

# The Hero and his Values

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*Abstract:* In this article, I argue that the portrayals of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani as a hero that emerge from the narratives about the slaying of the dragon in the *Prose Edda* and in the *Saga of the Volsungs* are rather different. A hero's essence is not only about what actions the hero performs or what physical qualities the hero possesses, but also about what choices he makes and what values he adheres to. Therefore, one has to investigate why Sigurðr chose to agree to slay Fáfnir in order to be able to judge how heroic this deed was – or was not. A comparative analysis of the two source texts shows that while the main motivating factor for Sigurðr in the *Prose Edda* version of the narrative is the prospect of gaining Fáfnir's treasure, the version contained in the *Saga of the Volsungs* gives a completely different picture. Here, the main motivation arises from Sigurðr's own desire to avenge those who had killed his father, Sigmundur. In order to be able to wreak his vengeance, Sigurðr needs a suitable weapon, a sword without equal. Since Reginn is extraordinarily zealous in inciting Sigurðr to slay Fáfnir, Sigurðr promises to do so in exchange for a sword that Reginn – who is a smith with supernatural, dwarf-like competences – has to fashion using all his skill and effort. Additionally, avenging the injustice suffered by Reginn seems morally right, and is compatible with Sigurðr's plans. The prospect of acquiring a hoard of gold may have contributed to his resolution, but in the *Saga of the Volsungs* it is not the main motivating factor for Sigurðr.

## 1. Introduction

Some time ago, I was rather perplexed to read, in a book by Aron Gurevich, that the famous Russian researcher Mikhail Steblin-Kamenskij did not consider Sigurðr Fáfnisbani a real hero. According to Gurevich,

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Steblin-Kamenskij argued that the most glorious deed performed by Sigurðr, i.e., the slaying of the dragon, required only physical, and not spiritual, strength. The way he killed Fáfnir by attacking him from a trench was more of an ambush than an honest fight. The reason why Sigurðr killed Fáfnir was nothing more than greed for gold. Immediately after having killed Fáfnir, Sigurðr committed treason and killed Reginn, the one who had forged the victorious sword for Sigurðr and who had taught him how to kill Fáfnir.<sup>1</sup>

I was taken aback. If Sigurðr is not a real hero, then who is? Are there any heroes at all? Admittedly, Gurevich “defends” Sigurðr against Steblin-Kamenskij’s criticism, and justifies his status as a hero. Why would Scandinavian and other Germanic people keep the memory of Sigurðr/Siegfried in high esteem if they had not seen him as a true hero, Gurevich asks rhetorically. The reason for killing Fáfnir cannot have been something as unsophisticated as greed for gold. One has to remember that the gold in question was not simple gold: it had magical characteristics and embodied the “luck” and power of its owner. Sigurðr did not attack and kill Reginn before he had learnt that the latter was planning to kill him. Importantly, the distinction between one’s physical strength (or other external characteristics, such as handsomeness) and one’s spiritual firmness was not drawn by the Old Norse audience in the same way it is usually drawn in our days. Sigurðr was a living embodiment of perfectness in the eyes of people of that time.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 “М. И. Стеблин-Каменский специально останавливается на Сигурде, наиболее прославленном из героев «Эдды». Что же героического совершил Сигурд? Прозвище Сигурда – Убийца Фафнира (дракона, охранявшего клад Нифлунгов – Нибелунгов), но, замечает исследователь, Сигурд, совершая этот подвиг, затратил одни только физические силы, «не обнаружив никакой силы духа». Он забрался в яму на пути ничего не подозревавшего дракона и пронзил его мечом. Не честный бой, а убийство из засады! Побудительную причину поступка Сигурда М. И. Стеблин-Каменский усматривает в простой корысти, в стремлении завладеть золотом, которое охранял дракон. Мало этого, Сигурд, умертвив Фафнира, тут же прибегает к предательству: не желая делиться добычей, он убивает его брата Регина, кузнеца, который выковал для него победоносный меч и научил его, как умертвить Фафнира” (Гуревич, 2005, 54f.).
- 2 “[П]очему же скандинавы и другие германские народы веками хранили память о Сигурде – Зигфриде и иных героях и все вновь воспевали их в своих песнях? Они ведь хорошо знали, [...] что он стремился завладеть золотым кладом и убил своего учителя Регина. Очевидно, эти обстоятельства, настояжывающие современного исследователя, вовсе не тревожили сочинителей

Still, I could not help thinking about Sigurðr and about what exactly makes a hero. I came to the conclusion that such a discussion cannot be confined to the question of *how* the hero performs his deeds and *what qualities* (physical or spiritual) he possesses, but also has to take into account the question of *why* the deeds are performed. It seems obvious that Sigurðr killed Fáfnir because Reginn urged him to do so; but *why* did Sigurðr *choose to agree* to kill the dragon? Was Sigurðr interested in the act of killing itself, in all the glory and honour he knew he would win by killing the dragon, or in the gold he knew Fáfnir was guarding? Did he consider it a rightful thing to kill the evil creature, well, because all dragons are evil by definition – or because he knew this particular dragon was remarkably evil? Does *the choice* to kill Fáfnir tell us anything about Sigurðr's own *values*?

In this article, I discuss how Reginn the smith persuades Sigurðr to kill Fáfnir as well as what choices Sigurðr makes, and reflect around what

и исполнителей песней «Эдды» и отвечали ожиданиям и вкусам их аудитории. [...] [Ж]елание завладеть золотом невозможно свести к элементарной жадности. Ведь золото, предмет раздора между асами (Æsir), альвами (álfar) и братьями Регином и Фафниром, обладало магическими свойствами и материализовало «удачу» того, кто им обладал. В нем как бы воплощались благополучие и власть. Неверно было бы игнорировать его символическую и магическую функцию. Далее, Сигурд напал на Фафнира по подстрекательству его брата и убил Регина после того как узнал, что тот замышляет умертвить его. Борьба с чудовищем, в какого обратился великан Фафнир, охранявший золото, доставшееся ему, кстати говоря, в результате отцеубийства, не требовала соблюдения тех правил, какими руководствовались персонажи исландских саг, мстившие своим обидчикам. [...] Утверждение о том, что эддические герои, собственно, вовсе и не герои, проистекает из мысли об идентичности понятия героического в давние времена и в Новое время. Герой, свершающий ратный подвиг, с современной точки зрения, – человек, который обладает прежде всего силой духа; выдающихся физических качеств он может быть и лишен, во всяком случае, они не обязательны. Между тем древнескандинавский герой выделяется как силой духа, так и физической силой, – по сути своей они едины и неразрывны, и потому никакого противоречия между ними не ощущается. [...] Дух и материя, моральное состояние героя и его физические качества не воспринимались в ту эпоху раздельно. Тогдашней системе ценностей чужда подобная дихотомия. Внешняя сила была симптомом величия духа. Ценили человека как за бесстрашие и верность, так и за физическую сноровку и силу мышц. Не случайно в песнях отмечается «великолепный облик» Сигурда – это не просто красота и воинская сила; Сигурд, в глазах людей той эпохи, – воплощение совершенства” (Гуревич, 2005, 55ff.).

