In two recent articles T. M. Andersson has attempted to reconstruct the contents of the collateral source of the *Niflunga saga* in *Pídreks saga* and to distinguish it from Heusler’s “Ältere Not.”¹ He agrees with Heinrich Hempel that this secondary source was a short Saxon lay and not the chronicle from Soest proposed by Roswitha Wisniewski.² Andersson found external evidence for the existence of the lay and independent indication of its contents in Saxo Grammaticus’ story of the singer who attempted to warn Knud Lavard of the ambush prepared for him in the year 1131.

Further external evidence for the existence of the Saxon lay is perhaps to be found in *Norna-Gests þátrr* where Gestr entertains Ólafr Tryggvason’s court with a poem called *Guðrúnarbrögð*:

Hætta þeir nú sínu tali, tekr Gestr hórpú sína ok slær vel ok lengi um kveldit, svá at ñollum þykkir unað í á at heyra, ok slær þó Gunnarsslag

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². Hempel, *Nibelungenstudien I. Nibelungenlied, Thidrekssaga und Balladen*, Germanische Bibliothek, Abteilung Untersuchungen und Texte 22 (Heidelberg, 1926); Wisniewski, *Die Darstellung des Niflungenunterganges in der Thidrekssaga. Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung*, Hermaea 9 (Tubingen, 1961); Wisniewski (pp. 302–08) affirms the lost Saxon lay, which she calls “Grimhilds Verrat” after Saxo, but makes it a source of the “Ältere Not” rather than the saga. Cf. also items 7, 13, and 14 in Hempel’s *Kleine Schriften*, ed. H. M. Heinrichs (Heidelberg, 1966). I wish to thank Prof. Heinrichs for a helpful critique of this note.
“Speak Useful Words or Say Nothing”

Guðrúnarbrögð may be a translation of the “title” of the Saxon lay known to Saxo and the compiler of the Níflunga saga; brögð, plural brögð, has to do with tricks and especially with deceit, and this answers well to Saxo’s “cantor” who, “speciosissimi carminis contextu notissimam Grimildæ erga fratres perfidiam de industria memorare adorsus, famosæ fraudis exemplo similium ei metum ingenerare tentabat.” Saxo’s allusion to the song specifies not merely revenge against the brothers but perfidia, and Andersson has argued that this must imply deceit and specifically a treacherous invitation. The brögð referred to could be this initial motif of the reconstructed Saxon lay or perhaps equally well the tricks which Grimhild later uses to dispatch her brothers (Andersson’s points 4 and 5, p. 29). If Grimildæ perfidia notissima reflects in some sort the same familiar designation (“title”) for the same song as Guðrúnarbrögð in fornu, it may be that Saxo has heightened slightly the moral sense in harmony with his general approach to his material. The point is not lost even if brögð is not claimed as a close equivalent of Saxo’s perfidia and his phrase is regarded as only a description, not a “title”; however, in Saxo’s usage perfidia usually indicates not a mere attitude or potentiality but concrete acts of treachery.

Supporting this interpretation of the passage from Norna-Gests þáttir is the striking fact that the audience of Norwegians at Ólafr’s court had never before heard the lay even though it is designated “in fornu”; naturally they were familiar with the Scandinavian version (revenge for the brothers), rather than the German version (revenge on the brothers). The fact that Guðrúnarbrögð in fornu was not known to the Norwegian audience also argues against the possibility that

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5. See Franz Blatt, ed., Saxonis Gesta Danorum, II (Copenhagen, 1957), s.v. perfidia for a (representative, not complete) collection of occurrences; Blatt’s gloss: “facinus vel dictum infidum, fraud, infidelitas.”
the brögð referred to might be Guðrún’s revenge on Atlri. The South Germanic origin of Guðrúnarbrögð is further supported by the fact that Gestr himself is a Dane (from Grøningr) who has spent a great deal of his supernaturally long life in South Germanic lands, and the Southern version is obviously more appropriate to this devoted follower and personal friend of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani who would be imagined as telling about the revenge for his lord.6

