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Tolkien's *Sigurd & Gudrún*: Summary, Sources, & Analogs

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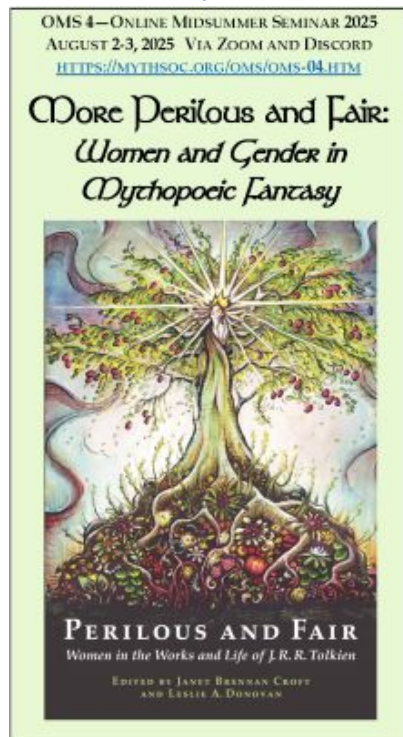
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Tolkien's *Sigurd & Gudrún*: Summary, Sources, & Analogs

Abstract

A thorough, analytical guide to *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*, listing Tolkien's sources for each incident in his poem and finding analogs in the rest of his work. Consists mainly of charts, which are an excellent guide through this tangle of Northern legend and an unfamiliar and highly allusive poetic style, and will provide a firm starting place for later scholarship on this long-unseen work. Includes a family tree of named characters in the poem.

Additional Keywords

Elder Edda; The Nibelungenlied; Norse mythology—Influence on J.R.R. Tolkien; Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*; *Völsunga Saga*

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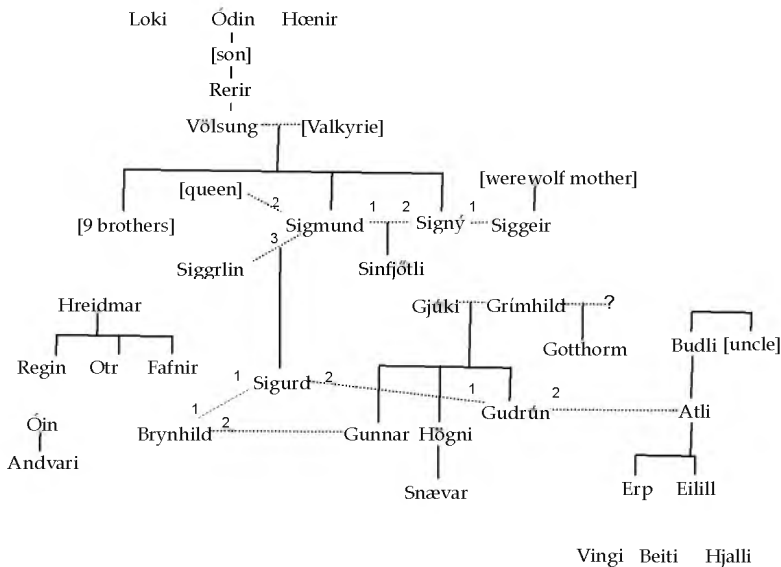
TOLKIEN'S SIGURD & GUDRÚN: SUMMARY, SOURCES, & ANALOGS

PIERRE H. BERUBE

TOLKIEN'S VERSE IN SIGURD & GUDRÚN IS INTENTIONALLY so condensed and so allusive that it is easy to miss the plot on a first reading. This table is intended to provide a convenient summary. It also indicates which major elements of the existing primary world legendarium Tolkien used for his purposes, and which he rejected. I have relied on Christopher Tolkien's endnotes and have also compared Tolkien to his sources. A third goal is to show what use of these elements Tolkien made in his other fiction.

I have not attempted to compare Tolkien to other modern treatments of the story (Richard Wagner, William Morris). Throughout the table I use J.R.R. Tolkien's [JRRR]'s names for the characters, even when discussing sources that give them different names (Gudrún for Kriemhild, etc).

I begin with a genealogical table. This shows all persons, named or unnamed, in both lays.



Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
The Lay of the Völsungs: Beginning				
	Elder Edda: <i>Völuspá</i> .	1-9	The Gods (<i>Æsir</i>) construct the world, plant the sun and moon in the sky, make the flora and fauna, create mankind, forge weapons, and (tentatively) overcome the Titans.	Silmarillion: <i>Ainulindalë</i>
	Elder Edda; Snorri's Edda.	10-15	A Sybil foresees the future destruction (in the Last Battle) of men, gods, and earth itself. Only the greatest of heroes (Sigurd) can avert this Ragnarök, because he, unlike the Gods, will have experienced both death and apotheosis. Thus can the <i>Æsir</i> re-build a new heaven and a new earth following the apocalypse. ¹	
	"This motive of the special function of Sigurd is an invention of the present poet" –JRRT, <i>Sigurd & Gudrún</i> [S&G] 53-54.	16-20	Ódin constructs Valhöll, where the dead heroes can await the Last Battle. Ódin will recruit the race of Völsungs for this purpose, and particularly Sigurd –even if he has to curse them to do so.	Túrin Turambar is similarly reserved for the Last Battle in the <i>Silmarillion</i> .

¹ This of course makes Sigurd a precursor to Christ, and his story an adumbration of the Gospel. Having single-handedly turned *Beowulf* into a Christian poem, Tolkien now does the same to Sigurd. Tolkien often found fragments of Christian truth in pagan myth, however far from Christianity the originals might be. It would be interesting to have C.S. Lewis's take on all this. Christopher Tolkien is mum, considering such speculation "outside [his] editorial limits" (S&G 185).

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
The Lay of the Völsungs: I. Andvari's Gold				
<i>Nibelungenlied</i> only begins at a much later point.	Elder Edda: <i>Reginismál</i> ; Snorri's Edda; <i>Völsunga Saga</i> are the sources throughout this section.	1-6	The Æsir, Ódin, Loki, and Hœnir walk the world. At Andvari's pool, Loki gratuitously kills Otr. He had been fishing in otter's shape. The three Gods then seek hospitality from Hreidmar, ² who turns out to be father to Otr, Fafnir, and Regin. Hreidmar and his two surviving sons take the Gods prisoner, and demand as wergild that they cover Otr's skin with gold.	<i>The Lord of the Rings [LotR]</i> : Gollum fishing in the Pool of Henneth Annûn.
		7-8	Loki is paroled long enough to borrow the sea goddess's net for catching drowned sailors. With this he ensnares the dwarf Andvari (in pike's shape). Andvari owns a treasure of gold, the future Hoard of the Niflungs. We are not told where or how he got it.	Oîn, father to Andvari, lends his name (but nothing else) to one of the companions of Thorin Oakenshield.
<i>Nibelungenlied</i> also has a dwarf, Alberich, and a treasure. Details are different and the treatment is far less extensive.		9-10	Loki will only release Andvari upon surrender of all his gold. Andvari begs to retain one little ring, Andvaranaut. He wants seed money to re-build his fortune (he knows about compound interest). Loki insists on having it all. Mistake! Andvari curses all the gold, but especially the little ring.	Farmer Giles makes no such mistake; he leaves Chrysophylax enough gold to keep him respectable.