Sigurðr's core values are. The source texts used in the study are the *Prose Edda* (specifically, *Skáldskaparmál*) and the *Saga of the Volsungs*.<sup>3</sup> The text of the *Prose Edda* referred to in this article is the one edited by Anthony Faulkes (Snorri Sturluson, 1998 [2007], ed. Faulkes). It is based mainly on the R manuscript (that is, Codex Regius, or GKS 2367 4to) because “[i]t is assumed that R, which has the fullest text of any of the medieval manuscripts, represents the contents and arrangement of the *Prose Edda* in the form nearest to that in which Snorri left it” (Snorri Sturluson, 1998 [2007], ed. Faulkes, li). The edition of the *Saga of the Volsungs* consulted in this study is the one edited by Ronald George Finch (*Völsunga saga. The Saga of the Volsungs*, 1965, ed. and trans. Finch), but for English quotations I chose to use a more recent translation by Kaaren Grimstad (*Völsunga saga. The Saga of the Volsungs*, 2019, ed. and trans. Grimstad).<sup>4</sup> There is only one vellum manuscript of this saga, dating from around 1400, namely Ny kgl. Saml. 1824 b 4to, which numerous paper manuscripts (dating from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century) derive from (see Finch, 1993, 711).

Although the narrative about Sigurðr's killing of Fáfnir in the two sources comprises the same core elements,<sup>5</sup> there are significant differences as to the order those elements come in, and how they are used. Thus, in the *Prose Edda* the story about Hreiðmarr having been killed by

- 3 For a thorough discussion of the lays of the *Poetic Edda* telling the story of Sigurðr, see e.g. Haimerl (2013) and Clark (2012, 67–88).
- 4 Both Finch's and Grimstad's editions are bilingual, and provide a translation into English besides the Old Norse original. The reason I have chosen to use Finch's edition for quotations of the Old Norse text of the saga, despite its being over five decades old, is that this edition uses the so-called “normalized” Old Norse spelling. The much more recent edition by Grimstad is, by contrast, diplomatic (i.e., non-normalized). In this article, I have chosen to use the normalized spelling in all quotations from Old Norse texts (both the *Prose Edda* and the *Saga of the Volsungs*).
- 5 Indeed, certain phrases in the two texts are nearly identical, e.g. “En er þat var gert, þá gekk Hreiðmarr fram ok sá eitt granahár ok bað hylja” (*Völsunga saga*, 1965, ed. Finch, 26; emphasis added) and “En Hreiðmarr leit til ok hugði at vandliga ok sá eitt granahár ok bað þat hylja” (Snorri Sturluson, 1998 [2007], ed. Faulkes, 45; emphasis added). Of course, such affinity is not incidental, but is a consequence of the fact that the *Prose Edda* and the *Saga of the Volsungs* share the lays of the *Poetic Edda* as a major source. In *Reginsmál* (2014, eds. Jónas Kristjánsson & Vésteinn Ólason, 297), it says “En er þat var gort gekk Hreiðmarr fram ok sá eitt granahár ok bað hylja”.

Fáfnir is primarily an account of why gold is called “otter-payment”, and serves as a precursor of the later events. In the *Saga of the Volsungs*, this story is, by contrast, told by Reginn himself, and used by him as a part of his argument that Fáfnir has to be killed. My point of departure is the assumption that such differences between the texts result in somewhat different portrayals of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, as they show rather different sets of values that Sigurðr adheres to.

The method I use in this study is first and foremost close reading and comparison of the source texts, and reasoning around the differences between them. I also use the actantial model developed by Algirdas Julien Greimas in order to analyse the communication between Sigurðr and Reginn.

## 2. The story in the source texts

*A comparison and reasoning around some differences in the source texts.* Both the *Prose Edda* and the *Saga of the Volsungs* have it that Sigurðr killed Fáfnir because Reginn urged him to do so. The reason Reginn wanted to have his brother killed is that Fáfnir did not share the gold with Reginn after having killed their father, Hreiðmarr. In his turn, Hreiðmarr had received the gold as a ransom for his son Otr who had been killed by Loki. The original owner of the gold was Andvari the dwarf, who pronounced that possessing the gold, which had been taken from him, would cause the death of its subsequent owners, a pronouncement Loki reiterated once more before leaving Hreiðmarr’s farm. Thus, the direct reason for Sigurðr’s killing of the dragon in both the *Prose Edda* and the *Saga of the Volsungs* is Reginn’s urging, but also Andvari’s pronouncement, or curse, is important. In older, underlying versions of the story, reasons of cosmological importance may have made the slaying of the dragon necessary. It may, for instance, be argued that the whole thing from the very beginning was a smart plan that Óðinn had made in order to get rid of Fáfnir,<sup>6</sup> or that the encounter between Sigurðr and Fáfnir is, ultimately, a remote reflection of an old Indo-European myth about the

6 “Odin appears here as ancestor and patron of the Volsung line and its scion, the dragon slayer Sigurd. [...] It is Odin who first provides the magical sword that Sigurd later inherits from his father Sigmund. Odin also advises Sigurd how to identify the special horse Grani, a descendant of the god’s own eight-legged steed Sleipnir. [...] [A]t crucial moments for Sigurd’s ancestors, Odin’s intervention ensures the continuation of the family that is to produce the monster slayer. [...]

thunder-god's killing of the serpent guarding a desirable object and preventing access to it.<sup>7</sup> The encounter has been interpreted as a story of initiation.<sup>8</sup> On the profane level, slaying Fáfnir may have been necessary to uphold social order.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, dragon slaying may be – and has been – seen as related to a bridal quest.<sup>10</sup> Finally, it may be argued that

Odin, together with the silent god Hoenir and the trickster Loki, sets in motion the events that bring a great treasure from the chthonic world of the dwarves into the world of men. [...] *For reasons that are not explained, Odin distances himself from Sigurd after the monster has been slain. Perhaps Sigurd is no longer of use to the god*” (*The Saga of the Volsungs*, 1990, introduction and translation by Byock, 8–10; emphasis added).

