

THE POETIC EDDA

Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri

The First Lay of Helgi Hundingsbane

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

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The birth and youthful deeds of Helgi, son of Sigmund: he slays King Hunding, wins the love of the valkyrie Sigrún and defeats the sons of Granmar. Includes a long exchange of insults between Sinfjötli and Gudmund. 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	*Ár var alda,* *þat er arar gullu,* *hnigu heilög vötn* *af Himinfjöllum;* *þá hafði Helga* *inn hugumstóra* *Borghildr borit* *í Brálundi.*	In olden days, when eagles screamed, And holy streams from heaven's crags fell, Was Helgi then, the hero-hearted, Borghild's son, in Bralund born.
2	*Nótt varð í bæ,* *nornir kómu,* *þær er öðlingi* *aldr of skópu;* *þann báðu fylki* *frægstan verða* *ok buðlunga* *beztan þykkja.*	'Twas night in the dwelling, and Norns there came, Who shaped the life of the lofty one; They bade him most famed of fighters all And best of princes ever to be.
3	*Sneru þær af afli* *örlögþáttu,* *þá er borgir braut* *í Bráluni;* *þær of greiddu* *gullin símu* *ok und mánasal* *miðjan festu.*	Mightily wove they the web of fate, While Bralund's towns were trembling all; And there the golden threads they wove, And in the moon's hall fast they made them.
4	*Þær austr ok vestr* *enda fálu,* *þar átti lofðungr* *land á milli;* *brá nift Nera* *á norðrvega* *einni festi,* *ey það hon halda.*	East and west the ends they hid, In the middle the hero should have his land; And Neri's kinswoman northward cast A chain, and bade it firm ever to be.

5

Eitt var at angri
Ylfinga nið
ok þeiri meyju,
er munúð fæddi;
hrafn kvað at hrafni,
- sat á hám meiði
andvanr átu -:
"ek veit nökkut.

Once sorrow had the Ylfings' son,
And grief the bride who the loved one had borne.
Quoth raven to raven, on treetop resting,
Seeking for food, “There is something I know.

6

Stendr í brynju
burr Sigmundar
dægrs eins gamall,
nú er dagr kominn;
hvessir augu
sem hildingar,
sá er varga vinr,
vit skulum teitir."

In mail-coat stands the son of Sigmund,
A half-day old; now day is here;
His eyes flash sharp as the heroes' are,
He is friend of the wolves; full glad are we.”

7

Drótt þótti sá
döglingr vera,
kváðu með gumnum
góð ár komin;
sjalfr gekk vísi
ór vígþrimu
ungum færa
ítrlauk grami.

The warrior throng a ruler thought him,
Good times, they said, mankind should see;
The king himself from battle-press came,
To give the prince a leek full proud.

8

Gaf hann Helga nafn
ok Hringstaði,
Sólfjöll, Snæfjöll
ok Sigarsvöllu,
Hringstöð, Hátún
ok Himinvanga,
blóðorm búinn
bræðr Sinfjötla.

Helgi he named him, and Hringstathir gave him,
Solfjoll, Snæfjoll, and Sigarsvoll,
Hringstoth, Hotun, and Himinvangar,
And a blood-snake bedecked to Sinfjotli's brother.

9

Þá nam at vaxa
fyr vina brjósti
almr ítrborinn
ynðis ljóma;
hann galt ok gaf
gull verðungu,
sparði eigi hilmir
hodd blóðrækinn.

Mighty he grew in the midst of his friends,
The fair-born elm, in fortune's glow;
To his comrades gold he gladly gave,
The hero spared not the blood-flecked hoard.

10

Skammt lét vísi
vígs at bíða;
þá er fylkir var
fimmtán vetra,
ok hann harðan lét
Hunding veginn
þann er lengi réð
löndum ok þegnum.

Short time for war the chieftain waited,
When fifteen winters old he was;
Hunding he slew, the hardy wight
Who long had ruled o'er lands and men.

11

Kvöddu síðan
Sigmundar bur
auðs ok hringa
Hundings synir,
því at þeir áttu
jöfri at gjalda
fjárnám mikit
ok föður dauða.

