



THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT



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Edward Pettit, *The Poetic Edda: A Dual-Language Edition*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0308>

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Digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0308#resources>

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80064-772-5

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80064-773-2

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80064-774-9

ISBN Digital ebook (EPUB): 978-1-80064-775-6

ISBN Digital ebook (AZW3): 978-1-80064-776-3

ISBN XML: 978-1-80064-777-0

ISBN HTML: 978-1-80064-778-7

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0308

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Back cover image: The god Heimdallr blowing his horn, from a seventeenth-century Icelandic manuscript (AM 738 4to, fol. 35v)

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Helgakviða Hundingsbana ǫnnur

Helgakviða Hundingsbana ǫnnur (*HH. II*) ‘The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingsbani’, on fol. 24r–26v of **R**, is the second of two compositions in this manuscript about the legendary hero Helgi Hundingsbani. They are separated by *HHv.*, about another Helgi—Helgi Hjǫrvarðsson, who gave his name to, and was possibly thought to have been reborn as, Helgi Hundingsbani.

HH. II is another *prosimetrum*—that is, a mixture of prose and poetry. Its verses are in *fornyrðislag*, except for one stanza of *ljóðaháttir* (23 [29]). The work gives an overall somewhat scrappy and secondary impression, due to certain groups of stanzas appearing out of their logical narrative order, the artlessness of the prose, and the explicit reliance on separate sources. Nevertheless, *HH. II* rewards attention by including many noteworthy details, scenes and themes. Among these are Helgi’s disguise, effectively as wolf in sheep’s clothing, in the court of his enemy, King Hundingr; Helgi’s treacherous killing by his brother-in-law, Dagr, with the spear of Óðinn; Dagr’s consequent cursing by his sister, Sigrún, Helgi’s valkyrie-wife; her eulogy of Helgi in terms of a young solar stag; Helgi’s joint rule with Óðinn in the afterlife; the dead Helgi’s ride to his burial-mound, and his meeting with the living Sigrún inside it; and the concluding revelation that Helgi and Sigrún were believed to have been reincarnated.

Three other Eddic poems are mentioned as sources for *HH. II*: the ancient *Vǫlsungakviða* ‘Poem of the Vǫlsungar’, which is lost; *Helgakviða* ‘Helgi’s Poem’, by which is apparently meant *HH. I*, a work which *HH. II* may partly paraphrase in prose and with which it displays obvious parallels, including a shorter version of the flying between Sinfjǫtli and Guðmundr; and *Káru ljóð* ‘Kára’s Song’, also lost.

Synopsis

Prose: An opening passage introduces the poem’s hero, Helgi, as the son of Sigmundr and Borghildr. It describes strife between Sigmundr and Hundingr, king of Hundland, and how Helgi spied out Hundingr’s court.

Verse: Helgi boasts that Hundingr failed to spot him (1).

Prose: A prose passage records how Hundingr again tried to find Helgi, but that his men failed to see through his disguise as a milling slave-girl, despite prompting by a certain Blindr (possibly Óðinn) (2–3). Hundingr’s men apparently accepted the explanation of Helgi’s foster-father, Hagall, that the mighty slave-girl was a valkyrie whom Helgi had captured (4).

Another prose passage records Helgi's escape and killing of Hundigr. A valkyrie called Sigrún then rides to Helgi's ships and they converse.

Verse: Helgi tries to conceal his identity from Sigrún, but she finally reveals that she already knows it (5–13).

Prose: More prose introduces King Granmarr and his sons Hǫðbroddr, Guðmundr and Starkaðr. Hǫðbroddr is betrothed to Sigrún, but she immediately goes to Helgi, who has just killed the sons of Hundigr. She kisses Helgi and they converse.

Verse: Sigrún declares her love for Helgi, and explains that she has been promised to Hǫðbroddr but wants him instead (14–17). Helgi, who reciprocates her love, tells her not to worry (18).

Prose: The next prose section records Helgi's journey to Frekasteinn, accompanied by lightning and valkyries. Guðmundr, we learn, saw the advancing fleet and asked who led it, and Sinfjǫtli, Helgi's brother, replied. The two sides then fought and all of Granmarr's sons and chieftains fell, except Dagr, who swore oaths to the Vǫlsungar. Sigrún found Hǫðbroddr dying.

Verse: Sigrún gloats that Hǫðbroddr won't have her now (19). Instead, she joyfully finds Helgi, who reveals, however, that he has killed her kin (20–22). He comforts her, and she laments her loss (23).

Verse: Abruptly, and out of chronological sequence, the scene then returns to Guðmundr (whose death has already been noted).¹ Four stanzas of flyting between him and Sinfjǫtli follow (an exchange also noted earlier) (24–27), and two in which Helgi says Sinfjǫtli would do better to fight than to insult, and that Granmarr's sons, though unimpressive, are not negligible (28–29).

Prose: Another prose passage records the marriage of Helgi and Sigrún. This is immediately followed by Helgi's death at the hands of Dagr, who slew him in a grove with the spear of Óðinn.

Verse: Dagr reluctantly tells Sigrún, his sister, of his killing of Helgi (30), whereupon she curses him (31–33). He tries to excuse himself by blaming Óðinn (34), and offers her compensation (35). She expresses her misery and laments Helgi (36–38).

Prose: A brief passage records the making of a burial-mound for Helgi, and his arrival in Valhǫll, where Óðinn invites him to rule at his side.

Verse: Helgi immediately assigns Hundigr demeaning tasks (39).

Prose: The focus then shifts to a serving-woman of Sigrún, who sees Helgi riding to his burial-mound with a host of men.

Verse: She wonders if it is an illusion or a sign of Ragnarok, which Helgi denies (40–41). The serving-woman informs Sigrún (42), who enters the mound and elatedly

1 This disorientating misplacement is probably due to a change of mind by the compiler of *R*, who composed at least some of the prose passages. He had initially decided not to quote the flyting between Guðmundr and Sinfjǫtli because he thought it was the same as that in *HH. I* (hence 'Sinfjǫtli, Sigmundr's son, answered, and that is also written [i.e., in *HH. I*]'); but subsequently he noticed significant differences and decided to include *HH. II*'s version, unfortunately in the wrong place; see Harris, 'Eddic Poetry', pp. 215–18.

addresses her husband, but is aghast at his physical condition (43–44). Helgi notes her grief and expresses his delight at her coming (45–46). Sigrún makes his bed in the barrow, and falls asleep in his embrace (47–48). He, however, has to return to Valhøll before cock-crow (49).

