



THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT



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

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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

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

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Guðrúnarkviða 2nnur

This poem, on fol. 37r–38r of **R**, is called simply *Guðrúnarkviða* ‘Lay of Guðrún’ in that manuscript, but is now generally known as *Guðrúnarkviða 2nnur* (*Gðr. II*) ‘The Second Lay of Guðrún’ to distinguish it from the collection’s other two lays of Guðrún. It is, however, sometimes also called *Guðrúnarkviða in forna* ‘The Old Lay of Guðrún’, this being a poem mentioned in the prose conclusion to *Br.*, although **R**’s *Gðr. II* is not thought to have been composed especially early.¹

Whether the poem is complete is uncertain.² What we have, which is wholly in *fornyrðislag*, is a reflective monologue by Guðrún, Sigurðr’s widow, which, according to *Dr.*, she speaks to King Þjóðrekr at Atli’s court. She is, by now, married to Atli, Brynhildr’s brother, but most unhappily. Sigurðr is long dead, as is Sigmundur, their son. By now, her brothers Gunnarr and Högni may also have been slain, by Atli, or at least she realizes they soon will be. In addition to the almost complete absence from *Gðr. II* of mythological references,³ several aspects of Guðrún’s reflections on her past life and intimations of the future are worth highlighting.

Most notable is the almost complete absence from the poem of references to Brynhildr; she is mentioned only once, in passing, as Atli’s sibling (27). Although Brynhildr is presumably now long dead, and Guðrún may leave much unspoken, it is nevertheless striking that Sigurðr’s widow does not blame Brynhildr for his death; instead, she attributes his murder to her brothers’ begrudging her a husband of higher status than them (3). Furthermore, Grímildr, Guðrún’s mother—who, ostensibly at least, comes across as a more sympathetic character than might have been expected of a subtle worker of magical potions⁴—is later said to have admitted either sole culpability or shared guilt with her sons, again without seeking to deflect blame toward Brynhildr (28). This distinctive feature, like others, such as Sigurðr’s apparent death in a wood

1 Additionally, chapter 9 of *Norna-Gests þáttur* refers to *Guðrúnarræða* ‘Guðrún’s Words’, which may well be another name for this poem. Chapter 2 of the same story mentions *Guðrúnarbrögð hinu fornu* ‘The Old Wiles of Guðrún’, which, if not referring to a lost work, might be yet another name for this poem, one reflecting Guðrún’s crafty interpretation of Atli’s dreams.

2 See note to *Gðr. II* 44 for the possibility that at least the poem’s conclusion is lost.

3 Guðrún says that Huginn drank Sigurðr’s blood (29). *Huginn* is elsewhere the name of one of Óðinn’s ravens, although perhaps the name just stands for ‘a raven’ here.

4 We glimpse, however, self-interest behind her actions when she describes Atli as the ‘marshal of the noblest family’ (30); she is doubtless keen to restore her family’s links to Atli, now that Brynhildr and Sigurðr are dead.

rather than in his own bed,⁵ is suggestive of the rich variety of traditions within the *Völsung-Niflung* cycle.

Other significant responses to Sigurðr's death recorded in *Gðr. II* are those of Grani, Gunnarr and Hǫgni.

Grani, Sigurðr's horse, gallops from the site of the murder and, in a touching scene, conveys the grim news to Guðrún by hanging his head (5). This episode is especially valuable for its rarity in expressing an emotional bond between horse, rider and, in this case, the rider's widow.⁶

Gunnarr's immediate response echoes that of Grani: a single half-line reports that he hung his head (7). His silence at this point conveys the overwhelming enormity of his guilt and loss—for which, in this case, he has no words, even if he and his brother Hǫgni are later willing to offer their sister gold in compensation (18).

Hǫgni, by contrast, says too much for comfort, perhaps due to frenzied grief. He directs Guðrún to Sigurðr's body, which they have left exposed to predators, and compounds her misery by describing how ravens, eagles and wolves are devouring Sigurðr's corpse. His terrible words elicit two impressive stanzas from Guðrún, in which she describes how she went alone to the wood to gather what was left of Sigurðr and to sit beside him, as if she herself were dead, on what seemed like a black night of the new moon (11–12).

Why subsequently, after extended resistance, Guðrún accepts the marriage to Atli proposed for her by Grímlidr and others, is uncertain. She, along with others, appears to have drunk Grímlidr's potion of forgetfulness—the list of ingredients for which is another of the poem's highlights (21–23)—but it is unclear whether it affected her, how quickly it took effect (assuming it did), what it caused her to forget, and for how long. Possibly, the drink was partly intended to dull Guðrún's memory of her disputes with her brothers and thus to make her better disposed to them. Judging from its prominent inclusion of 'the might of fate [or 'of Urðr']' (21), the potion probably also encouraged an acceptance of destiny by even the most obdurate.⁷ This, along with Grímlidr's insistence, would be enough to explain Guðrún's capitulation.

