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THE POETIC EDDA

Völundarkviða

The Lay of Völund

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

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Three brothers — among them Völund, the peerless smith — take swan-maidens, Valkyries, as their wives by the Wolf-Lake. For seven winters they live in happiness, but then the women long for battle and fly away. While his two brothers set out to seek their loves, Völund alone stays behind in Wolf-Dale, forging red gold and waiting for his wife to return. There the greedy King Nithuth has him seized in his sleep, cuts the sinews of his knees and forces him to smith on a lonely island. Völund's revenge is terrible: he lures the king's two sons to him, kills them, sets their skulls in silver as drinking-cups, makes gems of their eyes and a breast-brooch of their teeth, and violates the king's daughter Bothvild. At last, laughing, he rises into the air on wings he has fashioned, mockingly telling the king of his grief before he escapes. On the sources: the Old Norse follows the edition of Guðni Jónsson, the English that of Henry Adams Bellows (1923) — both public domain.

Old Norse	English – H. A. Bellows (1923)
1 <i>Meyjar flugu sunnan myrkvið í gögnum, Alvitr unga, örlög drýgja; þær á sævarströnd settusk at hvílask drósir suðrænar, dýrt lín spunnu.</i>	Maids from the south through Myrkwood flew, Fair and young, their fate to follow; On the shore of the sea to rest them they sat, The maids of the south, and flax they spun.
2 <i>Ein nam þeira Egil at verja, fögr mæf fira, faðmi ljósum; önnur var Svanhvít, svanfjaðrar dró, en in þriðja þeira systir varði hvítan hals Völundar.</i>	One in her arms took Egil then To her bosom white, the woman fair. Swan-White second — swan-feathers she wore — And her arms the third of the sisters threw Next round Völund's neck so white.
3 <i>Sátu síðan sjau vetr at þat, en inn átta allan þráðu, en inn níunda nauðr of skilði; meyjar fýstusk á myrkvan við, Alvitr unga, örlög drýgja.</i>	There did they sit for seven winters, In the eighth at last came their longing again, (And in the ninth did need divide them). The maidens yearned for the murky wood, The fair young maids, their fate to follow.
4 <i>Kom þar af veiði veðreygr skyti, Slagfiðr ok Egill, sali fundu auða, gengu út ok inn ok um sáusk; austur skreið Egill at Ölrúnu, en suðr Slagfiðr at Svanhvítu.</i>	Völund home from his hunting came, From a weary way, the weather-wise bowman, Slagfith and Egil the hall found empty, Out and in went they, everywhere seeking. East fared Egil after Olrun, And Slagfith south to seek for Swan-White.

- 5 *En einn Völundr
sat í Ulfdölum,
hann sló gull rautt
við gim fastan,
lukði hann alla
lind baugum vel;
svá beið hann
sinnar ljóssar
kvánar, ef hánur
koma gerði.*
- Völund alone in Ulfdalir lay.
Red gold he fashioned with fairest gems,
And rings he strung on ropes of bast;
So for his wife he waited long,
If the fair one home might come to him.
- 6 *Þat spyrr Níðuðr,
Níára dróttinn,
at einn Völundr
sat í Ulfdölum;
nóttum fóru seggir,
neglðar váru brynjur,
skildir bliku þeira
við inn skarða mána.*
- This Nithuth learned, the lord of the Njars,
That Völund alone in Ulfdalir lay;
By night went his men, their mail-coats were
studded,
Their shields in the waning moonlight shone.
- 7 *Stigu ór söðlum
at salar gafli,
gengu inn þaðan
endlangan sal;
sáu þeir á bast
bauga dregna,
sjau hundruð allra,
er sá seggr átti.*
- From their saddles the gable wall they sought,
And in they went at the end of the hall;
Rings they saw there on ropes of bast,
Seven hundred the hero had.
- 8 *Og þeir af tóku
ok þeir á létu,
fyr einn útan,
er þeir af létu.
Kom þar af veiði
veðreygr skyti,
Völundr, líðandi
um langan veg.*
- Off they took them, but all they left
Save one alone which they bore away.
Völund home from his hunting came,
From a weary way, the weather-wise bowman.
- 9 *Gekk hann brúnni
beru hold steikja,
ár brann hrísi
allþurr fura,
viðr inn vindþurri,
fyr Völundi.*
- A brown bear's flesh would he roast with fire;
Soon the wood so dry was burning well,
(The wind-dried wood that Völund's was).

