

THE POETIC EDDA

Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar

The Lay of Helgi the Son of Hjorvarth

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

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Helgi, son of King Hjörvard, wins the valkyrie Sváva, defeats his enemies and falls in single combat. The poem is interspersed with much prose and probably assembled from several pieces. 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	"*Sáttu Sigrlinn* *Sváfnis dóttur,* *mey ina fegrstu* *í munarheimi?* *Þó hagligar* *Hjörvarðs konur* *gumnum þykkja* *at Glasislundi.*"	“Sawest thou Sigrlin, Svafnir's daughter, The fairest maid in her home-land found? Though Hjorvath's wives by men are held Goodly to see in Glasir's wood.”
2	"*Mundu við Atla* *Iðmundar son,* *fugl fróðhugaðr,* *fleira mæla?*"	“Now with Atli, Ithmund's son, Wilt thou say more, thou bird so wise?”
3	"*Kjós-at-tu Hjörvarð* *né hans sonu* *né inar fögru* *fylkis brúðir,* *eigi brúðir þær,* *er buðlungr á;* *kaupum vel saman,* *þat er vina kynni.*"	“Choose not Hjorvarth, nor sons of his, Nor the wives so fair of the famous chief; Ask not the brides that the prince's are; Fair let us deal in friendly wise.”
4	"*Hof mun ek kjósa,* *hörga marga,* *gullhyrnðar kýr* *frá grams búi,* *ef hánum Sigrlinn* *sefr á armi* *ok ónauðig* *jöfri fylgir.*"	“A fane will I ask, and altars many, Gold-horned cattle the prince shall give me, If Sigrlin yet shall sleep in his arms, Or free of will the hero shall follow.”
5	"*Höfum erfiði* *ok ekki örindi,* *mara þraut óra* *á meginfjalli,* *urðum síðan* *Sæmorn vaða,* *þá var oss synjat* *Sváfnis dóttur,* *hringum gæddrar,* *er vér hafa vildum.*"	“Trouble we had, but tidings none, Our horses failed in the mountains high, The waters of Sæmorn we needs must wade; Svafnir's daughter, with rings bedecked, She whom we sought, was still denied us.”

6

"Síð muntu, Helgi,
hringum ráða,
ríkr rógapaldr,
né Röðulsvöllum,
- örn gól árla, -
ef þú æ þegir,
þótt þú harðan hug,
hilmir, gjaldir."

“Late wilt thou, Helgi, have hoard of rings,
Thou battle-tree fierce, or of shining fields,—
The eagle screams soon,— if never thou speakest,
Though, hero, hard thy heart may cry.”

7

"Hvat lætr þú fylgja
Helga nafni,
brúðr bjartlituð,
alls þú bjóða ræðr?
Hygg þú fyr öllum
atkvæðum vel.
Þigg ek eigi þat,
nema ek þik hafa."

“What gift shall I have with Helgi's name,
Glorious maid, for the giving is thine?
All thy words shall I think on well,
But I want them not if I win not thee.”

8

"Sverð veit ek liggja
í Sigarsholmi
fjórum færi
en fimm tögu;
eitt er þeira
öllum betra
vígnesta böl
ok varit gulli.

“Swords I know lying in Sigarsholm,
Fifty there are save only four;
One there is that is best of all,
The shield-destroyer, with gold it shines.

9

Hringr er í hjalti,
hugr er í miðju,
ógn er í oddi
þeim er eiga getr;
liggr með eggju
ormr dreyrfáiðr,
en á valböstu
verpr naðr hala."

In the hilt is fame, in the haft is courage,
In the point is fear, for its owner's foes;
On the blade there lies a blood-flecked snake,
And a serpent's tail round the flat is twisted.”

10

"Ert-at-tu, Hjörvarðr
heilráðr konungr,
folks oddviti,
þótt þú frægr séir;
léztu eld eta
jöfra byggðir,
en þeir angr við þik
ekki gerðu.

“Hjorvarth, king, unwholesome thy counsels,
Though famed thou art in leading the folk,
Letting fire the homes of heroes eat,
Who evil deed had never done thee.