In any event, Guðrún's monologue soon turns to a night when she lay beside her new husband in his hall, which from her perspective may feel more like a prison (36). The poem's final highlight is her consoling (mis)interpretation of the disturbing scenes which Atli had dreamed and which he wished her to interpret. Her explanations appear to satisfy him, but the poem's audience would appreciate the images' true import, which forbode violent death for Atli and his sons by Guðrún's hand in vengeance for his killing of her brothers.

5 Cf. the prose conclusion to *Br*.

6 Cf. the image of a horse (Grani?) hanging its head above a figure in a grave on the right side of the probably eighth-century Anglo-Saxon Franks Casket.

7 *Urðar magni* 'might of fate (or "of Urðr")' appears to be either a variation on or a mistake for *jarðar magni* 'might of earth'.

A version of *Gðr. II* is paraphrased, and three of its stanzas quoted (one only partially), in *VS* 34–35.

Important variant accounts of the dealings of figures corresponding to Sigurðr, Gunnarr, Hǫgni, Atli, 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

Guðrún reflects on her maidenly past and love for her brothers, which ended following her marriage to Sigurðr (1). He was, she says, far superior to them (2), and their resentment of his superiority caused them to kill him (3). Grani, Sigurðr's horse, ran from the scene of the murder (4). Guðrún went weeping to ask for news from Grani, who was downcast (5). At length, she asked Gunnarr (6). He too hung his head, but Hǫgni announced Sigurðr's murder (7–8). Guðrún asked why he spoke so eagerly, and wished him dead (9). He replied, grimly, that she would be even more sorrowful then (10).

Guðrún recounts that she went to the wood to gather Sigurðr's remains, and that night sat by them silent and motionless, as if she herself were dead (11–12). She then travelled to the hall of Hálftr, king of Denmark (13). She stayed in Denmark for seven seasons with Þóra, daughter of Hákon (14). They made tapestries depicting warriors fighting, including the ships of Sigmundr, Sigurðr's father (15–16).

Then Grímildr, Guðrún's mother, heard of her mood. She threw down her own tapestry, and asked her sons which of them would recompense their sister for the loss of her son and husband (17). Gunnarr and Hǫgni said they would offer gold (18). Various other well-dressed men also visited Guðrún to offer her treasures, too, but she distrusted them (19–20).

Grímildr then brought her a drink of forgetfulness, full of potent ingredients (21–23). All those who drank it either made merry or forgot their animosities(?), and three kings came to Guðrún, before Grímildr herself addressed her (24). Grímildr offered her treasures, halls and handmaidens, and declared that she should rule as Atli's rich wife (25–26). Guðrún flatly rejected this possibility (27). Grímildr urged her not to contemplate revenge on men (her sons and Atli?), admitted earlier culpability, and asserted that Guðrún would behave as if Sigurðr and her son were still living, if she had sons by Atli (28). Again, Guðrún said that she could not move on from Sigurðr (29). Grímildr then declared that Atli was the noblest marshal, and that Guðrún would be without a man unless she married him (30). Guðrún told her not to be so insistent and predicted that Atli would harm Gunnarr and Hǫgni, and that she would not rest until she had killed Atli (31).

Grímlidr wept in expectation of her sons' downfall (32), and offered Guðrún an escort and further lands (33). At that, Guðrún finally accepted Atli, but only due to the coercion of her kin, and prophesied misery for her and danger to her sons by Atli (34).

At once, Guðrún recalls, the marriage party set off for Atli's home (35), and the gate was opened for them (36).

She then describes how Atli woke her when she was angry (or distressed) about dead kinsmen (37). He asked her to interpret for him a dream about a distressing journey (probably to Hel) from which the Nornir awoke him, one in which Guðrún pierced him with a sword (38). She interpreted this as signifying fire, self-deception and self-indulgence, and said she would look after him, even if she loathed him (39). He then described visions of uprooted, bloody shoots and of hawks and whelps that left his hand and became food for him to eat (40–42). She interpreted these as merely visions of the sacrifice and consumption of whittings(?) (43). Guðrún may then say (the interpretation of the final stanza is uncertain) that she lay down, defiant, in the bed, and that she remembers it clearly (44).

