-haired one
 For her daughter is.

Grimhild: in the northern form of the story Kriemhild, Gunther’s sister and Siegfried’s wife, becomes Grimhild, mother of Gunnar and Guthrun, the latter taking Kriemhild’s place. The *Volsungasaga* tells how Grimhild gave Sigurth a magic draught which made him utterly forget Brynhild. Edzardi thinks two stanzas have been lost after stanza 33, their remains appearing in stanza 37.

Sigurþr kvað:

34. “Munk við þā Gunnar |
 gørva hleyti
 ok Guþrūnu |
 ganga at eiga:
 fullkvæni þā |
 fylkir vāeri,
 ef meintregar |
 mēr angraþit.”

Sigurth spake:

“Might I with Gunnar |
 kinship make,
 And Guthrun win |
 to be my wife,
 Well the hero |
 wedded would be,
 If my treacherous deed |
 would trouble me not.”

Grīpir kvað:

35. “Þik mun Grīmhildr |
 gørva vēla,
 mun Brynhildar |
 biþja fýsa
 Gunnari til handa |
 Gotna drottni:
 heitr fljōtla fōr |
 fylkis mōþur.”

Gripir spake:

“Wholly Grimhild |
 thy heart deceives,
 She will bid thee go |
 and Brynhild woo
 For Gunnar's wife, |
 the lord of the Goths;
 And the prince's mother |
 thy promise shall win.”

In the *Volsungasaga* Grimhild merely advises Gunnar to seek Brynhild for his wife, and to have Sigurth ride with him. *Goths*: the historical Gunnar (Gundicarius, cf. [Introductory Note](#)) was not a Goth, but a Burgundian, but the word “Goth” was applied in the North without much discrimination to the southern Germanic peoples.

Sigurþr kvað:

36. “Mein's fyr hōndum — |
 māk līta þat — ,

Sigurth spake:

“Evil waits me, |
 well I see it,

ratar gørliga |
 rāþ Sigurþar,
 ef mærrar skalk |
 meyjar biþja
 oþrum til handa, |
 es unnak vel.”

And gone is Sigurth's |
 wisdom good,
 If I shall woo |
 for another to win
 The maiden fair |
 that so fondly I loved.”

Grīpir kvað:

37. “Ēr munuþ allir |
 eiþa vinna
 Gunnarr ok Høgni, |
 en þū, gramr! þriþi;
 þā litum vīxliþ, |
 es ā leiþ eruþ,
 Gunnar ok þū: |
 Grīpir lȳgrat.”

Gripir spake:

“Ye three shall |
 all the oaths then take,
 Gunnar and Hogni, |
 and, hero, thou;
 Your forms ye shall change, |
 as forth ye tare,
 Gunnar and thou; |
 for Gripir lies not.”

In the *Nibelungenlied* Siegfried merely makes himself invisible in order to lend Gunther his strength for the feats which must be performed in order to win the redoubtable bride. In the northern version Sigurth and Gunnar change forms, “as Grimhild had taught them how to do.” The *Volsungasaga* tells how Sigurth and Gunnar came to Heimir, who told them that to win Brynhild one must ride through the ring of fire which surrounded her hall (cf. the hall of Mengloth in *Svipdagsmol*). Gunnar tries it, but his horse balks; then he mounts Grani, but Grani will not stir for him. So they change forms, and Sigurth rides Grani through the flames. *Oaths*: the blood-brotherhood sworn by Sigurth, Gunnar, and Hogni makes it impossible for the brothers to kill him themselves, but they finally get around the difficulty by inducing their half-brother, Gotthorm (cf. *Hyndluljoth*, 27 and note) to do it.

Sigurþr kvað:

38. “Hvī gegnir þat? |
 hvī skulum skipta

Sigurth spake:

“How meanest thou? |
 Why make we the change

litum ok lōtum, |
 es ā leiþ erum?
 þar mun flāræþi |
 fylgja annat
 atalt meþ ǫllu; |
 enn seg, Grīpir!”

Of shape and form |
 as forth we fare?
 There must follow |
 another falsehood
 Grim in all ways; |
 speak on, Gripir!”

Grīpir kvað:

39. “Lit hefr Gunnars |
 ok læti hans,
 mælsku þína |
 ok meginhyggjur;
 munt fastna þēr |
 framlundaþa
 fōstru Heimis, |
 fætr vætr fyr því.”

Gripir spake:

“The form of Gunnar |
 and shape thou gettest,
 But mind and voice |
 thine own remain;
 The hand of the fosterling |
 noble of Heimir
 Now dost thou win, |
 and none can prevent.”

The last half of line 4 is obscure, and the reading is conjectural.

Sigurþr kvað:

40. “Verst hyggjum því, |
 vāndr munk heitinn
 Sigurþr meþ seggjum |
 at svāgǫru;
 vildak eigi |
 vēlum beita
 jǫfra brūþi |
 es ǫzta veitk.”

Sigurth spake:

“Most evil it seems, |
 and men will say
 Base is Sigurth |
 that so he did;
 Not of my will shall |
 I cheat with wiles
 The heroes' maiden |
 whom noblest I hold.”

Grīpir kvað:

41. “Saman munu brullaup |
 bæþi drukkin
 Sigurþar ok Gunnars |
 ī solum Gjūka;
 þā hōmum vīxliþ, |
 es heim komiþ,
 hefr hvārr fyr þvī |
 hyggju sīna.”

Gripir spake:

“Thou dwellest, leader |
 lofty of men,
 With the maid as if |
 thy mother she were;
 Lofty as long |
 as the world shall live,
 Ruler of men, |
 thy name shall remain.”

Something is clearly wrong with stanzas 41–43. in the manuscript the order is 41, 43, 42, which brings two of Gripir's answers together, followed by two of Sigurth's questions. Some editors have arranged the stanzas as in this translation, while others have interchanged 41 and 43. In any case, Sigurth in stanza 42 asks about the “three nights” which Gripir has never mentioned. I suspect that lines 3–4 of stanza 41, which are practically identical with lines 3–4 of stanza 23, got in here by mistake, replacing two lines which may have run thus:

With thy sword between, | three nights thou sleepest
 With her thou winnest | for Gunnar's wife.

The subsequent poems tell how Sigurth laid his sword Gram between himself and Brynhild.

Sigurþr kvað:

42. “Mun gōþa kvōn |
 Gunnarr eiga
 mærr meþ mōnnum |
 — mēr seg, Grīpir! —,
 þōt hafi þrjār nātr |
 þegns brūþr hjā mēr
 snarlynd sofit? |
 sliks erut dōmi.”

Sigurth spake:

“Shall Gunnar have |
 a goodly wife,
 Famed among men, — |
 speak forth now, Gripir!
 Although at my side |
 three nights she slept,
 The warrior's bride? |
 Such ne'er has been.”

Grīpir kvað:

43. “Þū munt hvīla, |
 hers oddviti
 mærr! hjā meyju, |
 sem mōþir sē;
 þvī mun uppi, |
 meþan ǫld lifir,
 þjōþar þengill! |
 þitt nafn vesa.”

Gripir spake:

“The marriage draught |
 will be drunk for both,
 For Sigurth and Gunnar, |
 in Gjuki's hall;
 Your forms ye change, |
 when home ye fare,
 But the mind of each |
 to himself remains.”

The simultaneous weddings of Sigurth and Gunnar form a memorable feature of the German tradition as it appears in the *Nibelungenlied*, but in the *Volsungasaga* Sigurth marries Guthrun before he sets off with Gunnar to win Brynhild.

Sigurþr kvað:

44. “Hvē mun at ynþi |
 eptir verþa
 mægþ meþ mōnnum? |
 mēr seg, Grīpir!
 mun Gunnari |
 til gamans rāþit
 sīþan verþa |
 eþa sjölfum mēr?”

Sigurth spake:

“Shall the kinship new |
 thereafter come
 To good among us? |
 Tell me, Gripir!
 To Gunnar joy |
 shall it later give,
 Or happiness send |
 for me myself?”

Grīpir kvað:

45. “Minnir þik eiþa, |
 munt þegja þō,

Gripir spake:

“Thine oaths remembering, |
 silent thou art,

ant Guþrūnu |
 gōþra rāþa;
 en Brynhildr þykkisk |
 brūþr vargefín,
 snōt fíþr vēlar |
 sēr at hefndum.”

And dwellest with Guthrun |
 in wedlock good;
 But Brynhild shall deem |
 she is badly mated,
 And wiles she seeks, |
 herself to avenge.”

According to the *Volsungasaga*, Sigurth remembers his oaths to Brynhild almost immediately after his return to Gunnar's house. Brynhild, on the other hand, knows nothing until the famous quarrel between herself and Guthrun at the bath (an other reminiscence of the German story), when she taunts Guthrun with Sigurth's inferiority to Gunnar, and Guthrun retorts with the statement that it was Sigurth, and not Gunnar, who rode through the flames.

Sigurþr kvaþ:

46. “Hvat mun at bōtum |
 brūþr sū taka,
 es vēlar vēr |
 vífi gørþum?
 hefr snōt af mēr |
 svarna eiþa,
 enga efnda, |
 en unaþ lītít.”

Sigurth spake:

“What may for the bride |
 requital be,
 The wife we won |
 with subtle wiles?
 From me she has |
 the oaths I made,
 And kept not long; |
 they gladdened her little.”

Grīpir kvaþ:

47. “Mun Gunnari |
 gōrva segja,
 at eigi vel |
 eiþum þyrmþir,

Gripir spake:

“To Gunnar soon |
 his bride will say
 That ill didst thou |
 thine oath fulfill,

þās ītr konungr |
 af ǫllum hug,
 Gjūka arfi, |
 ā gram trūþi.”

When the goodly king, |
 the son of Gjuki,
 With all his heart |
 the hero trusted.”

Brynhild tells Gunnar that Sigurth really possessed her during the three nights when he slept by her in Gunnar's form, thus violating his oath. Here again there is a confusion of two traditions. If Sigurth did not meet Brynhild until after his oath to Gunnar (cf. note on stanza 13), Brynhild's charge is entirely false, as she herself admits in *Helreith Brynhildar*. On the other hand, according to the version in which Sigurth finds Brynhild before he meets Gjuki's sons, their union was not only completed, but she had by him a daughter, Aslaug, whom she leaves in Heimir's charge before going to become Gunnar's wife. This is the *Volsungasaga* version, and thus the statement Brynhild makes to Gunnar, as a result of which Sigurth is slain, is quite true.

Sigurþr kvað:

48. “Hvārt's þā, Grīpir? |
 get þess fyr mēr!
 munk saþr vesa |
 at sǫgu þeiri,
 eþa lǫgr ā mik |
 lofsæl kona
 ok ā sjalfa sik? |
 seg, Grīpir! þat.”

Sigurth spake:

“What sayst thou, Gripir? |
 give me the truth!
 Am I guilty so |
 as now is said,
 Or lies does the far-famed |
 queen put forth
 Of me and herself? |
 Yet further speak.”

Grīpir kvað:

49. “Mun fyr reiþi |
 rīk brūþr við þik
 ne af oftrega |
 allvel skipa;

Gripir spake:

“In wrath and grief |
 full little good
 The noble bride |
 shall work thee now;

viðr þū gōðri |
grand aldrigi,
þō víf konungs |
vēlum beittuþ.”

No shame thou gavest |
the goodly one,
Though the monarch's wife |
with wiles didst cheat.”

Sigurðr kvað:

50. “Mun horskr Gunnarr |
at hvotun hennar,
Gotþormr ok Hogni, |
ganga sīpan?
munu synir Gjūka |
ā sifjungi
eggjar rjōþa? |
enn seg, Grīpir!”

Sigurth spake:

“Shall Gunnar the wise |
to the woman's words,
And Gotthorm and Hogni, |
then give heed?
Shall Gjuki's sons, |
now tell me, Gripir,
Redden their blades |
with their kinsman's blood?”

Gotthorm: Gunnar's half-brother, and slayer of Sigurth.

Grīpir kvað:

51. “Þā's Guðrūnu |
grimt of hjarta,
es brøðr hennar |
þēr bana rāþa,
ok at øngu verþr |
ynþi sīpan
vitru vífi: |
velðr þvī Grīmhildr.”

Gripir spake:

“Heavy it lies |
on Guthrun's heart,
When her brothers all |
shall bring thee death;
Never again |
shall she happiness know,
The woman so fair; |
'tis Grimhild's work.”

Sigurþr kvað:

52. “Skiljumk heilir! |
munat sköpum vinna;
nu hefr, Grīpir! vel |
gört sem beiddak;
fljött myndir þū |
friþri segja
mīna ævi, |
ef mættir þat.”

Sigurth spake:

“Now fare thee well! |
our fates we shun not;
And well has Gripir |
answered my wish;
More of joy |
to me wouldst tell
Of my life to come |
if so thou couldst.”

The manuscript has stanzas 52 and 53 in inverse order.

Grīpir kvað:

53. “Þvī skal huggask |
hers oddviti,
sū mun gipt lagiþ |
ā grams ævi:
munat mætri maþr |
ā mold koma
und sōlar sjot, |
an Sigurþr þykki!”

Gripir spake:

“Ever remember, |
ruler of men,
That fortune lies |
in the hero's life;
A nobler man |
shall never live
Beneath the sun |
than Sigurth shall seem.”

Reginsmol

The Ballad of Regin

Introductory Note

The *Reginsmol* immediately follows the *Gripisspo* in the *Codex Regius*, and in addition stanzas 1, 2, 6, and 18 are quoted in the *Volsungasaga*, and stanzas 11–26 in the *Nornageststhattr*. In no instance is the title of the poem stated, and in *Regius* there stands before the introductory prose, very faintly written, what appears to be “Of Sigurth.” As a result, various titles have been affixed to it, the two most often used being “the Ballad of Regin” and “the First Lay of Sigurth Fafnisbane.”

As a matter of fact, it is by no means clear that the compiler of the Eddic collection regarded this or either of the two following poems, the *Fafnismol* and the *Sigrdrifumol*, as separate and distinct poems at all. There are no specific titles given, and the prose notes link the three poems in a fairly consecutive whole. Furthermore, the *prose passage* introducing the *Reginsmol* connects directly with *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*, and only the insertion of the *Gripisspo* at this point, which may well have been done by some stupid copyist, breaks the continuity of the story.

For convenience I have here followed the usual plan of dividing this material into distinct parts, or poems, but I greatly doubt if this division is logically sound. The compiler seems, rather, to have undertaken to set down the story of Sigurth in consecutive form, making use of all the verse with which he was familiar, and which, by any stretch of the imagination, could be made to fit, filling up the gaps with prose narrative notes based on the living oral tradition.

This view is supported by the fact that not one of the three poems in question, and least of all the *Reginsmol*, can possibly be regarded as a unit. For one thing, each of them includes both types of stanza commonly used in the Eddic poems, and this, notwithstanding the efforts of Grundtvig and Müllenhoff to prove the contrary, is almost if not quite conclusive proof that each poem consists of material taken from more than one source. Furthermore, there is nowhere continuity within the verse itself for more than a very few stanzas. An analysis of the *Reginsmol* shows that stanzas 1–4, 6–10, and 12, all in *Ljothahattr* stanza form, seem to belong together as fragments of a poem dealing with Loki’s (not Andvari’s) curse on the gold taken by the gods from Andvari and paid to Hreithmar, together with Hreithmar’s death at the hands of his son, Fafnir, as the first result of this curse. Stanza 5, in *Fornyrthislag*, is a curse on the gold, here ascribed to Andvari, but the only proper name in the stanza, *Gust*, is quite unidentifiable, and the stanza may originally have had to do with a

totally different story. Stanza 11, likewise in Fornyrthislag, is merely a father's demand that his daughter rear a family to avenge his death; there is nothing in it to link it necessarily with the dying Hreithmar. Stanzas 13–18, all in Fornyrthislag, give Regin's welcome to Sigurth (stanzas 13–14), Sigurth's announcement that he will avenge his father's death on the sons of Hunding before he seeks any treasure (stanza 15), and a dialogue between a certain Hnikar, who is really Othin, and Regin, as the latter and Sigurth are on the point of being shipwrecked. This section (stanzas 13–19) bears a striking resemblance to the Helgi lays, and may well have come originally from that cycle. Next follows a passage in Ljothahattr form (stanzas 19–22 and 24–25) in which Hnikar-Othin gives some general advice as to lucky omens and good conduct in battle; the entire passage might equally well stand in the *Hovamol*, and I suspect that it originally came from just such a collection of wise saws. Inserted in this passage is stanza 23, in Fornyrthislag, likewise on the conduct of battle, with a bit of tactical advice included. The “poem” ends with a single stanza, in Fornyrthislag, simply stating that the bloody fight is over and that Sigurth fought well—a statement equally applicable to any part of the hero's career.

Finnur Jonsson has divided the *Reginmol* into two poems, or rather into two sets of fragments, but this, as the foregoing analysis has indicated, does not appear to go nearly far enough. It accords much better with the facts to assume that the compiler of the collection represented by the *Codex Regius*, having set out to tell the story of Sigurth, took his verse fragments pretty much wherever he happened to find them. In this connection, it should be remembered that in the fluid state of oral tradition poems, fragments, and stanzas passed readily and frequently from one story to another. Tradition, never critical, doubtless connected with the Sigurth story much verse that never originated there.

If the entire passage beginning with the prose *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*, and, except for the *Gripisspo*, including the *Reginmol*, *Fafnismol*, and *Sigrdrifumol*, be regarded as a highly uncritical piece of compilation, rendered consecutive by the compiler's prose narrative, its difficulties are largely smoothed away; any other way of looking at it results in utterly inconclusive attempts to reconstruct poems some of which quite possibly never existed.

The twenty-six stanzas and accompanying prose notes included under the heading of *Reginmol* belong almost wholly to the northern part of the Sigurth legend; the mythological features have no counterpart in the southern stories, and only here and there is there any betrayal of the tradition's Frankish home. The story of Andvari, Loki, and Hreithmar is purely Norse, as is the concluding section containing Othin's counsels. If we assume that the passage dealing with the victory over Hunding's sons belongs to the Helgi cycle (cf. introductory notes to *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar* and *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*), there is very little left to reflect the Sigurth tradition proper.

Regarding the general development of the story of Sigurth in the North, see the introductory note to the *Gripisspo*.

Sigurþr gekk til stöps Hjálpreks ok
kaus sēr af hest einn, er Grani var
kallaþr síþan.

Sigurth went to Hjalprek's stud and
chose for himself a horse, who there-
after was called Grani.

Þá var kominn Reginn til Hjálpreks, sonr Hreiðmars; hann var hverjum manni hagari ok dvergr of vöxt, hann var vitr, grimmr ok fjölkunnigr.

Reginn veitti Sigurði föstr ok kenslu ok elskafi hann mjök.

Hann sagði Sigurði frá forellri sínu ok þeim atburðum, at Óðinn ok Hœnir ok Loki hófu komit til Andvarafora: í þeim forsi var fjöldi fiska.

Einn dvergr hét Andvari, hann var löngum í forsinum í geddu líki ok fekk sér þar matar.

Otr hét bróðir vārr, kvað Reginn, er opt för í forsinum í otrs líki; hann hafði tekit einn lax ok sat á árbakkanum ok á blundandi.

Loki laust hann með steini til bana; þóttuz æsir mjök hepnir verit hafa ok flögu belg af otrinum.

Þat sama kveld söttu þeir gisting til Hreiðmars ok sýndu veiði sína.

Þá tóku vēr þá höndum ok lögðum þeim fjörlausn at fylla otrbelginn með gulli ok hylja utan ok með rauðu gulli.

At that time Regin, the son of Hreithmar, was come to Hjalprek's home; he was more ingenious than all other men, and a dwarf in stature; he was wise, fierce and skilled in magic.

Regin undertook Sigurth's bringing up and teaching, and loved him much.

He told Sigurth of his forefathers, and also of this: that once Othin and Hönir and Loki had come to Andvari's waterfall, and in the fall were many fish.

Andvari was a dwarf, who had dwelt long in the waterfall in the shape of a pike, and there he got his food.

"Otr was the name of a brother of ours," said Regin, "who often went into the fall in the shape of an otter; he had caught a salmon, and sat on the high bank eating it with his eyes shut.

Loki threw a stone at him and killed him; the gods thought they had had great good luck, and stripped the skin off the otter.

That same evening they sought a night's lodging at Hreithmar's house, and showed their booty.

Then we seized them, and told them, as ransom for their lives, to fill the otter skin with gold, and completely cover it outside as well with red gold.

Þā sendu þeir Loka at afla gullsins;
hann kom til Rānar ok fekk net henn-
ar ok fōr þā til Andvaraforis ok kasta-
þi netinu fyr gedduna, en hon hljōp ī
netit.

Þā mælti Loki:

Then they sent Loki to get the gold; he
went to Ron and got her net, and went
then to Andvari's fall and cast the net
in front of the pike, and the pike leaped
into the net."

Then Loki said:

Hjalprek: father of Alf, Sigurth's step-father; cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*, and note. *Grani:* cf. *Gripisso*, 5 and note. *Regin* ("Counsel-Giver"): undoubtedly he goes back to the smith of the German story; in the *Thithrekssaga* version he is called Mimir, while Regin is there the name of the dragon (here Regin's brother, Fafnir). The *Voluspo* (stanza 12) names a Regin among the dwarfs, and the name may have assisted in making Regin a dwarf here. *Hreithmar:* nothing is known of him outside of this story. *Othin, Hönir* and *Loki:* these same three gods appear in company in *Voluspo*, 17–18. *Andvari's fall:* according to Snorri, who tells this entire story in the *Skaldskaparmal*, Andvari's fall was in the world of the dark elves, while the one when Loki killed the otter was not; here, however, the two are considered identical. *With his eyes shut:* according to Snorri, Otr ate with his eyes shut because he was so greedy that he could not bear to see the food before him diminishing. *Ron:* wife of the sea-god Ægir, who draws down drowning men with her net; cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 18 and note. Snorri says that Loki caught the pike with his hands.

1. "Hvat's þat fiska |
es rinnr flōþi ī,
kannat við vīti varask?
haufuþ þitt |
leystu helju ōr,
finn mēr *lindar* loga!"

"What is the fish |
that runs in the flood,
And itself from ill cannot save?
If thy head thou wouldst |
from hell redeem,
Find me the water's flame."

Snorri quotes this stanza. *Water's game:* gold, so called because Ægir, the sea-god, was wont to light his hall with gold.

Andvari kvað:

2. "Andvari heitik, |
Öinn hēt minn faðir,
margan hefk fors of farit;

Andvari spake:

"Andvari am I, |
and Oin my father,
In many a fall have I fared;

aumlig norn	An evil Norn
skōpumk ī ārdaga,	in olden days
at skyldak ī vatni vaða.”	Doomed me In waters to dwell.”

Snorri quotes this stanza. The name of the speaker is not given in the manuscripts. *Oin*: nothing further is known of Andvari’s father. *Norn*: cf. *Voluspo*, 20.

[*Loki kvað*:

3. “Seg þat, Andvari! |
 ef þū eiga vill
 lif ī lýða solum:
 hver gjöld |
 faa gumna synir,
 ef þeir höggvask orþum ā?”

Loki spake:

“Andvari, say, |
 if thou seekest still
 To live in the land of men,
 What payment is set |
 for the sons of men
 Who war with lying words?”

Stanzas 3–4 may well be fragments of some other poem. Certainly Loki’s question does not fit the situation, and the passage looks like an extract from some such poem as *Vafthruthnismol*. In *Regius* the phrase “Loki spake” stands in the middle of line 1.

Andvari kvað:

4. “Ofrgjöld |
 faa gumna synir
 þeirs Vaðgelmi vaða;
 ōsaþra orða |
 hverrs ā annan lýgr,
 oflengi leiða limar.”]

Andvari spake:

“A mighty payment |
 the men must make
 Who in Valthgelmir’s waters wade;
 On a long road lead |
 the lying words
 That one to another utters.”

The manuscript does not name the speaker. *Vathgelmir* (“Raging to Wade”): a river not elsewhere mentioned, but cf. *Voluspo*, 39.

Loki sá allt gull þat er Andvari átti.	Loki saw all the gold that Andvari had.
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En er hann hafði fram reitt gullit, þā
hafði hann eptir einn hring, ok tók
Loki þann af honum.

But when he had brought forth all the
gold, he held back one ring, and Loki
took this from him.

Dvergrinn gekk inn í steininn ok
mælti:

The dwarf went into his rocky hole and
said:

Snorri says Andvari's ring had the power to create new gold. In this it resembled Baldr's ring, Draupnir; c.f. *Skirnismol*, 21 and note.

5. “Þat skal goll, |
es Gustr ātti,
brøþrum tveim |
at bana verða
ok oþlingum |
āta at rōgi;
mun mīns fear |
mangi njōta.”

“Now shall the gold |
that Gust once had
Bring their death |
to brothers twain,
And evil be |
for heroes eight;
joy of my wealth |
shall no man win.”

This stanza apparently comes from a different source from stanzas 1–4 (or 1–2 if 3–4 are interpolated) and 6–10; cf. *Introductory Note*. In the *Volsungasaga* Andvari lays his curse particularly on the ring. *Gust*: possibly a name for Andvari himself, or for an earlier possessor of the treasure. *Brothers twain*: Fafnir and Regin. *Heroes eight*: the word “eight” may easily have been substituted for something like “all” to make the stanza fit the case; the “eight” in question are presumably Sigurth, Gotthorm, Gunnar, Hogni, Atli, Erp, Sorli and Hamther, all of whom are slain in the course of the story. But the stanza may originally not have referred to Andvari's treasure at all.

Æsir reiddu Hreiðmari fēit ok trāðu
upp otrbelginn ok reistu ā fœtr.

The gods gave Hreithmar the gold, and
filled up the otter-skin, and stood it on
its feet.

Þā skyldu æsirnir hlaða upp gullinu
ok hylja.

Then the gods had to heap up gold and
hide it.

En er þat var gort, gekk Hreiðmarr
fram ok sá eitt granahār ok bað hylja.

Þā drō Ōþinn fram hringinn And-
varanaut ok hulði hārit.

Þā kvað Loki:

And when that was done, Hreithmar
came forward and saw a single whisker,
and bade them cover it.

Then Othin brought out the ring And-
varanaut and covered the hair.

Then Loki said:

Andvaranaut: “Andvari’s Gem.”

6. “Goll’s þēr nū reitt, |
en þū gjöld hefr
mikil mīns hofuþ;
syni þīnum |
verþra sǣla skopuþ,
þat’s ykkarr beggja bani.”

“The gold is given, |
and great the price
Thou hast my head to save;
But fortune thy sons |
shall find not there,
The bane of ye both it is.”

Snorri quotes this stanza, introducing it, as here, with “Then Loki said” in the prose. *Regius* omits this phrase, but inserts “said Loki” in line 1.

Hreiðmarr kvað:

7. “Gjafar þū gaft, |
gaftat āstgjafar,
gaftat af heilum hug;
fjorvi yþru |
skylduþ ēr firþir vesa,
ef vissak fār þat fyrir.”

Hreithmar spake:

“Gifts ye gave, |
but ye gave not kindly,
Gave not with hearts that were whole;
Your lives ere this |
should ye all have lost,
If sooner this fate I had seen.”

Loki kvað:

8. “Enn es verra |
— þat vita þykkjumk —
niþja stríð of † nept:
jǫfra óborna |
hykk þā enn vesa,
es þat’s til hatrs hugat.”

Loki spake:

- “Worse is this |
that methinks I see,
For a maid shall kinsmen clash;
Heroes unborn |
thereby shall be,
I deem, to hatred doomed.”

The word translated “maid” in line 2 is obscure, and “gold” may be meant. Apparently, however, the reference is to the fight between Sigurth and the sons of Gjuki over Brynhild. The manuscript does not name the speaker, and many editions assign this stanza to Hreithmar.

Hreiðmarr kvað:

9. “Rauðu golli |
hykk mik ráða munu
svā lengi sem lifik;
hōt þīn |
hræpumk etki lyf,
ok haldiþ heim heðan.”

Hreithmar spake:

- “The gold so red |
shall I rule, methinks,
So long as I shall live;
Nought of fear |
for thy threats I feel,
So get ye hence to your homes.”

The manuscript includes “said Hreithmar” (abbreviated) in the middle of line 1, and some editors have followed this.

Fāfnir ok Reginn kröfðu Hreiðmar ni-
þgjalda eptir Otr brōður sinn.

Fafnir and Regin asked Hreithmar for a
share of the wealth that was paid for
the slaying of their brother, Otr.

Hann kvað nei við; en Fāfnir lagði
sverði Hreiðmar fōður sinn sofanda.

This he refused, and Fafnir thrust his
sword through the body of his father,
Hreithmar, while he was sleeping.

Hreiðmarr kallaði ā døtr sīnar:

Hreithmar called to his daughters:

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| <p>10. “Lyngheiðr ok Lofnheiðr!
 vitip mīnu lífi farit,
 mart’s þats þorf þear!”
 <i>Lyngheiðr kvað:</i>
 “Fō mun systir,
 þōt fōþur missi,
 hefna hl̥ra harms.”</p> | <p>“Lyngheith and Lofnheith,
 fled is my life,
 And mighty now is my need!”
 <i>Lyngheith spake:</i>
 “Though a sister loses
 her father, seldom
 Revenge on her brother she brings.”</p> |
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Hreithmar’s daughters do not appear elsewhere. It has been suggested that originally stanza 10 was followed by one in which Lofnheith lamented her inability to avenge her father, as she was married and had no son.

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| <p><i>[Hreiðmarr kvað:</i>
 11. “Al þō dōttur,
 dīs ulfhugur!
 ef getrat sun
 við siklingi;
 fā meyju mann
 ī meginþarfar,
 þā mun þeirar sunr
 þīns harms reka.”]</p> | <p><i>Hreithmar spake:</i>
 “A daughter, woman
 with wolf’s heart, bear,
 If thou hast no son
 with the hero brave;
 If one weds the maid,
 for the need is mighty,
 Their son for thy hurt
 may vengeance seek.”</p> |
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Apparently an interpolation (cf. [Introductory Note](#)). Vigfusson tries to reconstruct lines 2 and 4 to fit the Ljothahattr rhythm, but without much success. Hreithmar urges his daughter, as she has no sons, to bear a daughter who, in turn, will have a son to avenge his great-grandfather. Grundtvig worked out an ingenious theory to fit this stanza, making Sigurth’s grand-father, Eylimi, the husband of Lyngheith’s daughter, but there is absolutely no evidence to support this. The stanza may have nothing to do with Hreithmar.

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| <p>Þā dō Hreiðmarr, en Fāfnir tōk gullit
 allt.</p> | <p>Then Hreithmar died, and Fafnir took
 all the gold.</p> |
|---|--|

Þā beiddiz Reginn at hafa fōpurarf
sinn, en Fāfnir galt þar nei við.

Þā leitapi Reginn rāþa við Lynghei-
þi systur sīna, hvernig hann skyldi
heimta fōpurarf sinn.

Hon kvaþ:

Thereupon Regin asked to have his in-
heritance from his father, but Fafnir re-
fused this.

Then Regin asked counsel of Lyngheith,
his sister, how he should win his inher-
itance.

She said:

12. “Brōþur kveþja |
skaltu blīþliga
arfs ok ōþra hugar;
esa þat hōft, |
at þū hjōrvi skyllir
kveþja Fāfni fear.”

“In friendly wise |
the wealth shalt thou ask
Of thy brother, and better will;
Not seemly is it |
to seek with the sword
Fafnir’s treasure to take.”

Þessa hluti sagði Reginn Sigurþi.

Einn dag, er hann kom til hūsa Reg-
ins, var honum vel fagnat.

Reginn kvaþ:

All these happenings did Regin tell to
Sigurth.

One day, when he came to Regin’s
house, he was gladly welcomed.

Regin said:

13. “Kominn es hingat |
konr Sigmundar,
seggr snarrāþi |
til sala vārra;
mōþ hefr meira |
an maþr gamall,
fangs þykkjumk vōn |
at frekum ulfi.

“Hither the son |
of Sigmund is come,
The hero eager, |
here to our hall;
His courage is more |
than an ancient man’s,
And battle I hope |
from the hardy wolf.

This and the following stanza may be out of place here, really belonging, together with their introductory prose sentence, in the opening prose passage, following the first sentence describing Regin. Certainly they seem to relate to Regin's first meeting with Sigurth. Stanzas 13–26, interspersed with prose, are quoted in the *Nornageststhattr*. Stanzas 13–18 may be the remnants of a lost poem belonging to the Helgi cycle (cf. [Introductory Note](#)). *Hardy wolf*: warrior, i. e., Sigurth.

14. Ek mun fōþa	Here shall I foster
folkdjarfan gram:	the fearless prince,
nū's Yngva konr	Now Yngvi's heir
meþ oss kominn;	to us is come;
sjā mun rāesir	The noblest hero
rīkstr und sōlu,	beneath the sun,
þrymr of ǫll lǫnd	The threads of his fate
ørloḡsīmu."	all lands enfold."

Yngvi's heir: Yngvi was one of the sons of the Danish king Halfdan the Old, and traditionally an ancestor of Helgi (cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 57 and note). Calling Sigurth a descendant of Yngvi is, of course, absurd, and the use of this phrase is one of the many reasons for believing that stanzas 13–18 belonged originally to the Helgi cycle. *The threads*, etc.: another link with Helgi; cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 3–4. As Helgi was likewise regarded as a son of Sigmund, stanzas 13–14 would fit him just as well as Sigurth.

Sigurþr var þā jafnan meþ Regin, ok
sagði hann Sigurði, at Fāfnir lā ā
Gnitaheiði ok var ī orms líki.

Sigurth was there continually with Re-
gin, who said to Sigurth that Fafnir lay
at Gnitaheith, and was in the shape of a
dragon.

Hann ātti ægishjālm, er ǫll kvikvendi
hrædduz við.

He had a fear-helm, of which all living
creatures were terrified.

Reginn gørþi Sigurþi sverþ er Gramr
hēt: þat var svā hvast, at hann brā
þvī ofan ī Rīn ok lēt reka ullarlagþ fyr
straumi, ok tōk ī sundr lagþinn sem
vatnit.

Þvī sverþi klauf Sigurþr ī sundr steþja
Regins.

Eptir þat eggjaþi Reginn Sigurþ at
vega Fāfni; hann sagþi:

Regin made Sigurth the sword which
was called Gram; it was so sharp that
when he thrust it down into the Rhine,
and let a strand of wool drift against it
with the stream, it cleft the strand asun-
der as if it were water.

With this sword Sigurth cleft asunder
Regin's anvil.

After that Regin egged Sigurth on to
slay Fafnir, but he said:

Gnitaheith: cf. *Gripisspo*, 11 and note. *Fear-helm:* the word “ægis-hjalmr,” which occurs both here and in *Fafnismol*, suggests an extraordinarily interesting, and still disputed, question of etymology. *Gram:* according to the *Volsungasaga* Regin forged this sword from the fragments of the sword given by Othin to Sigmund (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note).

15. “Hōtt munu hlæja |
Hundings synir,
þeirs Eylima |
aldrs synjuþu,
ef meirr tyggja |
munar at sōkja
hringa rauþa |
an hefnd fōþur.”

“Loud will the sons |
of Hunding laugh,
Who low did Eylimi |
lay in death,
If the hero sooner |
seeks the red
Rings to find |
than his father's vengeance.”

Regarding the *sons of Hunding* and *Eylimi*, father of Sigurth's mother, all of whom belong to the Helgi-tradition, cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note.

Hjālprekr konungr fekk Sigurþi
skipaliþ til fōþurhefnda.

Þeir fengu storm mikinn ok beittu fyr
bergsnōs nōkkura.

Maþr einn stōþ ā berginu ok kvaþ:

King Hjalprek gave Sigurth a fleet for
the avenging of his father.

They ran into a great storm, and were
off a certain headland.

A man stood on the mountain, and said:

The fleet, and the subsequent storm, are also reminiscent of the Helgi cycle; cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 29–31, and II, prose after stanza 16. A *man*: Othin.

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| <p>16. “Hverir rīpa þar
 Rævils hestum
 hōvar unnir,
 haf glymjanda?
 seglvigg eru
 sveita stokkin,
 munut vāgmarar
 vind of standask.”</p> | <p>“Who yonder rides
 on Rævil’s steeds,
 O’er towering waves
 and waters wild?
 The sail-horses all
 with sweat are dripping,
 Nor can the sea-steeds
 the gale withstand.”</p> |
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Rævil’s steeds (Rævil was a sea-king, possibly the grandson of Ragnar Lothbrok mentioned in the *Hervararsaga*), *sail-horses* and *sea-steeds* all mean “ships.”

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| <p style="color: #8B0000;"><i>Reginn svarði:</i></p> <p>17. “Hēr ’u vēr Sigurþr
 ā sǣtrëum,
 es oss byrr gefinn
 viþ bana sjalfan;
 fellr brattr breki
 brǫndum hǣri,
 hlunnvigg hrapa;
 hverr spyrr at þvī?”</p> | <p style="color: #8B0000;"><i>Regin answered:</i></p> <p>“On the sea-trees here
 are Sigurth and I,
 The storm wind drives us
 on to our death;
 The waves crash down
 on the forward deck,
 And the roller-steeds sink;
 who seeks our names?”</p> |
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Sea-trees and *roller-steeds* (the latter because ships were pulled up on shore by means of rollers) both mean “ships.”

Hnikarr kvað:

18. “Hnikar hētu mik, |
þās hugin gladdi
Volsungr ungi |
ok vegit hafði;
nū mätt kalla |
karl af bergi
Feng eða Fjölni— |
far vilk þiggja.”

The Man spake:

“Hnikar I was |
when Volsung once
Gladdened the ravens |
and battle gave;
Call me the Man |
from the Mountain now,
Feng or Fjölner; |
with you will I fare.”

The *Volsungasaga* quotes this stanza. *Hnikar* and *Fjölner*: Othin gives himself both these names in *Grimnismol*, 47; *Feng* (“The Seizer”) does not appear elsewhere. According to the *Volsungasaga*, no one knew Othin’s name when he came to Volsung’s house and left the sword there for Sigmund.

Þeir viku at landi, ok gekk karl ā skip,
ok lægði þā veðrit.

Sigurðr kvað:

They sailed to the land, and the man
went on board the ship, and the storm
subsided.

Sigurth spake:

19. “Seg mér þat, Hnikarr! |
alls þū hvōrtveggja veizt
goða heill ok guma:
hver þōzt eru, |
ef berjask skal,
heill at sverða svipun?”

“Hnikar, say, |
for thou seest the fate
That to gods and men is given;
What sign is fairest |
for him who fights,
And best for the swinging of swords?”

This and the following stanzas are strongly suggestive of the *Hovamol*, and probably came originally from some such collection.

Hnikarr kvað:

20. “Morg eru gōþ, |
 ef gumar vissi,
heill at sverþa svipun;

dyggva fylgju |
 hykk ens dökkva vesa
hrottameiði hrafns.

21. Þat es annat, |
 ef þū'st út of kominn
auk'st ā braut buinn:
tvā þū lītr |
 ā taī standa
hrōþrfūsa hali.

22. Þat's et þriþja, |
 ef þjōta heyrir
ulf und asklimum:
heilla auþit |
 verþr þer af hjalmstōfum,
ef þū sēr þā fyrri fara.

23. [Skal gumna engr |
 ī gøgn vega
sīþ skīnandi

Hnikar spake:

“Many the signs, |
 if men but knew,
That are good for the swinging of
swords;
It is well, methinks, |
 if the warrior meets
A raven black on his road.

Another it is |
 if out thou art come,
And art ready forth to fare,
To behold on the path |
 before thy house
Two fighters greedy of fame.

Third it is well |
 if a howling wolf
Thou hearest under the ash;
And fortune comes |
 if thy foe thou seest
Ere thee the hero beholds.

A man shall fight not |
 when he must face
The moon's bright sister setting late;

systur māna; þeir sigr hafa	Win he shall
es sea kunnu,	who well can see,
hjørleiks hvatir,	And wedge-like forms
es hamalt fylkja.]	his men for the fray.

This stanza is clearly an interpolation, drawn in by the common-sense advice, as distinct from omens, given in the last lines of stanza 22. *Moon's sister*: the sun; cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 23 and note. *Wedge-like*: the wedge formation (prescribed anew in 1920 for the United States Army under certain circumstances) was said to have been invented by Othin himself, and taught by him only to the most favored warriors.

24. Þat's fār mikit,	Foul is the sign
ef þū fōti drepr,	if thy foot shall stumble
þars at vīgi veþr:	As thou goest forth to fight;
tālardīsir	Goddesses baneful
standa þēr a tvær hliþar	at both thy sides
ok vilja þik sāran sea.	Will that wounds thou shalt get.

Goddesses: Norse mythology included an almost limitless number of minor deities, the female ones, both kind and unkind, being generally classed among the lesser Norns.

25. Kemþr ok þveginn	Combed and washed
skal kōnna hverr	shall the wise man go,
auk at morni mettr:	And a meal at mom shall take;
þvīt ōsýnt es,	For unknown it is
hvar at aptni kōmr;	where at eve he may be;
illt's fyr heill at hrapa."	It is ill thy luck to lose."

This stanza almost certainly had nothing originally to do with the others in this passage; it may have been taken from a longer version of the *Hovamol* itself.

Sigurþr ātti orrostu mikla við Lyngva
Hundingsson ok brœþr hans; þar fell
Lyngvi ok þeir þrír brœþr.

Sigurth had a great battle with Lyngvi,
the son of Hunding, and his brothers;
there Lyngvi fell, and his two brothers
with him.

Eptir orrostu kvað Reginn:

After the battle Regin said:

Lyngvi: the son of Hunding who killed Sigmund in jealousy of his marriage with Hjordis; cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note. The *Volsungasaga* names one brother who was with Lyngvi in the battle, Hjorvarth, and Sigurth kills him as readily as if he had not already been killed long before by Helgi. But, as has been seen, it was nothing for a man to be killed in two or three different ways.

26. “Nū’s blōþugr ǫrn |
bitrum hjǫrvi
bana Sigmundar |
ā baki ristinn;
fār vas fremri, |
sās fold ryði,
hilmis arfi, |
ok hugin gladdi.”

“Now the bloody eagle |
with biting sword
Is carved on the back |
of Sigmund’s killer;
Few were more fierce |
in fight than his son,
Who reddened the earth |
and gladdened the ravens.”

Bloody eagle, etc.: the *Nornageststhattr* describes the manner in which the captured Lyngvi was put to death. “Regin advised that they should carve the bloody eagle on his back. So Regin took his sword and cleft Lyngvi’s back so that he severed his back from his ribs, and then drew out his lungs. So died Lyngvi with great courage.”

Heim fōr Sigurþr til Hjālpreks; þā
eggjaði Reginn Sigurþ til at vega
Fāfni.

Sigurth went home to Hjalprek’s house;
thereupon Regin egged him on to fight
with Fafnir.

In *Regius* there is no break of any kind between this prose passage and the [prose introduction](#) to the *Fafnismol* (cf. [Introductory Note](#)).

Fafnismol

The Ballad of Fafnir

Introductory Note

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

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

Here, as in the *Reginsmol*, there is very little that bespeaks the German origin of the Sigurth story. Sigurth’s winning of the treasure is in itself undoubtedly a part of the earlier southern legend, but the manner in which he does it is thoroughly Norse. Moreover, the concluding section, which points toward the finding of the sleeping Brynhild, relates entirely to the northern Valkyrie, the warrior-maiden punished by Othin, and not at all

to the southern Brynhild the daughter of Buthli. The *Fafnismol* is, however, sharply distinguished from the *Reginsmol* by showing no clear traces of the Helgi tradition, although a part of the bird song (stanzas 40–44, in Fornyrthislag form, as distinct from the body of the poem) sounds suspiciously like the bird passage in the beginning of the *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*. Regarding the general relations of the various sets of traditions in shaping the story of Sigurth, see the introductory note to *Gripisspo*.

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

Sigurþr ok Reginn fōru upp ā Gnita-
heipi ok hittu þar slōþ Fāfnis, þā er
hann skreiþ til vatns.

Þar gōrþi Sigurþr grōf mikla ā vegin-
um ok gekk Sigurþr þar ī.

En er Fāfnir skreiþ af gullinu, blēs
hann eitri, ok hraut þat fyr ofan
hōfuþ Sigurþi.

En er Fāfnir skreiþ yfir grōfna, þā lag-
þi Sigurþr hann meþ sverþi til hjarta.

Fāfnir hristi sik ok barþi hōfþi ok
sporþi.

Sigurþr hljōp ōr grōfinni, ok sā þā
hvārr annan.

Fāfnir kvaþ:

Sigurth and Regin went up to the Gni-
taheith, and found there the track that
Fafnir made when he crawled to water.

Then Sigurth made a great trench
across the path, and took his place
therein.

When Fafnir crawled from his gold, he
blew out venom, and it ran down from
above on Sigurth’s head.

But when Fafnir crawled over the
trench, then Sigurth thrust his sword
into his body to the heart.

Fafnir writhed and struck out with his
head and tail.

Sigurth leaped from the trench, and
each looked at the other.

Fafnir said:

The prose follows the concluding prose passage of the *Reginsmol* without any interruption; the heading “Of Fafnir’s Death” is written in the manuscript very faintly just before stanza 1. *Gnitaheith*: cf. *Gripisspo*, 11 and note. *Fafnir*: Regin’s brother: cf. *Reginsmol*, prose after stanza 14. *Venom*: in the *Volsungasaga* it was the blood, and not the venom, that poured down on Sigurth’s head. Sigurth was much worried about this danger, and before he dug the trench asked Regin what would happen if the dragon’s blood overcame him. Regin thereupon taunted him with cowardice (Sigurth refers to this taunt in stanza 30, but the stanza embodying it has disappeared). After Sigurth had dug his trench, an old man (Othin, of course) appeared and advised him to dig other trenches to carry off the blood, which he

did, thereby escaping harm.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. “Sveinn ok sveinn!
 hverjum est, <i>sveinn!</i> of
 borinn?
 hverra’st manna mögr?
 es ā Fāfni rautt
 þinn enn frāna mæki:
 stöndumk til hjarta hjörr.”</p> | <p>“Youth, oh, youth!
 of whom then, youth, art thou
 born?
 Say whose son thou art,
 Who in Fafnir’s blood
 thy bright blade reddened,
 And struck thy sword to my heart.”</p> |
|---|---|

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

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>Sigurþr dulþi nafns síns fyr því at þat
 var trúa þeira í forneskju, at orþ feigs
 manns mætti mikít, ef hann bölvafi
 övin sínum með nafni.
 Hann kvaþ:</p> | <p>Sigurth concealed his name because it
 was believed in olden times that the
 word of a dying man might have great
 power if he cursed his foe by his name.
 He said:</p> |
|---|---|

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>2. “Göfugt dýr heitik,
 en ek gengit hefk
 enn möþurlausi mögr;
 föður ek ākka
 sem fira synir,
 æ gengk einn saman.”</p> | <p>“The Noble Hart
 my name, and I go
 A motherless man abroad;
 Father I had not,
 as others have,
 And lonely ever I live.”</p> |
|--|---|

Fāfñir kvaþ:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>3. “Veizt, ef föður nē āttat
 sem fira synir,</p> | <p><i>Fafñir spake:</i>
 “If father thou hadst not,
 as others have,</p> |
|--|--|

af hverju vast undri alinn?	By what wonder wast thou born?
þōt mer birtira nafn	[Though thy name on the day
ā banadægri,	of my death thou hidest,
þā veizt vist, at lýgr.”	Thou knowest now thou dost lie.]”

The names of the speakers do not appear in the manuscript, though they seem originally to have been indicated in the margin for stanzas 3–30. The last two lines of stanza 3 are missing in the manuscript, with no gap indicated, but the *Volsungasaga* prose paraphrase indicates that something was omitted, and the lines here given are conjecturally reconstructed from this paraphrase.

Sigurþr kvaþ:

4. “Ætterni mitt |
 kveþk þēr ofkunnigt vesa
 auk mik sjalfan et sama:
 Sigurþr heitik, |
 Sigmundr hēt minn faþir,
 es hefk þik vōpnum vegit.”

Sigurth spake:

“My race, methinks, |
 is unknown to thee,
 And so am I myself;
 Sigurth my name, |
 and Sigmund’s son,
 Who smote thee thus with the sword.”

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

Fāfnir kvaþ:

5. “Hverr þik hvatti? |
 hvī hvetjask lēzt
 mīnu fjörvi at fara?
 enn frāneygi sveinn! |
 āttir fōþur bitran,
 es ī barnōsku ’st brāþr.”

Fafnir spake:

“Who drove thee on? |
 why wert thou driven
 My life to make me lose?
 A father brave |
 had the bright-eyed youth,
 For bold in boyhood thou art.”