² In his prose introduction to this section, JRRT rather oddly calls Hreidmar a "demon" (66). In *Völsunga Saga* he is merely a well-off farmer.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analog in JRRT
		11-12	Ódin covers the otter skin with the gold, keeping back the little ring. One whisker remains uncovered. Ódin is forced to give that up too. Hreidmar keeps the gold but releases the three Gods. Ódin will seek revenge.	For the much-misunderstood relationship between this ring and Sauron's, see Tom Shippey ("Problem" 97).
	JRRT's invention.	13-15	Loki foretells the disasters to follow. Ódin replies, admitting the disasters but foreseeing also the ultimate eucatastrophe—that is, that Sigurd will come to Vallhöll and so participate decisively in the Ragnarök. Out of evil he will bring forth good.	The poem "The Hoard" in <i>The Adventures of Tom Bombadil</i> follows the history of a similar hoard.
The Lay of the Völsungs: II. Signý				
In <i>Beowulf</i> it is Sigmund who slays the dragon, and nothing is said of any son Sigurd.	<i>Völsunga Saga</i> is the main source throughout this section, greatly compressed.	1-4	Völsung ³ is a Viking king, the great-grandson of Ódin. A Valkyrie wife bears him eleven children: the twins Sigmund and Signý (male and female), as well as nine other sons. He reigns gloriously and builds a great hall with a living tree in its midst, upon which the birds sing.	<i>LotR</i> : The White Tree in the court of Minas Tirith
		5-9	Siggeir King of the Gauts proposes to marry Signý. It is an advantageous political marriage. Völsung and Sigmund both consent, although Signý foresees the disastrous consequences.	

³ The name *Völsung* is used throughout the lay as though it were the name of a dynasty or of a chosen race, as well as the name of this particular representative of the dynasty. JRRT believed that the word derived from a root meaning *to choose* (S&G 54). To some extent the Völsungs are equated with the Jews of the Old Testament, as viewed retrospectively by Christians.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
	Elder Edda: <i>Grímnismál</i> (only for the name Grímnir).	10-20	At the wedding feast, Ódin appears in the guise of Grímnir and sinks a sword (later to be identified as Gram) into the living tree. He challenges those present to draw out the sword. This provokes a battle between Völsungs and Gauts. Sigmund withdraws the sword and defeats the Gauts, but spares Siggeir. Siggeir offers to buy the sword for cash, but is refused. The defeated Gauts swallow the insult and are allowed to sail back with the bride. Having already given her away, Völsung will not go back on his word.	The name Gríma in <i>LotR</i> comes from the same root ("mask") as Grímnir. The Sword in the Stone motif, so prominent in the Arthurian story, is not used in Tolkien's other fiction.
		21-25	Some time later, Völsung and Sigmund sail to Gautland with an army, ostensibly on a visit to Signý. Upon their arrival she warns them that Siggeir still wants revenge and that they are marching into an ambush. The Völsungs attack first but are defeated; Völsung is slain; the ten brothers are captured alive.	
		26-29	Signý begs Siggeir to let her brothers live. He ironically agrees, then sets them bound in the forest to starve. Siggeir's mother, a werewolf, emerges on ten successive nights to eat the brothers alive. On the tenth night, she attacks Sigmund, the last brother, but he escapes. ⁴	<i>Silmarillion</i> : Finrod Felagund and his companions, serially slain by werewolves in the dungeons of Morgoth.

⁴ JRRT does not tell us what has happened. We know (from *Völsunga Saga*) that Signý has smeared Sigmund's mouth with honey. The werewolf has a sweet tooth, and goes for the mouth first. Sigmund bites out the wolf's tongue by the roots, killing the wolf and bursting his bonds at the same time. Signý has maneuvered to sacrifice nine brothers in order to save the tenth.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
		30-32	Sigmund retires to an abandoned dwarf-cave. Signý seeks him out and commits incest with him. She does this with loathing, but feels duty-bound to conceive the next generation of Völsungs and to provide a hero who will avenge Völsung. She gives birth to Sinfjötli.	The incest of Túrin Turambar in <i>The Silmarillion</i> is rather to be compared to that of Kullervo in the Kalevala.
In <i>Völsunga Saga</i> Signý has four other sons by Siggeir, who all come to bad ends at the hands of Sinfjötli and Sigmund.		33-36	Sigmund lives as an outlaw while Sinfjötli grows to a boy. Then Signý sends Sinfjötli to Sigmund, bearing Völsung's sword Gram. The son and father live a horrible life together as werewolves and murderers, until Sinfjötli is fully grown.	
		37-41	Sigmund and Sinfjötli, still as werewolves, attack Siggeir. They kill him and burn down his fortress. Signý appears at the door of the burning fortress, but declines to be rescued – she loathes her own deeds, necessary though they were, and retires into the fortress to die with her hated husband.	
The Lay of the Völsungs: III. The Death of Sinfjötli				
JRRT greatly compressed <i>Völsunga Saga</i> , where the queen's name is Borghild. The story of her son Helgi Hundingsbani is omitted as irrelevant.	<i>Völsunga Saga</i> ; Elder Edda: <i>Frá dauða Sinfjötla</i> .	1-4	Sigmund and Sinfjötli are now back at their ancestral seat, gloriously reigning and victorious in war. Sigmund takes a queen, and this queen is a witch. We are not told her name.	

