



# THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT



<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

© 2023 Edward Pettit



This work is licensed under an Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute and transmit the text, and to adapt the text for non-commercial purposes, providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

Edward Pettit, *The Poetic Edda: A Dual-Language Edition*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0308>

Further details about the CC BY-NC license are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>

Digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0308#resources>

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80064-772-5

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80064-773-2

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80064-774-9

ISBN Digital ebook (EPUB): 978-1-80064-775-6

ISBN Digital ebook (AZW3): 978-1-80064-776-3

ISBN XML: 978-1-80064-777-0

ISBN HTML: 978-1-80064-778-7

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0308

Front cover image: 'The Two Corbies' by Arthur Rackham, from *Some British Ballads* (London, [1919])

Back cover image: The god Heimdallr blowing his horn, from a seventeenth-century Icelandic manuscript (AM 738 4to, fol. 35v)

Images on pp. 27 and 861: 'Two Ravens' (CC-BY 4.0) by M. Barran, <https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/MarleenaBarranDesign>

Cover design by Katy Saunders.

# Sigurðarkviða in skamma

---

An immediate obstacle to the appreciation of this poem is presented by its title (now titles), which, today may appear inadequately representative of its nature and set the wrong expectations. In **R** (fol. 34v–36r) the poem is called simply *Kviða Sigurðar* ‘Lay of Sigurðr’, but it is now generally known as *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* (*Sg.*) ‘The Short Lay of Sigurðr’, in contrast to *\*Sigurðarkviða in meira* ‘The Longer/Greater Lay of Sigurðr’, a hypothetical poem often supposed to have been recorded earlier in **R** on leaves now lost. *Sg.* may have been shorter than that hypothetical poem, but at seventy-one stanzas of *fornyrðislag* it is not short; it is actually the third-longest poem in **R** (as it stands), behind only *Háv.* (a likely composite work) and *Am.* This point matters because an audience expecting a compact composition of highly charged emotional immediacy like *Gðr. I* may be unprepared for, and therefore disappointed by, the more expansive and less explosive nature of *Sg.*, especially given its ‘obscure, allusive narration of events’.<sup>1</sup> Also, although Sigurðr does make a brief death-bed appearance, *Sg.* is not really about him. It would be better called *Brynhildarkviða*, because its main character, and the one who leaves the most abiding impression, is Brynhildr.<sup>2</sup>

For *Sg.* is largely a study of how the heart and mind of this impassioned woman—whose desperation, both loving and potentially murderous, for Sigurðr surfaces briefly in st. 6—turned to hard-heartedness, cold calculation, instigation of revenge, prophecy and suicide. As such, Brynhildr undergoes an inversion of Guðrún’s progression, in *Gðr. I*, from silent grief on the point of death to emotional release and prolonged life.

The counsels of women are proverbially ‘cold’ in Old Norse literature,<sup>3</sup> and this view is exemplified by the thwarted, vengeful Brynhildr of *Sg.* In perhaps the poem’s most memorable stanza (8), she fills up metaphorically with ice-floes and icicles (or

---

1 C. M., Sperberg-MacQueen, ‘The Legendary Form of *Sigurðarkviða in Skamma*’, *ANF* 100 (1985), 16–40 at 19; interested readers are referred to this valuable article, which investigates the possible underlying events in detail. The difficulty of following the poem’s events is compounded by the potential misordering of the rather obscure stt. 36–39.

2 T. M. Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 249 observes: ‘The Brynhild of *Skamma*, and more particularly of *Meiri*, is the most complete psychological portrait, male or female, in Icelandic literature’. He also observes that ‘Brynhild is the most dominant and triumphant figure in Germanic legend’ (p. 245), whereas Sigurðr is a ‘pale personality in most versions of the story’ (p. 241).

3 See S. M. Andersson, ‘Introduction: “og eru köld kvenna ráð”’, in S. M. Andersson and K. Swenson, ed., *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. xi–xvi.

glaciers), at the same time as Sigurðr and Guðrún sleep together in a warm bed. After instigating the murder of Sigurðr and of his and Guðrún's son, this Northern ice-maiden coolly makes preparations, in precise detail, for her final place of rest with Sigurðr. This is apparently to be an emulation of the flame-enveloped stronghold in which she had first lain in a prolonged, deathlike slumber and subsequently slept chastely beside Sigurðr. There she will melt, next to Sigurðr, in the heat of a funeral pyre. Although she could not have Sigurðr in life, having committed suicide, she will lie beside him once more in death.<sup>4</sup>

Recognition of this emulation of Brynhildr's earlier slumber calls attention to the notable absence from *Sg.*, in contrast to several preceding poems, of Óðinn, the god whose magic had condemned her to prolonged sleep. He is not mentioned once—even his protégé Sigurðr is, in *Sg.* 24, the friend of Freyr, the god who makes no women cry (according to *Ls.* 37), not of Óðinn. Furthermore, Brynhildr kills herself not by stabbing herself with a spear in classic Óðinnic fashion, but by piercing herself, through her mail-coat, with a sword.<sup>5</sup> If she has rejected her god, her subsequent journey, in *Hlr.*, to Hel rather than Valhøll, indicates more clearly that he has rejected her.

*Sg.* is thought to borrow from numerous other Eddic poems and therefore to be among the youngest of these compositions.<sup>6</sup> In turn, *VS* apparently paraphrases passages from a version of *Sg.*, especially in chapters 32 and 33.

Important variant accounts of the dealings of figures corresponding to Sigurðr, Gunnarr, Høgni, Brynhildr and Guðrún appear in the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, the Old Norse (Norwegian) *Þiðreks saga af Bern* and the Faroese ballad *Brynhildar táttur* 'Brynhild's Story'.

## Synopsis

Long ago, Sigurðr visited the home of King Gjúki, and exchanged oaths of allegiance with Gjúki's sons, Gunnarr and Høgni (1). They offered him in marriage Guðrún, Gjúki's daughter, and drank together many a day (2), until they went to ask for Brynhildr, whom Sigurðr would have had for himself, were he not married to Guðrún (3). Sigurðr, having probably assumed Gunnarr's appearance, laid a sword between himself and Brynhildr, whom he reserved for Gunnarr (4).

Brynhildr, who had, up to that time, known no suffering or disgrace (5), yearns for Sigurðr but declares that, if she cannot have him, he will die (6). She curses the Nornir

4 Suicide is thought unlikely to have been Brynhildr's original fate. Andersson, *Legend of Brynhild*, p. 241 deems it 'an idiosyncratic deviation from the common version' in which she took revenge for deceit and survived. He suggests influence from the suicide of Dido, queen of Carthage, in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

5 Cf. Sigurðr's slitting of Brynhildr's mail-coat with his sword in *VS* 21. Sexual symbolism is a possibility.

6 Sperberg-MacQueen, 'Legendary Form', 25 remarks on the poet's 'almost constant citation of earlier poems'; for specifics, see Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 2nd edn (Copenhagen: Gad, 1920), I, 291–92.

who shaped her miserable fate (7), and went outside in icy distress each evening, when Sigurðr and Guðrún lay in bed together (8). She declares she must content herself with her grim spirit (9), and threatens to leave Gunnarr unless he kills both Sigurðr (10–11) and his son (12).