- 7 “The thunder-god is not after you and me. His wrath is directed against devils, demons, giants. Their identity varies from one country to another. But there is an adversary of a different order who lurks in Vedic, Greek, and Norse mythology and who seems to represent an Indo-European concept: a monstrous reptile associated with water, lying in it or blocking its flow. It is perhaps a cosmic version of the common mythical motif of *the serpent who guards a spring, or some other desirable thing, and prevents access to it*” (West, 2007, 255; emphasis added). “The archetypal Indo-European dragon-slaying myth is presumably the one [...] where the victor is the thunder-god and his victim the monstrous serpent that blocks the waters. [...] I do not suggest that all dragon-slaying heroes are faded thunder-gods, only that – seeing that dragons or colossal serpents are not a feature of the real world – *the concept of slaying one as a heroic feat may have originated with the cosmic myth*” (West, 2007, 430; emphasis added).
- 8 “This episode may exemplify the initiation of a young hero in Old Norse society: instruction in the wilderness, a deed of strength and courage, the gaining of wisdom and of a new name” (Hedeager, 2011, 142).
- 9 “Fafnir represents all that is antipathetical and threatening to a heroic society – he is a greedy tyrant, hoarding gold instead of sharing it, and an evil father-murderer who has violated sacred kinship bonds. In slaying him Sigurd acts to uphold social order (chap. 18)” (*Volsunga saga*, 2019, ed. and trans. Grimstad, 35).
- 10 “The task of killing a monster is one classic test of suitor eligibility in traditional tales. Before he meets Brynhild for the first time, Sigurd slays the mighty dragon Fafnir, thereby establishing his everlasting fame as the Nordic dragon-slayer (chap. 18). Although this accomplishment is not, strictly speaking, a condition for marriage set by the bride, he can understand the birds and learn the way to Brynhild’s mountain only by slaying Fafnir, eating his heart, and tasting his blood. Like the prince in the fairy tale “Sleeping Beauty”, he must awaken Brynhild from her enchanted sleep. This he does by cutting the armor from her body (chap. 21), an action recalling his recent penetration of Fafnir’s scaly skin. Upon awakening, Brynhild recognizes him immediately as Sigurd, the slayer of Fafnir, and they swear betrothal vows to each other” (*Volsunga saga*, 2019, ed. and trans. Grimstad, 27).

the portrayal of Sigurðr was influenced by – or, at least, found compatible with – Christian ideas and paralleled to Saint Michael the Archangel.<sup>11</sup> All these considerations are something I am not going to discuss further in this article, as they do not reveal much about Sigurðr’s own choices and values, which is in the focus of the present study. I do not aspire to reconstruct the original story of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani or its subsequent development, but aim rather to discuss differences between the versions of the story in the *Prose Edda* and in the *Saga of the Volsungs*, with a special focus on the way Reginn the smith manages to persuade Sigurðr that he has to kill Fáfnir, and on Sigurðr’s own choices and values.

An important point for this study is the fact that the story in the *Prose Edda* has a completely different frame narrative to that in the *Saga of the Volsungs*. In the *Prose Edda*, the frame narrative is a dialogue between Bragi and Ægir, who discuss various kennings and other poetical techniques. Admittedly, by the time the reader reaches the story of Sigurðr, Reginn and Fáfnir, the names of Bragi and Ægir are not mentioned any longer (they are mentioned at the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál*), but the general form of a dialogue between someone who wants to know more about kennings (Ægir) and his conversation partner who is an expert in such things (Bragi) is still easily recognizable. In the *Saga of the Volsungs*, by contrast, the story of Sigurðr, Reginn and Fáfnir is a part of a larger story spanning over several generations of the Volsung family, which Sigurðr is the most glorious representative of.

In the *Prose Edda*, the story about Andvari’s gold is told before the account of Reginn’s arrival at King Hjálprekr’s court, i.e., the narrative follows the chronology of events. In the *Saga of the Volsungs*, the story about Andvari’s gold is put into the mouth of Reginn, who tells it answering Sigurðr’s question about why he is so keen on urging Sigurðr to kill Fáfnir (in the *Prose Edda*, Sigurðr does not ask any such questions). Interestingly, the slaying of Fáfnir by Sigurðr is completely missing from one of the main manuscripts of the *Prose Edda*, known as *Uppsala Edda*, and it may be argued that the only reason the author of the *Prose Edda* needed this story in the first place is the background it provides for gold kennings like “lair or abode of Fáfnir”, “metal of Gnitaheiðr” or “burden

11 “The idea of transforming Sigurd into Michael is fairly straightforward; the hero, whether Sigurd, Christ, or Michael, overcomes the treacherous and evil enemy. [...] A further parallel could also be drawn between the worldly treasure won by Sigurd and the heavenly treasure promised to the baptized Christian” (Bradley, 2013, 101).

of Grani". Had it not been for these kennings, Snorri might have chosen to omit the tale about Sigurðr's main heroic deed completely – just as he chose to omit the tale about Sigurðr's revenge on Lyngvi and his brothers for having killed Sigmundur, Sigurðr's father. In the *Saga of the Volsungs*, by contrast, the revenge on Lyngvi is an essential part of the narrative. Actually, it may be argued that this part of the story is directly related to the real reason why Sigurðr agreed to kill Fáfnir. In the following paragraphs I will demonstrate that this is indeed the case.

Apart from a different frame narrative, the process of incitement from Reginn's side is completely different in the source texts. To be precise, there is no direct incitement to kill Fáfnir in the *Prose Edda* at all. The only sentence that explicitly tells the reader anything about urging from Reginn's side is this: "Reginn told him about where Fafnir was lying on the gold and incited him to go and try and get the gold" (Snorri Sturluson, 1987, trans. Faulkes, 101), "Reginn sagði honum til hvar Fáfnir lá á gullinu ok eggjaði hann at sókja gullit" (Snorri Sturluson, 1998 [2007], ed. Faulkes, 46). The text says "at sókja gullit", and not, for example, "at drepa Fáfni". Of course, Sigurðr – and the audience of the *Edda* – understand that facing and killing Fáfnir is ineluctable in order to acquire the gold, and we do remember Andvari's pronouncement, which must mean that Fáfnir, the current owner of the cursed treasure, is doomed to die. Consequently, the killing of the dragon does not come as a surprise. What is germane to our discussion about what values the hero adheres to is that the text of the *Prose Edda* gives no reason to argue that Sigurðr needed any additional motivation besides the prospect of acquiring the treasure per se.