Prose: Helgi and his men and the women return to their respective homes, but Sigrún has her serving-woman watch the grave-mound the following evening. Sigrún herself arrives at sunset.

Verse: Her serving-women (or Sigrún herself) declares that now that eagles and humans are sleeping, hopes that Helgi would return are fading (50). The serving-woman warns Sigrún not to enter the mound alone at night due to the nocturnal power of undead enemies (51).

Prose: A final passage records Sigrún's death from grief soon after. It also states that both she and Helgi were supposedly reborn, as Helgi Haddingjaskaði and Kára, daughter of Hálfdan, if only according to what is now considered an old wives' tale.

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Helgakviða Hundingsbana 9nnur

Frá Völsungum

Sigmundur konungur, Völsungs sonur, átti Borghildi af Brálundi. Þau hétu son sinn Helga, ok eptir Helga Hjórvardssyni. Helga fóstaði Hagall.

Hundingur hét ríkr konungur. Við hann er Hundland kent. Hann var hermaðr mikill ok átti marga sonu, þá er í hernaði váru.

Ófriðr ok dylgjur váru á milli þeira Hundings konungs ok Sigmundar konungs. Drápu hvárir annarra frændr. Sigmundur konungur ok hans ættmenn hétu Völsungar ok Ylfingar.

Helgi fór ok njósnaði til hirðar Hundings konungs á laun. Høemingur, sonur Hundings konungs, var heima. En er Helgi fór í brot, þá hitti hann hjarðarsvein ok kvað:

1. 'Segðu Høemingi at Helgi man,
hvern í brynju bragnar feldu;
ér úlf grán inni høfðuð,
þar er Hamal hugði Hundingur konungur!'

Hamall hét sonur Hagals. Hundingur konungur sendi menn til Hagals at leita Helga. En Helgi mátti eigi forðask annan veg en tók klæði ambáttar ok gekk at mala. Þeir leituðu ok fundu eigi Helga. Þá kvað Blindur inn þölvísi:

2. 'Hvöss eru augu í Hagals þýju —
era þat karls ætt er á kvernum stendr;
steinar rífna, stökkur lúðr fyrir!

3. 'Nú hefir hørð dæmi hildingur þegit,
er vísi skal valbygg mala;
heldr er sœmri hendi þeiri
meðalkafli en mōndultré!'

4. Hagall svaraði ok kvað:
'Þat er lítil vá, þótt lúðr þrumi,
er mæru konungs mōndul hrœrir;
hon skævaði skýjum efri
ok vega þorði sem víkingar,
áðr hana Helgi høptu gørði;
systir er hon þeira Sigars ok Høgna,
því hefir øtul augu Ylfinga man!'

Undan komsk Helgi ok fór á herskip. Hann feldi Hunding konung ok var síðan kallaðr Helgi Hundingsbani. Hann lá með her sinn í Brunavágum ok hafði þar strandhögg, ok átu þar hrátt.

Høgni hét konungur. Hans dóttir var Sigrún. Hon varð valkyrja ok reið lopt ok lög. Hon var svá endrborin. Sigrún reið at skipum Helga ok kvað:

The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingsbani

About the Völsungar

King Sigmundr, Völsungr's son, married Borghildr from Brálundr. They called their son Helgi, and [that was] after Helgi Hjórvardósson.¹ Hagall² fostered Helgi.

There was a powerful king called Hundingr. Hundland is named after him. He was a great warrior and had many sons, who were raiding.

There was strife and hostility between King Hundingr and King Sigmundr. They slew each other's kinsmen. King Sigmundr and his relatives were called Völsungar and Ylfingar.

Helgi went and reconnoitred King Hundingr's court in secret. Høemingr, son of King Hundingr, was at home. And when Helgi went away, then he met a herd-boy and said:

1. 'Say to Høemingr that Helgi remembers
 who, in a mail-coat, the men felled;³
 you had a grey wolf in your house,
 where King Hundingr thought of Hamall!⁴

Hamall was the name of Hagall's son. King Hundingr sent men to Hagall to look for Helgi. And Helgi could save himself in no other way than by taking the clothes of a serving maid and going to mill. They searched and did not find Helgi. Then Blindr the 'harm-wise'⁵ said:

2. 'Sharp are the eyes in Hagall's slave-girl —
 it's not a churl's kin who stands at the quern;
 the stones are riven, the stand breaks apart before [her]!

3. 'Now the ruler has received a harsh fate,
 when the leader must mill foreign barley;
 a sword-hilt⁶ is more seemly for that hand
 than a mill-handle-tree!'

Hagall answered and said:

4. 'It means little,⁷ even though the mill thunders,
 when a king's maid turns the mill-handle;
 she hurried along, higher than the clouds,
 and dared to fight as vikings do,⁸
 before Helgi held her captive;
 she's the sister of Sigarr and Høgni,⁹
 which is why the Ylfingar's girl has terrible eyes!'

Helgi escaped and went to the warships. He felled King Hundingr and thereafter was called Helgi *Hundingsbani* 'Hundingr's Slayer'. He lay with his army in Brunavágar,¹⁰ and there on the shore slew cattle stolen on a raid,¹¹ and they ate them raw there.