Gunnarr is distressed at this, and uncertain what to do, given his affection for Sigurðr (13). He asks Hogni to speak with him in private (14). Gunnarr declares that he will die before he loses Brynhildr and her riches (15), and asks Hogni if he is willing to join him in betraying Sigurðr, in view of the great financial gain (16). Hogni replies that it would be unfitting for them to break their oaths by killing Sigurðr (17), and observes that there are no happier men than the four of them—he, Gunnarr, Sigurðr and Guthormr—when they rule together (18). He blames Brynhildr's passionate incitement for this course of action (19). Gunnarr decides to have Guthormr do the killing, since he had not sworn oaths to Sigurðr (20). Guthormr was easily incited and soon buried a sword in Sigurðr's heart (21). Sigurðr, however, threw his sword after Guthormr, slicing him in two (22–23).

Guðrún awoke beside Sigurðr, drenched in his blood (24). He tells her not to weep (25) and intimates that her brothers will also kill their young son, and all because of Brynhildr (26–27). He adds that he did not touch Brynhildr and therefore did not break his oaths to Gunnarr (28). At that, Guðrún sighed, Sigurðr died (29), and Brynhildr laughed once at Guðrún's weeping (30).

Gunnarr, having recognized the malice in Brynhildr's laughter (31), declares that she is worthy of seeing her brother, Atli, killed in front of her (32). She replies that Atli will always be stronger than him (33), and observes that it was Gunnarr and at least one other who had decided on causing strife (probably by threatening to attack if Brynhildr were not betrothed to Gunnarr) (34). She recalls that she never wanted to marry before the sons of Gjúki rode in (35), whereupon she promised herself to Sigurðr (whether through a formal betrothal is unclear) (36 [39]). Atli had told her that he would not grant her the wealth he had bestowed on her unless she let herself be married (presumably to Gunnarr) (37 [36]). This had put her in a state of confusion as to whether to fight (probably against Gunnarr and his brothers) (38 [37]), but this was somehow resolved when (or despite the fact that) she set her heart on Sigurðr and his treasures (39 [38]). She declares that she loved only one man (Sigurðr), and determines to kill herself (40–41).

Gunnarr and others tried to dissuade her from suicide (42), but she rejected their embraces (43). Gunnarr then spoke to Hogni, telling him that he wanted all their men to try to stop her (44), a decision Hogni disapproved of, as he would rather see the cursed woman dead (45). Gunnarr left the conversation downcast, and went to where Brynhildr was distributing treasures (46).

Brynhildr gazed at her possessions and dead women (who presumably had committed suicide or been killed) before donning her golden mail-coat and stabbing herself with a sword (47). She sank down (48) and invited those women who wanted

gifts to approach her (49), but all declared that enough had already died and that they had work to do (50). Brynhildr then declares that she does not want anyone to die with her unwillingly (51), but that fewer treasures will be cremated with them if they do not (52).

She then tells Gunnarr to give up hope for her (53), and starts to prophesy. She says that he and Guðrún will be reconciled sooner than he thinks (54), that Svanhildr (daughter of Guðrún and Sigurðr), a radiant girl, will be born (55), and that Guðrún will marry Atli unwillingly (56). Having recalled her betrayal (57), Brynhildr goes on to foresee that Oddrún, Atli's other sister, will have an affair with Gunnarr (58), that Atli will put him in a snake-enclosure (59), and that, soon after, Guðrún will kill Atli and his sons (60). She adds that it would be more fitting for Guðrún to accompany Sigurðr in death (61), but that Guðrún will rather reach Jónakr's land (62). Svanhildr will be sent away from there (63), to marry King Jǫrmunrekkr, but will be betrayed by the king's counsellor, Bikki, with the result that Sigurðr's line will end (64).

Brynhildr then makes her last request, which is that Gunnarr build her a stronghold that will serve as a spacious pyre for Sigurðr, her and others (65). She gives instructions for its preparation and arrangement, stipulating, among other things, that a sword be laid between her and Sigurðr, as it was formerly (66–68), so that their journey to the afterlife will be ennobled (69–70). Finally, her breath failing, Brynhildr announces her death, having spoken, in her words, 'only truth' (71).

## Further Reading

- Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, 'Gunnarr and the Snake Pit in Medieval Art and Legend', *Speculum* 87 (2012), 1015–49, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0038713412003144>
- Anderson, S. M., and K. Swenson, ed., *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
- Andersson, T. M., *The Legend of Brynhild* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).
- Andersson, T. M., 'Beyond Epic and Romance: *Sigurðarkviða in meiri*', in R. Simek, Jónas Kristjánsson and H. Bekker-Nielsen, ed., *Sagnaskemmtun: Studies in Honour of Hermann Pálsson* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1986), pp. 1–11.
- Andersson, T. M., *A Preface to the Nibelungenlied* (Stanford, CA: California University Press, 1987).
- Batten, C. R., 'Strengði hon elfi: Female Reactions to Male Violence in Eddic Heroic Poetry', *SS* 91 (2019), 289–321, <https://doi.org/10.5406/scanstud.91.3.0289>
- Brockington, M., *The Motif of the Separating Sword in World Art and Literature: A Study of Its Origins and Development* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2008).
- Jochens, J., *Old Norse Images of Women* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).
- Larrington, C., 'Sibling Drama: Laterality in the Heroic Poems of the Edda', in D. Anlezark, ed., *Myths, Legends, and Heroes: Essays on Old Norse and Old English Literature in Honour of John McKinnell* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 169–87, <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442662056-012>

- McKinnell, J., 'Female Reactions to the Death of Sigurðr', in D. Kick and J. D. Shafer, ed., *Essays on Eddic Poetry* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014), pp. 249–67, <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442669260-012>
- Olley, K. M., 'The Icelandic Högni: The Re-imagining of a Nibelung Hero in the Eddic Tradition', *SS 90* (2018), 237–64, <https://doi.org/10.5406/scanstud.90.2.0237>
- Sperberg-MacQueen, C. M., 'The Legendary Form of *Sigurðarkviða in Skamma*', *ANF 100* (1985), 16–40.
- Von See, K., B. La Farge, E. Picard, K. Schulz and M. Teichert, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, Bd. 6: *Heldenlieder* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2009).

## *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*

### Kviða Sigurðar

1. Ár var, þats Sigurðr sótti Gjúka,  
Völsungr ungi, er vegit hafði;  
tók við tryggðum tveggja bræðra,  
seldusk eiða eljunfræknir.
2. Mey buðu honum ok meiðma fjöld,  
Guðrúnu ungu, Gjúka dóttur;  
drukku ok dæmðu dægr mart saman,  
Sigurðr ungi ok synir Gjúka.
3. Unz þeir Brynhildar biðja fóru,  
svá at þeim Sigurðr reið í sinni,  
Völsungr ungi, ok vega kunni;  
hann um ætti, ef hann eiga knætti.
4. Seggr inn suðræni lagði sverð nøkkvit,  
mæki málfán, á meðal þeira;  
né hann konu kyssa gærði,  
né húnskr konungr hefja sér at armi;  
mey frumunga fal hann megi Gjúka.
5. Hon sér at lífi lóst né vissi  
ok at aldralagi ekki grand,  
vamm þat er væri eða vera hygði.  
Gengu þess á milli grimmar urðir.
6. Ein sat hon úti aptan dags;  
nam hon svá bert um at mælask:  
'Hafa skal ek Sigurð — eða þó svelt —  
mög frumungan, mér á armi!
7. 'Orð mæltak nú, iðrumk eptir þess;  
kván er hans Guðrún, en ek Gunnars;  
ljótar Nornir skópu oss langa þrá!'
8. Opt gengr hon innan, ills um fylld,  
ísa ok jökla, aptan hvern,  
er þau Guðrún ganga á beð  
ok hana Sigurðr sveipr í ripti,  
konungr inn húnski, kván frjá sína.



