



THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT



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Front cover image: 'The Two Corbies' by Arthur Rackham, from *Some British Ballads* (London, [1919])

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

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Fáfnismál

The title *Fáfnismál* (*Fm.*) is post-medieval, as is probably the perception of *Fm.* (R fol. 30r–31v) as an entity distinct from *Rm.* and *Sd.*

To a modern audience possibly expecting ‘The Sayings/Lay of Fáfnir’ to include a vivid account of a dragon-fight comparably dramatic to those of Þórr against the Miðgarðsormr (in *Vsp.* and *Hym.*) and of Beowulf against the fire-drake (in the Old English *Beowulf*), it may both surprise and disappoint. For *Fm.* is another *prosimetrum* (with verses in *ljóðahátttr* and *fornyrðislag*) in which the action advances in rudimentary prose. Most strikingly, after a few preparatory details, the introductory prose merely records matter-of-factly that Sigurðr pierced Fáfnir’s heart with his sword, whereupon the snake writhed and the pair began a conversation. No poetic description of the actual act of dragon-slaying is even attempted, and it therefore makes little impression, in contrast to the more satisfyingly vibrant depictions of this feat and related events on Swedish runestones and Norwegian stave-churches.

Nor, surprisingly, may this killing of a giant snake by the Germanic North’s greatest medieval hero appear especially heroic now, though it was presumably greatly admired in medieval times. Whereas, for example, in *Beowulf*, the eponymous warrior trumpets his advance into the lands of giants, wolves and water-snakes, before beheading a giantess in ferocious hand-to-hand combat, *Fm.*’s Sigurðr is a stealth assassin who, having planned and prepared his attack, waits in concealment for a foe whom he pierces mortally from beneath with a peerless weapon. It is a killing conducted with consummate, if unfair, efficiency, and its implicit celebration through multiple and widespread portrayals in medieval literature and art suggests that, in contrast to some modern perceptions, it was formerly thought that the martial hero should command not just courage, strength and determination, but also a ruthless precision informed by knowledge of the only or most effective way to win, especially if the enemy himself had an unfair advantage (Fáfnir wore a ‘helm of terror’). As such, aspects of Sigurðr’s killing of Fáfnir find broad parallel elsewhere in early medieval European literature, especially that of Ireland. Most notably, in medieval Irish literature, Cú Chulainn, Ulster’s pre-eminent fighter, dispatches ostensibly impenetrable human foes by anal penetration from below with a unique spear, the *gae bolga*, which he alone commanded and knew how to use—an act both singularly effective and unfair.¹ Another example,

1 See E. Pettit, ‘Cú Chulainn’s *gae bolga* — from Harpoon to Stingray-Spear?’, *Studia Hibernica* 41 (2015), 9–48.

- 70 Or 'travelling' in front. The sense is perhaps that you are in luck if you see your enemies before they see you, or if you see them in front of you. This stanza appears to record two omens, not one.
- 71 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 72 The sun. The moon is perhaps personified as Máni here.
- 73 Warriors.
- 74 Specifically, a formation that resembles a boar's snout.
- 75 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza; instead of *at vígi veðr* '(when you) wade into battle', it has *at vígi vegr* '(when you) fight in battle'.
- 76 Literally 'if you strike with (your) foot'.
- 77 Supernatural women; cf. *Grm.* 53, *HH. I* 16, *Sd.* 27, *Hm.* 15, 28.
- 78 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 6 has a variant of this stanza: '*Kembdr ok þveginn skal kennast hverr, / ok at morgni mettr, / þvíat óvíst er, hvar at aptni kemr, / illt er fyrri heill at hrapa*' 'Combed and washed shall each man know himself (to be), and full of food in the morning, because it's uncertain where he will come to in the evening; it's a bad idea to press ahead despite an omen.'
- 79 I.e., an omen to the contrary.
- 80 Latin for 'little head', used to mark the start of a new section.
- 81 A reference to the supposed (and supposedly Óðinnic) practice of, according to the most extreme of various, increasingly lurid accounts, cutting open the ribcage of a fallen enemy from behind and then drawing out the lungs, so that they lay like a pair of eagle's wings spread across his back. Cf. *Sd.* 16.
- 82 Sigurðr.

- 39 A name of the god Freyr.
- 40 Or 'spread out, extend'.
- 41 Cf. *HH. I* 3–4.
- 42 Fáfnir.
- 43 'Angry', 'Hostile'.
- 44 The Rhine.
- 45 Probably Sigurðr.
- 46 *Norna-Gests þátr* 5 has a variant of this stanza, spoken by Sigurðr: '*Hátt munu hlægja Hundings synir, / þeir er Eylima aldrs vörnuðu, / ef mik tregar meirr, at sækja / hringa rauða enn hefna föður*' 'Hundingr's sons will laugh loudly, they who denied Eylimi his old age, if I desire more to seek red rings than to avenge my father!'
- 47 Sigurðr's maternal grandfather.
- 48 I.e., who killed Eylimi.
- 49 *Norna-Gests þátr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 50 Or 'Ræfill's'. A sea-king; the meaning of his name is uncertain.
- 51 Ships.
- 52 *Norna-Gests þátr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 53 Ships. *Norna-Gests þátr* 6 instead has *á sjó komnir* '(we have) come on the sea'.
- 54 Ships, which were launched using rollers.
- 55 *VS 17* has a close variant of this stanza. *Norna-Gests þátr* 6 has another, with *víða* 'widely' instead of *ungi* 'young', and *karl á bjargi* 'old man on the cliff' instead of *karl af bergi* 'old man from the cliff'.
- 56 An alias of Óðinn.
- 57 One of Óðinn's ravens, who is gladdened by carrion. Whether the 'young *Völsungr*' who gladdened him was *Völsungr* himself or Sigurðr is uncertain.
- 58 'Gripper', 'Seizer', another alias of Óðinn.
- 59 'Very Wise One' or 'Hidden One/Concealer', another alias of Óðinn.
- 60 The calming is not, of course, coincidental; nor was the storm's onset.
- 61 *Norna-Gests þátr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza; it identifies the speaker as Sigurðr.
- 62 I.e., in combat.
- 63 *Norna-Gests þátr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 64 Warrior.
- 65 *Norna-Gests þátr* 6 has a variant of this stanza, with *til burtferðar* '(ready) for departure' in place of *ert á braut* 'you are (ready) for the road/the off', and *hróðrfulla* 'full of praise' instead of *hróðrfúsa* 'praise-eager'.
- 66 Or the path at the entrance to, and along the front of, the building from which you are setting out. The idea is doubtless that they will be keen to accompany you.
- 67 *Norna-Gests þátr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 68 Possibly the branches of the world-ash *Yggdrasill*.
- 69 Apparently warriors, likened to staffs wearing helmets.

- 12 VS 14 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 13 ‘Timid/Fearful One’. Instead of *Óinn*, VS 14 has *Óðinn*, which, as the ‘easier’ reading, is probably a substitution.
- 14 I.e., wound.
- 15 This question appears irrelevant in the context, and some scholars therefore consider this stanza a likely interpolation. That Loki should want this question answered is, however, not out of character, given his inclination to invective (see *Ls.*).
- 16 Possibly ‘Wading-Place Yeller’, presumably a river.
- 17 The waders are probably dead; cf. *Vsp.* 38, *Grm.* 21.
- 18 Andvari.
- 19 This description and the following stanza probably contributed to J. R. R. Tolkien’s conception of the One Ring in *The Lord of the Rings*.
- 20 Dwarves live in rocks.
- 21 ‘Gust’, perhaps an alias of Andvari or the name of one of his forebears.
- 22 Presumably Reginn and Fáfnir.
- 23 If this number is meant precisely, not just to indicate ‘no small number’, the eight noblemen may be Sigurðr, Guthormr, Gunnarr, Hǫgni, Atli, Erpr, Sǫrli and Hamðir.
- 24 ‘Andvari’s Gift’, evidently the ring that Loki took from Andvari.
- 25 VS 14 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 26 I.e., ordained.
- 27 I.e., killed.
- 28 This stanza is apparently spoken by Loki.
- 29 Or ‘grief’.
- 30 This translation reflects just one of many explanations that scholars have proposed for a difficult line.
- 31 When not denoting an actual boar, *jöfurr* is, as here, a common metaphor for ‘warrior’ or ‘prince’.
- 32 Perhaps ‘Heather Heath’ and ‘Praise Heath’, but *heiðr* can mean ‘bright’ as well as ‘heath’.
- 33 Whether the ‘great need’ is the man’s or Lyngheiðr’s is unclear.
- 34 I.e., he refused.
- 35 Sigurðr.
- 36 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 5 (*FSN* I; cited by chapter) has a variant of this stanza: ‘*Kominn er hingat konr Sigmundar, / seggr inn snarráði, til sala vorra, / megn hefir mikit, en ek maðr gamall, / er mér fangs ván at frekum úlfi*’ ‘Sigmundr’s offspring has come here, the man of resolute counsel, to our halls; he has great strength, but I [am] an old man; I expect a wrestle with a ravenous wolf!’
- 37 Proverbial. The ‘wolf’ is Sigurðr, whom Reginn expects to be hard to handle.
- 38 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 5 has a variant of this stanza: ‘*Ek mun fræða fólkdjarfan gram; / nú er Yngva konr með oss kominn; / sjá mun ræsir, ríkstr und sólu, / frægr um lönd öll með lofi mínu [v.l. sínu]*’ ‘I shall instruct the battle-brave prince; now Yngvi’s offspring has come among us; that prince will be the most powerful under the sun, famous throughout all lands with my [v.l. ‘his’] praise!’

Textual Apparatus to *Reginismál*

Reginismál] This title, now traditional, is not in **R**; it is supplied editorially. *NK* detects a faded heading in **R**, which it suggests reads *Frá Sigurði* 'About Sigurðr'.

Sigurðr] The first letter is large and red, but faded, in **R**

sonr] **R** *sonar*

1/6 *lindar*] **R** *linar*

5/3 *bræðrum tveim*] **R** *brærum tveim*

6/1 *reitt*] **R** absent, supplied from *VS* 14

8/3 *ónept*] **R** *vm nept*

10/1 *Lyngheiðr*] **R** *Lyngheiþr*

10/4 *Fátt*] **R** *Far*

12/1 *Bróður*] **R** *Brvðar*

12 pr. *hluti*] **R** *lvoti*

14 pr. *øll*] **R** *os*

14 pr. *Gramr*] **R** *gram*

15/3 *þeir*] **R** *þr*

19/2 *hvárttveggja*] **R** *hvaertveGja*

22/5 *hjálmstøfum*] **R** *hilm stofom*

Capitulum] Rubricated but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; the reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein

Notes to the Translation

- 1 The meaning of his name is uncertain.
- 2 Reginn's.
- 3 Three gods.
- 4 'Andvari's Waterfall'.
- 5 ON *andvari* elsewhere means 'gurnard' (cf. the dwarf's pike-form), 'care, anxiety' and 'breeze' (cf. *Gustr* 'Gust' in *Rm.* 5).
- 6 'Otter'.
- 7 Or simply 'gods'; either way, the reference is to Óðinn, Hœnir and Loki.
- 8 'Plunder, Robbery', wife of the sea-giant Ægir.
- 9 *VS* 14 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 10 The underworld land of the dead.
- 11 A kenning for 'gold'. Emendation of *linar* (and the corresponding *lionar* of *VS*) to *lindar* 'of the brook' is not the only way to make sense of this phrase; other possible emendations, which also yield 'gold'-kennings, are *linnar loga* 'flame/blaze of the snake' and *liðar loga* 'flame/blaze of the (arm/finger-)joint'.

- 19.⁶¹ 'Tell me this, Hnikarr, since you know
the omens of both gods and humans:
what are the best omens, if one has to do battle,
at the swinging of swords?'⁶²
- Hnikarr said:
- 20.⁶³ 'There are many good signs, if men [only] knew them,
at the swinging of swords;
I think the dark raven is a doughty escort
for a sword-tree.'⁶⁴
- 21.⁶⁵ 'This is the second, if you've come outside
and are ready for the road:
you see standing on the threshold⁶⁶
two fame-eager fellows.
- 22.⁶⁷ 'This is the third, if you hear
a wolf howling beneath ash-branches,⁶⁸
good luck will granted to you from helm-staves,⁶⁹
if you see them travelling first.'⁷⁰
- 23.⁷¹ 'No man shall fight when facing towards
the late-shining sister of the moon,⁷²
they have victory, whetters of sword-play,⁷³
who know how to see, or how to form a snout-like phalanx.'⁷⁴
- 24.⁷⁵ 'It's a great hazard, if you stub your toe,⁷⁶
when you wade into battle;
treacherous females⁷⁷ stand on both sides of you
and want to see you wounded.
- 25.⁷⁸ 'Combed and washed shall every wise man be
and fully fed in the morning,
because it's uncertain where one will come to by evening;
it's [a] bad [idea] to press ahead despite an omen.'⁷⁹

Capitulum⁸⁰

Sigurðr had a great battle against Lyngvi, Hundingr's son, and his brothers. There Lyngvi fell and those three brothers. After the battle Reginn said:

26. 'Now a bloody eagle is carved with bitter sword
on the back of the slayer of Sigmundr!⁸¹
None is more outstanding [than] the one who might redder the earth,
the ruler's heir,⁸² and gladden Huginn!'