Of Sigmund's son then next they sought
Hoard and rings, the sons of Hunding;
They bade the prince requital pay
For booty stolen and father slain.

12

Lét-at buðlungr
bótir uppi
né niðja in heldr
nefgjöld fáa;
ván kvað hann mundu
veðrs ins mikla
grára geira
ok gremi Óðins.

The prince let not their prayers avail,
Nor gold for their dead did the kinsmen get;
Waiting, he said, was a mighty storm
Of lances gray and Othin's grimness.

13

Fara hildingar
hjörstefnu til,
þeirar er lögðu
at Logafjöllum;
sleit Fróða frið
fjánda á milli;
fara Viðris grey
valgjörn of ey.

The warriors forth to the battle went,
The field they chose at Logafjoll;
Frothi's peace midst foes they broke,
Through the isle went hungrily Vithrir's hounds.

14

Settisk vísi,
þá er vegit hafði
Alf ok Eyjólf,
und arasteini,
Hjörvarð ok Hávarð,
Hundings sonu;
farit hafði hann allri
ætt geirmímis.

The king then sat, when he had slain
Eyjolf and Alf, 'neath the eagle-stone;
Hjorvarth and Hovarth, Hunding's sons,
The kin of the spear-wielder, all had he killed.

15

Þá brá ljóma
af Logafjöllum,
en af þeim ljómum
leiftrir kómu,
-- -- --
hávar und hjalmum
á Himinvanga,
brynjur váru þeira
blóði stokknar,
en af geirum
geislar stóðu.

Then glittered light from Logafjoll,
And from the light the flashes leaped;
High under helms on heaven's field;
Their byrnies all with blood were red,
And from their spears the sparks flew forth.

16

Frá árliga
ór úlfíði
döglingr at því
dísir suðrænar,
ef þær vildi heim
með hildingum
þá nótt fara;
þrymr var alma.

Early then in wolf-wood asked
The mighty king of the southern maid,
If with the hero home would she
Come that night; the weapons clashed.

17

En af hesti
Högna dóttir,
- líddi randa rym, -
ræsi sagði:
"Hygg ek, at vér eigim
aðrar sýslur
en með baugbrota
bjór at drekka.

Down from her horse sprang Hogni's daughter,—
The shields were still,— and spake to the hero:
“Other tasks are ours, methinks,
Than drinking beer with the breaker of rings.

18

Hefir minn faðir
meyju sinni
grimmum heitit
Granmars syni,
en ek hef, Helgi,
Höðbrodd kveðinn
konung óneisan
sem kattar son.

My father has pledged his daughter fair
As bride to Granmar's son so grim;
But, Helgi, I once Hothbrodd called
As fine a king as the son of a cat.

19

Þó kemr fylkir
fára nátta,
nema þú hánum vísir
valstefnu til
eða mey nemir
frá mildingi."

Yet the hero will come a few nights hence,
Unless thou dost bid him the battle-ground seek,
Or takest the maid from the warrior mighty.”

20

"Uggi eigi þú
Ísungs bana;
fyrr mun dolga dynr,
nema ek dauðr séak."

“Fear him not, though Isung he felled,
First must our courage keen be tried,
Before unwilling thou fare with the knave;
Weapons will clash, if to death I come not.”

21

Sendi áru
allvaldr þaðan
of land ok um lög
leiðar at biðja,
iðgnógan
Ógnar ljóma
brögnum bjóða
ok burum þeira.

Messengers sent the mighty one then,
By land and by sea, a host to seek,
Store of wealth of the water's gleam,
And men to summon, and sons of men.

22

"Biðið skjótliga
til skipa ganga
ok ór Brandeyju
búna verða."
Þaðan beið þengill,
unz þingat kómu
halir hundmargir
ór Heðinseyju.

“Bid them straightway seek the ships,
And off Brandey ready to be!”
There the chief waited till thither were come
Men by hundreds from Hethinsey.

23

Ok þar af ströndum
ór Stafnsnesi
beit her út skriðu
ok búin gulli;
spurði Helgi
Hjörleif at því:
"hefir þú kannaða
koni óneisa?"