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

Sigurðr kvað:

6. “Hugr mik hvatti, |
 hendr mēr fulltýðu
 ok minn enn hvassi hjørr;
 fār es hvatr |
 es hrørask tekr,
 ef ī barnøsku ’s blauðr.”

Sigurth spake:

- “My heart did drive me, |
 my hand fulfilled,
 And my shining sword so sharp;
 Few are keen |
 when old age comes,
 Who timid in boyhood be.”

Fāfnir kvað:

7. “Veitk, ef vaxa næðir |
 fyr þinna vina brjōsti,
 sæi maðr þik vreipan vega;
 nū est haptr |
 ok hernuminn,
 æ kveða bandingja bifask.”

Fafnir spake:

- “If thou mightest grow |
 thy friends among,
 One might see thee fiercely fight;
 But bound thou art, |
 and in battle taken,
 And to fear are prisoners prone.”

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

Sigurðr kvað:

8. “Því bregðr mēr, Fāfnir! |
 at til fjarri seak
 mīnum feðrmunum:
 eigi emk haptr, |
 þōt værak hernumi,
 þū fannt at ek lauss lifi.”

Sigurth spake:

- “Thou blamest me, Fafnir, |
 that I see from afar
 The wealth that my father’s was;
 Not bound am I, |
 though in battle taken,
 Thou hast found that free I live.”

Fāfnir kvað:

9. “Heiptyrþi ein |
 telr þū þēr ī hvīvetna,
 en ek þēr satt eitt segik:
 et gjalla goll |
 ok et glōþrauþa fē—
 þēr verþa þeir baugar at bana.”

Fafnir spake:

- “In all I say |
 dost thou hatred see,
 Yet truth alone do I tell;
 The sounding gold, |
 the glow-red wealth,
 And the rings thy bane shall be.”

Sigurþr kvað:

10. “Fei rāþa |
 skal fyrþa hverr
 æ til ens eina dags;
 þvīt einu sinni |
 skal alda hverr
 fara til heljar heþan.”

Sigurth spake:

- “Some one the hoard |
 shall ever hold,
 Till the destined day shall come;
 For a time there is |
 when every man
 Shall journey hence to hell.”

Fāfnir kvað:

11. [“Norna dōm |
 muntu fyr nesjum hafa
 ok ørlōg ōsvinns apa;
 ī vatni þu drukknar, |
 ef ī vindi rōr,
 allt es feigs forað.”

Fafnir spake:

- “The fate of the Norns |
 before the headland
 Thou findest, and doom of a fool;
 In the water shalt drown |
 if thou row 'gainst the wind,
 All danger is near to death.”

Stanzas 11–15 are probably interpolated, and come from a poem similar to *Vafthruthnismol*. *The headland*: Fafnir is apparently quoting proverbs; this one seems to mean that disaster (“the fate of the Norns”) awaits when one rounds the first headland (i. e., at the beginning of life’s voyage, in youth). The third line is a commentary on obstinate rashness. The

Volsungasaga paraphrases stanzas 11–15 throughout.

Sigurþr kvað:

12. “Seg mer þat, Fāfnir! |
 alls þik frōþan kveða
 ok vel mart vita:
 hverjar’u nornir |
 es nauþgönglar ’ū
 ok kjōsa mōþr frā mōgum?”

Sigurth spake:

“Tell me then, Fafnir, |
 for wise thou art famed,
 And much thou knowest now:
 Who are the Norns |
 who are helpful in need,
 And the babe from the mother bring?”

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

Fāfnir kvað:

13. “Nābornar |
 hykkak nornir vesa,
 eigut þær ætt saman:
 sumar’u āskungar, |
 sumar alfkungar,
 sumar dōtr Dvalins.”

Fafnir spake:

“Of many births |
 the Norns must be,
 Nor one in race they were;
 Some to gods, others |
 to elves are kin,
 And Dvalin’s daughters some.”

Snorri quotes this stanza. There were minor Norns, or fates, in addition to the three great Norns, regarding whom cf. *Voluspo*, 20. *Dvalin:* chief of the dwarfs; cf. *Voluspo*, 14.

Sigurþr kvað:

14. “Seg mer þat, Fāfnir! |
 alls þik frōþan kveða
 ok vel mart vita:

Sigurth spake:

“Tell me then, Fafnir, |
 for wise thou art famed,
 And much thou knowest now:

hvē sǫ holmr heitir, |
 es blanda hjǫrlegi
 Surtr ok æsir saman?"

How call they the isle |
 where all the gods
 And Surt shall sword-sweat mingle?"

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

Fāfnir kvað:

15. "Ösköpnir heitir, |
 en þar ǫll skulu
 geirum leika goð;
 Bilrost brotnar, |
 es þeir ā brū fara,
 ok svima ī mōþu marir.]

Fafnir spake:

"Oskopnir is it, |
 where all the gods
 Shall seek the play of swords;
 Bilrost breaks |
 when they cross the bridge,
 And the steeds shall swim in the flood.

Oskopnir ("Not-Made"): apparently another name for Vigrith, which is named in *Vafthruthnismol*, 18, as the final battle-ground. *Bilrost* (or Bifrost): the rainbow bridge which breaks beneath Surt's followers; cf. *Grimnismol*, 29 and note.

16. Ægishjalm |
 bark of alda sunum,
 meþan of menjum lāk;
 einn rammari |
 hugþumk ǫllum vesa,
 fannkak svā marga mögu."

The fear-helm I wore |
 to afright mankind,
 While guarding my gold I lay;
 Mightier seemed I |
 than any man,
 For a fiercer never I found."

With this stanza Fafnir returns to the situation. *Fear-helm*: regarding the "ægis-hjalmr" cf. *Reginismol*, prose after stanza 14 and note.

Sigurðr kvað:

17. “Ægishjalmr |
bergr einungi,
hvars skulu vreiðir vega;
þā þat fiðr, |
es með fleirum kómr,
at engi’s einna hvatastr.”

Sigurth spake:

“The fear-helm surely |
no man shields
When he faces a valiant foe;
Oft one finds, |
when the foe he meets,
That he is not the bravest of all.”

Fāfnir kvað:

18. “Eitri fnōstak, |
es ā arfi lāk
miklum mīns fōður;
[vasa maðr svā mōþugr |
at mēr mōta þyrði
hræddumka vōpn nē vēlar.]”

Fafnir spake:

“Venom I breathed |
when bright I lay
By the hoard my father had;
[There was none so mighty |
as dared to meet me,
And weapons nor wiles I feared.]”

Lines 3–4 do not appear in the manuscript and no gap is indicated; they are here conjecturally paraphrased from the prose passage in the *Volsungasaga*.

Sigurðr kvað:

19. “Enn frāni ormr! |
þū gørðir fræs mikla
ok galzt harðan hug;
heipt at meiri |
verðr hólða sunum,
at þann hjalm hafi.”

Sigurth spake:

“Glittering worm, |
thy hissing was great,
And hard didst show thy heart;
But hatred more |
have the sons of men
For him who owns the helm.”

Fāfnir kvað:

20. “Ræþk þer nū, Sigurþr! |
 en þū rāþ nemir,
 ok rīþ heim heþan:
 et gjalla goll |
 ok et glōþrauþa fē—
 þēr verþa þeir baugar at bana.”

Fafnir spake:

“I counsel thee, Sigurth, |
 heed my speech,
 And ride thou homeward hence,
 The sounding gold, |
 the glow-red wealth,
 And the rings thy bane shall be.”

It has been suggested that this stanza is spurious, and that stanza 21 ought to follow stanza 22. Lines 3–4, abbreviated in the manuscript, are identical with lines 3–4 of stanza 9. The *Volsungasaga* paraphrase in place of these two lines makes Fafnir say: “For it often happens that he who gets a deadly wound yet avenges himself.” It is quite likely that two stanzas have been lost.

Sigurþr kvað:

21. “Rāþ’s þēr rāþit, |
 en ek rīþa mun
 til þess golls es ī lyngvi liggr;
 en þū, Fāfnir! |
 ligg ī fjōrbrotum,
 þars þik Hel hafi.”

Sigurth spake:

“Thy counsel is given, |
 but go I shall
 To the gold in the heather hidden;
 And, Fafnir, thou |
 with death dost fight,
 Lying where Hel shall have thee.”

Fāfnir kvað:

22. “Reginn mik rēþ, |
 hann þik rāþa mun,
 hann mun okkr verþa bōþum at
 bana;
 fjōr sitt lāta |
 hykk at Fāfnir myni,
 þitt varþ nū meira megin.”

Fafnir spake:

“Regin betrayed me, |
 and thee will betray,
 Us both to death will he bring;
 His life, methinks, |
 must Fafnir lose,
 For the mightier man wast thou.”

The *Volsungasaga* places its paraphrase of this stanza between those of stanzas 15 and 16.

Reginn var ā brot horfinn, meðan Sig-
urþr vā Fāfni, ok kom þā aptr, er Sig-
urþr strauk blōþ af sverþinu.

Reginn kvað:

Regin had gone to a distance while Sig-
urth fought Fafnir, and came back while
Sigurth was wiping the blood from his
sword.

Regin said:

23. “Heill þu nū, Sigurþr! |
 hefr nū sigr vegit
auk Fāfni of farit;
manna þeira |
 es mold troða
þik kveþk öblaupastan alinn.”

“Hail to thee, Sigurth! |
 Thou victory hast,
And Fafnir in fight hast slain;
Of all the men |
 who tread the earth,
Most fearless art thou, methinks.”

Sigurþr kvað:

24. “Þat’s övist at vita, |
 þās komum allir saman
[sigtīva synir,]
hverr’s öblaupastr alinn;
margr es hvatr, |
 es hjör nē rýþr
annars brjōstum ī.”

Sigurth spake:

“Unknown it is, |
 when all are together,
[The sons of the glorious gods,]
Who bravest born shall seem;
Some are valiant |
 who redden no sword
In the blood of a foeman’s breast.”

Line 2 is probably spurious, but it is a phrase typical of such poems as *Grimnismol* or *Vafthruthnismol*.

Reginn kvap:

25. “Glaþr est nū, Sigurþr! |
 ok gagni feginn,
 es þū þerrir Gram ā grasi;
 brōþur minn |
 hefr þū benjaþan,
 ok veldk þō sjalfr sumu.”

Regin spake:

“Glad art thou, Sigurth, |
 of battle gained,
 As Gram with grass thou cleanseest;
 My brother fierce |
 in fight hast slain,
 And somewhat I did myself.”

Gram: Sigurth’s sword; cf. *Reginsmol*, prose after 14.

Sigurþr kvap:

26. “Fjarri þū gekkt, |
 meþan ā Fāfni rauþk
 minn enn hvassa hjor;
 afli mīnu attak |
 viþ orms megin,
 meþan þū ī lyngvi lātt.”

Sigurth spake:

“Afar didst thou go |
 while Fafnir reddened
 With his blood my blade so keen;
 With the might of the dragon |
 my strength I matched,
 While thou in the heather didst hide.”

In the manuscript stanzas 26–29 stand after stanza 31, which fails to make clear sense; they are here rearranged in accordance with the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase.

Reginn kvap:

27. “Lengi liggja |
 lētir þū lyngvi ī
 þann enn aldna jōtun,
 ef sverþs nē nytir |
 þess es sjalfr gōrþak
 ok þīns ens hvassa hjors.”

Regin spake:

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

Sigurðr kvað:

28. “Hugr es betri |
 an sē hjōrs megin,
 hvars skulu vreipir vega;
 þvīt hvatan mann |
 sāk harpla vega
 meþ slævu sverpi sigr.

Sigurth spake:

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

29. [Hvōtum es betra |
 an sē ōhvōtum
 ī hildileik hafask;
 glōpum es betra |
 an sē glūpnanda
 hvats at hendi kōmr.]

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

28–29. Almost certainly interpolated from some such poem as the *Hovamol*. Even the faithful *Volsungasaga* fails to paraphrase stanza 29.

30. Þū þvī rētt, |
 es rīpa skyldak
 heilōg fjōll hinig;
 feī ok fjōrvi |
 rēpi sa enn frāni ormr,
 nema frýpir mēr hvats hugar.”

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

Something has evidently been lost before this stanza. Sigurth clearly refers to Regin’s reproach when he was digging the trench (cf. note on *introductory prose*), but the poem does not give such a passage.

Þá gekk Reginn at Fāfni ok skar hjarta
ōr honum með sverþi er Ríþill heitir,
ok þá drakk hann blōþ or undinni ept-
ir.

Reginn kvað:

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

Regin said:

Rithil (“Swift-Moving”): Snorri calls the sword Refil (“Serpent”).

31. “Sit nū, Sigurþr! |
— en ek mun sofa ganga—
ok halt Fāfnis hjarta við funa;
eisköld |
ek vil etin lāta
ept þenna dreyra drykk.”

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

Sigurþr tōk Fāfnis hjarta ok steikþi ā
teini.

Er hann hugþi at fullsteikt væri, ok
freyddi sveitinn ōr hjartanu, þā tōk
hann ā fingri sīnum ok skynjaþi
hvārt fullsteikt væri.

Hann brann ok brā fingrinum ī munn
sēr.

En er hjartblōþ Fāfnis kom ā tungu
honum, ok skilþi hann fugls rōdd.

Hann heyrþi at igþur klōkuþu ā hrīs-
inu.

Igþan kvað:

Sigurth took Fafnir’s heart and cooked
it on a spit.

When he thought that it was fully
cooked, and the blood foamed out of
the heart, then he tried it with his fin-
ger to see whether it was fully cooked.

He burned his finger, and put it in his
mouth.

But when Fafnir’s heart’s-blood came
on his tongue, he understood the
speech of birds.

He heard nut-hatches chattering in the
thickets.

A nut hatch said:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>32. “Þar sitr Sigurþr
 sveita stokkinn,
 Fāfnis hjarta
 viþ funa steikir;
 spakr þōtti mēr
 spillir bauga,
 ef fjörsega
 frānan æti.”</p> | <p>“There sits Sigurth,
 sprinkled with blood,
 And Fafnir’s heart
 with fire he cooks;
 Wise were the breaker
 of rings, I ween,
 To eat the life-muscles
 all so bright.”</p> |
|---|---|

That the birds’ stanzas come from more than one source is fairly apparent, but whether from two or from three or more is uncertain. It is also far from clear how many birds are speaking. The manuscript numbers II, III, and IV in the margin with numerals; the *Volsungasaga* makes a different bird speak each time. There are almost as many guesses as there are editions. I suspect that in the original poem there was one bird, speaking stanzas 34 and 37. Stanza 38 is little more, than a repetition of stanza 34, and may well have been a later addition. As for the stanzas in Fornyrthislag (32–33 and 35–36), they apparently come from another poem, in which several birds speak (cf. “we sisters” in stanza 35). This may be the same poem from which stanzas 40–44 were taken, as well as some of the Fornyrthislag stanzas in the *Sigrdrifumol*.

Önnur kvað:

- 33.** “Þar liggr Reginn, |
 ræþr umb viþ sik,
 vill tæla mög |
 þanns truір hōnum;
 berr af reiþi |
 rōng orþ saman,
 vill bōlvasmīþr |
 brōþur hefna.”

A second spake:

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

En þriðja kvað:

34. “Hofpi skemra |
lāt enn hāra þul
fara til heljar heþan;
ollu golli |
þā knātt einn rāþa,
fjølþ es und Fāfni lā.”

A third spake:

“Less by a head |
let the chatterer hoary
Go from here to hell;
Then all of the wealth |
he alone can wield,
The gold that Fafnir guarded.”

Some editions turn this speech from the third person into the second, but the manuscript is clear enough.

En fjórða kvað:

35. “Horskr þōtti mēr, |
ef hafa kynni
āstrāþ mikit |
ypvar systra;
hygpi umb sik |
ok hugin gleddi;
ulfs vōn erumk |
es eyru sēk.”

A fourth spake:

“Wise would he seem |
if so he would heed
The counsel good |
we sisters give;
Thought he would give, |
and the ravens gladden,
There is ever a wolf |
where his ears I spy.”

Wolf, etc.: the phrase is nearly equivalent to “there must be fire where there is smoke.” The proverb appears else where in Old Norse.

En fimta kvað:

36. “Esat svā horskr |
hildimeipr,
sem hers jaþar |
hyggja mundak,

A fifth spake:

“Less wise must be |
the tree of battle
Than to me would seem |
the leader of men,

ef brōþur lætr |
 ā braut komask,
 en ǫþrum hefr |
 aldrs of synjat.”

If forth he lets |
 one brother fare,
 When he of the other |
 the slayer is.”

Tree of battle: warrior.

En sētta kvað:

37. “Mjök’st ösviþr, |
 ef þu enn sparir
 fianda enn folkskaa;
 þars Reginn liggr, |
 es þik rāþinn hefr—
 kannta við svikum at sea?”

A sixth spake:

“Most foolish he seems |
 if he shall spare
 His foe, the bane of the folk,
 There Regin lies, |
 who hath wronged him so,
 Yet falsehood knows he not.”

Here, as in stanza 34, some editions turn the speech from the third person into the second.

En sjaunda kvað:

38. “Hǫfþi skemra |
 lāt enn hrīmkalda jötun
 auk af baugum bua,
 þā munt fear |
 þess es Fāfnir rēþ
 einvaldi vesa!”

A seventh spake:

“Let the head from the frost-cold |
 giant be hewed,
 And let him of rings be robbed;
 Then all the wealth |
 which Fafnir’s was
 Shall belong to thee alone.”

Giant: Regin was certainly not a frost-giant, and the whole stanza looks like some copyist’s blundering reproduction of stanza 34.

Sigurþr kvað:

39. “Verþat svā rīk skop, |
 at Reginn skyli
 mitt banorþ bera;
 þvīt þeir bāþir brōþr |
 skulu brāþliga
 fara til heljar heþan.”

Sigurþr hjō hōfuþ af Regin, ok þā
 āt hann Fāfnis hjarta ok drakk blōþ
 þeira beggja Regins ok Fāfnis.

Þā heyrþi Sigurþr, hvar igþur mæltu:

Sigurth spake:

“Not so rich a fate |
 shall Regin have
 As the tale of my death to tell;
 For soon the brothers |
 both shall die,
 And hence to hell shall go.”

Sigurth hewed off Regin’s head, and
 then he ate Fafnir’s heart, and drank
 the blood of both Regin and Fafnir.

Then Sigurth heard what the nut-hatch
 said:

40. “Bitt þū, Sigurþr! |
 bauga rauþa,
 esa konunglikt |
 kvīþa mǫrgu:
 mey veitk eina |
 miklu fegrsta,
 golli gōdda, |
 ef geta mættir.

“Bind, Sigurth, the golden |
 rings together,
 Not kingly is it |
 aught to fear;
 I know a maid, |
 there is none so fair,
 Rich in gold, |
 if thou mightest get her.

Neither the manuscript nor any of the editions suggest the existence of more than one bird in stanzas 40–44. It seems to me, however, that there are not only two birds, but two distinct stories. Stanzas 40–41 apply solely to Guthrun, and suggest that Sigurth will go straight to Gunnar’s hall. Stanzas 42–44, on the other hand, apply solely to Brynhild, and indicate that Sigurth will find her before he visits the Gjukungs. The confusion which existed between these two versions of the story, and which involved a fundamental difference in the final working out of Brynhild’s revenge, is commented on in the note on [Gripisspo, 13](#). In the present passage it is possible that two birds are speaking, each reflecting one version of the story; it seems even more likely that one speech or the other (40–41 or 42–44) reflects the

original form of the narrative, the other having been added, either later or from another poem. In the *Volsungasaga* the whole passage is condensed into a few words by one bird: “Wiser were it if he should then ride up on Hindarfjoll, where Brynhild sleeps, and there would he get much wisdom.” The Guthrun-bird does not appear at all.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>41. Liggja til Gjūka
 grōnar brautir,
 fram vīsa skōp
 folklīþōndum;
 hefr dýrr konungr
 dōttur alna,
 þā munt, Sigurþr!
 mundi kaupa.”</p> | <p>Green the paths
 that to Gjuki lead,
 And his fate the way
 to the wanderer shows;
 The doughty king
 a daughter has,
 That thou as a bride
 mayst, Sigurth, buy.”</p> |
|---|---|

Gjuki: father of Gunnar and Guthrun: cf. *Gripisspo*, 13 and note.

Another spake:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>42. “Hōll’s ā hōvu
 Hindarfjalli,
 ōll es ūtan
 eldi sveipin,
 hana hafa horskir
 halir of gōrva
 ōr ōdōkkum
 ōgnar ljōma.</p> | <p>“A hall stands high
 on Hindarfjoll,
 All with flame
 is it ringed without;
 Warriors wise
 did make it once
 Out of the flaming
 light of the flood.</p> |
|--|--|

Hindarfjoll: “Mountain of the Hind.” *Light of the flood*: gold; cf. *Reginmol*, 1 and note.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>43. Veitk ā fjalli
 folkvīt sofa,</p> | <p>On the mountain sleeps
 a battle-maid,</p> |
|---|---|

ok leikr yfir	And about her plays
lindar vāþil	the bane of the wood;
Yggr stakk þorni —	Ygg with the thorn
aþra feldi	hath smitten her thus,
hǫrgefn hali,	For she felled the fighter
an hafa vildi.	he fain would save.

Battle-maid: Brynhild, here clearly defined as a Valkyrie. *Bane of the wood*: fire. *Ygg*: Othin; cf. *Grimnismol*, 53. *The thorn*: a prose note in *Sigrdrifumol* calls it “sleep-thorn.” *The fighter*: the story of the reason for Brynhild’s punishment is told in the prose following stanza 4 of *Sigrdrifumol*.

44. Knātt, mǫgr! sea	There mayst thou behold
mey und hjalmi	the maiden helmed,
þās frā vīgi	Who forth on Vingskornir
Vingskorni reiþ;	rode from the fight;
māt sigrdrifa	The victory-bringer
svefni bregþa,	her sleep shall break not,
skjöldunga niþr!	Thou heroes’ son,
fyr skǫpum norna.”	so the Norns have set.”

Vingskornir: Brynhild’s horse, not elsewhere mentioned. *Victory-bringer*: the word thus translated is in the original “sigrdrifa.” The compiler of the collection, not being familiar with this word, assumed that it was a proper name, and in the prose following stanza 4 of the *Sigrdrifumol* he specifically states that this was the Valkyrie’s name. Editors, until recently, have followed him in this error, failing to recognize that “sigrdrifa” was simply an epithet for Brynhild. It is from this blunder that the so-called *Sigrdrifumol* takes its name. Brynhild’s dual personality as a Valkyrie and as the daughter of Buthli has made plenty of trouble, but the addition of a second Valkyrie in the person of the supposed “Sigrdrifa” has made still more.

Sigurþr reiþ eptir slōþ Fāfnis til bœlis	Sigurth rode along Fafnir’s trail to his
hans ok fann þat opit	lair, and found it open.

ok hurðir af járni ok gætti, af járni
vāru ok allir timbrstokkar ī hūsinu,
en grafit ī jorð niðr.

Þar fann Sigurðr störmikit gull ok
fyldi þar tvær kistur; þar tók hann
ægishjālm ok gullbrynju ok sverpit
Hrotta ok marga dýrgripi ok klyfja-
ði þar með Grana, en hestrinn vildi
eigi fram ganga, fyrr en Sigurðr steig
ā bak honum.

The gate-posts were of iron, and the
gates; of iron, too, were all the beams
in the house, which was dug down into
the earth.

There Sigurth found a mighty store of
gold, and he filled two chests full there-
of; he took the fear-helm and a gold-
en mail-coat and the sword Hrotti, and
many other precious things, and loaded
Grani with them, but the horse would
not go forward until Sigurth mounted
on his back.

There is no break in the manuscript between the end of this prose passage and the beginning of the one introducing the *Sigrdrifumol*: some editors include the entire prose passage with one poem or the other. *Hrotti*: “Thruster.”

Sigrdrifumol

The Ballad of The Victory–Bringer

Introductory Note

The so-called *Sigrdrifumol*, which immediately follows the *Fafnismol* in the *Codex Regius* without any indication of a break, and without separate title, is unquestionably the most chaotic of all the poems in the Eddic collection. The end of it has been entirely lost, for the fifth folio of eight sheets is missing from *Regius*, the gap coming after the first line of stanza 29 of this poem. That stanza has been completed, and eight more have been added, from much later paper manuscripts, but even so the conclusion of the poem is in obscurity.

Properly speaking, however, the strange conglomeration of stanzas which the compiler of the collection has left for us, and which, in much the same general form, seems to have lain before the authors of the *Volsungasaga*, in which eighteen of its stanzas are quoted, is not a poem at all. Even its customary title is an absurd error. The mistake made by the annotator in thinking that the epithet “sigrdrifa,” rightly applied to Brynhild as a “bringer of victory,” was a proper name has already been explained and commented on (note on *Fafnismol*, 44). Even if the collection of stanzas were in any real sense a poem, which it emphatically is not, it is certainly not the “Ballad of Sigrdrifa” which it is commonly called. “Ballad of Brynhild” would be a sufficiently suitable title, and I have here brought the established name “Sigrdrifumol” into accord with this by translating the epithet instead of treating it as a proper name.

Even apart from the title, however, the *Sigrdrifumol* has little claim to be regarded as a distinct poem, nor is there any indication that the compiler did so regard it. Handicapped as we are by the loss of the concluding section, and of the material which followed it on those missing pages, we can yet see that the process which began with the prose *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*, and which, interrupted by the insertion of the *Gripisspo*, went on through the *Reginsmol* and the *Fafnismol*, continued through as much of the *Sigrdrifumol* as is left to us. In other words, the compiler told the story of Sigurth in mixed prose and verse, using whatever verse he could find without much questioning as to its origin, and filling in the gaps with his own prose. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*, *Reginsmol*, *Fafnismol*, and *Sigrdrifumol* are essentially a coherent unit, but one of the compiler’s making only; they represent neither one poem nor three distinct poems, and the divisions and titles which have been almost universally adopted by editors are both arbitrary and misleading.

The *Sigrdrifumol* section as we now have it is an extraordinary piece of patchwork. It is most unlikely that the compiler himself brought all these fragments together for the first

time; little by little, through a process of accretion and also, unluckily, through one of elimination, the material grew into its present shape. Certainly the basis of it is a poem dealing with the finding of Brynhild by Sigurth, but of this original poem only five stanzas (2–4 and 20–21) can be identified with any degree of confidence. To these five stanzas should probably, however, be added some, if not all, of the passage (stanzas 6–12) in which Brynhild teaches Sigurth the magic runes. These stanzas of rune-lore attracted sundry similar passages from other sources, including stanza 5, in which a magic draught is administered (not necessarily by Brynhild or to Sigurth), the curious rune-chant in stanzas 15–17, and stanzas 13–14 and 18–19. Beginning with stanza 22, and running to the end of the fragment (stanza 37), is a set of numbered counsels closely resembling the *Loddfafnismol* (*Hovamol*, stanzas 111–138), which manifestly has nothing whatever to do with Brynhild. Even in this passage there are probably interpolations (stanzas 25, 27, 30, 34, and 36). Finally, and bespeaking the existence at some earlier time of another Sigurth-Brynhild poem, is stanza 1, sharply distinguished by its metrical form from stanzas 2–4 and 20–21. Many critics argue that stanzas 6–10 of *Helreith Brynhildar* belonged originally to the same poem as stanza 1 of the *Sigrdrifumol*.

The *Sigrdrifumol*, then, must be regarded simply as a collection of fragments, most of them originally having no relation to the main subject. All of the story, the dialogue and the characterization are embodied in stanzas 1–4 and 20–21 and in the prose notes accompanying the first four stanzas; all of the rest might equally well (or better) be transferred to the *Hovamol*, where its character entitles it to a place. Yet stanzas 2–4 are as fine as anything in Old Norse poetry, and it is out of the scanty material of these three stanzas that Wagner constructed much of the third act of “Siegfried.”

The *Sigrdrifumol* represents almost exclusively the contributions of the North to the Sigurth tradition (cf. introductory note to the *Gripisspo*). Brynhild, here disguised by the annotator as “Sigdrifa,” appears simply as a battle-maid and supernatural dispenser of wisdom; there is no trace of the daughter of Buthli and the rival of Guthrun. There is, however, so little of the “poem” which can definitely be assigned to the Sigurth cycle that it is impossible to trace back any of the underlying narrative substance.

The nature and condition of the material have made editorial conjectures and emendations very numerous, and as most of the guesses are neither conclusive nor particularly important, only a few of their are mentioned in the notes.

Sigurþr reið upp ā Hindarfjall ok
stefndi suðr til Frakklands.

Ā fjallinu sā hann ljōs mikit, svā sem
eldr brynni, ok ljōmaði af til himins.

Sigurth rode up on Hindarfjoll and
turned southward toward the land of
the Franks.

On the mountain he saw a great light,
as if fire were burning, and the glow
reached up to heaven.

En er hann kom at, þā stōþ þar skjald-
borg ok upp ōr merki.

Sigurþr gekk ī skjaldborgina ok sā
at þar lā maþr ok svaf meþ ǫllum
hervāpnum.

Hann tōk fyrst hjālminn af hǫfþi hon-
um; þā sā hann at þat var kona.

Brynjan var fǫst, sem hon væri hold-
grōin.

Þā reist hann meþ Gram frā hǫfuþs-
mātt brynjuna ī gøgnum niþr ok svā
ūt ī gøgnum bāþar ermar.

Þā tōk hann brynju af henni, en hon
vaknaþi, ok settiz hon upp ok sā Sig-
urþ ok mælti:

And when he came thither, there stood
a tower of shields, and above it was a
banner.

Sigurth went into the shield-tower, and
saw that a man lay there sleeping with
all his war-weapons.

First he took the helm from his head,
and then he saw that it was a woman.

The mail-coat was as fast as if it had
grown to the flesh.

Then he cut the mail-coat from the
head-opening downward, and out to
both the arm-holes.

Then he took the mail-coat from her,
and she awoke, and sat up and saw Sig-
urth, and said:

The introductory prose follows without break the prose concluding the *Fafnismol*, the point of division being arbitrary and not agreed upon by all editors. *Hindarfjoll*: cf. *Fafnismol*, 42 and note. *Franks*: this does not necessarily mean that Sigurth was on his way to the Gjukungs' home, for Sigmund had a kingdom in the land of the Franks (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*). *Shields*: the annotator probably drew the notion of the shield-tower from the reference in *Helreith Brynhildar*, 9. The flame-girt tower was not uncommon; cf. Mengloth's hall in *Svipdagsmol*.

1. “Hvat beit brynju? |
hvī brāk svefni?
hverr feldi af mēr |
fǫlvar maupir?”

Hann svaraþi:

“Sigmundar burr, |
— sleit fyr skǫmmu

“What bit through the byrnie? |
how was broken my sleep?
Who made me free |
of the fetters pale?”

He answered:

“Sigmund's son, |
with Sigurth's sword,

hrafñ hrælundir — |
hjǫrr Sigurðar.”

That late with flesh |
hath fed the ravens.”

This stanza, and the two lines included in the prose after stanza 4, and possibly stanza 5 as well, evidently come from a different poem from stanzas 2–4. Lines 3–4 in the original are obscure, though the general meaning is clear.

Sigurðr settiz niðr ok spurði hana
nafns.
Hon tók þā horn fullt mjaðar ok gaf
honum minnisveig:

Sigurth sat beside her and asked her
name.
She took a horn full of mead and gave
him a memory-draught.

In the manuscript stanza 4 stands before this prose note and stanzas 2–3. The best arrangement of the stanzas seems to be the one here given, following Müllenhoff's suggestion, but the prose note is out of place anywhere. The first sentence of it ought to follow stanza 4 and immediately precede the next prose note; the second sentence ought to precede stanza 5.

2. “Heill dagr! |
heilir dags synir!
heil nōtt ok nipt!
ōreiðum augum |
litið okkr þinig
ok gefið sitjondum sigr!

“Hail, day! |
Hail, sons of day!
And night and her daughter now!
Look on us here |
with loving eyes,
That waiting we victory win.

Sons of day: the spirits of light. *The daughter of night* (Not), according to Snorri, was Jorth (Earth).

3. Heilir æsir! |
heilar āsynjur!
heil sja en fjǫlnýta fold!
māl ok mannvit |
gefið okkr mærum tveim

Hail to the gods! |
Ye goddesses, hail,
And all the generous earth!
Give to us wisdom |
and goodly speech,

ok læknishendr, meðan lifum!

And healing hands, life-long.

4. Lengi svafk, |
lengi sofnuþ vask,
lōng eru lýða læ:
Óþinn þvī veldr, |
es eigi máttak
bregða blundstöfum.”

Long did I sleep, |
my slumber was long,
And long are the griefs of life;
Othin decreed |
that I could not break
The heavy spells of sleep.”

Hon nefndiz Sigrdrifa ok var val-
kyrja.

Her name was Sigrdrifa, and she was a
Valkyrie.

Hon sagði at tveir konungar þorpuz:
hēt annarr Hjālmgunnarr, hann var
þā gamall ok enn mesti hermaþr, ok
hafði Óþinn honum sigri heitit, en

She said that two kings fought in bat-
tle; one was called Hjalmgunnar, an old
man but a mighty warrior, and Othin
had promised him the victory, and

annarr hēt Agnarr, |
Auðu brōþir,
es vætr engi |
vildi þiggja.

The other was Agnar, |
brother of Autha,
None he found |
who fain would shield him.

Sigrdrifa feldi Hjālmgunnar í orrost-
unni, en Óþinn stakk hana svefn-
þorni í hefnd þess ok kvað hana aldri
skyldu síðan sigr vega í orrostu ok
kvað hana giptaz skyldu.

Sigrdrifa slew Hjalmgunnar in the bat-
tle, and Othin pricked her with the
sleep-thorn in punishment for this, and
said that she should never thereafter
win victory in battle, but that she
should be wedded.

“En ek sagðak honum, at ek strengþak
heit þar í mōt at giptaz øngum þeim
manni er hræþaz kynni.”

“And I said to him that I had made a vow
in my turn, that I would never marry a
man who knew the meaning of fear.”

Hann segir ok biðr hann kenna sēr
speki, ef hon vissi tíðindi ör ǫllum
heimum.

Sigrdrifa kvað:

Sigurth answered and asked her to
teach him wisdom, if she knew of what
took place in all the worlds.

Sigrdrifa said:

Sigrdrifa: on the error whereby this epithet, “victory-bringer,” became a proper name cf. *Fafnismol*, 44 and note. *Hjalmgunnar*: in *Helreith Brynhildar* (stanza 8) he is called a king of the Goths, which means little; of him and his adversary, *Agnar*, we know, nothing beyond what is told here. The two lines quoted apparently come from the same poem as stanza 1; the two first lines of the stanza have been reconstructed from the prose thus:

Hjalmgunnar was one, | the hoary king,
And triumph to him | had Heerfather promised.

(Hēt Hjalmgunnarr | hārr vīsir
hafði hōnum Herfōðr | heitit sigri.)

A few editions insert in this prose passage stanzas 7–10 of *Helreith Brynhildar*, which may or may not have been longed originally to this poem.

5. “Björ fōrik þēr, |
brynþings apaldr!
magni blandinn |
ok megingtīri;
fullr es ljōþa |
ok līknstafa,
gōþra galdra |
ok gamanrūna.”

“Beer I bring thee, |
tree of battle,
Mingled of strength |
and mighty fame;
Charms it holds |
and healing signs,
Spells full good, |
and gladness-runes.”

This stanza is perhaps, but by no means surely, from the same poem as stanza 1. *Tree of battle*: warrior. *Runes*: the earliest runes were not letters, but simply signs supposed to

possess magic power; out of them developed the “runic alphabet.”

* * *

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| <p>6. [Sigrūnar skalt kunna,
 ef vill sigr hafa,
 ok rīsta ā hjalti hjōrs,
 sumar ā vēttrimum,
 sumar ā valbōstum
 ok nefna tysvar Tȳ.</p> | <p>Winning-runes learn,
 if thou longest to win,
 And the runes on thy sword-hilt write;
 Some on the furrow,
 and some on the flat,
 And twice shalt thou call on Tyr.</p> |
|--|---|

Stanzas 6–12 give a list of runes which probably had no original connection with the Brynhild-Sigurth story. *Tyr*: the sword-god (cf. *Hymiskvitha*, 4 and note); “tyr” is also the name of a rune which became “T.”

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|--|---|
| <p>7. Qlrūnar skalt kunna,
 ef þu vill annars kvæn
 vēlit þik ī trygþ, ef truir;
 ā horni skal rīsta
 ok ā handar baki
 ok merkja ā nagli Nauþ.
 [full skal signa
 ok viþ fāri sea
 ok verpa lauki ī lōg.]
 [þā ek þat veit
 at þēr verþr aldri
 meinblandinn mjōþr]</p> | <p>Ale-runes learn,
 that with lies the wife
 Of another betray not thy trust;
 On the horn thou shalt write,
 and the backs of thy hands,
 And Need shalt mark on thy nails.
 Thou shalt bless the draught,
 and danger escape,
 And cast a leek in the cup;
 [For so I know
 thou never shalt see
 Thy mead with evil mixed.]</p> |
|--|---|

Regius gives only lines 1–6; lines 7–8 are added from *Volsungasaga*. *Lies*, etc.: a guest on his arrival received a draught of ale from the hands of his host’s wife, and it was to prevent this draught from bewitching him that the runes were recommended. *Need*: the word “nauth,”

meaning “need,” is also the name of the rune which became “N.” *Leek*: leeks were long supposed to have the power of counteracting poison or witchcraft.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>8. Bjargrūnar skalt kunna,
ef þū bjarga vill
ok leysa kind frā konum;
ā lōfum skal rīsta
ok of liðu spenna
ok biþja dīsir duga.</p> | <p>Birth-runes learn,
if help thou wilt lend,
The babe from the mother to bring;
On thy palms shalt write them,
and round thy joints,
And ask the fates to aid.</p> |
| <p>9. Brimrūnar skalt kunna,
ef þu vill borgit hafa
ā sundi seglmōrum;
ā stafni skal rīsta
ok ā stjōrnarblaði
ok leggja <i>eldi</i> ī ōr.
[esa svā brattr breki
ne svā blaar unnir,
þō kōmsk heill af hafi.]</p> | <p>Wave-runes learn,
if well thou wouldst shelter
The sail-steeds out on the sea;
On the stem shalt thou write,
and the steering blade,
And burn them into the oars;
Though high be the breakers,
and black the waves,
Thou shalt safe the harbor seek.</p> |

Sail-steeds: ships.

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|---|---|
| <p>10. Limrūnar skalt kunna,
ef þu vill lækni vesa
ok kunna sōr at sea;
ā berki skal rīsta
ok ā barri viþar
es lūta austr limar.</p> | <p>Branch-runes learn,
if a healer wouldst be,
And cure for wounds wouldst work;
On the bark shalt thou write,
and on trees that be
With boughs to the eastward bent.</p> |
|---|---|

Branch-runes: runes cut in the bark of trees. Such runes were believed to transfer sickness from the invalid to the tree. Some editors, however, have changed “limrunar” (“branch runes”) to “lifrunar” (“life-runes”).

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|---|---|
| <p>11. Mālrūnar skalt kunna,
 ef vill at mangi þēr
 heiptum gjaldi harm;
 [þær of vindr,
 þær of vefr,
 þær of setr allar saman
 ā þvī þingi
 es þjōþir skulu
 ī fulla dōma fara.]</p> | <p>Speech-runes learn,
 that none may seek
 To answer harm with hate;
 Well he winds
 and weaves them all,
 And sets them side by side,
 At the judgment-place,
 when justice there
 The folk shall fairly win.</p> |
|---|---|

Lines 3–6 look like an accidental addition, replacing two lines now lost. They mean, apparently, that the man who interweaves his speech with “speech-runes” when he pleads his case at the “Thing,” or popular tribunal, will not unduly enrage his adversary in the argument of the case.

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|--|--|
| <p>12. Hugrūnar skalt kunna,
 ef þu vill hverjum vesa
 geþsvinnari guma;]</p> | <p>Thought-runes learn,
 if all shall think
 Thou art keenest minded of men.</p> |
|--|--|

Here the list of runes breaks off, though the manuscript indicates no gap, and three short passages of a different type, though all dealing with runes, follow.

* * *

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|--|---|
| <p>13. [þær of rēþ,
 þær of reist,
 þær of hugþi Hrōþtr</p> | <p>Them Hropt arranged,
 and them he wrote,
 And them in thought he made,</p> |
|--|---|

af þeim legi	Out of the draught
es lekit hafði	that down had dropped
ōr hausi Heiðdraupnis	From the head of Heithdraupnir,
[ok or‘r horni Hoddrofnis.]	And the horn of Hoddrofnir.

Stanzas 13–14 appear to have come from a passage regarding Othin’s getting of the runes similar to *Hovamol*, 139–146. Editors have tried various combinations of the lines in stanzas 12–14. *Hropt*: Othin; cf. *Voluspo*, 62. *The draught*, etc.: apparently the reference is to the head of Mim, from which Othin derived his wisdom in magic (cf. *Voluspo*, 47 and note); *Heithdraupnir* (“Light-Dropper”) and *Hoddrofnir* (“Treasure-Opener”) seem to be names for Mim.

14. Ā bjargi stōþ	On the mountain he stood
meþ Brimis eggjar,	with Brimir’s sword,
hafþisk ā hōfþi hjalm;	On his head the helm he bore;
þā mælti Mīms hōfuþ	Then first the head
frōþlikt et fyrsta orþ	of Mim spoke forth,
ok sagþi sanna stafi.]	And words of truth it told.

This stanza is clearly in bad shape; perhaps, as the manuscript indicates, a new stanza, of which most has been lost, should begin with line 3. *Brimir*: a giant (cf. *Voluspo*, 9 and 37); why Othin should have his sword is unknown.

* * *

15. [Ā skildi kvaþ ristnar	He bade write on the shield
þeims stendr fyr skīnanda	before the shining goddess,
goþi,	
ā eyra Ārvaks	On Arvak’s ear,
ok ā Alsvinns hōfi,	and on Alsvith’s hoof,
ā þvī hvēli es snýsk	On the wheel of the car
und [reiþ] Hrungnis bana,	of Hrungnir’s killer,

ā Sleipnis tǫnnum ok ā sleða fjǫtrum,	On Sleipnir's teeth, and the straps of the sledge.
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Stanzas 15–17 constitute a wholly distinct rune-chant. Line 1 is unusually long in the original, as here. *Shield*: the shield Svalin (“Cooling”) that stands in front of the sun; cf. *Grimnismol*, 38. *Arvak* (“Early Waker”) and *Alsvith* (“All Swift”): the horses that draw the sun’s car; cf. *Grimnismol*, 37. *Hrungnir*: the slayer of the giant Hrungnir was Thor (cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 14 and note), but the line is in bad shape; the name may not be Hrungnir, and “killer” is a conjectural addition. *Sleipnir*: Othin’s eight-legged horse; cf. *Grimnismol*, 44 and note. *Sledge*: perhaps the one mentioned in *Grimnismol*, 49.

16. ā bjarnar hrammi ok ā Braga tungu, ā ulfs kloum ok ā arnar nefi, ā blōþgum vængjum ok ā bruar sporþi, ā lausnar lōfa ok ā līknar spori,	On the paws of the bear, and on Bragi’s tongue, On the wolf’s claws bared, and the eagle’s beak, On bloody wings, and bridge’s end, On freeing hands and helping foot-prints.
---	--

Bragi: the god of poetry; cf. *Grimnismol*, 44 and note.

17. ā gleri ok ā golli ok ā gumna heillum, ī vīni ok ī virtri ok ā vilisessi, ā Gungnis oddi ok ā Grana brjōsti, ā nornar nagli ok ā nefi uglu.]	On glass and on gold, and on goodly charms, In wine and in beer, and on well-loved seats, On Gungnir’s point, and on Grani’s breast, On the nails of Norns, and the night-owl’s beak.
--	--

Charms: the wearing of amulets was very common. *Gungnir*: Othin's spear, made by the dwarfs, which he occasionally lent to heroes to whom he granted victory. *Grani*: Sigurth's horse; the *Volsungasaga* has "giantesses'."

* * *

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| <p>18. [Allar vǫru af skafnar
 þærs vǫru ā ristnar
 ok hverfþar víþ enn helga mjǫþ
 ok sendar ā víþa vega;
 þær'u meþ ǫsum,
 þær'u meþ ǫlfum,
 sumar meþ vīsum vǫnum,
 sumar hafa menskir menn.</p> | <p>Shaved off were the runes
 that of old were written,
 And mixed with the holy mead,
 And sent on ways so wide;
 So the gods had them,
 so the elves got them,
 And some for the Wanes so wise,
 And some for mortal men.</p> |
|--|---|

Stanzas 18–19, which editors have freely rearranged, apparently come from another source than any of the rest. *Shaved off*: the runes were shaved off by Othin from the wood on which they were carved, and the shavings bearing them were put into the magic mead. *Wanes*: cf. *Voluspo*, 21, note.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>19. Þat eru bōkrūnar,
 þat eru bjargrūnar
 ok allar ǫlrūnar
 ok mætar meginrūnar,
 hveims knā ǫviltar
 ok ǫspiltar
 sēr at heillum hafa;
 njōttu ef namt,
 unz of rjūfask regin!]</p> | <p>Beech-runes are there,
 birth-runes are there,
 And all the runes of ale,
 And the magic runes of might;
 Who knows them rightly
 and reads them true,
 Has them himself to help;
 Ever they aid,
 Till the gods are gone.</p> |
|---|---|

Lines 3, 6, and 7 look like spurious additions, but the whole stanza is chaotic. *Beech-runes*:

runes carved on beech trees.

* * *

Brynhild spake:

20. “Nū skalt kjōsa, | “Now shalt thou choose, |
 alls þēr’s kostr of boþinn, for the choice is given,
 hvassa vāpna hlynr! Thou tree of the biting blade;
 sōgn eþa þōgn | Speech or silence, |
 hafþu þēr sjalfr ī hug, ’tis thine to say,
 qll eru mein of metin.” Our evil is destined all.”

Stanzas 20–21 are all that remains of the dialogue between Brynhild and Sigurth from the poem to which stanzas 2–4 belong; cf. [Introductory Note](#). In the intervening lost stanzas Brynhild has evidently warned Sigurth of the perils that will follow if he swears loyalty to her; hence the choice to which she here refers. *Tree*, etc.: warrior. The manuscript does not indicate the speaker of either this or the following stanza; the *Volsungasaga* names Sigurth before stanza 21.

Sigurþr kvap:

21. “Munkak flōja, |
 þōt mik feigjan vitir,
 emkak meþ bleyþi borinn;
 āstrōþ þīn |
 vil ek qll hafa
 svā lengi sem lifik.”

Sigurth spake:

- “I shall not flee, |
 though my fate be near,
 I was born not a coward to be;
 Thy loving word |
 for mine will I win,
 As long as I shall live.”

It is quite possible that the original poem concluded with two stanzas after this, paraphrased thus in the *Volsungasaga*: “Sigurth said: ‘Nowhere is to be found any one wiser than thou, and this I swear, that I shall have thee for mine, and that thou art after my heart’s desire.’ She answered: ‘I would rather have thee though I might choose among all men.’ And this they bound between them with oaths.” Stanzas 22–37, which the *Volsungasaga* paraphrases, may have been introduced at a relatively early time, but can hardly have formed part of

the original poem.

* * *

Sigrdrifa kvað:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>22. “Þat ræþk þer et fyrsta,
 at við frændr þína
 vammalaust vesir;
 sīþr þū hefnir,
 þót þeir sakar gørvir:
 þat kveþa dauþum duga.</p> | <p>“Then first I rede thee,
 that free of guilt
 Toward kinsmen ever thou art;
 No vengeance have,
 though they work thee harm,
 Reward after death thou shalt win.</p> |
|--|---|

With this stanza begins the list of numbered counsels, closely resembling the Loddafnismol (*Hovamol*, 111–138), here attributed to Brynhild. That the section originally had anything to do with Brynhild is more than improbable.

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|--|---|
| <p>23. Þat ræþk þēr annat,
 at þu eiþ nē sverir,
 nema þanns saþr sei;
 grimmar <i>limar</i>
 fylgja griþrofi,
 armr es vāra vargr.</p> | <p>Then second I rede thee,
 to swear no oath
 If true thou knowest it not;
 Bitter the fate
 of the breaker of troth,
 And poor is the wolf of his word.</p> |
|--|---|

Wolf of his word: oath-destroyer, oath-breaker.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>24. Þat ræþk þēr þriþja,
 at þū þingi ā
 deilit við heimska hali;
 þvīt ōsviþr maþr
 lætr opt kveþin</p> | <p>Then third I rede thee,
 that thou at the Thing
 Shalt fight not in words with fools;
 For the man unwise
 a worser word</p> |
|--|---|

verri orþ an viti.

Than he thinks doth utter oft.

