

HELGAKVIÐA HUNDINGSBANA I

(The First Lay of Helgi, Hunding's Bane)

Bellows' Introduction (1936)

The general subject of the Helgi lays is considered in the introduction to *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, and it is needless here to repeat the statements there made. The first lay of *Helgi Hundingsbane* is unquestionably one of the latest of the Eddic poems, and was composed probably not earlier than the second quarter of the eleventh century. It presents several unusual characteristics. For one thing, it is among the few essentially narrative poems in the whole collection, telling a consecutive story in verse, and, except for the abusive dialogue between Sinfjotli and Gothmund, which clearly was based on another and older poem, it does so with relatively little use of dialogue. It is, in fact, a ballad, and in the main an exceedingly vigorous one. The annotator, who added his prose narrative notes so freely in the other Helgi poems, here found nothing to do. The available evidence indicates that narrative verse was a relatively late development in Old Norse poetry, and it is significant that most of the poems which consist chiefly, not of dialogue, but of narrative stanzas, such as the first *Helgi Hundingsbane* lay and the two Atli lays, can safely be dated, on the basis of other evidence, after the year 1000.

The first *Helgi Hundingsbane* lay is again differentiated from most of the Eddic poems by the character of its language. It is full of those verbal intricacies which were the delight of the Norse skalds, and which made Snorri's dictionary of poetic phrases an absolute necessity. Many of these I have paraphrased in the translation; some I have simplified or wholly avoided. A single line will serve to indicate the character of this form of complex diction (stanza 56, line 4): "And the horse of the giantess raven's-food had." This means simply that wolves (giantesses habitually rode on wolves) ate the bodies of the dead.

Except for its intricacies of diction, and the possible loss of a stanza here and there, the poem is comparatively simple. The story belongs in all its essentials to the Helgi tradition, with the Volsung cycle brought in only to the extent of making Helgi the son of Sigmund, and in the introduction of Sinfjotli, son of Sigmund and his sister Signy, in a passage which has little or nothing to do with the course of the narrative, and which looks like an expansion of a passage from some older poem, perhaps from the "old Volsung lay" to which the annotator of the second *Helgi Hundingsbane* lay refers (prose after stanza 12). There are many proper names, some of which betray the confusion caused by the blending of the two sets of traditions; for example, Helgi appears indiscriminately as an Ylfing (which presumably he was before the Volsung story became involved) and as a Volsung. Granmar and his sons are called Hniflungs (Nibelungen) in stanza 50, though they seem to have had no connection with this race. The place names have aroused much debate as to the localization of the action, but while some of them probably reflect actual places, there is so much geographical confusion, and such a profusion of names which are almost certainly mythical, that it is hard to believe that the poet had any definite locations in mind.

Hollander's Introduction (1962)

All things considered, this lay is perhaps the truest, though certainly not the finest, expression of the spirit of the "Viking Age," when Scandinavia—*vagina gentium*—poured forth, as the last wave of the Great Age of Migration, those swarms of dragon-ships, manned with the boldest sailors and fiercest warriors of the time, which swept like angry storm clouds over the coastlands of the Western World. In no other lay is there an equal concentration of vision, to the exclusion of all else, on the warrior's life as the only occupation worthy of men—the joyance in dangers on land and on sea of "athelings ever eager for war." In no other lay, too, does the paucity of contents verge so nearly on monotony and thinness of invention. Barring the word-duel between Sinfjotli and Guthmund, it is all about Helgi's warlike deeds, beginning with his birth, and leaving him at the zenith of power, with Sigrun won and the Hundings' lands his. We hear nothing of the tragic end hinted at in Stanza 5. Characterization is totally absent and, indeed, it is not aimed at: both scenes and men are typical and representative, not individual. But within the limits of his art the poet has achieved some truly magnificent stanzas, in the Northern mood; such as the grandiose figure of the norms affixing the fate-threads of the newly born hero to the very heavens, the description of the storm at sea, and the of the appearance of the Valkyries in the uproar of the elements and the clash of battle.