There was a king called Høgni. His daughter was Sigrún. She became¹² a valkyrie and rode sky and sea. She was reborn that way.¹³ Sigrún rode to Helgi's ships and said:

5. 'Hverir láta fljóta fley við bakka?
Hvar, hermegir, heima eiguð?
Hvers bíðið ér í Brunavágum?
Hvert lystir yðr leið at kanna?'
6. 'Hamall lætr fljóta fley við bakka,
eigum heima í Hléseyju;
bíðum byrjar í Brunavágum —
austr lystir oss leið at kanna!'
7. 'Hvar hefir þú, hilmir, hildi vakða
eða gögl alin Gunnar systra?
Hví er brynja þín blóði stokkin?
Hví skal und hjálmum hrátt kjöt eta?'
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.
9. 'Nú er sagt, mæ'r, hvaðan sakar gørdusk;
því var á legi mér lítt steikt etit.'
10. 'Víg lýsir þú! Varð fyr Helga
Hundingr konungr hníga at velli;
bar sókn saman, er sefa hefnduð,
ok busti blóð á Brimis eggjar.'
11. 'Hvat vissir þú, at þeir sé,
snót svinnhuguð, er sefa hefndu?
Margir ru hvassir hildings synir
ok ámunir ossum niðjum.'
12. 'Varka ek fjarri, fólks oddviti,
gær á morgun, grams aldrlokum;
þó tel ek slægjan Sigmundar bur,
er í valrúnum vígspjöll segir!
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 Høgna mæ'r Helga kennir!'

Granmarr hét ríkr konungr er bjó at Svarinshaugi. Hann átti marga sonu: Høðbroddr, annarr Guðmundr, þriði Starkaðr. Høðbroddr var í konungastefnu. Hann fastnaði sér Sigrúnu, Høgna dóttur. En er hon spyr þat, þá reið hon með valkyrjur um lopt ok um lög at leita Helga.

5. ‘Who lets ships float by the shore?
Where, warriors, do you have homes?
What are you waiting for in Brunavágar?
Where do you want to set a course?’
- 6.¹⁴ ‘Hamall lets ships float by the shore,
we have homes on Hlésey;¹⁵
we’re awaiting a fair wind in Brunavágar —
we want to set a course eastward!’
7. ‘Where, ruler, have you awoken battle
or nourished the goslings of Gunnr’s sisters?¹⁶
Why is your mail-coat besmirched with blood?
Why, beneath your helms, must you eat raw meat?’
8. ‘Most recently, the kinsman of the Ylfingar¹⁷ fought anew
west of the sea, if you want to know,
when I captured bears¹⁸ in Bragalundr¹⁹
and sated the family of eagles with spear-points.²⁰
9. ‘Now it’s been said, maiden, whence strife came about;
that’s why it was [that], by the sea, I had eaten meat scarcely roasted.’²¹
10. ‘You’re declaring a manslaughter!²² It was before Helgi
that King Hundingr sank down on the field;
a battle began in which you²³ avenged a kinsman,²⁴
and blood streamed along Brimir’s edges.’²⁵
11. ‘How do you know, wise-minded woman,
that they are [those] who avenged a kinsman?²⁶
There are many keen sons of a warrior
and similar to our kinsmen.’
12. ‘I wasn’t far, army’s point-wise one,²⁷
yesterday morning, from the leader’s²⁸ life’s-end;
yet I reckon Sigmundr’s son [to be] sly,
when he tells²⁹ war-stories in slaughter-runes!³⁰
13. ‘I saw you once before on longships,
when you settled in the bloody stems
and the drizzle-cool waves sported;
now the descendant of Dagr³¹ wants to conceal himself before me,
but Hǫgni’s maiden recognizes Helgi!’

There was a powerful king called Granmarr who lived at Svarinshaugr.³² He had many sons: Hǫðbroddr, second Guðmundr, third Starkaðr.³³ Hǫðbroddr was at a meeting of kings. He betrothed himself to Sigrún, Hǫgni’s daughter. But when she heard that, she rode with valkyries through sky and over sea to look for Helgi.

Helgi var þá at Logafjöllum ok hafði barisk við Hundings sonu. Þar feldi hann þá Álf ok Eyjólf, Hjørvarð ok Hervarð, ok var hann allvígmóðr, ok sat undir Arasteini. Þar hitti Sigrún hann ok rann á háls honum ok kysti hann ok sagði honum erindi sitt, svá sem segir í 'Völsungakviðu inni fornu':

14. Sótti Sigrún sikling glaðan,
heim nam hon Helga hǫnd at sækja;
kysti ok kvaddi konung und hjálmi,
þá varð hilmi hugr á vífi.
15. Fyrr létz hon unna af öllum hug
syni Sigmundar, en hon sét hafði.
16. 'Var ek Hǫðbroddi í her fǫstnuð,
en jǫfur annan eiga vildak;
þó sjámk, fylkir, frænda reiði;
hefi ek míns fǫður munráð brotit!'
17. Nama Hǫgna mæR of hug mæla;
hafa kvazk hon Helga hylly skyldu.
18. 'Hirð eigi þú Hǫgna reiði,
né illan hug ættar þinnar!
Þú skalt, mæR ung, at mér lifa!
Ætt áttu, in góða, er ek eigi sjámk!'

Helgi samnaði þá miklum skipaher ok fór til Frekasteins, ok fengu í hafi ofviðri mannhætt. Þá kvómu leiptr yfir þá, ok stóðu geislar í skipin. Þeir sá í loptinu at valkyrjur níu riðu, ok kendu þeir Sigrúnu. Þá lægði storminn ok kvómu þeir heilir til lands.

Granmars synir sátu á bjargi nökkoru er skipin sigldu at landi. Guðmundr hljóp á hest ok reið á njósn á bergit við hǫfnina. Þá hlóðu Völsungar seglum. Þá kvað Guðmundr, svá sem fyrr er ritat í 'Helgakviðu':

'Hverr er fylkir, sá er flota stýrir,
ok feiknalið færir at landi?'

Sinfjötli, Sigmundar sonr, svaraði, ok er þat enn ritat. Guðmundr reið heim með hersögu. Þá sǫmnuðu Granmars synir her. Kómu þar margir konungar. Þar var Hǫgni, faðir Sigrúnar, ok synir hans Bragi ok Dagr. Þar var orrosta mikil, ok fellu allir Granmars synir ok allir þeira hǫfðingjar, nema Dagr, Hǫgna sonr, fekk gríð ok vann eiða Völsungum. Sigrún gekk í valinn ok hitti Hǫðbrodd at kominn dauða. Hon kvað:

- 19 [25]. 'Muna þér Sigrún frá Sevafjöllum,
Hǫðbroddr konungr, hníga at armi!
Liðin er ævi — opt nár hrævi
gránstóð gríðar — Granmars sona!'