10 *Sat á berfjalli,
bauga talði,
alfa ljóði,
eins saknaði;
hugði hann, at hefði
Hlöðvés dóttir,
Alvitr unga,
væri hon aftr komin.*

On the bearskin he rested, and counted the rings,
The master of elves, but one he missed;
That Hlothver's daughter had it he thought,
And the all-wise maid had come once more.

11 *Sat hann svá lengi,
at hann sofnaði,
ok hann vaknaði
viljalauss;
vissi sér á höndum
höfgar nauðir,
en á fótum
fjötur of spenntan.*

So long he sat that he fell asleep,
His waking empty of gladness was;
Heavy chains he saw on his hands,
And fetters bound his feet together.

12 *Hverir ro jöfrar,
þeir er á lögðu
besti bör síma
ok mik bundu?*

What men are they who thus have laid
Ropes of bast to bind me now?

13 *Hvar gaztu, Völundr,
vísi alfa,
vára aura
í Ulfdöllum?*

Then Nithuth called, the lord of the Njars:
How gottest thou, Völund, greatest of elves,
These treasures of ours in Ulfdalir?

14 *Gull var þar eigi
á Grana leiðu,
fjarri hugða ek vart land
fjöllum Rínar;
man ek, at vér meiri
mæti áttum,
er vér heil hjú
heima várum.*

The gold was not on Grani's way,
Far, methinks, is our realm from the hills of the
Rhine;
I mind me that treasures more we had
When happy together at home we were.

15 *Hlaðguðr ok Hervör
borin var Hlöðvé
kunn var Ölrún
Kíars dóttir.*

Hlathguth and Hervor, Hlothver's children,
And Orlun the Wise Kjar's daughter was.

16 *Úti stóð kunnig
kván Níðaðar,
hon inn of gekk
endlangan sal,
stóð á golfi,
stillti röddu:
Er-a sá nú hýrr,
er ór holti ferr.*

Without stood the wife of Nithuth wise,
And in she came from the end of the hall;
On the floor she stood, and softly spoke:
Not kind does he look who comes from the wood.

17 Ámun eru augu
ormi þeim inum frána,
tenn hánúm teygjask,
er hánúm er tét sverð
ok hann Böðvildar
baug of þekkir;
sníðið ér hann
sina magni
ok setið hann síðan
í Sævarstöð.

The glow of his eyes is like gleaming snakes,
His teeth he gnashes if now is shown
The sword, or Bothvild's ring he sees;
Let them straightway cut his sinews of strength,
And set him then in Sævarstath.

18 Skínn Níðaði
sverð á linda,
þat er ek hvessta,
sem ek hagast kunna
ok ek herðak,
sem mér hægst þótti;
sá er mér fránn mækir
æ fjarri borinn,
sékk-a ek þann Völundi
til smiðju borinn.

At Nithuth's girdle gleams the sword
That I sharpened keen with cunningest craft,
(And hardened the steel with highest skill;)
The bright blade far forever is borne,
(Nor back shall I see it borne to my smithy).

19 Nú berr Böðvildr
brúðar minnar
— bíðk-a ek þess bót —
bauga rauða.

Now Bothvild gets the golden ring
(That was once my bride's — ne'er well shall it be).

20 Sat hann, né hann svaf, ávallt
ok hann sló hamri;
vél gerði hann heldr
hvatt Níðaði.
Drifu ungir tveir
á dýr séa
synir Níðaðar,
í Sævarstöð.