25. [Allt es vant: |
 ef þū viþ þegir,
 þā þykkir meþ bleyþi borinn
 [eþa sǫnnu sagþr;
 hættir es heimiskviþr,
 nema sēr gōþan geti];
 annars dags |
 lāttu hans ǫndu farit
 ok launa svā leiþum lygi.]

Ill it is |
 if silent thou art,
 A coward born men call thee,
 And truth mayhap they tell;
 Seldom safe is fame,
 Unless wide renown be won;
 On the day thereafter |
 send him to death,
 Let him pay the price of his lies.

This chaotic and obscure jumble of lines has been unsuccessfully “improved” by various editors. It is clearly an interpolation, meaning, in substance: “It is dangerous to keep silent too long, as men may think you a coward; but if any one taunts you falsely because of your silence, do not argue with him, but the next morning kill him as proof that he is a liar.”

26. Þat ræþk þer et fjörþa, |
 et býr fordæþa
 vammafull ā vegi:
 ganga’s betra |
 an gista seï,
 þōt þik nōtt of nemi.

Then fourth I rede thee, |
 if thou shalt find
 A wily witch on thy road,
 It is better to go |
 than her guest to be,
 Though night enfold thee fast.

27. [Fornjōsnar augu |
 þurfu fira synir,
 hvars skulu vreipir vega;
 opt bǫlvīsar konur |
 sitja brautu nār,

Eyes that see |
 need the sons of men
 Who fight in battle fierce;
 Oft witches evil |
 sit by the way,

þærs deyfa sverþ ok sefa.]

Who blade and courage blunt.

Probably another interpolation.

28. Þat ræþk þer et fimta, |
þōttu fagar seir
brūþir bekkjum ā,
sifja silfr |
lāta svefni rāþa,
teygjat at kossi konur!

Then fifth I rede thee, |
though maidens fair
Thou seest on benches sitting,
Let the silver of kinship |
not rob thee of sleep,
And the kissing of women beware.

Silver of kinship: the passage is doubtful, but apparently it means the “marriage-price” for which a bride was “bought.”

29. Þat ræþk þer et sētta, |
þōt meþ seggjum fari
ǫlþrmōl til ǫfug,
drukkna deila |
skalattu við dolgviðu;
margan stelr vīn viti.

Then sixth I rede thee, |
if men shall wrangle,
And ale-talk rise to wrath,
No words with a drunken |
warrior have,
For wine steals many men’s wits.

Line 1 comes at the end of the thirty-second leaf of *Regius*, and whatever further was contained in that manuscript has vanished with the lost eight-leaf folio (cf. [Introductory Note](#)). The rest of stanza 29, and stanzas 30–37, are added from later paper manuscripts, which were undoubtedly copied from an old parchment, though probably not from the complete *Regius*. The *Volsungasaga* paraphrases these additional stanzas.

30. [Sennur ok ǫl |
hefr seggjum verit
morgum at mōþtrega,

Brawls and ale |
full oft have been
An ill to many a man,

sumum at bana, |
sumum at þolstofum:
fjölþ's þats fira tregr.]

Death for some, |
and sorrow for some;
Full many the woes of men.

Probably an interpolation.

31. Þat ræþk þer et sjaunda, |
ef þū sakar deilir
viþ hugfulla hali,
berjask's betra |
an brinna sei
inni auþstofum.

Then seventh I rede thee, |
if battle thou seekest
With a foe that is full of might;
It is better to fight |
than to burn alive
In the hall of the hero rich.

The meaning is that it is better to go forth to battle than to stay at home and be burned to death. Many a Norse warrior met his death in this latter way; the burning of the house in the *Njalssaga* is the most famous instance.

32. Þat ræþk þer et ātta, |
at skalt viþ illu sea
ok firrask flærþarstafi;
mey þu teygjat |
nē manns konu
ne eggja ofgamans.

Then eighth I rede thee, |
that evil thou shun,
And beware of lying words;
Take not a maid, |
nor the wife of a man,
Nor lure them on to lust.

33. Þat ræþk þer et niunda, |
at þū nqum bjargir,
hvars þu ā foldu fiþr,
hvārts eru sōttðaupir |
eþa eru sēðaupir

Then ninth I rede thee: |
burial render
If thou findest a fallen corpse,
Of sickness dead, |
or dead in the sea,

eða vāpndaupir verar.

Or dead of weapons' wounds.

34. [Laug skal gørva |
þeims liþnir'ū,
þvaa hendr ok hōfuþ,
kemba ok þerra, |
āþr ī kistu fari,
ok biþja sǣlan sofa.]

A bath shalt thou give them |
who corpses be,
And hands and head shalt wash;
Wipe them and comb, |
ere they go in the coffin,
And pray that they sleep in peace.

Probably an interpolation.

35. Þat rǣþk þer et tiunda, |
at þū truīr *aldri*
vōrum vargdropa
[hverstu'st brōþurbani

eða hafir þū feldan fōþur;]
opt es ulfr |
ī ungum syni,
þōt sei golli gladdr.

Then tenth I rede thee, |
that never thou trust
The word of the race of wolves,
[If his brother thou broughtest to
death,
Or his father thou didst fell;]
Often a wolf |
in a son there is,
Though gold he gladly takes.

Lines 3–4 are probably interpolated. *Race of wolves*: family of a slain foe.

36. [Sakar ok heiptir |
hyggjat svefngar vesa
nē harm in heldr;
vits ok vāpna |
vant's jōfri at faa
þeims skal fremstr meþ firum.]

Battle and hate |
and harm, methinks,
Full seldom fall asleep;
Wits and weapons |
the warrior needs
If boldest of men he would be.

Probably an interpolation.

37. Þat rǣþk þer et ellipta,	Then eleventh I rede thee,
at þu við illu seir	that wrath thou shun,
hvern veg at <i>vinum</i> ;	And treachery false with thy friends;
langt líf	Not long the leader's
þykkjumka lofþungs vita:	life shall be,
rǫmm eru rǫg of risin.”	For great are the foes he faces.”

Lines 3–4 may well have come from the old Sigurth-Brynhild poem, like stanzas 2–4 and 20–21, being inserted here, where they do not fit particularly well, in place of the two lines with which the eleventh counsel originally ended. Perhaps they formed part of the stanza of warning which evidently preceded Brynhild’s speech in stanza 20. In the *Volsungasaga* they are paraphrased at the end of Brynhild’s long speech of advice (stanzas 20–37), and are immediately followed by the prose passage given in the note on stanza 21. It seems likely, therefore, that the paper manuscripts have preserved all of the so-called *Sigrdrifumol* which was contained in the lost section of *Regius*, with the possible exception of these two concluding stanzas, and these may very well have been given only in the form of a prose note, though it is practically certain that at one time they existed in verse form.

Brot af Sigurtharkvithu

Fragment of a Sigurth Lay

Introductory Note

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

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

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

The course of the *Volsungasaga*’s story from the *Sigrdrifumol* to the *Brot* is, briefly, as follows. After leaving the Valkyrie, Sigurth comes to the dwelling of Heimir, Brynhild’s brother-in-law, where he meets Brynhild and they swear oaths of fidelity anew (the *Vol-*

sungasaga is no more lucid with regard to the Brynhild-Sigrdrifa confusion than was the annotator of the poems). Then the scene shifts to the home of the Gjukungs. Guthrun, Gjukki's daughter, has a terrifying dream, and visits Brynhild to have it explained, which the latter does by foretelling pretty much everything that is going to happen; this episode was presumably the subject of a separate poem in the lost section of the manuscript. Guthrun returns home, and Sigurth soon arrives, to be made enthusiastically welcome. Grimhild, mother of Gunnar and Guthrun, gives him a magic draught which makes him forget all about Brynhild, and shortly thereafter he marries Guthrun.

Then follows the episode of the winning of Brynhild for Gunnar (cf. *Gripisspo*, 37 and note). This was certainly the subject of a poem, possibly of the first part of the "Long" Lay of Sigurth, although it seems more likely that the episode was dealt with in a separate poem. The *Volsungasaga* quotes two stanzas describing Sigurth's triumphant passing through the flames after Gunnar has failed and the two have changed forms. They run thus:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hogni kvað:

1. “hvat hefr Sigurþr |
til saka unnit,
es frōknan vill |
fjōrvi nāma?”

Hogni spake:

“[What evil deed |
has Sigurth] done,
That the hero's life |
thou fain wouldst have?”

The fragment begins with the last words of line 1 (probably line 3 of the stanza). A few editors ascribe this speech to Gunnar and the next to Brynhild; one reconstruction of lines 1–2 on this probably false assumption runs:

Why art thou, Brynhild, | daughter of Buthli,
Scheming ill | with evil counsel?

(Hvī ertu, Brynhildr, | Buþla dōttir!
bōlvi blandin | ok banarāþum?)

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

Gunnarr kvað:

2. “Mēr hefr Sigurþr |
selda eiþa,
eiþa selda, |
alla logna;
þā vēlti mik, |
es vesa skyldi
allra eiþa |
einn fulltruī.”

Gunnar spake:

“Sigurth oaths |
to me hath sworn,
Oaths hath sworn, |
and all hath broken;
He betrayed me there |
where truest all
His oaths, methinks, |
he ought to have kept.”

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

Hogni kvað:

3. “Þik hefr Brynhildr |
böl at gørva
heiptar hvattan, |
harm at vinna;
fyrman Guþrūnu |
gōþra rāða,
en sīþan þēr |
sīn at njōta.”

Hogni spake:

“Thy heart hath Brynhild |
whetted to hate,
Evil to work |
and harm to win,
She grudges the honor |
that Guthrun has,
And that joy of herself |
thou still dost have.”

4. Sumir ulf sviðu, |
sumir orm sniðu,
sumir Gotþormi |
af gera deildu,
āþr þeir mætti |
meins of lystir
ā horskum hal |
hendr of leggja.

They cooked a wolf, |
they cut up a snake,
They gave to Gotthorm |
the greedy one's flesh,
Before the men, |
to murder minded,
Laid their hands |
on the hero bold.

The *Volsungasaga* quotes a somewhat different version of this stanza, in which the snake is called “wood-fish” and the third line adds “beer and many things.” Eating snakes and the flesh of beasts of prey was commonly supposed to induce ferocity. *Gotthorm*: Grimhild's son, half-brother to Gunnar. He it is who, not having sworn brotherhood with Sigurth, does the killing.

5. Soltinn varþ Sigurþr |
sunnan Rīnar;

Slain was Sigurth |
south of the Rhine;

hrafn at meiþi |
hōtt kallði:
“Ykkir mun Atli |
eggjar rjōþa,
munu vīgskaa |
of við eiþar.”

From a limb a raven |
called full loud:
“Your blood shall redden |
Atli’s blade,
And your oaths shall bind |
you both in chains.”

In the manuscript this stanza stands between stanzas 11 and 12; most editions have made the change here indicated. *South of the Rhine*: the definite localization of the action shows how clearly all this part of the story was recognized in the North as of German origin. *Atli* (Attila; cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*): the Northern version of the story makes him Brynhild’s brother. His marriage with Guthrun, and his slaying of her brothers, are told in the *Atli* poems. Regarding the manner of Sigurth’s death cf. *concluding prose passage* and note. Stanza 13 indicates that after stanza 5 a stanza containing the words of an eagle has been lost.

6. Ūti stōþ Guþrūn |
 Gjúka dōttir,
auk þat orþa |
 alls fyrst of kvaþ:
“Hvar’s nū Sigurþr, |
 seggja drōttinn,
es frændr mīnir |
 fyrri rīþa?”

Without stood Guthrun, |
 Gjuki’s daughter,
Hear now the speech |
 that first she spake:
“Where is Sigurth now, |
 the noble king,
That my kinsmen riding |
 before him come?”

7. Einn þvī Hogni |
 andsvor veitti
“Sundr hofum Sigurþ |
 sverþi hoggvinn,
gnafir æ grār jör |
 of grami dauðum.”

Only this |
 did Hogni answer:
“Sigurth we |
 with our swords have slain;
The gray horse mourns |
 by his master dead.”

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

- | | |
|--|--|
| 8. [Þā kvaþ Brynhildr
Bupla dōttir:
“Vel skuluþ njōta
vāpna ok landa;
einn mundi Sigurþr
ollu rāþa,
ef lengr litlu
lifi heldi. | Then Brynhild spake,
the daughter of Buthli:
“Well shall ye joy
in weapons and lands;
Sigurth alone
of all had been lord,
If a little longer
his life had been. |
|--|--|

Some editions set stanzas 8 and 9 after stanza 11; Sijmons marks them as spurious. *Buthli:* cf. *Gripisspo*, 19, note.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 9. Vāria þat sōmt,
at svā rēþi
Gjūka arfi
ok Gota mengi,
es fimm sunu
at folkræþi
gunnarfūsa
getna hafþi.”] | Right were it not
that so he should rule
O’er Gjuki’s wealth
and the race of the Goths;
Five are the sons
for ruling the folk,
And greedy of fight,
that he hath fathered.” |
|---|--|

Goths: a generic term for any German race; cf. *Gripisspo*, 35 and note. *Five sons:* according to the *Volsungasaga* Sigurth had only one son, named Sigmund, who was killed at Brynhild’s behest. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma* and *Guthrunarkvitha II* likewise mention only one son. The daughter of Sigurth and Guthrun, Svanhild, marries Jormunrek (Ermanarich).

10. Hlō þā Brynhildr |
— bōr allr dunþi —
einu sinni |
af ǫllum hug:
“*Lengi njōtiþ* |
landa ok þegna,
es frōknan gram |
falla lētup!”

Then Brynhild laughed — |
and the building echoed —
Only once, |
with all her heart;
“Long shall ye joy |
in lands and men,
Now ye have slain |
the hero noble.”

11. Þā kvaþ Guþrūn |
Gjúka dōttir:
“Mjōk mǣlir þū |
miklar firnar;
gramir hafi Gunnar, |
gōtvaþ Sigurþar!
heiptgjarns hugar |
hefnt skal verþa.”

Then Guthrun spake, |
the daughter of Gjuki:
“Much thou speakest |
in evil speech;
Accursed be Gunnar, |
Sigurth’s killer,
Vengeance shall come |
for his cruel heart.”

12. Fram vas kvelda, |
fjōlþ vas drukkit,
þō vas *vǣtki* |
vilmāls talit;
sofnuþu allir, |
es ī sæing kvōmu,
einn Gunnarr lengr |
ǫllum vakþi.

Early came evening, |
and ale was drunk,
And among them long |
and loud they talked.;
They slumbered all |
when their beds they sought,
But Gunnar alone |
was long awake.

The manuscript marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza, and a few editions combine

it with stanza 13.

13. Fōt namat hrōra, |
fjōlþ namat spjalla,
hitt herglōtuþr |
hyggja tēþi,
hvat ī bōrvi þeir |
bāþir sōgþu
hrafn ey ok ǫrn, |
es heim riþu.

His feet were tossing, |
he talked to himself,
And the slayer of hosts |
began to heed
What the twain from the tree |
had told him then,
The raven and eagle, |
as home they rode.

Slayer of hosts: warrior (Gunnar). *Raven and eagle:* cf. note on stanza 5.

14. Vaknaþi Brynhildr |
Buþla dōttir,
dīs skjōldunga |
fyr dag litlu:
“Hvetiþ eþa letiþ mik |
— harmr es unninn —
sorg at segja |
eþa svā lāta!”

Brynhild awoke, |
the daughter of Buthli,
The warrior’s daughter, |
ere dawn of day:
“Love me or hate me, |
the harm is done,
And my grief cries out, |
or else I die.”

15. Þōgþu allir |
viþ þvī orþi,
fār kunni þeim |
fljōþa lōtum,
es grātandi |
gørþisk at segja,

Silent were all |
who heard her speak,
And nought of the heart |
of the queen they knew,
Who wept such tears |
the thing to tell

þats hlæjandi |
hølpa beiddi.

That laughing once |
of the men she had won.

Brynhildr kvap:

Brynhild spake:

16. [“*Hugþumk*, Gunnarr! |
grimt ī svefni,
svalt allt ī sal, |
ættak sæing kalda,
en þū, gramr! riþir |
glaums andvani,
fjotri fatlaþr |
ī fianda liþ.

“Gunnar, I dreamed |
a dream full grim:
In the hall were corpses; |
cold was my bed;
And, ruler, thou |
didst joyless ride,
With fetters bound |
in the foemen’s throng.

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

17. ... |
...
... |
...
svā mun øll yþur |
ætt Niflunga
afli gengin— |
eruþ eiþrofa.]

... |
...
... |
...
Utterly now your |
Niflung race
All shall die; |
your oaths ye have broken.

No gap is indicated in the manuscript, and some editions attach these two lines to stanza 16. *Niflungs*: this name (German Nibelungen), meaning “sons of the mist,” seems to have belonged originally to the race of supernatural beings to which the treasure belonged in the German version. It was subsequently extended to include the Gjukungs and their Burgundians. This question, of minor importance in the Norse poems, has evoked an enormous

amount of learned discussion in connection with the *Nibelungenlied*.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 18. Mantat, Gunnarr!
til gǫrva þat,
es blōþi ī spor
bāþir renduþ;
nu hefr allt hōnum
illu launat,
es fremstan þik
finna vildi. | Thou hast, Gunnar,
the deed forgot,
When blood in your footprints
both ye mingled;
All to him
hast repaid with ill
Who fain had made thee
the foremost of kings. |
|--|---|

- | | |
|--|--|
| 19. Þā reyndi þat,
es riþit hafþi
mōþugr ā vit
mīn at biþja,
hvē herglōtuþr
hafþi fyrri
eiþum haldit
viþ ungan gram. | Well did he prove,
when proud he rode
To win me then
thy wife to be,
How true the host-slayer
ever had held
The oaths he had made
with the monarch young. |
|--|--|

Footprints: the actual mingling of blood in one another's footprints was a part of the ceremony of swearing blood-brother hood, the oath which Gunnar and Sigurth had taken. The fourth line refers to the fact that Sigurth had won many battles for Gunnar.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 20. Benvond of lēt
brugþinn golli
margdýrr konungr
ā meþal okkar; | The wound-staff then,
all wound with gold,
The hero let
between us lie; |
|---|--|

eldi vǫru eggjar |
ūtan gǫrvar,
en eitrdropum |
innan fāþar.”

With fire the edge |
was forged full keen,
And with drops of venom |
the blade was damp.”

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

Hēr er sagt í þessi kvíðu frá dauða Sigurþar, ok víkr hēr svā til, sem þeir dræpi hann ūti, en sumir segja svā, at þeir dræpi hann inni í rekkju sinni sofanda.

En þýþverskir menn segja svā, at þeir dræpi hann ūti í skōgi, ok svā segir í Guþrūnarkvíðu enni fornu, at Sigurþr ok Gjūka synir hefði til þings ríþit, þā er hann var drepinn;

en þat segja allir einnig, at þeir sviku hann í trýgþ ok vōgu at honum liggjanda ok ōbūnum.

Here it is told in this poem about the death of Sigurth, and the story goes here that they slew him out of doors, but some say that they slew him in the house, on his bed while he was sleeping.

But German men say that they killed him out of doors in the forest; and so it is told in the old Guthrun lay, that Sigurth and Gjuki's sons had ridden to the council-place, and that he was slain there.

But in this they are all agreed, that they deceived him in his trust of them, and fell upon him when he was lying down and unprepared.

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

Guthrunarkvitha I

The First Lay of Guthrun

Introductory Note

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

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

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

Guthrunarkvitha I, so far as the narrative underlying it is concerned, shows very little northern addition to the basic German tradition. Brynhild appears only as Guthrun’s enemy and the cause of Sigurth’s death; the three women who attempt to comfort Guthrun, though unknown to the southern stories, seem to have been rather distinct creations of the poet’s

than traditional additions to the legend. Regarding the relations of the various elements in the Sigurth cycle, cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*.

Guþrūn sat yfir Sigurþi dauðum; hon
grēt eigi sem aðrar konur, en hon var
būin til at springa af harmi.

Til gengu bæði konur ok karlar at
hugga hana, en þat var eigi auðvelt.

Þat er sagn manna, at Guþrūn hefði
etit af Fāfnis hjarta, ok hon skilði því
fugls rødd.

Þetta er enn kveðit um Guþrūnu:

Guthrun sat by the dead Sigurth; she
did not weep as other women, but her
heart was near to bursting with grief.

The men and women came to her to
console her, but that was not easy to do.

It is told of men that Guthrun had eat-
en of Fafnir's heart, and that she under-
stood the speech of birds.

This is a poem about Guthrun.

The prose follows the concluding prose of the *Brot* without indication of a break, the heading standing immediately before stanza 1. *Fafnir's heart*: this bit of information is here quite without point, and it is nowhere else stated that Guthrun understood the speech of birds. In the *Volsungasaga* it is stated that Sigurth gave Guthrun some of Fafnir's heart to eat, "and thereafter she was much grimmer than before, and wiser."

1. Ār vas þats Guþrūn |
 gørþisk at deyja,
es sorgfull sat |
 of Sigurþi;
gørþit hjūfra |
 nē høndum slā
nē kveina umb |
 sem konur aðrar.

Then did Guthrun |
 think to die,
When she by Sigurth |
 sorrowing sat;
Tears she had not, |
 nor wrung her hands,
Nor ever wailed, |
 as other women.

This stanza seems to be based on *Guthrunarkvitha II*, 11–12.

2. Gengu jarlar |
 alnotrir fram,

To her the warriors |
 wise there came,

þeirs harþs hugar |
hāna lottu;
þeygi Guþrūn |
grāta mǣtti,
svā vas mōþug, |
mundi springa.

Longing her heavy |
woe to lighten;
Grieving could not |
Guthrun weep,
So sad her heart, |
it seemed, would break.

3. Sōtu ītrar |
jarla brūþir,
golli būnar, |
fyr Guþrūnu:
hver sagði þeira |
sinn oftrega,
þanns bitrastan |
of beþit hafði.

Then the wives |
of the warriors came,
Gold-adorned, |
and Guthrun sought;
Each one then |
of her own grief spoke,
The bitterest pain |
she had ever borne.

4. Þā kvað Gjaflaug, |
Gjúka systir:
“Mik veitk *moldar* |
munarlausasta:
hefk fimm vera |
forspell beþit,
[tveggja dōtra, |
þriggja systra,]
átta brōþra — |
þō enn lifik.”

Then spake Gjaflaug, |
Gjuki's sister:
“Most joyless of all |
on earth am I;
Husbands five |
were from me taken,
[Two daughters then, |
and sisters three,]
Brothers eight, |
yet I have lived.”

Gjaflaug: nothing further is known of this aunt of Guthrun, or of the many relatives whom

she has lost. Very likely she is an invention of the poet's, for it seems improbable that otherwise all further trace of her should have been lost. Line 4 has been marked by many editors as spurious.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 5. Þeygi Guþrūn
grāta mātti,
svā vas mōþug
at mōg dauþan
ok harþhugub
of hrør fylkis. | Grieving could not
Guthrun weep,
Such grief she had
for her husband dead,
And so grim her heart
by the hero's body. |
|---|--|

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| 6. Þā kvaþ Herborg,
<i>Hūna</i> drottning:
“Hefk harþara
harm at segja:
mīnir sjau synir
sunnanlands,
verr enn ātti
ī val fellu.
[faþir ok mōþir,
fjōrir brōþr,
þau ā vāgi
vindr of lēk,
barþi bāra
viþ borþþili.] | Then Herborg spake,
the queen of the Huns:
“I have a greater
grief to tell;
My seven sons
in the southern land,
And my husband, fell
in fight all eight.
[Father and mother
and brothers four
Amid the waves
the wind once smote,
And the seas crashed through
the sides of the ship.] |
|--|---|

Herborg: neither she nor her sorrows are elsewhere mentioned, nor is it clear what a “queen of the Huns” is doing in Gunnar’s home, but the word “Hun” has little definiteness of meaning in the poems, and is frequently applied to Sigurth himself (cf. note on stanza 24). Herborg appears from stanza 11 to have been the foster-mother of Gollrond, Guthrun’s sister. Lines 5–7 may be interpolations, or may form a separate stanza.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>7. <i>Hrør skyldak sjølf</i>
 <i>høndla þeira,</i>
 <i>gofga skyldak,</i>
 <i>götva skyldak;</i>
 <i>þat allt of beiþk</i>
 <i>ein misseri,</i>
 <i>svāt mangi mēr</i>
 <i>munar leitapi.</i></p> | <p>The bodies all
 with my own hands then
 I decked for the grave,
 and the dead I buried;
 A half-year brought me
 this to bear;
 And no one came
 to comfort me.</p> |
|---|--|

Lines 1 and 2 stand in reversed order in the manuscript; I have followed Gering’s conjectural transposition.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>8. <i>Þā varþk hapta</i>
 <i>ok hernuma</i>
 <i>sams misseris</i>
 <i>sīþan verþa;</i>
 <i>skyldak skreyta</i>
 <i>ok skua binda</i>
 <i>hersis kvōn</i>
 <i>hverjan morgin.</i></p> | <p>Then bound I was,
 and taken in war,
 A sorrow yet
 in the same half-year;
 They bade me deck
 and bind the shoes
 Of the wife of the monarch
 every morn.</p> |
|--|---|

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>9. <i>Hōn ðgþi mēr</i>
 <i>af afbrýþi</i></p> | <p>In jealous rage
 her wrath she spake,</p> |
|---|--|

ok hǫrþum mik	And beat me oft
hǫggum keyrþi;	with heavy blows;
fannk hūssuma	Never a better
hvergi in betra,	lord I knew,
en hūsfreyju	And never a woman
hvergi verri.”	worse I found.”

Herborg implies that the queen’s jealousy was not altogether misplaced.

10. Þeygi Guþrūn	Grieving could not
grāta mātti,	Guthrun weep,
svā vas mǫþug	Such grief she had
at mǫg dauþan	for her husband dead,
ok harþhugur	And so grim her heart
of hrør fylkis.	by the hero’s body.

Cf. stanza 5 and note. The manuscript abbreviates to first letters.

11. Þā kvaþ Gollrond,	Then spake Gollrond,
Gjúka dōttir:	Gjuki’s daughter:
“Fō kannt, fōstra!	“Thy wisdom finds not,
þōt frōþ seir,	my foster-mother,
ungu vífi	The way to comfort
andspjöll bera.”	the wife so young.”
varaþi at hylja	She bade them uncover
of hrør fylkis.	the warrior’s corpse.

Gollrond: not elsewhere mentioned. Line 4 looks like an interpolation replacing a line

previously lost.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 12. Svípti blæju
af Sigurði
ok vatt vengi
fyr vífs knëum:
“Lít á ljūfan,
legg munn við grōn,
sem halsaðir
heilan stilli!” | The shroud she lifted
from Sigurth, laying
His well-loved head
on the knees of his wife:
“Look on thy loved one,
and lay thy lips
To his as if yet
the hero lived.” |
|---|--|

The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza, and some editors have attempted to follow this arrangement.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 13. Á leit Guþrūn
einu sinni;
sā dōglings skōr
dreyra runna,
frānar sjōnir
fylkis liþnar,
hugborg jōfurs
hjōrvi skorna. | Once alone did
Guthrun look;
His hair all clotted
with blood beheld,
The blinded eyes
that once shone bright,
The hero’s breast
that the blade had pierced. |
| 14. Þā hnē Guþrūn
hōll við bolstri,
haddr losnaði,
hlýr roþnaði, | Then Guthrun bent,
on her pillow bowed,
Her hair was loosened,
her cheek was hot, |

en regns dropi |
rann niðr of knē.

And the tears like raindrops |
downward ran.

Many editors assume the loss of a line from this stanza.

15. Þā grēt Guþrūn |
Gjūka dōttir,
svāt tōr flugu |
tresk ī gøgnum,
ok gullu vīþ |
gæss ī tūni,
mærir foglar |
es mæR ātti.

Then Guthrun, daughter |
of Gjuki, wept,
And through her tresses |
flowed the tears;
And from the court |
came the cry of geese,
The birds so fair |
of the hero's bride.

The word here translated “tresses” is sheer guesswork. The detail of the geese is taken from *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 29, line 3 here being identical with line 4 of that stanza.

16. [Þā kvaþ Gollrōnd |
Gjūka dōttir:]
“Ykkar vissak |
āstir mestar
manna allra |
fyr mold ofan;
ūti ne inni |
unþir hvārki,
systir mīn! |
nema hjā Sigurþi.”

Then Gollrond spake, |
the daughter of Gjuki:
“Never a greater |
love I knew
Than yours among |
all men on earth;
Nowhere wast happy, |
at home or abroad,
Sister mine, |
with Sigurth away.”

Line 1, abbreviated in the manuscript, very likely should be simply “Gollrond spake.”

Guþrūn kvaþ:

17. “Svā vas minn Sigurþr |
 hjā sunum Gjūka,
 sem væri geirlaukr |
 ōr grasi vaxinn,
 eþa væri bjartr steinn |
 ā band dreginn,
 jarknasteinn |
 of oþlingum.

Guthrun spake:

“So was my Sigurth |
 o’er Gjuki’s sons
 As the spear-leek grown |
 above the grass,
 Or the jewel bright |
 borne on the band,
 The precious stone |
 that princes wear.

Cf. *Guthrunarkvitha II, 2*. The manuscript does not name the speaker, and some editions have a first line,

Then Guthrun spake, | the daughter of Gjuki.

(þā kvaþ þat Guþrūn | Gjūka dōttir.)

18. Ek þōttak auk |
 þjōþans rekkum
 hverri hāeri |
 Herjans dīsi;
 nū’mk svā lītil, |
 sem lauf seī
 opt ī jōlstrum |
 at jōfur dauþan.

To the leader of men |
 I loftier seemed
 And higher than all |
 of Herjan’s maids;
 As little now |
 as the leaf I am
 On the willow hanging; |
 my hero is dead.

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

19. Saknak ī sessi | In his seat, in his bed, |
ok ī sǣingu I see no more
mīns mǣlvinar — | My heart's true friend; |
valda megir Gjūka, the fault is theirs,
valda megir Gjūka | The sons of Gjuki, |
mīnu bǫlvi for all my grief,
ok systr sinnar | That so their sister |
sōrum grāti. sorely weeps.
20. Svā at lýpum | So shall your land |
land of eyþiþ, its people lose
sem of unnuþ | As ye have kept |
eiþa svarþa; your oaths of yore;
muna þū, Gunnarr! | Gunnar, no joy |
golls of njōta, the gold shall give thee,
[þeir munu þēr baugar | [The rings shall soon |
at bana verþa,] thy slayers be,]
es Sigurþi | Who swarest oaths |
svarþir eiþa. with Sigurth once.

Line 4 looks like an interpolation (cf. *Fafnismol*, 9, line 4), but some editors instead have queried line 5. How Guthrun's curse is fulfilled is told in the subsequent poems. That desire for Sigurth's treasure (the gold cursed by Andvari and Loki) was one of the motives for his murder is indicated in *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma* (stanza 16), and was clearly a part of the German tradition, as it appears in the *Nibelungenlied*.

21. Opt vas ī tūni | In the court was greater |
teiti meiri, gladness then

þās minn Sigurþr |
 sǫplaði Grana,
 ok Brynhildar |
 biþja fōru,
 armrar vǣttar, |
 illu heilli.”

The day my Sigurth |
 Grani saddled,
 And went forth Brynhild's |
 hand to win,
 That woman ill, |
 in an evil hour.”

Cf. *Gripisspo*, 35 and note.

22. Þā kvað Brynhildr |
 Buþla dōttir:
 “Vǫn sei vǣtr sū |
 vers ok barna,
 es þik, Guþrūn! |
 grāts of beiddi
 ok ī morgin þēr |
 mǣlrūnar gaf!”

Then Brynhild spake, |
 the daughter of Buthli:
 “May the witch now husband |
 and children want
 Who, Guthrun, loosed |
 thy tears at last,
 And with magic today |
 hath made thee speak.”

Line 1 is abbreviated in the manuscript.

23. Þā kvað Gollrond |
 Gjūka dōttir:
 “Þegi þū, þjǫþleip! |
 þeira orþa:
 urþr ǫþlinga |
 hefr æ verit,
 rekr þik alda hver |
 illrar skepnu.

Then Gollrond, daughter |
 of Gjuki, spake:
 “Speak not such words, |
 thou hated woman;
 Bane of the noble |
 thou e'er hast been,
 [Borne thou art |
 on an evil wave,

[sorg sára	Sorrow hast brought
sjau konunga	to seven kings,]
ok vinspell	And many a woman
vīfa mest.]”	hast loveless made.”

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

24. Þā kvað Brynhildr	Then Brynhild, daughter
Buþla dōttir:	of Buthli, spake:
“Veldr einn Atli	“Atli is guilty
ollu bōlvi,	of all the sorrow,
[of borinn Buþla,	[Son of Buthli
brōþir minn,]	and brother of mine,]
es ī hōllu vit	When we saw in the hall
hunskrar þjōpar	of the Hunnish race
eld ā jōfri	The flame of the snake’s bed
ormbeþs litum.	flash round the hero;
[þess hefð gangs	[For the journey since
goldit sīþan,	full sore have I paid,
þeirar sýnar	And ever I seek
ek sǫmuk ey.]”	the sight to forget.]”

The stanza is obviously in bad shape; perhaps it represents two separate stanzas, or perhaps three of the lines are later additions. *Atli*: Brynhild here blames her brother, following the frequent custom of transferring the responsibility for a murder (cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*, 33), because he compelled her to marry Gunnar against her will, an idea which the poet seems to have gained from *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 32–39. These stanzas represent an entirely different version of the story, wherein Atli, attacked by Gunnar and Sigurth, buys them off by giving Gunnar his sister, Brynhild, as wife. He seems to have induced

the latter to marry Gunnar by falsely telling her that Gunnar was Sigurth (a rationalistic explanation of the interchange of forms described in the *Volsungasaga* and *Gripisspo*, 37–39). In the present stanza Atli is made to do this out of desire for Sigurth’s treasure. *Hunnish race*: this may be merely an error (neither Gunnar nor Sigurth could properly have been connected in any way with Atli and his Huns), based on *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, wherein Sigurth appears more than once as the “Hunnish king.” The North was very much in the dark as to the differences between Germans, Burgundians, Franks, Goths, and Huns, and used the words without much discrimination. On the other hand, it may refer to Sigurth’s appearance when, adorned with gold, he came with Gunnar to besiege Atli, in the alternative version of the story just cited (cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 36). *Flame of the snake’s bed*: gold, so called because serpents and dragons were the traditional guardians of treasure, on which they lay.

25. Stōþ hōn und stoþ,	By the pillars she stood,
strengþi efli,	and gathered her strength,
brann Brynhildi	From the eyes of Brynhild,
Buþla dōttur	Buthli’s daughter,
eldr ōr augum,	Fire there burned,
eitri fnōsti,	and venom she breathed,
es sōr of leit	When the wounds she saw
ā Sigurþi.	on Sigurth then.

Guprūn gekk þaþan ā braut til skōgar
ā eyþimerkr ok fōr allt til Danmarkar
ok var þar meþ Þōru Hākonardōttur
sjau misseri.

Brynhildr vildi eigi lifa eptir Sigurþ.

Hon lēt drepa þræla sīna ātta ok
fimm ambōttir.

Þā lagþi hon sik sverþi til bana,
svā sem segir ī Sigurþarkviþu enni
skōmmu.

Guthrun went thence away to a forest
in the waste, and journeyed all the way
to Denmark, and was there seven half-
years with Thora, daughter of Hokon.

Brynhild would not live after Sigurth.

She had eight of her thralls slain and
five serving-women.

Then she killed herself with a sword, as
is told in the Short Lay of Sigurth.

The manuscript has “Gunnar” in place of “Guthrun,” but this is an obvious mistake; the

entire prose passage is based on *Guthrunarkvitha II*, 14. The *Volsungasaga* likewise merely paraphrases *Guthrunarkvitha II*, and nothing further is known of Thora or her father, Hokon, though many inconclusive attempts have been made to identify the latter. *Brynhild*: the story of her death is told in great detail in the latter part of *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*.

Sigurtharkvitha en Skamma

The Short Lay of Sigurth

Introductory Note

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 through out the North in many and varied forms, and the poem shows traces of variants of the main story which do not appear elsewhere.

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|---|---|
| 1. Ār vas þats Sigurþr
sōtti Gjūka,
Volsungr ungi,
es vegit hafði;
tōk við trygðum
tveggja brōþra,
seldusk eiða
eljunfrōknir. | Of old did Sigurth
Gjuki seek,
The Volsung young,
in battles victor;
Well he trusted
the brothers twain,
With mighty oaths
among them sworn. |
|---|---|

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). *Volsung*: Sigurth's grandfather was Volsung; cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note. *Oaths*: regarding the blood-brother hood sworn by Sigurth, Gunnar, and Hogni cf. *Brot*, 18 and note.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2. Mey buðu hōnum
ok meipma fjōlþ,
Guþrūnu ungu,
Gjūka dōttur;
drukku ok dōmþu
dōgr mart saman
Sigurþr ungi
ok synir Gjūka. | 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. |
|---|---|

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 3. Unz Brynhildar
biþja fōru, | Thereafter went they
Brynhild to woo, |
|---------------------------------------|--|

svāt þeim Sigurþr	And so with them
reiþ ī sinni,	did Sigurth ride,
Volsungr ungi,	The Volsung young,
ok vega kunni —	in battle valiant, —
hann of ætti,	Himself would have had her
ef eiga knætti.	if all he had seen.

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.

4. Seggr suþrōni	The southern hero
lēt sverþ nøkkvit,	his naked sword,
mæki malfān,	Fair-flashing, let
ā meþal þeira,	between them lie;
[nē hann konu	[Nor would he come
kyssa gørþi,]	the maid to kiss;]
nē hunskr konungr	The Hunnish king
hōfsk at armi	in his arms ne'er held
mey frumunga	The maiden he gave
fal megi Gjūka.	to Gjuki's sons.

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. 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. *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).

5. Hon at lífi sēr	Ill she had known not
lōst nē vissi	in all her life,

ok at aldragi	And nought of the sorrows
etki grand,	of men she knew;
vamm þats væri	Blame she had not,
eþa vesa hygþi;—	nor dreamed she should bear it,
gengu ā milli	But cruel the fates
grimmar urþir.	that among them came.

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. *Guthrunarkvitha I*, 24 and note). The manuscript marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza, and many editors combine it with stanza 6.

6. Ein sat ūti	By herself at the end
aptan dags,	of day she sat,
nam svā allbrätt	And in open words
umb at mælsk:	her heart she uttered:
“Hafa skalk Sigurþ,	“I shall Sigurth have,
eþa þō svelti,	the hero young,
mōg frumungan	E'en though within
mēr ā armi.	my arms he die.

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. *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.”

7. Orþ mæltak nū — | The word I have spoken; |
iþrumk eptir; soon shall I rue it,
kvōn's hans Guþrūn, | His wife is Guthrun, |
en ek Gunnars; and Gunnar's am I;
ljōt norn skōpumk | Ill Norns set for me |
langa þrō." long desire."

Perhaps a line is missing after line 3.

8. Opt gengr innan | Oft did she go |
ills of fyld with grieving heart
īsa ok jōkla | On the glacier's ice |
aptan hverjan, at even-tide,
es þau Guþrūn | When Guthrun then |
ganga ā beþ to her bed was gone,
auk hana Sigurþr | And the bedclothes Sigurth |
sveipr ī ripti. about her laid.

Glacier: a bit of Icelandic (or Greenland) local color.

9. “[Nū mun Gjūka dōttur | “[Now Gjuki's child |
ā gamanþingi,] to her lover goes,]
konungr enn hunski | And the Hunnish king |
kvōn fria sīna; with his wife is happy;
vōn gengk vilja | Joyless I am |
ok vers beggja, and mateless ever,
verþk mik gōla | Till cries from my heavy |
af grimum hug.” heart burst forth.”

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. *Hunnish king*: cf. stanza 4.

10. Nam af heiptum þeim	In her wrath to battle
hvetjask at vīgi:	she roused herself:
“Þū skalt, Gunnarr!	“Gunnar, now
gørst of lāta	thou needs must lose
mīnu landi	Lands of mine
ok mēr sjalfri,	and me myself,
munk una aldri	No joy shall I have
meþ ǫþlingi.	with the hero ever.

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.

11. Munk aptr fara	Back shall I fare
þars āþan vask,	where first I dwelt,
meþ nābornum	Among the kin
nipjum mīnum;	that come of my race,
þar munk sitja	To wait there, sleeping
ok sofa lífi,	my life away,
nema þū Sigurþ	If Sigurth’s death
svelta lātir	thou shalt not dare,
[ok jǫfur ǫþrum	[And best of heroes
ǫþri verþir.]	thou shalt not be.]

Line 5, or perhaps line 3, may be interpolated.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>12. Lōtum sun fara
 feþr ī sinni,
 skalat ulf ala
 ungan lengi;
 hveim verþr hōlþa
 hefnd lēttara
 sīþan til sātta,
 at sunr <i>lifit</i>.”</p> | <p>The son 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> |
|---|---|

The son: the three-year-old son of Sigurth and Guthrun, Sigmund, who was killed at Brynhild’s behest.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>13. <i>Hryggr</i> varþ Gunnarr
 ok hnipnaþi,
 sveip sīnum hug,
 sat allan dag:
 hann vissi þat
 vilgi gōrla,
 hvat hōnum vāri
 vinna sōmst
 [eþa hōnum vāri
 vinna bazt,
 alls <i>Vōlsungi</i>
 vissisk firþan
 auk at Sigurþ
 sōknuþ mikinn.]</p> | <p>Sad was Gunnar,
 and bowed with grief,
 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,
 For with mighty longing
 Sigurth he loved.]</p> |
|--|--|

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. *Grief* (line 1): the manuscript has

“wrath,” involving a metrical error.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 14. ȳmist hugþi
jafnlanga stund:
þat vas eigi
ārar tītt,
at frā konungdōm
kvānir gengi;
nam sēr Hōgna
heita at rūnum
[þar ātti hann
alls fulltrua:] | 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.] |
|---|---|

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.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 15. “Ein’s mēr Brynhildr
ǫllum betri,
of borin Buþla,
hōn’s bragr kvenna;
fyr skalk mīnu
fjorvi lāta,
an meýjar þeirar
munugþ tȳna. | “More than all
to me is Brynhild,
Buthli’s child,
the best of women;
My very life
would I sooner lose
Than yield the love
of yonder maid. |
|---|--|

After “Buthli” in line 2 the manuscript has “my brother,” apparently a scribal error. 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.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>16. Vildu okkr fylki
 til fear vēla?
 gott's at rāþa
 Rīnar malmi,
 ok unandi
 auþi stýra
 [ok sitjandi
 sǣlu njōta].”</p> | <p>Wilt thou the hero
 for wealth betray?
 'Twere good to have
 the gold of the Rhine,
 And all the hoard
 in peace to hold,
 And waiting fortune
 thus to win.”</p> |
|--|--|

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. *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 *Guthrunarkvitha I*, 20, and in the German versions of the story.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>17. Einu þvī Høgni
 andsvor veitti:
 “Samir eigi okkr
 slíkt at vinna,
 sverþi rofna
 svarna eiþa,
 eiþa svarna,
 unnar trygþir.</p> | <p>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. Vituma ā moldu
 menn in sǣlli,
 meþan fjōrir vēr
 folki rōþum</p> | <p>We know no mightier
 men on earth
 The while we four
 o'er the folk hold sway,</p> |

auk sa enn hunski |
herbaldr lifir,
nē in mætri |
mægþ ā foldu;

And while the Hunnish |
hero lives,
Nor higher kinship |
the world doth hold.

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. *Hunnish hero:* Sigurth; cf. stanza 4 and note. 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.

19. [ef vēr fimm sunu |
fōpum lengi,
ōtt of gōþa |
ōxla knættim.]
Ek veit gōrla, |
hvaþan vegir standa—
eru Brynhildar |
brek ofmikil.”

If sons we five |
shall soon beget,
Great, methinks, |
our race shall grow;
Well I see |
whence lead the ways;
Too bitter far |
is Brynhild’s hate.”

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 3–4 with stanza 20. *Whence lead the ways:* a proverbial expression signifying “whence the trouble comes.”

Gunnarr kvæþ:

20. “Vit skulum Gotþorm |
gørva at vīgi,
yngra brōþur, |
ōfrōþara;

Gunnar spake:

“Gotthorm to wrath |
we needs must rouse,
Our younger brother, |
in rashness blind;

<p>hann vas fyr ūtan eiþa svarna, eiþa svarna, unnar trygþir.”</p>	<p>He entered not in the oaths we swore, The oaths we swore and all our vows.”</p>
---	---

The manuscript does not name the speaker. *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.

<p>21. Dælt vas at eggja ōbilgjarnan stōþ til hjarta hjōrr Sigurþi.</p>	<p>It was easy to rouse the reckless one. The sword in the heart of Sigurth stood.</p>
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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.

<p>22. Rēþ til hefnda hergjarn ī sal ok eptir varp ōbilgjörnum; flō til Gotþorms Grams ramliga kynbirt iarn ōr konungs hendi.</p>	<p>In vengeance the hero rose in the hall, And hurled his sword at the slayer bold; At Gotthorm flew the glittering steel Of Gram full hard from the hand of the king.</p>
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Some editions combine lines 3–4 with stanza 23. *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.”

- | | |
|---|---|
| 23. Hnē hans of dolgr
til hluta tveggja
hendr ok haufuþ
hnē annan veg,
en fōtahlutr
fell aptr ī staþ. | The foeman cleft
asunder fell,
Forward hands
and head did sink,
And legs and feet
did backward fall. |
|---|---|

A line may well have been lost from this stanza.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 24. Sofnuþ vas Guþrūn
ī sǣingu
sorgalaus
hjā Sigurþi,
en vaknaþi
vilja firþ,
es Freys vinar
flaut ī dreyra. | 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 she lay. |
|---|---|

Freyr: if the phrase “the friend of Freyr” means anything more than “king” (cf. *Rigsthula*, 46 etc.), which I doubt, it has reference to the late tradition that Freyr, and not Othin, was the ancestor of the Volsungs (cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 57 and note).

- | | |
|---|--|
| 25. Svā slō svāran
sīnar hendr,
at rammhugaþr
reis upp við beþ: | So hard she smote
her hands together
That the hero rose up,
iron-hearted: |
|---|--|

“Grātaþu, Guþrūn! |
svā grimmliga,
brūþr frumunga, |
þēr brōþr lifa.

“Weep not, Guthrun, |
grievous tears,
Bride so young, |
for thy brothers live.

Müllenhoff thinks this stanza, or at any rate lines 1–2, a later addition based on stanza 29.

26. Āk til ungan |
erfínytja,
kannat firrask |
ōr fiandgarþi;
þeir sēr hafa |
svārt ok dātt
en nār numit |
nȳlig rōþ.

Too young, methinks, |
is my son 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.

My son: Sigmund; cf. stanza 12 and note, and also *Brot*, 9 and note.

27. Rīþra þeim síþan, |
þōt sjau alir,
systursunr |
slīkr at þingi;
ek veit gōrla, |
hvī gegnir nū:
ein veldr Brynhildr |
ōllu bōlvi.

No son will ride, |
though seven thou hast,
To the Thing as the son |
of their sister rides;
Well I see |
who the ill has worked,
On Brynhild alone |
lies the blame for all.

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.” *Thing*: council.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 28. Mēr unni mæ̃r
fyr mann <i>hverjan</i> ,
en við Gunnar
grand etki vannk;
þyrmpak sífjum,
svornum eiþum,
síþr værak heitinn
hans kvānar vinr.” | 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.” |
|--|--|

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.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 29. Kona varp ondu
en konungr fjorvi,
svā slō svāran
sīnar hendr,
at kvōþu við
kalkar ī vō
ok gullu við
gæss ī tūni. | 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. |
|--|---|

Cf. *Guthrunarkvitha* I, 15.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 30. Hlō þā Brynhildr
Buþla dōttir | Then Brynhild, daughter
of Buthli, laughed, |
|---|--|

einu sinni |
af öllum hug,
es hvīlu til |
heyra knātti
gjallan grāt |
Gjúka dóttur.

Only once, |
with all her heart,
When as she lay |
full loud she heard
The grievous wail |
of Gjuki's daughter.

Cf. *Brot*, 10.

31. [Hitt kvað þā Gunnarr, |
gramr høgstalda:]
“Hlærat af því, |
heiptgjörn kona!
ā golfi glöþ, |
at þēr gōþs viti!
hvī hafnar þū |
enum hvīta lit,
feikna fōþir? |
hykk at feig seir.

Then Gunnar, monarch |
of men, spake forth:
“Thou dost not laugh, |
thou lover of hate,
In gladness there, |
or for aught of good;
Why has thy face |
so white a hue,
Mother of ill? |
Foredoomed thou art.

Line 1 may well be a mere expansion of “Gunnar spake.” The manuscript marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza, and some editions combine lines 4–5 with stanza 32.