11

En Hróðmarr skal
hringum ráða,
þeim er áttu
órir niðjar;
sá sésk fylkir
fæst at lífi,
hyggsk aldauða
arfi at ráða."

Yet Hrothmar still the hoard doth hold,
The wealth that once our kinsmen wielded;
Full seldom care the king disturbs,
Heir to dead men he deems himself."

12

"Hverir ro hölðar
í Hatafirði?
Skjöldum er tjaldat á skipum;
frænknliga látið,
fátt hygg ek yðr séask,
kennið mér nafn konungs."

"Who are the heroes in Hatafjord?
The ships are covered with shields;
Bravely ye look, and little ye fear,
The name of the king would I know."

13

"Helgi hann heitir,
en þú hvergi mátt
vinna grand grami;
járnborgir ro
of öðlings flota;
knegu-t oss fálur fara."

"Helgi his name, and never thou mayst
Harm to the hero bring;
With iron is fitted the prince's fleet,
Nor can witches work us ill."

14

"Hvé þik heitir,
halr inn ámáttki,
hvé þik kalla konir?
Fylkir þér trúir,
er þik í fögrum lætr
beits stafni búa."

"Who now, thou mighty man, art thou?
By what name art thou known to men?
He trusts thee well, the prince who wills
That thou stand at the stem of his ship."

15

"Atli ek heiti,
atall skal ek þér vera,
mjök em ek gífrum gramastr;
úrgan stafn
ek hefi oft búit
ok kvalðar kveldriður.

"Atli am I, and ill shalt thou find me,
Great hate for witches I have;
Oft have I been in the dripping bows,
And to dusk-riders death have brought.

16

Hvé þú heitir,
hála nágráðug?
Nefndu þinn, fála, föður;
níu röstum
er þú skyldi neðar vera
ok vaxi þér á baðmi barr."

Corpse-hungry giantess, how art thou called?
Say, witch, who thy father was!
Nine miles deeper down mayst thou sink,
And a tree grow tall on thy bosom."

17

"Hrímgerðr ek heiti,
Hati hét minn faðir,
þann vissa ek ámáttkastan jötun;
margar brúðir
hann lét frá búi teknar,
unz hann Helgi hjó."

"Hrimgerth am I, my father was Hati,
Of giants the most in might;
Many a woman he won from her home,
Ere Helgi hewed him down."

18

"Þú vart, hála,
fyr hildings skipum
ok látt í fjarðar mynni fyrir;
ræsis rekka
er þú vildir Rán gefa,
ef þér kæmi-t í þverst þvari."

“Witch, in front of the ship thou wast,
And lay before the fjord;
To Ron wouldst have given the ruler's men,
If a spear had not stuck in thy flesh.”

19

"Duliðr ertu nú, Atli,
draums kveð ek þér vera,
síga lætr þú brýnn fyr bráar;
móðir mín
lá fyrir mildings skipum;
ek drekkða Hlövarðs sonum í hafi.

“Dull art thou, Atli, thou dreamest, methinks,
The lids lie over thine eyes;
By the leader's ships my mother lay,
Hlothvarth's sons on the sea I slew.

20

Gneggja myndir þú, Atli,
ef þú geldr né værir,
brettir sinn Hrímgerðr hala;
aftarla hjarta,
hygg ek, at þitt, Atli, sé,
þótt hafir reina rödd."

Thou wouldst neigh, Atli, but gelded thou art,
See, Hrimgerth hoists her tail;
In thy hinder end is thy heart, methinks,
Though thy speech is a stallion's cry.”

21

"Reini mun þér ek þykkja
ef þú reyna knátt,
ok stíga ek á land af legi,
öll muntu lemjask,
ef mér er alhugat,
ok sveigja þinn, Hrímgerðr, hala."

“A stallion I seem if thou seekest to try me,
And I leap to land from the sea;
I shall smite thee to bits, if so I will,
And heavy sinks Hrimgerth's tail.”

22

"Atli, gakk þú á land,
ef afli treystisk,
ok hittumk í vík Varins;
rifja rétti
er þú munt, rekkr, fáa,
ef þú mér í krummur kemr."

“Go ashore then, Atli, if sure of thy might,
Let us come to Varin's cove;
Straight shall thy rounded ribs be made
If thou comest within my claws.”