Sigurðr went back to Hjálprekr's. Then Reginn incited Sigurðr to kill Fáfñir.

19. 'Segðu mér þat, Hnikarr, allz þú hvártveggja veizt,
goða heill ok guma:
hver þózt eru, ef berjask skal,
heill at sverða svipun?'

- Hnikarr kvað:
20. 'Mörg eru góð, ef gumar vissi,
heill at sverða svipun;
dyggja fylgju hygg ek ins dökkva vera
at hrottameiði hrafns.

21. 'Þat er annat, ef þú ert út um kominn
ok ert á braut búinn:
tvá þú lítr á tái standa
hróðrfúsa hali.

22. 'Þat er it þriðja, ef þú þjóta heyrir
úlf und asklimum;
heilla auðit verðr þér af hjálmstöfum,
ef þú sér þá fyrri fara.

23. 'Engr skal gumna í gogn vega
síð skínandi systur mána;
þeir sigr hafa, er sjá kunnu,
hjørleiks hvatir, eða hamalt fylkja.

24. 'Þat er fár mikit, ef þú foeti drepr,
þars þú at vígi veðr;
tálar dísir standa þér á tvær hliðar
ok vilja þik sáran sjá.

25. 'Kemðr ok þveginn skal kœnna hverr
ok at morni mettr,
þvíat ósýnt er, hvar at apni kœmr;
illt er fyr heill at hrapa.'

Capitulum

Sigurðr átti orrostu mikla við Lyngva, Hundings son, ok bræðr hans. Þar fell Lyngvi ok þeir þrír bræðr. Eptir orrostu kvað Reginn:

26. 'Nú er blóðugr ǫrn bitrum hjörvi
bana Sigmundar á baki ristinn!
Ǫngr er fremri, sá er fold ryði,
hilmis arfi, ok Hugin gladdi!'

Heim fór Sigurðr til Hjálpreks. Þá eggjaði Reginn Sigurð til at vega Fáfni.

Reginn told these things to Sigurðr. One day, when he³⁵ came to Reginn's farmstead, he was greeted well. Reginn said:

13.³⁶ 'Sigmundr's offspring has come here,
the man of resolute counsel, to our halls;
he has more spirit than an old man,
and I expect a wrestle with a ravenous wolf!³⁷

14.³⁸ 'I shall bring up the battle-brave prince;
now Yngvi's³⁹ offspring has come among us;
that prince will be the most powerful under the sun —
his fate-threads lie⁴⁰ across all lands!⁴¹

Sigurðr was then always with Reginn, and he told Sigurðr that Fáfñir lay on Gnitahaiðr and was in the form of a snake. He⁴² had a helm of terror, of which all living things were afraid.

Reginn made Sigurðr a sword, which was called Gramr.⁴³ It was so sharp that he dipped it in the Rín⁴⁴ and let a tuft of wool drift with the current, and it took the tuft apart as [easily as it did] the water. With that sword Sigurðr clove asunder Reginn's anvil.

After that Reginn incited Sigurðr to slay Fáfñir. He⁴⁵ said:

15.⁴⁶ 'Hundingr's sons will laugh loudly,
they who denied Eylimi⁴⁷ his old age,⁴⁸
if the prince's wishes are more to seek
red rings than revenge for his father!'

King Hjálprekr gave Sigurðr a naval force to avenge his father. They ran into a great storm and tacked for a certain rocky promontory. A man was standing on the cliff and he said:

16.⁴⁹ 'Who is riding there, on Rævill's⁵⁰ horses,
the high waves, the roaring sea?
The sail-horses⁵¹ are splattered with sweat,
the wave-steeds won't withstand the wind!'

Reginn answered:

17.⁵² 'Here we are with Sigurðr on sea-trees,⁵³
since a fair wind is given to us toward death itself!
The steep breaker falls from higher than the prow-boards,
the roller-steeds⁵⁴ stumble — who asks about this?'

18.⁵⁵ 'They called me Hnikarr,⁵⁶ when young Vǫlsungr
gladdened Huginn,⁵⁷ and he had slain;
now you can me "old man from the cliff,"
Fengr⁵⁸ or Fjölñir⁵⁹ — I want to receive passage!'

They steered to land, and the old man went on to a ship, and then the weather calmed.⁶⁰

Þessa hluti sagði Reginn Sigurði. Einn dag, er hann kom til húsa Regins, var honum vel fagnat. Reginn kvað:

13. ‘Kominn er hingat konr Sigmundar,
 seggr inn snarráði, til sala várra;
 móð hefir meira en maðr gamall,
 ok er mér fangs vón at frekum úlfi!
14. ‘Ek mun fœða fólkjarfan gram;
 nú er Yngva konr með oss kominn;
 sjá mun ræsir ríkstr und sólu —
 þrymr um ǫll lönd ǫrlögsímu!’

Sigurðr var þá jafnan með Regin, ok sagði hann Sigurði at Fáfnr lá á Gnitahiði ok var í orms líki. Hann átti ægishjál, er ǫll kvikvindi hræddusk við.

Reginn gerði Sigurði sverð, er Gramr hét. Þat var svá hvast at hann brá því ofan í Rín ok lét reka ullarlagð fyrir straumi, ok tók í sundr lagðinn sem vatnit. Því sverði klauf Sigurðr í sundr steðja Regins.

Eptir þat eggjaði Reginn Sigurð at vega Fáfni. Hann sagði:

15. ‘Hátt munu hlæja Hundings synir,
 þeir er Eylima aldrs synjuðu,
 ef meirr tiggja munar at sækja
 hringa rauða en hefnd fǫður!’

Hjálprekr konungr fekk Sigurði skipalið til fǫðurhefnda. Þeir fengu storm mikinn ok beittu fyrir bergsnǫs nakkvara. Maðr einn stóð á berginu ok kvað:

16. ‘Hverir ríða þar Rævils hestum
 hávar unnir, haf glymjanda?
 Seglvigg eru sveita stokkin,
 munat vágmarar vind um standask!’

Reginn svaraði:

17. ‘Hér eru vér Sigurðr á sætrjám,
 er oss byrr gefinn við bana sjálfan!
 Fellr brattr breki brǫndum hæri,
 hlunnvigg hrapa — hverr spyrr at því?’
18. ‘Hnikar hétu mik, þá er Hugin gladdi
 Vǫlsungr ungi, ok vegit hafði;
 nú máttu kalla “karl af bergi,”
 Feng eða Fjǫlni — far vil ek þiggja!’

Þeir viku at landi, ok gekk karl á skip, ok lægði þá veðrit.

The Æsir paid Hreiðmarr the treasure and filled up the otter-skin and stood it on its legs. Then the Æsir had to pile up the gold and cover it. And when that was done, Hreiðmarr went forward and saw a whisker, and he told them to cover it. Then Óðinn drew forth the ring *Andvaranautr*²⁴ and covered the hair.

6.²⁵ ‘The gold is now paid to you’, said Loki, ‘and you have
 a great payment for my head;
 for your son happiness will not be shaped²⁶ —
 it will be the death of you both!’

 Hreiðmarr said:
7. ‘You gave gifts, [but] you didn’t give love-gifts,
 you didn’t give them with your whole heart!
 You’d have been separated from your life,²⁷
 if I’d known of this mischief before!’

8.²⁸ ‘It’s even worse — I think I know this —
 the unceasing strife²⁹ of kinsmen,³⁰
 I think the boars³¹ are still unborn
 for whom this hatred is intended!’

9. ‘With red gold,’ said Hreiðmarr, ‘I think I shall rule,
 as long as I live;
 your threat scares me not in the slightest,
 and go home, [away] from here!’

Fáfnir and Reginn demanded kin-compensation from Hreiðmarr after Otr, their brother. He said no to that. And Fáfnir ran Hreiðmarr, his father, through with a sword, as he was sleeping. Hreiðmarr called to his daughters:

10. ‘Lyngheiðr and Lofnheiðr,³² know that my life is destroyed!
 It’s many a thing that need compels!’

 Lyngheiðr answered:
‘Scarcely will a sister, even if she loses her father,
 avenge that sorrow on her brother!’

11. ‘Yet bear a daughter,’ said Hreiðmarr, ‘wolf-hearted woman,
 if you don’t beget a son by a prince!
 Get for the maid a man in great need!³³
 Then their son will avenge your sorrow!’

Then Hreiðmarr died, and Fáfnir took all the gold. Then Reginn asked to have his patrimony, but Fáfnir paid with a ‘no’.³⁴ Then Reginn sought advice from Lyngheiðr, his sister, as to how he should obtain his patrimony. She said:

12. ‘You must ask your brother amiably
 for your inheritance and in a better spirit;
 it’s not fitting that you should
 demand treasure from Fáfnir with a sword!’

Æsir reiddu Hreiðmari féit ok tráðu upp otrbelginn ok reistu á fœtr. Þá skyldu Æsirnir hlaða upp gullinu ok hylja. En er þat var gort, gekk Hreiðmarr fram ok sá eitt granahár, ok það hylja. Þá dró Óðinn fram hringinn Andvaranaut ok hulði hárit.

6. 'Gull er þér nú *reitt*', kvað Loki, 'en þú gjöld hefir mikil míns hofuðs;
syni þínum verðra sæla sköpuð —
þat verðr ykkarr beggja bani!'
- Hreiðmarr sagði:
7. 'Gjafar þú gaft, gaftattu ástgjafar,
gaftattu af heilum hug!
Fjörvi yðru skylduð ér firðir vera,
ef ek vissa þat fár fyrir!'
8. 'Enn er verra — þat vita þikkjumk —
niðja stríð ónept;
jöfra óborna hygg ek þá enn vera,
er þat er til hats hugat!'
9. 'Rauðu gulli', kvað Hreiðmarr, 'hugg ek mik ráða munu,
svá lengi sem ek lifi;
hót þín hræðumk ekki lyf,
ok haldið heim heðan!'

Fáfnir ok Reginn kröfðu Hreiðmar niðgjalda eptir Otr, bróður sinn. Hann kvað nei við. En Fáfnir lagði sverði Hreiðmar, föður sinn, sofanda. Hreiðmarr kallaði á dætr sínar:

10. 'Lyngheiðr ok Lofnheiðr, vitið mínu líf farit!
Mart er þat er þörf þjár!'
- Lyngheiðr svaraði:
'Fátt mun systir, þótt föður missi,
hefna hlýra harms!'
11. 'Al þú þó dóttur', kvað Hreiðmarr, 'dís úlfhuguð,
ef þú getrat son við siklingi!
Fá þú mey mann í meginþarfar!
Þá mun þeirar sonr þíns harms reka!'

Þá dó Hreiðmarr, en Fáfnir tók gullit alt. Þá beiddisk Reginn at hafa föðurarf sinn, en Fáfnir galt þar nei við. Þá leitaði Reginn ráða við Lyngheiði, systur sína, hvernig hann skyldi heimta föðurarf sinn. Hon kvað:

12. 'Bróður kveðja skaltu blíðliga
arfs ok æðra hugar;
era þat hæft at þú hjörvi skylir
kveðja Fáfni fjár!'

The Sayings of Reginn

Sigurðr went to Hjálprekr's stud and chose himself a horse, which was called Grani thereafter. Then Reginn, son of Hreiðmarr,¹ had come to Hjálprekr's. He was more skilful than any man, and a dwarf in stature. He was wise, grim and skilled in magic.

Reginn offered Sigurðr fosterage and instruction and loved him greatly. He told Sigurðr about his² forefathers and those events in which Óðinn and Hœnir and Loki³ had come to Andvarafors.⁴ In that waterfall was a multitude of fish. There was a dwarf called Andvari.⁵ He was in the waterfall for a long time in the form of a pike and got himself food there.

'Our brother was called Otr,⁶ said Reginn, 'who often went into the waterfall in the form of an otter. He had caught a salmon and was sitting on the riverbank and eating with his eyes closed. Loki stuck him to death with a stone. The Æsir⁷ thought they had been very lucky and flayed the skin from the otter.

