

THE POETIC EDDA

Helgakviða Hundingsbana önnur

The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingsbane

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

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A second version of the Helgi legend, closely bound up with prose, telling of Helgi's death and his return at night from the burial mound to Sigrún. Guðni Jónsson prints it as ‘Völsungakviða in forna’. 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	"*Segðu Hemingi* *at Helgi man,* *hvern i brynju* *bragnar felldu;* *ér ulf gráan* *inni höfðuð,* *þar er Hamal hugði* *Hundingr konungr.*"	“Say to Hæming that Helgi knows Whom the heroes in armor hid; A gray wolf had they within their hall, Whom King Hunding Hamal thought.”
2	"*Hvöss eru augu* *í Hagals þýju;* *er-a þat karls ætt,* *er á kvernum stendr;* *steinar rifna* *stökk lúðr fyrir.*	“Of Hagal's bond-woman bright are the eyes; Yon comes not of churls who stands at the quern; The millstones break, the boards are shattered.
3	*Nú hefir hörð dæmi* *hildingr þegit,* *er vísi skal* *valbygg mala;* *heldr er sæmri* *hendi þeiri* *meðalkafli* *en möndultré.*"	The hero has a doom full hard, That barley now he needs must grind; Better befits his hand to feel The hilt of the sword than the millstone's handle.”
4	"*Þat er lítil vá,* *þótt lúðr þrumi* *er mær konungs* *möndul hrærir;* *hon skævaði* *skýjum efri* *ok vega þorði* *sem víkingar,* *áðr hana Helgi* *höftu gerði;* *systir er hon þeira* *Sigars ok Högna;* *því hefir ötul augu* *Ylfinga man.*"	“Small is the wonder if boards are splintered By a monarch's daughter the mill is turned; Once through clouds she was wont to ride, And battles fought like fighting men, [Till Helgi a captive held her fast; Sister she is of Sigar and Hogni, Thus bright are the eyes of the Ylfings' maid.]”

5

"Hverir láta fljóta
fley við bakka?
Hvar, hermegir,
heima eiguð?
Hvers bíðið ér
í Brunavágum?
Hvert lystir yðr
leið at kanna?"

“Who rules the ship by the shore so steep?
Where is the home ye warriors have?
Why do ye bide in Brunavagar,
Or what the way that ye wish to try?”

6

"Hagall lætr fljóta
fley við bakka,
eigum heima
í Hléseyju,
bíðum byrjar
í Brunavágum,
austr lystir oss
leið at kanna."

“Hamal's the ship by the shore so steep,
Our home in Hlesey do we have;
For fair wind bide we in Brunavagar,
Eastward the way that we wish to try.”

7

"Hvar hefir þú, hilmir,
hildi vakða
eða gögl alin
Gunnar systra?
Hví er brynja þín
blóði stokkin?
Hví skal und hjalmum
hrátt kjöt eta?"

“Where hast thou, warrior, battle wakened,
Or gorged the birds of the sisters of Guth?
Why is thy byrnie spattered with blood,
Why helmed dost feast on food uncooked?”

8

"Þat vann næst nýs
niðr Ylfinga
fyr vestan ver,
ef þik vita lystir,
er ek björnu tók
í Bragalundi
ok ætt ara
oddum saddak.

“Latest of all, the Ylfings' son
On the western sea, if know thou wilt,
Captured bears in Bragalund,
And fed the eagles with edge of sword.

9

Nú er sagt, mær,
hvaðan sakar gerðusk,
því var á legi mér
lítt steikt etit."

Now is it shown why our shirts are bloody,
And little our food with fire is cooked.”

10

"Víg lýsir þú,
varð fyr Helga
Hundingr konungr
hníga at velli;
bar sókn saman,
er sefa hefnduð
ok busti blóð
á brimis eggjar."

“Of battle thou tellest, and there was bent
Hunding the king before Helgi down;
There was carnage when thou didst avenge thy kin,
And blood flowed fast on the blade of the sword.”