23

"Munk-a ek ganga,
áðr gumnar vakna
ok halda of vísa vörð;
er-a mér örvænt,
nær óru kemr
skass upp undir skipi."

“I will not go till the warriors wake,
Again their chief to guard;
I should wonder not, foul witch, if up
From beneath our keel thou shouldst come.”

24

"Vaki þú, Helgi,
ok bæt við Hrímgerði,
er þú lézt höggvinn Hata;
eina nótt
kná hon hjá jöfri sofa,
þá hefr hon bölva bætr."

“Awake now, Helgi, and Hrimgerth requite,
That Hati to death thou didst hew;
If a single night she can sleep by the prince,
Then requited are all her ills.”

25

"*Loðinn heitir, er þik skal eiga,*
leið ertu mannkyni,
sá býr í Þolleyju þurs,
hundvíss jötunn,
hraunbúa verstr,
sá er þér makligr maðr."

“'Tis Lothin shall have thee,— thou'rt loathsome to men,—
His home in Tholley he has;
Of the wild-dwellers worst is the giant wise,
He is meet as a mate for thee.”

26

"*Hina vildu heldr, Helgi,*
er réð hafnir skoða
fyrri nótt með firum;
marggullin mær
mér þótti afli bera;
hér sté hon land af legi
ok festi svá yðvarn flota;
hon ein því veldr,
er ek eigi mák
buðlungs mönnum bana."

“More thou lovest her who scanned the harbor,
Last night among the men;
[The gold-decked maid bore magic, methinks,
When the land from the sea she sought,
And fast she kept your fleet;]
She alone is to blame that I may not bring
Death to the monarch's men.”

27

"*Heyr nú, Hrímgerðr,*
ef ek bæti harma þér,
segðu görr grami:
Var sú ein vættr,
er barg öðlings skipum,
eða fóru þær fleiri saman?"

“Hrimgerth, mark, if thy hurts I requite,
Tell now the truth to the king;
Was there one who the ships of the warrior warded,
Or did many together go?”

28

"*Þrennar níundir meyja,*
þó reið ein fyrir
hvít und hjalmi mær;
marir hristusk,
stóð af mönum þeira
dögg í djúpa dali,
hagl í háva viðu;
þaðan kemr með öldum ár,
allt var mér þat leitt, er ek leitk."

“Thrice nine there were, but one rode first,
A helmed maid white of hue;
Their horses quivered, there came from their manes
Dew in the dales so deep,
[Hail on the woods so high,
Thence men their harvest have,
But ill was the sight I saw.]”

29

"*Austr líttu nú, Hrímgerðr,*
ef þik lostna hefr
Helgi helstöfum;
á landi ok á vatni
borgit er lofðungs flota
ok siklings mönnum it sama."

“Look eastward, Hrimgerth, for Helgi has struck thee
Down with the runes of death;
Safe in harbor floats the prince's fleet,
And safe are the monarch's men.”

30

"*Dagr er nú, Hrímgerðr,*
en þik dvalða hefr
Atli til aldrlaga;
hafnarmark
þykkir hlægligt vera,
þars þú í steins líki stendr."

“It is day, Hrimgerth, for Atli held thee
Till now thy life thou must lose;
As a harbor mark men shall mock at thee,
Where in stone thou shalt ever stand.”

31

"*Kom þú heill, Heðinn,*
hvat kanntu segja
nýra spjalla
ór Nóregi?
Hví er þér, stillir,
stökkt ór landi
ok ert einn kominn
oss at finna?"

“Welcome, Hethin! what hast thou to tell
Of tidings new that from Norway come?
Wherefore didst leave thy land, O prince,
And fared alone to find us here?”

32

"*[Erumk-a, stillir,*
stökkt ór landi],
mik hefr miklu glæpr
meiri sóttan:
Ek hefi körna
ina konungbornu
brúði þína
at bagarfulli."

“A deed more evil I have done
Than, brother mine, thou e'er canst mend;
For I have chosen the child of the king,
Thy bride, for mine at the monarch's toast.”