# The Short Lay of Sigurðr

## Lay of Sigurðr

1. Early it was,<sup>1</sup> when Sigurðr visited Gjúki,<sup>2</sup>  
the young Vǫlsungr,<sup>3</sup> who had slain;<sup>4</sup>  
he<sup>5</sup> received the troths of two brothers,<sup>6</sup>  
the strong-willed bold ones gave each other oaths.
2. They offered him a maiden and a multitude of treasures,  
young Guðrún, daughter of Gjúki;  
they drank and debated together many a day,  
young Sigurðr and the sons of Gjúki.
- 3.<sup>7</sup> Until they<sup>8</sup> went to ask for Brynhildr,  
so that Sigurðr rode in their fellowship,  
the young Vǫlsungr, and he knew the ways;<sup>9</sup>  
he<sup>10</sup> would have owned her,<sup>11</sup> if he could have.<sup>12</sup>
4. The southern man<sup>13</sup> laid a naked sword,  
a sign-coloured blade,<sup>14</sup> in between them;  
he did not attempt to kiss the woman,  
nor did the Hunnish king<sup>15</sup> lift her in his arms;  
he reserved the very young girl<sup>16</sup> for the son of Gjúki.<sup>17</sup>
5. She<sup>18</sup> had known no wrong in her life  
and no injury in her allotted span,  
[no] disgrace that was or that might be conceived.  
Grim fates intervened in this.
6. Alone she sat outside in the evening of the day;  
she started to speak about herself then, openly:<sup>19</sup>  
'I must have Sigurðr — or else he dies<sup>20</sup> —  
the very young man, in my arms!
7. 'The words I say now,<sup>21</sup> I shall regret after this;<sup>22</sup>  
his wife is Guðrún, and I am Gunnarr's;  
loathsome Nornir<sup>23</sup> shaped long sufferings for us!
8. Often she<sup>24</sup> goes outside, filled with evil,<sup>25</sup>  
ice-floes and icicles,<sup>26</sup> each evening,  
when Guðrún and Sigurðr go to bed  
and Sigurðr swathes her in bedclothes,  
the Hunnish king, in order to caress his wife.

9. 'Vön geng ek vilja, vers ok beggja;  
verð ek mik gæla af grimnum hug!'
10. Nam af þeim heiptum hvetjask at vígi:  
'Þú skalt, Gunnarr, gørst um láta  
mínu landi ok mér sjálfri;  
mun ek una aldri með öðlingi!
11. 'Mun ek aprt fara, þars ek áðan vark,  
með nábornum niðjum mínum;  
þar mun ek sitja ok sofa lífi,  
nema þú Sigurð svelta látir  
ok jöfur öðrum æðri verðir!
12. 'Látum son fara feðr í sinni!  
Skalat úlf ala ungan lengi!  
Hveim verðr hólða hefnd léttari,  
síðr til sátta, at sonr lífi.'
13. *Hryggr* varð Gunnarr ok hnipnaði;  
sveip sínum hug, sat um allan dag;  
hann vissi þat vilgi gørla,  
hvat honum væri vinna scemst,  
eða honum væri vinna bezt,  
allz sik Völsung vissi firðan  
ok at Sigurð söknuð mikinn.
14. Ýmist hann hugði jafnlanga stund;  
þat var eigi árar títt  
at frá konungdóm kvánir gengi;  
nam hann sér Høgna heita at rúnum —  
þar átti hann alls fulltrúa.
15. 'Ein er mér Brynhildr öllum betri,  
um borin Buðla — hon er bragr kvenna!  
Fyrr skal ek mínu fjörvi láta  
en þeirar meyjar meiðmum týna!
16. 'Vildu okkr fylki til fjár véla?  
Gott er at ráða Rínar málmi  
ok unandi auði stýra  
ok sitjandi sælu njóta!'
17. Einu því Høgni annsvor veitti:  
'Samir eigi okkr slíkt at vinna,  
sverði rofna svarna eiða,  
eiða svarna, unnar tryggðir!

9. I walk in want of joy and man both(?);<sup>27</sup>  
I must gratify myself with my grim heart!<sup>28</sup>
10. She began, out of those hatreds, to incite herself to slaying:  
‘You, Gunnarr, shall entirely lose  
my land and me myself;  
I will never be happy with a nobleman!
11. I will go back, to where I was before,  
among my close-born kinsmen;  
there I will sit and sleep my life [away],  
unless you let Sigurðr die<sup>29</sup>  
and you become a boar<sup>30</sup> better than others!
12. ‘Let’s make the son depart<sup>31</sup> in company with the father!<sup>32</sup>  
One shouldn’t rear a young wolf for long!  
For every man,<sup>33</sup> vengeance becomes easier,  
[and] settlement<sup>34</sup> less [likely], if a son lives.’<sup>35</sup>
13. Gunnarr became distressed<sup>36</sup> and hung his head;  
he turned things over in his mind, sat all the day through;  
he didn’t know clearly what he desired,  
what would be most fitting for him to do,  
or would be best for him to do,  
since he himself would feel robbed of the Vǫlsungr<sup>37</sup>  
and [feel] a great loss after Sigurðr.<sup>38</sup>
14. He considered diverse options for an equally long time;  
it was not customary earlier<sup>39</sup>  
that wives should depart from a kingdom;<sup>40</sup>  
he called Hǫgni to him for a private conversation —  
there he had a faithful friend in all respects.
15. ‘To me, Brynhildr, born of Buðli, alone  
is better than all [others] — she is the best of women!  
I shall relinquish my life before  
I lose that lady’s riches!
16. ‘Are you willing for us both to betray the marshal for money?  
It’s good<sup>41</sup> to rule the Rín’s metal<sup>42</sup>  
and, living contentedly, to command wealth  
and, sitting down, to savour good fortune!’
17. Only this did Hǫgni give in reply:  
‘It is not fitting for us two to do such [a thing],  
to tear apart sworn oaths with a sword,  
sworn oaths, pledged troths!