Helgi was then at Logafjöll³⁴ and had fought with Hundinger's sons. There he felled Álfr and Eyjólf, Hjørvarðr³⁵ and Hervarðr,³⁶ and he was exhausted from battle, and he sat beneath Arasteinn.³⁷ There Sigrún met him and threw her arms round his neck and kissed him and told him her errand, just as it says in 'the ancient *Völsungakviða* ["Lay of the Völsungar"]':³⁸

14. Sigrún sought the glad prince,
 she sought Helgi's hand;
she kissed and greeted the king beneath his helm,
then the prince's³⁹ heart warmed to the woman.
15. She said she had loved Sigmundr's son
 with all her heart before she had seen him.
16. 'I was betrothed to Höðbroddr on a campaign,
 but I wanted to have another boar;⁴⁰
yet, marshal, I dread the wrath of kinsmen;
I have broken my father's dearest wish!'
17. Högni's maid didn't speak contrary to her feelings;⁴¹
 she said she should have Helgi's favour.
18. 'Pay no heed to Högni's wrath,
 nor the ill feeling of your family!
You must, young maiden, live with me!
You have a family, good [lady], which I don't fear!'

Helgi then gathered a great fleet of ships and went to Frekasteinn, and heavy storms, dangerous to men, seized them in the sea. Then lightnings came over them, and rays of light shone into the ships. They⁴² saw in the sky that nine valkyries were riding, and they recognized Sigrún. Then the storm abated and they came safely to land.

Granmarr's sons were sitting on a certain cliff when the ships sailed to land. Guðmundr leapt on his horse and rode on reconnaissance to the cliff by the haven. Then the Völsungar lowered the sails. Then Guðmundr said, as is written earlier in *Helgakviða* 'Helgi's Poem':

'Who is the marshal who steers this fleet,
and leads a fell force to land?'⁴³

Sinfjötli, Sigmundr's son, answered, and that is also written.⁴⁴ Guðmundr rode home with news of the army. Then Granmarr's sons mustered an army. Many kings came there. There was Högni, father of Sigrún, and his sons Bragi⁴⁵ and Dagr.⁴⁶ There was a great battle, and all of Granmarr's sons fell and all of their chieftains, except Dagr, Högni's son, accepted immunity and swore oaths to the Völsungar. Sigrún went among the slain and came upon Höðbroddr at the point of death. She said:

- 19 [25].⁴⁷ 'Sigrún from Sevafjöll⁴⁸ will not
 sink into your arms, King Höðbroddr!
Spent is the life — the grey steeds of a giantess⁴⁹
 often get a corpse — of Granmarr's sons!'

Þá hitti hon Helga ok varð allfegin.

- Hann kvað:
- 20 [26]. ‘Erat þér at ǫllu, alvittr, gefit,
þó kveð ek nøkkvi Nornir valda:
felli í morgun at Frekasteini
Bragi ok Hǫgni — varð ek bani þeira.
- 21 [27]. ‘En at Styrkleifum Starkaðr konungr,
en at Hlébjörgum Hrollaug's synir;
þann sá ek gylfa grimmúðgastan,
er barðisk bolr, var á brot hǫfuð!
- 22 [28]. ‘Liggja at jörðu allra flestir
niðjar þínir, at nám orðnir;
vantattu vígi, var þér þat skapat
at þú at rógi ríkmenni vart.’

Þá grét Sigrún.

- Hann kvað:
- 23 [29]. ‘Huggastu, Sigrún! “Hildir” hefir þú oss verit;
vinnat Skjöldungar skǫpum!’
‘Lifna mynda ek nú kjósa, er liðnir eru,
ok knætta ek þér þó í faðmi felask!’
- Þetta kvað Guðmundr, Granmars sonr:
- 24 [19]. ‘Hverr er Skjöldungr, sá er skipum stýrir?
Lætr gunnfana gullinn fyrir stafni;
þikkja mér friðr í farar broddi;
verpr vígroða um víkinga.’
- Sinfjötli kvað:
- 25 [20]. ‘Hér má Hǫðbroddr Helga kenna,
flóttu trauðan, í flota miðjum;
hann hefir eðli ættar þinnar,
arf Fjǫrsunga, und sik þrungit.’
- 26 [21]. ‘Því fyrr skulu at Frekasteini
sáttir saman um sakar dæma;
mál er, Hǫðbroddr, hefnd at vinna,
ef vér lægra hlut lengi bárum!’

Then she came upon Helgi and was overjoyed.

He said:

20 [26]. 'You've not been given entirely good luck, alien creature,
yet I declare that the Nornir caused this, in part:
there fell this morning at Frekasteinn
Bragi and Hǫgni — I was their slayer.

21 [27]. 'And at Styrkleifar,⁵⁰ King Starkaðr [fell],
and at Hlébjörg,⁵¹ Hrollaugr's sons,⁵²
I saw that most grim-minded ruler,
when his trunk fought — his head was gone!⁵³

22 [28]. 'There lie on the earth almost all
of your kinsmen, turned into corpses;
you couldn't prevent the battle, for you it was decreed
that you were the source of strife for powerful men.'

Then Sigrún wept.

He said:

23 [29]. 'Comfort yourself, Sigrún! You have been a "Hildir"⁵⁴ to us;
Skjöldungar⁵⁵ cannot escape fate!
'Now I would choose that those should live, who have passed away,
and I could yet conceal myself in your embrace!'

24 [19]. Guðmundr, Granmarr's son, said this:⁵⁶
'Who is the Skjöldungr, the one who steers the ships?
He lets a golden battle-standard [fly] before the stem;
it doesn't seem to me that peace is at the forefront of your voyage;
a battle-redness is cast over the vikings.'⁵⁷

Sinfjötli said:

25 [20]. 'Here Hǫðbroddr can recognize Helgi,
averse to flight, in the middle of the fleet;
he has subjugated to himself
your family's homeland, the inheritance of the Fjǫrsungar.'⁵⁸

26 [21]. 'Before that [comes about], at Frekasteinn
they⁵⁹ shall be reconciled through discussion of the dispute,⁶⁰
it's time, Hǫðbroddr, to take vengeance,
if we bear the lower part for long!⁶¹

- 27 [22]. ‘Fyrr mundu, Guðmundr, geitr um halda,
ok bergskorar brattar klífa,
hafa þér í hendi heslikylfu —
þat er þér blíðara en Brimis dómar!’
- 28 [23]. ‘Þér er, Sinfjötli, sœmra myklu
gunni at heyja ok glaða ǫrnu,
en ónýtum orðum at deila,
þótt hildingar heiptir deili!
- 29 [24]. ‘Þikkit mér góðir Granmars synir,
þó dugir siklingum satt at mæla:
þeir merkt hafa á Móinsheimum
at hug hafa hjörum at bregða;
eru hildingar hølzti snjallir!’