This is very different from the much more elaborate and sophisticated process of incitement in the *Saga of the Volsungs*. Here, Reginn starts by asking Sigurðr how much wealth his father had had, who looks after this wealth now and whether he trusts the king completely. All these questions serve as a preparatory stage before telling Sigurðr more details about the possibility of gaining a treasure that would be his own, and that no one else would have any command of. Clearly, Reginn expects Sigurðr to show some signs of disappointment with his current situation, so that Reginn can tell him about Fáfnir and all the possibilities killing Fáfnir would open up for Sigurðr. However, Sigurðr does not show any signs of being interested in a further discussion on this topic. He does not need to change his status or his relationship with the king. Then Reginn tells Sigurðr he should ask the king to give him a

horse. Perhaps this is a kind of a test. Should Sigurðr be denied a horse, Reginn could use it as “proof” that the king cannot be trusted, and that Sigurðr definitely needs to do something in order to change his situation. Or perhaps this is just a new step in the preparatory process for the future slaying of the dragon: Reginn assumes Sigurðr will need a horse, and wants to make sure he has got one. Then Reginn, once more, starts talking about what a shame it is Sigurðr has too little wealth, but this time he says that he not only knows where a great treasure can be acquired, but also that “you (i.e., Sigurðr – UM) will gain great honour and fame if you can seize it” (*Saga of the Volsungs*, 2019, trans. Grimstad, 125), “þat sé sómi at sökja ok virðing, ef þú næðir” (*Völsunga saga*, 1965, ed. Finch, 24). Now Sigurðr seems to be interested in hearing more details. I do not find it plausible that Sigurðr’s interest is simply woken by the fact that Reginn talks about the wealth repeatedly. It is more likely that the decisive factor here is the mention of honour and glory (“sómi” and “virðing”), which rank higher in Sigurðr’s value system than wealth (cf. Leeming (2005 [2006]) who notices that what Reginn tried to incite in Sigurðr was pride and heroic spirit as opposed to avarice).<sup>12</sup> However, Sigurðr is not immediately tempted to try and kill Fáfnir when Reginn tells him it is he who guards the treasure. Sigurðr feels cautious, if not directly scared, because he has heard of Fáfnir: “that no one dares to face him because of his size and evil nature” (*Saga of the Volsungs*, 2019, trans. Grimstad, 125), “at engi þorir at koma á mót honum fyrir vaxtar sakir ok illsku” (*Völsunga saga*, 1965, ed. Finch, 24). Reginn concludes, correctly, that Sigurðr thinks more of honour than of wealth. Rather than insisting that Sigurðr needs the treasure guarded by Fáfnir, Reginn reproaches him for lacking the spirit of the Volsungs. After this, it is not long before Sigurðr eventually changes his mind. In my view, it can be read between the lines that, from now on, Sigurðr cannot help thinking of his

- 12 “As Sigurd began to grow to manhood, his foster father attempted to incite in him the pride and heroic spirit necessary to confront Fafnir; eventually Sigurd agreed to do so, on the condition that Regin forge for him a magnificent sword. Regin created two lesser blades that Sigurd shattered upon the anvil, but the third time Sigurd bade him use the two pieces of Sigmund’s broken blade, which Sigurd had obtained from his mother as his inheritance. This blade was named Gram and had come to Sigurd’s father, Sigmund, indirectly from Odin. When Regin refashioned it, it cut easily through the anvil. Sigurd now agreed to face Fafnir, once he had avenged his own father’s death. Once Sigurd had accomplished this vengeance he returned to Regin and prepared to make good on his oath” (Leeming, 2005 [2006]).

own ancestors, the Volsungs. Admittedly, some more steps are needed before the incitement from Reginn's side has proven successful, but a shift in Sigurðr's mind has already begun, and he has started making his own plans. Next, Sigurðr asks what the reasons for Reginn's zeal are. When Reginn has finished telling him the story about the death of Otr and Hreiðmarr, Sigurðr promises to kill Fáfnir. One significant difference between the two versions of the story is the identity of Hreiðmarr's murderer. In the *Prose Edda*, the two brothers kill their father together. In the *Saga of the Volsungs*, by contrast, Fáfnir is solely responsible for the murder of his father – or, at least, this is what Reginn wants Sigurðr to believe as patricide makes it clear that Fáfnir is an evil and dangerous creature, who deserves to be killed.<sup>13</sup> Importantly, the verb Reginn uses here is “myrði”, which is a term for the kind of murder that was considered a particularly heinous crime.

Reginn's tale proves to be an eye-opener for Sigurðr in more ways than one. To a certain degree, Sigurðr's resolution arises from his feeling of honour and justice, perhaps even empathy. Sigurðr says: “You have suffered great losses at the hands of your monstrous kinsmen” (*Saga of the Volsungs*, 2019, trans. Grimstad, 129), “Mikit hefir þú látit, ok stórrillir hafa þínir frændr verit” (*Völsunga saga*, 1965, ed. Finch, 26). Thus, Reginn has succeeded in persuading Sigurðr that he (Reginn) has been treated badly, and that Fáfnir is substantially evil, which provides valid reasons for killing the dragon. I agree, partly, with the following analysis:

[T]he reasoning behind Sigurðr's decision to slay the dragon is not related to his particular desire to do so, but is rather a result of his sense of obligation to Reginn, and perhaps a sense of empathy aroused in the youngster after hearing the tale of “the Otter's Ransom”. (McGillivray, 2015, 374)

However, the final and decisive motive for Sigurðr's determination is, in my view, his own thoughts about the importance of family and blood ties, and his duty as a Volsung and a son – Sigmundr's son. Sigurðr does not simply and unconditionally promise to kill Fáfnir. At first, he requires Reginn to forge a sword without equal.

13 In his recent book, Martin Arnold says that Reginn consciously lied to Sigurðr on this account: “That he omits to mention his part in the murder of his father is a fair illustration of Regin's deceptive nature” (Arnold, 2018, 99).

“Now use your skills as a smith to forge for me the best sword ever made, a weapon which will enable me to accomplish mighty deeds if I prove brave enough – that is, if you want me to kill that great dragon.”

“I am confident that I can make a sword with which you’ll be able to kill Fafnir”, says Regin. (*Saga of the Volsungs*, 2019, trans. Grimstad, 131)

“[...] Ger nú eitt sverð af þínum hagleik, þat er ekki sé jafngott gert ok ek mega vinna stórverk, ef hugr dugir, ef þú vilt at ek drepa þenna inn mikla dreka.”

Reginn segir: “Þat geri ek með trausti, ok muntu mega drepa Fáfni með því sverði”. (*Völsunga saga*, 1965, ed. Finch, 26f.)