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Guðrúnarkviða 9nnur

1. 'Mær var ek meýja — móðir mik fœddi,
björt, í búri, unna ek vel brœðrum —
unz mik Gjúki gulli reifði,
gulli reifði, gaf Sigurði.
2. 'Svá var Sigurðr uf sonum Gjúka,
sem væri groenn laukr ór grasi vaxinn,
eða hjörtr hábeinn um hvössum dýrum,
eða gull glóðrautt af grá silfri.
3. 'Unz mér fyrmundu mínir brœðr,
at ek ætta ver ðllum fremra;
sofa þeir né máttut né of sakar dœma,
áðr þeir Sigurð svelta létu.
4. 'Grani rann af þingi — gnýr var at heyra! —
en þá Sigurðr sjálfr eigi kom;
ðll váru sðuldýr sveita stokkin,
ok of vanið vási und vegondum.
5. 'Gekk ek grátandi við Grana rœða,
úrughlýra, jó frá ek spjalla;
hniþnaði Grani þá, drap í gras hqfði;
jór þat vissi: eigendr né lifðut.
6. 'Lengi hvarfaðak, lengi hugir deildusk,
áðr ek of frægak fólkvörð at gram.
7. 'Hniþnaði Gunnarr. Sagði mér Hogni
frá Sigurðar sárum dauða:
"Liggr of höggvinn fyr handan ver,
Gothorms bani, of gefinn úlfum!"
8. "'Líttu þar Sigurð á suðrvega!
Þá heyrir þú hrafna gjalla,
qrnu gjalla, æzli fegna,
varga þjóta um veri þínum!"
9. "'Hví þú mér, Hogni, harma slíka,
viljalaussi, vill um segja?
Þitt skyli hjarta hrafnar slíta
við lqnd yfir, en þú vitir, manna!"

The Second Lay of Guðrún

- 1.¹ I was the maiden of maidens² — my mother raised me,
bright, in a bower, I loved my brothers well —
until Gjúki endowed me with gold,
endowed me with gold, gave me to Sigurðr.
2. 'So was Sigurðr above the sons of Gjúki,
as if he were a green leek grown [up] from the grass,³
or a high-antlered⁴ stag over sharp[-horned]⁵ deer,⁶
or glowing red gold above grey silver.
3. 'Until my brothers begrudged it to me,
that I should have a man superior to all;
they could not sleep or judge lawsuits,
until they had caused Sigurðr to perish.
4. 'Grani⁷ ran from the meeting⁸ — that was a clamour to hear! —
but then Sigurðr himself did not come;
all the saddle-beasts⁹ were drenched with sweat,¹⁰
and they were used to hard work beneath warriors.¹¹
5. 'Weeping, I went to converse with Grani,
with damp cheeks, I asked the horse for tidings;
Grani hung his head then, lowered his head to the grass;
the horse knew it: his owners¹² were not living.
6. 'Long I wavered, long were my thoughts divided,¹³
before I asked the army-guardian¹⁴ about the prince.¹⁵
7. 'Gunnarr hung his head. Högni told me
about Sigurðr's sorry death:
"He lies, hacked down, on the other side of the river,¹⁶
Gothormr's slayer, given to wolves!¹⁷
8. "'Look for Sigurðr there on the southern-road!¹⁸
Then you'll hear ravens scream,
eagles scream, elated with their food,
wolves howling around your husband!"
9. "'Why, Högni, do you wish to speak
of such sorrows to me, [when I am] joyless?
Ravens shall rip your heart [apart]
over lands of men wide[r] than you're aware of!"

10. 'Svaraði Hogni sinni einu,
trauðr góðs hugar, af trega stórum:
"Þess áttu, Guðrún, græti at fleiri,
at hjarta mitt hrafnar slíti!"
11. 'Hvarf ek ein þaðan, andspillt frá,
á við, lesa varga leifar;
gerðiga ek hjúfra né höndum slá,
né kveina ver sem konur aðrar,
þá er sat soltin um Sigurði.
12. 'Nótt þótti mér niðmyrkr vera,
er ek sárla satk yfir Sigurði;
úlfar þóttumk öllu betri,
ef þeir léti mik lífi týna,
eða brendi mik sem birkinn við!
13. 'Fór ek af fjalli fimm dægr talið,
unz ek höll Hálf, háva, þekðak.
14. 'Sat ek með Þóru sjau misseri,
dætr Hákonar, í Danmörku;
hon mér at gamni gullbókaði
sali suðræna ok svani danska.
15. 'Höfðu vit á skriptum þat er skatar léku,
ok á hannyrðum hilmis þegna,
randir rauðar, rekka Húna,
hjödrótt, hjálmdrótt, hilmis fylgju.
16. 'Skip Sigmundar skriðu frá landi,
gyltar grímur, grafnir stafnar;
byrðu vit á borða þat er þeir þorðusk,
Sigarr ok Siggeirr, suðr á Fívi.
17. 'Þá frá Grímildr, gotnesk kona,
hvat ek væra hyggjuð;
hon brá borða ok buri heimti,
þrágjarnliga, þess at spyrja,
hverr vildi son systur bæta,
eða ver veginn vildi gjalda.
18. 'Gerr létz Gunnarr gull at bjóða,
sakar at bæta, ok it sama Hogni;
hon frétti at því, hverr fara vildi
vigg at sǫðla, vagn at beita,
hesti ríða, hauki fleygja,
örum at skjóta af ýboga.

