

GLANZ UND GRAVUR

THE POETIC EDDA

Atlakviða

The Lay of Atli

Old Norse · English – H. A. Bellows (1923)

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GLANZ & GRAVUR
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Atli invites the brothers Gunnar and Högni in order to extort the hoard of the Niflungs from them. Both die unbowed, and Gudrun takes terrible revenge on her husband. It is regarded as one of the oldest heroic poems. Preserved in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda (GKS 2365 4to, c. 1270). This reading edition sets the Old Norse text and the English translation side by side, stanza by stanza; the German version is on the German edition of this page. Old Norse text after Guðni Jónsson's edition (Eddukvæði), digitised by heimskringla.no. German after Karl Simrock, Die Edda (1851; 6th ed. 1876, Wikisource). English after Henry Adams Bellows, The Poetic Edda (1923). All are in the public domain.

	Old Norse	English – H. A. Bellows (1923)
1	*Atli sendi* *ár til Gunnars* *kunnan segg at ríða,* *Knéfröðr var sá heitinn;* *at görðum kom hann Gjúka* *ok at Gunnars Höllu,* *bekkjum aringreypum* *ok at bjóri svásum.*	Atli sent of old to Gunnar A keen-witted rider, Knefröth did men call him; To Gjuki's home came he and to Gunnar's dwelling, With benches round the hearth, and to the beer so sweet.
2	*Drukku þar dróttmegir,* *en dyljendr þögðu,* *vín í valhöllu,* *vreiði sásk þeir Húna;* *kallaði þá Knéfröðr* *kaldri röddu,* *seggr inn suðræni* *sat hann á bekk háum:*	Then the followers, hiding their falseness, all drank Their wine in the war-hall, of the Huns' wrath wary; And Knefröth spake loudly, his words were crafty, The hero from the south, on the high bench sitting:
3	*"Atli mik hingat sendi* *ríða erendi* *mar inum mélgreypa* *myrkvið inn ókunna,* *at biðja yðr, Gunnarr,* *at it á bekk kæmið* *með hjalmum aringreypum* *at sækja heim Atla.*	“Now Atli has sent me his errand to ride, On my bit-champing steed through Myrkwood the secret, To bid You, Gunnar, to his benches to come, With helms round the hearth, and Atli's home seek.
4	*Skjöldu kneguð þar velja* *ok skafna aska,* *hjalma gullroðna* *ok Húna mengi,* *silfrgyllt söðulklæði,* *serki valrauða,* *dafar darraðar,* *drösla mélgreypa.*	Shields shall ye choose there, and shafts made of ash-wood, Gold-adorned helmets, and slaves out of Hunland, Silver-gilt saddle-cloths, shirts of bright scarlet, With lances and spears too, and bit-champing steeds.

5

Völl lézk ykkr ok mundu gefa
víðrar Gnitaheiðar,
af geiri gjallanda
ok af gylltum stöfnum,
stórar meiðmar
ok staði Danpar,
hrís þat it mæra,
er meðr Myrkvið kalla."

The field shall be given you of wide Gnitaheith,
With loud-ringing lances, and stems gold-o'er-laid,
Treasures full huge, and the home of Danp,
And the mighty forest that Myrkwood is called."

6

Höfði vatt þá Gunnarr
ok Högna til sagði:
"Hvat ræðr þú okkr, seggr inn æri,
alls vit slíkt heyrum?
Gull vissa ek ekki
á Gnitaheiði,
þat er vit ættim-a
annat slíkt.

His head turned Gunnar, and to Hogni he said:
"What thy counsel, young hero, when such things we hear?
No gold do I know on Gnitaheith lying
So fair that other its equal we have not.

7

Sjau eigum vit salhús
sverða full,
hverju eru þeira
hjölt ór gulli;
minn veit ek mar beztan,
en mæki hvassastan,
boga bekksæma,
en brynjur ór gulli,
hjalm ok skjöld hvítastan
kominn ór höll Kíars,
einn er minn betri
en sé allra Húna."