This short dialogue and its placement right after Reginn’s tale about his own father having been murdered by Fáfniir is crucial for my argument. There are some blatant differences between the *Prose Edda* and the *Saga of the Volsungs* here. First of all, in the *Prose Edda*, Reginn simply makes a sword for Sigurðr to use. There is no reason to assume that Reginn does not fashion the sword on his own initiative. In the *Saga of Volsungs*, by contrast, it is Sigurðr who requests a sword, and he is very clear about the qualities of the sword he needs (“the best sword ever made”). Secondly, in the *Saga of the Volsungs* Sigurðr actually gives a hint about his plans, but it does not seem that Reginn takes this hint immediately. Sigurðr says that possessing such a sword will enable him to accomplish mighty deeds if he proves brave enough, before adding “if you want me to kill that great dragon”. It is quite clear that Sigurðr needs this sword for his own plans, and not exclusively for slaying Fáfniir. However, he wants Reginn to focus on Sigurðr’s promise to kill the dragon, because that is what Reginn finds important, and what makes sure Reginn will use all his skill and put all his effort into producing such a unique and excellent sword.

It may also be argued that the tale about Hreiðmarr and his sons, and about Andvari’s ring, was an eye-opener for Sigurðr in one more way. Before learning about Reginn’s background, Sigurðr did not actually realize what kind of smith Reginn was, but now he understands that Reginn must possess non-human, supernatural competences and powers related to smithery. Not every smith has brothers who can turn into otters and serpents! Obviously, there is something uncanny about Reginn’s family. Even if he is not called a dwarf in *Völsunga saga*, it is a

reasonable assumption that Reginn is not entirely human. That's exactly the kind of smith Sigurðr needs to produce a sword for him.<sup>14</sup>

When Reginn (at the third attempt) has fashioned a sword that Sigurðr finds good enough, he says he will face Fáfnir, but: “first there’s something else I need to do – avenge the death of my father” (*Saga of the Volsungs*, 2019, trans. Grimstad, 133), “annat fyrr, at hefna fǫður míns” (*Vǫlsunga saga*, 1965, ed. Finch, 27). In the battle against Hundingr’s sons, Sigurðr uses this particular sword, kills his enemies, thereby avenging his father, and wins a great victory.

King Lyngvi promptly has troops called up in every part of his realm. He rejects the idea of retreat and summons all warriors willing to fight for him; he and his brothers then move against Sigurd with a huge force. The encounter is bloody and a sight to be seen. [...] After the battle has raged on for a long time, Sigurd, the sword Gram in hand, fights his way alone past his war standards, shattering enemy lines. With both his arms drenched in blood to the shoulders he hacks down men and horses right and left; warriors fled wherever he advanced, for neither helmet nor coat of mail withstands him. No one recalled ever before having seen such a man. The battle went on and on with vast slaughter from repeated assaults on both sides. But the outcome was not what usually happens when the home

- 14 In the prose preface to *Reginismál*, it says that Reginn was “more skilful in making things than anyone else and a dwarf in height”, and “clever, fierce and knowledgeable about magic” (*The Lay of Regin*, 2014, trans. Larrington, 147); “hverjum manni hagari ok dvergr of vǫxt” and “vitr, grimmr ok fjǫlkunnigr” (*Reginismál*, 2014, eds. Jónas Kristjánsson & Vésteinn Ólason, 297). Even if it is not entirely clear whether Reginn in *Reginismál* is a “real” dwarf, or just looks like a dwarf, he is definitely not an ordinary, human smith. I find it likely that the author of the *Saga of the Volsungs* also wanted the audience to think of Reginn as a being who is either non-human or, perhaps, only partly human, and who is able to produce smithery comparable to such dwarf-made weapons as Óðinn’s spear or Þórr’s hammer. Hedeager (2011, 142), in her analysis of Sigurðr’s story according to the *Poetic Edda*, argues similarly that Reginn “is the only one who knows how to forge a sword with necessary (magical) power to kill Fáfnir” and that “[o]nly with this particular sword, named Gram, was Sigurd able to kill the dragon Fáfnir”. Reginn is no ordinary smith, and Gramr is no ordinary sword. In my analysis, it is Sigurðr who manipulates Reginn by making him concentrate on the prospect of having Fáfnir killed, while the real reason why Sigurðr needs this sword, is his desire to avenge Sigmundur’s death.

forces attack: their effort came to naught. The sons of Hunding lost countless numbers of men. Sigurd was in the vanguard of his troops when the sons of King Hunding attack him. Aiming a blow at King Lyngvi, Sigurd splits his helmet, skull, and mail-clad torso. With another stroke he slices Lyngvi's brother Hjørvard in two. He then struck down the remaining sons of Hunding and the better part of their army. (*Saga of the Volsungs*, 2019, trans. Grimstad, 135, 137)

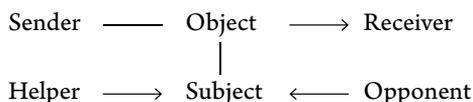
Lyngvi konungur lætr nú fara um allt sitt ríki herboð; vill eigi á flóttu leggjask, stefnir til sín öllum þeim mönnum, er honum vilja lið veita. Kemr nú á mót Sigurði með allmikinn her ok bróðr hans með honum. Teksk þar in harðasta orrosta með þeim. [...] Ok er orrostan hefir svá staðit mjök langa hríð, sókir Sigurðr fram um merkin ok hefir í hendi sverðit Gram. Hann høggr bæði menn ok hesta ok gengr í gegnum fylkingar ok hefir báðar hendr blóðgar til axlar, ok stókk undan fólk, þar sem hann fór, ok helzk hvárki við hjálmr né brynja, ok engi maðr þóttisk fyrr sét hafa þvílíkan mann. Þessi orrosta stóð lengi með miklu mannfalli ok ákafri sókn. Ferr þar, sem sjaldnar kann henda, þá er landherrinn sókir til, at þat kom fyrir ekki. Fell þar svá margt fyrir Hundings sonum, at engi maðr vissi töl á. Ok Sigurðr var framarla í fylkingu. Þá koma á mót honum synir Hundings konungs. Sigurðr høggr til Lyngva konungs ok klýfr hjálm hans ok höfuð ok brynjaðan búk, ok síðan høggr hann Hjørvard, bróður hans, sundr í tvá hluti, ok þá drap hann alla Hundings sonu, er eptir lifðu, ok mestan hluta liðs þeira. (*Völsunga saga*, 1965, ed. Finch, 29, 30)