Helgi fekk Sigrúnar ok áttu þau sonu; var Helgi eigi gamall. Dagr, Högna sonr, blótaði Óðin til fǫðurhefnda. Óðinn léði Dag geirs síns. Dagr fann Helga, mág sinn, þar sem heitir at Fjöturlundi. Hann lagði í gögnum Helga með geirnum. Þar fell Helgi. En Dagr reið til fjalla ok sagði Sigrúnu tíðindi:

30. ‘Trauðr em ek, systir, trega þér at segja,
þvíat ek hefi nauðigr nipti grœtta:
fell í morgun und Fjöturlundi
buðlungr, sá er var beztr í heimi
ok hildingum á hálsi stóð.’
31. ‘Þik skyli allir eiðar bíta,
þeir er Helga hafðir unna,
at ínu ljósa Leiptrar vatni
ok at úrsvølum Unnar steini!
32. ‘Skríðiat þat skip, er und þér skríði,
þótt óskabyrr eptir leggisk!
Rennia sá marr, er und þér renni,
þóttu fjáendr þína forðask eigir!
33. ‘Bítia þér þat sverð, er þú bregðir,
nema sjálfum þér syngvi um hǫfði!
Þá væri þér hefnt Helga dauða,
ef þú værir vargr á viðum úti,
auðs andvani ok alls gamans,
hefðir eigi mat, nema á hræum spryngir!’

27 [22]. ‘Before that, Guðmundr, you’d tend goats,
 and scale steep rock-gorges,
 have in your hand a hazel stick —
that’s pleasanter for you than Brimir’s judgements!’⁶²

28 [23].⁶³ ‘For you, Sinfjötli, it’s much more seemly
 to wage war and to gladden eagles
 than to deal in useless words,
 even if the warriors deal in hatreds!’⁶⁴

29 [24]. ‘Granmarr’s sons don’t seem good to me,
 yet it befits princes to speak truly:
 they’ve made it clear at Móinsheimar,
 that they have the spirit to wield swords,⁶⁵
 the warriors are far too brave!’

Helgi married Sigrún and they had sons; Helgi was not old. Dagr, Hǫgni’s son, sacrificed to Óðinn to avenge his father. Óðinn lent Dagr his spear. Dagr found Helgi, his brother-in-law, at the place called Fjöturlundr.⁶⁶ He ran Helgi through with the spear.⁶⁷ There Helgi fell.⁶⁸ And Dagr rode to the fell and told Sigrún the news:

30. ‘I am loath, sister, to tell you of sorrows,
as, against my will, I have to make my kinswoman weep:
 there fell this morning beneath Fjöturlundr
a descendant of Buðli, the one who was best in the world
 and [who] stood on the necks of warriors.’

31. ‘All the oaths shall bite you,
 those which you had sworn to Helgi,
 by the lustrous water of Leiptr⁶⁹
 and by the drizzle-cool stone of Unnr!’⁷⁰

32. ‘May the ship not glide, which glides beneath you,
 even if a fair wind lies behind it!
May the steed not run, which runs beneath you,
 even if you have to escape your enemies!’

33. ‘May the sword not bite for you, which you brandish,
 unless it sing above your own head!
Then Helgi’s death would be avenged on you,
 if you were a wolf⁷¹ out in the woods,
 devoid of wealth and of all pleasure,
[if you] had no food, unless you burst [from feeding] on corpses!’

Dagr kvað:

34. 'Ær ertu, systir, ok ørvita,
er þú bræðr þínum biðr forskapa!
Einn veldr Óðinn öllu þölví,
þvíat með sífjungum sakrúnar bar!
35. 'Þér býðr bróðir bauga rauða,
öllum Vandilsvé ok Vígdali;
hafðu hálfan heim harms at gjöldum,
brúðr baugvarið, ok burir þínir!'
36. 'Sitka ek svá sæl at Sevafjöllum,
ár né um nætr, at ek una lífi,
nema at liði lofðungs ljóma bregði,
renni und vísa Víglætr þínig,
gullbitli vanr, knega ek grami fagna!
37. 'Svá hafði Helgi hrædda gorrva
fjáendr sína alla ok frændr þeira,
sem fyr úlfi óðar rynni
geitr af fjalli, geiska fullar!
38. 'Svá bar Helgi af hildingum
sem ítrskapaðr askr af þyrni,
eða sá dýrkálfr, döggu slunginn,
er øfri ferr öllum dýrum,
ok horn glóa við himin sjálfan!'

Haugr var gørr eptir Helga. En er hann kom til Valhallar, þá bauð Óðinn honum öllu at ráða með sér.

Helgi kvað:

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

Ambótt Sigrúnar gekk um aptan hjá haugi Helga, ok sá at Helgi reið til haugsins með marga menn.

Ambótt kvað:

40. 'Hvart eru þat svik ein, er ek sjá þikkjumk,
eða ragna rök — ríða menn dauðir,
er jóa yðra oddum keyrið —
eða er hildingum heimförf gefin?'