32. Þū værir þess |
verþust kvenna,
at fyr augum þēr |
Atla hjöggim,
sæir brōþr þīnum |
blōþugt sār,

A worthier woman |
wouldst thou have been
If before thine eyes |
we had Atli slain;
If thy brother's bleeding |
body hadst seen

undir dreyrgar, |
knættir yfir binda.”

And the bloody wounds |
that thou shouldst bind.”

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 *Guthrunarkvitha* I, 24 and note).

Brynhildr kvaþ:

33. “Frýra þēr, Gunnarr! |
hefr fullvegít:
litt sēsk Atli |
ōfu þīna;
hann mun ykkarr |
ōnd sīpari
ok æ bera |
afl et meira.

Brynhild spake:

“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.

The manuscript does not name the speaker, and some editions add a first line:

Then Brynhild, daughter | of Buthli, spake.

(Þā kvaþ þat Brynhildr | Buþla dōttir.)

34. Segja munk þēr |
— sjalfr veizt gōrla —,
hvē ēr snimma |
til saka rēþuþ;
varþka til øngþ |
nē ofþrungin,

To thee I say, |
and thyself thou knowest,
That all these ills |
thou didst early shape;
No bonds I knew, |
nor sorrow bore,

fullgōdd feī |
ā fleti brōþur.

And wealth I had |
in my brother's home.

Cf. stanza 5.

35. Nē vildak þat |
at mik verr ætti,
āþr Gjūkungar |
riþu at garþi,
þrīr ā hestum |
þjōþkonungar —
en þeira fōr |
þorfgi vāri!

Never a husband |
sought I to have,
Before the Gjukungs |
fared to our land;
Three were the kings |
on steeds that came,—
Need of their journey |
never there was.

Three kings: Gunnar, Hogni, and Sigurth.

36. Þeim hētumk þā |
þengli mærum
es meþ golli sat |
ā Grana bōgum;
vasat ī augu |
yþr of glīkr
[ne ā engi hlut |
at ālitum,]
þō þykkisk ēr |
þjōþkonungar.

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.

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 Gun-

nar, 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.

37. [Ok mer Atli þat	And so to me
einni sagði,	did Atli say
at hvārki lēzk	That share in our wealth
hōfn of deila,	I should not have,
goll nē jarþir,	Of gold or lands,
nema gefask lētak,	if my hand I gave not;
ok engi hlut	[More evil yet,
aupins fear,	the wealth I should yield,]
þās mer jōþungri	The gold that he
eigu seldi	in my childhood gave me,
ok mer jōþungri	[The wealth from him
aura talði.	in my youth I had.]

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.

(of borinn Buþla | brōþir minn.)

After line 6 Bugge adds:

Not thou was it, Gunnar, | who Grani rode,
Though thou my brother | with rings didst buy.

(Vartat sǫ, Gunnarr! | er Grana reiþ,
þō hefr brōþur mīns | bauga þegna.)

Regarding Brynhild's wealth cf. stanza 10 and note.

- 38.** Þā vas ā hvōrfun | Oft in my mind |
hugr minn of þat, I pondered much
hvārt vega skyldak | If still I should fight, |
eþa val fella and warriors fell,
[bōll ī brynju | Brave in my byrnie, |
of brōþur sōk]; my brother defying;
þat mundi þā | That would wide |
þjōþkunt vesa, in the world be known,
mōrgum manni | And sorrow for many |
at munar strīþi. a man would make.

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.

- 39.** Lētum sīga | But the bond at last |
sāttmōl okkur, I let be made,
lēk mer meirr ī mun | For more the hoard |
meiþmar þiggja, I longed to have,
bauga rauþa | The rings that the son |
burar Sigmundar, of Sigmund won;
nē annars manns | No other's treasure |
aura vildak.] e'er I sought.

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. *The bond:* Brynhild thought she was marrying Sigurth, owner of the treasure, whereas she was being tricked into marrying Gunnar.

- 40.** Unnak einum | One-alone |
nē ymisum, of all I loved,

bjōat of hverfan |
 hug menskōgul;
 allt mun þat Atli |
 eptir finna,
 es mīna spyrr |
 morþfōr gōrva.”

Nor changing heart |
 I ever had;
 All in the end |
 shall Atli know,
 When he hears I have gone |
 on the death-road hence.”

* * *

41. “At þeygi skal |
 þunngēþ kona
 annarrar ver |
 aldri leiþa
 . . . |
 . . .
 † þā mun ā hefndum |
 harma minna.”

“Never a wife |
 of fickle will
 Yet to another |
 man should yield.
 . . . |
 . . .
 So vengeance for all |
 my ills shall come.”

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.

42. Upp reis Gunnarr, |
 gramr verþungar,
 ok of hals konu |
 hendr of lagþi;

Up rose Gunnar, |
 the people’s ruler,
 And flung his arms |
 round her neck so fair;

gengu allir, |
ok þō ymsir
af heilum hug, |
hāna at letja.

And all who came, |
of every kind,
Sought to hold her |
with all their hearts.

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 44. 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.

43. Hratt af halsi |
hveim þar sēr,
lēta letjask |
langrar gōngu;
[nam sēr Hōgna |
heita at rūnum:]
“[Þā lōtum þvī |
þarfar rāþa.]

But back she cast |
all those who came,
Nor from the long road |
let them hold her;
In counsel then |
did he Hogni call:
“Of wisdom now |
full great is our need.

Cf. note on preceding stanza.

44. Seggi vilk alla |
ī sal ganga,
þīna meþ mīnum |
—nū's þorf mikil—,
vita ef meini |
morþfor konu,

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,

unz af mēli |
enn mein komi.”

Till her fearful thoughts |
with time shall fade.”

Cf. note on stanza 42.

45. Einu þvī Hogni |
andsvǫr veitti:
“Letiþa hāna |
langrar gǫngu,
þars aptrborin |
aldri verþi!
hōn krǫng of kvamsk |
fyr knē mōþur,
hōn’s æ borin |
ōvilja til,
mǫrgum manni |
at mōþtrega.”

[Few the words |
of Hogni were:]
“From the long road now |
shall ye hold her not,
That born again |
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.]”

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.

(aumlig vǣttr | illu heilli.)

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. *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*).

- | | |
|--|---|
| 46. Hvarfsk ðhrðþugr
andspilli frā,
þars mǫrk menja
meiþmum deildi;
leit of alla
eigu sīna,
soltnar þýjar
ok salkonur. | From the speaker gloomily
Gunnar turned,
For the jewel-bearer
her gems was dividing;
On all her wealth
her eyes were gazing,
On the bond-women slain
and the slaughtered slaves. |
|--|---|

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. *Jewel-bearer* (literally “land of jewels”): woman, here Brynhild. *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.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 47. Gollbrynju smō
— vasa gott ī hug,
āþr miþlaþisk
mækis eggjum;
hnē viþ bolstri
hōn annan veg
ok hjǫrunduþ
hugþi at rōþum. | 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. |
|--|--|

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.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 48. “Nū skulu ganga
þærs goll vilja | “Hither I will
that my women come |
|---|--|

minna þýja	Who gold are fain
at mēr þiggja;	from me to get;
ek gef hverri	Necklaces fashioned
of hroþit sigli,	fair to each
bōk ok blæju,	Shall I give, and cloth,
bjartar vāþir.”	and garments bright.”

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.

49. Þogþu allar	Silent were all
viþ þvī orþi,	as so she spake,
ok allar senn	And all together
andsvōr veittu:	answer made:
“Ērnar soltnar,	“Slain are enough;
munum enn lifa,	we seek to live,
verþat salkonur	Not thus thy women
sōmþ at vinna.”	shall honor win.”

In place of “as so she spake” in line 1 the manuscript has “of their plans they thought,” which involves a metrical error.

50. Unz af hyggjandi	Long the woman,
hōrskrýdd kona	linen-decked, pondered,—
ung at aldri	— Young she was,—
orþ viþ of kvap:	and weighed her words:
“Vilka mann traupan	“For my sake now
nē torbōnan	shall none unwilling

of ōra sǫk |

aldri tȳna.

Or loath to die |

her life lay down.

51. Þō mun ā beinum |

brinna yþrum

fāri eyrir, |

þās fram komiþ

nē Menju gōþ |

mīn at vitja.

... |

...

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.

... |

...

No gap indicated in the manuscript; many editions place it between lines 3 and 4. *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*.

52. Sez k niþr, Gunnarr! |

munk segja þēr

līfs ørvæna |

ljōsa brūþi:

muna yþvart far |

allt ī sundi,

þōt ek hafa |

øndu lātīt.

Sit now, Gunnarr! |

for I shall speak

Of thy bride so fair |

and so fain to die;

Thy ship in harbor |

home thou hast not,

Although my life |

I now have lost.

With this stanza begins Brynhild's prophesy of what is to befall Gunnar, Guthrun, Atli, and the many others involved in their fate. Line 3 is a proverbial expression meaning simply "your troubles are not at an end."

53. Sōtt munuþ Guþrūn snemr an hyggir hefr kunn kona viþ konungi daprar minjar at dauþan ver.	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.
---	---

No gap is indicated in the manuscript; one suggestion for line 2 runs:

Grimhild shall make her | to laugh once more.

(mun hana Grimhildr | gōla ganga.)

Gering suggests a loss of three lines, and joins lines 3–4 with stanza 54.

54. Þar's mæ̃r borin — mōþir fōþir —, sū mun hvītari an enn heiþi dagr [Svanhildr vesa, sōlar geisla].	A maid shall then the mother bear; Brighter far than the fairest day Svanhild shall be, or the beams of the sun.
--	---

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.

(Munuþ ī hōll Hālf's | hana finna.)

Some editions query line 3 as possibly spurious. *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 *Völundarkvitha*. 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.

55. <i>Gefr</i> Guþrūnu	Guthrun a noble
gōþra nökkurum	husband thou givest,
† skeyti skōþa	Yet to many a warrior
skatna mengi;	woe will she bring,
munat at vilja	Not happily wedded
versæl gefin,	she holds herself;
hāna mun Atli	Her shall Atli
eiga ganga	hither seek,
[of borinn Buþla,	[Buthli's son,
brōþir minn.]	and brother of mine.]

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.

56. Margs āk minnask,	Well I remember
hvē við mik fōruþ,	how me ye treated
þās mik sārla	When ye betrayed me
svikna hōfþuþ;	with treacherous wiles;
...	...
...	...
vapin at vilja	Lost was my joy
vask meðan lifþak.	as long as I lived.

This stanza probably ought to follow stanza 52, as it refers solely to) the winning of Brynhild by Gunnar and Sigurth. Müllenhoff regards stanzas 53–55 as interpolated. The manuscript indicates no gap after line 3.

57.	Munt Oddrūnu	Oddrun as wife
	eiga vilja,	thou fain wouldst win,
	en þik Atli mun	But Atli this
	eigi lāta;	from thee withholds;
	it munuþ lūta	Yet in secret tryst
	ā laun saman,	ye twain shall love;
	hōn mun þer unna,	She shall hold thee dear,
	sem ek skyldak,	as I had done
	ef gōþ skōp okkr	If kindly fate
	gørþi verþa.	to us had fallen.

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. *Oddrun*: this sister of Atli and Brynhild, known mainly through the *Oddrunar-gratr*, 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.

58.	Þik mun Atli	Ill to thee
	illu beita:	shall Atli bring,
	munt ī ōngan	When he casts thee down
	ormgarþ lagīþr.	in the den of snakes.

Possibly two lines have been lost; many editions combine the two remaining lines with lines 1–3 of stanza 59. Concerning the manner of Gunnar's death cf. *Drap Niflunga*.

59.	Þat mun ok verþa	But soon thereafter
	þvīgit lengra,	Atli too
	at Atli mun	His life, methinks,
	ōndu tȳna	as thou shalt lose,

[sǣlu sinni ok sona lífi;]	[His fortune lose and the lives of his sons;]
þvīt hǫnum Guþrūn grȳmir ā beþ	Him shall Guthrun, grim of heart,
snǫrpum eggjum af sǫrum hug.	With the biting blade in his bed destroy.

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.” The slaying of Atli by Guthrun in revenge for his killing of her brothers is told in the two Atli lays. 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.

60. Sǫmri vǣri systir ykkur frumver sīnum at fylgja dauðum, ef henni gæfi gōþra ráða, eða ætti hug ossum glíkan.	It would better beseem thy sister fair To follow her husband first in death, If counsel good to her were given, Or a heart akin to mine she had.
--	---

To follow in death: this phrase is not in *Regius*, but is included in late paper manuscripts, and has been added in most editions.

61. Ōǫrt mǣlik— en hǫn eigi mun of ōra sǫk aldri tȳna: hana munu hefja hōvar bǫrur	Slowly I speak,— but for my sake Her life, methinks, she shall not lose; She shall wander over the tossing waves,
--	--

til Jōnakrs |
ōþaltorfu.

To where Jonak rules |
his father's realm.

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*).

62. *Ala mun sēr jōþ,* |
erfivorþu,
erfivorþu |
Jōnakrs sunum;
mun Svanhildi |
senda af landi,
sīna mey |
ok Sigurþar.

Sons to him |
she soon shall bear,
Heirs therewith |
of Jonak's wealth;
But Svanhild far |
away is sent,
The child she bore |
to Sigurth brave.

Svanhild: cf. stanza 54 and note.

63. *Hana munu bīta* |
Bikka rōþ,
þvīt Jormunrekkr |
ōþarft lifir;
þā's ǫll farin |
ætt Sigurþar,
eru Guþrūnar |
grōti at fleiri.

Bikki's 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.

Bikki: Svanhild is married to the aged Jormunrek (Ermanarich), but Eikki, 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 be came in any way connected with the Sigurth cycle (cf. introductory note to *Gripis-spo*).

64. Biþja munk þik bōnar einnar, sū mun ī heimi hinzt bōn vesa: lāt svā breiþa borg ā velli, at und oss ǫllum jafnrūmt sei [þeim es sultu meþ Sigurþi.]	Yet one boon I beg of thee, The last of boons in my life it is: 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.]
---	---

Line 5 is very probably spurious.

65. Tjaldi of borg þā tjǫldum ok skjǫldum valript vel fōþ ok vala mengi, brenni mer enn hunska ā hliþ aþra.	With shields and carpets cover the pyre, Shrouds full fair, and fallen slaves, And besides the Hunnish hero burn me.
---	---

The manuscript indicates no gap; a suggested addition runs

Gold let there be, | and jewels bright.

(sē þar goll ǫrit | ok gersimar.)

Fallen slaves: cf. stanzas 66 and 69. *Hunnish hero:* cf. stanza 4 and note.

66. Brenni enum hunska	Besides the Hunnish
ā hliþ aþra	hero there
mīna þjōna	Slaves shall burn,
menjum gōfga,	full bravely decked,
tveir at hōfþum	Two at his head
tveir at fōtum,	and two at his feet,
tveir hundar	A brace of hounds
ok tveir haukar —	and a pair of hawks,
þā's ǫllu skipt	For so shall all
til jafnaþar.	be seemly done.

In place of lines 3–4 the manuscript has one line

Two at his head, | and a pair of hawks;

(tveir at hōfþum | ok tveir haukar;)

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.

67. Liggi okkar	Let between us
enn ī milli	lie once more
egghvast iarn,	The steel so keen,
svā endr lagit,	as so it lay
þās vit bæþi	When both within
beyð einn stigum	one bed we were,
ok hētum þā	And wedded mates
hjōna nafni.	by men were called.

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.

68. Hrynja hōnum	The door of the hall
ā hæl þeygi	shall strike not the heel
hlunnblik hallar,	Of the hero fair
hringa litkuþ,	with flashing rings,
ef hōnum fylgir	If hence my following
ferþ mīn heþan;	goes with him;
þeygi mun ōr fōr	Not mean our faring
aumlig vesa.	forth shall be.

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 any one 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.

69. Þvīt hōnum fylgja	Bond-women five
fimm ambōttir,	shall follow him,
átta þjōnar	And eight of my thralls,
øþlum gōþir,	well-born are they,
fōstrman mitt	Children with me,
ok faþerni	and mine they were
þats Buþli gaf	As gifts that Buthli
barni sīnu.	his daughter gave.

Cf. stanza 66.

70. Mart sagþak þēr,	Much have I told thee,
mundak fleira,	and more would say

ef meirr mjötuþr |
mālrūm gæfi;
ōmun þverr, |
undir svella,
satt eitt sagþak, |
svā munk lāta.”

If fate more space |
for speech had given;
My voice grows weak, |
my wounds are swelling;
Truth I have said, |
and so I die.”

Helreith Brynhildar

Brynhild's Hell-Ride

Introductory Note

The little *Helreith Brynhildar* immediately follows the “short” Sigurth lay in the *Codex Regius*, being linked to it by the brief prose note; the heading, “Brynhild’s Ride on Hel-Way,” stands just before the first stanza. The entire poem, with the exception of stanza 6, is likewise quoted in the *Nornagestthattr*. Outside of one stanza (No. 11), which is a fairly obvious interpolation, the poem possesses an extraordinary degree of dramatic unity, and, certain pedantic commentators notwithstanding, it is one of the most vivid and powerful in the whole collection. None the less, it has been extensively argued that parts of it belonged originally to the so-called *Sigrdrifumol*. That it stands in close relation to this poem is evident enough, but it is difficult to believe that such a masterpiece of dramatic poetry was ever the result of mere compilation. It seems more reasonable to regard the *Helreith*, with the exception of stanza 11 and allowing for the loss of two lines from stanza 6, as a complete and carefully constructed unit, based undoubtedly on older poems, but none the less an artistic creation in itself.

The poem is generally dated as late as the eleventh century, and the concluding stanza betrays Christian influence almost unmistakably. It shows the confusion of traditions manifest in all the later poems; for example, Brynhild is here not only a Valkyrie but also a swan-maiden. Only three stanzas have any reference to the Guthrun-Gunnar part of the story; otherwise the poem is concerned solely with the episode of Sigurth’s finding the sleeping Valkyrie. Late as it is, therefore, it is essentially a Norse creation, involving very few of the details of the German cycle (cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*).

Eptir dauða Brynhildar vāru gōr bāl
tvau, annat Sigurði, ok brann þat
fyrr, en Brynhildr var ā ǫþru brend,
ok var hon ī reiþ þeiri er guþvefjum
var tjölduþ.

After the death of Brynhild there were
made two bale-fires, the one for Sig-
urth, and that burned first, and on the
other was Brynhild burned, and she
was on a wagon which was covered with
a rich cloth.

Svā er sagt, at Brynhildr ōk meþ rei-
þinni ā helveg ok fōr um tūn, þar er
gýgr nōkkur bjō.

Gýgrin kvaþ:

Thus it is told, that Brynhild went in
the wagon on Hel-way, and passed by
a house where dwelt a certain giantess.

The giantess spake:

The prose follows the last stanza of *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma* without break. *Two bale-fires*: this contradicts the statement made in the concluding stanzas of *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, that Sigurth and Brynhild were burned on the same pyre; there is no evidence that the annotator here had anything but his own mistaken imagination to go on.

1. “Skalt ī gøgnum |
ganga eigi
grjōti studda |
garþa mīna;
betr semþi þēr |
borþa at rekja,
heldr an vitja |
vers annarrar.

“Thou shalt not further |
forward fare,
My dwelling ribbed |
with rocks across;
More seemly it were |
at thy weaving to stay,
Than another's husband |
here to follow.

2. Hvat skalt vitja |
af Vallandi,
hvarfūst hōfup! |
hūsa minna?
þū hefr, vōr golls! |
ef vita lystir,
mild, af hōndum |
manns blōþ þvegir.”

What wouldst thou have |
from Valland here,
Fickle of heart, |
in this my house?
Gold-goddess, now, |
if thou wouldst know,
Heroes' blood |
from thy hands hast washed.”

Valland: this name (“Land of Slaughter”) is used elsewhere of mythical places; cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 24, and *prose introduction* to *Völundarkvitha*; it may here not be a proper name

at all. *Gold-goddess*: poetic circumlocution for “woman.”

Brynhildr kvað:

3. “Bregþ eigi mēr, |
brūþr ōr steini!
þōt vāerak fyrr |
ī vīkingu;
ek mun okkur |
ōþri þykkja,
hvars øpli menn |
okkart kunnu.”

Brynhild spake:

- “Chide me not, woman |
from rocky walls,
Though to battle once |
I was wont to go;
Better than thou |
I shall seem to be,
When men us two |
shall truly know.”

Gýgr kvað:

4. “Þū vast, Brynhildr |
Buþla dōttir!
heilli verstu |
ī heim borin;
þū hefr Gjūka |
of glatat þornum
ok bui þeira |
brugþit gōþu.”

The giantess spake:

- “Thou wast, Brynhild, |
Buthli's daughter,
For the worst of evils |
born in the world;
To death thou hast given |
Gjuki's children,
And laid their lofty |
house full low.”

Brynhildr kvað:

5. “Munk segja þēr |
svinn ōr reiðu
vitlaussi mjök, |
ef vita lystir,

Brynhild spake:

- “Truth from the wagon |
here I tell thee,
Witless one, |
if know thou wilt

hvē gørþu mik |
Gjūka arfar
āstalausā |
ok eiþrofa.

How the heirs of Gjuki |
gave me to be
joyless ever, |
a breaker of oaths.

6. Hētu mik allir |
ī Hlymdǫlum
Hildi und hjalmi, |
hverr es kunni.
... |
...
... |
...

Hild the helmed |
in Hlymdalir
They named me of old, |
all they who knew me.
... |
...
... |
...

In *Regius* these two lines stand after stanza 7, but most editions place them as here. They are not quoted in the *Nornageststattr*. Presumably two lines, and perhaps more, have been lost. It has frequently been argued that all or part of the passage from stanza 6 through stanza 10 (6–10, 7–10 or 8–10) comes originally from the so-called *Sigrdrifumol*, where it would undoubtedly fit exceedingly well. *Hild*: a Valkyrie name meaning “Fighter” (cf. *Voluspo*, 31). In such compound names as Brynhild (“Fighter in Armor”) the first element was occasionally omitted. *Hlymdalir* (“Tumult-Dale”): a mythical name, merely signifying the place of battle as the home of Valkyries.

7. Lēt hami vāra |
hugfullr konungr
ātta systra |
und eik borit;
vask vetra tolf, |
ef vita lystir,

The monarch bold |
the swan-robcs bore
Of the sisters eight |
beneath an oak;
Twelve winters I was, |
if know thou wilt,

es ungum gram |
eiþa seldak.

When oaths I yielded |
the king so young.

Regarding the identification of swan-maidens with Valkyries, and the manner in which men could get them in their power by stealing their swan-garments, cf. *Völundarkvitha*, *introductory prose* and note, where the same thing happens. *The monarch*: perhaps Agnar, brother of Autha, mentioned in *Sigrdrifumol* (*prose and quoted verse following stanza 4*) as the warrior for whose sake Brynhild defied Othin in slaying Hjalmgunnar. *Eight*: the *Nornageststhattr* manuscripts have “sisters of Atli” instead of “sisters eight.”

8. Þā lētk gamlan |
ā Gotþjōþu
Hjalmgunnar nǣst |
heljar ganga;
gafk ungum sigr |
Auþu brōþur,
þar varþ mer Ōþinn |
ofreiþr of þat.

Next I let |
the leader of Goths,
Hjalmgunnar the old, |
go down to hell,
And victory brought |
to Autha's brother;
For this was Othin's |
anger mighty.

Hjalmgunnar: regarding this king of the Goths (the phrase means little) and his battle with Agnar, brother of *Autha* cf. *Sigrdrifumol*, *prose after stanza 4*. One *Nornageststhattr* manuscript has “brother of the giantess” in place of “leader of Goths.”

9. Lauk mik skjöldum |
ī Skatalundi
rauþum ok hvītum, |
randir *snurtusk*;
þann baþ slita |
svefni mīnum,
es hvergi lands |
hræþask kynni.

He beset me with shields |
in Skatalund,
Red and white, |
their rims o'erlapped;
He bade that my sleep |
should broken be
By him who fear |
had nowhere found.

Cf. *Sigrdrifumol*, prose introduction. *Skatalund* ("Warriors' Grove"): a mythical name; elsewhere the place where Brynhild lay is called Hindarfjoll.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>10. Lēt of sal minn
 sunnanverþan
 hōvan brinna
 her alls viþar;
 þar baþ einn þegn
 yfir at rīþa,
 es mer fōrþi goll
 þats und Fāfni lā.</p> | <p>He let round my hall,
 that southward looked,
 The branches' foe
 high-leaping burn;
 Across it he bade
 the hero come
 Who brought me the gold
 that Fafnir guarded.</p> |
|---|--|

Branches' foe: fire. Regarding the treasure cf. *Fafnismol*.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>11. Reiþ gōþr Grana
 gollmiþlandi,
 þars fōstri minn
 fletjum stýrþi;
 einn þōtti þar
 ollum betri
 víkingr Dana
 ī verþungu.</p> | <p>On Grani rode
 the giver of gold,
 Where my foster-father
 ruled his folk;
 Best of all
 he seemed to be,
 The prince of the Danes,
 when the people met.</p> |
|---|--|

This stanza is presumably an interpolation, reflecting a different version of the story, wherein Sigurth meets Brynhild at the home of her brother-in-law and foster-father, Heimir (cf. *Gripisspo*, 19 and 27). *Grani*: Sigurth's horse. *Danes*: nowhere else does Sigurth appear in this capacity. Perhaps this is a curious relic of the Helgi tradition.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>12. Svōfum ok unþum
 ī sæing einni,</p> | <p>Happy we slept,
 one bed we had,</p> |
|---|---|

sem brōþir minn |
 of borinn vāri;
 hvārtki knātti |
 hōnd of annat
 ātta nōttum |
 okkart leggja.

As he my brother |
 born had been;
 Eight were the nights |
 when neither there
 Loving hand |
 on the other laid.

Eight nights: elsewhere (cf. *Gripisspo*, 42) the time is stated as three nights, not eight. There is a confusion of traditions here, as in *Gripisspo*. In the version of the story wherein Sigurth met Brynhild before he encountered the Gjukungs, Sigurth was bound by no oaths, and the union was completed; it is only in the alternative version that the episode of the sword laid between the two occurs.

13. Þvī brā mer Guþrūn |
 Gjūka dōttir,
 at Sigurþi |
 svāfak ā armi;
 þā varþk þess vīs |
 es vildigak,
 at vēltu mik |
 ī verfangi.

Yet Guthrun reproached me, |
 Gjuki's daughter,
 That I in Sigurth's |
 arms had slept;
 Then did I hear |
 what I would were hid,
 That they had betrayed me |
 in taking a mate.

14. Munu víþ ofstrīþ |
 alls til lengi
 konur ok karlar |
 kvikvir fōþask;
 vit skulum okkrum |
 aldri slīta

Ever with grief |
 and all too long
 Are men and women |
 born in the world;
 But yet we shall live |
 our lives together,

Sigurþr saman.— |
Søkksk, gýgjar kyn!”

Sigurth and I. |
Sink down, Giantess!”

The idea apparently conveyed in the concluding lines, that Sigurth and Brynhild will be together in some future life, is utterly out of keeping with the Norse pagan traditions, and the whole stanza indicates the influence of Christianity.

Drap Niflunga

The Slaying of The Niflungs

Introductory Note

It has been already pointed out (introductory note to *Reginsmol*) that the compiler of the Eddic collection had clearly undertaken to formulate a coherent narrative of the entire Sigurth cycle, piecing together the various poems by means of prose narrative links. To some extent these links were based on traditions existing outside of the lays themselves, but in the main the material was gathered from the contents of the poems. The short prose passage entitled *Drap Niflunga*, which in the *Codex Regius* immediately follows the *Helreith Brynhildar*, is just such a narrative link, and scarcely deserves a special heading, but as nearly all editions separate it from the preceding and following poems, I have followed their example.

With Sigurth and Brynhild both dead, the story turns to the slaying of the sons of Gjuki by Atli, Guthrun's second husband, and to a few subsequent incidents, mostly late incorporations from other narrative cycles, including the tragic death of Svanhild, daughter of Sigurth and Guthrun and wife of Jormunrek (Ermanarich), and the exploits of Hamther, son of Guthrun and her third husband, Jonak. These stories are told, or outlined, in the two Atli lays, the second and third Guthrun lays, the *Oddrunargratr*, the *Guthrunarhvot*, and the *Hamthesmol*. Had the compiler seen fit to put the Atli lays immediately after the *Helreith Brynhildar*, he would have needed only a very brief transitional note to make the course of the story clear, but as the second Guthrun lay, the next poem in the collection, is a lament following the death of Guthrun's brothers, some sort of a narrative bridge was manifestly needed.

Drap Niflunga is based entirely on the poems which follow it in the collection, with no use of extraneous material. The part of the story which it summarizes belongs to the semi-historical Burgundian tradition (cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*), in many respects parallel to the familiar narrative of the *Nibelungenlied*, and, except in minor details, showing few essentially Northern additions. Sigurth is scarcely mentioned, and the outstanding episode is the slaying of Gunnar and Hogni, following their journey to Atli's home.

Gunnarr ok Hogni tōku þā gullit allt,
Fāfnis arf.

Gunnar and Hogni then took all the
gold that Fafnir had had.

Öfriþr var þā milli Gjūkunga ok Atla: kendi hann Gjūkungum völd um andlāt Brynhildar.

Þat var til sætta, at þeir skyldu gipta honum Guþrūnu, ok gāfu henni öm-innisveig at drekka, āþr hon jātti at giptaz Atla.

Synir Atla vāru þeir Erpr ok Eitill, en Svanhildr var Sigurþar dōttir ok Guþrūnar.

Atli konungr bauþ heim Gunnari ok Hōgna ok sendi Vinga eþa Knēfrōþ.

Guþrūn vissi vēlar ok sendi meþ rūnum orþ, at þeir skyldu eigi koma, ok til jartegna sendi hon Hōgna hringinn Andvaranaut ok knýtti ī vargshār.

Gunnarr hafði beþit Oddrūnar, systur Atla, ok gat eigi; þā fekk hann Glaumvarar, en Hōgni ātti Kostberu; þeira synir vāru þeir Sōlarr ok Snævarr ok Gjūki.

En er Gjūkungar kōmu til Atla, þā bauþ Guþrūn sonu sīna at þeir bæði Gjūkungum līfs, en þeir vildu eigi.

Hjarta var skorit ōr Hōgna, en Gunnarr settr ī ormgarþ.

Hann slō hōrpu ok svæfði ormana, en naþra stakk hann til lifrar.

There was strife between the Gjukungs and Atli, for he held the Gjukungs guilty of Brynhild's death.

It was agreed that they should give him Guthrun as wife, and they gave her a draught of forgetfulness to drink before she would consent to be wedded to Atli.

The sons of Atli were Erp and Etil, and Svanhild was the daughter of Sigurth and Guthrun.

King Atli invited Gunnar and Hogni to come to him, and sent as messenger Vingi or Knefrōth.

Guthrun was aware of treachery, and sent with him a message in runes that they should not come, and as a token she sent to Hogni the ring Andvaranaut and tied a wolf's hair in it.

Gunnar had sought Oddrun, Atli's sister, for his wife, but had her not; then he married Glaumvor, and Hogni's wife was Kostbera; their sons were Solar and Snævar and Gjuki.

And when the Gjukungs came to Atli, then Guthrun besought her sons to plead for the lives of both the Gjukungs, but they would not do it.

Hogni's heart was cut out, and Gunnar was cast into the serpent's den.

He smote on the harp and put the serpents to sleep, but an adder stung him in the liver.

Niflungs: regarding the mistaken application of this name to the sons of Gjuki, who were

Burgundians, cf. *Brot*, 17 and note. *Draught of forgetfulness*: according to the *Volsungasaga* Grimhild, Guthrun's mother, administered this, just as she did the similar draught which made Sigurth forget Brynhild. *Erp and Eitil*: Guthrun kills her two sons by Atli as part of her revenge; the annotator here explains her act further by saying that Guthrun asked her sons to intercede with their father in favor of Guthrun's brothers, but that they refused, a detail which he appears to have invented, as it is found nowhere else. *Svanhild*: cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 54 and note. *Vingi or Knefröth*: *Atlakvitha* (stanza 1) calls the messenger Knefröth; *Atlamol* (stanza 4) speaks of two messengers, but names only one of them, Vingi. The annotator has here tried, unsuccessfully, to combine the two accounts. *Andvaranaut*: regarding the origin of Andvari's ring cf. *Reginsmol*, prose after stanzas 4 and 5 and notes; Sigurth gave the ring to Guthrun. Here again the annotator is combining two stories; in *Atlakvitha* (stanza 8) Guthrun sends a ring (not Andvaranaut) with a wolf's hair; in *Atlamol* (stanza 4) she sends a message written in runes. The messenger obscures these runes, and Kostbera, Hogni's wife, who attempts to decipher them, is not clear as to their meaning, though she suspects danger. *Oddrun*: cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 57 and note. *Glaumvor*: almost nothing is told of Gunnar's second wife, though she appears frequently in the *Atlamol*. *Kostbera* (or Bera), Hogni's wife, is known only as skilled in runes. Her brother was Orkning. The sons of Hogni and Kostbera, according to the *Atlamol* (stanza 28), were *Solar* and *Snævar*; the third son, *Gjuki*, named after his grandfather, seems to be an invention of the annotator's. *Adder*: according to *Oddrunargratr* (stanza 30) Atli's mother assumed this form in order to complete her son's vengeance.

Guthrunarkvitha II, en forna

The Second, or Old, Lay of Guthrun

Introductory Note

It has already been pointed out (introductory note to [Guthrunarkvitha I](#)) that the tradition of Guthrun's lament was known wherever the Sigurth story existed, and that this lament was probably one of the earliest parts of the legend to assume verse form. Whether it reached the North as verse cannot, of course, be determined, but it is at least possible that this was the case, and in any event it is clear that by the tenth and eleventh centuries there were a number of Norse poems with Guthrun's lament as the central theme. Two of these are included in the Eddic collection, the second one being unquestionably much the older. It is evidently the poem referred to by the annotator in the prose note following the [Brot](#) as "the old Guthrun lay," and its character and state of preservation have combined to lead most commentators to date it as early as the first half of the tenth century, whereas [Guthrunarkvitha I](#) belongs a hundred years later.

The poem has evidently been preserved in rather bad shape, with a number of serious omissions and some interpolations, but in just this form it lay before the compilers of the *Volsungasaga*, who paraphrased it faithfully, and quoted five of its stanzas. The interpolations are on the whole unimportant; the omissions, while they obscure the sense of certain passages, do not destroy the essential continuity of the poem, in which Guthrun reviews her sorrows from the death of Sigurth through the slaying of her brothers to Atli's dreams foretelling the death of their sons. It is, indeed, the only Norse poem of the Sigurth cycle antedating the year 1000 which has come down to us in anything approaching complete form; the [Reginsmol](#), [Fafnismol](#), and [Sigdrifumol](#) are all collections of fragments, only a short bit of the "long" Sigurth lay remains, and the others—[Gripisspo](#), [Guthrunarkvitha I](#) and [III](#), [Sigurtharkvitha en skamma](#), [Helreith Brynhildar](#), [Oddrunargratr](#), [Guthrunarhvot](#), [Hamthesmol](#), and the [two Atli lays](#)—are all generally dated from the eleventh and even the twelfth centuries.

An added reason for believing that [Guthrunarkvitha II](#) traces its origin back to a lament which reached the North from Germany in verse form is the absence of most characteristic Norse additions to the narrative, except in minor details. Sigurth is slain in the forest, as "German men say" (cf. [Brot](#), [concluding prose](#)); the urging of Guthrun by her mother and brothers to become Atli's wife, the slaying of the Gjukungs (here only intimated, for at that point something seems to have been lost), and Guthrun's prospective revenge on Atli, all belong directly to the German tradition (cf. introductory note to [Gripisspo](#)).

In the *Codex Regius* the poem is entitled simply *Guthrunarkvitha*; the numeral has been added in nearly all editions to distinguish this poem from the other two Guthrun lays, and the phrase “the old” is borrowed from the annotator’s comment in the prose note at the end of the *Brot*.

Þjōþrekr konungr var með Atla ok hafði þar látit flesta alla menn sína.	King Thjothrek was with Atli, and had lost most of his men.
Þjōþrekr ok Guþrūn kærðu harma sín ā milli.	Thjothrek and Guthrun lamented their griefs together.
Hon sagði honum ok kvað:	She spoke to him, saying:

Thjothrek: the famous Theoderich, king of the Ostrogoths, who became renowned in German story as Dietrich von Bern. The German tradition early accepted the anachronism of bringing together Attila (Etzel, Atli), who died in 453, and Theoderich, who was born about 455, and adding thereto Ermanarich (Jormunrek), king of the Goths, who died about 376. Ermanarich, in German tradition, replaced Theoderich’s actual enemy, Odovakar, and it was in battle with Jormunrek (i. e., Odovakar) that Thjothrek is here said to have lost most of his men. The annotator found the material for this note in *Guthrunarkvitha III*, in which Guthrun is accused of having Thjothrek as her lover. At the time when *Guthrunarkvitha II* was composed (early tenth century) it is probable that the story of Theoderich had not reached the North at all, and the annotator is consequently wrong in giving the poem its setting.

1. Mær vask meyja,	A maid of maids
mōþir mik fōddi,	my mother bore me,
björt ī būri,	Bright in my bower,
unnak vel brōþrum,	my brothers I loved,
unz mik Gjūki	Till Gjuki dowered
golli reifði,	me with gold,
golli reifði,	Dowered with gold,
gaf Sigurði.	and to Sigurth gave me.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 2. Svā vas Sigurþr
of sunum Gjūka,
sem væri grōnn laukr
ōr grasi vaxinn,
eþa hjōrtr hōbeinn
of hvōtum dýrum
eþa goll glōþrautt
of grōu silfri. | So Sigurth rose
o'er Gjuki's sons
As the leek grows green
above the grass,
Or the stag o'er all
the beasts doth stand,
Or as glow-red gold
above silver gray. |
|--|--|

Cf. *Guthrunarkvitha I*, 17.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 3. Unz mīnir brōþr
fyrmunþu mēr,
at ættak ver
ollum fremra;
sofa nē mōttut
ne of sakar dōma,
āþr þeir Sigurþ
svelta lētu. | Till my brothers let me
no longer have
The best of heroes
my husband to be;
Sleep they could not,
or quarrels settle,
Till Sigurth they
at last had slain. |
| 4. Grani rann af þingi,
gnýr vas at heyra,
en þā Sigurþr
sjalfr eigi kwam;
oll vōru sōþuldýr
sveita stokkin
ok of vaniþ vāsi
und vegondum. | From the Thing ran Grani
with thundering feet,
But thence did Sigurth
himself come never;
Covered with sweat
was the saddle-bearer,
Wont the warrior's
weight to bear. |

Regarding the varying accounts of the manner of Sigurth's death cf. *Brot*, concluding prose and note. *Grani*: cf. *Brot*, 7.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 5. Gekk grātandi
viþ Grana rōþa,
ūrughlȳra,
jō frāk spjalla;
hnipnaþi Grani,
drap ī gras hōfþi,
jōr þat vissi:
eigendr nē lifþut. | Weeping I sought
with Grani to speak,
With tear-wet cheeks
for the tale I asked;
The head of Grani
was bowed to the grass,
The steed knew well
his master was slain. |
|---|---|

- | | |
|--|---|
| 6. Lengi hvarfapak,
lengi hugir deildusk,
āþr of frægak
folkvorþ at gram
...
... | Long I waited
and pondered well
Ere ever the king
for tidings I asked.
...
... |
|--|---|

No gap indicated in the manuscript. Some editions combine these two lines with either stanza 5 or stanza 7.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 7. Hnipnaþi Gunnarr,
sagþi mer Hogni
frā Sigurþar
sōrum dauþa:
“Liggr of hōggvinn
fyr handan ver | His head bowed Gunnar,
but Hogni told
The news full sore
of Sigurth slain:
“Hewed to death
at our hands he lies, |
|--|---|

Gotþorms bani |
of gefinn ulfum.

Gotthorm's slayer, |
given to wolves.

Gotthorm: from this it appears that in both versions of the death of Sigurth the mortally wounded hero killed his murderer, the younger brother of Gunnar and Hogni. The story of how Gotthorm, was slain after killing Sigurth in his bed is told in *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 22–23, and in the *Volsungasaga*.

8. Līt þar Sigurþ |
ā suprvega!
þā heyrir þū |
hrafna gjalla,
ørnu gjalla |
æzli fegna,
varga þjōta |
of veri þīnum.”

On the southern road |
thou shalt Sigurth see,
Where hear thou canst |
the ravens cry;
The eagles cry |
as food they crave,
And about thy husband |
wolves are howling.”

9. Hvī mēr, Hogni! |
harma slīka
viljalaussi |
vill of segja?
þitt skyli hjarta |
hrafnar slīta
vīþ lōnd yfir, |
an vitir manna.”

Why dost thou, Hogni, |
such a horror
Let me hear, |
all joyless left?
Ravens yet |
thy heart shall rend
In a land that never |
thou hast known.”

10. Svarþi Hogni |
sinni einu,

Few the words |
of Hogni were,

trauþr gōþs hugar |
af trega stōrum:
“Þess ātt, Guþrūn! |
grōti at fleiri,
at hjarta mitt |
hrafnar slíti.”

Bitter his heart |
from heavy sorrow:
“Greater, Guthrun, |
thy grief shall be
If the ravens so |
my heart shall rend.”

11. Hvarfk ein þāpan |
andspilli frā
ā viþ lesa |
varga leifar;
gørþigak hjūfra |
nē hōndum slā,
nē kveina *umb*, |
sem konur aþrar
[þās sat soltin |
of Sigurþi.]

From him who spake |
I turned me soon,
In the woods to find |
what the wolves had left;
Tears I had not, |
nor wrung my bands,
Nor wailing went, |
as other women,
[When by Sigurth |
slain I sat.]

On lines 3–4 cf. *Guthrunarkvitha I*, 1. Line 5 is probably spurious.

12. Nōtt þōtti mēr, |
niþmyrkr, vesa,
es sārla satk |
of Sigurþi;
ulfar . . . |
...
... |
...

Never so black |
had seemed the night
As when in sorrow |
by Sigurth I sat;
The wolves . . . |
...
... |
...

Many editions make one stanza of stanzas 12 and 13, reconstructing line 3; the manuscript shows no gap. Bugge fills out the stanza thus:

The wolves were howling | on all the ways,
The eagles cried | as their food they craved.

((ulfar) þutu | ā alla vega,
ernir gullu | æzli fegnir.)

13.
.
. . . þōttumk	Best of all
ollu betra,	methought 'twould be
ef lēti mik	If I my life
lifi tȳna	could only lose,
eþa brendi mik	Or like to birch-wood
sem birkinν viþ.	burned might be.

Cf. note on preceding stanza. Grundtvig suggests as a first line:

Long did I bide, | my brothers awaiting.

(Buþumk brōþr | bōtr ōsmār
en eitt (þōttumk).)

Many editors reject line 4.

14. Fōrk af fjalli	From the mountain forth
fimm dōgr taliþ,	five days I fared,
unz hōll Hōulfs	Till Hoalf's hall
hōva þāttak;	so high I saw;
satk meþ þōru	Seven half-years
sjau misseri,	with Thora I stayed,

dōtr Hōkonar, |
ī Danmōrku.

Hokon's daughter, |
in Denmark then.

The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a stanza, and many editions combine lines 3–4 with lines 1–2 of stanza 15. *Hoalf* (or Half): Gering thinks this Danish king may be identical with Alf, son of King Hjalprek, and second husband of Hjordis, Sigurth's mother (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note), but the name was a common one. *Thora* and *Hokon* have not been identified (cf. *Guthrunarkvitha I, concluding prose*, which is clearly based on this stanza). A Thora appears in *Hyndluljóth*, 18, as the wife of Dag, one of the sons of Halfdan the Old, the most famous of Denmark's mythical kings, and one of her sons is Alf (Hoalf?).

15. Hōn mer at gamni |
gollbōkaþi
sali suþrōna |
ok svani danska;
hoþpum ā skriptum |
þats skatar lēku
ok ā hannyrpum |
hilmis þegna,
[randir rauþar, |
rekka būna,
hjōdrōtt, hjalmdrōtt, |
hilmis fylgju.]

With gold she broidered, |
to bring me joy,
Southern halls |
and Danish swans;
On the tapestry wove we |
warrior's deeds,
And the hero's thanes |
on our handiwork;
[Flashing shields |
and fighters armed,
Sword-throng, helm-throng, |
the host of the king.]

The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a stanza. Some editors combine lines 5–6 with lines 1–2 of stanza 16, while others mark them as interpolated.

16. Skip Sigmundar |
skriðu frā landi,
gyldar grīmur, |
grafnir stafnar;

Sigmund's ship |
by the land was sailing,
Golden the figure-head, |
gay the beaks;

byrþum ā borþa	On board we wove
þats þeir þorþusk	the warriors faring,
Sigarr ok Siggeirr	Sigar and Siggeir,
suþr ā Fjōni.	south to Fjon.

Some editions combine lines 3–4 with stanza 17. *Sigmund*: Sigurth’s father, who here appears as a sea-rover in Guthrun’s tapestry. *Sigar*: named in *Fornaldar sögur* II, 10, as the father of Siggeir, the latter being the husband of Sigmund’s twin sister, Signy (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*). *Fjon*: this name, referring to the Danish island of Fünen, is taken from the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase as better fitting the Danish setting of the stanza than the name in *Regius*, which is “Fife” (Scotland).

17. Þā frā Grīmhildr,	Then Grimhild asked,
gotnesk kona,	the Gothic queen,
† hvat ek væra	Whether willingly
hyggjuþ . . .	would I . . .
.
.

No gap is indicated in the manuscript, and most editions combine these two lines either with lines 3–4 of stanza 16, with lines 1–2 of stanza 18, or with the whole of stanza 18. Line 2 has been filled out in various ways. The *Volsungasaga* paraphrase indicates that these two lines are the remains of a full stanza, the prose passage running: “Now Guthrun was some what comforted of her sorrows. Then Grimhild learned where Guthrun was now dwelling.” The first two lines may be the ones missing. *Gothic*: the term “Goth” was used in the North without much discrimination to apply to all south-Germanic peoples. In *Gripisspo*, 35, Gunnar, Grimhild’s son, appears as “lord of the Goths.”

18. Hōn brā borþa	Her needlework cast she
ok buri heimti	aside, and called
þrāgjarnliga	Her sons to ask,
þess at spyrja,	with stern resolve,

hvārt sun vildi |
systur bōta
eþa ver veginn |
vīfi gjalda.

Who amends to their sister |
would make for her son,
Or the wife requite |
for her husband killed.

The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a stanza. Grimhild is eager to have amends made to Guthrun for the slaying of Sigurth and their son, Sigmund, because Atli has threatened war if he cannot have Guthrun for his wife.

19. Gorr lēzk Gunnarr |
goll at bjōþa,
sakar at bōta, |
ok et sama Hogni;
hōn frētti at þvī, |
hverr fara vildi
vigg at sōþla, |
vagn at beita,
[hesti rīþa, |
hauki fleygja,
orūm at skjōta |
af yboga.]

Ready was Gunnar |
gold to give,
Amends for my hurt, |
and Hogni too;
Then would she know |
who now would go,
The horse to saddle, |
the wagon to harness,
[The horse to ride, |
the hawk to fly,
And shafts from bows |
of yew to shoot.]

Lines 5–6 are almost certainly interpolations, made by a scribe with a very vague understanding of the meaning of the stanza, which refers simply to the journey of the Gjukungs to bring their sister home from Denmark.

20. [Valdarr Dōnum |
meþ Jarizleifi,
Eymōþr þriþi |
meþ Jarizskāri.]

[Valdar, king |
of the Danes, was come,
With Jarizleif, Eymoth, |
and Jarizskar.]

Inn gengu þā	In like princes
jǫfrum glīkir	came they all,
langbarþs liþar,	The long-beard men,
hǫfðu loþa rauþa,	with mantles red,
stuttar brynjur,	Short their mail-coats,
steypþa hjalma,	mighty their helmets,
skǫlmum gyrþir,	Swords at their belts,
hǫfðu skarar jarpar.	and brown their hair.

Lines 1–2 are probably interpolated, though the *Volsungasaga* includes the names. Some one apparently attempted to supply the names of Atli’s messengers, the “long-beard men” of line 4, who have come to ask for Guthrun’s hand. Some commentators assume, as the *Volsungasaga* does, that these messengers went with the Gjukungs to Denmark in search of Guthrun, but it seems more likely that a transitional stanza has dropped out after stanza 19, and that Guthrun received Atli’s emissaries in her brothers’ home. *Long-beards*: the word may actually mean Langobards or Lombards, but, if it does, it is presumably without any specific significance here. Certainly the names in the interpolated two lines do not fit either Lombards or Huns, for Valdar is identified as a Dane, and Jarizleif and Jarizskar are apparently Slavic. The manuscript indicates line 5 as beginning a new stanza.