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
At the third attempt, <i>Völsunga Saga</i> 's Sigmund advises his son to strain the drink through his beard. This detail, though picturesque, makes no sense; JRRT omits it.		5-10	Sinfjötli has killed the queen's father, how and when we do not know. The queen, bent on revenge, three times attempts to poison Sinfjötli. ⁵ Sigmund twice intercepts the drink. It does him no harm (he is immune to poison) except to make him drunker. By the third attempt, Sigmund is too drunk to intervene further. Sinfjötli swallows the drink in the first half of a line and dies in the second half. As a junior hero he is immune only to <i>externally</i> -applied poison.	
		11-13	With the help of Ódin (disguised this time as a boatman), Sigmund dispatches the dead Sinfjötli to Valhöll, where his grandfather Völsung greets him. Two down, two to go.	
The Lay of the Völsungs: IV. Sigurd Born				
	<i>Völsunga Saga</i> throughout, except that the name Sigrlinn has been adapted from <i>Nibelungenlied</i> .	1-4	Sigmund, grown old, has married a beautiful young girl, Sigrlinn (presumably the old witch queen has died). Sigrlinn has chosen the old man in preference to seven king's sons who all wooed her. She wants the glory of bearing "the World's chosen," Sigurd the Dragon-Slayer, most famous of the heroes of the North.	
		5-9	The rejected suitors attack as soon as the couple is married. Sigmund is disarmed by the disguised Ódin, who has a reputation for abandoning his favorites. Sigmund is mortally wounded in battle, and the sword is broken.	

⁵ With wine, beer, and ale; JRRT omits mead.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
		10-13	After the battle Sigrlinn offers to heal Sigmund, but he feels Ódin calling him to Valhöll, and declines help. He predicts the birth and early death of Sigurd, enjoins the pregnant Sigrlinn to preserve the shards of the sword, and dies.	The shards of Isildur's Narsil are similarly preserved to be reforged as Aragorn's Anduril.
		14-18	A second fleet of pirates sails by, and captures Sigrlinn after she succeeds in changing places with her handmaid. Thus Sigurd is born into slavery in a far country.	
The Lay of the Völsungs: V. Regin				
<i>Thiðrekssaga</i> has a very different childhood account of Sigurd, who is nonetheless still the son of Sigmund. The infant sails down a river in a glass basket, is raised by a doe, then found and adopted by Mimir.	<i>Völsunga Saga</i> primarily, throughout this section.	1-2	Sigurd has grown up. He is sent (we are not told why or by whom) to be tutored by Regin, who is a master smith and all-around polymath besides being the brother of Otr and Fafnir.	
In <i>Thiðrekssaga</i> , Regin is the dragon and the smith is called Mimir. Sigurd kills the dragon, then kills Mimir, then betroths himself to the Valkyrie Brynhild.	Also Snorri's Edda and two lays of the Elder Edda: <i>Reginismál</i> and <i>Fáfnismál</i> .	3-6	Regin knows of a dragon. He urges Sigurd to kill the dragon and seize his treasure.	
		7-12	Regin tells Sigurd the story of Andvari's Gold. We have heard all this before.	

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
		13-14	Regin goes on to tell Sigurd how Fafnir has killed Hreidmar, seized his hoard, denied any share to Regin, and has consequently turned into a dragon on Gnitaeiði.	
		15-16	Sigurd is suspicious of Regin's motives. Regin counters that the benefit is mutual – Sigurd can use the cash to recover his throne, Regin can wreak his own revenge on Fafnir.	
In <i>Völsunga Saga</i> , Sigurd will pursue no dragon until he has avenged his father. JRRT drops this.		17-20	Sigurd finally accedes. Regin twice forges a sword for Sigurd. Sigurd breaks each one in testing it. From Sigrlinn (who reappears in the briefest of cameos), Sigurd obtains the shards of Gram: the Sword that was Broken. Regin re-forges the sword and gives it to Sigurd. The sword cleaves the anvil and severs a tuft of wool floating in the Rhine.	<i>LotR</i> : Elendil's sword Narsil, later reforged as Aragorn's sword Anduril.
		21-25	Regin and Sigurd set off to find the dragon. Ódin, again in disguise, meets Sigurd and gives him the horse Grani.	
<i>Nibelungenlied</i> knows that Sigurd killed a dragon, and says so briefly in a flashback. The horny skin is important here; a vital spot between the shoulder blades is left unprotected. ⁶		26-29	Sigurd kills the dragon by digging a pit and stabbing upwards as the dragon passes overhead. He is drenched in the blood, which hardens his skin (JRRT retains this plot element but makes no further use of it). Regin takes no part in the combat.	The slayings of Glaurund and Smaug.

⁶ This is the same basic idea as Achilles's unprotected heel. This motif must go back at least as far as the common Indo-European ancestor of Greek and Norse.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogues in JRRT
In <i>Völsunga Saga</i> the riddles are interesting in themselves but irrelevant to the plot, so dropped by JRRT.		30-34	Sigurd and the dying Fafnir converse. Sigurd identifies himself. ⁷ Fafnir tells Sigurd that the gold is cursed, then dies. Sigurd ignores the curse.	The riddling conversation between Bilbo & Smaug in <i>Hobbit</i> .
		35-38	Regin congratulates Sigurd, then feigns remorse at killing his own brother. Sigurd assures him that his share of the guilt is inconsiderable.	
		39-40	Regin cuts the heart out of Fafnir and drinks of his blood. This sends him to sleep – but not before Regin has asked Sigurd to roast Fafnir's heart for him.	
		41	Sigurd does so. ⁸ Burning his finger, he sucks it cool. As soon as he tastes the hot gravy, he understands the speech of birds and beasts.	
		42-44 ⁹	Two birds warn Sigurd that Regin is dangerous and that Sigurd should eat the heart himself.	The talking thrush and raven that help Bilbo in <i>Hobbit</i> .
		45	Turning around, Sigurd sees Regin creeping up on him, perhaps to avenge his brother, perhaps to steal the gold. He has been shamming sleep. Sigurd cuts him down.	

⁷ In *Völsunga Saga* Sigurd first calls himself the “Noble Beast,” somewhat as Ulysses identifies himself to Polyphemus as “No Man.” JRRT drops this epithet but retains the initial riddling response. The idea seems to be that if a dying enemy knows your right name he can curse you by it, and such curses will bite. In both versions the hero, without explanation, goes on to give his right name after all, rather spoiling the effect.

⁸ Why? We are not told. The plot requires that the heart be roasted, but the compiler of *Völsunga Saga* gives Sigurd no good motive to comply. Immediately after their quarrel we are asked to believe that Sigurd allows Regin to participate in the cookery and even to dictate the recipe. Tolkien leaves this problem as he found it.