10. Hǫgni answered one time [only],
 averse to good humour, out of great grief:
 “You will have more grieving about this, Guðrún,
 if ravens rip my heart [apart]!”
11. ‘Alone, I turned from there, from his answer,
 to the wood, to gather the wolves’ leavings;¹⁹
 I did not howl or strike with my hands,
 or lament my man like other women,²⁰
 when I sat, dead,²¹ beside Sigurðr.
12. ‘Night seemed to me to be new-moon dark,
 when I sat sorrowfully over Sigurðr;
 wolves would have seemed to me better than all [other beings],
 if they had caused me to lose my life,²²
 or if someone had burnt me up like birchwood!²³
13. ‘I travelled from the fell for five days [all] told,
 until I perceived the high hall of Hálfir.²⁴
14. ‘For seven seasons²⁵ I stayed with Þóra,
 daughter of Hákon, in Danmǫrk;²⁶
 for my amusement she embroidered in gold
 southern halls and Danish swans.
15. ‘We both had in our pictures that which men play at,²⁷
 and [also] in our handiwork a ruler’s thanes,
 red shields,²⁸ warriors of the Húnar,²⁹
 a sword-host, a helmet-host, a ruler’s following.
16. ‘Sigmundr’s³⁰ ships were sliding from the land,³¹
 gilded “masks,”³² carved stems;
 we both embroidered on the borders that which they fought,³³
 Sigarr and Siggeirr,³⁴ south in Fífl.³⁵
17. ‘Then Grímildr,³⁶ the Gothic³⁷ woman, heard
 what frame of mind I was in,³⁸
 she threw down her tapestry³⁹ and summoned her sons,
 insistently, to ask them this,
 who would recompense their sister for her son,⁴⁰
 or pay compensation for her slain husband.⁴¹
18. ‘Gunnarr said he was willing to offer gold,
 to compensate for the crime, and Hǫgni likewise;
 she⁴² asked about this, who wanted to go
 to saddle horses, harness them to a wagon,
 ride a steed, fly a hawk,
 shoot arrows from a yew-bow.⁴³

19. ‘Valdarr Dønum með Jarizleifi,
Eymóðr þriði með Jarizkári;
inn gengu þá, jöfrum líkir,
Langbarðs liðar, höfðu loða rauða,
skreyttar brynjur, steypa hjálma;
skálmum girðir, höfðu skarar jarpar.
20. ‘Hverr vildi mér hnossir velja,
hnossir velja ok hugat mæla,
ef þeir mætti mér margra súta
tryggðir vinna — né ek trúa gerðak!
21. ‘Færði mér Grímildr full at drekka,
svalt ok sárlikt né ek sakar munðak;
þat var um aukit urðar magni,
svalköldum sæ ok sonar dreyra.
22. ‘Váru í horni hvers kyns stafir,
ristnir ok roðnir — ráða ek né máttak —
lyngfiskr langr lands Haddingja,
ax óskorit, innleið dýra.
23. ‘Váru þeim bjóri bøl mǫrg saman,
urt alls viðar ok akarn *brunninn*,
umdoegg arins, iðrar blótnar,
svíns lifr soðin, þvíat hon sakar deyfði.
24. ‘En þá gleymðu, er getit höfðu,
öll jöfurs jörbjúg í sal;
kvómu konungar fyr kné þrennir,
áðr hon sjálfa mik sótti at máli.
25. “‘Gef ek þér, Guðrún, gull at þiggja,
fjöld alls fjár, at þinn föður dauðan,
hringa rauða, Hlōðvés sali,
ársal allan, at jöfur fallinn,
26. “‘Húnskar meyar, þær er hlaða spjöldum
ok gøra gull fagrt, svá at þér gaman þikki;
ein skaltu ráða auði Buðla,
gulli gøfguð ok gefin Atla!”
27. “‘Vilk eigi ek með veri ganga
né Brynhildar bróður eiga!
Samir eigi mér, við son Buðla,
ætt at auka né una lífi!”