18. 'Vituma vit á moldu menn in sælli,  
meðan fjórir vér fólki ráðum  
ok sá inn húnski her-Baldr lifir,  
né in mætri mægð á moldu,  
ef vér fimm sonu fœðum lengi,  
áttum góða æxla knættim.
19. 'Ek veit gǫrla, hvaðan vegir standa:  
eru Brynhildar brek ofmikil!'
20. 'Vit skulum Guthorm gǫrva at vígi,  
yngra bróður, ófróðara;  
hann var fyr útan eiða svarna,  
eiða svarna, unnar tryggðir!'
21. Dælt var at eggja óbilgjarnan:  
stóð til hjarta hjǫrr Sigurði.
22. Réð til hefnda hergjarn í sal  
ok eptir varp óbilgjörnum;  
fló til Guthorms Grams ramliga  
kynbirt járn ór konungs hendi.
23. Hné hans um dólgr til hluta tveggja:  
hendr ok haufuð hné á annan veg,  
en fótahlutr fell aprt í stað.
24. Sofnuð var Guðrún í sæingu,  
sorga laus, hjá Sigurði;  
en hon vaknaði vilja firð,  
er hon Freys vinar flaut í dreyra.
25. Svá sló hon svárar sínar hendr  
at rammhugaðr reis upp við beð:  
'Grátaðu, Guðrún, svá grimmliga,  
brúðr frumunga — þér bræðr lifa!
26. 'Á ek til ungan erfínytja —  
kannat hann firrask ór fjándgarði;  
þeir sér hafa, svárt ok dátt,  
en nær numit, nýlig ráð.
27. 'Ríðra þeim síðan, þótt sjau alir,  
systur sonr slíkr at þingi!  
Ek veit gǫrla hví gegnir nú:  
ein veldr Brynhildr ǫllu þǫlvi!

18.                   ‘We both know of no happier men on earth,  
                          while we four<sup>43</sup> rule the people  
                          and the Hunnish army-Baldr<sup>44</sup> lives,  
nor of a worthier in-law relationship on earth,  
                          [even] if we father, at length, five sons,  
[if] we can produce good ones for our families.
19.                   ‘I know for certain, whence these ways come:<sup>45</sup>  
                          Brynhildr’s emotions are too extreme!’
- 20.<sup>46</sup>               ‘We two shall prepare Guthormr for the killing,  
                          our younger, more unwise brother;  
                          he was exempt from<sup>47</sup> the sworn oaths,  
                          sworn oaths, pledged troths!’
21.                   It was easy to incite the unhesitant one:<sup>48</sup>  
                          a sword stood at Sigurðr’s heart.<sup>49</sup>
22.                   The battle-eager one<sup>50</sup> sought vengeance in the hall  
                          and hurled [a weapon] after the unhesitant one;  
Gramr’s highly brightened iron<sup>51</sup> flew towards Guthormr,  
                          forcefully, from the king’s hand.
23.                   His enemy<sup>52</sup> sank in two parts:  
                          hands and head<sup>53</sup> sank one way,  
                          and the foot-part<sup>54</sup> fell backwards on the spot.
24.                   Guðrún had fallen asleep in bed,  
                          free of sorrows, beside Sigurðr;  
                          but she awoke robbed of joy,  
                          as she floated in the blood of Freyr’s friend.<sup>55</sup>
25.                   She struck her heavy<sup>56</sup> hands [together] in such a way<sup>57</sup>  
                          that the strong-hearted one<sup>58</sup> raised himself up in bed:  
                          ‘Don’t weep, Guðrún, so grievously,  
                          [my] very young bride — your brothers live!
26.                   ‘I have too young an heir —  
he doesn’t know how to distance himself from the enemy-court;  
they have themselves a new course of action, heavy<sup>59</sup> and dire,  
                          and it is nearly decided upon.
27.                   ‘No such sister’s son, even if you bear seven,  
will ride with them hereafter to the assembly!<sup>60</sup>  
I know for certain what [all this] means now:  
Brynhildr alone is the cause of all [this] evil!

28. 'Mér unni mæ'r fyr mann hvern,  
en við Gunnar grand ekki vannk;  
þyrmða ek sífjum, svörnum eiðum,  
síðr værak heitinn hans kvánar vinr!'
29. Kona varp ǫndu, en konungr fjǫrvi;  
svá sló hon svára sinni hendi,  
at kváðu við kálkar í vá  
ok gullu við gæss í túni.
30. Hló þá Brynhildir, Buðla dóttir,  
einu sinni, af ǫllum hug,  
er hon til hvílu heyra knátti  
gjallan grát Gjúka dóttur.
31. Hitt kvað þá Gunnarr, gramr haukstalda:  
'Hlæraðu af því, heiptgjörn kona,  
glöð á gólfi, at þér góðs viti!  
Hví hafnar þú inum hvíta lit,  
feikna fæðir? Hygg ek at feig sér!
32. 'Þú værir þess verðust kvenna,  
at fyr augum þér Atla hjøggim,  
sæir bræðr þínum blóðugt sár,  
undir dreyrgar, knættir yfir binda!'
33. 'Frýra maðr þér engi, Gunnarr: hefir þú fullvegiti!  
Lítt sésk Atli ófu þína;  
hann mun ykkar ǫnd síðari  
ok æ bera afl it meira.
34. 'Segja mun ek þér, Gunnarr — sjálfr veiztu gǫrla —  
hvé ér yðr snemma til saka réðuð!  
Varðkat ek til ung, né ofþrungin:  
fullgædd fé á fleti bróður.
35. 'Né ek vilda þat, at mik verr ætti,  
áðr þér Gjúkungar riðuð at garði,  
þrír á hestum, þjóðkonungar;  
en þeira fǫr þǫrfgi væri!
- 36 [39]. 'Þeim hétumk þá, þjóðkonungi  
er með gulli sat á Grana bógum;  
varat hann í augu yðr um líkr,  
né á engi hlut at álitum —  
þó þikkisk ér þjóðkonungar!

28.                   ‘The maiden loves me above every [other] man,  
                          but I did no injury to Gunnarr;  
                          I kept our kinship inviolate, our sworn oaths,  
                          lest I should be called *his* wife’s “friend”!’<sup>61</sup>
29.                   The woman<sup>62</sup> let out a sigh,<sup>63</sup> and the king his life;  
                          she struck heavily with her hand,  
                          so that the cups in the corner responded  
                          and the geese in the home-meadow honked<sup>64</sup> in reply.<sup>65</sup>
30.                   Then Brynhildr laughed, Buðli’s daughter,  
                          one time [only], with all her heart,<sup>66</sup>  
                          when she could hear from the bed  
                          the shrill crying of Gjúki’s daughter.
31.                   Then Gunnarr, prince of warriors,<sup>67</sup> said this:  
‘You’re not laughing on account of this, hatred-eager woman,  
glad on the floor, that you know of something good for you!  
Why do you lose those white looks<sup>68</sup> [of yours],  
fomenter of evils? I think that you’re doomed!
32.                   ‘You’d be the most worthy of women for this,  
                          that before your eyes we should hack Atli down,  
                          that you should see bloody wounds on your brother,  
                          gory gashes, that you could bind up!’
- 33.<sup>69</sup>               ‘No one questions you,<sup>70</sup> Gunnarr: you’ve fought enough!<sup>71</sup>  
                          Little does Atli fear your enmity;  
                          of the two of you, he’ll bear the longer breath<sup>72</sup>  
                          and always the greater strength.
34.                   ‘I will tell you, Gunnarr — you know it yourself clearly —  
                          how you<sup>73</sup> decided on this strife of yours early!<sup>74</sup>  
                          I was not too young, nor too hard-pressed:<sup>75</sup>  
                          [I was] fully endowed with wealth on my brother’s floor.
35.                   ‘I didn’t desire it, that a man should possess me,  
                          before you Gjúkungar<sup>76</sup> rode into the courtyard,<sup>77</sup>  
                          three on horses,<sup>78</sup> people-kings;  
                          but their<sup>79</sup> journey ought not to have occurred!<sup>80</sup>
- 36 [39].<sup>81</sup>       ‘I promised myself then to *that* one,<sup>82</sup> to the people-king<sup>83</sup>  
                          who sat with gold on Grani’s shoulders;<sup>84</sup>  
                          he was not alike to *you* in his eyes,  
                          nor in any respect in appearance —  
                          yet you think yourselves people-kings!<sup>85</sup>