Otherwise the poem, like *Hymiskviða*, is notable in the Collection for its unusually numerous kennings—for hero, battle, ships, and so forth—and frequent intercalated phrases, characteristics which make it approach somewhat the manner of later encomiastic skaldic poetry. And if, as has been surmised, the Helgi of this ay is meant to idealize King Magnus Olafsson, this would furnish additional reason for placing composition of the lay in the middle of the eleventh century. Its present form may be due to later accretions.

Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Hollander (1962)
<p>1. It was in times of yore, when the eagles screamed, Holy waters fell from the heavenly hills; Then to Helgi, the great of soul, Borghild gave birth in Bralund.</p> <p>2. In the mansion it was night: the Norns came, Who should the prince's life determine. They him decreed a prince most famed to be, And of leaders accounted best.</p> <p>3. With all their might they span the fatal threads, When that [he] burghs should overthrow¹ in Bralund. They stretched out the golden cord, And beneath the middle of the moon's mansion fixed it.</p> <p>4. East and west they hid the ends, Where the prince had lands between; Towards the north Neri's sister cast a chain, Which she bade last forever.</p> <p>5. One thing disquieted the Ylfing's offspring, And the woman who had the child brought forth. Sitting on a lofty tree, on prey intent, A raven to a raven said: "I know something.</p> <p>6. Stands cased in mail Sigmund's son, One day old: now is our day come. His eyes are piercing as a warrior's; The wolf's friend is he: we shall rejoice!"</p> <p>7. He to the folk appeared a noble chief to be; Among men 'twas said that happy times were come; Went the king himself from the din of war, Noble garlic to bring to the young prince;</p> <p>8. Gave him the name of Helgi,² and Hringstadir, Solfioll, Snæfioll, and Sigarsvellir, Hringstad, Hatun, and Himinvangar, A sword ornate, to Sinfiotli's brother.</p> <p>9. Then grew up, in his friends' bosom, The high-born youth, in joyous splendour. He paid and gave gold for deserts; Nor spared the chief the blood-stained sword.</p> <p>10. A short time only the leader let warfare cease. When the prince was fifteen winters old, He caused the fierce Hunding to fall, Who long had ruled over lands and people.</p>	<p>1. In olden days, when eagles screamed,⁸ And holy streams from heaven's crags fell, Was Helgi then, the hero-hearted, Borghild's⁹ son, in Bralund born.</p> <p>2. 'Twas night in the dwelling, and Norns there came,¹⁰ Who shaped the life of the lofty one; They bade him most famed of fighters all And best of princes ever to be.</p> <p>3. Mightily wove they the web of fate, While Bralund's towns were trembling all;¹¹ And there the golden threads they wove, And in the moon's hall¹² fast they made them.</p> <p>4. East and west the ends they hid,¹³ In the middle the hero should have his land; And Neri's kinswoman¹⁴ northward cast A chain, and bade it firm ever to be.</p> <p>5. Once sorrow had the Ylfings' son,¹⁵ And grief the bride who the loved one had borne. ¹⁶Quoth raven to raven, on treetop resting, Seeking for food, "There is something I know.</p> <p>6. "In mail-coat stands the son of Sigmund,¹⁷ A half-day old; now day is here; His eyes flash sharp as the heroes' are, He is friend of the wolves; full glad are we."</p> <p>7. The warrior throng a ruler thought him, Good times, they said, mankind should see; The king¹⁸ himself from battle-press came, To give the prince a leek¹⁹ full proud.</p> <p>8. Helgi he named him, and Hringstathir²⁰ gave him, Sol fjoll, Snæfjoll,²¹ and Sigarsvoll,²² Hringstoð, Hotun,²³ and Himinvangar,²⁴ And a blood-snake²⁵ bedecked to Sinfiotli's brother.²⁶</p> <p>9. Mighty he grew in the midst of his friends, The fair-born elm,²⁷ in fortune's glow; To his comrades gold he gladly gave, The hero spared not the blood-flecked²⁸ hoard.</p> <p>10. Short time for war the chieftain waited, When fifteen²⁹ winters old he was; Hunding³⁰ he slew, the hardy wight Who long had ruled o'er lands and men.</p>	<p>'Twas in olden time, as eagles screamed And holy streams flowed from the Heaven-Fells¹²⁸ When in Brálund Borghild¹²⁹ bore to the world A hero high-hearted, Helgi by name.</p> <p>At night in hall the norns did come, To the lord they allotted his life and fate: To him awarded under welkin most fame, Under heaven to be among heroes first.</p> <p>His fate-thread¹³⁰ span they to o'erspread the world (for Borghild's bairn)¹³¹ in Brálund castle; They gathered together the golden threads, And in moon-hall's¹³² middle they made them fast.</p> <p>In East and West the ends they hid: The liege's lands lay there between; On the Northern side, Neri's sister¹³³ Did hang one end to hold forever.</p> <p>One evil only the Ylfing¹³⁴ threatened, The maiden eke who the atheling bore: ¹³⁵Croaked a raven hoarsely, on high tree sitting— Hunger gnawed him—"I know something:</p> <p>6. "In his byrnie stands¹³⁶ who was born at night, King Sigmund's son; now the sun is risen! His eyes flash fire, athelingwise; He will feast the wolves:¹³⁷ fain let us be!"</p> <p>7. A true king he to the housecarls seemed: They hoped to have good harvest years;¹³⁸ Sigmund himself, from the swordplay¹³⁹ coming, To the lordling brought a leek most noble.¹⁴⁰</p> <p>8. Named him Helgi, and Hringstead gave him, Sun Fell, Snow Fell, and Sigar's Field, Hringstead, Hátún, and Himin Meadows,¹⁴¹ Eke a seemly sword, to Sinfiotli's brother.¹⁴²</p> <p>9. Under kinsmen's care the king's son thrived, The highborn elm tree,¹⁴³ in happiness; Gave and granted gold to his housecarls, Nor spared the hero the hoard blood-splattered.¹⁴⁴</p> <p>10. Not long the lord delayed battle, When fifteen winters¹⁴⁵ the folk-warder; Hunding he slew, the hardy king Who long had ruled over lands and thanes.</p>