⁹ These stanzas are in a different meter (*ljóðaháttur*) from the rest of the poem.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
In <i>Völsunga Saga</i> , he saves part of the heart to give later to Gudrún.		46-48	He then finishes the heart. This must be what turns him into a champion. Up till now he has been more a burglar than a hero. He puts on the Helm of Horror (originally Hreidmar's), rifles the gold from the dragon's cave, loads it on Grani, and begins his return trip. JRRT retains the Helm from his source but makes no further use of it.	<i>LotR</i> : Aragorn & the hobbits load the trolls' gold on Bill the Pony. Túrin also had a Helm of Horror.
		49-54	As he returns, two birds tell him of the two women soon to come into his life – Brynhild and Gudrún. He hears, ¹⁰ but pays no attention.	
The Lay of the Völsungs: VI. Brynhild				
	<i>Völsunga Saga</i> ; Elder Edda: <i>Sigrdrífumál</i> .	1-4	Sigurd, coming directly from the dragon-slaying, reaches the mountain Hindarfell. He finds it surrounded by a shield-wall and a fence of flickering flames. He crosses the flames, ¹¹ finds Brynhild asleep in full harness, and awakens her.	Tolkien makes no use of the Sleeping Beauty motif in his other fiction.
		5-6	Brynhild poetically celebrates her resuscitation.	

¹⁰ Tolkien leaves this enigmatic. Perhaps Sigurd understands the words (which is more than most people make of bird chatter) but does not realize the implications of what the birds say. The birds describe Brynhild's situation recognizably but do not mention her by name.

¹¹ We are not told why he does so. Perhaps he is merely curious; perhaps he has been paying more attention to the birds than Tolkien lets on. Perhaps because of his hardened skin, he seems to experience no difficulty crossing the flames.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
<i>Nibelungenlied</i> knows nothing of Valkyries. Its Brynhild is an Amazon and can only be subdued by deflowering her. She is Queen of Iceland and sister of Attila, stretching dynastic geography to the limit.	Remote sources for Sigurd and Brynhild may be Sigibert King of the Franks (†575) and his queen Brunhild (†613), daughter to the King of the Visigoths. ¹²	7-8	Brynhild introduces herself. She is a shield-maiden, a favorite of Ódin. He has punished her by condemning her to marry and putting her into this charmed sleep. It is implied that she must marry whomever wakes her. Before falling asleep, Brynhild has vowed to take no husband but the greatest of warriors. The birds have already told us that Brynhild is a Valkyrie, a chooser of the slain. At some point she has chosen the wrong warrior to die. This is the offense for which she is punished.	Brynhild has some resemblances to Éowyn in <i>LoTR</i> .
In <i>Nibelungenlied</i> , the two first meet in Iceland, where Brynhild's prior knowledge of Sigurd is tantalizingly unclear.		9-10	Sigurd reveals his name and family, and they compare notes. Brynhild realizes that her hero has come. After a show of modesty, Sigurd admits to being the World's chosen—the one that all the heroes in Valhöll are waiting for.	
In <i>Völsunga Saga</i> Brynhild gives us a dissertation on <i>runes</i> which JRRT omits.		11-14	They drink to each other and betroth themselves.	

¹² Sigibert was successful in war and defeated the Huns in battle. He was assassinated by an in-law. Brunhild, described as wise and beautiful, mourned him deeply. Both were involved in plots and assassination attempts. In her old age her enemies had her dragged to death by a wild horse. See St. Gregory of Tours. Gregory annoyingly leaves out Brunhild's horrible death because at the time of writing it hadn't happened yet.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
<i>Völsunga Saga</i> gives the couple a daughter Aslaug, who marries Ragnar Lodbrok. ¹³	Here <i>Sigrdrífumál</i> breaks off and the 8-leaf gap in the Codex Regius begins.	15-17	Brynhild warns Sigurd of all the things he shouldn't do while he is seeking his kingdom. Sigurd winds up doing them all. She foretells his early death.	
	From this point the only source is <i>Völsunga Saga</i> .	18-19	They plight their troth a second time. ¹⁴	
	Brynhild's refusal to marry Sigurd until he attains his kingdom is JRRT's own invention.	20-22	They do not spend the night on the mountain nor consummate the match. ¹⁵ They set off in company, but soon part. Brynhild will not marry Sigurd until he attains his destined kingdom. That is Brynhild all over. We will see this fatal pride again. Sigurd does not argue; he always does what is asked of him.	Similarly in <i>LotR</i> Elrond enjoins Aragorn not to marry Arwen until he becomes King of both Arnor and Gondor.
<i>Völsunga Saga</i> now re-introduces Brynhild & her domestic sister as though Sigurd had never seen her before.		23	Sigurd goes to the court of the Burgundian kings, the Niflungs. Brynhild returns to her own land (wherever that may be), where she seems to be held in high honor (she claims to have formerly been a queen, which does not quite jibe with the Valkyrie story).	

¹³ Notorious semi-legendary Viking; ancestor to the kings of Norway.

¹⁴ The redundancy is strange. Perhaps JRRT fears that a single betrothal would be taken for perfunctory prophecy-fulfillment. Lovers proverbially delight in repeated avowals of love.

¹⁵ This is crucial to the plot, since Brynhild will later lie to Gunnar about it.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
The Lay of the Völsungs: VII. Guðrún				
In the source, she recounts this dream to Brynhild.	<i>Völsunga Saga</i> .	1-6	At some length, Guðrún recounts to her mother Grímhild her prophetic dream of the disasters to follow. Grímhild makes light of it.	
The main narrative of <i>Nibelungenlied</i> begins here, with Högni (Hagen) being a vassal, not a brother.	<i>Völsunga Saga</i> ; Snorri's Edda. For the bare names of the historical personages, Old English sources & Burgundian lawbooks.	7-10	Gjúki is king of the Burgundians (or Niflungs, or Gjúkings); his wife Grímhild is an aged witch. Their sons are Gunnar and Högni; their daughter is Guðrún. Gutthorm is a step-son, perhaps even a bastard. Their court is rich and glorious, but at constant war with the Huns. ¹⁶	
In <i>Thiðrekssaga</i> , Sigurd likewise (after various adventures) comes to Gunnar. ¹⁷	<i>Völsunga Saga</i> .	11-13	Sigurd arrives at Gjúki's court, bearing the treasure.	
	<i>King Heidrek's Saga</i> ; Elder Edda: <i>Atlakviða</i> .	14-15	At the welcoming feast, Gunnar sings of wars when the invading Huns first encountered the Goths, then of later wars in which Niflungs slew Atli's uncle.	
	Recapitulation of story already told.	16-19	Sigurd sings of killing the dragon, recovering the gold, and encountering Brynhild.	

¹⁶ All these people except Högni are actual personages – much transformed from their historical prototypes.