- 37 [36].                   ‘Ok mér Atli þat einni sagði,  
at hvárki létz hofn um deila,  
gull né jarðir, nema ek gefask létak,  
ok engi hlut auðins fjár,  
þá er mér jóðungri eigu seldi  
ok mér jóðungri ára talði.
- 38 [37].                   ‘Þá var á hvörfum hugr minn um þat,  
hvárt ek skylda vega eða val fella,  
böll í brynju, um bróður sök;  
þat myndi þá þjóðkunt vera,  
morgum manni at munar stríði.
- 39 [38].                   ‘Létum síga sáttmál okkur —  
lék mér meirr í mun meiðmar þiggja,  
bauga rauða, burar Sigmundar;  
né ek annars manns aura vildak.
40.                         ‘Unna einum, né ýmissum —  
þjóat um hverfan hug men-Skögul!  
Allt mun þat Atli eptir finna,  
er hann mína spyr morðfögr görva,
41.                         at þeygi skal þunnged kona  
annarrar ver aldri leiða;  
þá mun á hefndum harma minna!’
42.                         Upp reis Gunnarr, gramr verðungar,  
ok um háls konu hendr um lagði;  
gengu allir, ok þó ýmsir,  
af heilum hug, hana at letja.
43.                         Hratt af hálsi hveim þar sér;  
léta mann sik letja langrar göngu.
44.                         Nam hann sér Högna hvetja at rúnum:  
‘Seggi vil ek alla í sal ganga,  
þína með mínum — nú er þörf mikil —  
vita ef meini morðfögr konu,  
unz, af méli, enn mein komi;  
þá látum því þarfar ráða.’
45.                         Einu því Högna andsvör veitti:  
‘Letia maðr hana langrar göngu,  
þars hon aþtrborin aldri verði!  
Hon kröng of komsk fyr kné móður,  
hon æ borin óvilja til,  
morgum manni at móðtrega!’



- 37 [36].                   ‘And Atli said this to me alone,<sup>86</sup>  
                                   that he would not allow possessions to be shared,  
                                   neither gold nor earth,<sup>87</sup> unless I let myself be given,<sup>88</sup>  
                                   and no part of the bestowed wealth,  
                                   of the property which he assigned me when I was very young<sup>89</sup>  
                                   and allotted<sup>90</sup> me when I was very young in years.<sup>91</sup>
- 38 [37].                   ‘Then my mind was in a muddle<sup>92</sup> about this,  
                                   whether I should fight and<sup>93</sup> fell warriors,<sup>94</sup>  
                                   bold in my mail-coat, for my brother’s sake;  
                                   that would then be widely known,  
                                   for many a man an affliction of will.<sup>95</sup>
- 39 [38].                   ‘We let an agreement settle between the two of us<sup>96</sup> —  
                                   a greater longing played on my mind,<sup>97</sup> to obtain the precious objects,  
                                   the red arm-rings, of Sigmundr’s son,<sup>98</sup>  
                                   I didn’t want another man’s treasures.
40.                         ‘I loved one [man],<sup>99</sup> not several —  
                                   the torc-Skōgul<sup>100</sup> did not harbour a spinning heart!<sup>101</sup>  
                                   Atli will find out all this afterwards,  
                                   when he hears of *my* murder-journey<sup>102</sup> in full,
41.                         that a single-minded<sup>103</sup> woman shall in no way  
                                   accompany another’s husband<sup>104</sup> in life,<sup>105</sup>  
                                   then there will be [?] in acts of vengeance for my harms!<sup>106</sup>
42.                         Up rose Gunnarr, prince of the retinue,  
                                   and laid his arms around his wife’s neck;  
                                   they all went, and yet severally,<sup>107</sup>  
                                   with sincere heart, to dissuade her.
43.                         She thrust each one from her neck there;  
                                   she let no one dissuade her from the long journey.<sup>108</sup>
44.                         He<sup>109</sup> urged Hōgni to speak with him in secret:  
                                   ‘I want all the men to go into the hall,  
                                   yours with mine — now there’s great necessity —  
                                   to see if they may keep the woman from her murder-journey,  
                                   before, from this time [on], further misfortunes arise,<sup>110</sup>  
                                   then let’s decide what’s necessary in this case.’
45.                         Only this did Hōgni grant in answer:  
                                   ‘Let no one dissuade her from the long journey,  
                                   [and] may she never be reborn from there!<sup>111</sup>  
                                   Awkward she came before her mother’s knee,<sup>112</sup>  
                                   she was always born for misery,  
                                   as a [source of] mood-sorrow for many a man!’

46. Hvarf sér óhróðugr andspilli frá,  
þar er mörk menja meiðmum deildi.
47. Leit hon um alla eigu sína,  
soltnar þýjar ok salkonur;  
gullbrynju smó — vara gott í hug —  
áðr sik miðlaði mækis eggjum.
48. Hné við bólstri hon á annan veg,  
ok hjörunduð hugði at ráðum:
49. ‘Nú skulu ganga, þeir er gull vili  
ok minna því at mér þiggja;  
ek gef hverri um hroðit sigli,  
bók ok blæju, bjartar váðir!’
50. Þogðu allir, hugðu at ráðum,  
ok allir senn annsvör veittu:  
‘Ærnar soltnar — munum enn lifa!  
Verða salkonur sœmð at vinna!’
51. Unz af hyggjandi hørskrýdd kona,  
ung at aldri, orð viðr um kvað:  
‘Vilkat ek mann trauðan né torbœnan  
um óra sök aldri týna!’
52. ‘Þó mun á beinum brenna yðrum  
færi eyrir, þá er ér fram komið —  
neit! Menju góð — mín at vitja!’
53. ‘Seztu niðr, Gunnarr! Mun ek segja þér  
lífs ørvæna ljósa brúði;  
muna yðvart far allt í sundi,  
þótt ek hafa öndu látit!’
54. ‘Sátt munuð it Guðrún, snemr en þú hyggir;  
hefir kunn kona við konung,  
daprar minjar at dauðan ver.
55. ‘Þar er mærl borin, móðir fœðir;  
sú mun hvítari en inn heiði dagr,  
Svanhildir, vera, sólar geisla.