The same evening they sought lodging at Hreiðmarr's and showed their kill. Then we seized them and imposed on them as ransom the requirement that the otter-skin be filled with gold, and also to cover the outside with red gold. Then they sent Loki to procure the gold. He came to Rán⁸ and got her net and went then to Andvarafors and cast the net before the pike, and it leapt into the net.

Then Loki said:

- 1.⁹ 'What sort of fish is that, which swims in the flood?
It doesn't know how to guard itself against misfortune!
Free your head from Hel:¹⁰
find me "blaze of the brook"!'¹¹
- 2.¹² 'I am called Andvari, my father was called Óinn,¹³
I have travelled though many a waterfall;
in early days a wretched Norn shaped [as destiny] for us
that I should wade in water.'
3. 'Tell [me] this, Andvari', said Loki, 'if you want to have
life in the halls of people:
what retribution do the sons of men receive,
if they hack at¹⁴ each other with words?'¹⁵
4. 'The sons of men receive excessive retribution,
those who wade Vaðgelmir;¹⁶
[for] everyone who lies about another,
the ramifications of untrue words accompany him long [after]!'¹⁷

Loki saw all the gold, that which Andvari owned. And when he¹⁸ had brought forth the gold, then he kept back one ring,¹⁹ and Loki took that from him. The dwarf went into the stone²⁰ and said:

5. 'That gold, which Gustr²¹ owned,
shall be the death of two brothers,²²
and for eight noblemen²³ a source of strife —
no one will profit from *my* possessions!'

Reginismál

Sigurðr gekk til stóðs Hjalpreks ok kaus sér af hest einn, er Grani var kallaðr síðan. Þá var kominn Reginn til Hjalpreks, sonr Hreiðmars. Hann var hverjum manni hagari, ok dvergr of vøxt. Hann var vitr, grimmr ok fjölkunnigr.

Reginn veitti Sigurði fóstr ok kennslu ok elskaði hann mjök. Hann sagði Sigurði frá forellri sínu ok þeim atburðum at Óðinn ok Hœnir ok Loki höfðu komit til Andvarafors. Í þeim forsi var fjöldi fiska. Einn dvergr hét Andvari. Hann var lönngum í forsinum í geddu líki ok fekk sér þar matar.

‘Otr hét bróðir várr’, kvað Reginn, ‘er opt fór í forsinn í otrs líki. Hann hafði tekit einn lax ok sat á árbakkanum ok át blundandi. Loki laust hann með steini til bana. Þóttusk Æsir mjök hepnir verit hafa ok flógu belg af otrinum.

Þat sama kveld sóttu þeir gisting til Hreiðmars ok sýndu veiði sína. Þá tóku vér þá höndum ok lögðum þeim fjörlausn at fylla otrbelginn með gulli, ok hylja útan ok með rauðu gulli. Þá sendu þeir Loka at afla gullsins. Hann kom til Ránar ok fekk net hennar ok fór þá til Andvarafors ok kastaði netinu fyrir gedduna, en hon hljóp í netit.

Þá mælti Loki:

1. ‘Hvat er þat fiska, er renn flóði í?
Kannat sér við víti varask!
Höfuð þitt leystu Helju ór:
finn mér lindar loga!’
2. ‘Andvari ek heiti, Óinn hét minn faðir,
margan hefi ek fors um farit;
aumlig Norn skóp oss í árdaga
at ek skylda í vatni vaða.’
3. ‘Segðu þat, Andvari,’ kvað Loki, ‘ef þú eiga vill
líf í lýða solum:
hver gjöld fá gumna synir,
ef þeir höggvask orðum á?’
4. ‘Ofrgjöld fá gumna synir,
þeir er Vaðgelmi vaða;
ósaðra orða, hverr er á annan lýgr,
of lengi leiða limar!’

Loki sá allt gull, þat er Andvari átti. En er hann hafði fram reitt gullit, þá hafði hann eptir einn hring, ok tók Loki þann af honum. Dvergrinn gekk inn í steininn ok mælti:

5. ‘Þat skal gull, er Gustr átti,
bræðrum tveim at bana verða,
ok oðlingum átta at rógi —
mun míns fjár mangi njóta!’

Verse: The man asks the sailors to identify themselves (16). Reginn identifies them as Sigurðr and his men (17). The man on the cliff identifies himself by various names (aliases of Óðinn), and requests passage (18).

Prose: They granted him that, and the storm abated.

Verse: Sigurðr (probably) asks the man to identify the best battle-omens for him (19), which he does (20–25).

Prose: Sigurðr slew Lyngvi and Hundingr's other sons in battle.

Verse: Reginn triumphantly records the incision of an 'eagle' on Lyngvi's back and praises Sigurðr (26).

Prose: Sigurðr returned to Hjálprekr's, and Reginn incited him to kill Fáfnir.

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Synopsis

Prose: Sigurðr chose himself a horse called Grani from King Hjálprekr's stud. There he met Reginn, son of Hreiðmarr, who offered to foster and instruct him. Reginn told him of how three gods, Óðinn and Hœnir and Loki, went to a waterfall, where Loki killed Reginn's brother, Otr, who was in the form of an otter. That evening, the gods showed Otr's skin to Hreiðmarr. Hreiðmarr and Reginn seized them and required them to cover the skin inside and out with gold. Loki then took the net of the sea-giantess Rán and went to the waterfall, where he caught the dwarf Andvari in the form of a pike.

Verse: Loki asks what sort of fish it is that fails to protect itself and demands that it find him gold (1). Andvari identifies himself and explains that he was destined to inhabit waterfalls (2). Loki asks him about the punishment meted out to those who insult each other (3), and Andvari answers (4).

Prose: Loki looked at the gold that Andvari owned, and even deprived him of the one ring that the dwarf had tried to withhold.

Verse: Andvari then declares that the gold will be the death of two brothers and a source of conflict for eight noblemen (5).

Prose: The gods covered the otter-skin, except for one whisker. At Hreiðmarr's insistence, Óðinn covered the whisker with the ring that Loki took from Andvari.

Verse: Loki declares the gold paid, but that it will be the death of both Hreiðmarr and Reginn (6). Hearing that, Hreiðmarr regrets not having killed Loki (7), who tells him that the curse will extend to those yet unborn (8). Hreiðmarr says he is not scared, and tells Loki to be off (9).

Prose: Hreiðmarr denied Fáfnir and Reginn compensation for Otr, their brother. Consequently, Fáfnir mortally wounded his father as he slept.

Verse: Hreiðmarr cries out to his daughters, Lyngheiðr and Lofnheiðr (10), but the former declares that a sister can scarcely avenge her father on her brother. Hreiðmarr urges Lyngheiðr, should she not bear a son, to have a daughter whose son might avenge him (11).

Prose: Fáfnir took all the gold and denied any to Reginn, who in turn asked Lyngheiðr for advice.

Verse: Lyngheiðr tells him to ask Fáfnir for his share in a friendly manner (12).

Prose: Reginn told these happenings to Sigurðr.

Verse: Reginn declares that Sigurðr has arrived at his home (13), and that he shall foster him, destined as Sigurðr is to become the most powerful man on earth (14).

Prose: Fáfnir, now in the form of a snake, lay on the treasure on Gnitaeiðr and had a helmet of terror. Reginn forged the marvellous sword Gramr for Sigurðr, and incited him to kill Fáfnir.

Verse: Sigurðr (probably) indicates that he wants to avenge his father first (15).

Prose: Hjálprekr gave Sigurðr a naval force to avenge his father. The fleet encountered a severe storm and turned toward a promontory on which a man was standing.

Reginsmál

Reginsmál (*Rm.*) ‘The Sayings of Reginn’ is another *prosimetrum*. Its status as a distinct work bearing this title is attributable to modern editors; in **R** (fol. 28v–30r), it bears no such heading,¹ although its opening word clearly marks the start of a new compositional unit, its initial letter being a rubricated (but now faded) and enlarged *S*. *Rm.* should be taken together with *Fáfnismál*, the next poem (*prosimetrum*) in **R**.

After the synopsis of *Grp.*, it is really with *Rm.* that the story of Sigurðr gets under way, if only after much colourful information about how the troublesome god Loki’s earlier killing of a dwarf led to the cursing of treasure which Sigurðr will later take from the dragon Fáfnir, brother of Reginn, Sigurðr’s foster-father. It does so with some vigour, with Sigurðr taking the god Óðinn onboard his ship, learning battle-wisdom from him, and ultimately carving a ‘blood-eagle’ into the back of his father’s killer.

The narrative advances largely in simply-worded prose summaries, but there is also much verse dialogue, more characterful than that of *Grp.* In common with other Eddic dialogues, some of this poetry has a gnomic character and is mostly in *ljóðahátttr*, although there are some stanzas of *fornyrðislag*. Also shared with some preceding dialogue poems in **R** (*Vm.*, *Grm.* and *Hrbl.*) is the prominent involvement of an incognito Óðinn.

More specific Old Norse parallels to *Rm.* exist in:

- *VS* (13–15 and 17–18), which includes variants of stt. 1, 2, 6 and 18.
- *Norna-Gests þáttr* ‘The Story of Norna-Gestr’ (4–6; *FSN* I), which includes variants of stt. 13–26. This story probably dates from the early fourteenth century.
- *SnESkald* (I, 39–40, pp. 45–47), which tells the story of the killing of Otr and its aftermath.

These three texts also contain parallels to some of *Rm.*’s prose passages.

Comparison may also be made with the Faroese ballad *Regin smiður* ‘Regin the Smith’.

¹ It may originally have been headed simply *Frá Sigurði* ‘About Sigurðr’.

- 50 In this and the following stanza, the bracketed numbers reverse the manuscript order to indicate a more logical flow.
- 51 I.e., celebrated by drinking at a feast.
- 52 Cf. *VS* 30–32.
- 53 Or ‘... and is hardly contented.’
- 54 Cf. *VS* 31.
- 55 *Gunnarr*.
- 56 ‘God/Good/Battle Snake’.
- 57 Cf. *Gðr. I* and *Gðr. II*.
- 58 *Sigurðr*’s death is described in *VS* 32; see also *Br.* 4–6 and *Sg.* 20–29.
- 59 I.e., there will be no contentment.
- 60 I.e., under heaven, the sky.

- 18 Gjúki is the father of Gunnarr, Högni and Guðrún, key figures in Sigurðr's story. The name *Gjúki* equates to *Gibica*, the name of an early Burgundian king.
- 19 This visit is mentioned in neither **R** nor *VS*, but cf. *Fm.* 41.
- 20 Grípir.
- 21 Brynhildr, as in *VS* 20 (Sigrdrífa in *Fm.* 44 and *Sd.*). The link later in this stanza with Helgi (Hundingsbani?) might also suggest a connection with Sigrún; alternatively, perhaps this Helgi is equivalent to the Hjálm-Gunnarr whom Brynhildr/Sigrdrífa slew in violation of Óðinn's command, as described in *Sd.* 4 pr. and in *Hlr.* 8.
- 22 The identity of this Helgi is uncertain (see previous footnote).
- 23 I.e., the sword. Cf. the initial prose to *Sd.*
- 24 Or 'woman'.
- 25 Cf. *Sd.*
- 26 Heimir is Brynhildr's foster-father. He is not named in subsequent poems in **R**, but cf. *Hlr.* 7. His name is based on *heimr* or *heima* 'home'.
- 27 I.e., living, not dead and buried.
- 28 A 'point-shower' is a hail of spears or arrows, a metaphor for 'battle'; its 'announcer' is a warrior.
- 29 Literally, 'mother's brother'.
- 30 Grípir refers to himself.
- 31 Sigurðr speaks of himself in the third person. Alternatively, emend *vill* to *vilk* 'I want'.
- 32 Literally, 'what Sigurðr plainly has before his hands.'
- 33 'Mail-Coat Battle'.
- 34 Cf. Sigurðr's visit to Heimir and sight of Brynhildr in *VS* 24–25.
- 35 Cf. *VS* 25.
- 36 Cf. *VS* 28.
- 37 In Eddic poems and *VS* Grímhildr (a name usually spelt *Grímildr* in **R**) is the wife of Gjúki and the mother of Gunnarr, Högni, Guthormr and Guðrún. Her name means either 'Grim/Fierce Battle' or 'Face-Mask Battle'. For her treachery, cf. *VS* 28.
- 38 Guðrún.
- 39 'Battle Army'. He is a reflex of a fifth-century Burgundian king called *Gundaharius*.
- 40 'Battle Rune' or 'God Rune'.
- 41 Sigurðr speaks of himself.
- 42 'Goths', or humans in general.
- 43 Cf. *VS* 28.
- 44 Literally, 'before (my) hands'.
- 45 Cf. *VS* 29.
- 46 Cf. *VS* 29.
- 47 Warriors, princes.
- 48 An honorific for a leader skilled with the points of weapons.
- 49 Cf. *Sg.* 4 and *VS* 29.