21. Hverr vildi mēr	Each to give me
hnossir velja,	gifts was fain,
hnossir velja	Gifts to give,
ok hugat mæla,	and goodly speech,
ef mætti mēr	Comfort so
margra sūta	for my sorrows great
trygþir vinna:	To bring they tried,
nē trua gørþak.	but I trusted them not.

Each: the reference is presumably to Gunnar and Hogni, and perhaps also Grimhild. I suspect that this stanza belongs before stanza 20.

22. Fōrþi mer Grīmhildr full at drekka svalt ok sārligt, nē sakar mynþak; þat vas of aukit jarþar magni, svalkǫldum sǣ ok sonardreyra.	A draught did Grimhild give me to drink, Bitter and cold; I forgot my cares; For mingled therein was magic earth, Ice-cold sea, and the blood of swine.
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Stanzas 22–25 describe the draught of forgetfulness which Grimhild gives Guthrun, just as she gave one to Sigurth (in one version of the story) to make him forget Brynhild. The draught does not seem to work despite Guthrun’s statement in stanza 25 (cf. stanza 30), for which reason Vigfusson, not unwisely, places stanzas 22–25 after stanza 34. *Blood of swine*: cf. *Hyndluljóth*, 39 and note.

23. Vōru ī horni hverskyns stafir ristnir ok roþnir, rāþa nē mǣttak: lyngfiskr lagar, lands Haddingja ax ōskorit, innleiþ dýra.	In the cup were runes of every kind, Written and reddened, I could not read them; A heather-fish from the Haddings’ land, An ear uncut, and the entrails of beasts.
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The *Volsungasaga* quotes stanzas 23–24. *Heather-fish*: a snake. *Haddings’ land*: the world of the dead, so called because, according to Saxo Grammaticus, the Danish king Hadingus once visited it. It is possible that the comma should follow “heather fish,” making the “ear uncut” (of grain) come from the world of the dead.

24. Vōru þeim bjōri bǫl mǫrg saman:	Much evil was brewed within the beer,
---	--

urt alls víðar |
ok okurn brunnin,
umbdogg arins, |
iðrar blōtnar,
svīns lifr soðin — |
þvīt sakar deyfði.

Blossoms of trees, |
and acorns burned,
Dew of the hearth, |
and holy entrails,
The liver of swine, — |
all grief to allay.

Dew of the hearth: soot.

25. En þā gleympak, |
es getit hafþak
ólveig, jófurs |
jarnbjūgs, ī sal; —
kvōmu konungar |
fyr knē þrennir,
āþr hōn sjōlf mik |
sōtti at māli.

Then I forgot, |
when the draught they gave me,
There in the hall, |
my husband's slaying;
On their knees the kings |
all three did kneel,
Ere she herself |
to speak began:

In the manuscript, and in some editions, the first line is in the third person plural:

Then they forgot, | when the draught they had drunk.

The second line in the original is manifestly in bad shape, and has been variously emended. *I forgot:* this emendation is doubtful, in view of stanza 30, but cf. note to stanza 22. *The kings all three:* probably Atli's emissaries, though the interpolated lines of stanza 20 name four of them. I suspect that line 4 is wrong, and should read:

Ere he himself (Atli) | to speak began.

Certainly stanzas 26–27 fit Atli much better than they do Grimhild, and there is nothing unreasonable in Atli's having come in person, along with his tributary kings, to seek Guthrun's hand. However, the "three kings" may not be Atli's followers at all, but Gunnar, Hogni, and the unnamed third brother possibly referred to in *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 18.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 26. “Gefk þēr, Guþrūn!
goll at þiggja,
fjǫlþ alls fear,
at fǫður dauþan,
hringa rauþa,
Hlǫpvēs sali,
arsal allan,
at jǫfur fallinn; | “Guthrun, gold
to thee I give,
The wealth that once
thy father’s was,
Rings to have,
and Hlothver’s halls,
And the hangings all
that the monarch had. |
|---|--|

Thy father’s: So the manuscript, in which case the reference is obviously to Gjuki. But some editions omit the “thy,” and if Atli, and not Grimhild, is speaking (cf. note on stanza 25), the reference may be, as in line 3 of stanza 27, to the wealth of Atli’s father, Buthli. *Hlothver:* the northern form of the Frankish name Chlodowech (Ludwig), but who this Hlothver was, beyond the fact that he was evidently a Frankish king, is uncertain. If Atli is speaking, he is presumably a Frankish ruler whose land Atli and his Huns have conquered.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 27. Hunskar meyjar
þærs hlaþa spjǫldum
ok gøra goll fagrt,
svāt gaman þykki;
ein skalt rāþa
auþi Buþla,
golli gǫfguþ
ok gefin Atla.” | Hunnish women,
skilled in weaving,
Who gold make fair
to give thee joy,
And the wealth of Buthli
thine shall be,
Gold-decked one,
as Atli’s wife.” |
|--|---|

Cf. note on stanza 25 as to the probable speaker.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 28. “Viljak eigi
meþ veri ganga, | <i>Guthrun spake:</i>
“A husband now
I will not have, |
|--|---|

nē Brynhildar |
brōþur eiga;
samir eigi mēr |
viþ sun Buþla
ætt at auka |
nē una lífi.”

Nor wife of Brynhild’s |
brother be;
It beseems me not |
with Buthli’s son
Happy to be, |
and heirs to bear.”

In stanzas 28–32 the dialogue, in alternate stanzas, is clearly between Guthrun and her mother, Grimhild, though the manuscript does not indicate the speakers.

Grimhild spake:

29. “Hirþaþu hǫlþum |
heiptir gjalda,
þōt vēr hafim |
valdit fyrri;
svā skalt lāta, |
sem lífi bāþir
Sigurþr ok Sigmundr, |
ef sunu fǫþir.”

“Seek not on men |
to avenge thy sorrows,
Though the blame at first |
with us hath been;
Happy shalt be |
as if both still lived,
Sigurth and Sigmund, |
if sons thou bearest.”

Sigmund: son of Sigurth and Guthrun, killed at Brynhild’s behest.

Guthrun spake:

30. “Mākak, Grīmhildr! |
glaumi bella,
nē vīgrinum |
vānir telja,
sīz Sigurþar |
sārla drukku

“Grimhild, I may not |
gladness find,
Nor hold forth hopes |
to heroes now,
Since once the raven |
and ravening wolf

huginn ok hrægīfr |
hjärtblōþ saman.”

Sigurth's heart's-blood |
hungrily lapped.”

This stanza presents a strong argument for transposing the description of the draught of forgetfulness (stanzas 22–24 and lines 1–2 of stanza 25) to follow stanza 33. *Raven*, etc.: the original is somewhat obscure, and the line may refer simply to the “corpse-eating raven.”

Grimhild spake:

31. “Þann hefk allra |
ættgofgastan
fylki fundit |
ok framast nekkvi;
hann skalt eiga, |
unz aldr þik við,
verlaus vesa, |
nema vilir þenna.”

“Noblest of birth |
is the ruler now
I have found for thee, |
and foremost of all;
Him shalt thou have |
while life thou hast,
Or husbandless be |
if him thou wilt choose not.”

Guthrun spake:

32. “Hirþa þu bjōþa |
bǫlvafullar
þrāgjarnliga |
þær kindir mēr:
hann mun Gunnarr |
grandi beita
auk ōr Hǫgna |
hjarta slīta.”

“Seek not so eagerly |
me to send
To be a bride |
of yon baneful race;
On Gunnar first |
his wrath shall fall,
And the heart will he tear |
from Hogni's breast.”

In the manuscript this stanza is immediately followed by the two lines which here, following Bugge's suggestion, appear as stanza 35. In lines 3–4 Guthrun foretells what will (and

actually does) happen if she is forced to become Atli's wife. If stanza 35 really belongs here, it continues the prophesy to the effect that Guthrun will have no rest till she has avenged her brothers' death.

33. Grātandi Grīmhildr |
greip við orði,
es burum sīnum |
bǫlva vætti
[ok mǫgum sīnum |
meina stōrra:]
“Lond gefk enn þēr, |
lǫpa sinni,
[Vinbjörg, Valbjörg, |
ef vill þiggja,]
eig of aldr þat |
ok uni, dōttir!”

Weeping Grimhild |
heard the words
That fate full sore |
for her sons foretold,
[And mighty woe |
for them should work;]
“Lands I give thee, |
with all that live there,
[Vinbjorg is thine, |
and Valbjorg too,]
Have them forever, |
but hear me, daughter.”

Very likely the remains of two stanzas; the manuscript marks line 4 as beginning a new stanza. On the other hand, lines 3 and 5 may be interpolations. *Vinbjörg* and *Valbjörg*: apparently imaginary place-names.

34. Þann munk kjōsa |
af konungum
ok þō af niþjum |
naupug hafa;
verþr eigi mēr |
verr at ynþi
nē bǫl brōþra |
at bura skjōli.

So must I do |
as the kings besought,
And against my will |
for my kinsmen wed,
Ne'er with my husband |
joy I had,
And my sons by my brothers' |
fate were saved not.

The kings: presumably Gunnar and Hogni. *My sons:* regarding Guthrun's slaying of her two sons by Atli, Erp and Eitil, cf. *Drap Niflunga*, note.

35.
.
munkak lētta,	I could not rest
āþr lifshvatan	till of life I had robbed
eggleiks hvøtuþ	The warrior bold,
aldri næmik.	the maker of battles.

In the manuscript this stanza follows stanza 32. The loss of two lines, to the effect that "Ill was that marriage for my brothers, and ill for Atli himself," and the transposition of the remaining two lines to this point, are indicated in a number of editions. *The warrior*, etc.: Atli, whom Guthrun kills.

36. Senn vas ā hesti	Soon on horseback
hverr drengr litinn,	each hero was,
en víf valnesk	And the foreign women
hafip ī vagna;	in wagons faring;
vēr sjau daga	A week through lands
svalt land riþum,	so cold we went,
en aþra sjau	And a second week
unnir knīþum	the waves we smote,
[en ena þriþju sjau	[And a third through lands
þurt land stigum.]	that water lacked.]

The stanza describes the journey to Atli's home, and sundry unsuccessful efforts have been made to follow the travellers through Germany and down the Danube. *Foreign women:* slaves. Line 5, which the manuscript marks as beginning a stanza, is probably spurious.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 37. Þar hliðverðir
hōrar borgar
grind upp luku,
āþr ī garð riðum. | The warders now
on the lofty walls
Opened the gates,
and in we rode. |
|---|---|

After these two lines there appears to be a considerable gap, the lost stanzas giving Guthrun's story of the slaying of her brothers. It is possible that stanzas 38–45 came originally from another poem, dealing with Atli's dream, and were here substituted for the original conclusion of Guthrun's lament. Many editions combine stanzas 37 and 38, or combine stanza 38 (the manuscript marks line 1 as beginning a stanza) with lines 1–2 of stanza 39.

* * *

- | | |
|--|---|
| 38. vakði mik Atli,
en vesa þóttumk
full ills hugar
at frændr dauða. | Atli woke me,
for ever I seemed
Of bitterness full
for my brothers' death. |
|--|---|

Atli spake:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 39. “Svā mik nýla
nornir vekja
vilsinnis spō
— <i>vilda</i> at rēðak — :
hugðak þik, Guðrūn
Gjūka dōttir!
læblōndnum hjōr
leggja mik ī gōgnum.” | “Now from sleep
the Norris have waked me
With visions of terror, —
to thee will I tell them;
Methought thou, Guthrun,
Gjuki's daughter,
With poisoned blade
didst pierce my body.” |
|---|---|

The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza. The manuscript and most

editions do not indicate the speakers in this and the following stanzas.

Guthrun spake:

40. “Þat’s fyr eldi | “Fire a dream |
es ģarn dreyma, of steel shall follow
fyr dul ok vil | And willful pride |
drōsar reiþi; one of woman’s wrath;
munk þik viþ bōlvi | A baneful sore |
brenna ganga, I shall burn from thee,
lĳkna ok lāekna, | And tend and heal thee, |
þōt mer leiþr seĳr.” though hated thou art.”

Guthrun, somewhat obscurely, interprets Atli’s first dream (stanza 39) to mean that she will cure him of an abscess by cauterizing it. Her interpretation is, of course, intended merely to blind him to her purpose.

Atli spake:

41. “Hugþak ĳ tūni | “Of plants I dreamed, |
teina fallna, in the garden drooping,
þās ek vildak | That fain would I have |
vaxna lāta: full high to grow;
rifnir meþ rōtum, | Plucked by the roots, |
roþnir ĳ blōþi, and red with blood,
bornir ā bekki, | They brought them hither, |
beþit mik at tyggva. and bade me eat.

In stanzas 41–43 Atli’s dreams forecast the death of his two sons, whose flesh Guthrun gives him to eat (cf. *Atlakvitha*, 39, and *Atlamol*, 78).

42. *Hugþumk* af hendi |
hauka fljūga
brāþalausa |
bqlranna til;
hjortu hugþak |
viþ hunang tuggin,
sorgmōþs sefa, |
sollin blōþi.

I dreamed my hawks |
from my hand had flown,
Eager for food, |
to an evil house;
I dreamed their hearts |
with honey I ate,
Soaked in blood, |
and heavy my sorrow.

43. *Hugþumk* af hendi |
hvelpa losna,
glaums andvana, |
gylli bāþir;
hold þeira hugþak |
at hræum orþit,
nauþugr nai |
nȳta skyldak.”

Hounds I dreamed |
from my hand I loosed,
Loud in hunger |
and pain they howled;
Their flesh methought |
was eagles’ food,
And their bodies now |
I needs must eat.”

44. “Þar munu seggir |
of sving dōma
ok hvītinga |
hofþi nāma;
þeir munu feigir |
fāra nātta
fyr dag litlu, |
drōtt mun bergja.”

Guthrun spake:
“Men shall soon |
of sacrifice speak,
And off the heads |
of beasts shall hew
Die they shall |
ere day has dawned,
A few nights hence, |
and the folk shall have them.”

This stanza is evidently Guthrun's intentionally cryptic interpretation of Atli's dreams, but the meaning of the original is more than doubtful. The word here rendered "sacrifice" may mean "sea-catch," and the one rendered "beasts" may mean "whales." None of the attempted emendations have rendered the stanza really intelligible, but it appears to mean that Atli will soon make a sacrifice of beasts at night, and give their bodies to the people. Guthrun of course has in mind the slaying of his two sons.

Atli spake:

45. "Lægak sīþan	"On my bed I sank,
— nē sofa vildak—	nor slumber sought,
þrāgjarn ī kǫr:	Weary with woe,—
þat mank gǫrva"	full well I remember."
...	...
...	...

With these two lines the poem abruptly ends; some editors assign the speech to Atli (I think rightly), others to Guthrun. Ettmüller combines the lines with stanza 38. Whether stanzas 38–45 originally belonged to Guthrun's lament, or were interpolated here in place of the lost conclusion of that poem from another one dealing with Atli's dreams (cf. note on stanza 37), it is clear that the end has been lost.

Guthrunarkvitha III

The Third Lay of Guthrun

Introductory Note

The short *Guthrunarkvitha III*, entitled in the manuscript simply *Guthrunarkvitha*, but so numbered in most editions to distinguish it from the first and second Guthrun lays, appears only in the *Codex Regius*. It is neither quoted nor paraphrased in the *Volsungasaga*, the compilers of which appear not to have known the story with which it deals. The poem as we have it is evidently complete and free from serious interpolations. It can safely be dated from the first half of the eleventh century, for the ordeal by boiling water, with which it is chiefly concerned, was first introduced into Norway by St. Olaf, who died in 1030, and the poem speaks of it in stanza 7 as still of foreign origin.

The material for the poem evidently came from North Germany, but there is little indication that the poet was working on the basis of a narrative legend already fully formed. The story of the wife accused of faithlessness who proves her innocence by the test of boiling water had long been current in Germany, as elsewhere, and had attached itself to various women of legendary fame, but not except in this poem, so far as we can judge, to Guthrun (Kriemhild). The introduction of Thjothrek (Theoderich, Dietrich, Thithrek) is another indication of relative lateness, for the legends of Theoderich do not appear to have reached the North materially before the year 1000. On the anachronism of bringing Thjothrek to Atli's court cf. *Guthrunarkvitha II*, *introductory prose*, note, in which the development of the Theoderich tradition in its relation to that of Atli is briefly outlined.

Guthrunarkvitha III is, then, little more than a dramatic German story made into a narrative lay by a Norse poet, with the names of Guthrun, Atli, Thjothrek, and Herkja incorporated for the sake of greater effectiveness. Its story probably nowhere formed a part of the living tradition of Sigurth and Atli, but the poem has so little distinctively Norse coloring that it may possibly have been based on a story or even a poem which its composer heard in Germany or from the lips of a German narrator.

Herkja hēt ambōtt Atla; hon hafði
verit frilla hans.

Hon sagði Atla, at hon hefði sēt
Þjóþrek ok Guþrūnu bæði saman.

Herkja was the name of a serving-woman of Atli's; she had been his concubine.

She told Atli that she had seen
Thjothrek and Guthrun both together.

Atli var þā allökātr.

Atli was greatly angered thereby.

Þā kvað Guþrūn:

Then Guthrun said:

The annotator derived all the material for this note from the poem itself, except for the reference to Herkja as Atli's former concubine. *Herkja*: the historical Kreka and the Helche of the *Nibelungenlied*, who there appears as Etzel's (Attila's) first wife. *Thjothrek*: cf. *Introductory Note*.

1. “Hvat's þēr, Atli! |
 æ, Buþla sunr?
 es þer hryggð ī hug? |
 hvī hlær æva?
 hitt mundi øþra |
 jorlum þykkja,
 at við menn mæltir |
 ok mik sæir.”

“What thy sorrow, Atli, |
 Buthli's son?
 Is thy heart heavy-laden? |
 Why laughest thou never?
 It would better befit |
 the warrior far
 To speak with men, |
 and me to look on.”

Atli kvað:

2. “Tregi mik, Guþrūn |
 Gjúka dōttir!
 þats mer ī hollu |
 Herkja sagði:
 at it þjōþrekr |
 und þaki svæfiþ
 ok lēttliga |
 līni verþisk.”

Atli spake:

“It troubles me, Guthrun, |
 Gjuki's daughter,
 What Herkja here |
 in the hall hath told me,
 That thou in the bed |
 with Thjothrek liest,
 Beneath the linen |
 in lovers' guise.”

The manuscript omits the names of the speakers throughout.

Guprūn kvað:

3. “Þēr munk alls þess |
 eiða vinna
 at enum hvīta |
 helga steini,
 at við Þjóðmars sun |
 þatki áttak
 es vörð nē verr |
 vinna knātti.

Guthrun spake:

- “This shall I |
 with oaths now swear,
 Swear by the sacred |
 stone so white,
 That nought was there |
 with Thjothmar’s son
 That man or woman |
 may not know.

Holy stone: just what this refers to is uncertain; it may be identical with the “ice-cold stone of Uth” mentioned in an oath in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* II, 29. *Thjothmar’s son:* the manuscript has simply “Thjothmar.” Some editions change it as here, some assume that Thjothmar is another name or an error for Thjothrek, and Finnur Jonsson not only retains Thjothmar here but changes Thjothrek to Thjothmar in stanza 5 to conform to it.

4. Nē ek halsaða |
 herja stilli,
 jöfur óneisan |
 einu sinni:
 aðrar vöru |
 okkrar spekjur,
 es vit hörmug tvau |
 hnigum at rūnum.

- Nor ever once |
 did my arms embrace
 The hero brave, |
 the leader of hosts;
 In another manner |
 our meeting was,
 When our sorrows we |
 in secret told.

5. Hēr kvam Þjóðprekr |
 með þria tōgu,
 lífa ne einir |
 allra manna;

- With thirty warriors |
 Thjothrek came,
 Nor of all his men |
 doth one remain;

<i>hnøgg</i> mik at brøþrum	Thou hast murdered my brothers
ok at brynjuþum,	and mail-clad men,
<i>hnøgg</i> mik at ǫllum	Thou hast murdered all
haufuþniþjum.	the men of my race.

Regarding the death of Thjothrek's men cf. *Guthrunarkvitha II*, [introductory prose](#), note. It was on these stanzas of *Guthrunarkvitha III* that the annotator based his introduction to *Guthrunarkvitha II*. The manuscript repeats the “thirty” in line 2, in defiance of metrical requirements.

6. Kømra nū Gunnarr,	Gunnar comes not,
kalligak Høgna,	Hogni I greet not,
sēkak sīþan	No longer I see
svāsa brøþr;	my brothers loved;
sverþi mundi Høgni	My sorrow would Hogni
sliks harms reka,	avenge with the sword,
nū verþk sjølf fyr mik	Now myself for my woes
synja lýta.	I shall payment win.

In the manuscript this stanza follows stanza 7; many editions have made the transposition.

7. Sentu at Saxa,	Summon Saxi,
sunnmanna gram,	the southrons' king,
hann kann helga	For be the boiling
hver vellanda.” —	kettle can hallow.”
Sjau <i>tigir</i> manna	Seven hundred
ī sal gengu,	there were in the hall,
āþr kvæn konungs	Ere the queen her hand
ī ketil tōki.	in the kettle thrust.

Who *Saxi* may be is not clear, but the stanza clearly points to the time when the ordeal by boiling water was still regarded as a foreign institution, and when a southern king (i. e., a Christian from some earlier-converted region) was necessary to consecrate the kettle used in the test. The ordeal by boiling water followed closely the introduction of Christianity, which took place around the year 1000. Some editions make two stanzas out of stanza 7, and Müllenhoff contends that lines 1–2 do not constitute part of Guthrun’s speech.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>8. Brā hōn til botns
 bjortum lōfa
 ok upp of tōk
 jarknasteina:
 “Sē nū seggir!
 sykn emk orþin
 heilagliga,
 hvē hverr velli.”</p> | <p>To the bottom she reached
 with hand so bright,
 And forth she brought
 the flashing stones:
 “Behold, ye warriors,
 well am I cleared
 Of sin by the kettle’s
 sacred boiling.”</p> |
| <p>9. Hlō þā Atla
 hugr ī brjōsti,
 es heilar sā
 hendr Guþrūnar:
 “Nū skal Herkja
 til hvers ganga,
 sūs Guþrūnu
 grandi vāendi.”</p> | <p>Then Atli’s heart
 in happiness laughed,
 When Guthrun’s hand
 unhurt he saw;
 “Now Herkja shall come
 the kettle to try,
 She who grief
 for Guthrun planned.”</p> |
| <p>10. Sāat maþr armlikt,
 hverrs þat sāat,
 hvē þar ā Herkju
 hendr sviþnuþu;</p> | <p>Ne’er saw man sight
 more sad than this,
 How burned were the hands
 of Herkja then;</p> |

mey leiddu þā |

ī mȳri fūla.—

Svā þā hefnd Guþrūn |

harma sinna.

In a bog so foul |

the maid they flung,

And so was Guthrun's |

grief requited.

The word “requited” in line 4 is omitted in the manuscript, but it is clear that some such word was intended. The punishment of casting a culprit into a bog to be drowned was particularly reserved for women, and is not infrequently mentioned in the sagas.

Oddrunargratr

The Lament of Oddrun

Introductory Note

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.

Heiþrekr hēt konungr, dōttir hans
hēt Borgnȳ.

Heithrek was the name of a king, whose
daughter was called Borgny.

Vilmundr hēt sǫ er var friþill hennar.

Vilmund was the name of the man who was her lover.

Hon mǫtti eigi fœþa bœrn, ǣr til kom
Oddrūn, Atla systir; hon hafði verit
unnusta Gunnars Gjūkasonar.

She could not give birth to a child until Oddrun, Atli's sister, had come to her; Oddrun had been beloved of Gunnar, son of Gjuki.

Um þessa sǫgu er hēr kveþit.

About this story is the following poem.

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. *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.

1. Heyrþak segja |
ī sǫgum fornum,
hvē mǣr of kvam |
til Mornalands;
engi mǫtti |
fyr jorþ ofan
Heiþreks dōttur |
hjalpir vinna.

I have heard it told |
in olden tales
How a maiden came |
to Morningland;
No one of all |
on earth above
To Heithrek's daughter |
help could give.

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

2. Þat frā Oddrūn, |
Atla systir,

This Oddrun learned, |
the sister of Atli,

at sū mār hafpi |
 miklar sōttir;
 brā hōn af stalli |
 stjōrnbitluþum
 ok ā svartan jō |
 sōþul of lagpi.

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.

3. Lēt hōn mar fara |
 moldveg slēttan,
 unz at hōri kvam |
 hōll standandi;
 [ok hōn inn of gekk |
 endlangan sal]
 svipti hōn sōpli |
 af svongum jō
 auk þat orþa |
 alls fyrst of kvaþ:

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;]
 From the weary steed |
 the saddle she took;
 Hear now the speech |
 that first she spake:

Line 3 (cf. *Völundarkvitha*, 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.

4. “Hvat's frægst ā foldu |
 . . .
 eþa hvat's † hlēz |
 Hūnaland?”
Ambōtt kvaþ:
 “Hēr liggr Borgny |
 of borin verkjum,

“What news on earth, |
 . . .
 Or what has happened |
 in Hunland now?”
A serving-maid spake:
 “Here Borgny lies |
 in bitter pain,

vina þín, Oddrún! |
vittu ef hjalpir.”

Thy friend, and, Oddrun, |
thy help would find.”

Line 1 in the original appears to have lost its second half. In line 2 the word rendered “has happened” is doubtful. The manuscript does not indicate the speaker of lines 3–4, and a few editors assign them to Borgny herself.

Oddrún kvað:

5. “Hverr hefr vífi |
vamms of leitat?
hvī ’ru Borgnýjar |
brāþar söttir?

Ambött kvað:

“Vilmundr heitir |
vinr høgstalda,
hann varþi mey |
varmri blæju
[fimm vetr alla, |
svāt sinn fōþur leyndi].”

Oddrun spake:

“Who worked this woe |
for the woman thus,
Or why so sudden |
is Borgny sick?”

The serving-maid spake:

“Vilmund is he, |
the heroes’ friend,
Who wrapped the woman |
in bedclothes warm,
[For winters five, |
yet her father knew not].”

The manuscript does not indicate the speakers. *For the woman:* conjectural; the manuscript has instead:

What warrior now | hath worked this woe?

The manuscript indicates line 3 as beginning a new stanza. Line 5, apparently modeled on line 4 of stanza 13, is probably spurious.

6. Þær hykk mæltu |
þvīgit fleira,
gekk mild fyr knē |
meyju at sitja;

Then no more |
they spake, methinks;
She went at the knees |
of the woman to sit;

rīkt gōl Oddrūn, |
ramt gōl Oddrūn
bitra galdra |
at Borgnǫju.

With magic Oddrun |
and mightily Oddrun
Chanted for Borgny |
potent charms.

Charms: cf. *Sigrdrifumol*, 8.

7. Knātti mǣr ok mǫgr |
moldveg sporna,
bǫrn en blīpu |
viþ bana Hǫgna;
þat nam at mǣla |
mǣr fjǫrsjūka,
svāt etki kvaþ |
orþ et fyrra:

At last were born |
a boy and girl,
Son and daughter |
of Hogni's slayer;
Then speech the woman |
so weak began,
Nor said she aught |
ere this she spake:

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.

(borin bjargrūnum | systr bana Hǫgna.)

8. "Svā hjalpi þēr |
hollar vættir,
Frigg ok Freyja |
ok fleiri goð,
sem þū feldir mēr |
fār af hǫndum."

"So may the holy |
ones thee help,
Frigg and Freyja |
and favoring gods,
As thou hast saved me |
from sorrow now."

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.

Oddrūn kvaḥ:

9. “Hnēkat af þvī |
 til hjalpar þēr,
 at vārir þess |
 verḥ aldrigi;
 heltk ok efndak, |
 es hinig mæltak,
 at hvīvetna |
 hjalpa skyldak.
 [þās ǫþlingar |
 arfi skiptu].”

Oddrun spake:

“I came not hither |
 to help thee thus
 Because thou ever |
 my aid didst earn;
 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].”

The manuscript does not name the speaker. In line 2 the word rendered “earn” is omitted in the manuscript, but nearly all editions have supplied it. 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.

10–20. In the manuscript the order is as follows: 12; 13; 14; 15, 3–4; 10; 11; 16; 17; 15; 19, 1–2; 15, 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.

Borgn̄ kvaḥ:

10. “Ær est, Oddrūn! |
 ok ørvita,
 es af fāri mēr |
 flest orḥ of kvazt;

Borgny spake:

“Wild art thou, Oddrun, |
 and witless now,
 That so in hatred |
 to me thou speakest;

en fylgþak þēr	I followed thee
ā fjörgynju,	where thou didst fare,
sem vit brøþrum tveim	As we had been born
bornar vārim.”	of brothers twain.”

The manuscript does not name the speaker; cf. [note on stanzas 10–20](#).

Oddrūn kvað:

11. “Mank hvat mæltir |
 meins of aptan,
 þās Gunnari |
 gørþak drekku:
 kvaðat slíks dōmi |
 sīþan mundu
 meyju verþa |
 nema mēr einni.”

Oddrun spake:

“I remember the evil |
 one eve thou spakest,
 When a draught I gave |
 to Gunnar then;
 Thou didst say that never |
 such a deed
 By maid was done |
 save by me alone.”

The manuscript does not name the speaker; cf. [note on stanzas 10–20](#). 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. [A draught](#), etc.: apparently in reference to a secret meeting of the lovers.

12. Þā nam at setjask	Then the sorrowing woman
sorgmōþ kona	sat her down
at telja bōl	To tell the grief
af trega stōrum:	of her troubles great.

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,
 (Mær tōk at minnask | mōþugs dags,)

and inserts as a second line line 5 of stanza 9.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 13. “Vask upp alin
ī jōfra sal
— flestr fagnaþi—
at fira rāþi;
unþak aldri
ok eign fōþur
fimm vetr eina,
svāt minn faþir lifþi. | “Happy I grew
in the hero’s hall
As the warriors wished,
and they loved me well;
Glad I was
of my father’s gifts,
For winters five,
while my father lived. |
|---|---|

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| 14. Þat nam at mæla
māl et efsta
sjā mōþr konungr,
āþr hann sylti:
mik baþ hann gōþa
golli rauþu
ok suþr gefa
syni Grīmhildar. | These were the words
the weary king,
Ere he died,
spake last of all:
He bade me with red gold
dowered to be,
And to Grimhild’s son
in the South be wedded. |
|--|---|

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. 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.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 15. En hann Brynhildi
bað hjalm geta,
hana kvað öskmey
verða skyldu;
kvaða ena þþri
alna mundu
mey í heimi,
nema mjötuþr spilti. | But Brynhild the helm
he bade to wear,
A wish-maid bright
he said she should be;
For a nobler maid
would never be born
On earth, he said,
if death should spare her. |
|--|---|

Lines 1–2 have here been transposed from the middle of stanza 19; cf. [note on stanzas 10–20](#). *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](#). In the manuscript stanzas 10–11 follow line 4 of stanza 15.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 16. Brynhildr í būri
borða rakði,
hafði hōn lýði
ok lönd of sik;
jörð dūsaði
ok upphiminn,
þās bani Fāfnis
borg of þātti. | At her weaving Brynhild
sat in her bower,
Lands and folk
alike she had;
The earth and heaven
high resounded
When Fafnir’s slayer
the city saw. |
|---|---|

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. *Fafnir's slayer*: Sigurth.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 17. Þa vas vīg vegit
vǫlsku sverþi
ok borg brotin
sūs Brynhildr ātti;
vasa langt af þvī,
heldr vālītī,
unz vēlar þær
vissi allar. | 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. |
|---|---|

Cf. note on preceding stanza.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 18. Þess lēt harþar
hefndir verþa,
svāt ver ǫll hǫfum
ōrnar raunir;
þat mun ā hǫlþa
hvert land fara,
es hōn sveltask lēt
at Sigurþi. | 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. |
|--|--|

- | | |
|---|---|
| 19. En Gunnari
gatk at unna,
bauga deili,
sem Brynhildr skyldi;
buþu þeir <i>Atla</i>
bauga rauþa | Love to Gunnar
then I gave,
To the breaker of rings,
as Brynhild might;
To Atli rings
so red they offered, |
|---|---|

ok brøþr mīnum |
bōtr ōsmaar.

And mighty gifts |
to my brother would give.

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. *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.

20. Baup hann enn við mēr |
† bū fimmtān,
hlipfarm Grana |
ef hafa vildit:
en Atli kvazk |
eigi vilja
mund aldri |
at megi Gjūka.

Fifteen dwellings |
fain would he give
For me, and the burden |
that Grani bore;
But Atli said |
he would never receive
Marriage gold |
from Gjūki’s son.

Grani’s burden: the treasure won by Sigurth from Fafnir; cf. *Fafnismol*, concluding prose. The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza, as also in stanzas 21 and 22.

21. Þeygi vit mōttum |
við munum vinna,
nema heltk hōþi |
við hringbrota;
mæltu margir |
mīnir niþjar,
kvōþusk okkr hafa |
orþit bæþi.

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.

22. En mik Atli kvað |
 eigi mundu
 lýti ráða |
 nē lōst gōrva;
 en slíks skyli |
 synja aldri
 maðr fyr annan, |
 þars munugð deilir!

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.

23. Sendi Atli |
 ōru sīna
 of myrkvan víð |
 mīn at freista,
 ok þeir kvōmu |
 þars koma ne skyldut,
 þās breiddum vit |
 blæju eina.

Soon his men |
 did Atli send,
 In the murky wood |
 on me to spy;
 Thither they came |
 where they should not come,
 Where beneath one cover |
 close we lay.

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.

24. Buðum vit þegnum |
 bauga rauða,
 at þeir eigi til |
 Atla segði;
 en þeir hvatliga |
 heim skunduðu

To the warriors ruddy |
 rings we offered,
 That nought to Atli |
 e'er they should say;
 But swiftly home |
 they hastened thence,

ok ōliga |
Atla sǫgðu.

And eager all |
to Atli told.

In the manuscript lines 3 and 4 stand in reversed order.

25. en Guþrūnu |
gǫrla leyndu
þvīs heldr vita |
hǫlfu skyldi.
... |
...
... |
...

But close from Guthrun |
kept they hid
What first of all |
she ought to have known.
... |
...
... |
...

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.

26. Hlymr vas at heyra |
hōfgollinna,
þās ī garþ riðu |
Gjūka arfar;
þeir ōr Hǫgna |
hjarta skōru
en ī ormgarþ |
annan lǫgðu.

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.

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. *Drap Niflunga*, which likewise tells of the slaying of *Hogni* and Gunnar (*the other*).

27. Nam horskr konungr	The hero wise
hǫrpu sveigja	on his harp then smote,
...	...
...	...
þvīt hugði mik	For help from me
til hjalpar sēr	in his heart yet hoped
kynrīkr konungr	The high-born king,
of koma mundu.	might come to him.

In the manuscript these three lines follow line 2 of stanza 28. No gap is indicated in the manuscript, 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 Adventure of the *Nibelungenlied*, in which Volker plays the followers of Gunther to sleep before the final battle.

28. Vask enn farin	Alone was I gone
einu sinni	to Geirmund then,
til Geirmundar	The draught to mix
gørva drykkju;	and ready to make;
namk at heyra	Sudden I heard
ōr Hlēseyju,	from Hlesey clear
hvē þar af strīpum	How in sorrow the strings
strengir mæltu.	of the harp resounded.

In the manuscript the three lines of stanza 27 follow line 2, and line 3 is marked as beginning a new stanza. *Geirmund*: nothing further is known of him, but he seems to be an ally or retainer of Atli, or possibly his brother. *Hlesey*: the poet's geography is here in very bad shape. Hlesey is (or may be) the Danish island of Läsö, 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.

29. Þaþk ambāttir	I bade the serving-maids
būnar verþa,	ready to be,
vildak fylkis	For I longed the hero's
fjorvi bjarga;	life to save;
lētum fljōta	Across the sound
far <i>sund</i> yfir,	the boats we sailed,
unz alla sāk	Till we saw the whole
Atla garþa.	of Atli's home.

Many editions combine this stanza with lines 3–4 of stanza 28. *The sound:* cf. note on stanza 28.

30. Þā kwam en arma	Then crawling the evil
ūt skævandi	woman came,
mōþir Atla	Atli's mother —
— hōn skyli morna! —,	may she ever rot!
ok Gunnari	And hard she bit
grōf til hjarta,	to Gunnar's heart,
svāt mättigak	So I could not help
mærum bjarga.	the hero brave.

The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza. *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.”

31.	Opt undrumk þat,	Oft have I wondered
	hvī eptir māk,	how after this,
	linnvengis bil!	Serpents’-bed goddess!
	līfi halda,	I still might live,
	es ögnhvötum	For well I loved
	unna þöttumk	the warrior brave,
	sverþa deili	The giver of swords,
	sem sjalfri mēr.	as my very self.

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).

32.	Sazt ok hlýddir,	Thou didst see and listen,
	meþan sagþak þēr	the while I said
	mörg ill of sköp	The mighty grief
	mīn ok þeira;	that was mine and theirs;
	maþr hverr lifir	Each man lives
	at munum sīnum —	as his longing wills, —
	nū’s of genginn	Oddrun’s lament
	grātr Oddrūnar.”	is ended now.”

Some editions make line 4 a statement of the poet’s, and not part of Oddrun’s speech.

Atlakvitha en Grönlenszka

The Greenland Lay of Atli

Introductory Note

There are two Atli poems in the *Codex Regius*, the *Atlakvitha* (*Lay of Atli*) and the *Atlamol* (*Ballad of Atli*). The poems are not preserved or quoted in any other old manuscript, but they were extensively used by the compilers of the *Volsungasaga*. In the manuscript superscription to each of these poems appears the word “Greenland,” which has given rise to a large amount of argument. The scribe was by no means infallible, and in this case his statement proves no more than that in the period round 1300 there was a tradition that these two poems originated in the Greenland settlement.

The two Atli poems deal with substantially the same material: the visit of the sons of Gjuki to Atli’s court, their deaths, and the subsequent revenge of their sister, Guthrun, Atli’s wife, on her husband. The shorter of the two, the *Atlakvitha*, tells the story with little elaboration; the *Atlamol*, with about the same narrative basis, adds many details, some of them apparently of the poet’s invention, and with a romantic, not to say sentimental, quality quite lacking in the *Atlakvitha*. Both poems are sharply distinguished from the rest of the collection by their metrical form, which is the Malahattr (used irregularly also in the *Harbarthslooth*), employed consistently and smoothly in the *Atlamol*, and with a considerable mixture of what appear to be Fornyrthislag lines (cf. *Introduction*) in the *Atlakvitha*.

It is altogether probable that both poems belong to the eleventh century, the shorter *Atlakvitha* being generally dated from the first quarter thereof, and the longer *Atlamol* some fifty years or more later. In each case the poet was apparently a Christian; in the *Atlamol* (stanza 82) Guthrun expresses her readiness to die and “go into another light,” and in the *Atlakvitha* there is frequent use of mythological names (e.g., Valhall, Hlithskjolf) with an evident lack of understanding of their relation to the older gods. These facts fit the theory of a Greenland origin exceedingly well, for the Greenland settlement grew rapidly after the first explorations of Eirik the Red, which were in 982–985, and its most flourishing period was in the eleventh century. The internal evidence, particularly in the case of the *Atlamol*, points likewise to an origin remote from Iceland, Norway, and the “Western Isles”; and the two poems are sufficiently alike so that, despite the efforts of Finnur Jonsson and others to separate them, assigning one to Greenland and the other to Norway or else where, it seems probable that the manuscript statement is correct in both instances, and that the two Atli poems did actually originate in Greenland. An interesting account of this Greenland settlement is given in William Hovgaard’s *Voyages of the Norsemen to America*, published by the American-Scandinavian Foundation in 1914, and an extraordinarily vivid picture

of the sufferings of the early settlers appears in Maurice Hewlett's *Thorgils*, taken from the *Floamannasaga*.

From the standpoint of narrative material there is little that is distinctively Norse in either the *Atlakvitha* or the *Atlamol*. The story is the one outlined in the prose *Drap Niflunga* (largely based on these two poems), representing almost exclusively the southern blending of the Attila and Burgundian legends (cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*). In the *Atlakvitha*, indeed, the word "Burgundians" is actually used. Brynhild is not mentioned in either poem; Sigurth's name appears but once, in the *Atlamol*. Thus the material goes directly back to its South-Germanic origins, with little of the Northern making-over which resulted in such extensive changes in most parts of the Sigurth story. The general atmosphere, on the other hand, particularly in the *Atlamol*, is essentially Norse.

As has been said, the *Atlakvitha* is metrically in a chaotic state, the normal Malahattr lines being frequently interspersed with lines and even stanzas which apparently are of the older Fornyrthislag type. How much of this confusion is due to faulty transmission is uncertain, but it has been suggested that the composer of the *Atlakvitha* made over in Malahattr an older Atli poem in Fornyrthislag, and this suggestion has much to recommend it. That he worked on the basis of an older poem is, indeed, almost certain, for in oral prose tradition a far larger number of distinctively Norse traits would unquestionably have crept in than are found in the material of the *Atlakvitha*. As for the *Atlamol*, here again the poet seems to have used an older poem as his basis, possibly the *Atlakvitha* itself, although in that case he must have had other material as well, for there are frequent divergences in such matters as proper names.

The translation of the *Atlakvitha* is rendered peculiarly difficult by the irregularity of the metre, by the evident faultiness of the transmission, and above all by the exceptionally large number of words found nowhere else in Old Norse, involving much guesswork as to their meanings. The notes do not attempt to indicate all the varying suggestions made by editors and commentators as to the reconstruction of defective stanzas and the probable meanings of obscure passages; in cases which are purely or largely guesswork the notes merely point out the uncertainty without cataloguing the proposed solutions.

Guprūn Gjūka dōttir hefndi brœpra
sinna, svā sem frægt er orþit.

Hon drap fyrst sonu Atla, en eptir
drap hon Atla ok brendi hōllina ok
hirþina alla.

Um þetta er sjā kviþa ort.

Guthrun, Gjuki's daughter, avenged her
brothers, as has become well known.

She slew first Atli's sons, and thereafter
she slew Atli, and burned the hall with
his whole company.

Concerning this was the following po-
em made:

On the marriage of *Guthrun* to *Atli* at the instigation of her brothers, Gunnar and Hogni,

and on the slaying of Atli and his two sons, Erp and Eitil, cf. *Drap Niflunga* and note.

1.	Atli sendi	Atli sent
	ā̄r til Gunnars	of old to Gunnar
	kunnan segg rīpa,	A keen-witted rider,
	Knēfrøþr vas heitinn;	Knefrōth did men call him;
	at gø̄rþum kwam Gjūka	To Gjuki's home came he
	ok at Gunnars hōllu,	and to Gunnar's dwelling,
	bekkjum aringreypum	With benches round the hearth,
	ok at bjōri svōsum.	and to the beer so sweet.

Line 1 apparently is in Fornyrthislag. *Knefrōth* (the name is spelt in various ways, and its meaning is uncertain): in the *Atlamol* (stanza 4) there are two messengers, one named Vingi and the other unnamed; the annotator combines the two versions in the *Drap Niflunga*. *Benches*, etc.: the adjective rendered “round the hearth,” which etymologically it ought to mean, is made obscure by its application to “helmets” in stanzas 3 and 17.

2.	Drukku drōttmegir	Then the followers, hiding
	— enn dyljendr þogþu—	their falseness, all drank
	vīn ī valhōllu,	Their wine in the war-hall,
	vreiþi sōusk Hūna;	of the Huns' wrath wary;
	kallaþi þā Knēfrøþr	And Knefrōth spake loudly,
	kaldri rōddu,	his words were crafty,
	seggr enn suþrōni	The hero from the south,
	— sat ā bekk hōvum—:	on the high bench sitting:

Falseness: i.e., Gunnar's followers concealed their fear and hatred of the Huns at the feast; but the word may mean “fear of treachery.” *War-hall*: the word used is “Valhall,” the name of Othin's hall of slain warriors.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>3. “Atli mik sendi
 rīpa eyrindi
 mar enum mēlgreypa
 Myrkviþ ōkunnan,
 biþja ykk, Gunnarr!
 at ā bekk kōmiþ
 meþ hjōlmum † aringreypum
 sōkja heim Atla.</p> | <p>“Now Atli has sent me
 his errand to ride,
 On my bit-champing steed
 through Myrkwood the secret,
 To bid You, Gunnar,
 to his benches to come,
 With helms round the hearth,
 and Atli’s home seek.</p> |
|--|--|

Myrkwood the secret (the adjective is literally “unknown”): the forest which divided Atli’s realm from that of the Gjukungs; cf. *Oddrunargratr*, 23 and note. *Around the hearth*: the adjective is the same one which is applied to “benches” in stanza 1 (cf. note); it may be an error here, or it may possibly have the force of “of your followers,” i.e., Gunnar is to arm the men of his household (those who are round his hearth) for the journey.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>4. Skjōldu knegup velja
 ok skafna aska,
 hjalma gollhroþna
 ok hjōrva mengi,
 silfrgyld sōpulklēþi,
 serki valrauþa,
 dafar ok darraþar,
 drōsla mēlgreypa.</p> | <p>Shields shall ye choose there,
 and shafts made of ash-wood,
 Gold-adorned helmets,
 and slaves out of Hunland,
 Silver-gilt saddle-cloths,
 shirts of bright scarlet,
 With lances and spears too,
 and bit-champing steeds.</p> |
|---|--|

Slaves, etc.: some editions have “swords in plenty.” *Scarlet*: the word apparently means “slaughter-red,” “blood-red,” but it may mean something entirely different.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>5. Vōll lēzk gefa mundu
 vīþrar Gnitaheiþar,</p> | <p>The field shall be given you
 of wide Gnitaheith,</p> |
|---|--|

af geiri gjallanda	With loud-ringing lances,
ok af gyldum stöfnum,	and stems gold-o'er-laid,
stōrar meiþmar	Treasures full huge,
ok staþi Danpar,	and the home of Danp,
hrīs þat et mæra	And the mighty forest
es Myrkviþr heitir.”	that Myrkwood is called.”

Gnitaheith: here the dragon Fafnir had his lair (cf. *Gripisspo*, 11). Sigurth doubtless owned it after Fafnir's death, and the Gjukungs after they had killed Sigurth. Possibly they had given it to Atli in recompense for the death of his sister, Brynhild, and he now offered to restore it to them, or — as seems more likely — the poet was not very clear about its ownership himself. *Stems*: i.e., the gilded stems of ships, carved like dragons, — an evident northern touch, if the word is correct, which is by no means certain. *Danp*: this name was early applied to a mythical Danish king (cf. *Rigsthula*, 49 and note), but it may have been fabricated by error out of the word “Danparstaþir” (the phrase here used is “staþi Danpar”), used in the *Hervararsaga* of a field of battle between the Goths and the Huns, and quite possibly referring to the region of the Dnieper. The name seems to have clung to the Atli tradition long after it had lost all definite significance. *Myrkwood*: cf. note on stanza 3.

6. Höfþi vatt Gunnarr	His head turned Gunnar,
ok Hogni til sagði:	and to Hogni he said:
“Hvat ræþr, seggr enn ðri!	“What thy counsel, young hero,
alls vit slíkt heyrum?	when such things we hear?
goll vissak etki	No gold do I know
ā Gnitaheiþi,	on Gnitaheith lying
þats vit jafnmikit	So fair that other
annat nē hefþim.	its equal we have not.

7. Sjau eigum salhūs	We have seven halls,
sverþa full hver'ru,	each of swords is full,

<i>hver eru þeira </i>	[And all of gold
<i>hjólt ór golli,</i>	is the hilt of each;]
<i>minn veitk mar baztan, </i>	My steed is the swiftest,
<i>mæki hvassastan,</i>	my sword is sharpest,
<i>[boga bekksōma, </i>	My bows adorn benches,
<i>en brynjur ór golli,]</i>	my byrnies are golden,
<i>hjalm minn hvīastan </i>	My helm is the brightest
<i>kominn ór hōll Kīars,</i>	that came from Kjar's hall,
<i>[einn es minn betri </i>	[Mine own is better
<i>an seī allra Hūna.]”</i>	than all the Huns' treasure.]”

The stanza is clearly in bad shape; the manuscript indicates line 5 as beginning a new stanza. In line 5 the manuscript has “and shield” after “helm.” *Kjar*: Gering ingeniously identifies this Kjar with Kjar the father of Olrun, mentioned in the *Völundarkvitha*, introductory prose and stanza 2, on the basis of a genealogy in the *Flateyjarbok*, in which Authi, the grand father of Kjar (by no means certainly the same man) and Buthli, father of Atli, are mentioned as making a raiding voyage together. This identification, however, rests on slight evidence.