¹⁷ The Guðrún character in this saga is called Grímhild, not to be confused with the Grímhild character in *Völsunga Saga*.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
	<i>Völsunga Saga.</i>	20-24	Sigurd is an instant success. He becomes the Niflungs's champion warrior; they award him gold and honors; they call him king. This is a titular honor (Gjúki retains political control), but it seems to be enough to satisfy Brynhild's stipulation.	
	In <i>Völsunga Saga</i> this expedition took place at an earlier point.	25-32	They loan him an army and a fleet to win back Völsung's former kingdom, but he finds the court desolate and the tree dead. Grímnir (Ódin) warns him that his fate now lies elsewhere. The anticlimax is that they all go back home and forget about Völsung's kingdom.	<i>LotR</i> : The dead White Tree in the courtyard of Minas Tirith.
	<i>Völsunga Saga.</i>	33-34	Grímhild decides to marry Sigurd off to Gudrún, and persuades her children to agree. She wants this valuable champion in the family.	
	<i>Völsunga Saga.</i>	35	Sigurd begins to think that it is time to claim Brynhild.	
	<i>Völsunga Saga.</i>	36-39	Grímhild gives Sigurd a magic potion which causes him to forget all about Brynhild and his vows to her. Gudrún appears and dazzles Sigurd.	

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogues in JRRT
The Lay of the Völsungs: VIII. Brynhild Betrayed				
In <i>Thiðrekssaga</i> , Sigurd knowingly breaks his betrothal to Brynhild and marries Guðrún, just because it is a more advantageous alliance. Brynhild marries Gunnar on the rebound, but as in <i>Nibelungenlied</i> she rebuffs him on the wedding night and hangs him from a peg. She is not tamed until Gunnar authorizes Sigurd to rape her.	<i>Völsunga Saga</i> is the primary source throughout this section. Óðin's visit to Brynhild is original to JRRT.	1-6	Brynhild waits two years at her court, and develops a reputation for wealth and splendor. Kings come courting her, but she sends them packing or kills them off. The last king is Óðin in disguise. He tells her that she must marry within two years, and (for a second time ¹⁸) hedges her in flickering flame.	
<i>Völsunga Saga</i> gives the couple a son Sigmund, whom JRRT ignores.		7-11	Meanwhile Sigurd marries Guðrún and swears an oath of brotherhood with Gunnar and Högni (but not with Gutthorm). Guðrún loves and hero-worships Sigurd. He returns her love dutifully, but by his own later admission he is always casting sheep's eyes at Brynhild.	

¹⁸ The two enchanted sleeps presumably derive from an early conflation of two different versions of the same incident. The duplication is already entrenched in the Elder Edda, too deeply for JRRT to uproot it without fatally disrupting the plot. JRRT goes so far as to add a third awakening (S&G 160); and this he emphasizes, very unusually, by a marginal annotation. Perhaps this is meant to distract our attention.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
In <i>Nibelungenlied</i> the heroes travel to Iceland where Sigurd, using an invisibility cloak that he got from the dragon, overcomes Brynhild in athletic contests (Gunnar going through the motions). Gunnar marries her. For three nights running she ties him up and hangs him from the wall. Sigurd has to wrestle Brynhild down so that Gunnar can deflower her.		12-24	Grímhild urges Gunnar to enhance his prestige by marrying Brynhild. Gunnar, Högni, and Sigurd set off to find her. Gunnar's horse Goti is daunted by the flame, and throws Gunnar. Gunnar borrows Grani from Sigurd. Grani will not bear him either. ¹⁹ Not without some disdain, Sigurd agrees to woo Brynhild for Gunnar. The two of them magically exchange appearances.	
In <i>Nibelungenlied</i> Brynhild is encouraged to think that Sigurd is Gunnar's vassal. This ineradicable delusion, not any love for Sigurd, is the reason she subsequently claims social precedence over Gudrún.		25-32	Sigurd crosses the flame and accosts Brynhild, who of course was expecting Sigurd not Gunnar. Now she is caught between conflicting oaths—to marry Sigurd, and to marry whomever crosses the flame. She decides to accept Gunnar. They spend the night together, but Sigurd lays the sword Gram between them so that the marriage-by-proxy is not consummated. ²⁰	
For the wide variations in the ring story at this point, between and even within the different sources, see Tom Shippey, "The Problem of the Rings: Tolkien and Wagner."		33	In the morning, while Brynhild is still sleeping, Sigurd takes a gold ring from her finger (presumably one that he himself had given her at their first encounter) and instead sets the ring Andvaranaut on her finger. Brynhild will not notice the switch until Gudrún points it out later.	

¹⁹ Brynhild later blames Gunnar for cowardice in not facing the flames. At the time, the poet diplomatically lays all the blame on the horses.

²⁰ This is crucial to JRRT's plot, since Brynhild will later lie to Gunnar about it.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogues in JRRT
		34	They set a date for the wedding and separate. The Niflungs return to prepare the wedding feast.	
The Lay of the Völsungs: IX. Strife				
	<i>Völsunga Saga</i> remains the primary source throughout this section.	1 – 3	Brynhild arrives at the Niflung court and duly marries Gunnar.	
	Snorri's Edda covers much the same ground more briefly.	4 – 5	The potion of forgetfulness wears off. Sigurd remembers that he was supposed to have married Brynhild, not Gudrún. ²¹	
		6	Sigurd goes out hunting to think it all over.	
In <i>Nibelungenlied</i> , the ladies quarrel at the church door. ²²		7	Meanwhile, the two queens go wading in the Rhine to shampoo their hair. ²³ Brynhild orders Gudrún to go downstream. As the senior queen, Brynhild will wash only in fresh water, not in Gudrún's rinsings.	

²¹ At this point in the Lay, Tom Shippey points out a metrical error, the only one in the poem. *The second half-line alliterates where it should not: "oaths were remembered | all unfulfilled"* ("Tolkien out-Wagners Wagner" 5). Sigurd is so distressed that the poem falters in its prosody. Perhaps JRRT wishes to alert the reader, "Here is the turning point of the whole poem!" JRRT demands a very alert reader.

²² Because, Shippey says, skinny-dipping queens offended medieval ideas of decorum ("Problem" 103). Why, when the Norse and German poets are near-contemporaries? The Norse poets seem to have had a better feel for historicity ("The past is another country, they do things differently there"); hence they may have felt less need to modernize old stories. Perhaps German courts were more elegant than Scandinavian ones of the same period, or perhaps group nudity was more acceptable among a people who may already have borrowed the sauna bath from their Finnish neighbors. Swimsuits were not invented till the 18th century.

²³ Sixth-century Burgundians dressed their hair with butter and would have benefited from occasional shampoos. St. Sidonius Appollinaris, quoted by Christopher Tolkien (*S&G* 339).