Textual Apparatus to *Grípisspá*

Grípisspá] This poem is untitled in **R**; the title *Grípisspá* comes from later, paper manuscripts

Hann] Absent from **R**; supplied from later, paper manuscripts

3/1 *konungr*] **R** *konvng*

18/1 *Nú*] **R** *þa* (the emendation supplies alliteration)

22/7 *eða*] **R** *ep*

26/6 *viltki*] **R** *vilkít*

40/7 *brúði*] **R** *brvþr*

46/8 *unað*] **R** *vnat*

47/4 *þyrmðir*] **R** *þyrmir*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 This name appears related to *grípa* ‘to grasp’.
- 2 Grípir is the maternal uncle of Sigurðr, the hero of this and subsequent poems. The bond between maternal uncle and nephew was traditionally strong in early Germanic societies.
- 3 The man.
- 4 A name apparently based on *geit* ‘she-goat’.
- 5 Sigurðr refers to himself.
- 6 Grani is Sigurðr’s horse; the name derives from *grøn* ‘moustache’ or ‘lip’. This reference is a chronological anachronism in **R** because Sigurðr does not acquire Grani until the prose introduction to *Rm.*; in *VS*, however, Sigurðr does have Grani before visiting Grípir.
- 7 Literally, ‘mother’s brother’.
- 8 When not denoting an actual boar, *jofurr* is, as here, a common metaphor for ‘warrior’, ‘prince’.
- 9 I.e., the killing of Eylimi, Sigurðr’s grandfather, by Hundingr’s son Lyngvi with assistance from Óðinn. Lyngvi was Sigmundr’s rival for the hand of Hjördís (*VS* 11–12, 17).
- 10 Cf. *Rm.* 15–26.
- 11 I.e., become most widely known across the world.
- 12 Perhaps ‘Scree Heath’ and maybe identifiable as Knetterheide, Germany. The snake is Fáfnir.
- 13 ‘Ruler’, ‘Powerful One’ (cf. *regin* ‘divine powers’, ‘ruling gods’). He is Sigurðr’s foster-father.
- 14 ‘Embracer’, Reginn’s brother. Fáfnir, who became a giant snake, certainly embraced treasure; perhaps he also constricted his prey.
- 15 See the accounts of *Rm.* and *Fm.*
- 16 Alternatively, ‘longer’, ‘at greater length’, if *lengi* ‘at length’ is emended to *lengra* (cf. *Grp.* 18).
- 17 Cf. the concluding prose to *Fm.*

45. 'You'll recall your oaths, but be able to keep quiet,
you'll grant Guðrún a good marriage;
but Brynhildr, the bride, will think herself badly married,
the woman will find tricks to avenge herself!'⁵²
46. 'What will that bride accept as compensations,
when we have worked tricks on the wife?
The woman has sworn oaths from me,
none kept, and little contentment!'⁵³
47. 'She'll say clearly to Gunnarr,
that you didn't keep the oaths well,⁵⁴
when the noble king, with his whole heart,
Gjúki's heir,⁵⁵ trusted in the prince.'
48. 'What will happen then, Grípir? Explain this for me!
Will I truly be as in the tale?
Or will the famous woman lie about me
and about herself? Tell me that, Grípir!'
49. 'Out of wrath, from excessive grief,
the powerful bride will not treat you altogether well;
you'll never do harm to the good woman,
though you deceived the king's wife with tricks.'
50. 'Will wise Gunnarr, Guthormr⁵⁶ and Hogni
accede to her incitement then?
Will the sons of Gjúki redden their sword-edges
on me, their in-law? Speak on, Grípir!'
51. 'Then, for Guðrún, there will be grimness of heart⁵⁷ —
her brothers will bring about your death⁵⁸ —
and contentment will then come to nothing⁵⁹
for the wise wife — Grím(h)ildr will cause this.
52. 'You shall console yourself with this, army's point-wise one,
[that] this gift will be laid down in the prince's life:
a worthier man than you seem, Sigurðr,
won't come on [this] earth, under the sun's seat!'⁶⁰
53. 'Let's part in good spirits! One can't resist fate!
Now, Grípir, you've done well, as I asked;
you would soon have spoken more favourably
of my life, if you could have [done] that!'

45. 'Minnir þik eiða, máttu þegja þó,
antu Guðrúnu góðra ráða;
en Brynhildr þikkisk, brúðr, vargefin,
snót fiðr vélar sér at hefndum!'
46. 'Hvat mun at bótum brúðr sú taka,
er vélar vér vífi gerðum?
Hefir snót af mér svarna eiða,
enga efnda, en unað lítit!'
47. 'Mun hon Gunnari gørva segja,
at þú eigi vel eiðum þyrmðir,
þá er ítr konungr af öllum hug,
Gjúka arfi, á gram trúði.'
48. 'Hvat er þá, Grípir? Get þú þess fyr mér!
Mun ek saðr vera at sögu þeiri?
Eða lýgr á mik lofsæl kona
ok á sjálfa sik? Segðu, Grípir, þat!'
49. 'Mun fyr reiði rík brúðr við þik
né af oftrega allvel skipa;
viðr þú góðri grand aldregi,
þó ér víf konungs vélum beittuð.'
50. 'Mun horskr Gunnarr at hvötun hennar,
Guthormr ok Høgni, ganga síðan?
Munu synir Gjúka á sífjugum mér
eggjar rjóða? Enn segðu, Grípir!'
51. 'Þá er Guðrúnu grimt um hjarta —
bræðr hennar þér til bana ráða —
ok at øngu verðr ynði síðan
vitru vífi — veldr því Grímildr.
52. 'Því skal hugga þik, hers oddviti,
sú mun gipt lagið á grams ævi:
munat mætri maðr á mold koma,
und sólar sjöt, en þú, Sigurðr, þikkir!'
53. 'Skiljumk heilir! Munat sköpum vinna!
Nú hefir þú, Grípir, vel gørt, sem ek beiddak;
fljótt myndir þú fríðri segja
mína ævi, ef þú mættir þat!'

36. 'Misfortunes are before me,⁴⁴ I can see that;
Sigurðr's decision-making will fall down entirely
if I have to ask for the excellent maiden,
whom I love well, on behalf of another.'
37. 'You'll all swear oaths —
Gunnarr and Hǫgni, and you, prince, third —
as you'll exchange appearances, when you're on the way,
Gunnarr and you — Grípir does not lie!⁴⁵
38. 'What does that mean? Why shall we exchange
appearances and manners when we're on the way?
There will be another deception accompanying [this one],
entirely dreadful — speak on, Grípir!'
39. 'You'll have Gunnarr's appearance and his manner,
[but] your eloquence and great understanding;
you'll betroth yourself to the high-minded
fosterling of Heimir — you'll think nothing of it!⁴⁶
40. 'I think this the worst [thing, that] I, Sigurðr,
will be called evil among men, in such circumstances!
I wouldn't use tricks against
the boars'⁴⁷ bride, whom I know to be the noblest!'
41. 'You will sleep, army's point-wise one,⁴⁸
glorious, beside the maiden, as if she were your mother!⁴⁹
For that, nation's prince, your name
will be remembered as long as humanity lives!
- 42 [43].⁵⁰ 'Both weddings will be drunk⁵¹ together,
Sigurðr's and Gunnarr's, in Gjúki's halls;
when you exchange skins, when you come home,
each will have his own mind about this!'
- 43 [42]. 'Will glorious Gunnarr have a good wife,
among people — tell me, Grípir! —
even though for three nights the thane's bride
has slept, bold-spirited, beside me? There are no precedents for such!
44. 'How will this marital kinship between people
turn to happiness? Tell me, Grípir!
Will pleasure be assigned to Gunnarr
then, or to me myself?'

36. 'Mein eru fyr høndum, má ek lífa þat;
ratar gørliga ráð Sigurðar
ef ek skal mærrar meyjjar biðja
øðrum til handa, þeirar ek unna vel.'
37. 'Ér munuð allir eiða vinna,
Gunnarr ok Høgni, en þú, gramr, þriði,
þvíat litum víxla, er á leið eruð,
Gunnarr ok þú — Grípir lýgr eigi!'
38. 'Hví gegnir þat? Hví skulum skipta
litum ok látum er á leið erum?
Þar mun fláræði fylgja annat,
atalt með øllu: enn segðu, Grípir!'
39. 'Lit hefir þú Gunnars ok læti hans,
mælsku þína ok meginhyggjur;
mundu fastna þér framlundaða
fóstru Heimis — sér vætr fyr því!'
40. 'Verst hyggjum því, vándr munk heitinn,
Sigurðr, með seggjum, at sógøru!
Vilda ek eigi vélum beita
jöfra brúði, er ek æzta veitk!'
41. 'Þú munt hvíla, hers oddviti,
mærr, hjá meyju, sem þín móðir sé!
Því mun uppi, meðan øld lifir,
þjóðar þengill, þitt nafn vera!'
- 42 [43]. 'Saman munu brullaup bæði drukkin,
Sigurðar ok Gunnars, í solum Gjúka;
þá hømum víxlið, er it heim komið,
hefir hvárr fyr því hyggju sína!'
- 43 [42]. 'Mun góða kván Gunnarr eiga,
mærr, með mønnum — mér segðu, Grípir! —
þóat hafi þrjár nætr þegns brúðr hjá mér,
snarlynd, sofit? Slíks erut dæmi!'
44. 'Hvé mun at ynði eptir verða
mægð með mønnum? Mér segðu, Grípir!
Mun Gunnari til gamans ráðit
síðan verða, eða sjálfum mér?'

27. 'There's a woman at Heimir's, fair in appearance —
men call her Brynhildr³³ —
daughter of Buðli, and the worthy king, Heimir,
brings up a hard-minded maiden.'
28. 'What's it to me, even if the maiden is
fair in appearance, brought up at Heimir's?
You must tell it, Grípir, in full,
since you foresee all fates!'
29. 'She, Heimir's fosterling, fair in appearance;
will deprive you of most delight;
you won't sleep a sleep, nor judge lawsuits,
you won't heed men, unless you see that maiden!'³⁴
30. 'What will be laid down as comfort for Sigurðr?
Speak, Grípir, if you seem to see it;
will I manage to buy the girl with a bride-price,
that fair daughter of a marshal?'
31. 'You two will swear all oaths,³⁵
very firmly — few will hold;
[when] you have been Gjúki's guest for one night,
you won't recall Heimir's clever fosterling.'³⁶
32. 'What's [this], then, Grípir? Explain it for me!
Do you see capriciousness in the prince's character,
since I shall break my contract with the maiden,
whom I thought I loved with all my heart?'
33. 'You'll fall victim, prince, to the treacheries of another,
you'll pay for Grímhildr's counsels;³⁷
she'll offer you a bright-haired girl,
her daughter³⁸ — she'll plot against the prince!'
34. 'Will I, then, become an in-law to Gunnarr³⁹
and go to marry Guðrún?⁴⁰
The marshal⁴¹ would then be well-married,
if outrage-sorrows didn't cause me anguish.'
35. 'Grímhildr will trick you entirely;
she'll urge you to ask for Brynhildr
on behalf of Gunnarr, lord of the Gotar;⁴²
you'll immediately promise the journey to the marshal's mother!'⁴³

27. Fljóð er at Heimis, fagrt álitum —
hana Brynhildi bragnar nefna —
dóttir Buðla, en dýrr konungr,
harðugðíkt man, Heimir, fœðir.'
28. 'Hvat er mik at því, þótt mær sé,
fögr álitu, fœdd at Heimis?
Þat skaltu, Grípir, gǫrva segja,
þvíat þú ǫll um sér ǫrlög fyrir!'
29. 'Hon firrir þik flestu gamni,
fögr álitu, fóstura Heimis;
svefn þú né sefr, né um sakar dœmir,
gáraðu manna, nema þú mey sér!'
30. 'Hvat mun til líkna lagt Sigurði?
Segðu, Grípir, þat, ef þú sjá þikkisk;
mun ek mey ná mundi kaupa,
þá ina fögru fylkis dóttur?'
31. 'It munuð alla eiða vinna,
fullfastliga — fá munuð halda;
verit hefir þú Gjúka gestr eina nótt,
mantattu horska Heimis fósturu.'
32. 'Hvært er þá, Grípir? Get þú þess fyr mér!
Sér þú geðleysi í grams skapi,
er ek skal við mey þá málum slíta,
er ek alls hugar unna þóttumk?'
33. 'Þú verðr, siklingr, fyr svikum annars,
mundu Grímhildar gjalda ráða;
mun bjóða þér bjarthaddat man,
dóttur sína — dregr hon vél at gram!'
34. 'Mun ek við þá Gunnar gǫrva hleyti
ok Guðrúnu ganga at eiga?
Fullkvæni þá fylkir væri,
ef meintregar mér angraðit.'
35. 'Þik mun Grímhildr gǫrva véla;
mun hon Brynhildar biðja fýsa
Gunnari til handa, Gotna drótni;
heitr þú fljótliga fǫr fylkis móður!'

