



THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT



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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>

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Dráp Niflunga

Dráp Niflunga (*Dr.*) ‘The Slaying of the Niflungar’ is a prose passage in **R** (fol. 36v–37r), which was probably composed by the compiler of **R** or its predecessor. It serves as a bridge between the preceding poems concerning the death of Sigurðr and, most immediately, *Gðr. II*, but also those that follow, several of which involve Brynhildr’s brother, Atli. Some details mentioned in *Dr.* are not reflected in subsequent poems in **R**, however. This is another indication of the richness and variety of heroic traditions in medieval Iceland.

As *Dr.* is so short, it needs no synopsis.

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>

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).

Dráp Niflunga

Gunnarr ok Hogni tóku þá gullit alt, Fáfnis arf.

Ófriðr var þá milli Gjúkunga ok Atla. Kendi hann Gjúkungum völd um andlát Brynhildar. Þat var til sætta at þeir skyldu gipta honum Guðrúnu, ok gáfu henni ómennisveig at drekka áðr hon játti at giptask Atla. Synir Atla váru þeir Erpr ok Eitill. En Svanhildr var Sigurðar dóttir ok Guðrúnar.

Atli konungr bauð heim Gunnari ok Högna ok sendi Vinga eða Knéfrøð. Guðrún vissi vélar ok sendi með rúnum orð at þeir skyldu eigi koma, ok til jartegna sendi hon Högna hringinn Andvaranaut ok knýtti í vargshár.

Gunnarr hafði beðit Oddrúnar, systur Atla, ok gat eigi. Þá fekk hann Glaumvarar, en Hogni átti Kostberu. Þeira synir váru þeir Sólarr ok Snævarr ok Gjúki.

En er Gjúkungar kómu til Atla, þá bað Guðrún sonu sína at þeir bæði Gjúkungum lífs. En þeir vildu eigi. Hjarta var skorit ór Högna, en Gunnarr settr í ormgarð. Hann sló hǫrpu ok svæfði ormana, en naðra stakk hann til lifrar.

Þjóðrekr konungr var með Atla ok hafði þar látit flesta alla menn sína. Þjóðrekr ok Guðrún kærðu harma sín á milli. Hon sagði honum ok kvað:

The Slaying of the Niflungar

Gunnarr and Högni then took all the gold, Fáfnir's inheritance.

There was strife then between the Gjúkungar and Atli. He attributed responsibility for Brynhildr's death to the Gjúkungar. It was agreed as settlement that they should give him Guðrún in marriage, and they gave her a potion of forgetfulness to drink before she agreed to marry Atli.¹ Atli's sons were Erpr² and Eitill.³ And Svanhildr was the daughter of Sigurðr and Guðrún.

King Atli invited Gunnarr and Högni to his home and sent Vingi⁴ or Knéfrøðr⁵ [as his messenger]. Guðrún was wise to their tricks and sent word in runes that they should not come, and as a sign she sent Högni the ring Andvaranautr⁶ and tied wolf's hair around it.

Gunnarr had requested [the hand of] Oddrún, sister of Atli, and did not get it. Then he married Glaumvǫr,⁷ and Högni had Kostbera.⁸ Their sons were Sólarr⁹ and Snævarr¹⁰ and Gjúki.

And when the Gjúkungar came to Atli's, then Guðrun asked her sons to plead for the life of the Gjúkungar. But they would not. The heart was cut from Högni, and Gunnarr was placed in a snake-yard.¹¹ He played a harp and put the snakes to sleep, but an adder bit him in the liver.

King Þjóðrekr¹² was with Atli and had lost almost all his men there. Þjóðrekr and Guðrún lamented their sorrows together.¹³ She spoke to him and said:¹⁴

Textual Apparatus to *Dráp Niflunga*

Dráp Niflunga] This rubricated, but faded, heading is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; this reading is therefore reliant on the (partly bracketed) transcription therein

Gunnarr] The initial, apparently large letter is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; this reading is therefore taken from the transcription therein

Knéfrøð] **R** *knefrauþr*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 See *Gðr. II* 21–24.
- 2 ‘Dark-Brown One’.
- 3 Possibly ‘Strong Little One’.
- 4 This name’s etymology is uncertain.
- 5 Or *Knefrøðr* or *Knefrøðr*. The name’s second element probably means ‘wise’.
- 6 ‘Andvari’s Gift’. See *Rm.* 5 pr.
- 7 ‘Noisy Merriment *Vör* [a goddess]’, ‘Noisy Merriment Lady’.
- 8 Perhaps ‘Choice She-Bear’.
- 9 ‘Sun Army’.
- 10 ‘Snow Army’.
- 11 A well-known episode (see especially *VS* 39). In addition to subsequent references in **R**, it was perhaps the subject of a lost work called *Gunnarslag* ‘Gunnarr’s Lay’ mentioned in chapter 2 of *Norna-Gests þátr*.
- 12 ‘Nation Powerful One’. He is probably a reflex of Theodoric the Great, king of the Ostrogoths (454–526), though, in reality, Theodoric was born after Attila’s death. He is the Dietrich von Bern of German tradition.
- 13 For more on their relationship, see *Gðr. III*.
- 14 She recited *Gðr. II*, the next poem in **R**.