<p>11. The sons of Hunding afterwards demanded From Sigmund's son treasure and rings; Because they had on the prince to avenge Their great loss of wealth, and their father's death.</p> <p>12. The prince would neither the blood-fine pay, Nor for the slain indemnity would give. They might expect, he said, a terrific storm Of grey arrows, and Odin's ire.</p> <p>13. The warriors went to the trysting place of swords, Which they had appointed at Logafíoll. Broken was Frodi's peace between the foes: Vidrir's hounds went about the isle slaughter-greedy.</p> <p>14. The leader sat under the Arastein, After he had slain Alf and Eyjolf, Hiorvard and Havard, sons of Hunding: He had destroyed all Geirmimir's race.</p> <p>15. Then gleamed a ray from Logafíoll, And from that ray lightnings issued; Then appeared, in the field of air, A helmed band of Valkyriur: Their corslets were with blood besprinkled, And from their spears shone beams of light.</p> <p>16. Forthwith inquired the chieftain bold, From the wolf-congress of the southern Disir, Whether they would, with the warriors, That night go home?--then was a clash of arms!</p> <p>17. One from her horse, Hogni's daughter, Stilled the crash of shields, and to the leader said: "We have, I ween, other objects Than with princely warriors to drink beer.</p> <p>18. My father has his daughter promised To the fierce son of Granmar; But I have, Helgi! declared Hothbrodd, The proud prince, like to a cat's son.</p> <p>19. That chief will come in a few days, Unless thou him call to a hostile meeting; Or the maiden take from the prince."</p> <p>Helgi 20. Fear thou not Isung's slayer; There shall be first a clash of foes,</p>	<p>11. Of Sigmund's son then next they sought Hoard and rings, the sons of Hunding; They bade the prince requital pay For booty stolen and father slain.</p> <p>12. The prince let not their prayers avail, Nor gold for their dead did the kinsmen get; Waiting, he said, was a mighty storm³¹ Of lances gray and Othin's grimness.</p> <p>13. The warriors forth to the battle went, The field they chose at Logafjöll;³² Frothi's peace³³ midst foes they broke, Through the isle went hungrily Vithrir's hounds.³⁴</p> <p>14. The king then sat, when he had slain Eyjolf and Alf, 'neath the eagle-stone; Hjorvarth and Hovarth, Hunding's sons, The kin of the spear-wielder, all had he killed.³⁵</p> <p>15. Then glittered light from Logafjöll, And from the light the flashes leaped;³⁶</p> <p>16. [He saw there mighty maidens riding]³⁷ High under helms on heaven's field; Their byrnies all with blood were red, And from their spears the sparks flew forth.³⁸</p> <p>17. Early then in wolf-wood³⁹ asked The mighty king of the southern⁴⁰ maid, If with the hero home would she Come that night; the weapons clashed.</p> <p>18. Down from her horse sprang Hogni's daughter,-- The shields were still,-- and spake to the hero: "Other tasks are ours, methinks, Than drinking beer with the breaker of rings.