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
In <i>Thiðrekssaga</i> , the quarrel of the queens occurs much as in the <i>Nibelungenlied</i> , and Högni spears Sigurd in the back. When he rubbed on the dragon blood he hadn't been able to reach between the shoulder blades.	This ends the missing eight leaves of the Codex Regius, and the manuscript resumes in the middle of the <i>Brot</i> .	8-10	They quarrel. Gudrún claims to have the better man, because Gunnar feared to ride the flickering flame. She points to the ring on Brynhild's finger, Andvaranaut. It could only have come from Sigurd. This is proof that it was Sigurd not Gunnar who won Brynhild.	
		11-20	Brynhild is mortified. She retires to her bower and goes into a deep depression, not eating or drinking. She still loves Sigurd, but she has broken her oath to him, as he to her. She can never have him now, so she wants him dead. She hates Gudrún for having taken her place. She despises Gunnar as a coward and a cheat. When Gunnar visits her to find out what is wrong, she tells him so to his face.	
		21-34	Sigurd returns from hunting, and he too visits Brynhild. He explains about the potion of forgetfulness. ²⁴ While in his right mind, Sigurd had loved Brynhild exclusively. He loves her still. Brynhild accepts the explanation, so far as it goes. It does not mend matters much. Sigurd proposes a <i>ménage à trois</i> ; she will have none of it. He even offers to kill Gunnar and ditch Gudrún. Brynhild rejects this because it would make a traitor of Sigurd (whom she loves) and an innocent victim of Gunnar (whom she despises).	

²⁴ How does he know that his temporary selective amnesia had been caused by Grímhild's magic potion? Or *does* he know? We are not told. He seems to bear no special grudge against Grímhild.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogues in JRRT
In <i>Nibelungenlied</i> , he goes so far as to beat her.		35-37	Sigurd is desolated. He reproaches the remorseful Gudrún for having provoked Brynhild.	
		38-42	Sigurd advises Gunnar to patch up matters with Brynhild, offering cash compensation. She refuses scornfully.	
		43-44	Brynhild <i>lies</i> to Gunnar, telling him that Sigurd has cuckolded him and has bragged about it to Gudrún. Gunnar must kill Sigurd! If not, Brynhild will leave Gunnar. This ploy suits Brynhild because it leaves Sigurd the innocent victim and Gunnar the despised oathbreaker. The down side is that it makes Brynhild a guilty plotter and self-confessed whore, rather than an innocent victim of fate. This guilt she grimly accepts.	
		45-50	Now it is Gunnar's turn to be caught between conflicting obligations. As a wronged husband he must kill Sigurd, but as Sigurd's blood-brother he cannot do so without deep disgrace. He consults with Högni, who tells him outright that Brynhild is lying. Gunnar will not believe him. He resolves to kill Sigurd and brazen out the disgrace. Besides, Gunnar is tired of sharing the kingship with an outsider. Also, he covets the hoard.	

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
Various sources have Sigurd killed by Gunnar or by Högni; outdoors while hunting or indoors lying in Gudrún's arms. In <i>Nibelungenlied</i> , Högni tricks Gudrún into revealing Sigurd's one vulnerable spot so he can be speared in the back.	Elder Edda: <i>Brot</i> ; <i>Sigurðarkviða en skamma</i> .	51-60	Assassinating Sigurd is easier said than done. The step-brother Gutthorm is available, and he is <i>not</i> a sworn brother of Sigurd's. Gunnar bribes him, then psyches him up with another magic potion. At a first attempt, Gutthorm reviles Sigurd but is frightened off by Sigurd's bare words. For his second attempt, the coward attacks Sigurd as he is sleeping beside Gudrún. Sigurd is mortally wounded but succeeds in killing Gutthorm anyway by flinging Gram at him. Half of Gutthorm falls on this side of the threshold and the other half on the other side.	
		61-63	The dying Sigurd magnanimously appeals to Gudrún to go easy on her brothers. She will try her best to honor this last request.	
In <i>Völsunga Saga</i> , Gudrún bears to Sigurd a posthumous daughter Swanhild.		64-71	Guadrún mourns. Brynhild laughs, and curses the Niflungs. She declares her intention of leaving Gunnar. He begs her to stay, but Högni is glad to get rid of her.	
In <i>Nibelungenlied</i> , Brynhild survives Sigurd's death but take little part in the rest of the story.		72-76	Brynhild falls on her sword. ²⁵ Before dying she asks to be burned on the same pyre as Sigurd — with the sword between them! Thus she gloats to Gunnar that Sigurd's supposed seduction has been a lie.	
	This passage is JRRT's own, except for echoes of <i>Hákonarmál</i> .	77-82	The Lay ends with the arrival in Valhöll of Sigurd and Brynhild. All the heroes have been eagerly awaiting him throughout the poem. At the Last Battle it will be Brynhild who will buckle on his sword, and Sigurd will save the world.	

²⁵ Shippey calls this very close to *suttee* ("Tolkien out-Wagners Wagner" 3). Great queens who die for love are thin on the ground, even in fiction. In real life I can think only of Sophonisba, Cleopatra, and Yang Kuei-Fei.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
The Lay of Guðrún				
	<i>Guðrúnarkviða en forna.</i>	1-2	Guðrún grieves, wandering alone in the woods.	
The German sources, unlike the Norse, treat Attila as a noble and generous king. ²⁶		3-9	Atli, king of the Huns (the historical Attila) has long been an enemy of the Niflungs, though Sigurd has hitherto held him at bay. He wants the treasure and he wants Guðrún. He also wants revenge for the death of his uncle ²⁷ at the hands of the Niflungs (offstage and much earlier). He bethinks him that Sigurd is gone. He threatens war, but also offers marriage to Guðrún. Grímhild likes the idea.	

²⁶ A result of their different history. Ethnic Huns (fugitive remnants escaping out of far China) constituted only a cadre within Attila's empire. The Huns prevailed by a classic technique: first you subdue your weaker neighbors (mostly Germans of one sort or another). You do not exterminate them; you recruit them into your army with the promise of victory. With this strengthened army you then repeat the cycle on the next set of neighbors, and so *ad infinitum*. The Ostrogoths and other eastern Germans were willing allies and tributaries to Attila. Even Attila's name is German (= "Daddy"); his own real name has been forgotten. The medieval Germans inherited this favorable view of Attila. The medieval Norse, although never in direct contact with the Huns, inherited the hostile view of the western Germans (Visigoths, Franks, et al.), who had been mercilessly massacred by Attila's hordes. During the two World Wars, the Allies called the Germans "Huns"; it was not a misnomer. See Maenchen; Wolfram.