- 19.⁴⁴ 'Valdarr⁴⁵ from the Danir⁴⁶ with Jarizleifr,⁴⁷
Eymóðr third with Jarizkár;⁴⁸
there went inside then, like to boars,
troops of a Langbarðr,⁴⁹ they had red loden cloaks,
magnificent mail-coats, high(?)⁵⁰ helmets;
girded with swords, they had dark-brown hair.
20. 'Each wanted to select for me treasures,
to select treasures and speak agreeably,
[to see] if they could make amends
for my many afflictions — I didn't trust them!
21. 'Grímldr fetched me a full horn to drink from,
cool and bitter,⁵¹ so I wouldn't recall disputes;⁵²
it was fortified with the might of fate,⁵³
ice-cold sea and blood of a sacrificial boar.⁵⁴
- 22.⁵⁵ 'Inside the horn were rune-staves of every sort,
carved and reddened — I couldn't read⁵⁶ them —
a long ling-fish⁵⁷ of the land of the Haddingjar,⁵⁸
an uncut ear,⁵⁹ inwards(?)⁶⁰ of beasts.
- 23.⁶¹ 'In that beer many evils were [blended] together,
root of all [kinds] of tree⁶² and burnt acorns,⁶³
surrounding-dew of the hearth,⁶⁴ sacrificed entrails,
boiled swine's liver, because it soothes disputes.
24. 'And then they made a merry noise,⁶⁵ [those] who had got it,⁶⁶
all boar's *jórbjúg*(?)⁶⁷ in the hall;
three kings came before my knee,
before she herself⁶⁸ sought to speak to me.⁶⁹
25. "'I⁷⁰ give you, Guðrún, gold to accept,
an abundance of treasure of all [kinds], after your dead father,
red rings, Hlōðvér's halls,⁷¹
all the bed-curtains, on account of the fallen boar,⁷²
26. "'Hunnish maids, they who weave using tablets
and work in fair gold, so that it may seem a pleasure to you;
alone you shall rule Buðli's riches,
ennobled by gold and given⁷³ to Atli!'"
27. "'I⁷⁴ don't want to walk with a man
or to have Brynhildr's brother!⁷⁵
It's not seemly for me, with Buðli's son,⁷⁶
to enlarge my family or to enjoy life!'"

28. “Hirðaðu hǫlðum heiptir gjalda
þvíat vér hǫfum valdit fyrri!
Svá skaltu láta, sem þeir lifi báðir,
Sigurðr ok Sigmundur, ef þú sonu fœðir!”
29. “Máka ek, Grímildr, glaumi bella
né vígrisins vánir telja,
síz Sigurðar sárla drukku
hrægífr, Huginn hjartblóð saman!”
30. “Þann hefi ek allra ættgöfgastan
fylki fundit, ok framarst nekkvi!
Hann skaltu eiga, unz þik aldr viðar —
verlaus vera, nema þú vilir þenna!”
31. “Hirðaðú bjóða bǫlvafullar,
þrágjarnliga, þær kindir mér!
Hann mun Gunnar grandi beita
ok ór Högna hjarta slíta!
Munkat ek léttu áðr lífshvatan
eggleiks hvötuð aldri næmik!”
32. ‘Grátandi, Grímildr greip við orði,
er burum sínum bǫlva vætti
ok mǫgum sínum meina stórra:
33. “Lǫnd gef ek enn þér, lýða sinni,
Vínbjörg, Valbjörg, ef þú vill þiggja;
eigðu um aldr þat ok uni, dóttir!”
34. “Þann mun ek kjósa af konungum,
ok þó af niðjum nauðig hafa!
Verðr eigi mér verr at ynði,
né bǫl bræðra at bura skjóli!”
35. ‘Senn var á hesti hverr drengr lítinn,
en víf valnesk hafið í vagna;
vér sjau daga svalt land riðum,
en aðra sjau unnir kníðum,
en ina þriðju sjau þurt land stigum.
36. ‘Þar hliðverðir hárar borgar
grind upp luku, áðr í garð riðum.
37. ‘Vakði mik Atli, en ek vera þóttumsk
full ills hugar at frændr dauða.

28. “Don’t think of requiting hateful deeds on the men⁷⁷
 because we⁷⁸ have brought them about earlier!
 You shall behave thus, as if they were both living,
 Sigurðr and Sigmundr,⁷⁹ if you bear sons!”
29. “‘I cannot, Grímildr, rush into rejoicing
 or entertain hopes of a battle-ready one,⁸⁰
 since, distressingly, a corpse-greedy one,⁸¹ drank Sigurðr’s
 heart-blood, together with Huginn!’⁸²
30. “‘I’ve found the marshal of the noblest family of all,
 and the most superior by far!
 You shall have him, until old age fells you —
 [you’ll] be manless, unless you’re willing [to marry] this one!’”
31. “‘Don’t try [so] insistently to offer me
 these accursed kinships!
 He⁸³ will do Gunnarr harm
 and cut the heart from Hogni!
 I won’t rest until I’ve robbed the energetic
 inciter of edge-play⁸⁴ of life!’”
32. ‘Grímildr, weeping, grappled with this speech,
 as for her sons she expected evils
 and for her boys major misfortunes:
33. “‘I give you lands as well, an escort of men,
 Vínbjörg,⁸⁵ Valbjörg,⁸⁶ if you will accept them;
 have them throughout your life and relish them, daughter!’”
34. “‘I will choose that one from [among] kings,
 and yet have him due to coercion from my kinsmen!
 The man won’t be a source of pleasure to me,
 nor will my brothers’ misfortunes be to my boys’ protection!’⁸⁷
35. ‘At once each young man was seen on a horse,
 and foreign women were lifted into wagons;
 for seven days we rode over cold land,
 and another seven we rowed over waves,
 and the third seven we trod through dry land.
36. ‘There gate-keepers of a high stronghold
 opened up the gate, before we rode into the court.
37. ‘Atli woke me, and I seemed to be
 full of ill temper⁸⁸ about dead kinsmen.⁸⁹