18. 'Now that's finished, the lore has been learnt,
and I'm ready to ride away from there;
put your mind to it and speak more fully:
what more will be in my life?'
19. 'You'll come upon Heimir's settlements²⁶
and be the glad guest of the people-king;
it's at an end, Sigurðr, that which I foresaw;
you shouldn't question Grípir still further like this!'
20. 'Now the words you speak cause me sorrow,
because you [do] see further [ahead], marshal;
you know of extreme anguish for Sigurðr —
that's why, Grípir, you don't say it!'
21. 'The youth of your life lay before me
most clearly to look upon;
not rightly am I reckoned counsel-wise,
nor any the more prescient — what I knew is ended!'
22. 'I know no one above ground²⁷
who sees further ahead than you, Grípir;
you mustn't hide it, even if it is hideous,
or if harm may come to my condition!'
23. 'Life is not laid out for you with shame —
let that be learned, glorious nobleman!
Because, announcer of the point-shower,²⁸
your name will be remembered as long as men live!'
24. 'I think this the worst [thing],
that Sigurðr must part from the marshal in such circumstances;
show me the way — all is laid out in advance —
if you will, famed maternal uncle!²⁹
25. 'Now I shall speak to Sigurðr in full,
since the prince forces me to this;
you will surely know that he³⁰ does not lie:
one day is appointed for your death.'
26. 'I don't want [to incur] the wrath of the powerful people-king,
but would rather receive Grípir's good counsel;
now he wants³¹ to know for certain, even if it's unpleasant,
what Sigurðr plainly has in store.'³²

18. 'Nú er því lokit, numin eru fræði,
ok em braut þaðan búinn at ríða;
leið at huga ok lengra seg:
hvat mun meirr vera minnar ævi?'
19. 'Þú munt hitta Heimis byggðir
ok glaðr vera gestr þjóðkonungs;
farit er, Sigurðr, þats ek fyrir vissak;
skala fremr enn svá fregna Grípi!'
20. 'Nú fær mér ekka orð þatstu mæltir,
þvíat þú fram um sér, fylkir, lengra;
veiztu ofmikit angr Sigurði —
því þú, Grípir, þat gerra segja!'
21. 'Lá mér um æsku ævi þinnar
ljósast fyrir líta eptir;
rétt emka ek ráðspakr taliðr,
né in heldr framvís — farit þats ek vissak!'
22. 'Mann veit ek engi fyr mold ofan,
þann er fleira sé fram en þú, Grípir;
skalattu leyna, þótt ljótt sé,
eða mein gørisk á mínum hag!'
23. 'Era með lōstum lōgð ævi þér —
láttu, inn ítri, þat, qðlingr, nemask!
Þvíat uppi mun, meðan qld lifir,
naddéls boði, nafn þitt vera!'
24. 'Verst hyggjum því, verðr at skiljask
Sigurðr við fylki at sógøru;
leið vísaðú — lagt er allt fyrir —
mœrr, mér, ef þú vilt, móðurbróðir!'
25. 'Nú skal Sigurði segja gerva,
allz þengill mik til þess neyðir;
mundu víst vita at vætki lýgr:
dægr eitt er þér dauði ætlaðr.'
26. 'Vilkat ek reiði ríks þjóðkonungs,
góðráðs, at heldr, Grípis, þiggja;
nú vill víst vita, þótt viltki sé,
hvat á sýnt Sigurðr sér fyr hōndum.'

9. 'First, marshal, you will avenge your father
and entirely avenge Eylimi's harm;⁹
you will fell the hard, bold sons of Hundingr —
you will have victory!¹⁰
10. 'Tell me, noble king [and] kinsman,
rather wisely, since we're speaking agreeably:
do you foresee Sigurðr's strong, swift deeds,
those that will journey highest under heaven's corners?¹¹
11. 'You will alone slay the shining snake,
the one which lies greedy on Gniðaheiðr;¹²
you will become the killer of both,
Reginn¹³ and Fáfnir¹⁴ — Grípir speaks rightly!¹⁵
12. 'Wealth will be abundant, if I accomplish
such a killing among men, as you say with certainty;
put your mind to it and speak at length:¹⁶
what more will be in my life?'
13. 'You will find Fáfnir's lair
and take up the fair treasures,
load gold on Grani's shoulders;¹⁷
you will ride to Gjúki's,¹⁸ battle-proud prince.'¹⁹
14. 'Still you must in confidential speech,
high-minded boar,²⁰ say more to the ruler;
I'm a guest of Gjúki, and I go from there:
what more will be in my life?'
15. 'A marshal's daughter²¹ sleeps on a mountain,
bright in a mail-coat, after Helgi's death;²²
you will strike with a sharp sword,
cut the mail-coat with Fáfnir's bane.'²³
16. 'Broken is the mail-coat, the bride starts to speak,
when the wife²⁴ awoke from her sleep;
what will the woman say rather [soon] to Sigurðr
that will be to the marshal's benefit?'
17. 'She will teach you, powerful one, runes,²⁵
all those that people want to possess,
and to talk in every human tongue,
[and] medicines with healing art — live healthily, king!'

9. 'Fyrst muntu, fylkir, fōður um hefna
ok Eylima alls harms reka;
þú munt harða Hundings sonu,
snjalla, fella — mundu sigr hafa!'
10. 'Segðu, ítr konungr, ættingi, mér,
heldr horskliga, er vit hugat mælum:
sérðu Sigurðar snqr brögð fyrir,
þau er hæst fara und himinskautum?'
11. 'Mundu einn vega orm inn frána,
þann er gráðugr liggr á Gnitahiði;
þú munt báðum at bana verða,
Regin ok Fáfni — rétt segir Grípír!'
12. 'Auðr mun ærinn, ef ek eflík svá
víg með virðum, sem þú víst segir;
leið at huga ok lengi seg:
hvat mun enn vera ævi minnar?'
13. 'Þú munt finna Fáfnis bæli
ok upp taka auð inn fagra,
gulli hlœða á Grana bógu;
ríðr þú til Gjúka, gramr vígrisinn.'
14. 'Enn skaltu hilmí í hugaðsrœðu,
framlyndr jöfurr, fleira segja;
gestr em ek Gjúka, ok ek geng þaðan:
hvat mun enn vera ævi minnar?'
15. 'Sefr á fjalli fylkis dóttir,
björt í brynju, eptir bana Helga;
þú munt hoggva hvössu sverði,
brynju rísta með bana Fáfnis.'
16. 'Brotin er brynja, brúðr mæla tekr,
er vaknaði víf ór svefni;
hvat mun snót at heldr við Sigurð mæla,
þat er at farnaði fylki verði?'
17. 'Hon mun ríkjum þér rúnar kenna,
allar þær er aldir eignask vildu,
ok á manns tungu mæla hverja,
líf með lækning — lífðu heill, konungr!'

The Prophecy of Grípir

Grípir,¹ brother of Hjördís,² was the name of a son of Eylimi. He ruled lands and was the wisest of all men and prescient. Sigurðr rode alone and came to the hall of Grípir. Sigurðr was easily recognized. He met a man to speak to outside the hall. He³ named himself Geitir.⁴ Then Sigurðr asked to speak with him and enquired:

1. ‘Who inhabits these strongholds here?
What do thanes call the people-king?’
 ‘The steerer of men is called Grípir,
 he who rules firm ground and thanes.’
2. ‘Is the wise king at home in the land?
Will the leader come to talk with me?
An unknown man is in need of speech,
 I want to meet Grípir at once!’
3. ‘The glad king will ask Geitir this:
who the man is who asks to speak with Grípir.’
 ‘I am called Sigurðr, born to Sigmundr,
 and Hjördís is the ruler’s⁵ mother.’
4. Then Geitir went to speak to Grípir:
 ‘An unknown man has arrived outside here;
 he is lordly in appearance;
 he wants, marshal, to meet you.’
5. The lord of warriors walks from the dwelling
 and greets well the [newly] arrived ruler;
 ‘Accept [our hospitality] here, Sigurðr! Sooner would
 have been better!
And you, Geitir, take care of Grani himself!’⁶
6. They began to speak and to chat at length,
 when the counsel-wise men met each other:
 ‘Tell me, if you know, maternal uncle,⁷
 how will life turn out for Sigurðr?’
7. ‘You will be the most glorious man under the sun,
 and the highest born of any boar,⁸
 generous with gold, but stingy of flight,
 stately in appearance and wise in words!’
8. ‘Tell Sigurðr, just [and] wise king,
 more fully than I may ask, if you think you see:
 what will happen first to my advantage,
 when I am gone from your court?’

Grípisspá

Grípir hét sonr Eylima, bróðir Hjördísar. Hann réð lönðum ok var allra manna vitrastr ok framvís. Sigurðr reið einn saman ok kom til hallar Grípis. Sigurðr var auðkendr. *Hann* hitti mann at máli úti fyrir hollinni. Sá nefndisk Geitir. Þá kvaddi Sigurðr hann máls ok spyrr:

1. 'Hverr byggir hér borgir þessar?
Hvat þann þjóðkonung þegnar nefna?'
'Grípir heitir gumna stjóri,
sá er fastri ræðr foldu ok þegnum.'
2. 'Er horskr konungr heima í landi?
Mun sá gramr við mik ganga at mæla?
Máls er þarfi maðr ókunnigr,
vil ek fljótliga finna Grípi!'
3. 'Þess mun glaðr konungr Geiti spyrra:
hverr sá maðr sé er máls kveðr Grípi.'
'Sigurðr ek heiti, borinn Sigmundi,
en Hjördís er hilmis móðir.'
4. Þá gekk Geitir Grípi at segja:
'Hér er maðr úti, ókuðr, kominn;
hann er ítarligr at áliti;
sá vill, fylkir, fund þinn hafa.'
5. Gengr ór skála skatna dróttinn
ok heilsar vel hilmí komnum:
'Þiggðu hér, Sigurðr! Væri sœmra fyrr!
En þú, Geitir, tak við Grana sjálfum!'
6. Mæla námu ok mart hjala,
þá er ráðspakir rekkar fundusk:
'Segðu mér, ef þú veizt, móðurbróðir,
hvé mun Sigurði snúna ævi?'
7. 'Þú munt maðr vera mæztr und sólu,
ok hæstr borinn hverjum jöfri,
gjöf full af gulli, en glöggr flugar,
ítr áliti ok í orðum spakr!'
8. 'Segðu, gegn konungr, gerr en ek spyrra,
snotr, Sigurði, ef þú sjá þikkisk:
hvat mun fyrst gørask til farnaðar,
þá er ór garði emk genginn þínum?'

(40–41); celebrate his wedding (to Guðrún), along with Gunnarr's (to Brynhildr) (42); give Guðrún a good marriage, though Brynhildr will feel deeply aggrieved and use trickery to avenge herself (43–45); be accused of oath-breaking by Brynhildr (46–47); be harmed by Brynhildr (48–49); be killed by Guðrún's brothers (50–51); be the worthiest man ever born (52).

Sigurðr and Grípir then part on good terms (53).

Further Reading

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Grípisspá

Grípisspá (*Grp.*) ‘The Prophecy of Grípir’ survives in **R** (fol. 27r–28v). It is a pedestrian work in *fornyrðislag*, but it serves a useful purpose as a synoptic preface to subsequent poems in **R** concerning the hero Sigurðr. It reminds the audience—most or all of whom were probably familiar with some stories about Sigurðr—of what is to come. It was probably composed in the thirteenth century.

Chapter 16 of *VS*, another major Old Norse source for Sigurðr’s life, also mentions his visit to his maternal uncle, Grípir, and the latter’s prophecy. In contrast to the sequence of events indicated by the order of poems in **R**, however, the saga has Sigurðr meet his foster-father, Reginn, before hearing Grípir’s prophecy.

As a *spá* ‘prophecy’, *Grp.* merits comparison with *Vsp.* and *Hdl.* 29–44.

Synopsis

Prose: An introductory passage records that Sigurðr arrived at the hall of his maternal uncle, Grípir, who was the wisest of men and prescient. He met a man called Geitir outside and they conversed.