He sat, nor slept, and smote with his hammer,
Fast for Nithuth wonders he fashioned;
Two boys did go in his door to gaze,
Nithuth's sons, into Sævarstath.

21 Kómu þeir til kistu,
kröfðu lukla,
opin var illúð
er þeir í sáu;
fjölð var þar menja,
er þeim mögum sýndisk
at væri gull rautt
ok görsimar.

They came to the chest, and they craved the keys,
The evil was open when in they looked;
To the boys it seemed that gems they saw,
Gold in plenty and precious stones.

- 22 *Komið einir tveir,
komið annars dags;
ykkir læt ek þat gull
of gefit verða;
segið-a meyjum
né salþjóðum,
manni engum,
at it mik fyndið.*
- 23 *Snemma kallaði
seggr annan,
bróðir á bróður:
Göngum baug séa!
Kómu til kistu,
kröfðu lukla,
opin var illúð,
er þeir í litu.*
- 24 *Sneið af höfuð
húna þeira
ok und fen fjöturs
fætr of lagði;
en þær skálar,
er und skörum váru,
sveip hann útan silfri,
seldi Níðaði.*
- 25 *En ór augum
jarknasteina
sendi hann kunnigri
konu Níðaðar,
en ór tönnum
tveggja þeira
sló hann brjóstkringlur
sendi Böðvildi.*
- 26 *Þá nam Böðvildr
baugi at hrósa
...
[þar hann Völundi],
er brotit hafði:
þorig-a ek at segja
nema þér einum.*
- 27 *Ek bæti svá
brest á gulli
at feðr þínum
fegri þykkir
ok mæðr þinni
miklu betri
ok sjálfri þér
at sama hófi.*
- Come ye alone, the next day come,
Gold to you both shall then be given;
Tell not the maids or the men of the hall,
To no one say that me you have sought.
- Early did brother to brother call:
Swift let us go the rings to see.
They came to the chest, and they craved the keys,
The evil was open when in they looked.
- He smote off their heads, and their feet he hid
Under the sooty straps of the bellows.
Their skulls, once hid by their hair, he took,
Set them in silver and sent them to Nithuth.
- Gems full fair from their eyes he fashioned,
To Nithuth's wife so wise he gave them.
And from the teeth of the twain he wrought
A brooch for the breast, to Bothvild he sent it.
- Bothvild then of her ring did boast:
The ring I have broken,
I dare not say it save to thee.
- I shall weld the break in the gold so well
That fairer than ever thy father shall find it,
And better much thy mother shall think it,
And thou no worse than ever it was.

- 28 *Bar hann hana bjóri,
því at hann betr kunni
svá at hon í sessi
of sofnaði.
Nú hef ek hefnt
harma minna
allra nema einna
íviðgjarna.*
- 29 *Vel ek, kvað Völundr,
verða ek á fitjum
þeim er mik Níðaðar
námu rekkar.
Hlæjandi Völundr
hófsk at lofti,
grátandi Böðvildr
gekk ór eyju,
tregði för friðils
ok föður reiði.*
- 30 *Úti stendr kunnig
kván Níðaðar,
ok hon inn of gekk
endlangan sal,
— en hann á salgarð
settisk at hvílask —:
Vakir þú, Níðuðr
Níara dróttinn?*
- 31 *Vaki ek ávallt
viljalauss,
sofna ek minnst
síz mína sonu dauða;
kell mik í höfuð,
köld eru mér ráð þín,
vilnumk ek þess nú,
at ek við Völund dæma.*
- 32 *Seg þú mér þat, Völundr,
vísi alfa,
af heilum hvat varð
húnum mínum.*
- Beer he brought, he was better in cunning,
Until in her seat full soon she slept.
Now vengeance I have for all my hurts,
Save one alone, on the evil woman.
- Quoth Völund: Would that well were the sinews
Maimed in my feet by Nithuth's men.
Laughing Völund rose aloft,
Weeping Bothvild went from the isle,
For her lover's flight and her father's wrath.
- Without stood the wife of Nithuth wise,
And in she came from the end of the hall;
But he by the wall in weariness sat:
Wakest thou, Nithuth, lord of the Njars?
- Always I wake, and ever joyless,
Little I sleep since my sons were slain;
Cold is my head, cold was thy counsel,
One thing, with Völund to speak, I wish.
- Answer me, Völund, greatest of elves,
What happed with my boys that hale once were?