38. “Thus the Nornir awoke me⁹⁰ just now”⁹¹ —
he⁹² wished that I should interpret⁹³ the prophecy of a misery-journey⁹⁴ —
“I thought⁹⁵ that you, Guðrún, daughter of Gjúki,
ran me through with a treachery-blended sword!”⁹⁶
39. “‘It denotes fire when one dreams of iron,⁹⁷
[and] a woman’s wrath [denotes] self-deception and indulgence;
I will come and burn⁹⁸ you against evil,
look after and heal you, even if you’re loathsome to me!’”
40. “‘I thought that shoots⁹⁹ had fallen here in the home-meadow,
those which I wanted to let grow;
[they were] ripped up by the roots, reddened in blood,
borne to the bench, offered to me to chew!’
41. “‘I thought that hawks flew from my hand,
lacking meaty morsels, to evil houses;
I thought their hearts were chewed with honey,
with a sorrowful mind,¹⁰⁰ swollen with blood!’
42. “‘I thought that whelps were loosed from my hand,
bereft of joy, [and that] both bayed;
I thought their flesh had become carrion,
I had to consume their corpses against my will!’”
43. “‘There [it denotes that] men will discuss sacrifice
and deprive whittings(?)¹⁰¹ of their heads;
they will be doomed in a few nights,
to be tasted by warriors a little before day!’”
- 44.¹⁰² ‘I lay down then — I didn’t want to sleep,
implacable in the sick-bed¹⁰³ — I recall it clearly.’

Textual Apparatus to *Guðrúnarkviða 9nnur*

Guðrúnarkviða 9nnur] The rubricated title of this poem is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; the reading *Guðrúnarkviða* is therefore reliant on the transcription therein, where it is bracketed. *9nnur* is not in **R** but supplied editorially, following modern convention.

1/1 *Mær*] The first letter is large, half-inset and red, but faded, in **R**

3/8 *létu*] **R** *letop* (i.e., *létut* ‘they did not let’)

4/1 *af*] **R** at ‘to’

4/8 *und*] **R** *of*

5/7 *jór þat*] **R** *iorþ*

6/1 *hvarfaðak*] **R** *hvarfaþ*

11/3 *lesa*] **R** *lesar*

12/5 *þóttumk*] **R** *þottvz*

18/12 *af*] **R** *as* (with tall *s*)

19/4 *Jarizkári*] **R** *iarizscari*

21/7 *svalköldum*] **R** *sva cauldum*

21/8 *sonar*] **R** *sonom*

23/4 *akarn*] **R** *akarninn*

23/4 *brunninn*] Missing from **R**; supplied from *VS* 34

31/5 *Gunnar*] **R** *GvNhar*

31/9 *léttu*] **R** *lettia* (with *e* caudata); alternatively, emend *letja* ‘restrain (myself)’, ‘desist’

40/3 *vildak*] **R** *vildigac*

40/8 *beðit*] **R** *þeþit*

41/2 *fljúga*] **R** *fiuga*

42/7 *nauðigr*] **R** *noþi / gra*

42/7 *nái*] **R** *ná*

44/3 *þrágjörn*] **R** *þrágiarn*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 The speaker is Guðrún, Sigurðr’s widow, who addresses King Þjóðrekr at Atli’s court (see *Dr.*).
- 2 I.e., the most maidenly of maidens.
- 3 I.e., grown up and standing higher than the grass.
- 4 Or ‘long-legged’, the literal sense being ‘high-boned’.