46. He<sup>113</sup> turned downcast from the conversation,  
to where the woodland of torcs<sup>114</sup> was distributing treasures.
47. She looked over all her possessions,  
her dead slave-girls and hall-women;<sup>115</sup>  
she donned her gold mail-coat — she wasn't in good heart —  
before she stabbed her middle with a sword's edges.
48. She sank against the bolster on one side,  
and, sword-wounded, deliberated her decisions:
49. 'Now shall they come, those who want to accept  
from me gold and lesser things than that;  
I give each [woman] a [gold-]adorned item of jewelry,  
an embroidered coverlet and a bed-cover, bright clothes!'
50. All fell silent, deliberated their decisions,<sup>116</sup>  
and all gave answer at once:  
'Enough<sup>117</sup> have died — we shall live on!  
Hall-women must do honourable work!'<sup>118</sup>
51. Until, in her wisdom, the linen-adorned woman,<sup>119</sup>  
young in years, spoke words in response:  
'I don't want a person [who is] reluctant or hard to persuade  
to lose their life for our<sup>120</sup> sake!
52. 'Yet there will burn on your bones  
fewer treasures, when you go forth —  
no goods of Menja<sup>121</sup> — to visit me!<sup>122</sup>
53. 'Sit down, Gunnarr! I shall tell you  
that your lustrous bride [is] without hope of life;  
your voyage<sup>123</sup> won't all be in a sound,<sup>124</sup>  
even though I've given up breath!<sup>125</sup>
- 54.<sup>126</sup> 'You and Guðrún will be reconciled, sooner than you think;  
the well-known woman will have,<sup>127</sup> along with the king,<sup>128</sup>  
sorrowful memories of the dead man.<sup>129</sup>
55. 'Then a maiden will be born, her mother will raise her;  
she, Svanhildr,<sup>130</sup> will be fairer<sup>131</sup> than the shining day,  
than a ray of the sun.

56. 'Gefa mundu Guðrúnu góðra nøkkurum,  
skeyti skœða skatna mengi;  
munat at vilja, versæl, gefin;  
hana mun Atli eiga ganga,  
of borinn Buðla, bróðir minn.
57. 'Margs á ek minnask, hvé við mik fóru,  
þá er mik sára svikna hofðuð;  
vaðin at vilja vark, meðan ek lifðak!
58. 'Muntu Oddrúnu eiga vilja,  
en þik Atli mun eigi láta;  
it munuð lúta á laun saman;  
hon mun þér unna, sem ek skyldak,  
ef okkr góð um sköp gærði verða!
59. 'Þik mun Atli illu beita:  
mundu í þngan ormgarð lagiðr!
60. 'Þat mun ok verða þvígit lengra  
at Atli mun þndu týna,  
sælu sinni ok sona lífi,  
þvíat honum Guðrún grýmir á beð,  
snörpum eggjum, af sárum hug.
61. 'Sœmri væri Guðrún, systir okkur,  
frumver sínum *fylgja dauðum*,  
ef henni gæfi góðra ráð,  
eða ætti hon hug oss um líkan!
62. 'Óort mæli ek nú, en hon eigi mun  
of óra sök aldri týna;  
hana munu hefja hávar bárur  
til Jónakrs óðaltorfu.
63. 'Eru í varúðum Jónakrs sonum;  
mun hon Svanhildi senda af landi,  
sína mey ok Sigurðar.
64. 'Hana munu bíta Bikka ráð,  
þvíat Jormunrekkur óþarft lifir;  
þá er ǫll farin ætt Sigurðar,  
eru Guðrúnar grœti at fleiri.

56. 'You will give Guðrún to a certain good man,<sup>132</sup>  
 a damaging arrow for a multitude of men,<sup>133</sup>  
 not according to her wishes, [or] husband-happy, will she be given;  
 Atli will go to own<sup>134</sup> her,  
 [the man] born of Buðli, my brother.
57. 'I have much to remember, how things went against me,  
 when you<sup>135</sup> had betrayed me bitterly;<sup>136</sup>  
 I was deprived of my wishes, while I lived!
58. 'You'll want to own<sup>137</sup> Oddrún,<sup>138</sup>  
 but Atli won't let you;  
 you two will incline together<sup>139</sup> in secret;  
 she will love you, as I should [have],  
 if a good fate had been forthcoming for us!
59. 'Atli will persecute you with evil:  
 you'll be laid in a narrow snake-yard!
60. 'It will also come to pass not much later  
 that Atli will lose his breath,<sup>140</sup>  
 his happiness and the life of his sons,  
 because Guðrún will besmear him in bed,<sup>141</sup>  
 with sharp edges,<sup>142</sup> out of wounded spirit.
61. 'It would be more seemly for Guðrún, our sister,<sup>143</sup>  
 to follow her first, dead husband,<sup>144</sup>  
 if one were to give her good people's advice,  
 or she had a spirit like ours!<sup>145</sup>
62. 'Not hastily do I speak now, but she will not  
 lose her life in line with our<sup>146</sup> wishes;  
 high waves will carry her  
 to Jónakr's<sup>147</sup> ancestral territory.
63. 'They<sup>148</sup> will be in the care of Jónakr's sons;  
 she<sup>149</sup> will send Svanhildr from the land,  
 her girl and Sigurðr's.<sup>150</sup>
64. 'Bikki's counsels will bite her,<sup>151</sup>  
 because Jormunrekkr<sup>152</sup> lives to do evil;  
 when all of Sigurðr's family has passed [away],  
 Guðrún's griefs will be the more.



65.                   ‘I will make only one request of you,  
it will be my last request in this world:  
let a stronghold<sup>153</sup> be prepared on the plain,  
so that it’s<sup>154</sup> equally roomy for us all,  
for those who died with Sigurðr!<sup>155</sup>
66.                   ‘Let the stronghold be hung with tapestries and shields,  
well-coloured foreign cloth and a multitude of Valir;<sup>156</sup>  
let the Hunnish man<sup>157</sup> be burnt with me on one side.
67.                   ‘Let there be burned on the other side of the Hunnish man  
my servants, made stately with torcs,  
two at his head, and two hawks;  
then it will be arranged as is fitting in all [respects].
68.                   ‘Let there also lie between us the ring-adorned metal,<sup>158</sup>  
the edge-sharp iron, as it was once laid,  
when we both climbed into one bed  
and were then called by the name of married couple.
69.                   ‘The hall’s roller-gleams,<sup>159</sup> decorated with a ring,  
won’t then close on his heel with a clang,<sup>160</sup>  
if my entourage accompanies him hence —  
our journey won’t be at all wretched!
70.                   ‘For five handmaidens accompany him,  
[and] eight servants, of good origin,  
my slaves who grew up with me, and my patrimony,  
that which Buðli gave to his child.
71.                   ‘I have said much, I would [say] more,  
if fate should give me more speech-time;  
my voice fades, my wounds swell,  
I have spoken only truth — thus shall I expire!’