11

"Hvat vissir þú,
at þeir séim,
snót svinnhuguð,
er sefa hefndum?
Margir ro hvassir
hildings synir
ok ámunir
ossum niðjum."

"How didst thou know that now our kin,
Maiden wise, we have well avenged?
Many there are of the sons of the mighty
Who share alike our lofty race."

12

"Vark-a ek fjarri,
folks oddviti,
gær á morgun
grams aldrlokum,
þó tel ek slægjan
Sigmundar bur,
er í valrúnum
vígspjöll segir.

"Not far was I from the lord of the folk,
Yester morn, when the monarch was slain;
Though crafty the son of Sigmund, methinks,
When he speaks of the fight in slaughter-runes.

13

Leit ek þik um sinn
fyrr á langskipum,
þá er þú byggðir
blóðga stafna
ok úrsvalar
unnir léku;
nú vill dyljask
döglingr fyr mér,
en Högna mær
Helga kennir."

On the long-ship once I saw thee well,
When in the blood-stained bow thou wast,
[And round thee icy waves were raging;]
Now would the hero hide from me,
But to Hogni's daughter is Helgi known."

14

Sótti Sigrún
sikling glaðan,
heim nam hon Helga
hönd at sækja,
kyssti ok kvaddi
konung und hjalmi;
þá varð hilmi
hugr á vífi.

Sigrun the joyful chieftain sought,
Forthwith Helgi's hand she took;
She greeted the hero helmed and kissed him,
The warrior's heart to the woman turned.

15

Fyrr lézk hon unna
af öllum hug
syni Sigmundar
en hon sét hafði.

"Long with all my heart I loved
Sigmund's son ere ever I saw him.

16

"Var ek Höðbroddi
í her föstnuð,
en jöfur annan
eiga vildak;
þó sjámk, fylkir,
frænda reiði,
hefi ek míns föður
munráð brotit."

At the meeting to Hothbrodd mated I was,
But another hero I fain would have;
Though, king, the wrath of my kin I fear,
Since I broke my father's fairest wish."

17

Nam-a Högna mær
of hug mæla,
hafa kvaðsk hon Helga
hylli skyldu.

From her heart the daughter of Hogni spake,
Dear was Helgi, she said, to her;

18

"Hirð eigi þú
Högna reiði
né illan hug
ættar þinnar.
Þú skalt, mær ung,
at mér lifa;
ætt áttu, in góða,
er ek eigi sjámk."

“Fear not ever Hogni's anger,
Nor yet thy kinsmen's cruel wrath;
Maiden, thou with me shalt live,
Thy kindred, fair one, I shall not fear.”

19

"Hver er skjöldungr,
sá er skipum stýrir,
lætr gunnfana
gullinn fyr stafni?
Þykkja mér fríð
í fararbroddi;
verpr vígroða
um víkinga.

“What hero great is guiding the ships?
A golden flag on the stem he flies;
I find not peace in the van of your faring,
And round the fighters is battle-light red.”

20

"Hér má Höðbroddr
Helga kenna
flótta trauðan
í flota miðjum,
hann hefir eðli
ættar þinnar
arf Fjörsunga,
und sik þrungit."

“Here may Hothbrodd Helgi find,
The hater of flight, in the midst of the fleet;
The home of all thy race he has,
And over the realm of the fishes he rules.”

21

"Því fyrr skulu
at Frekasteini
sáttir saman
um sakar dæma;
mál er, Höðbroddr,
hefnd at vinna
ef vér lægra hlut
lengi bárum."

“First shall swords at Frekastein
Prove our worth in place of words;
Time is it, Hothbrodd, vengeance to have,
If in battle worsted once we were.”

22

"Fyrr mundu, Guðmundr,
geitr of halda
ok bergskorar
brattar klífa,
hafa þér í hendi
heslikylfu,
þat er þér blíðara
en brimis dómar.