²⁷ The brother of Budli, who here is Atli's father. The historical Bleda was not Attila's father but his elder brother and co-king. Attila himself is strongly suspected by modern historians of having murdered Bleda.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
	Elder Edda: <i>Atlakviða</i> and <i>Atlamaðl</i> are the primary sources throughout this Lay, and begin at this point. <i>Völsunga Saga</i> covers the same ground but is a less important source.	10-16	Gudrún has passed through the worst stages of grief and is now living in a cottage in the woods, embroidering a sort of Bayeux Tapestry displaying the heroic deeds of Sigurd. The poet lovingly describes the tapestry, which gives him the chance to recapitulate the events of the former Lay.	The tapestry is reminiscent of the one in Meduseld depicting the coming of Eorl the Young out of the North, in <i>LoTR</i> .
In the Elder Edda Grímhild gives Gudrún one of her patented potions to induce her to accept Atli's suit.		17-28	Grímhild persuades Gudrún to accept Atli's offer. She does so reluctantly — only as a patriotic duty and only after much soul-searching. Gunnar and Högni agree. Nothing is said of Gjúki. He seems to have died in the interim and to have left the throne to Gunnar. ²⁸	
<i>Atlakviða</i> : Gudrún and Atli have a horrible domestic life together.		29-32	Gudrún goes off to Hunland to be its queen, and Atli makes peace with the Niflungs. Gudrún makes a sincere effort to be a good wife to Atli. For his part, Atli is besotted with her.	
		33-36	Atli's desire for the treasure overcomes his love for Gudrún. She overhears him talking in his sleep, and realizes that he plans to break his treaty and attack the Niflungs.	

²⁸ Gunnar must therefore have lived down the disgrace of killing Sigurd. Probably he has succeeded in casting all the blame on the conveniently-dead Gutthorm.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
In <i>Thiðrekssaga</i> , Atli & Guðrún jointly invite the Niflungs so as to ambush them and get the gold. Numerous subsidiary characters & adventures are introduced.		37-43	Atli sends an embassy to Gunnar, headed by one Vingi. He offers treasure and territory, provided the Niflungs accept Atli as overlord. Vingi is entertained at a feast but no decision is reached at first.	Vingi's seductive offer recalls that of Sauron's ambassador to Daín, as reported by Gimli at the Council.
		44-45	Vingi carries two gifts from Guðrún in his diplomatic pouch: runes ²⁹ of healing for Gunnar, and a ring for Högni. ³⁰	
In <i>Nibelungenlied</i> , so far from warning off the Niflungs Guðrún entices them to Hunland to get revenge on Högni. ³¹		46-48	Grímhild, Gunnar, and Högni consult. Gunnar is first inclined to reject the offer. Högni notices that Guðrún's ring has a wolf hair wound around it, presumably as a warning. Grímhild notices that there are earlier runes, an unreadable palimpsest, on Gunnar's gift. Someone (Vingi?) has distorted Guðrún's original runes, whatever they may have been.	

²⁹ Runes were used for magic and for inscriptions, especially on tombstones. They were never used for correspondence, nor to record commercial transactions or literary compositions. If Guðrún sent a *letter* in runes, she was far ahead of her time. When the historical Justa Grata Honoria sent her famous love letter to Attila (also enclosing a ring, by the way), she was writing in Latin. Attila is known to have employed secretaries and interpreters to handle his Latin and Greek correspondence.

³⁰ The ring is probably not Andvaranaut, but who knows? We have not been told what became in the end of that evil bauble.

³¹ In the Norse sources (Eddas and Sagas), Attila is malevolent, Guðrún is benevolent, and her loyalty to her reconciled brothers is stronger than her desire for revenge. In the German sources (*Nibelungenlied* and *Thiðrekssaga*) the reverse is true.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
		49-54	Gunnar tells Vingi he rejects the offer. Vingi mocks him for being under his mother's thumb, then ups the ante. Atli, he says, is growing old and wishes Gunnar to serve as regent of the Huns during the minority of Atli's own sons. It is not clear to what extent Vingi is following instructions, and to what extent he is making up these lies on his own hook. Lies they are, as the poet clearly tells us.	
		55-56	This time Gunnar, well on in drink, agrees to follow Vingi back to Hunland. Grímhild does not agree. Högni does not believe Vingi and he knows that what they are about to do is disastrous. He does it anyway – classic hero behavior in the North. Gunnar is king and must be supported, even when he is drunk and foolish.	
		57-58	Högni remarks that always in the past they have heeded their mother, and she has led them to disaster; now that she is right, they pay her no attention. Grímhild is a malicious but short-sighted intriguer; always she looks to the Niflungs's immediate advantage but never beyond that. Vigni swears the runes are genuine.	This is reminiscent of Bilbo's remark to Gandalf at the Council of Elrond: All Gandalf's former advice has been unpleasant, but good; now that his advice is pleasant, Bilbo pretends to suspect it.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
In <i>Thiðrekssaga</i> , there are no hostilities upon arrival and everyone sits down to a very strained feast. Unable to get any of Atli's henchmen to attack Högni, Gudrún precipitates the fight by tricking her young son into landing a punch on him. Högni slices off the boy's head for his pains, and tosses it into Gudrún's lap.		59-67	Gunnar and Högni travel with few companions to Hunland. They find the gates barred. Vingi parleys at the gate and threatens them with hanging. For all his diplomatic immunity, the Niflungs hang him in the sight of Atli.	<i>LotR</i> : The Mouth of Sauron.
In <i>Nibelungenlied</i> and <i>Thiðrekssaga</i> , Atli stands above the fray dithering while his vassals ³² do the actual fighting.		68-78	The Huns attack. The Niflungs beat them back and enter the fortress. Atli appears, and demands the gold as ransom. They refuse, and the battle resumes.	
		79-80	Gudrún in her bower hears it all. She agonizes between loyalty to her first husband, loyalty to her current husband, and loyalty to her brothers.	
	The names in the song come from <i>Heiðrek's Saga</i> .	81-86	At Gudrún's urging, Goths in Atli's service switch sides and help the Niflungs. Gunnar welcomes them with a song, recalling old wars when Goths and Burgundians united against the Huns.	
		87-88	Högni's son Snævar is slain.	