Verse: Sigurðr learns from Geitir that Grípir lives there (1), and asks to speak with him (2). Sigurðr identifies himself (3), and Geitir informs Grípir that a visitor wishes to meet him (4). Grípir welcomes Sigurðr (5), who asks him how his life will turn out (6). Grípir informs him that he will be the greatest man (7).

In response to further questions from Sigurðr, Grípir informs him that he will avenge his grandfather, Eylimi (8–9); slay Reginn (his foster-father) and Reginn’s brother Fáfnir (10–11); take Fáfnir’s treasure (12–13); waken an armoured woman (Brynhildr) on a mountain (14–16), who will teach him runes (17); and arrive at the home of Heimir, Brynhildr’s foster-father (18–19).

Sigurðr then persuades a reluctant Grípir to continue, even if the future he sees is unpleasant (20–26). Grípir tells him of Brynhildr (27).

In response to further prompting from Sigurðr, Grípir tells him that he will fall deeply in love with Brynhildr (28–29); betroth himself to her, and she to him (30–31); fall victim to the treacheries of Grím(h)ildr (mother of Gunnarr, Hǫgni and Guðrún) (32–33); ask for Brynhildr on Gunnarr’s behalf (34–35); swear oaths with Gunnarr and Hǫgni, and exchange appearances with the former (36–37); disguised as Gunnarr, betroth himself to Brynhildr (38–39); sleep beside her, albeit without sexual contact

Textual Apparatus to *Frá dauða Sinfjötla*

Frá dauða Sinfjötla] This heading is rubricated but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; the reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein. Later, paper manuscripts have the title *Sinfjötllalok* 'Sinfjötli's End'.

Sigmundr] The first letter is large, inset and rubricated, but faded, in **R**

Hámundr] **R** *hamundir* (with a macron for *-un-*)

er hét . . .] **R** has a black space here

ok . . .] **R** has a blank space here

innan] **R** *iN*

þó] **R** *þa*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 Francia, kingdom of the Franks.
- 2 Helgi Hundingsbani, hero of *HH. I* and *HH. II*.
- 3 'High Hand/Protection'.
- 4 The name is missing. This man is also unnamed in the account of these events in *VS 10*.
- 5 The name of Helgi's love-rival is probably missing. *VS 10* records that it was a king, Borghildr's (unnamed) brother, who vied with Sinfjötli for a beautiful woman.
- 6 Sinfjötli.
- 7 Elsewhere, *ái* means 'great-grandfather'.
- 8 Sigmundr.
- 9 The old boatman was Óðinn in disguise (cf. *Hrbl.*). Óðinn was sometimes a psychopomp for the best fallen warriors, whom he took to Valhøll. This episode may reflect a tradition about the divisive waters of death (cf. the River Styx in Greek mythology), across which Sigmundr could not be ferried while alive.
- 10 Denmark.
- 11 'Sword Lady'.
- 12 'Victory Guardian'.
- 13 I.e., at the hands of.
- 14 'Elf' or 'Noble Wolf'.
- 15 'Help-Powerful One'. *VS 12* identifies him as a Danish king.

About Sinfjötli's Death

Sigmundr, Völsungr's son, was king in Frakkland.¹ Sinfjötli was the eldest of his sons, second was Helgi,² third Hámundr.³ Borghildr, Sigmundr's wife, had a brother who was called . . .⁴ And Sinfjötli, her stepson, and . . .⁵ they both asked to marry the one woman, and for that reason Sinfjötli slew him. And when he⁶ came home, Borghildr asked him to go away, but Sigmundr offered her compensation, and she had to accept that. But at the funeral feast, Borghildr served ale. She took poison, a great hornful, and brought it to Sinfjötli. And when he looked in the horn, he perceived that poison was in it, and he said to Sigmundr: 'The drink is cloudy, father.'⁷ Sigmundr took the horn and drained it. It is said that Sigmundr was so strongly made that poison could never hurt him outside or inside. But all his sons withstood poison [only] outside on their skin. Borghildr brought another horn to Sinfjötli, and asked him to drink, and everything went as before. And, again, the third time she brought him the horn, but with insulting words with it, if he did not drain it. He spoke again as before with Sigmundr. He⁸ said: 'Let your moustache strain it then, son!' Sinfjötli drank and died at once.

Sigmundr carried him a long way in his arms and came to a fjord slender and long, and there was a little ship and a lone man in it. He offered Sigmundr passage over the fjord. But when Sigmundr brought the body out to the ship, then the boat was [fully] laden. The old man said to Sigmundr that he would have to go along the shore inside the fjord. The old man pushed the ship out and vanished at once.⁹

King Sigmundr stayed a long time in Danmörk¹⁰ in the kingdom of Borghildr, after he married her. Then Sigmundr went south into Frakkland, to the kingdom that he owned there. Then he married Hjördís,¹¹ daughter of King Eylimi. Their son was Sigurðr.¹² King Sigmundr fell in battle before¹³ Hundinr's sons. And Hjördís then gave herself in marriage to Álfr,¹⁴ son of King Hjálprekr.¹⁵ Sigurðr grew up there in his childhood.

Sigmundr and all his sons were far above all other men in strength and stature and courage and all accomplishments. Sigurðr was foremost of all then, and in the ancient traditions all people call him superior to all men and the noblest of army-kings.

Frá dauða Sinfjötla

Sigmundur, Völsungs sonr, var konungr á Frakklandi. Sinfjötli var elztr hans sona, annarr Helgi, þriði Hámundur. Borghildr, kona Sigmundar, átti bróður er hét . . . En Sinfjötli, stjúpsonr hennar, ok . . . báðu einnar konu báðir, ok fyrir þá sök drap Sinfjötli hann. En er hann kom heim, þá bað Borghildr hann fara á brot, en Sigmundur bauð henni fébætr, ok þat varð hon at þiggja. En at erfinu bar Borghildr ǫl. Hon tók eitr, mikit horn fullt, ok bar Sinfjötla. En er hann sá í hornit, skilði hann at eitr var í, ok mælti til Sigmundar: ‘Gjöróttir er drykkinn, ái.’ Sigmundur tók hornit ok drakk af. Svá er sagt at Sigmundur var harðgǫrr at hvárki mátti honum eitr granda útan né innan. En allir synir hans stóðusk eitr á hǫrund útan. Borghildr bar annat horn Sinfjötla, ok bað drekka, ok fór allt sem fyrr. Ok enn it þriðja sinn bar hon honum hornit, ok þó ámælisorð með, ef hann drykki eigi af. Hann mælti enn sem fyrr við Sigmund. Hann sagði: ‘Láttu grǫn sía þá, sonr!’ Sinfjötli drakk ok varð þegar dauðr.

Sigmundur bar hann langar leiðir í fangi sér ok kom at firði einum mjóvum ok lǫngum, ok var þar skip eitt lítit ok maðr einn á. Hann bauð Sigmundi far of fjörðinn. En er Sigmundur bar líkit út á skipit, þá var bátrinn hlaðinn. Karlinn mælti at Sigmundur skyldi fara fyrir innan fjörðinn. Karl hratt út skipinu ok hvarf þegar.

Sigmundur konungr dvalðisk lengi í Danmǫrk í ríki Borghildar, síðan er hann fekk hennar. Fór Sigmundur þá suðr í Frakkland, til þess ríkis er hann átti þar. Þá fekk hann Hjördísar, dóttur Eylima konungs. Þeira sonr var Sigurðr. Sigmundur konungr fell í orrostu fyrir Hundings sonum. En Hjördís giptisk þá Álfi, syni Hjalpreks konungs. Óx Sigurðr þar upp í barnæsku.

Sigmundur ok allir synir hans váru langt um fram alla menn aðra um afl ok vǫxt ok hug ok alla atgervi. Sigurðr var þá allra framarstr, ok hann kalla allir menn í fornfræðum um alla menn fram ok gǫfgastan herkonunga.

Frá dauða Sinfjötla

Frá dauða Sinfjötla (*Sf.*) ‘About Sinfjötli’s Death’ is a purely prose passage in **R** (fol. 26v–27r). It serves as a bridge between the preceding three Helgi-poems and the following poems about Sigurðr, half-brother of Helgi Hundingsbani.

Sf. relates events described more fully in chapters 10 to 13 of *VS*. Similarities of wording indicate a close relationship between the two accounts.

Synopsis

Sf. begins by introducing three sons of Sigmundr: Sinfjötli, Helgi and Hámundr (the first two featured in *HH. I* and *HH. II*). Sinfjötli slew the brother of his stepmother, Borghildr, over their love of the same woman. For that, Borghildr wanted Sinfjötli exiled, but she had to accept compensation from Sigmundr instead.

At her brother’s funeral feast, however, she served Sinfjötli poisoned drink three times. The first two times, Sigmundr, who was reputedly wholly immune to poison, drank it for Sinfjötli. The third time Sigmundr told his son to strain the drink through his moustache. Sinfjötli drank it and died immediately.

Sigmundr carried Sinfjötli’s body to a fjord, where an old boatman (Óðinn incognito) offered him passage. Sigmundr put the body in the boat, which was then fully laden. The old man told Sigmundr he would have to walk along the shore, and then vanished.

Sigmundr stayed in Borghildr’s kingdom in Danmørk (Denmark) for a long time, before moving to his kingdom in Frakkland (Francia). Then he married Hjördís, daughter of King Eylimi, and they had a son called Sigurðr (the hero of subsequent poems in **R**). Sigmundr died at the hands of King Hundingr’s sons. Hjördís married Álfr, son of King Hjalprekr, at whose (probably Danish) court Sigurðr grew up.

Sigurðr proved to be the greatest man of all.

Further Reading

Fleck, J., ‘Konr—Óttarr—Geirrøðr: A Knowledge Criterion for Succession to the Germanic Sacred Kingship’, *SS* 42 (1970), 39–49.

Von See, K., B. La Farge, W. Gerhold, E. Picard and K. Schulz, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, Bd. 5: *Heldenlieder* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2006).

- 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.

- 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 Vǫlsungar.
- 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.

- 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.

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.

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** *hefnuþ*

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*

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 Hálfdan's daughter,¹⁰⁸ as is related in *Kárukjóð* 'Kára's Song',¹⁰⁹ and she was a valkyrie.

48. 'Nú kveð ek enskis ðrvænt vera,
síð né snimma, at Sevafjöllum,
er þú á armi ólifðum sefr,
hvít, í haugi, Høgna 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 öll draumþinga til.
51. 'Verðu eigi svá ær, at ein farir,
dís Skjöldunga, draughúsa til!
Verða oflgari allir á nóttum
dauðir dólgar, mæ, en um daga ljósa!'

Sigrún varð skammlíf af harmi ok trega. Þat var trúa í fornaskju at menn væri endrborin, en þat er nú kōlluð 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.

- 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!'

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!'

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?'

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
fjándr 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 gorr 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?'

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!’

- 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 egir!
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!’

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

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 Hrollaugs 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!’

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!'

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.

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.

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:

Helgakviða Hundingsbana þinnur

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 hermaður mikill ok átti marga sonu, þá er í hernaði váru.

Ófriður 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 bragar feldu;
ér úlf grán inni höfðuð,
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 lúður fyrir!

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

4. Hagall svaraði ok kvað:
'Þat er lítil vá, þótt lúður þrumi,
er mæru konungs mœndul hrœrir;
hon skævaði skýjum efri
ok vega þorði sem víkingar,
áðr hana Helgi hœptu gœrði;
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 kallaður 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:

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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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.

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 Hundigr; 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 Hundigr, king of Hundland, and how Helgi spied out Hundigr’s court.

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

Prose: A prose passage records how Hundigr 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). Hundigr’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).