“Better, Gothmund, to tend the goats,
And climb the rocks of the mountain cliffs;
A hazel switch to hold in thy hand
More seemly were than the hilt of a sword.”

23

"Þér er, Sinfjötli,
sæmra miklu
gunni at heyja
ok glaða örnu
en ónýtum
orðum at bregða,
þótt hildingar
heiftir deili.

“Better, Sinfjotli, thee 'twould beseem
Battles to give, and eagles to gladden,
Than vain and empty speech to utter,
Though warriors oft with words do strive.

24

Þykkja-t mér góðir
Granmars synir,
þó dugir siklingum
satt at mæla;
þeir merkt hafa
á Móinsheimum,
at hug hafa
hjörum at bregða;
eru hildingar
hölzti snjallir.

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,
[And ever brave the warriors are.]”

25

"Mun-a þér, Sigrún
frá Sefafjöllum
Höðbroddr konungr,
hníga at armi;
liðin er ævi
- oft náir hrævi
gránstóð gríðar, -
Granmars sona."

“Never shall Sigrun from Sevafjoll,
Hothbrodd king, be held in thine arms;
Granmar's sons full cold have grown,
And the giant-steeds gray on corpses gorge.”

26

"Er-at þér at öllu,
alvitr, gefit,
- þó kveð ek nökkvi
nornir valda -:
fellu í morgun
at Frekasteini
Bragi ok Högni,
varð ek bani þeira.

“Maid, not fair is all thy fortune,
The Norns I blame that this should be;
This morn there fell at Frekastein
Bragi and Hogni beneath my hand.

27

En at Styrkleifum
Starkaðr konungr,
en at Hlébjörgum
Hrollaugs synir;
þann sá ek gylfa
grimmúðgastan,
er barðisk bolr,
var á brott höfuð.

At Hlebjorg fell the sons of Hrollaug,
Starkath the king at Styrkleifar;
Fighters more noble saw I never,
The body fought when the head had fallen.

28

Liggja at jörðu
allra flestir
niðjar þínir,
at náum orðnir;
vannt-at-tu vígi,
var þér þat skapat,
at þú at rógi
ríkmenni vart."

On the ground full low the slain are lying,
Most are there of the men of thy race;
Nought hast thou won, for thy fate it was
Brave men to bring to the battle-field."

29

"*Huggastu, Sigrún!*
Hildr hefr þú oss verið;
vinna-t skjöldungar sköpum."

"Grieve not, Sigrun, the battle is gained,
The fighter can shun not his fate."

30

"*Trauðr em ek, systir,*
trega þér at segja,
því at ek hefi nauðigr
nifti grætta;
fell í morgun
und Fjöturlundi
buðlungr, sá er var
beztr í heimi
ok hildingum
á halsi stóð."

"Sad am I, sister, sorrow to tell thee,
Woe to my kin unwilling I worked;
In the morn there fell at Fjoturlund
The noblest prince the world has known,
[And his heel he set on the heroes' necks.]"

31

"*Þik skyli allir*
eiðar bíta,
þeir er Helga
hafðir unna
at inu ljósa
Leiftrar vatni
ok at úrsvölum
Unnarsteini.

"Now may every oath thee bite
That with Helgi sworn thou hast,
By the water bright of Leipt,
And the ice-cold stone of Uth.

32

Skríði-at þat skip,
er und þér skríði,
þótt óskabyrr
eftir leggisk;
renni-a sá marr,
er und þér renni,
þóttú fjándr þína
forðask eigir.

The ship shall sail not in which thou sailest,
Though a favoring wind shall follow after;
The horse shall run not whereon thou ridest,
Though fain thou art thy foe to flee.

33

Bíti-a þér þat sverð,
er þú bregðir,
nema sjalfum þér
syngvi of höfði.
Þá væri þér hefnt
Helga dauða,
ef þú værir vargr
á viðum úti
auðs andvani
ok alls gamans,
hefðir eigi mat,
nema á hræjum spryngir."