³² Including two historical personages who in real life had no connection to Attila: Ermanaric and Theodoric the Great. These worthies flourished several generations before and after Attila respectively.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
		89-93	The new allies turn the tide of battle. The Niflungs are winning, when Gudrún appears and begs her brothers to let Atli escape. They do so, dismissing him with scorn. Atli ungratefully uses the respite to recruit reinforcements. Meanwhile Goths & Niflungs cast the dead out of the hall.	
	Here JRRT abandons the Norse sources and turns to <i>Nibelungenlied</i> , supplemented by material from <i>Finn & Hengest</i> not originally connected to the Niflung story.	94-112	Atli and his men now regain the upper hand. In a night attack they besiege the Niflungs in the hall. After five days the Niflungs are in desperate straits, reduced to drinking the blood of the dead. Inexplicably, Atli despairs of defeating them. Atli's counselor Beiti advises him to fire the hall. He does so despite the shame. ³³ The Niflung brothers are forced out and captured.	
		113-116	Atli throws Högni in jail, but brings Gunnar bound before Gudrún. He expects she will gloat; after all, he has revenged her for Sigurd. Instead she begs Atli to spare him.	

³³ The shame lies not in using fire as a weapon, but in firing *his own* hall.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
<i>Thiðrekssaga</i> omits these refinements and kills off all the Niflung brothers, either during the battle or at the hands of Guðrún. Reflecting rather too late that his queen has caused a lot of bloodshed, Atli has one of his henchmen (Theodoric as it happens) cut her up into little pieces.		117-120	Even at this eleventh hour Atli is willing to release the Niflungs in return for the treasure (so at least he pretends). It has been hidden in the Rhine somewhere. Only Gunnar and Högni know where. Gunnar would surrender his half, if only he could do so without disclosing Högni's half too. ³⁴ Of course, if Gunnar held Högni's heart in his hand, he would then own both halves of the treasure. ³⁵ Bargaining would become easier, he hints. Guðrún thinks poorly of this proposal—she wants to save both brothers, not just one.	The situation in <i>Hobbit</i> following the death of Smaug depicts a similar tangle of conflicting legal claims to a treasure.
		121-124	Atli is delighted to have driven a wedge between Gunnar and Högni. Still, he wishes to save Högni's life in order to conciliate Guðrún. He tries to deceive Gunnar by giving him the heart of Hjalli. ³⁶ Gunnar detects the imposture because the heart quakes so.	

³⁴ Gunnar's pretended legal scruples are disingenuous. Atli is already *de jure* owner. Guðrún inherits the treasure from Sigurd. During her first widowhood, her person and property revert to the guardianship of Gunnar and Högni. The latter have a fiduciary responsibility to preserve the treasure for her, instead of which they fraudulently sink it in the Rhine—precisely so that she will *not* bring it to Atli upon her second marriage, as should have been done.

³⁵ The pretense that Gunnar is more concerned for Högni's legal rights than for Högni's life is ridiculous. Atli takes this to mean that Gunnar is trying to save his own life by setting Högni up as the fall guy. In Strophe 129 we learn different.

³⁶ Hjalli, Atli's pig keeper or perhaps cook, is not consulted about this. He objects, but in vain.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
		125-128	Finally Gunnar is given the genuine heart of Högni. ³⁷ Gunnar recognizes it, for Högni's heart does <i>not</i> quake. This is all the obituary Högni gets, but for a thousand years it has been considered the height of Norse <i>sang-froid</i> .	
		129-131	Gunnar is now the only one alive who knows where the gold is hid. He reneges on his promise to Atli, refusing to reveal the hiding place after all. At this point the only revenge Gunnar can get is to deny the treasure to the Huns, and this he is determined to do even if it means torture and death.	
	Fantastic as the situation now is, there are strong parallels (if not perhaps sources) in actual history. ³⁸	132-139	Atli throws Gunnar into a snake pit. By way of a life-line Gudrún tosses him a harp. Gunnar's harping puts the snakes to sleep ³⁹ – all except the biggest, which stings him to death.	
		140	The murder of her brothers Gunnar and Högni is the final straw for Gudrún, who now at last renounces her wifely obligations. She determines upon revenge. She is a sweet girl really, ⁴⁰ but you can push her only so far before she goes over the edge altogether.	

³⁷ Högni does not resent this cavalier treatment by Gunnar. He is a hero and has already resolved not to yield the treasure under any circumstances. Thus his own death is now certain no matter what Gunnar does.

³⁸ The fictional Atli destroys a kingdom to recover a dowry he claims for his marriage to a Burgundian queen. The historical Attila devastates half of Europe to recover a dowry he claims for his betrothal to a Roman princess. The story of Attila and Honoria can be read in any standard history of the period, such as Gibbon or Bury.

³⁹ Cf. the effect of Burgundian music upon St. Sidonius Appolinaris (S&G 339).

⁴⁰ Critics who think that Tolkien marginalizes women should ponder Grímhild, Gudrún, and Brynhild.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
		141-147	Atli has the bodies burned in a pyre, then returns for a victory feast. ⁴¹ Guðrún serves the drink. When all have feasted, she announces that she has killed Erp and Eitill, her two sons by Atli. She has cooked them up for the cannibal feast.	
<i>Nibelungenlied</i> & <i>Thiðrekssaga</i> leave Attila alive at story's end, thus getting wrong the only fact about the whole affair that ancient historians agree upon.	Marcellinus Comes thinks that Attila was murdered ⁴² by his new wife Ildico, whose name suggests some sort of German.	148-152	Atli swoons in horror and the servants put him to bed. Guðrún barges into his chamber, wakens him from his drunken stupor, mocks him, and stabs him dead. He dies reviling her.	
		153-155	Guðrún sets the second hall afire. ⁴³	
<i>Völsunga Saga</i> lets her live to remarry.	Elder Edda: <i>Guðrúnarhvöt</i> .	156-165	Guðrún takes to wandering in the woods alone. After recapitulating her history in song, she drowns herself in the river.	

⁴¹ Presumably at a spare hall, since the original one has been burnt. Atli must carry around spare halls the way Sherman carried around spare railroad tunnels during the Atlanta campaign.

⁴² Priscus, quoted in Jordanes, thinks that Attila died of natural causes aggravated by intemperance, and this view is endorsed by Christopher Tolkien (S&G 347). For a contrary view, extended to book length, see Babcock. Babcock also suggests that the character of Högni may have been based on the Roman general Aëtius—apparently because both when young had been hostages at the Hunnish court. It is true that Högni's name does not alliterate with those of his three supposed siblings and their father, also that his name, unlike theirs, is absent from the ancient Burgundian law codes.

⁴³ The double burning of Atli's hall, like the double awakening of Brynhild, must be due to conflating two different versions of the same event at some time prior to our earliest manuscripts.

Rejected Elements	Sources	Strophe	JRRT's Plot	Analogs in JRRT
	Original to JRRT.	166	The gold is still in the Rhine. All the characters are dead; not even a Fortinbras is left standing. Ódin has gotten what he wanted. Sigurd is in Valhöll, eagerly awaiting the Last Battle. <i>Sub species æternitas</i> , all has ended happily. The poet dismisses his audience.	



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