- 73 Or 'deadly staves'. The rays of the dawning sun are imagined as deadly staves that turn Hríngerðr to stone. At the same time, the 'staves' are metaphorical runic letters, the words with which Helgi has delayed the giantess until sunrise; cf. *Alv.* 35, *Hdl.* 49(?). There might also be a link between these staves and the peerless sword which Helgi took from Sigarshólmr; it bore representations of snakes, creatures traditionally likened to staffs, and, as an unmatched weapon, it was potentially solar and rune-inscribed.
- 74 Norway.
- 75 A cup which was drunk from when oaths were sworn at a feast.
- 76 An actual boar.
- 77 I.e., for a duel. Helgi's opponent is named shortly as Álfr, son of Hróðmarr, whom Helgi killed earlier.
- 78 The stanza seems to be spoken by Heðinn, who refers to himself in the third person.
- 79 A *fylgja* 'fetch' was a spirit thought to accompany someone in life (cf. *fylgja* 'to accompany'). Helgi apparently has more than one such escort, and he thinks they have abandoned him for Heðinn. Hence it would seem appropriate to Helgi that his brother should have Sváva.
- 80 Cf. chapter 52 of *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*.
- 81 'Sigarr's Plains'.
- 82 Heðinn.
- 83 Helgi.
- 84 Presumably the Sigarr of the aforementioned place-names Sigarshólmr and Sigarsvellir.
- 85 Sváva.
- 86 Helgi.
- 87 Helgi.
- 88 Literally 'before the nobly born one lost breath'.
- 89 Literally, 'to that one of men'.
- 90 The pair have apparently already arrived in the vicinity of Helgi's death.
- 91 'Freki's Stone'. See *HH. I* 44.
- 92 Literally, 'is not necessary'.
- 93 Helgi speaks this stanza.
- 94 The meaning of *hug deila*, literally 'to divide heart/mood/courage', is disputed.
- 95 Heðinn.
- 96 Sváva speaks this stanza.
- 97 Or 'in my beloved homeland'.
- 98 I.e., warrior, prince.
- 99 Heðinn speaks this stanza.
- 100 'Slander/Strife Home'.
- 101 'Halo's/Sun's Fells'.
- 102 Possibly as Helgi Hundingsbani, son of Sigmundr, and Sigrún, who appear in *HH. I* and *HH. II*. See the initial prose to *HH. II*.

- 42 Helgi reproaches his father for not avenging the burning of Sváfnir's land by Hróðmarr.
- 43 Sváfnir.
- 44 'Hater'; cf. Hati, the sun-hunting wolf of *Grm.* 39; they are not necessarily distinct characters.
- 45 'Hati's Fjord'.
- 46 'Frost Gerðr', a giantess. Cf. Gerðr in *Fsk.*
- 47 The following flyting between Hrímgæðr and Atli is sometimes known as *Hrímgæðarmál* 'Hrímgæðr's Sayings'.
- 48 Helgi.
- 49 Presumably some form of armour-plating; perhaps shields with metal rims and bosses.
- 50 Literally 'lodge', 'inhabit'.
- 51 Atli puns on his name.
- 52 This might mean simply 'killed'.
- 53 Witches or troll-women.
- 54 I.e., underground.
- 55 Or 'a fir-tree'.
- 56 The Norse text contains a pun, as *baðmr* 'breast'—here translated 'trunk'—also means 'tree'. Cf. *Fsk.* 35.
- 57 I.e., to drown them. *Rán* 'Plunder' was the wife of the sea-giant *Ægir*.
- 58 Hrímgæðr is apparently described unflatteringly as a whale; some other Northern giantesses (such as Grendel's mother in *Beowulf*) are also identified or closely associated with whales or other monstrous sea-creatures. Alternatively, the sense might be 'if a sharp point did not entirely thwart you.'
- 59 An idiomatic description of a scowl or drowsiness, or both.
- 60 'Famous Guardian' or 'Troop Guardian'.
- 61 Hrímgæðr apparently likens herself to a mare, or another tailed animal, and reveals herself in a sexual provocation.
- 62 I.e., in your arse.
- 63 I.e., straightening and breaking.
- 64 Or simply 'since you hacked Hati'.
- 65 I.e., Helgi. In this stanza Hrímgæðr speaks of herself in the third person.
- 66 This stanza is probably spoken by Helgi.
- 67 'Shaggy'.
- 68 'Fir-Tree Island'.
- 69 Sunshine can make the sea shine like gold, and in Old Norse poetry gold is often said to reside in the sea. Emendation of *margullin* 'sea-golden' to *marggullin* 'much golden' (i.e., 'greatly adorned with gold') therefore seems unnecessary.
- 70 I.e., tethered.
- 71 Helgi refers to himself in the third person.
- 72 It is not entirely clear who is speaking here, but perhaps Atli recites this stanza and Helgi the next.

- 8 Or 'most promising'.
- 9 Probably of Svávaland (see the *HHv.* 5 pr.), which might originally have been the home of the Suevi tribe.
- 10 'Victory Linden'.
- 11 Hjörvarðr's.
- 12 'Work/Deed Hand'.
- 13 'Terrible'.
- 14 'Sparking Famous One' or 'Shining Horse/Sea'.
- 15 A female equivalent of the male *Óláfr*.
- 16 'Love's Home/World' or 'Delight's World'. The word might also be interpretable as a common noun meaning 'beloved land'.
- 17 'Glásir's Grove'. *SnESkáld* (I, 34, p. 41) records that a golden-leaved tree called *Glásir* 'Gleaming One' stands before Valhöll.
- 18 Atli.
- 19 Hjörvarðr's.
- 20 Hjörvarðr.
- 21 The precise meaning of ON *hǫrgr* is uncertain.
- 22 When not denoting an actual boar, *þǫfurr* is, as here, a common metaphor for 'warrior' or 'prince', here Helgi.
- 23 Or *Sæmǫrn*, a river. *Sæ-* means 'Sea'; *Morn/mǫrn* is an attested term for a river.
- 24 Or 'he'.
- 25 The land of the Suevi, an early Germanic group; now Swabia.
- 26 Clouds of dust created by galloping horses.
- 27 Fránmarr was presumably the bird which Atli killed.
- 28 'Fame Glorious One' or 'Fame Horse/Sea'.
- 29 Sváfnir.
- 30 Or 'promising'.
- 31 We learn later that her name is Sváva.
- 32 I.e., warrior.
- 33 'Halo/Sun's Fields' or 'Crest's Fields'.
- 34 An auspicious sign for a warrior; cf. *HH.* I 1.
- 35 'Sigarr's Island'.
- 36 Probably shields. Alternatively, 'battle-fastenings' (i.e., armour) or 'battle-needles' (i.e., swords).
- 37 If not purely conceptual, the references to courage and terror might refer to magical inscriptions in runes or other signs.
- 38 Perhaps the hilt-binding.
- 39 'Swabian (woman)'.
- 40 An honorific for a leader skilled with the points of weapons.
- 41 Warriors, princes.

Textual Apparatus to *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*

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

Frá Hjörvarði ok Sigrlinn] A rubricated heading, but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; this reading is therefore taken from the transcription therein

Hjörvarðr] The first letter is large, inset, rubricated but faded in **R**

Atli] **R** *iarliN*

hlýddi] **R** *lyddi*

Hann kvað] **R** also has *F. kv.* (short for *Fuglinn kvað* ‘The bird said’) in the margin

2 *Atli kvað*] Abbreviated *A. kv.* in margin of **R**

2 *Fuglinn kvað*] Abbreviated *F. kv.* in margin of **R**

3 *Atli kvað*] Abbreviated *A. kv.* in margin of **R**

3/1 *Hjörvarð*] **R** *hiorvaþr*

4 *Fuglinn kvað*] Abbreviated *F. kv.* in margin of **R**

5/1 *erfiði*] **R** *erfi*

5 pr. *hafði*] **R** *hafi*

11 pr. *hann*] **R** *ho(n)* ‘she’

11 pr. *hlut*] **R** *lvt*

21/1 *Hreini*] **R** *remi*

29/5 *lofðungs*] **R** *auþlings* (the emendation provides alliteration)

33/6 *stefnt*] **R** *steyct*

36/6 *búna*] **R** *bvnir*

38/1 *Hvat varð*] **R** *Hvarþ*

41/4 *hlýða*] **R** *lyða*

42/5 *lostig*] **R** *lostic*

43/7 *var*] **R** absent

Notes to the Translation

- 1 A Norwegian king. His name means ‘Sword Guardian’.
- 2 ‘Elf Battle’.
- 3 ‘Hairy One’ or ‘Fur/Skin Jacket’.
- 4 Possibly ‘Sea Rider’.
- 5 ‘Humli’s Descendant’, Humli probably being a Hunnish king.
- 6 Perhaps ‘Cinder Red’.
- 7 Again, ‘Humli’s Descendant’.

42.⁹⁶ 'I had said this in Munarheimr,⁹⁷
when Helgi gave me rings:
I would not willingly, after the marshal had passed away,
put my arms around an unknown boar.'⁹⁸

43.⁹⁹ 'Kiss me, Sváva! I shall not come
to visit Rógheimr¹⁰⁰ or Røðulsfjöll,¹⁰¹
before I have avenged Hjörvarðr's son,
the descendant of Buðli who was best under the sun!'

It is said that Helgi and Sváva were born again.¹⁰²

42. 'Mælt hafða ek þat í Munarheimi,
þá er mér Helgi hringa valði:
myndiga ek lostig at liðinn fylki
jöfur ókunnan armi verja.'
43. 'Kystu mik, Sváva! Kem ek eigi áðr
Rógheims á vit né Røðulsfjalla,
áðr ek hefnt hefik Hjörvarðs sonar,
þess er buðlungr var beztr und sólu!'

Helgi ok Sváva er sagt at væri endrborin.

- 34.⁷⁸ 'You said, Helgi, that Heðinn was
worthy of good from you and great gifts;
it's more seemly for you to redden your sword
than to give peace to your opponents.'

Helgi said that because he suspected his doom and that his fetches had visited Heðinn when he saw the woman riding the wolf.⁷⁹

There was a king called Álfr, son of Hróðmarr, who, for Helgi, had marked a field with hazel poles⁸⁰ [for a duel] on Sigarsvellir⁸¹ before three nights had passed.

- Then Helgi said:
35. 'She rode on a wolf when it had grown dark,
a woman who offered him⁸² escort;
she knew that Sigrlinn's son⁸³
would be slain at Sigarsvellir.'

There was a great fight, and Helgi received a mortal wound there.

36. Helgi sent Sigarr⁸⁴ riding
after Eylimi's only daughter;⁸⁵
he bids her get ready swiftly,
if she wishes to find the marshal⁸⁶ alive.

37. 'Helgi has sent me here,
to speak with you yourself, Sváva;
the ruler said he wants to meet you,
before the nobly born one's⁸⁷ breath fails.⁸⁸

38. 'What has become of Helgi, Hjörvarðr's son?
Harshly it is that sorrows have sought me!
If sea deceived him or sword bit him,
I shall do harm to that one among men!⁸⁹

39. 'He fell here⁹⁰ this morning at Frekasteinn,⁹¹
Buðli's descendant, the man who was best under the sun;
Álfr will achieve victory over all,
although this time ought not to be.⁹²

- 40.⁹³ 'Hail, Sváva! You must share your heart,⁹⁴
this will be our last meeting in the world;
blood begins to flow under Buðli's descendant —
a sword has come very near to my heart.

41. 'I bid you, Sváva — don't weep, bride! —
if you will hear my words,
that you prepare a bed for Heðinn
and turn your love towards the young boar.⁹⁵

34. ‘Sagðir þú, Helgi, at Heðinn væri
góðs verðr frá þér ok gjafa stórra;
þér er sœmra sverð at rjóða
en frið gefa fjándum þínum.’

Þat kvað Helgi þvíat hann grunaði um feigð sína ok þat at fylgjur hans höfðu vitjat Heðins, þá er hann sá konuna ríða varginum.

Álfr hét konungr, sonr Hróðmars, er Helga hafði völlum haslaðan á Sigarsvelli á þriggja náttu fresti.

Þá kvað Helgi:

35. ‘Reið á vargi er rekkvit var,
fljóð eitt er hann fylgju beiddi;
hon vissi þat at veginn myndi
Sigrlinnar sonr á Sigarsvöllum.’

Þar var orrosta mikil, ok fekk þar Helgi banasár.

36. Sendi Helgi Sigar at ríða
eptir Eylima eingadóttur;
biðr brálliga búna verða,
ef hon vill finna fylki kvikvan.
37. ‘Mik hefir Helgi hingat sendan,
við þik, Sváva, sjálfa at mæla;
þik kvazk hilmir hitta vilja,
áðr ítrborinn öndu týndi.’
38. ‘Hvat varð Helga, Hjörvarðs syni?
Mér er harðliga harma leitat!
Ef hann sær um lék eða sverð um beit,
þeim skal ek gumna grand um vinna!’
39. ‘Fell hér í morgun at Frekasteini,
buðlungr, sá er var baztr und sólu;
Álfr mun sigri öllum ráða,
þótt þetta sinn þorfgi væri.’
40. ‘Heil verðu, Sváva! Hug skaltu deila,
sjá mun í heimi hinztr fundr vera;
tjá buðlungi blœða undir —
mér hefir hjör komit hjarta it næsta.
41. ‘Bið ek þik, Sváva — brúðr, grátattu! —
ef þú vill mínu máli hlýða,
at þú Heðni hvílu gœrvir
ok jöfur ungan ástum leiðir.’