What objections may be raised to this interpretation? Norna-Gests þáttir is late (usually dated about 1300), and Finnur Jónsson dismisses both Gunnarsslagr and Guðrúnarbrögð as invented names.7 However, there is no positive reason for believing these names invented, and the detail about not having heard Guðrúnarbrögð before would be gratuitous if the author of the þáttir had not had something particular in mind. Nora Chadwick was certainly mistaken in her translation of the passage: “What he rendered best was The Harping of Gunnar; and last of all he played the ancient Wiles of Guthrun, neither of which [my italics] they had heard before.”8 The plural in þau hofdu menn eigi fyrr heyrt refers only to the brögð; and in fact the passage may be interpreted as opposing pleasure-giving familiar pieces, the best of which was Gunnarsslagr (slær vel ok lengi um kveldit, svá at öllum þykkr unad í á at heyra, ok slær þó Gunnarsslag bezt), to the foreign Guðrúnarbrögð. There may be an artistic reason for this arrangement: the central strategy of this “short story” is the gradual revelation of Gestr’s mysterious history. In the second chapter he demurs when the retainers are admiring the ring Hnitrað; this leads to a wager that Gestr can produce better gold, which in turn leads to Gestr’s life story and the included heroic legends beginning in Chapter III. Here at the end of Chapter II the mystery and anticipation are at their highest; so it is fitting that Gestr’s performances in the last lines of the chapter should end with allusion to a song unknown to his audience and hinting unsettlingly of Gestr’s superior

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6. Esp. Wilken, pp. 241–42, 250, 253, 259; for the consistency and artistic care my argument assumes, cf. the þáttir author’s comments on the lack of (stone) halls in the Norway of Ólaf’s time (p. 238) and on the political geography of Europe (esp. p. 244).
knowledge and experience and his connection with the glamorous South Germanic region.

Mrs Chadwick thought Guðrúnarbrögð might possibly be identical with Guðrúnarkvida II because another possible interpretation of brögð would be “deeds, adventures,” which could fit almost any Guðrún poem, and because Guðrúnarkvida II is referred to in the Poetic Edda (“Frá dauða Sigurðar”) as Guðrúnarkvida in forna. However, “the ancient” is a designation carried by other poems as well (e.g. Hamðismál, Bjarkamál) and may be an honorific (cf. Bragi inn gamli); brögð in the plural seems most frequently to carry a sense of deceit or cunning, and in the present context the standard interpretations (without reference to Saxo and the Saxon lay, of course) have carried this sense. Furthermore, Norna-Gests pátr definitely alludes to Guðrúnarkvida II further along as Guðrúnarreða in a passage apparently lifted from “Frá dauða Sigurðar”; in other words, Guðrúnarreða was the pátr author’s title for the poem that the Poetic Edda calls Guðrúnarkvida in forna, and there is no reason for him to use two different titles for the same work. In fact, it is just possible that he changed to Guðrúnarreða here in order to avoid confusion with the Guðrún poem he had previously subtitled in fornu. In any case it would be pointless to refer to Guðrúnarkvida II as a poem that King Ólafr’s Norwegian court had never heard before.

10. Cleasby-Vigfusson, s.v. bragð, II, 2 and 3 (“a trick, scheme, device ... chiefly in pl. ... but also sing.”), 6 (“with a notion of deceit, a trick, crafty scheme... In Swed. bragder’ means an exploit, action, whilst the Icel. implies some notion of subtlety or craft; yet cp. phrases as stór brögð, great exploits ...”); Fritsner, s.v. bragð, 2 (“Gjerning, Foretagende”), 3 (“List, Kneb, kloektig Paafund, hvormed man søger at opnaa, udrette noget”), cf. bragðadrykkr (“Drik som er beredet i svigefuld Hensigt”). Cf. also Finnur Jónsson, Ordbog til ... rtmur ... (Copenhagen, 1926-27), s.v. bragð (“Gjerning, Foretagende”); M. A. Jacobsen and Chr. Matras, Foroysk-Donsk ordabok, 2nd ed. rev. (Torshavn, 1961), s.v. bragð/bragð (“manddomsstykke, bedrift... kneb, puds...”); and Svabos glossar til førørsku visehandskrifter, ed. Chr. Matras (Copenhagen, 1943), s.v. bragd.
12. Wilken, I, 253 text and n. 11; II, 256.
The most serious objection that may be raised against the proposals in this note is that if the Guðrúnarbrögð were the Saxon lay of perfidia it would have used the Southern name Grimhildr instead of Guðrún; the objection is especially important since the name Grimhildr for Guðrún's mother does not occur in Norna-Gests þátr. Nevertheless, I would argue that the North Germanic name could be used here partly because of the confusion that would be created by allusion to “Grimhildr” in a tradition where that name was applied regularly to Guðrún’s mother, as in the textually closely allied Völsunga saga and Poetic Edda. (Compare the relationship between the names Sigdrïfa and Brynhildr in the Edda and in Völsunga saga.) However, one other piece of external evidence, though notoriously hard to interpret, may be introduced to counter this onomastic objection. The portion of the Faroese ballad cycle of the Nibelungs that relates the fall of the Burgundians, Högna tättur, may also contain allusions to the Guðrúnarbrögð; for example:

Artala kongur í Húnalandi,
bróti úr bragdartatti;
festi Guðruna Júkadóttur,
ið Sjurður snari átti.13

Artála kongur í Húna landi
(sigist í bragda tátti)
festi frúnna Guðrunu,
ið Sjurður frægi átti (H, 18; I, 205).