33

"*Sakask eigi þú,*
sönn munu verða
ölmál, Heðinn,
okkur beggja.
Mér hefir stillir
stefnt til eyrar,
þriggja nátta
skylak þar koma;
if er mér á því,
at ek aftr koma;
þá má at góðu
gerask slíkt, ef skal."

“Grieve not, Hethin, for true shall hold
The words we both by the beer have sworn;
To the isle a warrior wills that I go,
[There shall I come the third night hence;]
And doubtful must be my coming back,
[So may all be well, if fate so wills.]”

34

"*Sagðir þú, Helgi,*
at Heðinn væri
góðs verðr frá þér
ok gjafa stórra;
þér er sæmra
sverð at rjóða,
en frið gefa
fjándum þínum."

“Thou saidst once, Helgi, that Hethin was
A friend full good, and gifts didst give him;
More seemly it were thy sword to redden,
Than friendship thus to thy foe to-give.”

35

"*Reið á vargi,*
er rökvit var,
fljóð eitt, er Heðinn
fylgju beiddi;
hón vissi þat,
at veginn myndi
Sigrlinnar sonr
á Sigarsvöllum."

“On a wolf there rode, when dusk it was,
A woman who fain would have him follow;
Well she knew that now would fall
Sigrlin's son at Sigarsvoll.”

36

Sendi Helgi
Sigar at ríða
eftir Eylima
eingadóttur;
"Bið bráðliga
búna verða,
ef hon vill finna
fylki kvikvan."

Sigar riding did Helgi send
To seek out Eylimi's only daughter:
“Bid her swiftly ready to be,
If her lover alive she would find.”

37

"Mik hefr Helgi
hingat sendan
við þik, Sváfa,
sjalfa at mæla;
þik kvaðsk hilmir
hitta vilja,
áðr ítrborinn
öndu týndi."

“Hither now has Helgi sent me,
With thee, Svava, thyself to speak;
The hero said he fain would see thee
Ere life the nobly born should leave.”

38

"Hvat varð Helga
Hjörvarðs syni?
Mér er harðliga
harma leitat,
ef hann sær of lék
eða sverð of beit,
þeim skal ek gumna
grand of vinna."

“What chanced with Helgi, Hjorvarth's son?
Hard to me is harm now come;
If the sea smote him, or sword bit him,
Ill shall I bring to all his foes.”

39

"Fell hér í morgun
at Frekasteini,
buðlungr, sá er var,
baztr und sólu;
Alfr mun sigri
öllum ráða,
þótt þetta sinn
þörfgi væri."

“In the morn he fell at Frekastein,
The king who was noblest beneath the sun;
Alf has the joy of victory all,
Though need therefor is never his.”

40

"Heil vertu, Sváfa,
hug skaltu deila,
sjá mun í heími
hinztr fundr vera;
téa buðlungi
blæða undir,
mér hefir hjörr komit
hjarta it næsta.

“Hail to thee, Svava! thy sorrow rule,
Our meeting last in life is this;
Hard the wounds of the hero bleed,
And close to my heart the sword has come.

41

Bið ek þik, Sváfa,
- brúðr grát-at-tu -,
ef þú vill mínu
máli hlýða,
at þú Heðni
hvílu gervir
ok jöfur ungan
ástum leiðir."

I bid thee, Svava,— weep not, bride,—
If thou wilt hearken to these my words,
The bed for Hethin have thou ready,
And yield thy love to the hero young.”

42

"*Mælt hafða ek þat*
í munarheimi,
þá er mér Helgi
hringa valði,
myndig-a ek lostig
at liðinn fylki
jöfur ókunnan
armi verja."

“A vow I had in my dear-loved home,
When Helgi sought with rings to have me,
That not of my will, if the warrior died,
Would I fold in my arms a man unfamed.”

43

"*Kysstu mik, Sváfa,*
kem ek eigi áðr
Rogheims á vit
né Röðulsfjalla,
áðr ek hefnt hefik
Hjörvarðs sonar,
þess er buðlungr var
beztr und sólu."

“Kiss me, Svava, I come not back,
Rogheim to see, or Rothulsfjoll,
Till vengeance I have for the son of Hjorvarth,
The king who was noblest beneath the sun.”

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