We have seven halls, each of swords is full,
[And all of gold is the hilt of each;]
My steed is the swiftest, my sword is sharpest,
My bows adorn benches, my byrnies are golden,
My helm is the brightest that came from Kjar's hall,
[Mine own is better than all the Huns' treasure.]"

8

"Hvat hyggr þú brúði bendu,
þá er hon okkr baug sendi,
varinn váðum heiðingja?
Hygg ek, at hon vörnuð byði.
Hár fann ek heiðingja
riðit í hring rauðum,
ylfskr er vegr okkarr
at ríða erendi."

"What seeks she to say, that she sends us a ring,
Woven with a wolf's hair? methinks it gives warning;
In the red ring a hair of the heath-dweller found I,
Wolf-like shall our road be if we ride on this journey."

9

Niðjar hvöttu Gunnar
né náungr annarr,
rýnendr né ráðendr
né þeir er ríkir váru;
kvaddi þá Gunnarr,
sem konungr skyldi,
mærr í mjöðranni
af móði stórum:

Not eager were his comrades, nor the men of his kin,
The wise nor the wary, nor the warriors bold.
But Gunnar spake forth as befitted a king,
Noble in the beer-hall, and bitter his scorn:

10

"Rístu nú, Fjörnir,
láttu á flet vaða
greppa gullskálir
með gumna höndum.

“Stand forth now, Fjornir! and hither on the floor
The beakers all golden shalt thou bring to the warriors.

11

Ulfr mun ráða
arfi Niflunga,
gamlir, gránvarðir,
ef Gunnars missir,
birnir blakkfjallir
bíta þreftönnum,
gamna greystóði,
ef Gunnarr né kemr-at."

The wolves then shall rule the wealth of the Niflungs,
Wolves aged and grey-hued, if Gunnar is lost,
And black-coated bears with rending teeth bite,
And make glad the dogs, if Gunnar returns not.”

12

Leiddu landrögni
lýðar óneisir,
grátendr gunnhvata
ór garði húna.
Þá kvað þat inn æri
erfivörþr Högna:
"Heilir farið nú ok horskir,
hvars ykkr hugr teygir!"

A following gallant fared forth with the ruler,
Yet they wept as their home with the hero they left;
And the little heir of Hogni called loudly:
“Go safe now, ye wise ones, wherever ye will!”

13

Fetum létu fræknir
um fjöll at þyrja
mari ina mélgreypu
Myrkvið inn ókunna;
hristisk öll Húnmörk
þar er harðmóðgir fóru,
ráku þeir vandstyggva
völlu algræna.

Then let the bold heroes their bit-champing horses
On the mountains gallop, and through Myrkwood the secret;
All Hunland was shaken where the hard-souled ones rode,
On the whip-fearers fared they through fields that were green.

14

Land sáu þeir Atla
ok liðskjalfar djúpa,
Bikka greppar standa
á borg inni háu,
sal of suðrþjóðum
sleginn sessmeiðum,
bundnum röndum,
bleikum skjöldum,
dafar darraðar;
en þar drakk Atli
vín í valhöllu,
verðir sátu úti
at varða þeim Gunnari,
af þeir hér vitja kvæmi
með geiri gjallanda
at vekja gram hildi.

Then they saw Atli's halls, and his watch-towers high,
On the walls so lofty stood the warriors of Buthli;
The hall of the southrons with seats was surrounded,
With targets bound and shields full bright.
Mid weapons and lances did Atli his wine
In the war-hall drink, without were his watchmen,
For Gunnar they waited, if forth he should go,
With their ringing spears they would fight with the ruler.

15

Systir fann þeira snemst,
at þeir í sal kómu
bræðr hennar báðir, -
bjóri var hon lítt drukkin:
"Ráðinn ertu nú, Gunnarr.
Hvat muntu, ríkr, vinna
við Húna harmbrögðum?
Höll gakk þú ór snemma.