Dagr said:

34. 'You're mad, sister, and out of your mind,⁷²
when you invoke an evil fate for your brother!
Óðinn alone is the cause of all the misfortune,
for he bore strife-runes among relatives!
35. 'Your brother⁷³ offers you red rings,
all Vandilsvé⁷⁴ and Vígdalir;⁷⁵
have half our homeland in compensation for the harm,
ring-adorned bride, [you] and your boys!'
36. 'I shan't sit so happily in Sevafjöll,
[neither] early nor during the nights, that I shall enjoy life,
unless light should shine on the host of the laudable one,
[and] there should run here, beneath the ruler, Víglæx,⁷⁶
used to a golden bit, [and] I can greet the prince!
37. 'So fully had Helgi frightened
all his foes and their kinsmen,
as before a wolf nanny-goats run frenzied
from a fell, full of fright!
38. 'So Helgi surpassed [other] warriors,
as nobly shaped ash [surpasses] thorn,
or the deer-calf, drenched in dew,
which walks superior to all [other] beasts,⁷⁷
and whose horns glow against heaven itself!⁷⁸

A burial-mound was prepared for Helgi. And when he came to Valhöll,⁷⁹ then Óðinn invited him to rule over all with him.

Helgi said:

39. 'You, Hundingr, shall for every man
get a foot-bath and kindle a fire,
tether the hounds, attend to the horses,
give slops to the swine, before going to sleep!'

Sigrún's serving-woman was walking during the evening by Helgi's burial-mound, and she saw that Helgi rode to the mound with many men.

The serving-woman said:

40. 'Is it an illusion, that which I seem to see,
or the doom of the powers⁸⁰ — dead people riding,
as your steeds are spurred by points⁸¹ —
or has a homeward-journey been granted to the warriors?'

41. 'Era þat svik ein, er þú sjá þikkisk,
né aldar rof, þóttu oss lítir,
þótt vér jói óra oddum keyrim —
né er hildingum heimförf gefin.'

Heim gekk ambótt ok sagði Sigrúnu:

42. 'Út gakk þú, Sigrún frá Sevafjöllum,
ef þik fólks jaðar finna lystir!
Upp er haugr lokinn, kominn er Helgi!
Dólgspor dreyra, döglingr bað þik,
at þú sárdropa svefja skyldir!'

Sigrún gekk í hauginn til Helga ok kvað:

43. 'Nú em ek svá fegin fundi okkrum
sem átfrekir Óðins haukar,
er val vitu, varmar bráðir,
eða dögglitir dagsbrún sjá!
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?'
45. 'Ein veldr þú, Sigrún frá Sevafjöllum,
er Helgi er harmdögg sleginn!
Grætr þú, gullvarið, grimmum tárur,
sólbjört, suðræn, áðr þú sofa gangir;
hvert fellr blóðugt á brjósti grami,
úrsvalt, innfjálgt, ekka þrungit!
46. 'Vel skulum drekka dýrar veigar,
þótt mist hafim munar ok landa!
Skal engi maðr anglrjóð kveða,
þótt mér á brjósti benjar líti!
Nú eru brúðir byrgðar í haugi,
lofða dísir, hjá oss liðnum!'

Sigrún bjó sæing í hauginum.

47. 'Hér hefi ek þér, Helgi, hvílu görva,
angrlausu mjök, Ylfinga niðr;
vil ek þér í faðmi, fylkir, sofna,
sem ek lofðungi lífnum myndak!'

- 41.⁸² 'It's no illusion, that which you seem to see,
nor the age's destruction, even though you observe us,
even though we spur our steeds with points —
nor has a homeward journey been granted to the warriors.'

The serving-woman went and said to Sigrún:

42. 'Go outside, Sigrún from Sevafjöll,
if you wish to meet the troop's protector!⁸³
The mound has opened up, Helgi has come!
His battle-traces⁸⁴ bleed, the descendant of Dagr⁸⁵ asked that you
should staunch⁸⁶ his wound-drops!⁸⁷

Sigrún went into the mound to Helgi and said:

43. 'Now I'm as elated at our meeting
as Óðinn's ravenous hawks,⁸⁸
when they perceive the slain, warm pieces of meat,
or, dew-glistening, they see daybreak!⁸⁹
44. 'I want to kiss the unliving king,
before you cast off your bloody mail-coat!
Your hair, Helgi, is covered with hoar-frost,
the prince is all drenched in slaughter-dew,⁹⁰
drizzle-cool are the hands of Högni's son-in-law!
How, descendant of Buðli, shall I make you a remedy for this?'
- 45.⁹¹ 'You alone, Sigrún from Sevafjöll, are the reason
why Helgi is drenched in harm-dew!⁹²
You, gold-adorned, weep grim tears,
sun-bright, southern [lady], before you go to sleep;
each falls bloody on the leader's breast,⁹³
drizzle-cool, searing, swollen with grief!
46. 'Well shall we drink costly liquors,
even though we've lost love and lands!
No one shall recite a grief-song,
even if one beholds mortal wounds on my breast!
Now brides are buried in the grave-mound,
the women of praiseworthy ones, passed away beside us!'
- Sigrún prepared a bed in the burial-mound.
47. 'Here, Helgi, I have made a bed for you,
very carefree, kinsman of the Ylfingar;
I want to fall asleep, marshal, in your embrace,
as I would with the living leader!'

48. 'Nú kveð ek enskis ðrvænt vera,
síð né snimma, at Sevafjöllum,
er þú á armi ólifðum sefr,
hvít, í haugi, Högna dóttir,
ok ertu kvik, in konungborna!
49. 'Mál er mér at ríða roðnar brautir,
láta fólvan jó flugstíg troða;
skal ek fyr vestan vindhjálms brúar,
áðr Salgofnir sigrþjóð vekti!'

Þeir Helgi riðu leið sína, en þær fóru heim til bæjar. Annan aptan lét Sigrún ambótt halda vörð á hauginum. En at dagsetri, er Sigrún kom til haugsins, hon kvað:

50. 'Kominn væri nú, ef koma hygði,
Sigmundar burr frá solum Óðins;
kveð ek grams þinig grænask vánir,
er á asklimum ernir sitja
ok drífr drótt ǫll draumþinga til.
51. 'Verðu eigi svá ær, at ein farir,
dís Skjöldunga, draughúsa til!
Verða ǫflgari allir á nóttum
dauðir dólgar, mæ, en um daga ljósa!'

Sigrún varð skammlíf af harmi ok trega. Þat var trúa í forneskju at menn væri endrbornir, en þat er nú kǫlluð kerlingavilla. Helgi ok Sigrún er kallat at væri endrborin. Hét hann þá Helgi Haddingjaskaði, en hon Kára Hálfðanar dóttir, svá sem kveðit er í 'Káru ljóðum', ok var hon valkyrja.