Hogni kvaþ:

8. “Hvat hyggr brūþi bendu, |
 þās okkr baug sendi
 vōþum ulfs varþan? |
 hykk at vōrnuþ bjōþi;
 hār fannk heiþingja |
 vriþit ī hring rauþum:
 ylfskr es vegr okkarr |
 at rīþa eyrindi.”

Hogni spake:

“What seeks she to say, |
 that she sends us a ring,
 Woven with a wolf's hair? |
 methinks it gives warning;
 In the red ring a hair |
 of the heath-dweller found I,
 Wolf-like shall our road be |
 if we ride on this journey.”

The manuscript does not name the speaker. One editor gives the first sentence to Gunnar. *She*, etc.: Guthrun, seeking to warn her brothers of Atli's treachery, sends them a ring with a wolf's hair as a sign of danger; in the *Atlamol* (stanza 4) she sends a message written in

runes; cf. *Drap Niflunga*. *Heath-dweller*: wolf.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>9. Nipjargi hvøttu
 nē nōungr annarr,
 rȳnendr nē rāþendr
 nē þeirs rīkir vōru;
 kvaddi þā Gunnarr,
 sem konungr skyldi,
 mærr ī mjōþranni
 af mōþi stōrum:</p> | <p>Not eager were his comrades,
 nor the men of his kin,
 The wise nor the wary,
 nor the warriors bold.
 But Gunnar spake forth
 as befitted a king,
 Noble in the beer-hall,
 and bitter his scorn:</p> |
|---|---|

In line 1 the manuscript has “His comrades did not urge Gunnar,” but the name, involving a metrical error, seems to have been inserted through a scribal blunder.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>10. “Rīstu nū, Fjornir!
 lāt ā flet vaþa
 greppa gollskālir
 meþ gumna hōndum
 . . .
 . . .
 . . .
 . . .</p> | <p>“Stand forth now, Fjornir!
 and hither on the floor
 The beakers all golden
 shalt thou bring to the warriors.
 . . .
 . . .
 . . .
 . . .</p> |
|---|---|

The manuscript indicates no lacuna, but probably two lines have dropped out, for the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase runs: “Give us to drink in great cups, for it may well be that this shall be our last feast.” *Fjornir*: Gunnar’s cup-bearer.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>11. <i>Ulfar munu rāþa</i>
 arfi Niflunga,</p> | <p>The wolves then shall rule
 the wealth of the Niflungs,</p> |
|--|--|

<i>gamlir, grānvarþir, </i>	Wolves aged and grey-hued,
<i>ef Gunnars missir,</i>	if Gunnar is lost,
<i>birnir blakkfjallir </i>	And black-coated bears
<i>bīta þreftǫnnum,</i>	with rending teeth bite,
<i>gamna greystōþi, </i>	And make glad the dogs,
<i>ef Gunnarr kǫmrat.”</i>	if Gunnar returns not.”

Bugge thinks this stanza is spoken by Gunnar’s terrified followers; Grundtvig assigns it to Hogni. Apparently, however, Gunnar means that if he and his men are not valiant enough to make the journey and return safely, it matters little what may happen to them. *Niflungs*: regarding the application of this name to Gunnar’s Burgundians cf. *Brot*, 17 and note. *Bears*: these “black” bears have been used as arguments against the Greenland origin of the poem. *And make glad the dogs*: i.e., by giving them corpses to eat, but the phrase in the original is more than doubtful.

12. <i>Leiddu landrǫgni </i>	A following gallant
<i>lǫþar ǫneisir,</i>	fared forth with the ruler,
<i>grātendr gunnhvatan </i>	Yet they wept as their home
<i>ǫr garþi innan;</i>	with the hero they left;
<i>þā kvap enn ǫri </i>	And the little heir
<i>erfivǫrþr Hǫgna:</i>	of Hogni called loudly:
<i>“Heilir fariþ, horskir! </i>	“Go safe now, ye wise ones,
<i>hvars ykkir hugr teygir!”</i>	wherever ye will!”

Some editions in line 2 read “home of the Niflungs” instead of “their home,” and others “home of the Huns,” the manuscript reading being “home of the men.” *Heir*: the *Atlamol* (stanza 28) names two sons of Hogni, Snævar and Solar, both of whom make the journey with their father and are killed. The *Volsungasaga*, combining the two versions, says that Snævar and Solar went with their father, and implies that it was a third and still younger son who said: “Farewell, and have a good time” (thus literally).

13. <i>Fetum lētu frǫknir </i>	Then let the bold heroes
<i>of fjǫll at þyrja</i>	their bit-champing horses

mara ena mēlgreypu	On the mountains gallop,
Myrkviþ ōkunnan;	and through Myrkwood the secret;
hristisk ǫll Hūnmǫrk,	All Hunland was shaken
harþmōþgir es fōru,	where the hard-souled ones rode,
vrōku vandstyggva	On the whip-fearers fared they
vǫllu algrōna.	through fields that were green.

Myrkwood: cf. stanza 3 and note; the journey is here made by land, whereas in the *Atlamol* it is made partly by boat; cf. *Atlamol*, 34 and note. *Whip-fearers*: horses, but there is some uncertainty as to the word.

14. Hǫll sǫu þeir Atla,	Then they saw Atli's halls,
hlíðskjalfar djūpar	and his watch-towers high,
— Buþla greppar standa	On the walls so lofty
ā borg enni hōvu —	stood the warriors of Buthli;
sal of suþrþjóþum	The hall of the southrons
sleginn sessmeiþum,	with seats was surrounded,
bundnum rǫndum,	With targets bound
bleikum skjǫldum.	and shields full bright.

In line 1 the manuscript has “land” instead of “halls,” which involves a metrical error. *Watch-towers*: the word used is identical with the name of Othin's watch-tower, Hlithskjolf (cf. *Grimnismol*, introductory prose). *Buthli*: the manuscript has “Bikki,” which has led some editors to transfer this stanza to the *Hamthesmol*, placing it between stanzas 16 and 17; it seems more likely, however, that “Bikki” was a scribal error for “Buthli.” Regarding Bikki cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 63 and note. Line 4 is apparently in Fornyrthislag.

15. En þar drakk Atli	Mid weapons and lances
...	did Atli his wine
vīn ī valhǫllu,	In the war-hall drink,
verþir sǫtu ūti,	without were his watchmen,

<p>at varða Gunnari, ef hans vitja kvæmi, með geiri gjallanda vekja gram hildi.</p>	<p>For Gunnar they waited, if forth he should go, With their ringing spears they would fight with the ruler.</p>
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Line 1 in the manuscript is apparently incorrectly copied, and some editions omit “Mid weapons and lances” and assume a gap in either line 1 or line 3.

<p>16. Systir fann þeira þegars í sal kvōmu brōþr hennar bāþir— bjōri vas litt drukkin: “Rāþinn est, Gunnarr! hvat munt, rīkr! vinna við Hūna harmbrōgþum? hōll gakk ōr snimma!</p>	<p>This their sister saw, as soon as her brothers Had entered the hall,— little ale had she drunk: “Betrayed art thou, Gunnar! what guard hast thou, hero, ’Gainst the plots of the Huns? from the hall flee swiftly!</p>
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<p>17. Betr hefþir, brōþir! at í brynju fōrir, sem hjōlmum † aringreypum at sea heim Atla, sǣtir þu í sōþlum sōlheiða daga, [nars nornir lētir naufþōlva grāta, Hūna skjaldmeyjar hervi kanna]</p>	<p>Brother, ’twere far better to have come in byrnie, With thy household helmed, to see Atli’s home, And to sit in the saddle all day ’neath the sun, [That the sword-norns might weep for the death-pale warriors, And the Hunnish shield-maids might shun not the sword,]</p>
--	--

en Atla sjalfan	And send Atli himself
lētir ī ormgarþ koma.	to the den of the snakes;
[nū's sã ormgarþr	[Now the den of the snakes
ykkir of folginn.]”	for thee is destined.]”

This may be the remains of two stanzas, the manuscript marks line 5 as beginning a new stanza. Editorial conjectures are numerous and varied. *Household*: the phrase is the same “helms round the hearth” commented on in stanza 3. Some editions insert a conjectural line after line 3. *Sword-norns*, etc.: the line is exceedingly obscure, and the phrase rendered “sword-norns” may mean “corpse-norns.” Apparently it refers to the warrior-women of the Huns, the “shield-maids” of line 5 and of stanza 45. Roman writers refer to the warrior-women among the early Germanic tribes, and the tradition, closely allied to that of the Valkyries, attached itself readily to the ferocious Huns. *Den of snakes*: concerning the manner of Gunnar’s death cf. *Drap Niflunga*.

Gunnar spake:

18.
...	...
“Seinat’s nū, systir!	“Too late is it, sister,
at samna Niflungum,	to summon the Niflungs,
langt es at leita	Long is it to come
lýþa sinnis til,	to the throng of our comrades,
of rosmufjöll Rīnar	The heroes gallant,
rekka ōneissa.”	from the hills of the Rhine.”

The manuscript indicates no lacuna and does not name the speaker; perhaps a line similar to line 1 of stanza 24 (or 26) should be inserted here. *Rhine*: Gunnar’s Burgundian home is here clearly localized. After this stanza it is probable that a passage describing the battle has been lost.

* * *

19. fengu þeir Gunnar	Then Gunnar they seized,
ok ī fjǫtur settu	and they set him in chains,

Borgunda hollvin, |
ok bundu fastla.

The Burgundians' king, |
and fast they bound him.

These two lines, apparently the remains of a full stanza, may belong after stanza 20. *Burgundians' king*: the phrase may mean “Burgundians' men,” i.e., they bound all the Burgundians who were left alive after the battle. This is the only place in the poems in which the name “Burgundian” appears; that the poet had no very clear conception of its meaning is indicated by the fact that in stanza 21 he calls Gunnar “king of the Goths.”

20. Sjau hjō Hogni |
sverþi hvōssu,
en enum ātta |
hratt ī eld heitan:
svā skal frōkn verjask |
fiḡndum . . .
sem Hogni varþi |
hendr . . .

Hogni slew seven |
with sword so keen,
And an eighth he flung |
in the fire hot;
A hero should fight |
with his foemen thus,
As Hogni strove |
in Gunnar's behalf.

Apparently a Fornyrthislag stanza, though most editions have attempted to expand the lines into Malahattr. The exploits of Hogni (Hagene), with the names of many of his victims, are told in the *Nibelungenlied*. *The fire*: in the *Nibelungenlied* Kriemhild has the hall set on fire, and the Burgundians fight amid the flames. Line 4 is clearly defective, and some editors regard the name “Gunnar” as all that is left of the first two lines of stanza 21.

21. . . . |
. . .
. . . |
. . . Gunnars;
frōgu frōknan, |
ef fjōr vildi
Gotna þjōþann |
golli kaupā.

. . . |
. . .
. . . |
. . .
The leader they asked |
if his life he fain
With gold would buy, |
the king of the Goths.

Again apparently the remains of a Fornyrthislag stanza. Editors have attempted various combinations of the lines. *Gold:* presumably Sigurth's treasure.

Gunnarr kvað:

22. "Hjarta skulumk Hogni |
 ī hendi liggja,
 blōþugt ōr brjōsti |
 skorit ballriþa
 saxi slīprbeitu, |
 syni þjōþkonungs."

Gunnar spake:

"First the heart of Hogni |
 shall ye lay in my hands,
 All bloody from the breast |
 of the bold one cut
 With keen-biting sword, |
 from the son of the king."

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker; perhaps a first line similar to line 1 of stanza 24 should appear here. Some editors, however, assume that a line is missing after line 3. Gunnar demands proof that Hogni is dead because, as stanza 29 shows, he is unwilling to die himself until he is assured that the secret of the treasure will perish with him. He did not, of course, intend that the heart should be cut from the living Hogni.

23. ... |
 ...
 skōru þeir hjarta |
 Hjalla ōr brjōsti
 ok ā bjōþ lōgþu, |
 bōru fyr Gunnar.

... |
 ...
 They cut out the heart |
 from the breast of Hjalli,
 On a platter they bore it, |
 and brought it to Gunnar.

Most editions assume a gap (lines 1–2, 2–3 or 3–4). *Hjalli:* Atli's cook, killed to deceive Gunnar, as Atli hoped to wring the secret of the hoard from Hogni if Gunnar remained silent. In the *Atlamol* (stanzas 59–60) Atli's men prepare to kill Hjalli, but he is spared at Hogni's intercession.

24. [Þā kvað þat Gunnarr, |
 gumna drōttinn:]

Then Gunnar spake forth, |
 the lord of the folk:

“Hēr hefk hjarta |
 Hjalla ens blauða,
 ōglíkt hjarta |
 Hogna ens frøkna,
 es mjök bifask |
 es ā bjōþi liggr,
 bifþisk hōlfu meirr |
 þās ī brjōsti lā.”

“Here have I the heart |
 of Hjalli the craven,
 Unlike to the heart |
 of Hogni the valiant,
 For it trembles still |
 as it stands on the platter;
 Twice more did it tremble |
 in the breast of the man.”

25. Hlō þā Hogni |
 es til hjarta skōru
 kvikvan kumblasmip, |
 klökkva sīzt hugþi;
 . . . |
 . . .
 þat ā bjōþ lōgþu, |
 bōru fyr Gunnar.

Then Hogni laughed |
 when they cut out the heart
 Of the living helm-hammerer; |
 tears he had not.
 . . . |
 . . .
 On a platter they bore it, |
 and brought it to Gunnar.

Helm-hammerer (literally “helmet-smith”): warrior, i.e., Hogni. No gap indicated in the manuscript.

26. [Mærr kvaþ þat Gunnarr |
 Geir-Niflung:]
 “Hēr hefk hjarta |
 Hogna ens frøkna,
 ōglíkt hjarta |
 Hjalla ens blauða,

Then Gunnar spake forth, |
 the spear of the Niflungs:
 “Here have I the heart |
 of Hogni the valiant,
 Unlike to the heart |
 of Hjalli the craven,

es litt bifask	Little it trembles
es ā bjōþi liggr,	as it lies on the platter,
bifþisk svāgi mjök	Still less did it tremble
þās ī brjōsti lā.	when it lay in his breast.

Line 1 may belong elsewhere (stanzas 18 or 22).

27. [Svā skalt, Atli!	So distant, Atli,
augum fjarri,	from all men's eyes,
sem <i>mættum</i> munt	Shalt thou be as thou
menjum verþa.	. . . from the gold.
.
.
.
.

Apparently the remains of two Fornyrthislag lines; the manuscript combines them with lines 1–2 of stanza 28. Gunnar foretells Atli's speedy death.

28. Es und einum mēr	To no one save me
oll of folgin	is the secret known
hodd Niflunga:	Of the Niflungs' hoard,
lifira Hogni;	now Hogni is dead;
ey <i>vorumk</i> tǣja,	Of old there were two,
meþan tveir lifpum,	while we twain were alive,
nū's mēr engi,	Now is none but I,
es einn lifik.]	for I only am living.

Apparently in Fornyrthislag. The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza, and many editions combine lines 3–4 with stanza 29. This stanza explains Gunnar's demand

for Hogni's heart in stanza 22.

29. Rīn skal nū rāþa	The swift Rhine shall hold
rōgmalmi skatna,	the strife-gold of heroes,
ō svinn, āskunnum	That once was the gods',
arfi Niflunga,	the wealth of the Niflungs,
ī veltanda vatni	In the depths of the waters
l̥ysask valbaugar,	the death-rings shall glitter,
heldr an ā hōndum	And not shine on the hands
skīni Hūna bōrnum."	of the Hunnish men."

The manuscript marks line 3, and not line 1, as the beginning of a stanza. *Rhine*, etc.: the stanza shows the blending of three different traditions with regard to the treasure: the German tradition of the gold of the Rhine (cf. *Völundarkvitha*, 16, and *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 16), the tradition, likewise German, of the hoard of the Nibelungen (Niflungs), early blended with the first one, and finally the northern tradition of the theft of Andvari's treasure by Othin, Hönir, and Loki (cf. *Reginmol*, 1–9).

Atli kvaþ:

30. "Ykviþ hvēlvōgnum,
haptr's nū ī bōndum!"

Atli spake:

"Ye shall bring the wagon,
for now is he bound."

Apparently all that is left of a full stanza. The manuscript does not name Atli as the speaker, and Grundtvig inserts:

Then Atli called, | the king of the Huns,

(Kallaþi nū Atli | konungr Hūna,)

as a first line. Some editors combine this line with the two lines of stanza 33. *Wagon*: in *Brot*, 16, Gunnar is led to his death in the serpents' den on horseback, not in a wagon.

* * *

31. †† Atli enn rīki	On the long-maned Glaum
reiþ Glaumi mōnum	rode Atli the great,

sleginn rōgþornum	About him were warriors
sifjungr þeira	. . .
Guprūn sigtīva	But Guthrun, akin
. . .	to the gods of slaughter,
varnaþi við tōrum	Yielded not to her tears
vapin ī þyshǫllu.	in the hall of tumult.

The stanza in the original is hopelessly confused. *Glaum*: this horse of Atli's is mentioned by name elsewhere. *Long-maned*: uncertain. The manuscript indicates no gap, but something has evidently been lost. *Gods of slaughter*: perhaps the phrase, usually applied to Othin and the other gods, is here used simply to mean "heroes," i.e., Atli, Gunnar, and Hogni. Line 4 suggests Guthrun's tearlessness after Sigurth's death (cf. *Guthrunarkvitha II, 11*)

Guprūn kvap:

32. "Svā gangi þēr, Atli! |
sem við Gunnar āttir
eiþa opt svarþa |
ok ār of nefnda,
at sōlu suprhǫllu |
ok at Sigty's bergi,
hǫlkvi hvīlbeþjar |
ok at hringi Ullar."

Guthrun spake:

"It shall go with thee, Atli, |
as with Gunnar thou heldest
The oaths oft-times sworn, |
and of old made firm,
By the sun in the south, |
by Sigtyr's mountain,
By the horse of the rest-bed, |
and the ring of Ull."

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker. *Sigtyr* ("Victory-God"): Othin; what particular mountain (if any) is meant is unknown. *Horse of the rest-bed*: probably this means "bedpost," i.e., the support of the marriage-bed. *Ull*: the archer god, cf. *Grimnismol, 5* and note. Nothing is known of his ring.

33. [Ok meirr þapan |
menvorþ bituls,
Then the champer of bits |
drew the chieftain great,

dolgrøgni, drō	The gold-guarder, down
til dauþs skōkr.	to the place of death.
...	...
...	...

Apparently the remains of a Fornyrthislag stanza. Some editors combine the two lines with the line here indicated as stanza 30. *Champer of bits*: horse. The manuscript indicates no gap.

34. Lifanda gram	By the warriors' host
lagþi ī garþ	was the living hero
þanns skriþinn vas,	Cast in the den
skatna mengi,	where crawling about
innan ormum,	Within were serpents,
en einn Gunnarr	but soon did Gunnar
heiptmōþr hōrþu	With his hand in wrath
hendi knīþi;	on the harp-strings smite;
glumþu strengir—	The strings resounded,—
svā skal golli	so shall a hero,
frōkn hringdrifi	A ring-breaker, gold
viþ fira halda.]	from his enemies guard.

Six Fornyrthislag lines which editors have tried to reconstruct in all sorts of ways. The manuscript marks line 5 as the beginning of a new stanza, Regarding the serpents' den, Gunnar's harp-playing, and the manner of his death, cf. *Drap Niflunga* and *Oddrunargrætr*, 27–30, and notes. In *Atlamol*, 62, Gunnar plays the harp with his feet, his hands being bound, and some editors change *hand* in line 4 to “foot.” Lines 5–6 may be interpolated, or, as Bugge maintains, lines 1–4 may have been expanded out of two lines.

35. Lēt þā Atli	Then Atli rode
lands sīns ā vit	on his earth-treading steed,

jō eyrskaan	Seeking his home,
aptr frā morþi;	from the slaughter-place;
dynr vas ī garþi,	There was clatter of hoofs
drōslum of þrungit,	of the steeds in the court,
vāpnsōngr virþa,	And the clashing of arms
es af víþi kvōmu.	as they came from the field.

The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza. Two (possibly three) of the lines appear to be in Fornyrthislag. *Field:* so the manuscript, involving a metrical error; many editions have “wood.”

36. Ūt gekk þā Guþrūn	Out then came Guthrun
Atla at mōti	to meeting with Atli,
meþ gyldum kalki	With a golden beaker
reiþa gjöld rōgni:	as gift to the monarch:
“Þiggja knātt, þengill!	“Thou mayst eat now, chieftain,
ī þinni hōllu	within thy dwelling,
glapr at Guþrūnu	Blithely with Guthrun
gnadda niflfarna.”	young beasts fresh slaughtered.”

Young beasts: Guthrun means Atli’s sons, Erp and Eitil, but of course he thinks she refers to newly slaughtered beasts; cf. *Guthrunarkvitha II*, 41–45.

37. Umþu ǫlskālir	The wine-heavy ale-cups
Atla vīnhōfgar,	of Atli resounded,
þās ī hōll saman	When there in the hall
Hūna bōrn tōlpusk;	the Hunnish youths clamored,
gumar gransīþir	And the warriors bearded,
gengu inn hvassir.	the brave ones, entered.

Youths: a conjectural addition. *The brave ones* is also conjectural, the manuscript having “each.” No gap indicated in the manuscript; some editions insert as line 3 or line 4 a slightly altered version of line 2 of stanza 45.

38. Skævaþi þā	Then in came the shining one,
en skīrleita	...
...	...
veigar þeim at bera;	and drink she bore them;
afkōr dīs jōfri	Unwilling and bitter
qlkrāsir valþi	brought she food to the warrior,
naupug neffolum,	Till in scorn to the white-faced
nīþ sagþi Atla:	Atli did she speak:

No gap indicated in the manuscript, but the two fragments cannot be fitted together as one line. *The shining one*: Guthrun.

39. “Suna hefr þinna,	“Thou giver of swords,
sverþa deilir!	of thy sons the hearts
hjórtu hrædreyrug	All heavy with blood
viþ hunang of tuggin;	in honey thou hast eaten;
melta knātt, mōþugr!	Thou shalt stomach, thou hero,
manna valbrāþir,	the flesh of the slain,
etnar qlkrāsir	To eat at thy feast,
ī qndugi sendar.	and to send to thy followers.

Giver of swords: generous prince, i.e., Atli. *Honey*: cf. *Guthrunarkvitha* II, 42. *To send to thy followers*: literally, “to send from thy high seat.”

40. [Kallara sīþan	Thou shalt never call
til knea þinna	to thy knees again

Erp nē Eitil |
 ǫlreifr tvaá;
 sēra sīþan |
 ī seti miþju
 golls miþlendr |
 geira skepta,
 [manar meita |
 nē mara keyra.]]”

Erp or Eitil, |
 when merry with ale;
 Thou shalt never see |
 in their seats again
 The sharers of gold |
 their lances shaping,
 [Clipping the manes |
 or minding their steeds.]]”

Apparently a Fornyrthislag stanza. *Merry with ale*: presumably this refers to Atli, but the manuscript reading makes it apply to the two boys. *Sharers of gold*: princes. Line 5 is either interpolated or all that is left of a separate stanza.

41. Ymr varþ ā bekkjum, |
 afkārr sǫngr virþa,
 gnýr und goþvefjum, |
 grētu bǫrn Hūna,
 nema ein Guþrūn, |
 es hōn æva grēt
 brøþr ena berhǫrþu |
 ne in heldr buri svāsa,
 unga, ðfrøþa |
 þās við Atla gat.

There was clamor on the benches, |
 and the cry of men,
 The clashing of weapons, |
 and weeping of the Huns,
 Save for Guthrun only, |
 she wept not ever
 For her bear-fierce brothers, |
 or the boys so dear,
 So young and so unhappy, |
 whom with Atli she had.

The text of the whole stanza has required a considerable amount of emendation. Lines 3–5 may have been expanded out of two lines, or line 5 may be an interpolation, possibly from stanza 12 of the *Guthrunarhvat*. *Weapons*: the word literally means “good-weaving,” and may refer to silken garments, but this hardly fits the noun here rendered “clashing.” *Wept not*: cf. stanza 31 and note.

42. Golli sœri Guþrūn | Gold did she scatter, |
 en gaglþjarta the swan-white one,
 ok hringum rauþum | And rings of red gold |
 hūskarla reifþi; to the followers gave she;
 sköþ lēt hōn vaxa, | The fate she let grow, |
 en skīran malm vaða, and the shining wealth go,
 æva fljōþ etki | Nor spared she the treasure |
 gāþi fjarghūsa. of the temple itself.

Line 1 appears to be in Fornyrthislag. Guthrun distributes Atli's treasures among his followers apparently to prevent their wrath at the slaying of Erp and Eitil from turning against her; Atli, as stanza 43 shows, is too drunk to realize or prevent what she is doing.

43. Ōvarr vas Atli, | Unwise then was Atli, |
 ōþan hafþisk drukkit, he had drunk to wildness,
 vāpn hafþi etki, | No weapon did he have, |
 varnaþit við Guþrūnu; and of Guthrun bewared not;
 opt vas leikr betri, | Oft their play was better |
 þās þau lint skyldu when both in gladness
 optarr umb faþmask | Each other embraced |
 † fyr oþlingum. among princes all.

The second half of line 4 is apparently an error, but none of the editorial suggestions have improved it.

44. Hōn beþjum broddi | With her sword she gave blood |
 gaf blōþ at drekka, for the bed to drink,
 hendi helfūssi, | With her death-dealing hand, |
 ok hvelpa leysti, and the hounds she loosed,

hratt fyr hallar dyrr	The thralls she awakened,
— hūskarla vakþi—	and a firebrand threw
brandi brūþr heitum:	In the door of the hall;
þau lēt brøþra gjöld.	so vengeance she had.

Guthrun allows the dogs and the house-thralls, who had no part in Gunnar's death, to escape before she burns the dwelling with all who are left therein. In *Atlamol*, stanzas 83–84, Atli is slain by a son of Hogni (Hniflung?) with Guthrun's help.

45. Eldi gaf alla	To the flames she gave all
es inni vōru	who yet were within,
ok frā morþi Gunnars	And from Myrkheim had come
kvōmu ōr Myrkheimi;	from the murder of Gunnar;
[forn timbr fellu,	The timbers old fell,
fjarghūs ruku,]	the temple was in flames,
bōr brann Buþlunga,	The dwelling of the Buthlungs,
brunnu ok skjaldmeyjar	and the shield-maids burned,
inni aldrstamar,	They were slain in the house,
hnigu ī eld heitan.	in the hot flames they sank.

Some editions transfer line 2 to stanza 37; others reject line 3 as interpolated. *Myrkheim* ("Dark-Home"): probably identical with Myrkwood; cf. stanza 3. *Temple*: probably both here and in stanza 42 the word means little more than the place where Atli's treasures were kept; the poet was by no means literal in his use of terms connected with the heathen religion. *Buthlungs*: sons of Buthli, i.e., Atli and his family. *Shield-maids*: cf. stanza 17 and note.

46. [Fullrøtt's of þetta,	Now the tale is all told,
ferrat svā sīþan	nor in later time
brūþr ī brynju	Will a woman in byrnie
brøþra at hefna;	avenge so her brothers;

hōn hefr þriggja |
þjōþkonunga
banorþ borit |
bjōrt, āþr sylti.]

The fair one to three |
of the kings of the folk
Brought the doom of death |
ere herself she died.

The entire stanza is very likely a later addition. *Three kings*: Atli and his two sons, Erp and Eitil.

Enn segir gløggra ī Atlamālum enum
grönlenszkum.

Still more is told in the Greenland ballad of Atli.

Atlamol en Grönlenzku

The Greenland Ballad of Atli

Introductory Note

Many of the chief facts regarding the *Atlamol*, which follows the *Atlakvitha* in the *Codex Regius*, are outlined in the introductory note to the *earlier Atli lay*. That the superscription in the manuscript is correct, and that the poem was actually composed in Greenland, is generally accepted; the specific reference to polar bears (stanza 17), and the general color of the entire poem make this origin exceedingly likely. Most critics, again, agree in dating the poem nearer 1100 than 1050. As to its state of preservation there is some dispute, but, barring one or two possible gaps of some importance, and the usual number of passages in which the interpolation or omission of one or two lines may be suspected, the *Atlamol* has clearly come down to us in fairly good shape.

Throughout the poem the epic quality of the story itself is overshadowed by the romantically sentimental tendencies of the poet, and by his desire to adapt the narrative to the understanding of his fellow-Greenlanders. The substance of the poem is the same as that of the *Atlakvitha*; it tells of Atli's message to the sons of Gjuki, their journey to Atli's home, the slaying of Hogni and Gunnar, Guthrun's bitterness over the death of her brothers, and her bloody revenge on Atli. Thus in its bare out line the *Atlamol* represents simply the Frankish blending of the legends of the slaughter of the Burgundians and the death of Attila (cf. *Gripisspo*, introductory note). But here the resemblance ends. The poet has added characters, apparently of his own creation, for the sake of episodes which would appeal to both the men and the women of the Greenland settlement. Sea voyages take the place of journeys by land; Atli is reproached, not for cowardice in battle, but for weakness at the Thing or great council. The additions made by the poet are responsible for the *Atlamol*'s being the longest of all the heroic poems in the Eddic collection, and they give it a kind of emotional vividness, but it has little of the compressed intensity of the older poems. Its greatest interest lies in its demonstration of the manner in which a story brought to the North from the South Germanic lands could be adapted to the understanding and tastes of its eleventh century hearers without any material change of the basic narrative.

In what form or forms the story of the Gjukungs and Atli reached the Greenland poet cannot be determined, but it seems likely that he was familiar with older poems on the subject, and possibly with the *Atlakvitha* itself. That the details which are peculiar to the *Atlamol*, such as the figures of Kostbera and Glaumvor, existed in earlier tradition seems doubtful, but the son of Hogni, who aids Guthrun in the slaying of Atli, appears, though under another name, in other late versions of the story, and it is impossible to say just how

much the poet relied on his own imagination and how far he found suggestions and hints in the prose or verse stories of Atli with which he was familiar.

The poem is in Malahattr (cf. [Introduction](#)) throughout, the verse being far more regular than in the [Atlakvitha](#). The compilers of the *Volsungasaga* evidently knew it in very much the form in which we now have it, for in the main it is paraphrased with great fidelity.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Frétt hefr ǫld öfō
 þās endr of gǫrþu
 seggir samkundu:
 sū vas nýt fæstum;
 ðxtu einmæli,
 yggt vas þeim sīþan
 ok et sama sunum Gjūka,
 es vōru sannrāþnir.</p> | <p>There are many who know
 how of old did men
 In counsel gather;
 little good did they get;
 In secret they plotted,
 it was sore for them later,
 And for Gjuki's sons,
 whose trust they deceived.</p> |
|---|--|

Men: Atli and his advisers, with whom he planned the death of the sons of Gjuki, Gunnar and Hogni. The poet's reference to the story as well known explains the abruptness of his introduction, without the mention of Atli's name, and his reference to Guthrun in stanza 3 simply as "the woman" ("husfreyja," goddess of the house).

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>2. Skǫp ǫxu skjǫldunga:
 skyldu þeir feigir;
 illa rēzk Atla,
 ātti þō hyggju;
 feldi stoþ stōra,
 strīddi sēr harþla,
 af bragþi boþ sendi,
 at kvæmi brātt māgar.</p> | <p>Fate grew for the princes,
 to death they were given;
 Ill counsel was Atli's,
 though keenness he had;
 He felled his staunch bulwark,
 his own sorrow fashioned,
 Soon a message he sent
 that his kinsmen should seek him.</p> |
|--|--|

Princes: Atli, Gunnar, and Hogni. *Bulwark:* Atli's slaying of his wife's brothers, who were

ready to support and defend him in his greatness, was the cause of his own death.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>3. Horsk vas hūsfreyja,
 hugði at mannviti,
 lag heyrði orða,
 hvat ā laun mæltu;
 þā vas vant vitri,
 vildi þeim hjalpa:
 skyldu of sǣ sigla,
 en sjölf nē kvamskat.</p> | <p>Wise was the woman,
 she fain would use wisdom,
 She saw well what meant
 all they said in secret;
 From her heart it was hid
 how help she might render,
 The sea they should sail,
 while herself she should go not.</p> |
|---|---|

The woman: Guthrun, concerning whose marriage to Atli cf. *Guthrunarkvitha II*. *The sea:* a late and essentially Greenland variation of the geography of the Atli story. Even the *Atlakvitha*, perhaps half a century earlier, separates Atli's land from that of the Gjukungs only by a forest.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>4. Rūnar nam rīsta,
 rengði þær Vingi
 — fārs vas flýtandi —,
 āþr hann fram seldi;
 fōru þā sīþan
 sendimenn Atla
 fjarri of fjorþ Lima,
 þars frœknir bjoggu.</p> | <p>Runes did she fashion,
 but false Vingi made them,
 The speeder of hatred,
 ere to give them he sought;
 Then soon fared the warriors
 whom Atli had sent,
 And to Limafjord came,
 to the home of the kings.</p> |
|---|--|

Runes: on the two versions of Guthrun's warning, and also on the name of the messenger (here *Vingi*), cf. *Drap Niflunga* and note. *Limafjord:* probably the Limfjord of northern Jutland, an important point in the wars of the eleventh century. The name was derived from "Eylimafjorþ," i. e., Eylimi's fjord. The poet may really have thought that the kingdom of the Burgundians was in Jutland, or he may simply have taken a well-known name for the sake of vividness.

5. Qlværir urðu | They were kindly with ale, |
 ok elda kyndu, and fires they kindled,
hugðu vætr vēla | They thought not of craft |
 es vōru komnir; from the guests who had come;
tōku þeir fōrnir | The gifts did they take |
 es þeim frīþr sendi, that the noble one gave them,
hengðu ā sūlu, | On the pillars they hung them, |
 hugþut þat varþa. no fear did they harbor.

Some editors assume a gap after this stanza.

6. Kvam þā Kostbera | Forth did Kostbera, |
 —kvæn vas hōn Hōgna— wife of Hogni, then come,
kona kapps gālig, | Full kindly she was, |
 ok kvaddi þā bāþa; and she welcomed them both;
glōþ vas ok Glaumvōr, | And glad too was Glaumvor, |
 es Gunnarr ātti, the wife of Gunnar,
fellskat saþr sviþri, | She knew well to care |
 sýsti of þōrf gesta. for the needs of the guests.

Some editions place this stanza between stanzas 7 and 8. *Kostbera* (“The Giver of Food”) and *Glaumvor* (“The Merry”): presumably creations of the poet. *Both*: Atli’s two emissaries, Vingi and the one here unnamed (Knefrōth?).

7. Buðu þeir heim Hōgna | Then Hogni they asked |
 ef þā heldr fōri: if more eager he were,
sýn vas sviþvīsi, | Full clear was the guile, |
 ef þeir sīn gæþi; if on guard they had been;

hēt þā ferþ Gunnarr, |
 ef Hogni vildi,
 Hogni þvī hlitti, |
 es hinn of rēþi.

Then Gunnar made promise, |
 if Hogni would go,
 And Hogni made answer |
 as the other counseled.

It is altogether probable that a stanza has been lost between stanzas 6 and 7, in which Gunnar is first invited, and replies doubtfully. *Made promise*: many editions emend the text to read “promised the journey.” The text of line 4 is obscure; the manuscript reads “nitti” (“refused”), which many editors have changed to “hlitti,” which means exactly the opposite.

8. Bōru mjōþ mærar, |
 margs vas alls beini,
 fōr þar fjōlþ horna, |
 unz vas fulldrukkit;
 . . . |
 . . .
 hīu gōrþu hvīlu |
 sem þeim hōgst þōtti.

Then the famed ones brought mead, |
 and fair was the feast,
 Full many were the horns, |
 till the men had drunk deep;
 . . . |
 . . .
 Then the mates made ready |
 their beds for resting.

No gap is indicated in the manuscript; Bugge adds (line 3):

Then the warriors rose, | and to slumber made ready.

(risu at þat rekkar, | rēþusk þeir at sofna.)

The manuscript indicates line 4 as beginning a new stanza, and some editions make a separate stanza out of lines 1–2. Others suggest the loss of a line after line 4.

9. Kend vas Kostbera, |
 kunni skil rūna,
 inti orþstafi |
 at eldi ljōsum;

Wise was Kostbera, |
 and cunning in rune-craft,
 The letters would she read |
 by the light of the fire;

gæta varþ tungu |
ī gōma bāþa:
vōru svā viltar, |
at vas vant at rāþa.

But full quickly her tongue |
to her palate clave,
So strange did they seem |
that their meaning she saw not.

The manuscript does not indicate line 1 as the beginning of a stanza; cf. note on stanza 8.

10. Sæing fōru sīþan |
sīna þau Hogni
... |
...
dreympī drōttlāta, |
dulþi þess vætki,
sagþi horsk hilmi, |
þegars hōn rēþ vakna:

Full soon then his bed |
came Hogni to seek,
... |
...
The clear-souled one dreamed, |
and her dream she kept not,
To the warrior the wise one |
spake when she awakened:

Some editions combine this stanza with lines 1–2 of stanza 11. The manuscript indicates no gap. Grundtvig adds (line 2):

But sleep to the woman | so wise came little.

(seint um sofnafi | svinn hūsfreyja.)

11. “Heiman gørisk, Hogni! |
hygg þū at rōþum
— fār es fullrýninn! — |
far ī sinn annat!
rēþ ek þær rūnar |
es reist þīn systir:
björt hefr þēr eigi |
boþit ī sinn þetta.

“Thou wouldst go hence, |
Hogni, but heed my counsel,—
Known to few are the runes,— |
and put off thy faring;
I have read now the runes |
that thy sister wrote,
And this time the bright one |
did not bid thee to come.

Some editions make a separate stanza out of lines 1–2, or combine them with stanza 10, and combine lines 3–4 with stanza 12 (either lines 1–4 or 1–2). The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>12. Eitt ek mest undrumk:
 mākat enn hyggja,
 hvat þā varþ vitri,
 es skyldi vilt rīsta;
 svā vas ā vīsat,
 sem undir vāri
 bani ykkarr beggja,
 ef brāpla kvæmiþ.
 [vant es stafs vīfi,
 eþa valda aprir.]”</p> | <p>Full much do I wonder,
 nor well can I see,
 Why the woman wise
 so wildly hath written;
 But to me it seems
 that the meaning beneath
 Is that both shall be slain
 if soon ye shall go.
 But one rune she missed,
 or else others have marred it.”</p> |
|--|---|

Line 5 may be spurious, or else all that is left of a lost stanza. The manuscript marks it as the beginning of a new stanza, which, as the text stands, is clearly impossible.

Hogni kvaþ:

- 13.** “Allar’u illūþgar, |
 ākkak þess kynni,
 vilkak lās leita, |
 nema launa eigim;
 okkr mun gramr golli |
 reifa glōþraupu,
 oumk ek aldrigi, |
 þōt vēr ōgn fregnim.”

Hogni spake:

- “All women are fearful; |
 not so do I feel,
 Ill I seek not to find |
 till I soon must avenge it;
 The king now will give us |
 the glow-ruddy gold;
 I never shall fear, |
 though of dangers I know.”

The manuscript, followed by some editions, has “Hogni spake” in the middle of line 1. *III:*

the manuscript and many editions have “this.” *The king*: Atli.

Kostbera kvað:

14. “Stopalt munuþ ganga, |
 ef it stundiþ þangat,
 ykkur mun āstkynni |
 eigi ī sinn þetta;
 dreympī mik, Hogni! |
 — dyljumk þat eigi —:
 ganga mun andāris, |
 eþa ella hræþumk.

Kostbera spake:

“In danger ye fare, |
 if forth ye go thither,
 No welcoming friendly |
 this time shall ye find;
 For I dreamed now, Hogni, |
 and nought will I hide,
 Full evil thy faring, |
 if rightly I fear.

The manuscript does not indicate the speakers in this dialogue between Kostbera and Hogni (stanzas 14–19). Two line, may possibly have been lost after line 2, filling out stanza 14 and making stanza 15 (then consisting of lines 3–4 of stanza 14 and lines 1–2 of stanza 15) the account of Kostbera’s first dream. The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza. In any case, the lost lines cannot materially have altered the meaning.

15. Blæju sāk þīna |
 brinna ī eldi,
 hryti hōr logi |
 hūs mīn ī gøgnum.”

Hogni kvað:

“Liggja līnklæþi |
 þaus ēr litt rōkiþ:
 þau munu brātt brinna, |
 þars þū blæju sātt.”

Thy bed-covering saw I |
 in the flames burning,
 And the fire burst high |
 through the walls of my home.”

Hogni spake:

“Yon garment of linen |
 lies little of worth,
 It will soon be burned, |
 so thou sawest the bed-cover.”

Saw I: the manuscript here, as also in stanzas 16, 18, 21, 22, and 24, has “methought,” which involves a metrical error. Some editors regard lines 3–4 as the remains of a four-line stanza. Regarding Kostbera’s warning dreams, and Hogni’s matter-of-fact interpretations

of them, cf. *Guthrunarkvitha* II, 39–44.

Kostbera kvað:

16. “Björn sāk inn kominn, |
bryti upp stokka,
hristi svā hramma, |
at vēr hrædd yrþim;
munni oss mǫrg hefþi, |
svāt mættim etki:
þar vas ok þrǫmmun |
þeygi svā lītil.”

Kostbera spake:

“A bear saw I enter, |
the pillars he broke,
And he brandished his claws |
so that craven we were;
With his mouth seized he many, |
and nought was our might,
And loud was the tumult, |
not little it was.”

The meaning of the first half of line 3 in the original is obscure.

Hogni kvað:

17. “Veþr mun þar vaxa, |
verþa ött snimma:
hvītabjörn hugþir — |
þar mun hregg austan.”

Hogni spake:

“Now a storm is brewing, |
and wild it grows swiftly,
A dream of an ice-bear |
means a gale from the east.”

Two lines may have been lost after line 2, but the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase gives no clue. *Ice-bear*: polar bears, common in Greenland, are very rarely found in Iceland, and never in Norway, a fact which substantiates the manuscript’s reference to Greenland as the home of the poem.

Kostbera kvað:

18. “Ǫrn sāk inn fljūga |
at endlǫngu hūsi:
mun oss drjūgt deilask, |
dreifþi oss ǫll blōþi;

Kostbera spake:

“An eagle I saw flying |
from the end through the house,
Our fate must be bad, |
for with blood he sprinkled us;

... |

...

hugþak af heitum, |
at væri hamr Atla.”

... |

...

From the evil I fear |
that 'twas Atli's spirit.”

The manuscript indicates no gap, but most editors assume the loss of a line after line 1 or 2; Grundtvig adds, after line 1:

Black were his feathers, | with blood was he covered.

(svörtum vængjum, | sveita vas hann mjök stokkinn.)

Atli's spirit: the poet's folk-lore seems here a bit weak. Presumably he means such a female following-spirit (“fylgja”) as appears in *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, prose following stanza 34 (cf. note thereon), but the word he uses, “hamr” (masculine) means “skin,” “shape.” He may, however, imply that Atli had assumed the shape of an eagle for this occasion.

Hogni kvað:

19. “Slōtrum sýsliga, |
säum þā roþru:
opt's þat fyr øxnum, |
es ornu dreymir;
heill es hugr Atla, |
hvatkis þik dreymir.”
Lokit þvī lētu, |
līddi hver rōþa.

Hogni spake:

“They will slaughter soon, |
and so blood do we see,
Oft oxen it means |
when of eagles one dreams;
True is Atli's heart, |
whatever thou dreamest.”
Then silent they were, |
and nought further they said.

The manuscript indicates line 4 as beginning a new stanza.

20. Voknuþu velborin, |
vas þar sams dōmi,
gættisk þess Glaumvōr, |
at væri grand svefna.

The high-born ones wakened, |
and like speech they had,
Then did Glaumvor tell |
how in terror she dreamed,

...	...
...	...
... við Gunnarr	... Gunnar
at faa tvær leiðir.	two roads they should go.

The manuscript indicates no gap, but none of the many attempted emendations have made sense out of the words as they stand. The proper location for the missing words is sheer guesswork. *Two roads*: probably the meaning is that their way (i. e., their success) would be doubtful.

Glaumvör kvæð:

21. “Görvan sāk þær galga, |
gengir at hanga,
æti þik ormar, |
yrðak þik kvikvan;
... |
...
gørþisk rök ragna: |
rāþ hvat þat væri.”

Glaumvor spake:

“A gallows saw I ready, |
thou didst go to thy hanging,
Thy flesh serpents ate, |
and yet living I found thee;
... |
...
The gods’ doom descended; |
now say what it boded.”

The manuscript does not indicate the speakers in this dialogue (stanzas 21–26). No gap is indicated after line 2. Most editors assume the loss of two lines or of a full stanza after stanza 21 giving Gunnar’s interpretation of Glaumvor’s dream, but the *Volsungasaga* gives no clue, as it does not mention this first dream at all. Grundtvig suggests as Gunnar’s answer:

Banners are gleaming, | since of gallows didst dream,
And wealth it must mean | that thou serpents didst watch.

(Gnæfir gunnfani, | þar er þū galga hugðir,
auðr mun þrinn, | þar er orma dreymir.)

Gods’ doom: an odd, and apparently mistaken, use of the phrase “ragna rök” (cf. *Voluspo*,

introductory note).

* * *

22. “Blōþgan sāk mæki |
 borinn ór serk þīnum
 — illt es svefn slīkan |
 segja nauþmanni — ,
 geir hugþak standa |
 ī gøgnum þik miþjan,
 emjuþu ulfar |
 ā endum bōþum.”

“A sword drawn bloody |
 from thy garments I saw, —
 Such a dream is hard |
 o a husband to tell, —
 A spear stood, methought, |
 through thy body thrust,
 And at head and feet |
 the wolves were howling.”

Gunnarr kvaþ:

23. “Rakkar þar rinna, |
 rāþask mjök geyja,
 opt verþr glaumr hunda |
 fyr geira flaugun.”

Gunnar spake:

“The hounds are running, |
 loud their barking is heard,
 Oft hounds’ clamor follows |
 the flying of spears.”

Perhaps two lines have been lost after line 2. Possibly the concluding phrase of line 2 should be “bloody spears,” as in the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase.

Glaumvǫr kvaþ:

24. Ǫ sāk inn rinna |
 at endlǫngu hūsi,
 þyti af þjōsti, |
 þeystisk of bekki,
 bryti fōtr ykkra |
 brōþra hēr tveggja,

Glaumvor spake:

“A river the length |
 of the hall saw I run,
 Full swiftly it roared, |
 o’er the benches it swept;
 O’er the feet did it break |
 of ye brothers twain,

gørþit vatn vægja: |
vesa mun þat fyr nekkvi.”

The water would yield not; |
some meaning there was.”

Again Gunnar’s interpretation is missing, and most editors either assume a gap or construct two Malahattr lines out of the *Volsungasaga* prose paraphrase, which runs: “The grain shall flow, since thou hast dreamed of rivers, and when we go to the fields, often the chaff rises above our feet.” (“Þar munu renna akrar, er þū hugþir āna, ok er vēr gongum akrinn, nema opt stōrar agnir fœtr vāra.”)

* * *

25. “Konur hugþak dauþar |
koma ī nōtt hingat,
væri vart būnar, |
vildi þik kjōsa,
byþi þēr brāþliga |
til bekkja sinna:
ek kveþ aflima |
orþnar þēr dīsir.”

“I dreamed that by night |
came dead women hither,
Sad were their garments, |
and thee were they seeking;
They bade thee come swiftly |
forth to their benches,
And nothing, methinks, |
could the Norns avail thee. ”

The meaning of line 4 is uncertain, but apparently it refers to the guardian spirits or lesser Norns (cf. *Fafnismol*, 12–13 and notes).

Gunnarr kvaþ:

26. “Seinat’s at segja, |
svā es nū rāþit:
forþumka furþu, |
alls þō’s fara ætlat,
mart es mjōk glīkligt |
at munim skammæir.”

Gunnar spake:

“Too late is thy speaking, |
for so is it settled
From the faring I turn not, |
the going is fixed,
Though likely it is |
that our lives shall be short.”

Possibly a line has been lost from this stanza.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 27. Litu es lýsti,
lētusk þeir fūsir
allir upp rīsa,
önnur þau löttu;
föru fimm saman,
— fleiri til vöru
hölfu hūskarlar —:
hugat vas því illa. | Then bright shone the morning,
the men all were ready,
They said, and yet each
would the other hold back;
Five were the warriors,
and their followers all
But twice as many, —
their minds knew not wisdom. |
|---|--|

Five: Gunnar, Hogni, and the three mentioned in stanza 28.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 28. Snævarr ok Sölarr,
synir vöru Högna,
Orkning þann hētu
es þeim enn fylgði,
blíþr vas þörr skjaldar
bröþir hans kvānar;
föru fagrbūnar,
unz þau fjörþr skilþi;
löttu æ ljōsar,
lētuat heldr segjask. | Snævar and Solar,
they were sons of Hogni,
Orkning was he called
who came with the others,
Blithe was the shield-tree,
the brother of Kostbera;
The fair-decked ones followed,
till the fjord divided them,
Full hard did they plead,
but the others would hear not. |
|---|---|

Perhaps a line has been lost before line 1; Grundtvig supplies:

Gunnar and Hogni, | the heirs twain of Gjuki.