28. ‘Thrice nine maidens, yet one rode in front,
 a maiden white under helm;
the horses shook themselves, from their manes came
 dew in deep dales,
 hail in high woods;
thence comes a good harvest among men;
 all that I saw was hateful to me!’
- 29.⁷² ‘Look east now, Hrímgæðr, since Helgi
 has struck you with Hel-staves!⁷³
On land and on water the prince’s fleet is protected
 and the leader’s men likewise!’
30. ‘It’s day now, Hrímgæðr, and Atli has delayed you
 to your life’s end!
A laughable harbour’s [land]mark you’ll seem to be,
 there where you stand in the likeness of a stone!’

King Helgi was an almighty warrior. He came to King Eylimi and asked for Sváva, his daughter. Helgi and Sváva exchanged vows and loved each other very much. Sváva stayed at home with her father, but Helgi went raiding. Sváva was still a valkyrie, as before. Heðinn was at home with his father, King Hjörvarðr, in Nóregr.⁷⁴

Heðinn went home alone from a wood on Yule Eve and met a troll-woman. She rode a wolf and had snakes on the bridle, and she offered Heðinn her company. ‘No!’, he said. She said: ‘You shall pay for this at the oath-cup!’⁷⁵ During the evening they swore oaths. A sacrificial boar⁷⁶ was brought forward. Men laid their hands on it there, and men then made solemn vows at the oath-cup. Heðinn made a solemn vow to [have] Sváva, Eylimi’s daughter, beloved of Helgi, his brother, and he regretted it so much that he went away on wild paths south in the land and met Helgi, his brother.

- Helgi said:
31. ‘Welcome, Heðinn! What new tidings can you
 tell of from Nóregr?
Why, prince, have you been driven from the land
 and come alone to find us?’
32. ‘A much greater misdeed has befallen me:
 I have chosen the king-born one,
 your bride, at the oath-cup!’
33. ‘Don’t blame yourself! The ale-talk of us both
 will come true, Heðinn:
 a prince has summoned me to an island,⁷⁷
 in three nights I must come there;
 I doubt that I shall come back;
such [an outcome] may then turn out for the good, if it must be!’

28. 'Prennar níundir meyja, þó reið ein fyrir,
hvít und hjálmi mær;
marir hristusk, stóð af mǫnom þeira
dogg í djúpa dali,
hagl í háva viðu;
þaðan kǫmr með ǫldom ár;
allt var mér þat leitt er ek leitk!'
29. 'Austr líttu nú, Hrímgærðr, er þik lostna hefr
Helgi helstǫfum!
Á landi ok á vatni borgit er lofðungs flota
ok siklings mǫnnum it sama!'
30. 'Dagr er nú, Hrímgærðr, en þik dvalða hefir
Atli til aldraga!
Hafnar mark þykkir hlǫglegt vera,
þars þú í steins líki stendr!'

Helgi konungr var allmikill hermaðr. Hann kom til Eylima konungs ok bað Svávu, dóttur hans. Þau Helgi ok Sváva veittusk vǫrar ok unnusk furðu mikit. Sváva var heima með feðr sínum, en Helgi í hernaði. Var Sváva valkyrja enn sem fyrr. Heðinn var heima með fǫður sínum, Hjörvarði konungi, í Nóregi.

Heðinn fór einn saman heim ór skógi jólaaptan ok fann trollkonu. Sú reið vargi ok hafði orma at taumum, ok bauð fylgð sína Heðni. 'Nei!', sagði hann. Hon sagði: 'Þess skaltu gjalda at bragarfulli!' Um kveldit óru heitstrengingar. Var fram leiddr sonargǫltr. Lögðu menn þar á hendr sínar, ok strengðu menn þá heit at bragarfulli. Heðinn strengði heit til Svávu, Eylima dóttur, unnustu Helga, bróður síns, ok iðraðisk svá mjök at hann gekk á braut villistígu suðr á lǫnd ok fann Helga, bróður sinn.

Helgi kvað:

31. 'Komðu heill, Heðinn! Hvat kantu segja
nýra spjalla ór Nóregi?
Hví er þér, stillir, stækkt ór landi
ok ert einn kominn oss at finna?'
32. 'Mik hefir myklu glæpr meiri sóttan:
ek hefi kǫrna ina konungbornu,
brúði þína, at bragarfulli!'
33. 'Sakask eigi þú! Sǫnn munu verða
ǫlmál, Heðinn, okkur beggja:
mér hefir stillir stefnt til eyrar,
þriggja náttu skylak þar koma;
if er mér á því, at ek aptr koma;
þá má at góðu gǫrask slíkt, ef skal!'

19. ‘You’re deluded now, Atli, I say you’re dreaming;
 you’re letting your eyebrows sink over your lashes,⁵⁹
my mother lay in wait for the munificent man’s ships —
 I drowned Hlōðvarðr’s⁶⁰ sons in the sea!
20. ‘You’d neigh, Atli, if you weren’t gelded —
 Hrímgerðr’s raising her tail!⁶¹
 I think your heart’s farther back,⁶² Atli,
 even if you have the voice of a reindeer-stag!’
21. ‘I’ll seem a reindeer-stag to you, if you could try [me]
 and [if] I stepped onto land from the sea!
 You’ll be all battered, if I put all my heart into it,
 and lower your tail, Hrímgerðr!’
22. ‘Atli, come ashore, if you trust your strength,
 and let’s meet in Varinn’s bay!
 It’s a rightening⁶³ of the ribs you’ll receive, warrior,
 if you come into my clutches!’
23. ‘I won’t come until the men awake
 and keep watch for the prince;
 it would be no surprise to me should a witch
 come up beneath our ship.’
24. ‘Awake, Helgi, and pay compensation to Hrímgerðr,
 since you had Hati hacked!⁶⁴
 If for a single night she can sleep beside the boar,⁶⁵
 then she’ll have compensation for her sorrows!’
- 25.⁶⁶ ‘He’s called Loðinn,⁶⁷ [the one] who shall have
 you — you’re loathsome to mankind!
 That giant lives on Þolley,⁶⁸
 an extremely wise ogre, the worst of lava-dwellers;
 he’s an appropriate man for you!’
26. ‘You’d rather have that one, Helgi, who spied out havens
 the other night among men;
 the sea-golden⁶⁹ maiden seemed to me to have strength;
 here she stepped ashore from the sea
 and fastened⁷⁰ your fleet thus;
 she alone brings it about that I cannot
 slay the men of Buðli’s descendant.’
27. ‘Hear now, Hrímgerðr, if I compensate you for your sorrows,
 speak to the warrior⁷¹ more fully:
 was she a lone creature who protected the prince’s ships,
 or did more of them journey together?’

19. 'Duliðr ertu nú, Atli, draums kveð ek þér vera;
 síga lætr þú brýnn fyr brár;
 móðir mín lá fyr mildings skipum —
 ek drekþa Hlōðvarðs sonum í hafi!
20. 'Gneggja myndir þú, Atli, ef þú geldr né værir —
 brettir sinn Hríngerðr hala!
 Aptarla hjarta hygg ek at þitt, Atli, sé,
 þótt þú hafir hreina rödd!'
21. 'Hreini mun þér ek þikkja, ef þú reyna knátt
 ok stíga ek á land af legi!
 Öll muntu lemjask, ef mér er alhugat,
 ok sveigja þinn hala, Hríngerðr!'
22. 'Atli, gakk þú á land, ef afli treystisk,
 ok hittumk í vík Varins!
 Rifja rétti er þú munt, rekk, fá,
 ef þú mér í krymmur kœmr!'
23. 'Munka ek ganga, áðr gumnar vakna
 ok halda of vísa vörð;
 era mér ørvænt, nær óru kœmr
 skass upp undir skipi.'
24. 'Vaki þú, Helgi, ok bæti við Hríngerði,
 er þú lézt hoggvinn Hata!
 Eina nótt kná hon hjá jöfri sofa,
 þá hefir hon þolva bætr!'
25. 'Loðinn heitir, er þik skal eiga — leið ertu mannkyni!
 Sá býr í Þolleyju þurs,
 hundvísst jötunn, hraunbúa verstr;
 sá er þér makligr maðr!'
26. 'Hina vildu heldr, Helgi, er réð hafnir skoða
 fyrri nótt með firum;
 margullin mæ'r mér þótti afli bera;
 hér sté hon land af legi
 ok festi svá yðarn flota;
 hon ein því veldr, er ek eigi mák
 buðlungs mǫnnum bana.'
27. 'Heyrðu nú, Hríngerðr, ef ek bæti harma þér,
 segðu gørr grami:
 var sú ein vætr, er barg øðlings skipum,
 eða fóru þær fleiri saman?'

11. 'And Hróðmarr shall rule rings,
those which our kinsmen owned;
that prince has least regard for his life,
he intends to govern the inheritance of an entirely dead [family]!'

Hjörvarðr replied that he would get Helgi help, if he is willing to avenge his maternal grandfather.⁴³ Then Helgi fetched the sword which Sváva directed him to. Then he went, and Atli [with him], and they felled Hróðmarr and performed many mighty deeds. He slew the giant Hati,⁴⁴ when he was sitting on a certain rock. Helgi and Atli moored their ships in Hatafjörðr.⁴⁵ Atli kept watch for the first part of the night.

12. Hrímgærðr,⁴⁶ Hati's daughter, said:⁴⁷
'Who are [these] heroes in Hatafjörðr?
Your ships are hung with shields;
you're acting boldly, I suspect you're not anxious about yourselves!
Make known to me the king's name!'

- Atli said:
13. 'He's called Helgi, and you can never
cause harm to the king!⁴⁸
"Iron-strongholds"⁴⁹ are around the nobleman's ships —
troll-women cannot destroy us!'

14. 'What are you named,' said Hrímgærðr, 'hugely mighty hero?
What do men call you?
Your marshal trusts you, when he lets you
stand⁵⁰ in the boat's fair stem!'

15. 'I'm called Atli, I shall be atrocious⁵¹ to you —
I'm much the grimmest to giantesses!
I've often stood in the damp stem
and abused⁵² evening-riders!⁵³

16. 'What are you called, corpse-greedy witch?
Name your father, troll-woman!
It's further down⁵⁴ by nine leagues you should be,
and may fir-trees⁵⁵ grow on your trunk!⁵⁶

17. 'I'm called Hrímgærðr, my father was called Hati,
whom I knew to be the most immensely mighty giant;
he had many brides taken from their dwelling,
until Helgi hewed him down.'

18. 'You, witch, were in front of the warlord's ships
and lay in wait in the fjord's mouth;
you wanted to give the prince's warriors to Rán,⁵⁷
if a sharp point didn't pierce your whale-flesh!⁵⁸

11. 'En Hróðmarr skal hringum ráða,
þeim er áttu órir niðjar;
sá sésk fylkir fæst at lífi,
hyggsk aldauðra arfi at ráða!'

Hjörvarðr svaraði at hann myndi fá lið Helga, ef hann vill hefna móðurföður síns. Þá sótti Helgi sverðit er Sváva vísaði honum til. Þá fór hann, ok Atli, ok feldu Hróðmar ok unnu mǫrg þrekvirki. Hann drap Hata jötun, er hann sat á bergi nökkoru. Helgi ok Atli lágu skipum í Hatafirði. Atli helt vörð inn fyrra hlut nætrinnar.

12. Hrímgærðr, Hata dóttir, kvað:
'Hverir ru hǫðar í Hatafirði?
Skjöldum er tjaldat á skipum yðrum;
frœknliga látið, fátt hygg ek yðr sjásk!
Kennið mér nafn konungs!'

- Atli kvað:
13. 'Helgi hann heitir, en þú hvergi mátt
vinna grand grami!
Járnborgir ru um ǫðlings flota —
knegut oss fálur fara!'

14. 'Hvé þik heitir', kvað Hrímgærðr, 'halr inn ámátki?
Hvé þik kalla konir?
Fylkir þér trúir, er þik í fǫgrum lætr
beits stafni búa!'

15. 'Atli ek heiti, atall skal ek þér vera —
mjök em ek gífrum gramastr!
Úrgan stafn ek hefi opt búit
ok kvalðar kveldriður!'

16. 'Hvé þú heitir, hála nágráðug?
Nefndu þinn, fála, fǫður!
Níu rǫstum er þú skyldir neðarr vera,
ok vaxi þér á baðmi barr!'

17. 'Hrímgærðr ek heiti, Hati hét minn faðir,
þann vissa ek ámátkastan jötun;
margar brúðir hann lét frá búi teknar,
unz hann Helgi hjó.'

18. 'Þú vart, hála, fyr hildings skipum
ok látt í fjarðar mynni fyrir;
ræsis rekka er þú vildir Rán gefa,
ef þér kæmit í þverst þvari!'