In my interpretation, these episodes – Sigurðr's request that Reginn make a sword without equal, the forging of the sword and the subsequent battle against Hundingr's sons where the sword is used – and especially their placement between Sigurðr's promise to slay Fáfnir and the actual slaying are what explain the reasons why Sigurðr chose to promise to do what Reginn asked him about. I argue that the story told by Reginn about Hreiðmarr having been murdered by Fáfnir was not the crucial motivating factor per se, but that it triggered Sigurðr's thoughts about his own family. The fact that Fáfnir's crime was a patricide made Sigurðr think about those who had killed his own father, Sigmundur. After having heard Reginn's tale, Sigurðr's "main desire is to avenge his father" (Ármann Jakobsson, 2010, 41). In order to be able to perform his vengeance, Sigurðr needed a suitable weapon – not just a good sword, but *the*

sword.<sup>15</sup> This means Sigurðr needed to make sure Reginn produced such a sword, putting all his effort into forging it. Therefore Sigurðr needed Reginn to believe he was making the weapon that was to give Fáfnir a deadly blow; it was killing Fáfnir that Reginn found extremely important. It was not a lie that Sigurðr was to use this sword to slay Fáfnir, because he eventually did; but Sigurðr had, additionally, his own agenda, namely to kill Lyngvi and the others who were responsible for the death of Sigmundur, Sigurðr's father. Without Gramr, Sigurðr would hardly have had a chance to realize his plan, and without Reginn, he would not have got Gramr. This is why Sigurðr agreed to kill Fáfnir.<sup>16</sup>

*Sigurðr, Reginn and the actantial model.* In order to make the main points of my argument clearer, I will now relate my analysis to the actantial model of Algirdas Julien Greimas.

- 15 The significance of this particular sword, and weapons generally, has recently been discussed in detail by Agneta Ney in her book devoted to various versions of the story of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani (Ney, 2017, 112–118). Especially relevant for my argument are the following ideas: “Rätten att bära vapen skiljer den vuxne mannen från pojken, men också den frie mannen från trälen” (Ney, 2017, 114), “Mansidealet på medeltiden handlar generellt om heder och ära [...] Synnerligen ärofyllt var innehav av ett gott vapen som ägaren fått i gåva, ärvt eller tagit som krigsbyte” (Ney, 2017, 116) and “Svärdet Gram kan i *Völsunga saga* ses som symbol för manlighet och krigarideal: i fadershämnden, i drakdödandet [...]” (Ney, 2017, 117).
- 16 At first glance, the following may seem similar to my analysis: “As Sigurd gets older, he increasingly sees avenging the death of his father as his fundamental duty, but Regin has other ideas. Rightly equipped, thinks Regin, Sigurd is just the one who could overcome his transmogrified brother and so provide him personally with the wealth to which he feels he is entitled. It is to this end that he tells Sigurd of the origin of the gold and just where Fáfnir can be found. [...] Persuaded that he should tackle Fáfnir after he has fulfilled his familial duty, Sigurd has Regin forge him a sword [...]” (Arnold, 2018, 99). However, there are at least three significant differences between Martin Arnold's interpretation and mine. First, I claim that it was Reginn himself who unintentionally made Sigurðr think about his duty to avenge the death of his father. This happened while Reginn was telling Sigurðr about Hreiðmarr's death and Fáfnir's crime. Second, the text of the *Saga of the Volsungs* tells us explicitly that to equip Sigurðr rightly was not Reginn's, but Sigurðr's own idea and initiative. Third, Reginn did not persuade Sigurðr to tackle Fáfnir *after having fulfilled his familial duty*. On the contrary, that Sigurðr had his own plans related to the sword Gramr, came as a rather irritating surprise to Reginn. What Reginn had expected and desired, was that Sigurðr would use the sword to kill Fáfnir soon after having received it.



**Figure 1.** The actantial model (based on Greimas, 1983, 207)

This model is based on the following prototypical scenario:

Someone (the sender) sends another (the subject) to perform a series of actions in order to obtain something of value (the object). The subject will be helped by someone (the helper) and obstructed by someone (the opponent). From the acquisition of the object someone will benefit (the receiver). (Marsen, 2006, 69)

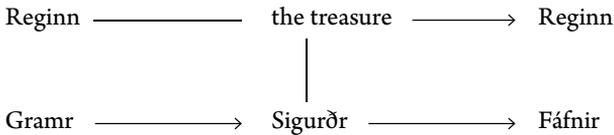
The six actants are divided into three pairs of contraries or oppositions: *sender vs. receiver*, *subject vs. object* and *helper vs. opponent*. Between the members of each pair there is a special type of relations.<sup>17</sup> In the actantial model, the relation between the sender and the receiver is described as the *axis of knowledge* or *transmission*. According to Nastopka (2005), the sender is the one who makes actions be performed (*fait faire*), who makes the subject believe (*fait croire*), be willing to (*fait vouloir*), know (*fait savoir*), be obliged to (*fait devoir*) and be able to (*fait pouvoir*) act and perform their deeds.<sup>18</sup> The relation between the subject and the object

<sup>17</sup> “In his theory of narrative structure, Greimas conceived of three pairs of contraries: sender vs. receiver; subject vs. object; and helper vs. opponent. He argued that these contraries generate three types of relations, operating as intersecting narrative axes: knowledge, constituted by communication between sender and receiver; desire, which is felt by the subject for the object; and power, realised through the agonistic struggle experienced by the subject to acquire or achieve the object of desire, a goal facilitated by the helper and hindered by the opponent” (Austin, 2018, 156). “This is well established in Greimas’s (1983) actantial model with six metaphorical actors (actants), which form the three pairs or oppositions: Subject versus Object, Sender versus Receiver, and Helper versus Opponent [ ... ]. These oppositions generate three types of relations: desire, which is felt by the subject for the object; knowledge, constituted by communication between sender and receiver; and power, realised through the agonistic struggle between helper and opponent” (Kotlík, 2018, 38).

<sup>18</sup> “Pagrindinis lėmėjas apibūdinantis modalumas – daryti, kad būtų daroma (*faire faire*). Lėmėjas yra tas, kuris priverčia (paskatina) subjektą tikėti (*fait croire*), norėti (*fait vouloir*), žinoti (*fait savoir*), kuris įteigia privalėjimą (*fait devoir*), suteikia galėjimą (*fait pouvoir*)” (Nastopka, 2005, 6).

is described as the *axis of desire*, while the relation between the helper and the opponent, who “either assist or hinder the subject in his quest for the object” (Abrantes, 2010, 76), is described as the *axis of power*. In other words, “[a]n actant is [...] an element in a relation” (Übersfeld, 1999, 45) or “a class of ‘characters’ (in the broadest meaning of the term) which in their different manifestations in a narrative have the same function” (Rulewicz, 1995) rather than a particular person or a character. This means that the same character may correspond to more actants than one and, conversely, that more characters than one may correspond to the same actant. Furthermore, a character “may simultaneously or successively assume different actantial functions” (Rulewicz, 1995). Also, an actant may be instantiated with an inanimate object or an abstraction and, finally, an actant may or may not be present in a particular narrative.