- 5 Or, less literally, 'wild (and dangerous)'.
- 6 Or 'animals'.
- 7 Sigurðr's horse.
- 8 I.e., of Sigurðr and his killers. Cf. the prose concluding *Br.*
- 9 Horses.
- 10 Sometimes *sveiti* 'sweat' denotes blood.
- 11 Or 'killers'.
- 12 The pl. is unexpected. Perhaps it refers to Sigurðr and his son.
- 13 I.e., she was in two minds (about what to do) for a long time.
- 14 Gunnarr.
- 15 Sigurðr.
- 16 Perhaps the Rhine; otherwise, the noun *ver* means 'sea'. There is a possible metaphorical sense, too, if the lands of the living and the dead were separated by water.
- 17 I.e., his corpse is now food for wolves.
- 18 I.e., in Germany.
- 19 Sigurðr's remains.
- 20 Cf. *Gðr. I 1*.
- 21 Figuratively; i.e., as if dead, or close to death. Cf. *Gðr. I 1*.
- 22 I.e., if they had killed me.
- 23 Or 'dry wood'.
- 24 Perhaps 'Battle Wolf' or 'High Wolf'. He is a king of Denmark.
- 25 I.e., half-years.
- 26 Denmark. Cf. *Gðr. I 27 pr.*
- 27 I.e., they depicted men fighting.
- 28 Literally, 'shield-rims', a synecdoche for 'shields'.
- 29 Literally, 'Huns', but see note to *Sg. 4*.
- 30 Sigurðr's father.
- 31 Here perhaps specifically sliding down rollers into the water; otherwise, simply moving away from the shore. Guðrún continues to describe the scenes on their embroideries.
- 32 Probably figureheads.
- 33 I.e., the battles they fought.
- 34 'Victory Army' and 'Victory Spear', probably two male relatives of Sigmundr.
- 35 Fife, Scotland. Some editors emend to *Fjóni* 'Fünen'.
- 36 Guðrún's mother.
- 37 Or 'Gotlandic'.
- 38 Despite her tapestry-work, Guðrún remains deeply distressed. Scholars disagree about whether *hyggjuð* is metrically deficient as a half-line of *fornyrðislag*.
- 39 Literally, 'border', a synecdoche for 'tapestry'.
- 40 I.e., Sigmundr, the son of Guðrún and Sigurðr, whom they had killed.
- 41 Sigurðr.

- 42 Grímildr.
- 43 The significance of the last two lines is unclear, unless all these activities would contribute to the assembling of the company which would visit Guðrún in Denmark; otherwise, these lines might be interpolated.
- 44 The last two lines of this stanza are quoted in variant form in *VS* 34, which has *stuttar brynjur* 'short mail-coats' instead of *skreyttar brynjur* 'magnificent mail-coats'.
- 45 *VS* 34 has *Valdamarr*.
- 46 I.e., Danes.
- 47 Jaroslav, a Slavic name. This line lacks alliteration in the Old Norse, unless *V-* alliterates with a vowel sound (*J*).
- 48 Presumably another Slav.
- 49 Lombard.
- 50 Or perhaps 'face-covering'.
- 51 Presumably a description of the drink inside the horn.
- 52 Or 'crimes', 'offences'.
- 53 Or *Urðar* 'of Urðr', one of the Nornir who was associated with a spring (*Vsp.* 19–20, *Háv.* 111). Either way, this word seems to be a variation on (or a mistake for) *jarðar* 'of earth', which appears in the corresponding passage of *VS* 34 and finds parallel in *Háv.* 137, *Hdl.* 38, 43.
- 54 Cf. *Hdl.* 38. The corresponding prose passage in *VS* 34 reads: *Sá drykkur var blandinn með jarðar magni ok sæ ok dreyra sonar hennar* 'That drink was mixed with earth's power and sea and her son's blood'. The drink is the *óminnisveig* 'potion of forgetfulness' mentioned in *Dr.*
- 55 *VS* 34 quotes this stanza with one notable variation: *lyngfiskr lagar* 'ling-fish of the sea', instead of *R's lyngfiskr langr* 'long ling-fish'.
- 56 I.e., interpret.
- 57 A 'ling [i.e., heather] fish' is a snake.
- 58 The interpretation of the last two lines of this stanza is uncertain, largely because it is unclear what *land Haddingja* 'land of the Haddingjar [two legendary Viking heroes or sea-kings, probably distant reflexes of the *Hasdingi*, a Vandal tribe]' signifies—it might be a kenning for 'sea' or the 'underworld of the dead'—and whether it qualifies *lyngfiskr langr* 'long ling-fish [i.e., snake]' or *ax óskorit* 'uncut ear' (the placing of a comma after *Haddingja*, rather than after *langr*, is therefore insecure). A 'long snake of the sea' might be an eel or an elongated fish, or, probably less likely in the context, (a picture of) a longship; a 'long snake of the underworld' might be a worm. An 'uncut ear of the sea' might be seaweed; an 'uncut ear of the underworld' might be hemlock. The passage is probably deliberately mysterious.
- 59 An ear of corn.
- 60 Or 'jaws' or 'throats'; the literal meaning is 'inside ways'.
- 61 *VS* 34 quotes a version of this stanza.
- 62 Or 'herb of all the wood'.
- 63 Or 'beechnuts'.
- 64 Presumably a kenning for 'soot'.