48. 'Now I declare nothing to be unexpected,
late or early, at Sevafjöll,
since you sleep on my unliving arm,
white, in the mound, Högni's daughter,
and you're alive, king-born one!

49. 'It's time to ride reddened ways,
to let my fallow steed tread the flight-path;⁹⁴
I must be west of wind-helm's bridges,⁹⁵
before Salgofnir⁹⁶ wakens the victory-people!⁹⁷

Helgi and his men rode on their way, and the women went home to the farmstead. The following evening, Sigrún had the serving-woman keep watch at the burial-mound. And at sunset, when Sigrún came to the mound, she said:

50.⁹⁸ 'He'd have come by now, if he intended to come,
Sigmundr's son from the halls of Óðinn;
I declare that hopes of the fierce one⁹⁹ [coming] here are fading,
when eagles sit on ash-branches¹⁰⁰
and the whole warrior-host¹⁰¹ drifts to dream-assemblies.¹⁰²

51.¹⁰³ 'Don't be so insane that you go alone,
woman of the Skjöldungar, to revenant-houses!¹⁰⁴
All dead enemies become mightier at night,¹⁰⁵
lady, than during bright days!'

Sigrún was short-lived due to sorrow and anguish. It was a belief in olden times that people were reborn, but that it now called an old wives' tale. It is declared that Helgi and Sigrún were reborn.¹⁰⁶ He was then called Helgi Haddingjaskaði,¹⁰⁷ and she Kára Hálfðan's daughter,¹⁰⁸ as is related in *Kárukjóð* 'Kára's Song',¹⁰⁹ and she was a valkyrie.

Textual Apparatus to *Helgakviða Hundingsbana ǫnnur*

Helgakviða Hundingsbana ǫnnur] This title is not in **R**; it is supplied editorially

Frá Vǫlsungum] A rubricated heading, but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; this reading therefore relies on the transcription therein

Sigmundur] The first letter is large and rubricated, but faded

hjarðarsvein] **R** *hiarþar*

3/4 *mala*] **R** absent

hrátt] **R** *rát*

varð valkyrja] **R** *var / þvalkyria*

7/4 *Gunnar*] **R** *gvNa*

11/4 *hefndu*] **R** *hefnuð*

13/10 *Helga*] **R** absent

18/8 *eigi*] **R** absent

18 prose *er*] **R** absent

19/6 *hrævi*] **R** *hreifi*

22/1 *jörðu*] **R** *iordán*

24/5 *fríðr*] **R** *friþ*

25/5 *hefir*] **R** *hefi*

26/5 *er*] **R** *ec*

28/6 *orðum at deila*] **R** abbreviates *o. a. d.*

29/1–4] **R** abbreviates *gran. s. þo. d. s. s. a. m.*

29/5–6 *hafa á Móinsheimum*] **R** abbreviates *h. a. m. r.*

31/5 *inu*] **R** *eíno*

36/3 *nætr*] **R** *rætr*

37/1 *Helgi*] **R** absent

39/7 *gefa*] **R** *ge* inserted in the outer margin; the rest of the word is lacking

43/3 *átfrekir*] **R** *át frekr*

45/9 *fellr*] **R** *felt*

51/5 *oflgari*] **R** *auflgan*

51/7 *dólgar, mæx*] **R** *dólgmer*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 He may actually have been Helgi Hjörvarðsson reborn.
- 2 'Hail'.
- 3 The armoured man they killed was probably Helgi's father, Sigmundur; cf. *Sf*.
- 4 The 'grey wolf' is evidently Helgi, one of the *Ylfingar* 'Wolfings/Descendants of a Wolf'. He probably pretended to be, or was otherwise protected by, his foster brother, *Hamall* 'Wether', for whom he was apparently mistaken by *Hundingr* 'Descendant of a Hound'. Helgi, it seems, was effectively a wolf in sheep's clothing, one soon pursued, in a sense, by a hound.
- 5 Possibly Óðinn in disguise. *Blindr* means 'Blind/Hidden One'.
- 6 More precisely, the part of a sword between the pommel and the guard.
- 7 Literally, 'It is little woe'.
- 8 I.e., she was a valkyrie.
- 9 Presumably Sigrún's father, mentioned below.
- 10 *Bruna-* could be the genitive of *bruni* 'burning, heat, fire', or of a personal name, *Bruni*. *Vágar* means 'waves' or 'bays'.
- 11 Literally, 'and he had there a strand-hewing'.
- 12 Or 'was', if *var* is preferred to *varð*.
- 13 Paper manuscripts have *Sváva* for *svá*, in which case the sentence means 'She was Sváva reborn'. Cf. the concluding prose to *HHv*.
- 14 Helgi speaks this stanza.
- 15 'Hlér's Island', *Hlér* 'Sea' being an alias of the sea-giant Ægir; now *Læsø* in the Kattegat.
- 16 *Gunnr* 'Battle' is the name of a valkyrie; her sisters are valkyries; their 'goslings' are ravens, which feed on the corpses of slain warriors.
- 17 Helgi refers to himself.
- 18 Either a literal reference to bears or, perhaps, to berserks or warriors in general.
- 19 A place-name. *Braga* could relate to *bragr* 'best' or be the genitive of *Bragi*, name of the god of poetry; *lundr* means 'grove'.
- 20 Or, more generally, 'weapon-points'.
- 21 I.e., the meat was raw.
- 22 As required under Icelandic law; by contrast, undeclared, secret killings were punishable as murders.
- 23 Helgi and his men.
- 24 Or 'kinsmen'.
- 25 *Brimir* is here the name of, or a term for, a sword; cf. *HH. II 27, Grm. 44, Sd. 14*.
- 26 Or 'kinsmen'.
- 27 An honorific for a leader skilled with the points of weapons, here Helgi.
- 28 *Hundingr*'s.
- 29 Or 'who tells'.
- 30 I.e., although he has had to question her, she still rates him a man sly enough to conceal his real name and whose bloody actions speak louder than any tales of war.