Hans Christian Lyngbye, Wilhelm Grimm, P. E. Müller, and Max Vogler have taken this bragdar táttur or bragda táttur to be the name of a lost poem, and Müller and Vogler equated it with the Guðrúnarbrögð of Norna-Gests þátr, observing that the bragdar/bragda táttur

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13. Føroya kvæði: Corpus Carminum Færoensium, compiled by Sv. Grundtvig and J. Bloch, ed. N. Djurhus and Chr. Matras, I (Copenhagen, 1951–63), p. 22 (= Sjurðar kvæði, version A, st. 1); further references give version letter, stanza number, volume and page number; the thirteen occurrences of the phrase in Högna táttur’s versions are A, 1, 5 (I, 22), Ba, 1 (I, 50), Bb, 1, 5 (I, 76–77), C, 255, 261 (I, 99), D, 1, 6 (I, 127), E, 25 (I, 153), G, 271, 277 (I, 182–83), H, 18 (I, 205); there are seven occurrences in Brynhildar táttur’s versions: A, 4 (I, 8), Ba, 7 (I, 41), Bb, 8 (I, 64), C, 105 (I, 91), D, 8 (I, 114), G, 112 (I, 174), H, 6 (I, 196).
must have treated of a trick and concerned Atli and Guðrún. But in the present context the striking thing about Högna táttur is that not only does it allude to a bragdar/bragda táttur but also here the Northern name Guðrún is combined with the Southern role of revenge on the brothers accomplished through the deceitful invitation and the later tricks—just as in our conception of Guðrúnarbrögð.

The question of the relationship of Högna táttur to the Danish ballad of Grimilds Hœvn, Den hvenske Krønike, Piøreks saga, and the “Altere Not” is still open after more than a century and a half, but Heusler, Hempel, and Schneider all agree on the necessity of two sources for Högna táttur: (1) a Scandinavian ballad (which is the common source of Högna táttur, Grimilds Hœvn, and the chronicle), and (2) the Piøreks saga directly. Hempel derives the first, the *Urballade, from a *sächsisches Lied which is the second source of Niflunga saga. It seems plausible to me to assume that the allusions to a bragdar/ bragda táttur are to the *Urballade or more generally the tradition of the *sächsisches Lied, while the actual extant Högna táttur represents a remaniement after the establishment of the influence of Piøreks saga. It is true that de Boor dismissed this phrase as a tag without significance, and one might add two more objections to my proposal: first, the phrase usually occurs in the singular and second, it also appears in Brynhildar táttur. But if the phrase were a formula like “Árla um morgunin,” it should occur more widely than in these two oldest songs, and the comments of Müller and other students.
indicate that *bragdar/bragda táttur* was not really understood in the modern ballad tradition. The only plausible explanation that has been offered is implicit in Müller’s equation of the phrase with the poem mentioned in *Norna-Gests þáttir:* it must be a source citation that became frozen and meaningless in the memorial transmission of *Högna táttur,* its appearance in *Brynhildar táttur* may indicate some early imitation or influence which similarly survived as a petrified phrase. R. C. Boer’s study of the ballad, which, however, derives *Högna táttur* entirely from *Piðreks saga,* gives *bragdar/bragda táttur* full semantic value but equates it with other source allusions (e.g., “sum sögan sigir frá”; H, 200; I, 212) as references to *Piðreks saga.* However, the theory of two (successive) sources seems superior and neatly accounts for the incompatibility of allusion to a poetic and also a prose source. Possibly, then, we have references to a Saxon lay of the twelfth century (*Grimildaes perfidia*), a thirteenth-century North Germanic translation of it (*Guðrúnarbrögð*), and a Scandinavian ballad version of perhaps the thirteenth or fourteenth century (*bragdar/bragda táttur*).
A final difficulty is posed by the relation of harp and poem in the allusion to Guðrúnarbrögð. Early references, especially West Germanic, show that some poetry (whether sung, chanted, or recited) was accompanied by the harp or lyre; but Scandinavian sources associating harping with poetry are rare and problematic, and in Norna-Gests þáttur the verb slá suggests harping alone, not a harped accompaniment to a lay as I have assumed. Opinions differ sharply on the general questions involved here, but even if Gunnarsslagr and Guðrúnarbrögð were considered tunes only by the fourteenth-century author of the þáttur, they reflect the earlier existence of the poems whose names they bear. It does seem possible that the name Gunnarsslagr was from the beginning applied only to the tune Gunnarr was supposed to have played in the snake-pit, and not

21. Much evidence is assembled in Finnur Jónsson, “Das Harfenspiel des Nordens in der alten Zeit,” Sammelbände der internationalen Musikgesellschaft 9 (1908), 530–37. Finnur Jónsson’s conclusions are based chiefly on the silence of Icelandic sources and would not seem to carry much weight for the Saxon-Danish area.