- 65 Alternatively, 'And then they forgot'. Either way, the drink probably caused the people in the hall to forget any animosities. *VS* 34 refers to *fagnaðr mikill* 'great rejoicing'.
- 66 I.e., those who had drunk Grímildr's drink.
- 67 In this passage *öll* means 'all' (nom. sg. fem. or nom./acc. pl. neut. of *allr*) and *jöfurs* means 'of a boar', but *jórbjúg* (written *ior biug* in **R**) is obscure ('boar/horse/earth-bowing(s)?'). The passage therefore resists convincing interpretation. It may well be corrupt, especially as *öll jöfurs* might be metrically short.
- 68 Grímildr.
- 69 Literally, 'sought me for speech'.
- 70 Guðrún quotes the words Grímildr had spoken to her.
- 71 Hlǫðvér was presumably a wealthy king; see the note on the occurrence of this name in the initial prose to *Vkv*.
- 72 Warrior, here Sigurðr.
- 73 I.e., given in marriage.
- 74 Guðrún quotes her earlier reply.
- 75 Atli.
- 76 Atli.
- 77 Gunnarr, Hǫgni and perhaps Atli.
- 78 Grímildr possibly uses the royal 'we'. Alternatively, she perhaps shares the blame with her sons (and possibly Atli) but wishes to stress that their crimes are in the past.
- 79 Presumably Sigurðr's son with Guðrún, not Sigurðr's father.
- 80 I.e., another husband.
- 81 Wolf.
- 82 One of Óðinn's ravens; alternatively, translate simply 'a raven'.
- 83 Atli.
- 84 A kenning for 'warrior' (here Atli), 'edge-play' being battle.
- 85 A place-name meaning 'Wine Cliffs', or, if rather *Vinbjörg*, 'Friend Cliffs'.
- 86 A place-name meaning 'Slain Cliffs', 'Cliffs of the Slain'.
- 87 Guðrún will kill her children by Atli in revenge for his killing of her brothers.
- 88 Or, less literally, 'distressing thoughts'.
- 89 By now, Atli has apparently had Gunnarr and Hǫgni killed (see *Dr.*). Guðrún may also have held Atli partly responsible for the deaths of Sigurðr and Sigmundur, her son.
- 90 Atli.
- 91 Guðrún quotes Atli.
- 92 Atli.
- 93 Or, if *vildi* is a pl. preterite subjunctive, 'they [the Nornir] wished that I [Atli] should interpret', in which case this line is spoken by Atli.
- 94 I.e., a troubling dream, probably suggestive of a journey to Hel.
- 95 I.e., dreamt.
- 96 Guðrún will, indeed, kill Atli in this way; see *Akv.* 42 [41]. For another potentially treacherous sword, *Lævateinn*, see *Fj.* 26.

- 97 Sword-blades were made of iron.
- 98 I.e., cauterize. Subsequently, however, Guðrún will burn down Atli's hall, with him inside it; see *Akv.* 42 [41], 43 [42].
- 99 The shoots, hawks and whelps of Atli's dream represent his sons with Guðrún, whom she will slay and feed to him; see *Akv.* 36 [35], 37 [36].
- 100 The phrase *sorgmóðs sefa* 'with a sorrowful mind' probably refers to Atli's mental state.
- 101 The interpretation of *hvítunga*, literally 'small white things', is disputed.
- 102 VS 35 attributes to Atli a short speech corresponding to this half-stanza: '*þat dreymði mik enn, segir hann, 'at ek lægi í kof, ok væri ráðinn bani minn.*' "I dreamt further", he [Atli] says, "that I was lying in my sickbed, and my death had been plotted". The episode of Atli's dreaming then immediately ends: *Nú líðr þetta, ok er þeira samvista fálíg* 'Now it ends, and their [Guðrún and Atli's] life together is cold'. In the Eddic poem the masc. gender of the adjective *þrágjarn* 'implacable, inexorable, defiant, insistent' (the manuscript reading) supports attribution to Atli. However, the poem then appears to end abruptly (some commentators suspect its ending is missing). The present edition tentatively attributes this half-stanza to Guðrún. Although this requires emendation of *þrágjarn* to fem. *þrágjorn*, the adjective seems more applicable to the ill-tempered Guðrún; it might be a trait she inherited, as her mother has twice acted *þrágjarnliga* 'insistently' (17, 31). Furthermore, the half-stanzas 37 and 44 then neatly frame Guðrún's interpretation of Atli's dreams, and the poem concludes with a satisfactorily foreboding return to the unsleeping, clear-mindedly reflective woman.
- 103 Presumably a figurative description of the couple's bed in view of Atli's troubled dreams and Guðrún's feelings and intentions toward him.