Soon off Stafnsnes stood the ships,
Fair they glided and gay with gold;
Then Helgi spake to Hjorleif asking:
“Hast thou counted the gallant host?”

24

En ungr konungr
öðrum sagði,
seint kvað at telja
af Trönueyri
langhöfðuð skip
und líðöndum,
þau er í Örvasund
útan fóru.

The young king answered the other then:
“Long were it to tell from Tronueyr
The long-stemmed ships with warriors laden
That come from without into Orvasund.

25

"Tolf hundruð
tryggra manna;
þó er í Hátúnum
halfu fleira
víglið konungs;
ván erum rómu."

There are hundreds twelve of trusty men,
But in Hotun lies the host of the king,
Greater by half; I have hope of battle.”

26

Svá brá stýrir
stafntjöldum af,
at mildinga
mengi vakði,
ok döglingar
dagsbrún séa
ok siklingar
sneru upp við tré
vefnistingum
á Varinsfirði.

The ship's-tents soon the chieftain struck,
And waked the throng of warriors all;
[The heroes the red of dawn beheld;]
And on the masts the gallant men
Made fast the sails in Varinsfjord.

27

Varð ára ymr
ok járna glymr,
brast rönd við rönd,
reru víkingar;
eisandi gekk
und öðlingum
lofðungs floti
löndum fjarri.

There was beat of oars and clash of iron,
Shield smote shield as the ships'-folk rowed;
Swiftly went the warrior-laden
Fleet of the ruler forth from the land.

28

Svá var at heyra,
er saman kómu
kolgu systir
ok kilir langir,
sem björg eða brim
brotna myndi.

So did it sound, when together the sisters
Of Kolga struck with the keels full long,
As if cliffs were broken with beating surf,

29

Draga bað Helgi
há segl ofar,
varð-at hrönnum
höfn þingloga,
þá er ógurlig
Ægis dóttir
stagstjórnmörum
steypa vildi.

Helgi bade higher hoist the sails,
Nor did the ships'-folk shun the waves,
Though dreadfully did Ægir's daughters
Seek the steeds of the sea to sink.

30

En þeim sjalfum
Sigrún ofan
folkdjörf of barg
ok fari þeira;
snerisk ramliga
Rán ór hendi
gjalfrdýr konungs
at Gnipalundi.

But from above did Sigrun brave
Aid the men and all their faring;
Mightily came from the claws of Ron
The leader's sea-beast off Gnipalund.

31

Sat þar um aftan
í Unavágum,
flaust fagrbúin
fljóta knáttu;
en þeir sjalfir
frá Svarinshaugi
með herməar hug
her könnuðu.

At evening there in Unavagar
Floated the fleet bedecked full fair;
But they who saw from Svarin's hill,
Bitter at heart the host beheld.

32

Frá góðborinn
Goðmundr at því:
"Hverr er landreki,
sá er liði stýrir
ok hann feiknalið
færir at landi?"

Then Gothmund asked, goodly of birth,
“Who is the monarch who guides the host,
And to the land the warriors leads?”

33

Sinfjötli kvað
- slöng upp við rá
rauðum skildi,
rönd var ór gulli;
þar var sundvörðr,
sá er svara kunni
ok við öðlinga
orðum skipta --:

Sinfjotli answered, and up on an oar
Raised a shield all red with golden rim;
A sea-sentry was he, skilled to speak,
And in words with princes well to strive.

34

"Segðu þat í aftan,
er svínum gefr
ok tíkr yðrar
teygir at solli,
at sé Ylfingar
austan komnir
gunnar gjarnir
fyr Gnipalundi.

“Say tonight when you feed the swine,
And send your bitches to seek their swill,
That out of the East have the Ylfings come,
Greedy for battle, to Gnipalund.

35

Þar mun Höðbroddr
Helga finna
flugtrauðan gram
í flota miðjum,
sá er oft hefir
örnu sadda,
meðan þú á kvernum
kystir þýjar."

There will Hothbrodd Helgi find,
In the midst of the fleet, and flight he scorns;
Often has he the eagles gorged,
Whilst thou at the quern wert slave-girls kissing.”