- 31 Or simply 'now the prince', but cf. *HH. I*, 7.
- 32 'Svarinn's (Burial-)Mound'.
- 33 'Strong Battle(r)'.
- 34 'Mountains of Flame(s)'.
- 35 'Sword Warder'.
- 36 'Army Warder'.
- 37 'Stone of Eagle(s)'.
- 38 A lost poem, although *HH. I*, entitled *Vǫlsungakviða* in **R**, has an equivalent scene.
- 39 Helgi's.
- 40 When not denoting an actual boar, *jǫfurr* is, as here, a common metaphor for 'warrior', 'prince'.
- 41 I.e., she spoke her mind.
- 42 The sailors.
- 43 *HH. I* 32, though the quotation is not verbatim.
- 44 I.e., in *HH. I* 33–44. Awkwardly, a version of Sinfjötli's verbal exchange with Guðmundr also forms *HH. II* 24–27.
- 45 'Best' (probably; cf. *bragr* 'best', 'poetry').
- 46 'Day'.
- 47 Here and in subsequent stanzas of *HH. II*, the first number denotes the stanza's position in **R**, the second, bracketed number the logical order of stanzas according to the sequence of events.
- 48 'Sea Mountains', 'Mountains of Kinsman/Kinsmen' or 'Mountains of Spirits/Affection(s)'.
- 49 Wolves.
- 50 'Tumult Cliffs'.
- 51 'Lee/Shelter Mountains' or 'Lee Help'.
- 52 Hrollaugr and his sons are obscure.
- 53 If this passage refers to King Starkaðr, he apparently shared more than his name with a more famous legendary warrior, about whose life and death much is recorded in medieval Scandinavian texts; see especially events concerning Starcatherus in *GD* (8.8.12), in which, at the last, his decapitated trunk almost crushes his killer.
- 54 'Battle', the name of a valkyrie.
- 55 'Shieldings', here probably in the general sense 'warriors'.
- 56 The following six stanzas focussed on the flyting between Guðmundr and Sinfjötli appear misplaced; this verbal exchange is mentioned earlier, in the prose following st. 18.
- 57 Possibly a reference to a redness in the sky, or to the battle-standard. If the latter, one might translate literally: 'it casts battle-redness over the vikings'.
- 58 *Fjǫrsungar* may be the name of Hǫðbroddr's tribe. Alternatively, *arf fjǫrsunga* 'the inheritance of weever fish', is possibly a kenning for gold, which was thought to reside in the sea; perhaps weever fish were thought to protect gold with their poisonous spines when buried in mud and sand.
- 59 Helgi and Hǫðbroddr.

- 60 I.e., agreement will arise through the death of one or other in battle; Guðmundr is being ironic.
- 61 I.e., 'if we draw (and have to keep) the short straw for long'.
- 62 Goat-tending was considered no task for a warrior.
- 63 Helgi speaks this stanza.
- 64 Cf. *HH. I* 45.
- 65 Cf. *HH. I* 46.
- 66 'Fetter Grove'.
- 67 Dagr thereby breaks his vow of allegiance to the Völsungar.
- 68 The first-century Roman historian Tacitus describes, in chapter 39 of his *Germania*, how the Semnones, a people of the Suebi, prohibited anyone from entering a sacred wood 'unless bound by a fetter' (*nisi vinculo ligatus*). The wood was the site of human sacrifice, doubtless to the supreme god who lived there. None who stumbled or collapsed there were permitted to get to their feet within the wood, but had to roll themselves out of it. Helgi's killing at 'Fetter Grove' with Óðinn's spear may distantly recall such a practice.
- 69 'Lightning', a river; cf. *Grm.* 28.
- 70 'Wave', probably another river or a spring. *Uðr* (gen. *Unnar*) is also the name of a daughter of the sea-giant, Ægir.
- 71 Or 'outlaw'.
- 72 Cf. *Ls.* 21, 29; *Od.* 15 [11].
- 73 Dagr refers to himself.
- 74 'Vandill's Sanctuary'. Perhaps now Vendsyssel, Denmark.
- 75 'Battle Dales'.
- 76 'Battle Breeze', Helgi's horse.
- 77 Or 'deer'.
- 78 Probably an instance of the mythological concept of a solar hart.
- 79 'Hall of the Slain', Óðinn's hall.
- 80 Ragnarok, the Norse apocalypse.
- 81 The points of spurs.
- 82 This stanza is presumably spoken by Helgi.
- 83 Helgi.
- 84 Wounds, the marks left by battle.
- 85 Not Helgi's killer.
- 86 Literally, 'put to sleep'.
- 87 The blood dripping from his wounds.
- 88 Ravens.
- 89 Literally 'day's brow', i.e., the light of dawn seen over the horizon.
- 90 Blood.
- 91 The dead Helgi speaks.
- 92 Blood.

- 93 Helgi refers to himself.
- 94 Air or sky.
- 95 'Wind-helm' is a poetic term for the vault of heaven. Its 'bridges' are perhaps rainbows.
- 96 A cockerel. *Sal-* means 'Hall', but *-gofnir* is obscure.
- 97 The warriors of Valhøll. Cf. *Vsp.* 42.
- 98 It is uncertain whether Sigrún or the serving-woman speaks this stanza. This edition tentatively attributes both this stanza and the next to the latter.
- 99 Helgi.
- 100 I.e., to roost. Yggdrasill, the world-tree, was an ash.
- 101 Men or humans in general.
- 102 I.e., goes to bed, falls asleep.
- 103 This stanza is presumably spoken by the serving-woman.
- 104 Burial-mounds.
- 105 Literally, 'in the nights'.
- 106 Cf. *Sg.* 45.
- 107 'Scathe/Harm of the Haddingjar', who seem to have been legendary brothers. They appear in a variety of early sources, but remain rather obscure; cf. *Gðr.* II 22.
- 108 *Kára* may mean '(One with) Curls' or '(One) of the Wind'; *Hálfðan* means 'Half-Dane'.
- 109 This poem is lost, but it was a source for the late medieval Icelandic poems called *Griplur*, which in turn inspired the seventeenth-century *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* 'Saga of Hrómundr Gripsson'. This saga features a certain *Helgi inn frækni* 'Helgi the Brave' who is protected by the magic of his flying swan-mistress *Lára* (cf. *Kára*), until he accidentally kills her by severing her leg.