The sword shall bite not which thou bearest,
Till thy head itself it sings about.
Vengeance were mine for Helgi's murder,
Wert thou a wolf in the woods without,
Possessing nought and knowing no joy,
Having no food save corpses to feed on."

34

"*Ær ertu, systir,*
ok örvita,
er þú bræðr þínum
biðr forskapa;
einn veldr Óðinn
öllu bölvi,
því at með sifjungum
sakrúnar bar.

"Mad art thou, sister, and wild of mind,
Such a curse on thy brother to cast;
Othin is ruler of every ill,
Who sunders kin with runes of spite.

35

Þér býðr bróðir
bauga rauða,
öll Vandilsvé
ok Vígdali;
hafðu halfan heim
harms at gjöldum,
brúðr baugvarið,
ok burir þínir."

Thy brother rings so red will give thee,
All Vandilsve and Vigdalir;
Take half my land to pay the harm,
Ring-decked maid, and as meed for thy sons."

36

"*Sitk-a ek svá sæl*
at Sefafjöllum
ár né of nætr,
at ek una lífi,
nema at liði lofðungs
ljóma bregði,
renni und vísa
Vígblær þinig,
gullbitli vanr,
knega ek grami fagna.

"I shall sit not happy at Sevafjoll,
Early or late, my life to love,
If the light cannot show, in the leader's band,
Vigblær bearing him back to his home,
[The golden-bitted; I shall greet him never.]

37

Svá hafði Helgi
hrædda görva
fjándr sína alla
ok frændr þeira
sem fyr ulfi
óðar rynni
geitr af fjalli
geiskafullar.

Such the fear that Helgi's foes
Ever felt, and all their kin,
As makes the goats with terror mad
Run from the wolf among the rocks.

38

Svá bar Helgi
af hildingum
sem ítrskapaðr
askr af þyrni
eða sá dýrkalfr
döggu slunginn
er efri ferr
öllum dýrum
ok horn glóa
við himin sjalfan."

Helgi rose above heroes all
Like the lofty ash above lowly thorns,
Or the noble stag, with dew besprinkled,
Bearing his head above all beasts,
[And his horns gleam bright to heaven itself.]"

39

"*Þú skalt, Hundingr,*
hverjum manni
fótlaug geta
ok funa kynda,
hunda binda,
hesta gæta,
gefa svínum soð,
áðr sofa gangir."

"Thou shalt, Hunding, of every hero
Wash the feet, and kindle the fire,
Tie up dogs, and tend the horses,
And feed the swine ere to sleep thou goest."

40

"*Hvárt eru þat svik ein,*
er ek sjá þykkjumk,
eða ragnarök,
- ríða menn dauðir,
er jóa yðra
oddum keyrið -
eða er hildingum
heimför gefin?"

"Is this a dream that methinks I see,
Or the doom of the gods, that dead men ride,
And hither spurring urge your steeds,
Or is home-coming now to the heroes granted?"

41

"*Er-a þat svik ein,*
er þú sjá þykkisk,
né aldar rof,
þóttú oss lítir,
þótt vér jóa óra
oddum keyrim,
né er hildingum
heimför gefin."

"No dream is this that thou thinkest to see,
Nor the end of the world, though us thou beholdest,
And hither spurring we urge our steeds,
Nor is home-coming now to the heroes granted."

42

"*Út gakk þú, Sigrún*
frá Sefafjöllum,
ef þik folks jaðar
finna lystir;
upp er haugr lokinn,
kominn er Helgi,
dolgspor dreyra,
döglingr bað þik,
at þú sárdropa
svefja skyldir."

"Go forth, Sigrun, from Sevafjoll,
If fain the lord of the folk wouldst find;
[The hill is open, Helgi is come;]
The sword-tracks bleed; the monarch bade
That thou his wounds shouldst now make well."

43

"Nú em ek svá fegin
fundi okkrum
sem átfrekir
Óðins haukar,
er val vitu,
varmar bráðir,
eða dögglitir
dagsbrún sjá.