(Gunnarr ok Hogni, | Gjūka arfar bāþir.)

Snævar (the manuscript here has “Snevar”), *Solar* and *Orkning* appear only in this poem and in the prose narratives based on it. Lines 2–3 may have been expanded out of one line, or possibly line 3 is spurious. The manuscript indicates line 4 as beginning a new

stanza, and many editions make a separate stanza out of lines 4–5, many of them assuming the loss of two lines. *Shield-tree*: warrior (Orkning), here identified as Kostbera’s brother. *Fair-decked ones*: women, i. e., Glaumvor and Kostbera. *Fjord*: perhaps specifically the Limafjord mentioned in stanza 4.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>29. Glaumvǫr kvað at orði,
 es Gunnarr átti,
 mælti við Vinga,
 sem henni vert þótti:
 “Veitkak ef verð launið
 at vilja ossum;
 glöpr es gests kvāma,
 ef í gørisk nekkvat.”</p> | <p>Then did Glaumvor speak forth,
 the wife of Gunnar,
 To Vingi she said
 that which wise to her seemed:
 “I know not if well
 thou requitest our welcome,
 Full ill was thy coming
 if evil shall follow.”</p> |
| <p>30. Svarði þā Vingi,
 sēr rēð litt eira
 ...
 ...:
 “Eigi hann jøtnar,
 ef at yðr lygi,
 galgi gørvallan,
 ef ā grið hygði!”</p> | <p>Then did Vingi swear,
 and full glib was his speech,
 ...
 ...
 “May giants now take me
 if lies I have told ye,
 And the gallows if hostile
 thought did I have.”</p> |

The manuscript indicates no gap. Grundtvig inserts (line 2):

The evil was clear | when his words he uttered.

(opin vas þō illūð, | es hann orð mælti.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>31. Bera kvað at orði
 blīp ī hug sīnum
 . . .
 . . .
 “Siglīp ēr sǣlir
 ok sigr of ārnīþ,
 fari sem fyrir mǣlik,
 fǣsk eigi þvī nīta!”</p> | <p>Then did Bera speak forth,
 and fair was her thought,
 . . .
 . . .
 “May ye sail now happy,
 and victory have,
 To fare as I bid ye,
 may nought your way bar.”</p> |
|---|---|

Bera: Kostbera; the first element in compound feminine proper names was not infrequently omitted; cf. Hild for Brynhild (*Helreith Brynhildar*, 6). The manuscript indicates no gap; Grundtvig inserts (line 2):

And clear was her cry | to her kinsmen dear.

(niþjum nābornum | nam hōn gott gala.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>32. Hogni þat mǣlti,
 hugði gott nōnum:
 “Huggizk it, horskar!
 hvēgis þat gǫrvisk;
 mǣla þat margir,
 missir þō stōrum:
 mǫrgum rǣþr litlu,
 hvē verþr leiddr heiman.”</p> | <p>Then Hogni made answer,—
 dear held he his kin,—
 “Take courage, ye wise ones,
 whatsoever may come;
 Though many may speak,
 yet is evil oft mighty,
 And words avail little
 to lead one homeward.”</p> |
|---|--|

Hogni’s method of cheering his wife and sister-in-law is somewhat unusual, for the meaning of lines 3–4 is that good wishes and blessings are of little use in warding off danger.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>33. Sǫusk til sīþan,
 āþr ī sundr hyrfi;</p> | <p>They tenderly looked
 till each turned on his way,</p> |
|--|---|

þā hykk sköp skiptu, |
skilþusk vegir þeira.

Then with changing fate |
were their farings divided.

Perhaps two lines have been lost after line 2; Grundtvig supplies:

Then weeping did | Glaumvor go to her rest-bed,
And sadly did Bera | her spinning wheel seek.

(Glaumvör grātandi | gekk til hvílbéðjar,
Bera brosandi | borða nam rekja.)

34. Roa nōmu rīki, |
rifu kjöl halfan,
beystu bakföllum, |
brugþusk heldr reiðir;
hömlur slitnuðu, |
hæir brotnuðu,
gørþut far festa, |
āþr þeir frā hyrfi.

Full stoutly they rowed, |
and the keel clove asunder,
Their backs strained at the oars, |
and their strength was fierce;
The oar-loops were burst, |
the thole-pins, were broken,
Nor the ship made they fast |
ere from her they fared.

Keel, etc.: in the *Nibelungenlied*, and presumably in the older German tradition, Hagene breaks his oar steering the Burgundians across the Danube (stanza 1564), and, after all have landed, splinters the boat (stanza 1581) in order that there may be no retreating. The poet here seems to have confused the story, connecting the breaking of the ship's keel with the violence of the rowing, but echoing the older legend in the last line, wherein the ship is allowed to drift away after the travellers have landed. *Oar-loops*: the thongs by which the oars in a Norse boat were made fast to the thole-pins, the combination taking the place of the modern oarlock.

35. Litlu ok lengra |
— lok munk þess segja—
bō sōu þeir standa |
es Buþli ātti;

Not long was it after— |
the end must I tell—
That the home they beheld |
that Buthli once had;

hōtt hrikþu grindir, |
 es Hogni knīþi,
 orþ kvaþ þā Vingi, |
 þats ōn betr vāri.

Loud the gates resounded |
 when Hogni smote them;
 Vingi spake then a word |
 that were better unsaid:

The manuscript indicates line 4 as beginning a new stanza, and many editions combine it with stanza 36, some of them assuming the loss of a line from stanza 35. In the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase the second half of line 4 is made a part of Vingi's speech: "Better had ye left this undone."

36. "Fariþ firr hūsi |
 — flātt es til sōkja,
 brātt hefk ykkir brenda, |
 bragþs skuluþ ēr hōggvir,
 fagrt baþk ykkir kvōmu, |
 flātt vas þō undir —
 ella heþan bīþiþ, |
 meþan hōkk yþr galga!"

"Go ye far from the house, |
 for false is its entrance,
 Soon shall I burn you, |
 ye are swiftly smitten;
 I bade ye come fairly, |
 but falseness was under,
 Now bide ye afar |
 while your gallows I fashion."

Cf. note on preceding stanza; the manuscript does not indicate line 1 as beginning a stanza. Line 3 may be spurious.

37. Hitt kvaþ þā Hogni, |
 hugþi litt vāgja,
 varr at vettugi, |
 es varþ at reyna:
 "Hirþa oss hræþa, |
 haf þat fram sjaldan!
 ef þū eykr orþi, |
 illt munt þēr lengja."

Then Hogni made answer, |
 his heart yielded little,
 And nought did he fear |
 that his fate held in store:
 "Seek not to affright us, |
 thou shalt seldom succeed;
 If thy words are more, |
 then the worse grows thy fate."

In the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase the second half of line 1 and the first half of line 2 are included in Hogni's speech.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 38. Hrundu þeir Vinga
ok ī hel drōþu,
øxar at lōgþu,
meþan ī ōnd hixti. | Then Vingi did they smite,
and they sent him to hell,
With their axes they clove him
while the death rattle came. |
|---|--|

Possibly two lines have been lost after line 2.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 39. Flykþusk þeir Atli
ok fōru ī brynjur,
gengu svā gōrvir,
at vas garþr milli. | Atli summoned his men,
in mail-coats they hastened,
All ready they came,
and between was the courtyard. |
|---|--|

It is probable that a considerable passage has been lost between stanzas 39 and 40, for the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase includes a dialogue at this point. The manuscript indicates no gap, and most editions combine stanzas 39 and 40 as a single stanza. The prose passage, indicating the substance of what, if any thing, is lost, runs as follows: “ ‘Be welcome among us, and give me that store of gold which is ours by right, the gold that Sigurth had, and that now belongs to Guthrun.’ Gunnar said: ‘Never shalt thou get that gold, and men of might shalt thou find here, ere we give up our lives, if it is battle thou dost offer us; in truth it seems that thou hast prepared this feast in kingly fashion, and with little grudging toward eagle and wolf.’ ” The demand for the treasure likewise appears in the *Nibelungenlied*.

* * *

- | | |
|--|---|
| 40. Urþusk ā orþum
allir senn reiþir:
“Fyrr vōrum fullrāþa
at firra yþr līfi.” | Then came they to words,
and full wrathful they were:
“Long since did we plan
how soon we might slay you.” |
|--|---|

These two lines, which most editions combine with stanza 39, may be the first or last two

of a four-line stanza. The *Volsungasaga* gives Atli's speech very much as it appears here.

Hogni spake:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 41. “A sēr þat illa,
ef hafþ āþr rāþit;
enn eruþ ōbūnir,
ok hōfum einn feldan,
lamþan til heljar:
liþs vas sā ypvars.” | “Little it matters
if long ye have planned it;
For unarmed do ye wait,
and one have we felled,
We smote him to hell,
of your host was he once.” |
|--|--|

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker; Grundtvig adds as a first line:

Then Hogni laughed loud | where the slain Vingi lay.

(Hlō þā Hogni, | stē of hræ Vinga.)

Many editors assume the loss of a line somewhere in the stanza. *Unarmed*: Hogni does not see Atli's armed followers, who are on the other side of the courtyard (stanza 39). *One*: Vingi.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 42. Ōþir þā urþu,
es þat orþ heyrþu:
forþuþu fingrum
ok fengu ī snōri,
skutu skarpliga
ok skjoldum hlīfþusk. | Then wild was their anger
when all heard his words;
Their fingers were swift
on their bowstrings to seize,
Full sharply they shot,
by their shields were they guarded. |
|--|---|

Most editors assume the loss of one line, after either line 1 or line 3.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 43. Inn kwam andspilli,
hvat ūti drýgþu | In the house came the word
how the heroes with out |
|---|---|

hvatir fyr hǫllu:	Fought in front of the hall;
heyrbu þræl segja;	they heard a thrall tell it;
ǫtul vas þā Guþrūn,	Grim then was Guthrun,
es ekka heyrþi,	the grief when she heard,
hlaþin halsmenjum:	With necklaces fair,
hreytti ǵorvǫllum,	and she flung them all from her,
[slǫngþi svā silfri,	[The silver she hurled
at ī sundr hrutu baugar.]	so the rings burst asunder.]

The manuscript reading of lines 1–2, involving a metrical error, is:

In the house came the word | of the warring without,
Loud in front of the hall | they heard a thrall shouting.

Some editors assume a gap of two lines after line 2, the missing passage giving the words of the thrall. The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a stanza, and many editions make a separate stanza of lines 3–5, some of them assuming the loss of a line after line 3. With the stanza as here given, line 5 may well be spurious.

44. Ūt gekk hōn sīþan,	Then out did she go,
ypþit litt hurþum	she flung open the doors,
— fōra fælt þeygi —	All fearless she went,
ok fagnaþi komnum;	and the guests did she welcome;
hvarf til Hniflunga	To the Niflungs she went —
— sū vas hinzt kveþja —,	her last greeting it was, —
fylgþi saþr slīku,	In her speech truth was clear,
sagþi mun fleira:	and much would she speak.

Niflungs: regarding the application of this term to the Burgundians cf. *Atlakvitha*, 11, and *Brot*, 17, and notes. The manuscript here spells the name with an initial N, as elsewhere, but in stanza 83 the son of Hogni appears with the name “Hniflung.” In consequence, some editors change the form in this stanza to “Hniflungs,” while others omit the initial H in

both cases. I have followed the manuscript, though admittedly its spelling is illogical.

45. “Leitapak ī līkna | “For your safety I sought |
at letja ykkir heiman: that at home ye should stay;
sköpum vípr mangi, | None escapes his fate, |
skuluþ þō hēr komnir.” so ye hither must fare.”
Mælti af mannviti, | Full wisely she spake, |
ef mundu sættask, if yet peace they might win,
etki at rēþusk, | But to nought would they hearken, |
allir nī kvōþu. and “No” said they all.
46. Sā þā sælborin, | Then the high-born one saw |
at þeir sárt lēku, that hard was their battle,
hugþi ā harþræþi | In fierceness of heart |
ok hrauzk ōr skikkju; she flung off her mantle;
nøkþan tōk mæki | Her naked sword grasped she |
ok niþja fjōr varþi, her kin’s lives to guard,
hōg vasat at hjaldri, | Not gentle her hands |
hvars hōn hendr festi. in the hewing of battle.

The warlike deeds of Guthrun represent an odd transformation of the German tradition. Kriemhild, although she did no actual fighting in the *Nibelungenlied*, was famed from early times for her cruelty and fierceness of heart, and this seems to have inspired the poet of the *Atlamol* to make his Guthrun into a warrior outdoing Brynhild herself. Kriemhild’s ferocity of course, was directed against Gunther and especially Hagene, for whose slaying she rather than Etzel was responsible; here, on the other hand, Guthrun’s is devoted to the defense of her brothers.

47. Dōttir lēt Gjūka | Then the daughter of Gjuki |
drengi tvā hnīga, two warriors smote down,

brōþur hjō Atla,	Atli's brother she slew,
bera varþ þann sīþan;	and forth then they bore him;
[skappi svā skōru,	[So fiercely she fought
skeldi fōt undan;]	that his feet she clove off;]
annan rēþ hōggva,	Another she smote
svāt sā upp reisat,	so that never he stood,
ī helju þann hafþi:	To hell did she send him, —
þeygi hendr skulfu.	her hands trembled never.

Line 3 is very likely an interpolation. The manuscript marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza, and some editions make a separate stanza of lines 4–5. *Atli's brother*: doubtless a reminiscence of the early tradition represented in the *Nibelungenlied* by the slaying of Etzel's brother, Blödelin (the historical Bleda), by Dancwart.

48. Þjōrku þat gōrþu,	Full wide was the fame
þeiri vas við brugþit,	of the battle they fought,
brā of allt annat	'Twas the greatest of deeds
es unnu bōrn Gjūka;	of the sons of Gjuki;
Hniþlunga kvōþu,	Men say that the Niflungs,
meþan heilir lifþu,	while themselves they were living,
[skōpu sōkn sverþum,	With their swords fought mightily,
slitusk af brynjur,]	mail-coats they sundered,
hjógu svā hjalma,	And helms did they hew,
sem þeim hugr dygþi.	as their hearts were fearless.

Line 3 may well be spurious, for it implies that Gunnar and Hogni were killed in battle, whereas they were taken prisoners. Some editors, in an effort to smooth out the inconsistency, change “themselves” in this line to “sound.” Line 5 has also been questioned as possibly interpolated. *Niflungs*: on the spelling of this name in the manuscript and the various editions cf. note on stanza 44.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>49. Morgin mest vōgu,
 unz miþjan dag līddi,
 [ōttu alla
 ok ǫndurþan dag,]
 fyrr vas fullvegitt,
 flōþi vōllr blōþi:
 ātjān, āþr fellu,
 øfri <i>firum</i> urþu
 Beru tveir sveinar
 ok brōþir hennar.</p> | <p>All the morning they fought
 until midday shone,
 [All the dusk as well
 and the dawning of day,]
 When the battle was ended,
 the field flowed with blood;
 Ere they fell, eighteen
 of their foemen were slain,
 By the two sons of Bera
 and her brother as well.</p> |
|---|---|

Line 2 is probably an interpolation, and the original apparently lacks a word. There is some obscurity as to the exact meaning of lines 4–5. *The two sons of Bera*: Snævar and Solar; *her brother* is Orkning; cf. stanza 28.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>50. Rǫskr tōk at rōþa,
 þōt hann reiþr vāri:
 “Illt es umb lītask,
 yþr es þat kenna;
 vōrum þrīr tigrir,
 þegnar vīgligrir,
 eptir <i>lifa</i> ellifu:
 ōr es þar brunnit.</p> | <p>Then the warrior spake,
 and wild was his anger:
 “This is evil to see,
 and thy doing is all;
 Once we were thirty,
 we thanes, keen for battle,
 Now eleven are left,
 and great is our lack.</p> |
|---|--|

The warrior: Atli. *Thirty*: perhaps an echo of the “thirty warriors” of Thjóðrek (cf. *Guthrunarkvitha* III, 5). Subtracting the eighteen killed by Snævar, Solar and Orkning (stanza 49), and Vingi, killed by the whole company (stanza 38), we have eleven left, as Atli says, but this does not allow much for the exploits of Gunnar and Hogni, who, by this reckoning, seem to have killed nobody. The explanation probably is that lines 4–5 of stanza 49 are in bad shape.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>51. Brøþr vōrum fjōrir,
 es Buþla mistum:
 hefr nū Hel halfa:
 hōgnir tveir liggja;
 mægþ gat ek mikla;
 mākak þvī leyna,
 konu vāliga:
 knākak þess njōta.</p> | <p>There were five of us brothers
 when Buthli we lost,
 Now Hel has the half,
 and two smitten lie here;
 A great kinship had I,—
 the truth may I hide not,—
 From a wife bringing slaughter
 small joy could I win.</p> |
|---|--|

Five brothers: the *Volsungasaga* speaks of four (not five) sons of Buthli, but names only Atli. Regarding the death of the first two brothers cf. stanza 91 and note. The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a stanza, and many editions combine lines 3–4 with stanza 52. Some insert lines 2–3 of stanza 52 ahead of lines 3–4 of stanza 51.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>52. Hljōtt ōttum sjaldan,
 sīz kvamt ī hendr ossar
 firþan mik frændum,
 fei opt svikvinn;
 senduþ systr Helju:
 slīks ek mest kennumk.”</p> | <p>We lay seldom together
 since to me thou wast given,
 Now my kin all are gone,
 of my gold am I robbed;
 Nay, and worst, thou didst send
 my sister to hell.”</p> |
|--|--|

Possibly a line has been lost from this stanza. The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza, which is impossible unless something has been lost. *Gold:* the meaning of this half line is somewhat doubtful, but apparently Atli refers to Sigurth’s treasure, which should have been his as Brynhild’s brother. *Sister:* Brynhild; regarding Guthrun’s indirect responsibility for Brynhild’s death cf. *Gripisspo*, 45 and note.

Guprūn kvap:

- 53.** “Getr þū þess, Atli! |
 gørþir svā fyrri:

Guthrun spake:

- “Hear me now, Atli! |
 the first evil was thine;

mōþur tōkt mīna	My mother didst thou take,
ok myrþir til hnossa;	and for gold didst murder her,
svinna systrungu	My sister's daughter
sveltir ī helli;	thou didst starve in a prison.
hlōgligt þat þykkjumk,	A jest does it seem
es þinn harm tīnir,	that thy sorrow thou tellest,
goðum þat þakkak,	And good do I find it
es þēr gengsk illa.”	that grief to thee comes.”

The manuscript does not name the speaker. The *Volsungasaga* gives the speech, in somewhat altered form, to Hogni: “Why speakest thou so? Thou wast the first to break peace; thou didst take my kinswoman and starved her in a prison, and murdered her and took her wealth; that was not kinglike; and laughable does it seem to me that thou talkest of thy sorrow, and good shall I find it that all goes ill with thee.” This presumably represents the correct form of the stanza, for nowhere else is it intimated that Atli killed Guthrun’s mother, Grimhild, nor is the niece elsewhere mentioned. Some editions make a separate stanza of lines 4–5, Grundtvig adding a line after line 3 and two more after line 5. Other editors are doubtful about the authenticity of either line 3 or line 5.

Atli kvað:

54. “Eggjak yþr, jarlar! |
auka harm stōrum
vīfs ens vegliga: |
viljak þat līta;
kostip svā keppa, |
at klökkvi Guþrūn,
sea þat mættak, |
at sēr nē ynþit.

Atli spake:

“Go now, ye warriors, |
and make greater the grief
Of the woman so fair, |
for fain would I see it;
So fierce be thy warring |
that Guthrun shall weep,
I would gladly behold |
her happiness lost.

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker.

55. Takiþ ēr Hōgna |
ok hyldiþ meþ knīfi,
skeriþ ōr hjarta, |
skuluþ þess gōrvir;
Gunnar grimmūþgan |
ā galga festiþ,
belliþ þvī bragði, |
bjōþiþ til ormum!”

Seize ye now Hogni, |
and with knives shall ye hew him,
His heart shall ye cut out, |
this haste ye to do;
And grim-hearted Gunnar |
shall ye bind on the gallows,
Swift shall ye do it, |
to serpents now cast him.”

Hōgni kvaþ:

56. “Gør sem til lystir, |
glapr munk þess bīpa:
rōskr munk þēr reynask, |
reynt hefk fyrr *brattan*;
hōfpuþ þā hnekking, |
meþan heilir vōrum:
nū ’rum svā sārir, |
at mātst sjalfr valda.”

Hogni spake:

“Do now as thou wilt, |
for glad I await it,
Brave shalt thou find me, |
I have faced worse before;
We held thee at bay |
while whole we were fighting,
Now with wounds are we spent, |
so thy will canst thou work.”

The text of the first half of line 3 is somewhat uncertain, but the general meaning of it is clear enough.

57. Beiti þat mælti, |
bryti vas hann Atla:
“Tōkum vēr Hjalla, |
en Hōgna forþum!
hōggum halfyrkjan! |
hann es skapdaui,

Then did Beiti speak, |
he was Atli’s steward:
“Let us seize now Hjalli, |
and Hogni spare we!
Let us fell the sluggard, |
he is fit for death,

lifira svā lengi, |
lōskr mun æ heitinn.”

He has lived too long, |
and lazy men call him.”

Beiti: not elsewhere mentioned. The *Atlakvitha* version of this episode (stanzas 23–25) does not mention *Beiti*, and in the *Volsungasaga* the advice to cut out Hjalli’s heart instead of Hogni’s is given by an unnamed “counsellor of Atli.” In the *Atlakvitha* Hjalli is actually killed; the *Volsungasaga* combines the two versions by having Hjalli first let off at Hogni’s intercession and then seized a second time and killed, thus introducing the *Atlakvitha* episode of the quaking heart (stanza 24). The text of the first half of line 3 is obscure, and there are many and widely varying suggestions as to the word here rendered “sluggard.”

58. Hræddr vas hvergætir, |
helta in lengr rūmi,
kunni kløkkv verða, |
kleif ī rō hverja;
vesall lēzk vīgs þeira, |
es skyldi vāss gjalda,
ok sinn dag dapran, |
at deyja frā svīnum,
[allri orkostu |
es hann āþr hafði].

Afraid was the pot-watcher, |
he fled here and yon,
And crazed with his terror |
he climbed in the corners:
“Ill for me is this fighting, |
if I pay for your fierceness,
And sad is the day |
to die leaving my swine
And all the fair victuals |
that of old did I have.”

Some editions mark line 5 as probably interpolated.

59. Tōku brās Buþla |
ok brugðu til knīfi,
ōppi illþræli, |
āþr odds of kendi;
tōm lēzk at eiga |
teþja vel garða,

They seized Buthli’s cook, |
and they came with the knife,
The frightened thrall howled |
ere the edge did he feel;
He was willing, he cried, |
to dung well the court yard,

vinna et vergasta, |
 ef hann við rētti.
 [feginn lēzk þō Hjalli, |
 at hann fjör þægi].

Do the basest of work, |
 if spare him they would;
 Full happy were Hjalli |
 if his life he might have.

Cook: the original word is doubtful. The *Volsungasaga* does not paraphrase lines 3–5; the passage may be a later addition, and line 5 is almost certainly so.

60. Gættisk þess Hogni |
 — gørva svā færi —
 at ārna ānaupgum, |
 at undan gengi:
 “Fyr kveþk mēr minna |
 at fremja leik þenna:
 hvī mynim hēr vilja |
 heyra ā þā skræktun?”

Then fain was Hogni — |
 there are few would do thus —
 To beg for the slave |
 that safe hence he should go;
 “I would find it far better |
 this knife-play to feel,
 Why must we all hark |
 to this howling longer?”

61. Þrifu þeir þjōþgōþan: |
 þā vas kostr engi
 rekkum rakklōtum |
 rāþ enn lengr dvelja;
 hlō þā Hogni, |
 heyrþu dagmegir,
 keppa svā kunni, |
 kvōl hann vel þolþi.

Then the brave one they seized; |
 to the warriors bold
 No chance was there left |
 to delay his fate longer;
 Loud did Hogni laugh, |
 all the sons of day heard him,
 So valiant he was |
 that well he could suffer.

It is probable that a stanza describing the casting of Gunnar into the serpents’ den has been

lost after this stanza. *Sons of day*: the phrase means no more than “men.”

* * *

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|--|---|
| <p>62. Hǫrpu tōk Gunnarr,
 hrǫrþi ilkvistum:
 slā hann svā kunni,
 at snōtir grētu;
 klukku þeir karlar,
 es kunnu gǫrst heyra;
 rīkri rǫþ sagði,
 raptar sundr brustu.</p> | <p>A harp Gunnar seized,
 with his toes he smote it
 So well did he strike
 that the women all wept,
 And the men, when clear
 they heard it, lamented;
 Full noble was his song,
 the rafters burst asunder.</p> |
|--|---|

Regarding Gunnar’s harp-playing, and his death, cf. *Oddrunargratr*, 27–30 and notes, and *Atlakvitha*, 34. *Toes* (literally “sole-twigs”): the *Volsungasaga* explains that Gunnar’s hands were bound. *Rafters*: thus literally, and probably correctly; Gering has an ingenious but unlikely theory that the word means “harp.”

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|--|--|
| <p>63. Dou þā dýrir:
 dags vas heldr snimma:
 lētu ā lesti
 lífa íþrōtta.
 . . .
 . . .</p> | <p>Then the heroes died
 ere the day was yet come;
 Their fame did they leave
 ever lofty to live.
 . . .
 . . .</p> |
|--|--|

There is some doubt as to the exact meaning of line 2. After this line two lines may have been lost; Grundtvig adds:

Few braver shall ever | be found on the earth,
 Or loftier men | in the world ever give.
 (fáir munu frōknari | ā fold koma
 nē menn mætri | fyrir mold ofan.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>64. Stōrr þōttisk Atli,
 stē of þā bāþa,
 horskri harm sagði
 ok rēþ heldr at bregþa:
 “Morginn’s nū, Guþrūn!
 mist hefr þēr hollra,
 sums est sjalfskapa,
 at hafi svā gengit.”</p> | <p>Full mighty seemed Atli
 as o’er them he stood,
 The wise one he blamed,
 and his words reproached her:
 “It is morning, Guthrun;
 now thy dear ones dost miss,
 But the blame is part thine
 that thus it has chanced.”</p> |
|--|---|

Wise one: Guthrun. The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza.

Guþrūn kvaþ:

- 65.** “Feginn estu, Atli! |
 ferr þū vīg lýsa:
 ā munu þēr iþrar, |
 ef þū allt reynir;
 sū mun erfþ eptir, |
 ek kann þēr segja:
 ills gengsk þēr aldri, |
 nema ek ok deyja.”

Guthrun spake:

- “Thou art joyous, Atli, |
 for of evil thou tellest,
 But sorrow is thine |
 if thou mightest all see;
 Thy heritage heavy |
 here can I tell thee,
 Sorrow never thou lovest |
 unless I shall die.”

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker.

Atli kvaþ:

- 66.** “Kannka slīks synja; |
 sēk til rāþ annat
 hōlfu hōgligra |
 — hōfnum opt gōþu — :

Atli spake:

- “Not free of guilt am I; |
 a way shall I find
 That is better by far, — |
 oft the fairest we shunned; —

mani munk þik hugga, |
mætum āgætum,
silfri snæhvītu, |
sem þū sjölf vilir.”

With slaves I console thee, |
with gems fair to see,
And with silver snow-white, |
as thyself thou shalt choose.”

The manuscript does not name the speaker. The negative in the first half of line 1 is uncertain, and most editions make the clause read “Of this guilt I can free myself.” *The fairest*, etc.: i. e., I have often failed to do the wise thing.

Guprūn kvæð:

67. “Ōn es þess engi |
æ vilk þvī nīta:
sleit ek þā sāttir, |
es vǫru sakar minni;
afkǫr āþr þóttak: |
ā mun nū gōþa,
hræfþak of hotvetna, |
meþan Hogni lifði.

Guthrun spake:

“No hope shall this give thee, |
thy gifts I shall take not,
Requital I spurned |
when my sorrows were smaller;
Once grim did I seem, |
but now greater my grimness,
There was nought seemed too hard |
while Hogni was living.

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker. *Requital*, etc.: it is not clear just to what Guthrun refers; perhaps she is thinking of Sigurth’s death, or possibly the poet had in mind his reference to the slaying of her mother in stanza 53.

68. Alin vit upp vǫrum |
ī einu hūsi,
lēkum leik margan |
ok ī lundi ōxum,
gōddi okkr Grīmhildr |
golli ok halsmenjum:

Our childhood did we have |
in a single house,
We played many a game, |
in the grove did we grow;
Then did Grimhild give us |
gold and necklaces,

bana munt mēr brōþra	Thou shalt ne'er make amends
bōta aldri	for my brother's murder,
[nē vinna þess etki,	Nor ever shalt win me
at mēr vel þykki].	to think it was well.

Line 5 is very probably a later addition, though some editors question line 3 instead.

69. Kostum drepr kvenna	But the fierceness of men
karla ofríki,	rules the fate of women,
ī knē gengr hnefi,	The tree-top bows low
ef kvistir þverra,	if bereft of its leaves,
trē tekr at hnīga,	The tree bends over
ef høggr tōg undan:	if the roots are cleft under it;
nū mätt einn, Atli!	Now mayest thou, Atli,
ollu hēr rāþa.”	o'er all things here rule.”

Guthrun suddenly changes her tone in order to make Atli believe that she is submissive to his will, and thus to gain time for her vengeance. Line 2 in the original is thoroughly obscure; it runs literally:

On the knee goes the fist | if the twigs are taken off.

Perhaps the word meaning “fist” may also have meant “tree-top,” as Gering suggests, or perhaps the line is an illogical blending of the ideas contained in lines 1 and 3.

70. Gnōtt vas grunnýþgi,	Full heedless the warrior
es gramr þvī trūþi,	was that he trusted her,
sýn vas svipvīsi,	So clear was her guile
ef hann sīn gæþi;	if on guard he had been;
krōpp vas þā Guþrūn,	But crafty was Guthrun,
kunni of hug mæla,	with cunning she spake,

lætt hōn sēr gørþi,	Her glance she made pleasant,
læk hōn tveim skjöldum.	with two shields she played.

The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a new stanza. *Two shields*, etc.: i. e., Guthrun concealed her hostility (symbolized by a red shield, cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 34) by a show of friendliness (a white shield).

71. Æxti ǫldrykkjur	The beer then she brought
at erfa brøþr sīna,	for her brothers' death feast,
samr lēzk ok Atli	And a feast Atli made
at sīna gørva;	for his followers dead
lokit þvī lētu,	No more did they speak,
lagat vas drykkju,	the mead was made ready,
sū vas samkunda	Soon the men were gathered
viþ svorfun ofmikla.	with mighty uproar.

Many editions make a separate stanza of lines 1–2, some of them suggesting the loss of two lines, and combine lines 3–4 with lines 1–2 of stanza 72. The manuscript marks both lines 1 and 3 as beginning stanzas.

72. Ströng vas stōrhuguþ,	Thus bitterly planned she,
strīddi ætt Buþla,	and Buthli's race threatened,
vildi ver sīnum	And terrible vengeance
vinna ofrhefndir:	on her husband would take;
lokkapi litla	The little ones called she,
ok lagði viþ stokki,	on a block she laid them;
glūpnuþu grimmir	Afraid were the proud ones,
ok grētu þeygi,	but their tears did not fall;
fōru ī faþm mōþur,	To their mother's arms went they,
frēttu hvat skyldi.	and asked what she would.

The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza; some editions make a separate stanza of lines 3–5, while others combine them with lines 1–2 of stanza 73. Line 2 in the original is clearly defective, the verb being omitted. The meaning of line 3 is uncertain; the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase has: “At evening she took the sons of King Atli (Erp and Eitil) where they were playing with a block of wood.” (“tök hon (Guþrūn) sonu þeira Atla konungs, er þeir lēku við stokki.”) Probably the text of the line as we have it is faulty. Lines 4–5 may possibly have been expanded out of a single line, or line 5 may be spurious.

Guþrūn kvað:

73. “Spyriþ litt eptir! |
spilla ætlak bōþum,
lyst vorumk þess lengi |
at lyfja ykkir elli.”

Sveinarnir kváðu:

“Blōtt sem vilt börnum, |
bannar þat mangi,
skōmm mun rō reiði, |
ef reynir gōrva.”

Guthrun spake:

“Nay, ask me no more! |
You both shall I murder,
For long have I wished |
your lives to steal from you.”

The boys spake:

“Slay thy boys as thou wilt, |
for no one may bar it,
Short the angry one’s peace |
if all thou shalt do.”

The manuscript does not name the speakers. It indicates line 3 as beginning a new stanza, in which it is followed by many editions. The *Volsungasaga* paraphrases line 4 thus: “But it is shameful for thee to do this.” (“en þēr er skōmm i at gōra þetta.”) Either the text of the line has been changed or the *Volsungasaga* compilers misunderstood it. *The angry one:* Atli.

74. Brā þā barnōsku |
brōþra en kappsvinna,
skiptit skapliga, |
skar ā hals bāþa;
enn frētti Atli, |
hvert farnir vāri

Then the grim one slew both |
of the brothers young,
Full hard was her deed |
when their heads she smote off;
Fain was Atli to know |
whither now they were gone,

sveinar hans leika, |
es sǫ þá hvergi.

The boys from their sport, |
for nowhere he spied them.

The manuscript indicates line 3 as beginning a new stanza.

Guprūn kvæð:

75. “Yfir rōþumk ganga |
Atla til segja,
dylja mun þik eigi |
dōttir Grīmhildar;
glaða munat þik, Atli! |
ef gōrva reynir:
vakþir vō mikla, |
es vātt brōþr mīna.

Guthrun spake:

“My fate shall I seek, |
all to Atli saying,
The daughter of Grimhild |
the deed from thee hides not;
No joy thou hast, Atli, |
if all thou shalt hear,
Great sorrow didst wake |
when my brothers thou slewest.

The manuscript does not name the speaker.

76. Svaf ek mjōk sjaldan, |
sīþans þeir fellu,
hēt ek þēr hōrþu, |
hefk þik nū mintan;
morgin mēr sagþir, |
mank enn þann gōrva:
nū es auk aptann, |
ātt slīkt at frēttu.

I have seldom slept |
since the hour they were slain,
Baleful were my threats, |
now I bid thee recall them;
Thou didst say it was morning,— |
too well I remember,—
Now is evening come, |
and this question thou askest.

Morning: Guthrun refers to Atli’s taunt in stanza 64.

77. Maga hefr þū þinna	Now both of thy sons
mist . . .	thou hast lost . . .
.
sem þū sīzt skyldir;	as thou never shouldst do;
hausá veizt þeirá	The skulls of thy boys
hafþa at ǫlskǫlum,	thou as beer-cups didst have,
drýgþak svá drykkju,	And the draught that I made thee
dreyra blettk þeirá.	was mixed with their blood.

The manuscript indicates no gap (lines 1–2), and most editions make a single line, despite the defective meter:

Thy sons hast thou lost | as thou never shouldst lose them.

The second part of line 2 is in the original identical with the second half of line 3 of stanza 80, and may perhaps have been inserted here by mistake. *Skulls*: it is possible that line 3 was borrowed from a poem belonging to the Völund tradition (cf. *Völundarkvitha*, 25 and 37), and the idea doubtless came from some such source, but probably the poet inserted it in a line of his own composition to give an added touch of horror. The *Volsungasaga* follows the *Atlamol* in including this incident.

78. Tökk þeirá hjörtu	I cut out their hearts,
ok ā teini steikþak,	on a spit I cooked them,
seldak þēr sīþan,	I came to thee with them,
sagþak at kalfs vāri:	and calf's flesh I called them;
einn þū þvī ollir,	Alone didst thou eat them,
etki rētt leifa,	nor any didst leave,
tǫggðu tīþliga,	Thou didst greedily bite,
trūþir vel ǵoxlum.	and thy teeth were busy.

Some editions add lines 3–4 to stanza 79; Finnur Jonsson marks them as probably spurious.

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|--|---|
| <p>79. Barna veizt þinna:
 þiðr sēr fār verra;
 hlut veld ek mīnum,
 hǫlumk þō etki.”</p> | <p>Of thy sons now thou knowest;
 few suffer more sorrow;
 My guilt have I told,
 fame it never shall give me.”</p> |
|--|---|

Perhaps these two lines should form part of stanza 78, or perhaps they, rather than lines 3–4 of stanza 78, are a later addition. A gap of two lines after line 1 has also been conjectured.

Atli kvað:

- 80.** “Grimm vastu, Guðrūn! |
 es gǫrva svā mǣttir,
 barna þinna blōði |
 at blanda mēr drykkju;
 snýtt hefr sífjungum, |
 sem þū sīzt skyldir,
 mēr lætr ok sjólfum |
 millum ills lítit.”

Atli spake:

- “Grim wast thou, Guthrun, |
 in so grievous a deed,
 My draught with the blood |
 of thy boys to mingle;
 Thou hast slain thine own kin, |
 most ill it be seemed thee,
 And little for me |
 twixt my sorrows thou leavest.”

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker.

Guðrūn kvað:

- 81.** “Vili mēr enn vāri |
 at vega þik sjalfan:
 fātt es fullilla |
 farit við gram slīkan;
 drýgt þū fyrr hafþir, |
 þats dōmi vissut

Guthrun spake:

- “Still more would I seek |
 to slay thee thyself,
 Enough ill comes seldom |
 to such as thou art;
 Thou didst folly of old, |
 such that no one shall find

heimsku, harþræþi	In the whole world of men
ī heimi þessum.	a match for such madness.
[nū hefr enn aukit	Now this that of late
þats āþan frōgum,	we learned hast thou added,
greipt hefr glōp stōran,	Great evil hast grasped,
gōrt hefr þitt erfi.]”	and thine own death feast made.”

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker. Lines 1–2 may be the remains of a separate stanza; Grundtvig adds:

Thou wast foolish, Atli, | when wise thou didst feel,
Ever the whole | of thy race did I hate.

(Heimskr vastu, Atli! | es þū horskri vel trūþir,
ætt þinni allri | hefik æ hatat.)

The *Volsungasaga* paraphrase, however, indicates no gap. Many editions make a separate stanza of lines 3–6, which, in the *Volsungasaga*, are paraphrased as a speech of Atli’s. Lines 5–6 may be spurious.

Atli kvaþ:

82. “Brend munt ā bāli |
ok bariþ āþr grjōti:
þā hefr þū ārnat |
þats þū æ beiddisk.”

Guprūn kvaþ:

“Seg þū þēr slíkar |
sorgir ār morgin:
frīþra vilk dauþa |
fara ī ljōs annat.”

Atli spake:

“With fire shall they burn thee, |
and first shall they stone thee,
So then hast thou earned |
what thou ever hast sought for.”

Guthrun spake:

“Such woes for thyself |
shalt thou say in the morning,
From a finer death I |
to another light fare.”

The manuscript does not indicate the speakers. Many editions make two separate stanzas of the four lines. *Another light:* a fairly clear indication of the influence of Christianity;

cf. [Introductory Note](#).

83. Sōtu samtȳnis,	Together they sat
sendusk fārhugi,	and full grim were their thoughts,
hendusk heiptyrþi,	Unfriendly their words,
hvārtki sēr unþi;	and no joy either found;
heipt ōx Hniflungi,	In Hniflung grew hatred,
hugþi ā stōrræþi,	great plans did he have,
gat fyr Guþrūnu,	To Guthrun his anger
at væri grimmr Atla.	against Atli was told.

The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a new stanza. *Hniflung*: the *Volsungasaga* says that “Hogni had a son who was called Hniflung,” but the name appears to be nothing more than the familiar “Niflung” applied in general to the sons of Gjuki and their people. On the spelling cf. note on stanza 44. This son of Hogni appears in later versions of the story. In the *Thithrekssaga* he is called Aldrian, and is begotten by Hogni the night before his death. Aldrian grows up and finally shuts Attila in a cave where he starves to death. The poet here has incorporated the idea, which finds no parallel in the *Atlakvitha*, without troubling himself to straighten out the chronology.

84. Kvōmu ī hug henni	To her heart came ever
Hōgna viðfarar,	the fate of Hogni,
talþi happ hōnum,	She told him ’twere well
ef hann hefnt ynni;	if he vengeance should win;
veginns vas þā Atli	So was Atli slain,—
— vas þess skamt bīpa — :	’twas not slow to await,—
sunr vā Hōgna	Hogni’s son slew him,
ok sjōlf Guþrūn.	and Guthrun herself.

Line 4 may be in Fornyrthislag, and from another poem.

85. Rǫskr tōk at rǫþa, | Then the warrior spake, |
rakþisk ǫr svefni, | as from slumber he awakened,
kendi brátt benja, | Soon he knew for his wounds |
bands kvaþ þǫrf ǫnga: | would the bandage do nought:
“Segiþ et sannasta: | “Now the truth shalt thou say: |
hverr vā sun Buþla? | who has slain Buthli’s son?
emkak litt leikinn, | Full sore am I smitten, |
lífs telk vǫn ǫnga.” | nor hope can I see.”

The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza. The *Volsungasaga* makes line 2 part of Atli’s speech.

Guprūn kvaþ:

86. ”[Dylja mun þik eigi |
dóttir Grīmhildar:]
lǫtumk því valda, |
es líþr þína ævi,
en sumu sunr Hǫgna, |
es þik sǫr mǫþa.”

Atli kvaþ:

- “Vaþit hefr at vígi, |
þót værit skapligt:
illt es vin vēla |
þanns þēr vel trúir.

Guthrun spake:

- “Ne’er her deed from thee hides |
the daughter of Grimhild,
I own to the guilt |
that is ending thy life,
And the son of Hogni; |
’tis so thy wounds bleed.”

Atli spake:

- “To murder hast thou fared, |
though foul it must seem;
Ill thy friend to betray |
who trusted thee well.

The manuscript does not name the speakers. It marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza, and many editions follow this arrangement, in most cases making a stanza of lines 4–5 and line 1 of stanza 87. However, line 1 may well have been interpolated here from stanza 75. Grundtvig adds after line 3:

His father he avenged, | and his kinsmen fully.
(hefndi hann svā fǫður | ok frænda sinna allra.)

Some editors assume the loss of one or two lines after line 5.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 87. Beiddr fōr ek heiman
at biþja þīn Guþrūn!
leyfþ vastu ekkja,
lētu stōrrāþa;
varþa vōn lygi,
es vēr of reyndum;
fōrtu heim hingat,
fylgþi oss herr manna. | Not glad went I hence
thy hand to seek, Guthrun,
In thy widowhood famed,
but haughty men found thee;
My belief did not lie,
as now we have learned;
I brought thee home hither,
and a host of men with us. |
|--|---|

The manuscript marks line 2 as beginning a new stanza, and some editions make a stanza out of lines 2–4 and line 1 of stanza 88.

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|---|--|
| 88. Allt vas ītarligt
of ōrar ferþir,
margs vas alls sōmi
manna tīginna;
naut vōru ōrin,
nutum af stōrum,
þar vas fjōlþ fear,
fengu til margir. | Most noble was all
when of old we journeyed,
Great honor did we have
of heroes full worthy;
Of cattle had we plenty,
and greatly we prospered,
Mighty was our wealth,
and many received it. |
|---|--|

The manuscript marks line 2 as the beginning of a stanza, and many editions make a stanza out of lines 2–4, or combine them with stanza 89. Some question the genuineness of line 4.

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|--|---|
| 89. Mund galt ek mārri,
meiþma fjōlþ þiggja, | To the famed one as bride-gift
I gave jewels fair, |
|--|---|

þræla þria tōgu,	I gave thirty slaves,
þýjar sjau gōþar;	and handmaidens seven;
— sōmþ vas at slīku — :	There was honor in such gifts,
silfr vas þō meira.	yet the silver was greater.

Many editions assume a gap of one line after line 3; Grundtvig adds:

Bit-champing horses | and wheel-wagons bright.

(mara mēlgreypa, | marga hvelvagna.)

Greater: i. e., the silver which Atli gave Guthrun was of greater value even than the honor of receiving such royal gifts. Line 4 may be spurious.

90. Lēzt þēr allt þykkja	But all to thee was
sem etki vāri,	as if nought it were worth,
meþan lōnd þau lōgu	While the land lay before thee
es mēr leifþi Buþli;	that Buthli had left me;
[grōftu svā undir,	Thou in secret didst work
gørþit hlut þiggja;]	so the treasure I won not;
svāeru lēzt þīna	My mother full oft
sitja opt grātna,	to sit weeping didst make,
fannka ī hug heilum	No wedded joy found I
hjōna vātr sīþan.”	in fullness of heart.”

Some editions mark line 3 as spurious or defective. The manuscript marks line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza. *The land*, etc.: there is much obscurity as to the significance of this line. Some editors omit or question “me,” in which case Atli is apparently reproaching Guthrun for having incited him to fight with his brothers to win for himself the whole of Buthli’s land. In stanza 91 Guthrun denies that she was to blame for Atli’s quarrels with his brothers. The *Volsungasaga* reading supports this interpretation. The historical Attila did actually have his brother, Bleda, killed in order to have the sole rule. *The treasure*: Sigurth’s hoard, which Atli claimed as the brother of Brynhild and husband of Guthrun, Sigurth’s widow, but which Gunnar and Hogni kept for themselves, with, as Atli here charges, Guthrun’s connivance. *My mother*: the only other reference to Atli’s mother is in *Oddrunargratr*, 30,

wherein she appears as the adder who stings Gunnar to death, and in the prose passages based on that stanza.

Guprūn kvað:

91. “Lýgr þū nū, Atli! |
 þōt þat litt rōkjak:
 heldr vask hōg sjaldan, |
 hōfsk þū þō stōrum;
 bōrþusk brōþr ungir, |
 bōrusk rōg milli,
 halft gekk til heljar |
 ōr hūsi þīnu.
 [hroldi hotvetna |
 þats til hags skyldi].

Guthrun spake:

“Thou liest now, Atli, |
 though little I heed it;
 If I seldom was kindly, |
 full cruel wast thou;
 Ye brothers fought young, |
 quarrels brought you to battle,
 And half went to hell |
 of the sons of thy house,
 And all was destroyed |
 that should e’er have done good.

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker. It marks both lines 4 and 5 as beginning new stanzas, but line 5 is presumably an interpolation. The text of the second half of line 2 is obscure, and many emendations have been suggested. *Ye brothers:* cf. note on stanza 90. *Half:* i. e., two of Atli’s brothers were killed, the other two dying in the battle with Gunnar and Hogni; cf. stanza 51.

92. Þriu vōrum systkin, |
 þōttum ōvægin,
 fōrum af landi, |
 fylgþum Sigurþi;
 skæva vēr lētum, |
 skipi hvert vārt stýrþi,
 orkuþum at auþnu, |
 unz vēr austr kvōmum.

My two brothers and I |
 were bold in our thoughts,
 From the land we went forth, |
 with Sigurth we fared;
 Full swiftly we sailed, |
 each one steering his ship,
 So our fate sought we e’er |
 till we came to the East.

From the land: this maritime expedition of Guthrun and her two brothers, Gunnar and

Hogni (the poet seems to know nothing of her half-brother, Gotthorm), with Sigurth seems to have been a pure invention of the poet's, inserted for the benefit of his Greenland hearers. Nothing further is reported concerning it.

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|---|---|
| <p>93. Konung drōpum fyrstan,
 kurum land þaþra,
 hersar ā hōnd gengu:
 hræzlu þat vissi;
 vōgum ōr skōgi
 þanns vildum syknan,
 settum þann sēlan
 es sēr nē āttit.</p> | <p>First the king did we slay,
 and the land we seized,
 The princes did us service,
 for such was their fear;
 From the forest we called
 them we fain would have guiltless,
 And rich made we many
 who of all were bereft.</p> |
|---|---|

The forest: i. e., men who were outlawed in the conquered land were restored to their rights—another purely Norse touch.

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|--|---|
| <p>94. Dauþr varþ enn hunski:
 drap þā brātt kosti,
 strangt vas angr ungri
 ekkju nafn hljōta;
 kvōl þōtti kvikri
 at koma ī hūs Atla,
 ātti āþr kappi,
 illr vas sā missir.</p> | <p>Slain was the Hun-king,
 soon happiness vanished,
 In her grief the widow
 so young sat weeping;
 Yet worse seemed the sorrow
 to seek Atli's house,
 A hero was my husband,
 and hard was his loss.</p> |
|--|---|

Hun-king: Sigurth, though most illogically so called; cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 4 and note. The *Volsungasaga* paraphrase of line 2 is so remote as to be puzzling: “It was little to bear the name of widow.” (“var þat litit at bera ekkju nafn.”) Perhaps, however, the word “not” fell out between “was” and “little.”