This their sister saw, as soon as her brothers
Had entered the hall,– little ale had she drunk:
“Betrayed art thou, Gunnar! what guard hast thou, hero,
'Gainst the plots of the Huns? from the hall flee swiftly!

16

Betr hefðir þú, bróðir,
at þú í brynju færir,
sem hjalmum aringreypum
at séa heim Atla,
sætir þú í söðlum
sólheiða daga,
nái nauðfölva
létir nornir gráta,
Húna skjaldmeyjar
herfi kanna,
en Atla sjalfan
létir þú í ormgarð koma,
nú er sá ormgarðr
ykkr of folginn."

Brother, 'twere far better to have come in byrnie,
With thy household helmed, to see Atli's home,
And to sit in the saddle all day 'neath the sun,
[That the sword-norns might weep for the death-pale warriors,
And the Hunnish shield-maids might shun not the sword,]
And send Atli himself to the den of the snakes;
[Now the den of the snakes for thee is destined.]”

17

"Seinat er nú, systir,
at samna Niflungum;
langt er at leita
lýða sinnis til,
ef rosmufjöll Rínar
rekka óneissa."

“Too late is it, sister, to summon the Niflungs,
Long is it to come to the throng of our comrades,
The heroes gallant, from the hills of the Rhine.”

18

Fengu þeir Gunnar
ok í fjötur settu
vin Borgunda
ok bundu fastla.

Then Gunnar they seized, and they set him in chains,
The Burgundians' king, and fast they bound him.

19

Sjau hjó Högni
sverði hvössu,
en inum átta
hratt hann í eld heitan;
svá skal frækn
fjándum verjask
[sem] Högni varði
hendr [sínar].

Hogni slew seven with sword so keen,
And an eighth he flung in the fire hot;
A hero should fight with his foemen thus,
As Hogni strove in Gunnar's behalf.

20

-- -- Gunnars;
frágu fræknan,
ef fjör vildi,
gotna þjóðann,
gulli kaupa.

The leader they asked if his life he fain
With gold would buy, the king of the Goths.

21

"Hjarta skal mér Högna
í hendi liggja
blóðugt, ór brjósti
skorit baldriða
saxi slíðrbeitu,
syni þjóðans."

“First the heart of Hogni shall ye lay in my hands,
All bloody from the breast of the bold one cut
With keen-biting sword, from the son of the king.”

22

Skáru þeir hjarta
Hjalla ór brjósti
blóðugt ok á bjóð lögðu
ok báru þat fyr Gunnar.

They cut out the heart from the breast of Hjalli,
On a platter they bore it, and brought it to Gunnar.

23

Þá kvað þat Gunnarr,
gumna dróttinn:
"Hér hefi ek hjarta
Hjalla ins blauða,
ólíkt hjarta
Högna ins frækna,
er mjök bifask,
er á bjóði liggr,
bifðisk halfu meir,
er í brjósti lá."

Then Gunnar spake forth, the lord of the folk:
“Here have I the heart of Hjalli the craven,
Unlike to the heart of Hogni the valiant,
For it trembles still as it stands on the platter;
Twice more did it tremble in the breast of the man.”

24

Hló þá Högni,
er til hjarta skáru
kvikvan kumblasmið,
klökkva hann sízt hugði;
blóðugt þat á bjóð lögðu
ok báru fyr Gunnar.

Then Hogni laughed when they cut out the heart
Of the living helm-hammerer; tears he had not.
On a platter they bore it, and brought it to Gunnar.

25

Mærr kvað þat Gunnarr
geirniflungr:
"Hér hefi ek hjarta
Högna ins frækna,
ólíkt hjarta
Hjalla ins blauða,
er lítt bifask,
er á bjóði liggr,
bifðisk svági mjök,
þá er í brjósti lá.