33 *Eiða skaltu mér áðr
alla vinna,
at skips borði
ok at skjaldar rönd,
at mars bægi
ok at mækis egg,
at þú kvelj-at
kván Völundar
né brúði minni
at bana verðir,
þótt vér kván eigim,
þá er ér kunnið,
eiða jóð eigim
innan hallar.*

First shalt thou all the oaths now swear,
By the rail of ship, and the rim of shield,
By the shoulder of steed, and the edge of sword,
That to Völund's wife thou wilt work no ill,
Nor yet my bride to her death wilt bring,
Though a wife I should have that well thou knowest,
And a child I should have within thy hall.

34 *Gakk þú til smiðju,
þeirar er þú gerðir,
þar fiðr þú belgi
blóði stokkna;
sneið ek af höfuð
húna þinna,
ok und fen fjöturs
fætr of lagðak.*

Seek the smithy that thou didst set,
Thou shalt find the bellows sprinkled with blood;
I smote off the heads of both thy sons,
And their feet 'neath the sooty straps I hid.

35 *En þær skálar,
er und skörum váru,
sveip ek útan silfri,
selda ek Níðaði;
en ór augum
jarknasteina
senda ek kunnigri
kván Níðaðar.*

Their skulls, once hid by their hair, I took,
Set them in silver and sent them to Nithuth;
Gems full fair from their eyes I fashioned,
To Nithuth's wife so wise I gave them.

36 *En úr tönnum
tveggja þeira
sló ek brjóstkringlur,
senda ek Böðvildi;
nú gengr Böðvildr
barni aukin,
eingadóttir
ykkur beggja.*

And from the teeth of the twain I wrought
A brooch for the breast, to Bothvild I gave it;
Now big with child does Bothvild go,
The only daughter ye two had ever.

37 *Mæltir-a þú þat mál,
er mik meir tregi,
né ek þik vilja, Völundr,
verr of níta;
er-at svá maðr hár,
at þik af hesti taki,
né svá öflugr,
at þik neðan skjóti,
þar er þú skollir
við ský uppi.*

Never spakest thou word that worse could hurt me,
Nor that made me, Völund, more bitter for
vengeance;
There is no man so high from thy horse to take
thee,
Or so doughty an archer as down to shoot thee,
While high in the clouds thy course thou takest.

38 *Hlæjandi Völundr
hófsk at lofti,
en ókátr Níðuðr
sat þá eftir.*

Laughing Völund rose aloft,
But left in sadness Nithuth sat.

39 *Upp ristu, Þakkráðr,
þræll minn inn bezt,
bið þú Böðvildi,
meyna bráhvítu,
ganga fagrvarið
við föður ræða.*

Rise up, Thakkrath, best of my thralls,
Bid Bothvild come, the bright-browed maid,
Bedecked so fair, with her father to speak.

40 *Er þat satt, Böðvildr,
er sögðu mér:
Sátuð it Völundr
saman í holmi?*

Is it true, Bothvild, that which was told me;
Once in the isle with Völund wert thou?

41 *Satt er þat, Níðuðr,
er sagði þér:
Sátum vit Völundr
saman í holmi
eina ögurstund,
æva skyldi;
ek vætr hánú
vinna kunnak,
ek vætr hánú
vinna máttak.*

True is it, Nithuth, that which was told thee,
Once in the isle with Völund was I,
An hour of lust, alas it should be!
Nought was my might with such a man,
Nor from his strength could I save myself.

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