“Now am I glad of our meeting together,
As Othin's hawks, so eager for prey,
When slaughter and flesh all warm they scent,
Or dew-wet see the red of day.

44

Fyrr vil ek kyssa
konung ólifðan
en þú blóðugri
brynju kastir;
hár er þitt, Helgi,
hélu þrungit,
allr er vísi
valdögg sleginn,
hendr úrsvalar
Högna mági;
hvé skal ek þér, buðlungr,
þess bót of vinna?"

First will I kiss the lifeless king,
Ere off the bloody byrnie thou cast;
With frost thy hair is heavy, Helgi,
And damp thou art with the dew of death;
[Ice-cold hands has Hogni's kinsman,
What, prince, can I to bring thee ease?]”

45

"Ein veldr þú, Sigrún
frá Sefafjöllum,
er Helgi er
harmdögg sleginn;
grætr þú, gullvarið,
grimmum tárum,
sólbjört, suðræn,
áðr þú sofa gangir;
hvert fellr blóðugt
á brjóst grami,
úrsvalt, innfjalgt,
ekka þrungit.

“Thou alone, Sigrun of Sevafjoll,
Art cause that Helgi with dew is heavy;
Gold-decked maid, thy tears are grievous,
[Sun-bright south-maid, ere thou sleepest;]
Each falls like blood on the hero's breast,
[Burned-out, cold, and crushed with care.]

46

Vel skulum drekka
dýrar veigar,
þótt misst hafim
munar ok landa;
skal engi maðr
angrljóð kveða,
þótt mér á brjósti
benjar líti;
nú eru brúðir
byrgðar í haugi,
lofða dísir,
hjá oss liðnum."

Well shall we drink a noble draught,
Though love and lands are lost to me;
No man a song of sorrow shall sing,
Though bleeding wounds are on my breast;
Now in the hill our brides we hold,
The heroes' loves, by their husbands dead.”

47

"Hér hefi ek þér, Helgi,
hvílu görva
angrlausa mjök,
Ylfinga niðr,
vil ek þér í faðmi,
fylkir, sofna
sem ek lofðungi
lifnum myndak."

“Here a bed I have made for thee, Helgi,
To rest thee from care, thou kin of the Ylfings;
I will make thee sink to sleep in my arms,
As once I lay with the living king.”

48

"Nú kveð ek enskis
örvænt vera
síð né snimma
at Sefafjöllum,
er þú á armi
ólifðum sefr,
hvít, í haugi,
Högna dóttir,
ok ertu kvik,
in konungborna.

“Now do I say that in Sevafjoll
Aught may happen, early or late,
Since thou sleepest clasped in a corpse's arms,
So fair in the hill, the daughter of Hogni!
[Living thou comest, a daughter of kings.]

49

Mál er mér at ríða
roðnar brautir,
láta fölvan jó
flugstíg troða;
skal ek fyr vestan
vindhjalms brúar,
áðr Salgófnir
sigrþjóð veki."

Now must I ride the reddened ways,
And my bay steed set to tread the sky;
Westward I go to wind-helm's bridges,
Ere Salgofnir wakes the warrior throng.”

50

"Kominn væri nú,
ef koma hygði,
Sigmundar burr
frá sölum Óðins;
kveð ek grams þinig
grænask vánir,
er á asklimum
ernir sitja
ok drífr drótt öll
draumþinga til."

“Now were he come, if come he might,
Sigmund's son, from Othin's seat;
Hope grows dim of the hero's return
When eagles sit on the ash-tree boughs,
And men are seeking the meeting of dreams.”

51

"Verðu eigi svá ær,
at ein farir,
dís skjöldunga,
draughúsa til;
verða öflgari
allir á nóttum
dauðir dolgar, mær,
en um daga ljósa."

“Mad thou wouldst seem alone to seek,
Daughter of heroes, the house of the dead;
For mightier now at night are all
The ghosts of the dead than when day is bright.”

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