Then Gunnar spake forth, the spear of the Niflungs:
“Here have I the heart of Hogni the valiant,
Unlike to the heart of Hjalli the craven,
Little it trembles as it lies on the platter,
Still less did it tremble when it lay in his breast.

26

Svá skaltu, Atli,
augum fjarri,
sem munt
menjum verða;
er und einum mér
öll of folgin
hodd Niflunga,
lifir-a nú Högni.

So distant, Atli, from all men's eyes,
Shalt thou be as thou from the gold.
To no one save me is the secret known
Of the Niflungs' hoard, now Hogni is dead;

27

Ey var mér týja,
meðan vit tveir lifðum,
nú er mér engi,
er ek einn lifik.
Rín skal ráða
rógmalmi skatna,
svinn, áskunna
arfi Niflunga,
- í veltanda vatni
lýsask valbaugar, -
heldr en á höndum gull
skíni Húna börnum."

Of old there were two, while we twain were alive,
Now is none but I, for I only am living.
The swift Rhine shall hold the strife-gold of heroes,
That once was the gods', the wealth of the Niflungs,
In the depths of the waters the death-rings shall glitter,
And not shine on the hands of the Hunnish men."

28

"Ýkvið ér hvélvögnum,
haftr er nú í böndum."

"Ye shall bring the wagon, for now is he bound."

29

Atli inn ríki
reið Glaum mönum,
sleginn rógþornum,
sifjungr þeira.
-- -- --
Guðrún sigtífa,
varnaði við tárum,
vaðin í þyshöllu.

On the long-maned Glaum rode Atli the great,
About him were warriors
But Guthrun, akin to the gods of slaughter,
Yielded not to her tears in the hall of tumult.

30

"Svá gangi þér, Atli,
sem þú við Gunnar áttir
eiða oft of svarða
ok ár of nefnda,
at sól inni suðrhöllu
ok at Sigtýs bergi,
hölkvi hvílbeðjar
ok at hringi Ullar."
Ok meir þaðan
menvörð bituls
dolgrögni dró
til dauðs skokkr.

"It shall go with thee, Atli, as with Gunnar thou heldest
The oaths ofttimes sworn, and of old made firm,
By the sun in the south, by Sigtyr's mountain,
By the horse of the rest-bed, and the ring of Ull."
Then the champer of bits drew the chieftain great,
The gold-guarder, down to the place of death.

31

Lifanda gram
lagði í garð,
þan er skriðinn var,
skatna mengi,
innan ormum,
en einn Gunnarr
heiftmóðr hörpu
hendi kníði,
glumðu strengir;
svá skal gulli
frækn hringdrifi
við fira halda.

By the warriors' host was the living hero
Cast in the den where crawling about
Within were serpents, but soon did Gunnar
With his hand in wrath on the harp-strings smite;
The strings resounded,— so shall a hero,
A ring-breaker, gold from his enemies guard.

32

Atli lét
lands síns á vit
jó eyrskáan
aftr frá morði;
dynr var í garði,
dröslum of þrungit,
vápnsöngr virða,
váru af heiði komnir.

Then Atli rode on his earth-treading steed,
Seeking his home, from the slaughter-place;
There was clatter of hoofs of the steeds in the court,
And the clashing of arms as they came from the field.

33

Út gekk þá Guðrún
Atla í gögn
með gylltum kálki
at reifa gjöld rögnis:
"Þiggja knáttu, þengill,
í þinni höllu
glaðr at Guðrúnu
gnadda niflfarna."

Out then came Guthrun to meeting with Atli,
With a golden beaker as gift to the monarch:
“Thou mayst eat now, chieftain, within thy dwelling,
Blithely with Guthrun young beasts fresh slaughtered.”

34

Umðu ölskálir
Atla vínhöfgar,
þá er í höll saman
Húnar tölðusk,
gumar gransíðir,
gengu inn hvatir.

The wine-heavy ale-cups of Atli resounded,
When there in the hall the Hunnish youths clamored,
And the warriors bearded, the brave ones, entered.