36

"Fátt mantu, fylkir,
fornra spjalla,
er þú öðlingum
ósönnu bregðr;
þú hefir etnar
ulfa krásir
ok bræðr þínum
at bana orðit,
oft sár sogin
með svölum munni,
hefr í hreysi
hvarleiðr skriðit."

“Hero, the ancient sayings heed,
And bring not lies to the nobly born.
Thou hast eaten the entrails of wolves,
And of thy brothers the slayer been;
Oft wounds to suck thy cold mouth sought,
And loathed in rocky dens didst lurk.”

37

"Þú vart völva
í Varinseyju,
skollvís kona,
bartu skrök saman;
kvaztu engi mann
eiga vilja,
segg brynjaðan,
nema Sinfjötla.

“A witch in Varin's isle thou wast,
A woman false, and lies didst fashion;
Of the mail-clad heroes thou wouldst have
No other, thou saidst, save Sinfjotli only.

38

Þú vart, in skæða,
skass, valkyrja,
ötul, ámátlig
at Alföður;
mundu einherjar
allir berjask,
svevís kona,
of sakar þínar.

A Valkyrie wast thou, loathly Witch,
Evil and base, in Allfather's home;
The warriors all must ever fight,
Woman subtle, for sake of thee.

39

Níu áttu vit
á nesi Ságu
ulfa alna,
ek var einn faðir þeira."

Nine did we in Sogunes
Of wolf-cubs have; I their father was.”

40

"Faðir var-at-tu
fenrisulfa
öllum ellri,
svá at ek muna,
síz þik geldu
fyr Gnipalundi
þursa meyjar
á Þórsnesi.

“Thou didst not father Fenrir's-wolves,
Though older thou art than all I know;
For they gelded thee in Gnipalund,
The giant-women at Thorsnes once.

41

Stjúpr vartu Siggeirs,
látt und stöðum heima,
vargljóðum vanr
á viðum úti;
kómu þér ógögn
öll at hendi,
þá er bræðr þínum
brjóst raufaðir;
gerðir þik frægjan
af firinverkum."

Under houses the stepson of Siggeir lay,
Fain of the wolf's cry out in the woods;
Evil came then all to thy hands,
When thy brothers' breasts thou didst redden,
Fame didst thou win for foulest deeds.

42

"*Þú vart brúðr Grana*
á Brávelli,
gullbitluð vart
gör til rásar;
hafða ek þér móðri
marg skeið riðit
svangri und söðli,
simul, forbergis."

In Bravoll wast thou Grani's bride,
Golden-bitted and ready to gallop;
I rode thee many a mile, and down
Didst sink, thou giantess, under the saddle.”

43

"*Sveinn þóttir þú*
siðlauss vera,
þá er þú Gullnis
geitr molkaðir,
en í annat sinn
Iðar dóttir
tötrughypja.
Vill þú tölu lengri?"

“A brainless fellow didst seem to be,
When once for Gollnir goats didst milk,
And another time when as Imth's daughter
In rags thou wentest; wilt longer wrangle?”

44

"*Fyrr vilda ek*
at Frekasteini
hrafna seðja
á hræum þínum
en tíkr yðrar
teygja at solli
eða gefa göltum;
deili gröm við þik."

“Sooner would I at Frekastein
Feed the ravens with flesh of thine
Than send your bitches to seek their swill,
Or feed the swine; may the fiends take you!”

45

"*Væri ykkr, Sinfjötli,*
Sæmra miklu
gunni at heyja
ok glaða örnu,
en sé ónýtum
orðum at bregðask,
þótt hringbrotar
heiftir deili.

“Better, Sinfjotli, thee 'twould beseem
Battle to give and eagles to gladden,
Than vain and empty words to utter,
Though ring-breakers oft in speech do wrangle.

46

Þykkja-t mér góðir
Granmars synir,
þó dugir siklingum
satt at mæla;
þeir hafa markat
á Móinsheimum,
at hug hafa
hjörum at bregða."

Good I find not the sons of Granmar,
But for heroes 'tis seemly the truth to speak;
At Moinsheimar proved the men
That hearts for the wielding of swords they had."

47

Þeir af ríki
renna létu
Svipuð ok Sveggjuð
Sólheima til
dala döggótta,
dökkvar hlíðir;
skalf Mistar marr
hvar er megir fóru.