We turn now to the *Prose Edda* version of the story. Here it seems to be clear that Reginn is both the sender and the receiver, Sigurðr is the subject, the treasure is the object, the sword Gramr is the helper and Fáfnir is the opponent. It is Reginn who incites Sigurðr to try and get the treasure (and, by implication, to kill Fáfnir). Also, Reginn provides Sigurðr with Gramr, thereby making him both willing to and able to perform the slaying of the dragon. Furthermore, Reginn has no intention to share the treasure with Sigurðr or anyone else, therefore it is Reginn himself who will benefit from the acquisition of the treasure.



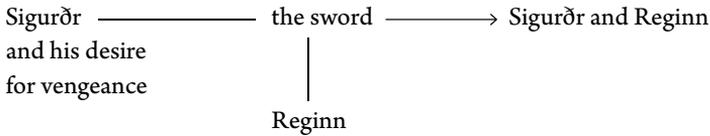
**Figure 2.** The actants in the *Prose Edda* version of the narrative

In the *Saga of the Volsungs*, the narrative has to be divided into several parts in order to demonstrate how the characters become different actants in each part.

a) At first, Reginn tries to initiate communication that would lead to entering into a contract where Reginn would assume the role as the sender, but Sigurðr is not interested in further communication. Thus, no contract, and no actants.

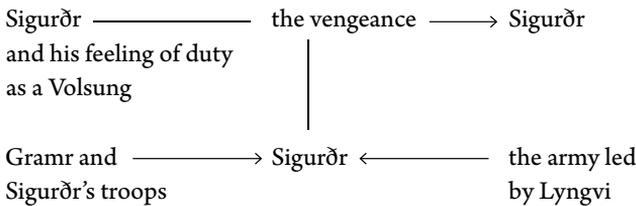
b) When Sigurðr has changed his mind, he allows Reginn to believe it is still Reginn who is pulling the strings, while in reality Sigurðr pursues

his own goals where the object is not the treasure, but the powerful sword. By promising to kill Fáfnir, Sigurðr makes Reginn be willing to produce the sword that Sigurðr needs. Thus, it is Sigurðr who is the real sender, while Reginn is the subject. It is also Sigurðr who is the (primary) receiver because it is he who will benefit from acquiring the sword, which will enable him to pursue his further goals. At the same time, Reginn is a (secondary) receiver, as Sigurðr does promise to kill Fáfnir using the same sword, so Reginn will also benefit from it, but only after Sigurðr has achieved his own goals.



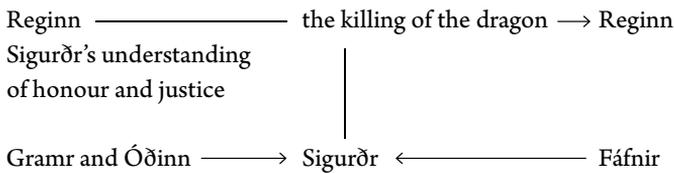
**Figure 3.** The actants in the part of the story related to Gramr in the *Saga of the Volsungs*

c) Sigurðr uses the sword as a means to achieve this main goal, namely to avenge his father. Of course, Sigurðr needs the help of his troops, as Lyngvi also has a great army. It is a battle, not a duel. Nevertheless, it is Sigurðr himself who kills Lyngvi, Hjørvarðr and all the other sons of Hundingr, – and the weapon Sigurðr uses is Gramr. Sigurðr’s feeling of duty as a Volsung, as Sigmundr’s son, is closely related to, or even synonymous with, his understanding of honour and justice, and makes the vengeance not only desirable but also incumbent on him. Consequently, Sigurðr is the one who makes actions be performed (the sender), who performs the actions (the subject), and who benefits from them (the receiver).



**Figure 4.** The actants in the part of the story related to vengeance on Hundingr’s sons

d) The plot turns back to Fáfnir and the treasure. Sigurðr has promised Reginn he would kill Fáfnir, and now it is time for the promise to be fulfilled. Thus, Sigurðr is obliged to perform the slaying of the dragon because Reginn has urged him to do so and because his own understanding of honour and justice makes him keep his word. Additionally, Sigurðr seems to have genuinely believed that Reginn had suffered injustice from Fáfnir, and that it was morally right to kill the evil dragon. In contrast to the *Prose Edda*, one more character makes an appearance in this episode, namely Óðinn, who gives Sigurðr a life-saving piece of advice on how to kill Fáfnir without drowning in the dragon's blood.



**Figure 5.** The actants in the part of the story related to the killing of the dragon in the *Saga of the Volsungs*

According to this analysis, Reginn is indeed the sender, but only in some parts of the narrative. This is completely in agreement with what the text of the *Saga of the Volsungs* explicitly says. Fáfnir himself uses wording that identifies Reginn as being the one who has caused the killing of Fáfnir.

[...] Fafnir spoke: “*It’s my brother Regin who is the cause of my death, but it makes me laugh that he will also be the cause of your death and get just what he wanted.*” (*The Saga of the Volsungs*, 2019, trans. Grimstad, 141; emphasis added)

[...] mælti Fáfnir: “*Reginn, bróðir minn, veldr mínum dauða, ok þat hlógir mik er hann veldr ok þínum dauða, ok ferr þá sem hann vildi.*” (*Völsunga saga*, 1965, ed. Finch, 32; emphasis added)

Also, Reginn admits his own role in what happened:

After this, Regin came to Sigurd and said, “Hail, my lord. Killing Fafnir is a proud victory for you, for until now there was no one courageous

enough to lie in wait for the dragon. This brave deed of yours will be remembered until the end of time”. Regin now stands gazing at the ground for a long while. Then he said with a heavy heart, “You have killed my brother, but *I am scarcely free of responsibility in this matter*”. (*The Saga of the Volsungs*, 2019, trans. Grimstad, 143; emphasis added)

Eptir þetta kom Reginn til Sigurðar ok mælti: “Heill, herra minn; mikinn sigr hefir þú unnit, er þú hefir drepit Fáfni, er engi varð fyrr svá djarfr, at á hans götu þorði sitja, ok þetta fremdarverk mun uppi, meðan veröldin stendr”. Nú stendr Reginn ok sér niðr í jörðina langa hríð. Ok þegar eptir þetta mælti hann af miklum móði: “Bróður minn hefir þú drepit, ok *varla má ek þessa verks saklauss vera*”. (*Völsunga saga*, 1965, ed. Finch, 33; emphasis added)

Thus, Reginn is identified by the participants of the narrative as the one who has made Sigurðr perform his deed, which corresponds to the role of the sender in the actantial model. Reginn persuaded Sigurðr that he not only had reasons to *want* to kill Fáfni, but also that it was *a morally right thing* to do, and made him be *obliged* to actually perform the slaying. At the same time, Sigurðr downgrades the importance of Reginn’s incitement, and identifies himself as the one who deliberately chose to kill Fáfni.