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|---|---|
| <p>95. Kvamtat af þingi,
 es vēr þat frægim,
 at þū sōk sōttir
 nē slōghir aþra:
 vildir æ vægja,
 en vætki halda,
 kyrt of þvī lāta
 . . .”</p> | <p>From the Thing thou camst never,
 for thus have we heard,
 Having won in thy quarrels,
 or warriors smitten;
 Full yielding thou wast,
 never firm was thy will,
 In silence didst suffer,
 . . .”</p> |
|---|---|

Thing, etc.: here the poet makes Atli into a typical Norse land-owner, going to the “Thing,” or general law council, to settle his disputes. Even the compilers of the *Volsungasaga* could not accept this, and in their paraphrase changed “Thing” to “battle.” The text of the second half of line 2 is uncertain. The manuscript leaves a blank to indicate the gap in line 4; Grundtvig adds: “as beseems not a king.” (“es konungr skyldit.”)

Atli kvað:

- 96.** “Lýgr þū nū, Guþrūn! |
 litt mun víþ bōtask
 hluti hvārigra: |
 hōfum ǫll skarþan;
 gørþu nū, Guþrūn! |
 af gōzku þinni
 okkr til āgætis, |
 es mik ūt hefja.”

Atli spake:

- “Thou liest now, Guthrun, |
 but little of good
 Will it bring to either, |
 for all have we lost;
 But, Guthrun, yet once |
 be thou kindly of will,
 For the honor of both, |
 when forth I am home.”

Guþrūn kvað:

- 97.** “knōrr mun ek kaupa |
 ok kistu steinda,

Guthrun spake:

- “A ship will I buy, |
 and a bright-hued coffin,

vexa vel blæju,	I will wax well the shroud
at verja þitt líki,	to wind round thy body,
hyggja ā þorð hverja,	For all will I care
sem vit holl værim.”	as if dear were we ever.”

The manuscript does not indicate the speaker. Many editors assume a gap either before or after line 1. *A ship*: the burial of Norse chiefs in ships was of frequent occurrence, but the Greenland poet's application of the custom to Atli is some what grotesque.

98. Nār varð þā Atli:	Then did Atli die,
níðjum stríð ǫxti;	and his heirs' grief doubled;
efndi ítrborin	The high-born one did
allt þats rēð heita;	as to him she had promised;
frōð vildi Guðrūn	Then sought Guthrun the wise
fara sēr at spilla:	to go to her death,
urðu dvöl dōgra,	But for days did she wait,
dō ī sinn annat.	and 'twas long ere she died.

Heirs, etc.: merely a stock phrase, here quite meaningless, as Atli's heirs had all been killed.
Long: cf. *Guthrunarhvot*, introductory prose.

99. Sæll es hverr sīpan,	Full happy shall he be
es slík getr fōða	who such offspring has,
jōð at afreki,	Or children so gallant,
sem es ōl Gjūki:	as Gjuki begot;
lifa mun þat eptir	Forever shall live,
ā landi hverju	and in lands far and wide,
þeira þrāmæli,	Their valor heroic
hvargis þjōð heyrir.	wherever men hear it.

Guthrunarhvot

Guthrun's Inciting

Introductory Note

The two concluding poems in the *Codex Regius*, the *Guthrunarhvot* (*Guthrun's Inciting*) and the *Hamthesmol* (*The Ballad of Hamther*), belong to a narrative cycle connected with those of Sigurth, the Burgundians, and Atli (cf. *Gripisspo*, introductory note) by only the slenderest of threads. Of the three early historical kings who gradually assumed a dominant place in Germanic legend, Ermanarich, king of the East Goths in the middle of the fourth century, was actually the least important, even though Jordanes, the sixth century author of *De Rebus Getecis*, compared him to Alexander the Great. Memories of his cruelty and of his tragic death, however, persisted along with the real glories of Theoderich, a century and a half later, and of the conquests of Attila, whose lifetime approximately bridged the gap between Ermanarich's death and Theoderich's birth.

Chief among the popular tales of Ermanarich's cruelty was one concerning the death of a certain Sunilda or Sanielh, whom, according to Jordanes, he caused to be torn asunder by wild horses because of her husband's treachery. Her brothers, Sarus and Ammius, seeking to avenge her, wounded but failed to kill Ermanarich. In this story is the root of the two Norse poems included in the *Codex Regius*. Sunilda easily became the wife as well as the victim of the tyrant, and, by the process of legend-blending so frequently observed, the story was connected with the more famous one of the Nibelungs by making her the daughter of Sigurth and Guthrun. To account for her brothers, a third husband had to be found for Guthrun; the Sarus and Ammius of Jordanes are obviously the Sorli and Hamther, sons of Guthrun and Jonak, of the Norse poems. The blending of the Sigurth and Ermanarich legends probably, though not certainly, took place before the story reached the North, in other words before the end of the eighth century.

Regarding the exact status of the *Guthrunarhvot* and the *Hamthesmol* there has been a great deal of discussion. That they are closely related is obvious; indeed the first parts of the two poems are nearly identical in content and occasionally so in actual diction. The annotator, in his concluding prose note, refers to the second poem as the "old" ballad of Hamther, wherefore it has been assumed by some critics that the composer of the *Guthrunarhvot* used the *Hamthesmol*, approximately as it now stands, as the source of part of his material. The extant *Hamthesmol*, however, is almost certainly a patchwork; part of it is in Fornyrthislag (cf. *Introduction*), including most of the stanzas paralleled in the *Guthrunarhvot*, and likewise the stanza followed directly by the reference to the "old" ballad, while the rest is in Malahattr. The most reasonable theory, therefore, is that there existed an old ballad

of Hamther, all in Fornyrthislag, from which the composer of the *Guthrunarhvot* borrowed a few stanzas as the introduction for his poem, and which the composer of the extant, or “new,” *Hamthesmol* likewise used, though far more clumsily.

The title “Guthrunarhvot,” which appears in the *Codex Regius*, really applies only to stanzas 1–8, all presumably borrowed from the “old” ballad of Hamther. The rest of the poem is simply another Guthrun lament, following the tradition exemplified by the *first* and *second Guthrun lays*; it is possible, indeed, that it is made up of fragments of two separate laments, one (stanzas 9–18) involving the story of Svanhild's death, and the other (stanzas 19–21) coming from an otherwise lost version of the story in which Guthrun closely follows Sigurth and Brynhild in death. In any event the present title is really a misnomer; the poet, who presumably was an eleventh century Icelander, used the episode of Guthrun's inciting her sons to vengeance for the slaying of Svanhild simply as an introduction to his main subject, the last lament of the unhappy queen.

The text of the poem in *Regius* is by no means in good shape, and editorial emendations have been many and varied, particularly in interchanging lines between the *Guthrunarhvot* and the *Hamthesmol*. The *Volsungasaga* paraphrases the poem with such fidelity as to prove that it lay before the compilers of the saga approximately in its present form.

Guþrūn gekk þā til sævar, er hon haf-
þi drepit Atla.

Gekk hon ūt ā sæinn ok vildi fara sēr;
hon mātti eigi søkkva.

Rak hana yfir fjörþinn ā land Jōnakrs
konungs; hann fekk hennar; þeira
synir vāru þeir Sqrli ok Erpr ok Ham-
þir.

Þar fœddiz upp Svanhildr Sigurþar-
dōttir; hon var gipt Jormunrekk en-
um rīkja.

Meþ honum var Bikki, hann rēþ þat
at Randvēr konungs son skyldi taka
hana.

Þat sagþi Bikki konungi.

Konungr lēt hengja Randvē, en troþa
Svanhildi undir hrossa fōtum.

Guthrun went forth to the sea after she
had slain Atli.

She went out into the sea and fain
would drown herself, but she could not
sink.

The waves bore her across the fjord to
the land of King Jonak; he took her as
wife; their sons were Sorli and Erp and
Hamther.

There was brought up Svanhild, Sig-
urth's daughter; she was married to the
mighty Jormunrek.

With him was Bikki, who counselled
that Randver, the king's son, should
have her.

This Bikki told to the king.

The king had Randver hanged, and
Svanhild trodden to death under hors-
es' feet.

En er þat spurði Guþrūn, þā kvaddi
hon sonu sīna.

And when Guthrun learned this, she
spake with her sons.

In the manuscript the prose is headed “Of Guthrun,” the title “Guthrunarhvot” preceding stanza 1. The prose introduction is used both by Snorri (*Skaldskaparmál*, chapter 42) and in the *Volsungasaga*. It would be interesting to know on what the annotator based this note, for neither Bikki nor Randver is mentioned by name in either the *Guthrunarhvot* or the *Hamthesmol*. On the prose notes in general, cf. *Reginsmol*, introductory note. *Guthrun*: on the slaying of Atli by his wife, Guthrun, Sigurth's widow, cf. *Atlamol*, 83–86 and notes. *Jonak*: a Northern addition to the legend, introduced to account for Svanhild's half-brothers; the name is apparently of Slavic origin. *Sorli, Erp*, and *Hamther*: Sorli and Hamther are the Sarus and Ammius of the Jordanes story (cf. *introductory note*). The *Volsungasaga* follows this note in making Erp likewise a son of Guthrun, but in the *Hamthesmol* he is a son of Jonak by another wife. *Svanhild*: cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 54 and note. *Jormunrek* (Ermanarich): cf. *introductory note*. *Bikki*: the Sifka or Sibicho of the Gothic legends of Ermanarich, whose evil counsel always brings trouble. *Randver*: in the *Volsungasaga* Jormunrek sends his son Randver with Bikki to seek Svanhild's hand. On the voyage home Bikki says to Randver: “It were right for you to have so fair a wife, and not such an old man.” Randver was much pleased with this advice, “and he spake to her with gladness, and she to him.” Thus the story becomes near of kin to those of Tristan and Iseult and Paolo and Francesca. According to the *Volsungasaga*, Bikki told Ermanarich that a guilty love existed between his son and his young wife, and presumably the annotator here meant as much by his vague “this.”

1. Þā frāk sennu	A word-strife I learned,
slīprfengligsta,	most woeful of all,
trauþmōl talīþ	A speech from the fullness
af trega stōrum,	of sorrow spoken,
es harþhuguþ	When fierce of heart
hvatti at vīgi	her sons to the fight
grimmum orþum	Did Guthrun whet
Guþrūn sunu:	with words full grim.

The poet's introduction of himself in this stanza is a fairly certain indication of the relative lateness of the poem.

2. “Hvī sitiþ kyrrir, | “Why sit ye idle, |
 hvī sofīþ lífi, why sleep out your lives,
 hvī tregrat ykkir | Why grieve ye not |
 teiti at mæla? in gladness to speak?
 es Jormunrekkr | Since Jormunrek |
 yþra systur your sister young
 unga at aldri | Beneath the hoofs |
 joum of traddi of horses hath trodden,
 [hvītum ok svørtum | [White and black |
 ā hervegi, on the battle-way,
 grøum, gangtømum | Gray, road-wonted, |
 Gotna hrossum.] the steeds of the Goths.]

Idle: a guess; a word is obviously missing in the original. The manuscript marks line 5 as beginning a new stanza, and lines 5–6 may well have been inserted from another part of the “old” *Hamthesmol* (cf. *Hamthesmol*, 3).

3. Urþuat glíkir | Not like are ye |
 þeim Gunnari to Gunnar of yore,
 ne in heldr hugþir | Nor have ye hearts |
 sem vas Hogni: such as Hogni's was;
 hennar munduþ | Vengeance for her |
 hefna leita, ye soon would have
 ef mōþ ættiþ | If brave ye were |
 minna brōþra as my brothers of old,
 [eþa harþan hug | Or hard your hearts |
 Hūnkonunga].” as the Hunnish kings’.”

Gunnar and *Hogni*: cf. *Drap Niflunga*. Line 5 may be interpolated. *Hunnish*: here used, as often, merely as a generic term for all South Germanic peoples; the reference is to the

Burgundian Gunnar and Hogni.

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| <p>4. Þā kvaþ þat Hamþēr
 enn hugumstōri:
 “Litt mundir þū
 leyfa dōþ Hōgna,
 þās Sigurþ vōkþu
 svefni ōr:
 bōkr vōru þīnar
 enar blāhvītu
 roþnar ī vers dreyra,
 folgnar ī valblōþi.</p> | <p>Then Hamther spake,
 the high of heart:
 “Little the deed
 of Hogni didst love,
 When Sigurth they awakened
 from his sleep;
 Thy bed-covers white
 were red with blood
 Of thy husband, drenched
 with gore from his heart.</p> |
|---|---|

Hamther: some editions spell the name “Hamthir.” *Sigurth*, etc.: cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 21–24, and *Broṭ, concluding prose*. This stanza has been subjected to many conjectural rearrangements, some editors adding two or three lines from the *Hamthesmol*.

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|--|---|
| <p>5. Urþu þēr brāþla
 brōþra hefndir
 slīprar ok sārar,
 es sunu myrþir;
 knættim <i>allir</i>
 Jormunrekki
 samhyggjendr
 systur hefna.</p> | <p>Bloody revenge
 durst have for thy brothers,
 Evil and sore,
 when thy sons durst slay;
 Else yet might we all
 on Jormunrek
 Together our sister's
 slaying avenge.</p> |
|--|---|

Bloody: a guess; a word in the original is clearly missing, and the same is true of *all* in line 3. *Thy sons*: i.e., by killing her sons Erp and Eitil (cf. *Atlamol*, 72–74) Guthrun deprived Hamther, Sorli, and the second Erp of valuable allies in avenging Svanhild's death.

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| <p>6. ... </p> <p> ...</p> <p> beriþ hnossir fram </p> <p> Hūnkonunga!</p> <p> hefr okkr hvatta </p> <p> at hjǫrþingi.”</p> | <p>... </p> <p> ...</p> <p> The gear of the Hunnish </p> <p> kings now give us!</p> <p> Thou hast whetted us so </p> <p> to the battle of swords.”</p> |
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The manuscript indicates no gap, but most editors assume the loss of one, two or even more lines before the two here given.

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| <p>7. Hlæjandi Guþrūn </p> <p> hvarf til skemmu,</p> <p> kumbl konunga </p> <p> ōr kerum valþi,</p> <p> sīþar brynjur, </p> <p> ok sunum fōrþi:</p> <p> hlōþusk mōþgir </p> <p> ā mara bōgu.</p> | <p>Laughing did Guthrun </p> <p> go to her chamber,</p> <p> The helms of the kings </p> <p> from the cupboards she took,</p> <p> And mail-coats broad, </p> <p> to her sons she bore them;</p> <p> On their horses' backs </p> <p> the heroes leaped.</p> |
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The manuscript indicates line 4 as beginning a new stanza.

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| <p>8. [Þā kvaþ þat Hamþēr </p> <p> enn hugumstōri:]</p> <p> “Svā kǫmsk meirr aptr </p> <p> mōþur at vitja</p> <p> geirnjǫrþr hniginn </p> <p> ā Gotþjōþu,</p> <p> at þū erfi </p> <p> at ǫll oss drekkir,</p> | <p>Then Hamther spake, </p> <p> the high of heart:</p> <p> “Homeward no more </p> <p> his mother to see</p> <p> Comes the spear-god, </p> <p> fallen mid Gothic folk;</p> <p> One death-draught thou </p> <p> for us all shalt drink,</p> |
|--|--|

at Svanhildi |
ok sunu þína.”

For Svanhild then |
and thy sons as well.”

Line 1, identical with line 1 of stanza 4, may be interpolated here. *Spear-god*: warrior, i.e., Hamther himself. With this stanza the introductory *hvot* (“inciting”) ends, and stanza 9 introduces the lament which forms the real body of the poem.

9. Grātandi Guþrūn |
Gjūka dōttir
gekk tregliga |
ā tāi sitja
auk at telja |
tōrughlȳra
mōþug spjōll |
ā margan veg:

Weeping Guthrun, |
Gjuki's daughter,
Went sadly before |
the gate to sit,
And with tear-stained cheeks |
to tell the tale
Of her mighty griefs, |
so many in kind.

10. “Þria vissak elda, |
þria vissak arna;
vask þrimr verum |
vegin at hūsi;
einn vorumk Sigurþr |
ollum betri,
es brōþr mīnir |
at bana urðu.

“Three home-fires knew I, |
three hearths I knew,
Home was I brought |
by husbands three;
But Sigurth only |
of all was dear,
He whom my brothers |
brought to his death.

11. Svārra sāra |
sākat, nē kunnu

A greater sorrow |
I saw not nor knew,

... meirr þóttusk	Yet more it seemed
mēr of strīða,	I must suffer yet
es mik ǫþlingar	When the princes great
Atla gōfu.	to Atli gave me.

Line 1 in the original is of uncertain meaning. Many editors assume the loss of a line after line 1, and some completely reconstruct line 1 on the basis of a hypothetical second line. *Princes*: Gunnar and Hogni.

12. Hūna hvassa	The brave boys I summoned
hētk mer at rūnum	to secret speech;
māttigak ǫlva	For my woes requital
bōtr of vinna,	I might not win
āþr hnōfk hǫfuþ	Till off the heads
at Hniflungum.	of the Hniflungs I hewed.

Some editors assume the loss of one line, or more, before line 1. *Hniflungs*: Erp and Eitil, the sons of Guthrun and Atli. On the application of the name Niflung (or, as later spelt, Hniflung) to the descendants of Gjuki, Guthrun's father, cf. *Brot*, 17, note.

13. Gekk ek til strandar,	To the sea I went,
grǫm vask nornum,	my heart full sore
vildak hrinda	For the Norns, whose wrath
vreiþi þeira:	I would now escape;
hōfumk, nē drekþu,	But the lofty billows
hōvar bōrur,	bore me undrowned,
þvī land of stēk,	Till to land I came,
at lifa skyldak.	so I longer must live.

Norns: the fates; cf. *Voluspo*, 8 and note.

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| <p>14. Gekk ek ā beþ
 — <i>hugþumk</i> fyrr betra —
 þriþja sinni
 þjōþkonungi;
 ōlk mēr jōþ,
 erfivorþu,
 <i>erfivorþu</i>
 Jōnakrs sunum.</p> | <p>Then to the bed —
 of old was it better! —
 Of a king of the folk
 a third time I came;
 Boys I bore
 his heirs to be,
 Heirs so young,
 the sons of Jonak.</p> |
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The manuscript omits the first half of line 4.

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| <p>15. En umb Svanhildi
 sōtu þýjar,
 <i>es</i> barna minna
 bazt fullhugþak;
 svā vas Svanhildr
 ī sal mīnum,
 sem væri sōmleitr
 sōlar geisli.</p> | <p>But round Svanhild
 handmaidens sat,
 She was dearest ever
 of all my children;
 So did Svanhild
 seem in my hall
 As the ray of the sun
 is fair to see.</p> |
| <p>16. Gōddak golli
 ok goþvefjum,
 āþr <i>hana</i> gāefak
 Gotþjōþar til;
 Sā's mēr <i>harþastr</i>
 harma minna,</p> | <p>Gold I gave her
 and garments bright,
 Ere I let her go
 to the Gothic folk;
 Of my heavy woes
 the hardest it was</p> |

es þann enn hvīta	When Svanhild's tresses
hadd Svanhildar	fair were trodden
aur ī trōddu	In the mire by hoofs
und joa fōtum.	of horses wild.

Some editors assume a gap of two lines after line 2, and make a separate stanza of lines 3–5; Gering adds a sixth line of his own coining, while Grundtvig inserts one between lines 3 and 4. The manuscript indicates line 5 as beginning a new stanza.

17. En sǫ sǫrastr,	The sorest it was
es Sigurþ minn	when Sigurth mine
sigri rǣndan	On his couch, of victory
ī sæing vōgu;	robbed, they killed;
en sǫ grimmastr,	And grimmest of all
es Gunnari	when to Gunnar's heart
frānir ormar	There crept the bright-hued
til fjōrs skriþu.	crawling snakes.

The manuscript does not indicate line 1 as beginning a stanza (cf. note on stanza 16). Stanzas 17 and 18 are very likely later interpolations, although the compilers of the *Vol-sungasaga* knew them as they stand here. The whole passage depends on the shades of difference in the meanings of the various superlatives: *harþastr*, “hardest”; *sǫrastr*, “sorest”; *grimmast*, “grimmest,” and *hvassastr*, “keenest.” *Snakes*: cf. *Drap Niflunga*.

18. En sǫ hvassastr,	And keenest of all
es hjarta til	when they cut the heart
konung ōblauþan	From the living breast
kvikvan skōru;	of the king so brave;
fjōlþ mank bōlva	Many woes I remember,
...	...

... |

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... |

...

The king: Hogni; cf. *Atlakvitha*, 25. The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a new stanza. Most editors agree that there is a more or less extensive gap after stanza 19, and some of them contend that the original ending of the poem is lost, stanzas 19–21 coming from a different poem, probably a lament closely following Sigurth's death.

19. Beittu, Sigurþr! |
 en blakka mar,
 hest enn harþfōra |
 lāt hinig rinna:
 sitr eigi hēr |
 snør nē dōttir
 sū es Guþrūn |
 gæfi hnossir.

Bridle, Sigurth, |
 thy steed so black,
 Hither let run |
 thy swift-faring horse;
 Here there sits not |
 son or daughter
 Who yet to Guthrun |
 gifts shall give.

The manuscript does not indicate line 1 as beginning a stanza, and it immediately follows the fragmentary line 3 of stanza 18. The resemblance between stanzas 19–21 and stanzas 64–69 of *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma* suggests that, in some other wise lost version of the story, Guthrun, like Brynhild, sought to die soon after Sigurth's death. *Thy steed:* Guthrun's appeal to the dead Sigurth to ride back to earth to meet her is reminiscent of the episode related in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*, 39–48. The promise mentioned in stanza 20 is spoken of elsewhere only in the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase of this passage.

20. Minnsk þū, Sigurþr! |
 hvat vit mæltum,
 es ā beþjum vit |
 bæþi sōtum,
 at myndir mīn |
 mōþugr vitja

Remember, Sigurth, |
 what once we said,
 When together both |
 on the bed we sat,
 That mightily thou |
 to me wouldst come

halr ōr helju, |
en ōr heimi ek þīn.

From hell and I |
from earth to thee.

21. Hlaþiþ ēr, jarlar! |
eikikesti,
lātiþ und hilmi |
hæstan verþa!
megi brenna brjōst |
bōlvafullt eldr,
þrungit hjarta, |
þiþni sorgir.”

Pile ye up, jarls, |
the pyre of oak,
Make it the highest |
a hero e'er had;
Let the fire burn |
my grief-filled breast,
My sore-pressed heart, |
till my sorrows melt.”

Perhaps something has been lost between stanzas 20 and 21, or possibly stanza 21, while belonging originally to the same poem as stanzas 19 and 20, did not directly follow them. *Sore-pressed*: a guess; a word seems to have been omitted in the original.

22. [Jǫrlum ǫllum |
vālaþs batni,
snōtum ǫllum |
sorgir minki,
at tregrōf þat |
of talit vāri.]

May nobles all |
less sorrow know,
And less the woes |
of women become,
Since the tale of this |
lament is told.

Words of the poet's, like stanza 1, and perhaps constituting a later addition. Many editors assume the loss of a line after line 3. The meaning, of course, is that the poet hopes the story of Guthrun's woes will make all other troubles seem light by comparison.

Hamthesmol

The Ballad of Hamther

Introductory Note

The *Hamthesmol*, the concluding poem in the *Codex Regius*, is on the whole the worst preserved of all the poems in the collection. The origin of the story, the relation of the *Hamthesmol* to the *Guthrunarhvat*, and of both poems to the hypothetical “old” *Hamthesmol*, are outlined in the introductory note to the *Guthrunarhvat*. The *Hamthesmol* as we have it is certainly not the “old” poem of that name; indeed it is so pronounced a patchwork that it can hardly be regarded as a coherent poem at all. Some of the stanzas are in Fornyrthislag, some are in Malahattr, one (stanza 29) appears to be in Ljothahattr, and in many cases the words can be adapted to any known metrical form only by liberal emendation. That any one should have deliberately composed such a poem seems quite incredible, and it is far more likely that some eleventh century narrator constructed a poem about the death of Hamther and Sorli by piecing together various fragments, and possibly adding a number of Malahattr stanzas of his own.

It has been argued, and with apparently sound logic, that our extant *Hamthesmol* originated in Greenland, along with the *Atlamol*. In any case, it can hardly have been put together before the latter part of the eleventh century, although the “old” *Hamthesmol* undoubtedly long antedates this period. Many editors have attempted to pick out the parts of the extant poem which were borrowed from this older lay, but the condition of the text is such that it is by no means clear even what stanzas are in Fornyrthislag and what in Malahattr. Many editors, likewise, indicate gaps and omissions, but it seems doubtful whether the extant *Hamthesmol* ever had a really consecutive quality, its component fragments having apparently been strung together with little regard for continuity. The notes indicate some of the more important editorial suggestions, but make no attempt to cover all of them, and the metrical form of the translation is often based on mere guesswork as to the character of the original lines and stanzas. Despite the chaotic state of the text, however, the underlying narrative is reasonably clear, and the story can be followed with no great difficulty.

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| 1. | [Spruttu ā tai | Great the evils |
| | tregnar īpir | once that grew, |

at glýstomu	With the dawning sad
grōti alfa;	of the sorrow of elves;
ār of morgin	In early morn
manna bōlva	awake for men
sūtir hverjar	The evils that grief
sorg of kveykva.]	to each shall bring.

This stanza looks like a later interpolation from a totally unrelated source. *Sorrow of elves*: the sun; cf. *Alvissmol*, 16 and note.

2. Vasa þat nū	Not now, nor yet
nē ī gær,	of yesterday was it,
þat hefr langt	Long the time
liþit sīþan,	that since hath lapsed,
[fātt es fornara,	So that little there is
fremr vas þat hōlfu]	that is half as old,
es hvatti Guþrūn	Since Guthrun, daughter
† Gjūka borin	of Gjuki, whetted
sunu sīna unga	Her sons so young
at hefna Svanhildar.	to Svanhild's vengeance.

Some editors regard lines 1–2 as interpolated, while others question line 3. *Guthrun*, etc.: regarding the marriage of Jonak and Guthrun (daughter of Gjuki, sister of Gunnar and Hogni, and widow first of Sigurth and then of Atli), and the sons of this marriage, Hamther and Sorli (but not Erp), cf. *Guthrunarhvot*, *introductory prose* and note.

3. “Systir vas ykkur	“The sister ye had
Svanhildr of heitin,	was Svanhild called,
sūs Jormunrekkr	And her did Jormunrek
joum of traddi,	trample with horses,

hvītum ok svörtum	White and black
ā hervegi,	on the battle-way,
grǫm, gangtǫmum	Gray, road-wonted,
Gotna hrossum.	the steeds of the Goths.

Svanhild and *Jormunrek*: regarding the manner in which Jormunrek (Ermanarich) married Svanhild, daughter of Sigurth and Guthrun, and afterwards had her trodden to death by horses, cf. *Guthrunarhvot*, introductory note. Lines 3–4 are identical with lines 5–6 of *Guthrunarhvot*, 2.

4. Eptir es þrungit	Little the kings
ykkir þjǫþkonunga,	of the folk are ye like,
lifir einir þátta	For now ye are living
ættar minnar.	alone of my race.

These two lines may be all that is left of a four-line stanza. The manuscript and many editions combine them with stanza 5, while a few place them after stanza 5 as a separate stanza, reversing the order of the two lines. *Kings of the folk*: Guthrun's brothers, Gunnar and Hogni, slain by Atli.

5. Einstǫþ emk orþin	Lonely am I
sem ǫsp í holti,	as the forest aspen,
fallin at frændum	Of kindred bare
sem fura at kvisti,	as the fir of its boughs,
vaðin at vilja	My joys are all lost
sem víðr at laufi,	as the leaves of the tree
þás en kvistskǫþa	When the scather of twigs
kømr of dag varman.”	from the warm day turns.”

Cf. note on stanza 4; the manuscript does not indicate line 1 as beginning a stanza. *Scather of twigs*: poetic circumlocution for the wind (cf. *Skaldskaparmál*, chapter 27), though some editors think the phrase here means the sun. Some editors assume a more or less extensive

gap between stanzas 5 and 6.

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| <p>6. Hitt kvað þā Hamþēr
 enn hugumstōri:
 “Litt mundir, Guþrūn!
 leyfa dōþ Hōgna,
 es þeir Sigurþ þinn
 svefni ōr vōkþu,
 saztu ā beþjum,
 en banar hlōgu.</p> | <p>Then Hamther spake forth,
 the high of heart:
 “Small praise didst thou, Guthrun,
 to Hogni’s deed give
 When they wakened thy Sigurth
 from out of his sleep,
 Thou didst sit on the bed
 while his slayers laughed.</p> |
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Lines 1–3 are nearly identical with lines 1–3 of *Guthrunarhvot*, 4. On the death of Sigurth cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 21–24, and *Brot*, concluding prose. The word *thy* in line 3 is omitted in the original.

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| <p>7. Bōkr vōru þīnar
 enar blāhvītu
 valundum roþnar,
 flutu ī vers dreyra;
 svalt þā Sigurþr,
 saztu of daupum,
 glýja nē gāþir:
 Gunnarr svā vildi.</p> | <p>Thy bed-covers white
 with blood were red
 From his wounds, and with gore
 of thy husband were wet;
 So Sigurth was slain,
 by his corpse didst thou sit,
 And of gladness didst think not:
 ’twas Gunnar’s doing.</p> |
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Lines 1–2 are nearly identical with lines 4–5 of *Guthrunarhvot*, 4. The manuscript, followed by many editions, indicates line 3 and not line 1 as beginning a stanza.

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| <p>8. [Atla þōttisk strīþa
 at Erps morþi</p> | <p>Thou wouldst strike at Atli
 by the slaying of Erp</p> |
|---|---|

ok at Eitils aldragi:	And the killing of Eitil;
þat vas þēr enn verra;	thine own grief was worse;
svā skyldi hverr ǫþrum	So should each one wield
verja til aldraga	the wound-biting sword
sverþi sārbeitu,	That another it slays
at sēr nē stríddit.]	but smites not himself.”

Some editors regard this stanza as interpolated. *Erp* and *Eitil*: regarding Guthrun’s slaying of her sons by Atli, cf. *Atlamol*, 72–75. The Erp here referred to is not to be confused with the Erp, son of Jonak, who appears in stanza 13. The whole of stanza 8 is in doubtful shape, and many emendations have been suggested.

9. Hitt kvað þā Sǫrli,	Then did Sorli speak out,
svinna hafði hyggu:	for wise was he ever:
“Vilkat við mǫður	“With my mother I never
mǫlum of skipta;	a quarrel will make;
orps þykkir enn vant	Full little in speaking
ykkru hvǫrugi:	methinks ye both lack;
hvers biðr þū, Guðrún!	What askest thou, Guthrun,
es at grāti nē færat?	that will give thee no tears?

10. Brœðr grætr þū þína	For thy brothers dost weep,
ok buri svāsa,	and thy boys so sweet,
niþja nāborna	Thy kinsmen in birth
leidda nær rōgi:	on the battlefield slain;
skaltu auk, Guðrún!	Now, Guthrun, as; well
grāta okkr bāþa;	for us both shalt thou weep,
sitjum hēr feigir [ā mǫrum],	We sit doomed on our steeds,
fjarri munum deyja.”	and far hence shall we die.”

Some editors assign this speech to Hamther. *Brothers:* Gunnar and Hogni. *Boys:* Erp and Eitil.

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| <p>11. Hitt kvaþ þā hrōþrglōþ
 — stōþ of hlēpum —
 mæfingr mælti
 viþ mōgu sīna:
 “Þvī’s þar hǣtta,
 at hl̥þigi myni:
 megut tveir menn einir
 tiu hundruþ Gotna
 binda eþa berja
 ī borg enni hōvu.”</p> | <p>Then the fame-glad one —
 on the steps she was —
 The slender-fingered,
 spake with her son:
 “Ye shall danger have
 if counsel ye heed not;
 By two heroes alone
 shall two hundred of Goths
 Be bound or be slain
 in the lofty-walled burg.”</p> |
|--|--|

In the manuscript this stanza follows stanza 21, and some editors take the word here rendered “fame-glad one” (hrōþrglōþ) to be a proper name (Jormunrek’s mother or his concubine). The *Volsungasaga*, however, indicates that Guthrun at this point “had so fashioned their war-gear that iron would not bite into it, and she bade them to have nought to do with stones or other heavy things, and told them that it would be ill for them if they did not do as she said.” The substance of this counsel may well have been conveyed in a passage lost after line 3, though the manuscript indicates no gap. It is by being stoned that Hamther and Sorli are killed (stanza 26). On the other hand, the second part of line 3 may possibly mean “if silent ye are not,” in which case the advice relates to Hamther’s speech to Jormunrek and Sorli’s reproach to him thereupon (stanzas 25 and 27). *Steps:* the word in the original is doubtful. Line 3 is thoroughly obscure. Some editors make a separate stanza of lines 3–5, while others question line 5.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>12. Gengu ōr garþi
 gōrvir at eiskra
 liþu þā ungir
 of ūrig fjōll
 mōrum hūnlenzkum
 morþs at hefna.</p> | <p>From the courtyard they fared,
 and fury they breathed;
 The youths swiftly went
 o’er the mountain wet,
 On their Hunnish steeds,
 death’s vengeance to have.</p> |
|---|---|

Many editors assume the loss of a line after line 1. In several editions lines 2–3 are placed after line 2 of stanza 18. *Hunnish*: the word meant little more than “German”; cf. *Guthrunarhvot*, 3 and note.

13. Fundu ā strāeti	On the way they found
stōrbrōgþōttan	the man so wise;
...	...
...	...
“hvē mun jarpskammr	“What help from the weakling
okkr fultingja?”	brown may we have?”

In the manuscript these two lines follow stanza 16; some editors insert them in place of lines 2–3 of stanza 11. The manuscript indicates no gap. *The man so wise*: Erp, here represented as a son of Jonak but not of Guthrun, and hence a half-brother of Hamther and Sorli. There is nothing further to indicate whether or not he was born out of wedlock, as intimated in stanza 16. Some editors assign line 3 to Hamther, and some to Sorli.

14. Svaraþi Erpr	So answered them
enn sundrmōþri:	their half-brother then:
“Svā munk frændum	“So well may I
fulting veita,	my kinsmen aid
eþa fōtr veitir	As help one foot
fōti oþrum.”	from the other has.”

The stanza is obviously defective. Many editors add Erp’s name in line 1, and insert between lines 2 and 1 a line based on stanza 15 and the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase:

As a flesh grown hand | another helps.

(sem holdgroin | hond annarri.)

In the *Volsungasaga*, after Erp’s death, Hamther stumbles and saves himself from falling with his hand, whereupon he says: “Erp spake truly; I had fallen had I not braced myself with my hand.” Soon thereafter Sorli has a like experience, one foot slipping but the other saving him from a fall. “Then they said that they had done ill to Erp, their brother.”

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>15. “hvat megi fōtr
 fōti veita
 nē holdgroin
 hond annarri?”</p> | <p>“How may afoot
 its fellow aid,
 Or a flesh-grown hand
 another help?”</p> |
|---|---|

Many editions attach these two lines to stanza 14, while a few assume the loss of two lines.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>16. Þā kvaþ þat Erpr
 einu sinni,
 es mærr of lēk
 ā mars baki:
 “Bāgt’s blaupum hal
 brautir kenna:
 kveþa harþan mjök
 hornung vesa.”</p> | <p>Then Erp spake forth,
 his words were few,
 As haughty he sat
 on his horse’s back:
 “To the timid ’tis ill
 the way to tell.”
 A bastard they
 the bold one called.</p> |
|---|---|

In the manuscript this stanza stands between stanzas 12 and 13. Some editors make line 4 a part of Erp’s speech.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>17. Drōgu ōr skōlpum
 skīþiisarn,
 mækis eggjar,
 at mun flagþi;
 þverþu þrōtt sinn
 at þriþjungi,
 lētu mōg ungan
 til moldar hnīga.</p> | <p>From their sheaths they drew
 their shining swords,
 Their blades, to the giantess
 joy to give;
 By a third they lessened
 the might that was theirs,
 The fighter young
 to earth they felled.</p> |
|---|---|

The manuscript does not indicate line 1 as beginning a stanza. *The giantess*: presumably

the reference is to Hel, goddess of the dead, but the phrase is doubtful.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>18. Skōku þeir loþa,
 skalmir festu,
 smugu gōþbornir
 ī gopvefi.</p> | <p>Their cloaks they shook,
 their swords they sheathed,
 The high-born men
 wrapped their mantles close.</p> |
|---|---|

In the manuscript these two lines are followed by stanza 19 with no indication of a break. Some editions insert here lines 2–3 of stanza 12, while others assume the loss of two or more lines.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>19. Fram lōgu brautir,
 fundu vāstīgu
 ok systur stjūpsun
 sāran ā meiþi,
 vargrē vindkōld
 vestan bōjar,
 trýtti æ † trōnu hvōt
 — titt vasat bīþa.</p> | <p>On their road they fared
 and an ill way found,
 And their sister's son
 on a tree they saw,
 On the wind-cold wolf-tree
 west of the hall,
 And cranes'-bait crawled;
 none would care to linger.</p> |
|--|---|

Cf. note on stanza 18. *Ill way*: very likely the road leading through the gate of Jormunrek's town at which Svanhild was trampled to death. *Sister's son*: many editors change the text to read "stepson," for the reference is certainly to Randver, son of Jormunrek, hanged by his father on Bikki's advice (cf. *Guthrunarhvot*, introductory note). *Wolf-tree*: the gallows, the wolf being symbolical of outlaws. *Cranes'-bait*: presumably either snakes or worms, but the passage is doubtful.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>20. Glaumr vas ī hōllu,
 gumar ǫlreifir,
 ok til gota etki
 gørþut heyra,</p> | <p>In the hall was din,
 the men drank deep,
 And the horses' hoofs
 could no one hear,</p> |
|---|---|

āþr halr hugfullr |
ī horn of þaut.

Till the warrior hardy |
sounded his horn.

Many editors assume the loss of a line after line 3. *The warrior*: presumably a warder or watchman, but the reference may be to Hamther himself.

21. Segja fōru ærir |
Jormunrekki
at sēnir vōru |
seggir und hjōlmum:
“Rōþiþ ēr of rāþ! |
rīkir’u komnir!
fyr mōtkum mōnnum |
hafīþ mey of tradda.”

Men came and the tale |
to Jormunrek told
How warriors helmed |
without they beheld:
“Take counsel wise, |
for brave ones are come,
Of mighty men |
thou the sister didst murder.”

The word here rendered *men* (line 1) is missing in the original, involving a metrical error, and various words have been suggested.

22. Hlō þā Jormunrekkr, |
hendi drap ā kanpa,
beindi skōg vanga, |
bōþvaþisk at vīni,
skōk hann skōr jarpa, |
sā ā skjōld hvītan,
lēt sēr ī hendi |
hvarfa ker gollit.

Then Jormunrek laughed, |
his hand laid on his beard,
His arms, for with wine |
he was warlike, he called for;
He shook his brown locks, |
on his white shield he looked,
And raised high the cup |
of gold in his hand.

Line 2 in the original is thoroughly obscure; some editors directly reverse the meaning here indicated by giving the line a negative force, while others completely alter the phrase

rendered “his arms he called for” into one meaning “he stroked his cheeks.”

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>23. “Sæll ek þā þōttumk,
 ef ek sea knættak
 Hamþē ok Sǫrla
 ī hǫllu minni:
 buri mundak binda
 meþ boga strengjum,
 gōþ bǫrn Guþrūnar
 ā galga festa.”</p> | <p>“Happy, methinks,
 were I to behold
 Hamther and Sorli
 here in my hall;
 The men would I bind
 with strings of bows,
 And Gjuki’s heirs
 on the gallows hang.”</p> |
|---|--|

Gjuki’s heirs: the original has “the well-born of Gjuki,” and some editors have changed the proper name to Guthrun, but the phrase apparently refers to Hamther and Sorli as Gjuki’s grandsons. In the manuscript this stanza is followed by stanza 11, and such editors as have retained this arrangement have had to resort to varied and complex explanations to account for it.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>24. Styrr varþ ī ranni,
 stukku ǫlskālir
 blōþ bragnar ōþu
 komit ōr brjōsti Gotna.</p> | <p>In the hall was clamor,
 the cups were shattered,
 Men stood in blood
 from the breasts of the Goths.</p> |
|---|--|

Editors have made various efforts to reconstruct a four line stanza out of these two lines, in some cases with the help of lines borrowed from the puzzling stanza 11 (cf. note on stanza 23). Line 2 in the original is doubtful.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>25. [Hitt kvaþ þā Hamþēr
 enn hugumstōri:]
 “Æstir, Jǫrmunrekkr!
 okkarrar kvōmu,</p> | <p>Then did Hamther speak forth,
 the haughty of heart:
 “Thou soughtest, Jormunrek,
 us to see,</p> |
|---|--|

brǫþra sammǫþra,	Sons of one mother
innan borgar þinnar:	seeking thy dwelling;
hoggnun sēr hǫndum,	Thou seest thy hands,
hoggnun sēr fǫtum,	thy feet thou beholdest,
Jormunrekkr! orpit	Jormunrek, flung
ī eld enn heita.”	in the fire so hot.”

Some editors mark line 1 as an interpolation. The manuscript marks line 4 as beginning a new stanza. As in the story told by Jordanes, Hamther and Sorli succeed in wounding Jormunrek (here they cut off his hands and feet), but do not kill him.

26. Þā hraut við ræsir	Then roared the king,
enn reginkunngi,	of the race of the gods,
ballr ī brynju,	Bold in his armor,
sem björn hryti:	as roars a bear:
“Grýtiþ ā gumna,	“Stone ye the men
alls geirar nē bīta,	that steel will bite not,
eggjar nē īsarn	Sword nor spear,
Jǫnakrs sunu.”	the sons of Jonak.”

The manuscript marks line 3, and not line 1, as beginning a stanza. *Of the race of the gods:* the reference here is apparently to Jormunrek, but in the *Volsungasaga* the advice to kill Hamther and Sorli with stones, since iron will not wound them (cf. note on stanza 11), comes from Othin, who enters the hall as an old man with one eye.

Sorli kvað:

27. “Bǫl vanntu, brǫþir! |
 es þann belg leystir:
 opt ōr belg orþgum |
 bǫll rǫþ koma;

Sorli spake:

“Ill didst win, brother, |
 when the bag thou didst open,
 Oft from that bag |
 came baleful counsel;

hug hefr þū, Hamþēr!	Heart hast thou, Hamther,
ef hefþir hyggjandi!	if knowledge thou hadst!
mikils es ā mann hvern vant,	A man without wisdom
es mannvits es.”	is lacking in much.”

In the manuscript this stanza is introduced by the same line as stanza 25:

Then did Hamther speak forth, | the haughty of heart,

(Hitt kvað þā Hamþēr | enn hugumstōri,)

but the speaker in this case must be Sorli and not Hamther. Some editors, however, give lines 1–2 to Hamther and lines 3–4 to Sorli. *Bag*: i.e., Hamther’s mouth; cf. note on stanza 11. The manuscript indicates line 3 as beginning a new stanza.

Hamþir kvað:

28. “Af vāri nū haufuþ, |
 ef Erpr lifþi,
 brōþir enn bōþfrōkni, |
 es ā braut vōgum,
 verr enn vīþfrāgi |
 — ǫttumk at dīsir —,
 gumi enn gunnhelgi |
 — gørþumk at vīgi.

Hamther spake:

“His head were now off |
 if Erp were living,
 The brother so keen |
 whom we killed on our road,
 The warrior noble,— |
 ’twas the Norns that drove me
 The hero to slay |
 who in fight should be holy.

Most editors regard stanzas 28–30 as a speech by Hamther, but the manuscript does not indicate the speaker, and some editors assign one or two of the stanzas to Sorli. Lines 1–2 are quoted in the *Volsungasaga*. The manuscript does not indicate line 1 as beginning a stanza. *Erp*: Hamther means that while the two brothers had succeeded only in wounding Jormunrek, Erp, if he had been with them, would have killed him. Lines 3–4 may be a later interpolation. *Norns*: the fates; the word used in the original means the goddesses of ill fortune.

29. [Ulfa dōmi | In fashion of wolves |
hykkak okkr vesa, it befits us not
at mynim sjalfir of sakask, Amongst ourselves to strive,
sem grey norna | Like the hounds of the Norns, |
þaus grōþug eru that nourished were
ī auþn of alin.] In greed mid wastes so grim.

This is almost certainly an interpolated Ljothahattr stanza, though some editors have tried to expand it into the Fornyrthislag form. *Hounds of the Norns*: wolves.

30. Vel hōfum vegit, | “We have greatly fought, |
stōndum ā val Gotna o’er the Goths do we stand
ofan eggmōþum, | By our blades laid low, |
sem ernir ā kvisti; like eagles on branches;
gōþs fengum tīrar, | Great our fame though we die |
þōt nū eþa ī gær *deyim*: today or tomorrow;
kveld lifir maþr etki | None outlives the night |
ept kviþ norna.” when the Norns have spoken.”

Some editors assume a gap after this stanza.

31. Þar fell Sōrli | Then Sorli beside |
at salar gafli, the gable sank,
en Hamþēr hnē | And Hamther fell |
at hūsbaki. at the back of the house.

Apparently a fragment of a stanza from the “old” *Hamthesmol* to which the annotator’s concluding prose note refers. Some editors assume the loss of two lines after line 2.

Þetta eru kölluð Hamþismāl en This is called the old ballad of Hamther.
fornu.

Regarding the “old” *Hamthesmol*, cf. [Guthrunarhvot](#), introductory note.

Pronouncing index of proper names

The pronunciations indicated in the following index are in many cases, at best, mere approximations, and in some cases the pronunciation of the Old Norse is itself more or less conjectural. For the sake of clarity it has seemed advisable to keep the number of phonetic symbols as small as possible, even though the result is occasional failure to distinguish between closely related sounds. In every instance the object has been to provide the reader with a clearly comprehensible and approximately correct pronunciation, for which reason, particularly in such matters as division of syllables, etymology has frequently been disregarded for the sake of phonetic clearness. For example, when a root syllable ends in a long (double) consonant, the division has arbitrarily been made so as to indicate the sounding of both elements (e. g., Am-ma, not Amm-a).

As many proper names occur in the notes but not in the text, and as frequently the more important incidents connected with the names are outlined in notes which would not be indicated by textual references alone, the page numbers include all appearances of proper names in the notes as well as in the text.

The following general rules govern the application of the phonetic symbols used in the index, and also indicate the approximate pronunciation of the unmarked vowels and consonants.

VOWELS. The vowels are pronounced approximately as follows:

a—as in “alone”	u—as <i>ou</i> in “would”	
ā—as in “father”	ū—as <i>ou</i> in “wound”	
e—as in “men”	y—as <i>i</i> in “is”	} Both with a slight sound of German <i>ü</i>
ē—as <i>a</i> in “fate”	ȳ—as <i>ee</i> in “free”	
i—as in “is”	æ—as <i>e</i> in “men”	
ī—as in “machine”	ǣ—as <i>a</i> in “fate”	
o—as in “on”	ei—as <i>ey</i> in “they”	
ō—as in “old”	ey—as in “they”	
ø—as in German “öffnen”	au—as <i>ou</i> in “out”	
ö—as in German “schön”	ai—as <i>i</i> in “fine”	
q—as <i>aw</i> in “law”		

No attempt has been made to differentiate between the short open “o” and the short closed “o,” which for speakers of English closely resemble one another.

CONSONANTS. The consonants are pronounced approximately as in English, with the following special points to be noted:

G is always hard, as in “get,” never soft, as in “gem;” following “n” it has the same sound as in “sing.”

J is pronounced as y in “young.”

P following a vowel is soft, as in “with;” at the beginning of a word or following a consonant it is hard, as in “thin.”

The long (doubled) consonants should be pronounced as in Italian, both elements being distinctly sounded; e. g., “Am-ma.”

S is always hard, as in “so,” “this,” never soft, as in “as.”

H enters into combinations with various following consonants; with “v” the sound is approximately that of *wh* in “what”; with “l” “r” and “n” it produces sounds which have no exact English equivalents, but which can be approximated by pronouncing the consonants with a marked initial breathing.

ACCENTS. The accented syllable in each name is indicated by the acute accent (´). In many names, however, and particularly in compounds, there is both a primary and a secondary, accent, and where this is the case the primary, stress is indicated by a double acute accent (¨) and the secondary one by a single acute accent (´). To avoid possible confusion with the long vowel marks used in Old Norse texts, the accents are placed, not over the vowels, but after the accented syllables.