Textual Apparatus to *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*

*Sigurðarkviða in skamma*] This title is not in **R**; it is supplied editorially

*Kviða Sigurðar*] This rubricated, but faded, heading is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; this reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein

1/1 *Ár*] The first letter is large, inset and rubricated, but faded

4/1 *Seggr*] **R** *Segvorr*

12/7 *síðr*] **R** *sib'*, which may alternatively be an abbreviation of *síðan* 'then, later'

15/3 *hon er*] After these words, the words *bdlla broþir minn* are erased in **R** (cf. 56/9–10)

13/1 *Hryggr*] **R** *reiðr* 'angry'; the emendation provides alliteration

23/5 *fótahlutr*] **R** *fota lotr*

25/1 *hon*] **R** *h'* (which otherwise stands for *hann*)

29/3 *svára*] **R** *svárar*

33/7 *bera*] **R** *vera*

36/2 *þjóðkonungi*] **R** absent

36/7 *hlut*] **R** *lvt*

36/6] A drawing of a dragon's head appears at the foot of the page in **R**

37/4 *hofn um*] **R** *hofnum*

37/7 *hlut*] **R** *lvt*

37/10 *eigu*] **R** *eiga*

37/10 *seldi*] **R** *selldak*

38/1 *hvørfum*] **R** *hvorfo* with a macron above the second 'o'

43/2 *hveim*] **R** *heim*

51/3 *ung*] **R** *óng*

52/5 *neitt*] **R** *neit* (with *e* caudata)

60/6 *sona*] **R** *sofa*

60/9 *eggjum*] **R** *egiom*

61/4 *fylgja dauðum*] **R** absent

61/5 *henni*] **R** *henði*

67/2 *á*] **R** absent

69/8 *vera*] Corrected from *þiccia* (i.e., *þikkja* 'seem') in **R**

71/3 *ef*] **R** *er*



## Notes to the Translation

- 1 I.e., it was long ago.
- 2 Or 'Gjúki's (hall)'.
- 3 Sigurðr, not Gjúki.
- 4 Or 'when he had slain'. Either way, this is presumably a reference to Sigurðr's killing of Fáfnir or the sons of Hundingr.
- 5 Sigurðr.
- 6 Gunnarr and Högni.
- 7 For another account of the events of this stanza and the next, see *Hlr.* 11–12.
- 8 Probably Gunnarr and Högni.
- 9 I.e., the route. It is unclear whether this means that Sigurðr had previously visited Brynhildr or her foster-father, and whether Sigurðr and Brynhildr had then been betrothed; cf. *Sg.* 36 [39]. Alternatively, translate 'and he knew how to fight/kill'.
- 10 Presumably Sigurðr.
- 11 I.e., married Brynhildr. It is likely that Sigurðr and the others went to ask for Brynhildr's hand on behalf of Gunnarr.
- 12 This visit is probably also the subject of *Sg.* 35.
- 13 Presumably Sigurðr, who has probably adopted the appearance of Gunnarr to fool Brynhildr.
- 14 Either a sword with a damascened blade or one marked with colourful signs or runes. Cf. *FSk.* 23.
- 15 Sigurðr. It seems that *Hún(n)* 'Hun' and *húnskr* 'Hunnish', originally terms for the historical Huns (as in *Akv.*), subsequently came to describe a non-Nordic people, family, person or land of southernness or exotic ferocity. In *VS* 2, Sigurðr's grandfather, Vǫlsungr, is *konungr yfir Húnalandi* 'king over Húnaland'.
- 16 She is actually a young woman.
- 17 Gunnarr.
- 18 Brynhildr.
- 19 This line lacks alliteration in the Old Norse. Suggested emendations include replacing *bert* 'openly' with *albert* 'entirely openly' or *ǫrt* 'quickly'.
- 20 I.e., otherwise, Brynhildr will kill him or have him killed.
- 21 I.e., those she has just uttered, or at least including them.
- 22 Possibly Brynhildr reflects that, since she cannot have Sigurðr in life, she must regretfully fulfil her prophecy that he will die.
- 23 The Northern Fates.
- 24 Brynhildr. Later in this stanza, 'her' refers to Guðrún.
- 25 Or 'harm'.
- 26 Or 'glaciers'. The ice is metaphorical. Another possible rendering is 'filled with the harm of ice-floes and icicles'.
- 27 The translation of this line is uncertain.
- 28 Or 'spirit', 'mind'.

- 29 I.e., unless you cause him to die.
- 30 When not denoting an actual boar, *jǫfurr* is, as here, a common metaphor for ‘warrior’ or ‘prince’.
- 31 I.e., to Hel. Alternatively, ‘Let’s make the son die’.
- 32 The son is the child of Sigurðr and Guðrún. He is elsewhere named Sigmundur.
- 33 I.e., for every dead man. The literal sense is ‘for each one of men’.
- 34 I.e., peaceful settlement in exchange for material compensation.
- 35 The interpretation of the second half of this stanza is disputed.
- 36 Replacement of the manuscript reading *reiðr* ‘angry’ with *hryggr* ‘distressed’ provides alliteration and appears more in keeping with the sense of the rest of this stanza. Another possible substitution is *hugsjúkr*, literally ‘heart/mind-sick’, as in the corresponding prose passage in *VS* 32: *Gunnarr varð nú mjök hugsjúkr* ‘Gunnarr now became very sick at heart’. Alternatively, again, if *reiðr* is kept (cf. *Þrk.* 13), *hnipaði* might be emended to *glúpaði* ‘lost heart’ or ‘became afraid’, but the combination of wrath with fearfulness would not be convincing.
- 37 Sigurðr.
- 38 I.e., after Sigurðr was dead.
- 39 I.e., in those days.
- 40 I.e., that queens should leave kings. Gunnarr is worried that Brynhildr will leave him.
- 41 Or ‘It will be good’.
- 42 Gold, here from Fáfnir’s hoard, which, ultimately at least, is deposited in the *Rín* ‘Rhine’ (see *Akv.* 27); the reference to the Rhine may therefore be proleptic here.
- 43 Possibly Gunnar, Högni, Guthormr and Sigurðr.
- 44 I.e., warlord—here Sigurðr. He is here identified with the innocent god Baldr, for whose killing see *Vsp.* 31–32.
- 45 Literally, ‘ways stand’.
- 46 That it is Gunnarr who speaks this stanza is apparent from *VS* 32.
- 47 Literally, ‘he was on the outside of’.
- 48 Guthormr.
- 49 The presence of only a half-stanza here may not indicate the loss of a second half, but rather the poet’s deliberate choice in order to provide a dramatic pause.
- 50 Sigurðr.
- 51 Gramr is Sigurðr’s sword.
- 52 Guthormr.
- 53 Or ‘arms and head’; the reference is to the upper half of Guthormr’s body.
- 54 Or ‘leg-part’; either way, the bottom half of Guthormr’s body.
- 55 Sigurðr. According to *Ls.* 37, Freyr was the god who made no women weep.
- 56 I.e., heavy with sorrow.
- 57 Striking the hands together was an old Germanic gesture of female grief; cf. *Gðr.* I 1.
- 58 Sigurðr.