“Who provoked you to this deed? And why did you let yourself be provoked?” responds Fafnir. “Hadn’t you heard how everyone trembles in fear of me and my helmet of terror? But, you keen-eyed boy, you had a gallant father.”

“*My fearless heart urged me on*”, replies Sigurd. “Help came from this strong hand and from this sharp sword that you felt. Those who are weaklings in their youth rarely become tough old warriors.” (*The Saga of the Volsungs*, 2019, trans. Grimstad, 139; emphasis added)

Fáfni svarar: “Hverr eggjaði þik þessa verks, eða hvi léttu at eggjask? Hafðir þú eigi frétt þatt, hversu allt fólk er hrætt við mik ok við minn ægishjálms? Inn fráneygi sveinn, þú áttir feðr snarpan”.

Sigurðr svarar: “*Til þessa hvatti mik inn harði hugr*, ok stoðaði til at gert yrði þessi in sterka hönd ok þetta it snarpa sverð, er nú kenndir þú, ok fárr er gamall harðr ef hann er í bernsku blautr”. (*Völsunga saga*, 1965, ed. Finch, 31; emphasis added)

This statement from Sigurðr's side is not an attempt to conceal the true identity of the person responsible for the slaying of the dragon, but a revelation of his own role in the course of events. Importantly, Fáfnir mentions Sigurðr's father in the above quotation ("you had a gallant father", "þú áttir feðr snarpan"), which may indicate that Fáfnir, wise as he is, actually understands what Sigurðr's secret plan and real motivation has been.

### 3. Conclusion

This study has shown that there are significant differences between the story of Fáfnir's slaying by Sigurðr in the *Prose Edda* and the *Saga of the Volsungs*, not only in terms of how the story is structured in the two sources and how detailed it is, but also in terms of what kind of image of Sigurðr emerges from the narrative.

In the *Prose Edda*, there is little to suggest that Sigurðr had any elevated motives to kill the dragon. The greed for gold seems to have been a sufficient motivating factor.

In the *Saga of the Volsungs*, Sigurðr may be contrasted with other characters whose actions are motivated by greed for gold. Analysing the story of Sigurðr as it is known from the lays of the *Poetic Edda*, Edgar Haimlerl wrote:

Narrative events here are without exception governed by avarice. Characterized by an insatiable greed for treasure, Loki demands the ring even after Andvari has already paid his ransom (*Rm* 4pr). Nor is Odin free of greed. Having put the ring Andvaranaut on his finger (*Rm* spr4), he has to take it off again at Hreiðmarr's demand. Like the gods, so too the heroes are governed by greed: Hreiðmarr values possession of the hoard more highly than a long life; neither does he care about curse or threats ("hót þín hroedomc ecci lyf" *Rm* 9). Driven by greed, Fáfnir murders his own father. Hreiðmarr seems to identify his son's motivation: "Mart er, þat er þörf þíar" [Need makes men do many things] (*Rm* 10). The fact that their actions are solely motivated by greed makes these heroes seem more questionable. (Haimlerl, 2013, 34<sup>19</sup>)

19 Admittedly, it may be argued that Reginn's motivation to have Fáfnir killed could have been his desire to avenge the killing of Hreiðmarr by Fáfnir: "Reginn incites Sigurðr to kill his brother Fáfnir, and it is ambiguous whether his motivation is to avenge his father or greed for gold" (Clark, 2012, 81).

This characterization is valid with respect to Loki, Óðinn, Hreiðmarr and Fáfnir in the *Saga of the Volsungs* as well. Unless we assume that these characters had no control of their actions because of Andvari's curse, we can argue that they were all driven by avarice. Sigurðr, however, is different. The turning point in his communication with Reginn is the mention of honour and glory, and especially the tale about the injustice Reginn has suffered from Fáfnir and about the murder of Hreiðmarr by Fáfnir, which makes Sigurðr think about his own father. Therefore, I disagree with statements such as “[i]t is for this gold that Sigurd kills Fáfnir, at the request of the dragon's surviving brother, Regin. [...] The fight with Fáfnir is specifically motivated by greed for treasure; Regin sends Sigurd to kill Fáfnir in order to retrieve the gold that turned his brother into a dragon in the first place” (Symons, 2015, 81),<sup>20</sup> “Siegfried slays the dragon [...] and then slays Fáfnir's brother, Reginn, also for the treasure” (Lecouteux, 2018, 52) or “Sigurd wanted to win renown and glory as much as he lusted for gold, and he gained them all” (Stein, 1968, 179). By contrast, I agree with the following statement: “Reginn's covert aim is to use the young hero to retrieve the treasure guarded by Reginn's brother, Fáfnir the dragon. Sigurðr has his own set of priorities, however” (Larrington, 2017, 136). This study has revealed what kind of priorities Sigurðr has, and how exactly these priorities are related to Sigurðr's decision to kill Fáfnir. The main motivating factor for Sigurðr to kill Fáfnir in the *Saga of the Volsungs* is his desire to avenge his own father. Reginn's tale about his father Hreiðmarr and his brothers Otr and Fáfnir reminded Sigurðr about his own family, and made him think about his duty as a son and a Volsung. In order to be able to fight Lyngvi and his brothers, Sigurðr needed a sword without equal, so he promised to do what Reginn had asked him about, namely to kill Fáfnir, in exchange for Gramr, the sword a random smith could not have forged or repaired. Only Reginn, a smith with supernatural, dwarf-like competences and powers, was able to do this. It also seems that Sigurðr genuinely believed

- 20 It may be appropriate to point out that this particular quotation refers specifically to the story of Sigurðr and Fáfnir according to the *Saga of the Volsungs*. Had it been a reference to the *Prose Edda* version of the story, I would have to agree with the author. Now, I only agree that Reginn's motivation was avarice; but Sigurðr was much more than a mere instrument used by Reginn. Sigurðr made his own choices and had his own plans. Ultimately, it was Sigurðr who successfully manipulated Reginn the smith rather than being manipulated by him, and slaying the dragon was a part of this manipulation.

Reginn had suffered injustice from Fáfnir, so he found it morally right to kill the dragon. Additionally, Fáfnir's crime – patricide – must have seemed particularly disgusting to Sigurðr, whose own father had been killed by enemies. Thus, Sigurðr of the *Saga of the Volsungs* was not motivated by avarice, but by much more noble feelings of duty, honour and justice; first and foremost, he felt he needed to avenge his own father and, additionally, avenging Reginn's loss was compatible with his plans. Certainly, the prospect of acquiring a hoard of gold may have contributed to his resolution, but it was not the main motivating factor.

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