35

Skævaði þá in skírleita
-- -- --
veigar þeim at bera,
afkár dís jöfrum
ok ölkrásir valði
nauðug neffölum,
en níð sagði Atla:

Then in came the shining one,
and drink she bore them;
Unwilling and bitter brought she food to the warrior,
Till in scorn to the white-faced Atli did she speak:

36

"Sona hefir þinna,
sverða deilir,
hjörtu hrædreyrug
við hunang of tuggin;
melta knáttu, móðugr,
manna valbráðir,
eta at ölkrásum
ok í öndugi at senda.

“Thou giver of swords, of thy sons the hearts
All heavy with blood in honey thou hast eaten;
Thou shalt stomach, thou hero, the flesh of the slain,
To eat at thy feast, and to send to thy followers.

37

Kallar-a þú síðan
til knéa þinna
Erp né Eitil,
ölreifa tvá;
sér-a-ðu síðan
í seti miðju
gulls miðlendr
geira skefta,
manar meita
né mara keyra."

Thou shalt never call to thy knees again
Erp or Eitil, when merry with ale;
Thou shalt never see in their seats again
The sharers of gold their lances shaping,
[Clipping the manes or minding their steeds.]”

38

Ymr varð á bekkjum,
afkárr söngr virða,
gnýr und guðvefjum,
grétu börn Húna;
nema ein Guðrún,
er hon æva grét
bræðr sína berharða
ok buri svása,
unga, ófróða,
þá er hon við Atla gat.

There was clamor on the benches, and the cry of men,
The clashing of weapons, and weeping of the Huns,
Save for Guthrun only, she wept not ever
For her bear-fierce brothers, or the boys so dear,
So young and so unhappy, whom with Atli she had.

39

Gulli söri
in gaglbjarta,
hringum rauðum
reifði hon húskarla;
sköp lét hon vaxa,
en skíran malm vaða,
æva fljóð ekki
gáði fjarghúsa.

Gold did she scatter, the swan-white one,
And rings of red gold to the followers gave she;
The fate she let grow, and the shining wealth go,
Nor spared she the treasure of the temple itself.

40

Óvarr Atli
óðan hafði hann sik drukkit,
vápn hafði hann ekki,
varnaði-t hann við Gudrúnu,
oft var sá leikr betri,
þá er þau lint skyldu
oftar um faðmask
fyr öðlingum.

Unwise then was Atli, he had drunk to wildness,
No weapon did he have, and of Guthrun bewared not;
Oft their play was better when both in gladness
Each other embraced among princes all.

41

Hon beð broddi
gaf blóð at drekka
hendi helfússi
ok hvelpa leysti,
hratt fyr hallar dyrr
ok húskarla vakði
brandi brúðr heitum,
þau lét hon gjöld bræðra.

With her sword she gave blood for the bed to drink,
With her death-dealing hand, and the hounds she loosed,
The thralls she awakened, and a firebrand threw
In the door of the hall; so vengeance she had.

42

Eldi gaf hon þá alla,
er inni váru
ok frá morði þeira Gunnars
komnir váru ór Myrkheimi;
forn timbr fellu,
fjarghús ruku,
bær Buðlunga,
brunnu ok skjaldmeyjar
inni aldrstamar,
hnigu í eld heitan.

To the flames she gave all who yet were within,
And from Myrkheim had come from the murder of Gunnar;
The timbers old fell, the temple was in flames,
The dwelling of the Buthlungs, and the shield-maids burned,
They were slain in the house, in the hot flames they sank.

43

Fullrætt er um þetta,
ferr engi svá síðan
brúðr í brynju
bræðra at hefna;
hon hefir þriggja
þjóðkonunga
banorð borit,
björt, áðr sylti.

Now the tale is all told, nor in later time
Will a woman in byrnie avenge so her brothers;
The fair one to three of the kings of the folk
Brought the doom of death ere herself she died.

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