- 59 I.e., grievous.
- 60 I.e., they plan to kill Sigmundur, the best son that Guðrún could ever have.
- 61 I.e., lover.
- 62 Guðrún.
- 63 Literally, 'threw breath'.
- 64 Literally, 'yelled'.
- 65 Cf. *Gðr.* I 16.
- 66 Cf. *Br.* 9 [10].
- 67 Literally, perhaps, 'of hawk-bearers'; see also the definition of this word in B. La Farge and J. Tucker, *Glossary to the Poetic Edda: Based on Hans Kuhn's Kurzes Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992).
- 68 I.e., fair complexion.
- 69 Brynhildr speaks.
- 70 I.e., questions your courage.
- 71 Brynhildr appears sarcastic, as Gunnarr did not fight Sigurðr but instead sent Guthormr to murder him; in her view, Gunnarr has fought enough for everyone to know his limitations. However, the prose paraphrase of this stanza in *VS* 32 has Brynhildr remark: '*Engi frýr at eigi sé fullveggit*' "'No one will complain that there's not been enough killing".'
- 72 I.e., he will live longer.
- 73 Pl.
- 74 According to Brynhildr's account in *VS* 31, Gunnar and his brothers had threatened to attack unless she were betrothed to Gunnarr. Cf. *Sg.* 38 [37].
- 75 Or perhaps 'too bursting (with pride)'.
- 76 'Descendants of Gjúki'.
- 77 *Sg.* 3 probably refers to the same event.
- 78 Gunnarr, Högni, and either Guthormr or Sigurðr.
- 79 Still referring to the three.
- 80 Literally, 'but their journey was not necessary'.
- 81 The bracketed numbers indicate the order in which the editors of *NK*, among others, assuming some textual confusion, believe the stanzas should be read. This rather obscure part of the poem is clearly related to Brynhildr's retrospective account of events at the start of *VS* 31.
- 82 Sigurðr. Whether this was a formal, public betrothal or a private matter (perhaps known only to Brynhildr herself) is uncertain.
- 83 Or 'great king'.
- 84 I.e., Grani's back.
- 85 Or 'great kings'.
- 86 When Atli said this is unclear.
- 87 I.e., land.
- 88 I.e., in marriage, presumably to Gunnarr.
- 89 Literally, 'child-young'.

- 90 Literally, 'tallied for'.
- 91 Some editors emend *ára* to *aura*; the line then means 'and the treasures he allotted me when I was very young'.
- 92 Literally, 'my mind was in turns'. Alternatively, *hvørfon* 'wavering', 'doubt'.
- 93 Literally 'or'.
- 94 Literally, 'fell the slain'. The warriors are probably the Gjúkungar, who had threatened to attack if Brynhildr were not betrothed to Gunnarr; cf. *Sg.* 34 and *VS* 31.
- 95 This could mean either that Brynhildr's fighting would be contrary to the wishes of many (especially those she kills), or that it would spark love-sickness for her in many men.
- 96 Brynhildr and Atli. The nature of the agreement is unclear.
- 97 Literally, 'on me'.
- 98 Sigurðr.
- 99 Sigurðr.
- 100 A term for 'woman', *Skǫgul* being a valkyrie-name. Brynhildr, a valkyrie, refers to herself.
- 101 I.e., a capricious heart. Cf. *Háv.* 84.
- 102 Suicide.
- 103 Or perhaps 'narrow-minded' or 'weak-minded' (here used ironically), the literal sense being 'thin-minded'. Brynhildr apparently describes herself as such.
- 104 Probably Sigurðr, Guðrún's husband.
- 105 This passage, in what is probably an incomplete stanza, is rather hard to interpret. It may, however, relate to an episode in *VS* 31 in which Sigurðr proposes to leave Guðrún and take up with Brynhildr, an offer Brynhildr rejects because she would sooner die than deceive Gunnarr.
- 106 The end of this stanza appears faulty.
- 107 I.e., each in turn.
- 108 I.e., to the afterlife.
- 109 Gunnarr.
- 110 Alternatively, 'further misfortune arises'.
- 111 Cf. the concluding prose to *HH. II* and *HHv.*; also *Vsp.* 21.
- 112 I.e., she was born wayward.
- 113 Gunnarr.
- 114 A kenning for 'woman', here Brynhildr.
- 115 These females presumably either committed suicide or were killed in order to accompany Brynhildr to the afterlife. Cf. *Sg.* 65.
- 116 Or 'deliberated about decisions'. In the Old Norse, it appears that *h-* alliterates with a vowel (*a-*).
- 117 I.e., enough women.
- 118 They claim they have important work to do, for which they must live.
- 119 Brynhildr.
- 120 Brynhildr uses the royal 'we'.

- 121 A kenning for 'gold', Menja (*men* 'torc') being a giantess who ground gold from a magical millstone, according to the Eddic poem *Grottasöngur*.
- 122 I.e., in the afterlife.
- 123 Or 'ship'. Either way, the reference is metaphorical.
- 124 I.e., you will have to venture out into the dangerous waters of the open sea; in other words, trouble lies ahead.
- 125 I.e., died.
- 126 Events mentioned in Brynhildr's dying prophecy relate to those in subsequent poems in **R**.
- 127 Or 'has'.
- 128 This could refer either to Gunnarr or the Danish King Hálfr with whom Guðrún stayed after Sigurðr's death (see *Gðr. II* 13 and *VS* 34).
- 129 Sigurðr.
- 130 'Swan Battle', daughter of Guðrún and Sigurðr.
- 131 Literally, 'whiter'.
- 132 Literally, 'to a certain one of good (men)'.
- 133 Guðrún's marriage to Atli results in multiple deaths. However, the interpretation of this line is uncertain.
- 134 I.e., marry.
- 135 Pl.
- 136 Brynhildr presumably refers to Gunnarr's deceitful exchange of appearance with Sigurðr in order to win her, a deception in which she may consider other members of Gunnarr's family complicit.
- 137 I.e., marry.
- 138 '(Weapon-)Point Rune', sister of Atli and Brynhildr. See *Od*.
- 139 I.e., embrace.
- 140 I.e., breathe his last.
- 141 I.e., cover him in his own blood.
- 142 Sword-edges.
- 143 As Gunnarr's sister, Guðrún is Brynhildr's sister-in-law.
- 144 Sigurðr.
- 145 Brynhildr uses the royal 'we'.
- 146 Brynhildr's.
- 147 King Jónakr becomes Guðrún's second husband. The etymology of his name is obscure.
- 148 Presumably Guðrún and Svanhildr, her daughter by Sigurðr. This stanza may be missing its first line.
- 149 Guðrún.
- 150 Svanhildr will be sent to marry the Gothic King Jǫrmunrekkr.
- 151 Bikki, whose name probably means 'Bitch' or '(Son of) a Bitch', was a counsellor of Jǫrmunrekkr. He falsely led Jǫrmunrekkr to believe that Svanhildr was having an affair with Jǫrmunrekkr's son, Randvér, whereupon the king had Randvér hanged and Svanhildr trampled to death by horses.

- 152 'Immensely Mighty One'; he appears as *Eormanric* and *Eormenric* in Old English, *Ermanaricus* in Latin. Historically, Ermanaric was a fourth-century Ostrogothic king.
- 153 Or 'pyre'.
- 154 Or 'have a stronghold (built) so broad on the plain that it's ...'.
- 155 Presumably the dead females mentioned in *Sg.* 47.
- 156 Literally, 'Welsh' (slaves), but the term encompasses any foreign slaves.
- 157 *Sigurðr*.
- 158 A sword with a ring-hilt.
- 159 Perhaps shining metal door-hinges or decorated door-wings.
- 160 Or perhaps just close on his heel. Either way, the idea is that there will be other people behind *Sigurðr*.