23. Bósa saga (cited by Finnur Jónsson, “Harfenspiel”) presents an example similar to Gunnarsslagr: there Hjárrandahljóð would seem to reflect a genuine old tradition. The whole problem of tune and text bears comparison with the Breton lay.

24. As it happens there actually is a Gunnar slagr printed in the Arnamagnæan edition of the Sæmundar Edda (II [Copenhagen, 1818], 1000–10) and in Rask’s edition (Stockholm, 1818), pp. 274–77; it seems to be the work of the learned Icelander Séra Gunnar Pálsson, one of the editors of the Copenhagen edition (Rask, p. 274, n.; Sophus Bugge, Sæmundar Edda [Christiania, 1867], p. xlii). It is of interest, though hardly strong evidence, that he interpreted the þáttur’s reference as to a poem (and cf. Arnamagnæan ed., II, 1000, n.); similarly the Chadwicks guessed that Gunnarsslagr might be the same as Oddrúnargrátr or one of the Atli poems (Growth, I, 576).
to a lament such as King Gelimer of the Vandals wished to sing to the accompaniment of a harp on a similar occasion. But a name like \textit{Guðrúnarbrögð in fornu} could hardly have arisen as the name of a tune without words.

The literary-historical milieu required by these lost poems is a transitional one with a mixture of traditions and forms: South Germanic revenge on the brothers carries the Northern name of the heroine in \textit{Högna tättur} and presumably in \textit{bragdar/bragda tättur} and \textit{Guðrúnarbrögð}; in Danish ballad tradition a \textit{Grimilds Hævn} exists side by side with a \textit{Færendehævn}, though the latter eventually lost explicit connection with the Burgundians; the collateral source of \textit{Piðreks saga}, the Saxon lay, did not yet have the subsidiary characters from the epic, Dietrich, Rüdiger, and others.\footnote{On Dietrich, Hempel, pp. 100–04, 108–09, but cf. Andersson, p. 29; on the Danish ballads, \textit{DgF}, I, 24–55 (nos. 4–5), and cf. \textit{DgF}, IV, 586–600; mixture of names can, of course, arise independently as in the A Ms. of \textit{Piðreks saga} (ed. H. Bertelsen [Copenhagen, 1905–11]).} \textit{Guðrúnarbrögð} seems, then, to fit easily into the transitional North German-Danish milieu evoked by Wolfgang Mohr’s important work and most recently by E. E. Metzner.\footnote{Mohr, “Entstehungsgeschichte und Heimat der jüngeren Eddalieder südgermanischen Stoffes,” \textit{ZDA} 75 (1938), 217–80; Metzner, \textit{Zur frühesten Geschichte der europäischen Balladendichtung. Der Tanz in Kölnbigk}, Frankfurter Beiträge zur Germanistik, Bd. 14 (Frankfurt, 1972).}

Further external evidence for the currency of the lay and its “title” turned up after the completion of this article: (1) \textit{Der Marner} (fl. 1230–67), lists part of his repertoire: “Sing ich dien liuten miniu liet, / sò wil der erste daz / wie Dietrich von Berne schiet / . . . / Der fünfte wen Kriemhilt verriet ...” (\textit{Der Marner}, ed. Philipp Strauch \textit{[Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach- und Cultur-geschichte der germanischen Völker, XIV]}, Strassburg, 1876: XV, 14, 11.261–67); (2) Hugo von Trimberg (c. 1230–1313) gives a similar list of poems: “Der niunde wil Kriemhliden mort / Der zehende der Nibelunge hort” (\textit{Der Renner}, ed. G. Ehrismann \textit{[Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, CCXLVIII]}, Tübingen, 1909, II, 283). Hugo’s reference is not independent evidence because it is an imitation of the Marner’s passage, but his nominalization of “wen K. verriet” suggests the kind of title found in \textit{Guðrúnarbrögð} (MHG \textit{mort} = treacherous killing,
Verrat). The Marner's editor Strauch compares Saxo's *Grimildae perfidia* and shows (a conclusion going back to Grimm) that the Marner must have still known the story of the Nibelungs in separate lays, not as a single epic (pp. 34–36); surprisingly the Marner's allusion has not been mentioned in connection with the Saxon lay by Wisniewski, Hempel, or Heusler. The Marner was a Swabian (and Hugo an East Franconian), but this has no significance here since he travelled widely and was familiar enough with Saxony to be criticized and mourned by a Saxon poet.