Mightily then they made to run
Sviputh and Sveggjuth to Solheimar;
[By dewy dales and chasms dark,
Mist's horse shook where the men went by;]

48

Mættu þeir tyggja
í túnhliði,
sögðu stríðliga
stilli kómu;
úti stóð Höðbroddr
hjalmi faldinn,
hugði hann jóreið
ættar sinnar:
"Hví er hermðar litr
á Hniflungum?"

The king they found at his courtyard gate,
And told him the foeman fierce was come.
Forth stood Hothbrodd, helmed for battle,
Watched the riding of his warriors;
"Why are the Hniflungs white with fear?"

49

"Snúask hér at sandi
snævgir kjólar,
rakka-hirtir
ok ráar langar,
skildir margir,
skafnar árar,
göfugt lið gylfa,
glaðir Ylfingar.

"Swift keels lie hard by the land,
[Mast-ring harts and mighty yards,
Wealth of shields and well-planed oars;]
The king's fair host, the Ylfings haughty;

50

Ganga fimmtán
folk upp á land,
þó er í Sogn út
sjau þúsundir;
liggja hér í grindum
fyr Gnipalundi
brimdýr blásvört
ok búin gulli;
þar er miklu mest
mengi þeira;
mun-a nú Helgi
hjörþing dvala."

Fifteen bands to land have fared,
But out in Sogn are seven thousand.
At anchor lying off Gnipalund
Are fire-beasts black, all fitted with gold;
There wait most of the foeman's men,
Nor will Helgi long the battle delay."

51

"Renni rökn bitluð
til Reginþinga,
en Sporvitnir
at Sparinsheiði,
Mélnir ok Mýlnir
til Myrkviðar;
látið engi mann
eftir sitja,
þeira er benlogum
bregða kunni.

“Bid the horses run to the Reginthing,
Melnir and Mylnir to Myrkwood now,
[And Sporvitnir to Sparinsheith;]
Let no man seek henceforth to sit
Who the flame of wounds knows well to wield.

52

Bjóðið ér Högna
ok Hrings sonum,
Atla ok Yngva,
Alf inum gamla,
þeir ró gjarnir
gunni at heyja;
látum Völsunga
viðrnám fáa."

Summon Hogni, the sons of Hring,
Atli and Yngvi and Alf the Old;
Glad they are of battle ever;
Against the Volsungs let us go.”

53

Svipr einn var þat,
er saman kómu
fölvir oddar
at Frekasteini;
ey var Helgi
Hundings bani
fyrstr í fólki,
þar er firar börðusk,
æstr á ímu,
alltrauðr flugar;
sá hafði hilmir
hart móðakarn.

Swift as a storm there smote together
The flashing blades at Frekastein;
Ever was Helgi, Hunding's slayer,
First in the throng where warriors fought;
[Fierce in battle, slow to fly,
Hard the heart of the hero was.]

54

Kómu þar ór himni
hjalmvítr ofan,
- óx geira gnýr, -
þær er grami hlífðu;
þá kvað þat Sigrún,
sárvitr fluga
- át hálu skær
af hugins barri -:

From heaven there came the maidens helmed,—
The weapon-clang grew,— who watched o'er the king;
Spake Sigrun fair,— the wound-givers flew,
And the horse of the giantess raven's-food had:—

55

"Heill skaltu, vísi,
virða njóta,
áttstafr Yngva,
ok una lífi,
er þú fellt hefir
inn flugartrauða
jöfur, þann er olli
ægis dauða.

“Hail to thee, hero! full happy with men,
Offspring of Yngvi, shalt ever live,
For thou the fearless foe hast slain
Who to many the dread of death had brought.

56

Ok þér, buðlungr,
samir bæði vel
rauðir baugar
ok in ríkja mær;
heill skaltu, buðlungr,
bæði njóta
Högna dóttur
ok Hringstaða,
sigrs ok landa.
Þá er sókn lokit.

Warrior, well for thyself hast won
Red rings bright and the noble bride;
Both now, warrior, thine shall be,
Hogni's daughter and Hringstathir,
Wealth and triumph; the battle wanes.”

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