⁴¹</p> <p>19. "My father has pledged his daughter fair As bride to Granmar's⁴² son so grim; But, Helgi, I once Hothbrodd called As fine a king as the son of a cat.</p> <p>20. "Yet the hero will come a few nights hence, [And home will carry Hogni's daughter]⁴³ Unless thou dost bid him the battle-ground seek, Or takest the maid from the warrior mighty."</p> <p>Helgi spake: 21. "Fear him not, though Isung⁴⁴ he felled, First [must our courage keen be tried,</p>	<p>11. Then Hunding's sons for hoard and rings Swiftly summoned King Sigmund's son, Thirsted, forsooth, to repay the thane For their father's fall and wealth from him taken.</p> <p>12. But Helgi would hear not of haggling gifts, Nor weregild award them, though they wanted it; But await rather the wrath-of-Othin, And whelming-storm-of-whining-spears.¹⁴⁶</p> <p>13. Fared the sons of kings to the sword-tryst then Which the lords had set at Loga Fells; Was Fróthi's Peace by foemen broken,¹⁴⁷ Ran Óthin's hounds¹⁴⁸ the island about.</p> <p>14. Sate him Helgi when slain he had Álf and Eyolf, 'neath Eagle Rock; Eke Hjorvarth and Hávarth, the Hunding's sons, Had the king then killed, all the kin of the warrior.</p> <p>15. A light shone then from Loga Fells; And out of the light lightning flashed: (saw the matchless hero the maidens riding)¹⁴⁹ High and helmeted, on Himin Meadows. Were their byrnies blood bespattered, From their spear points bright sparks flew forth.</p> <p>16. At earliest dayspring, in wolf forest¹⁵⁰ Asked Sigmund's son the Southron maidens If with the heroes home they would fare At time of night—twanged the bowstrings.</p> <p>17. But, high on horseback, Hogni's daughter¹⁵¹— Was the shield-din lulled—to the lord spoke thus: "Other deeds, I deem, we must do ere night, Breaker-of-rings,¹⁵² than drink thy beer.</p> <p>18. "Hath my father my faith plighted To wed Granmar's¹⁵³ grim son Hothbrodd; Yet have I, Helgi, of Hothbrodd said That the king callow like a kitten seemed.¹⁵⁴</p> <p>19. "Will he fare hither in few days' time (to fetch home with him Hogni's daughter),¹⁵⁵ But to battle on holm thou biddest him, Or from the king carriest the maiden."</p> <p>(Helgi said): 20. "In awe stand not of Ísung's slayer.¹⁵⁶ (our swords shall say and settle first,</p>
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<p>Unless I am dead.</p> <p>21. Thence sent messengers the potent prince Through air and over water, succours to demand, And abundance of ocean's gleam To men to offer, and to their sons.</p> <p>22. "Bid them speedily to the ships to go, And those from Brandey to hold them ready." There the king abode, until thither came warriors In hundreds from Hedinsey.</p> <p>23. From the strands also, and from Stafnsnes, A naval force went out, with gold adorned. Helgi then of Hiorleif asked: "Hast thou mustered the valiant people?"</p> <p>24. But the young king the other answered: "Slowly" said he "are counted from Tronuey The long-beaked ships, under the seafarers, Which sail without in the Oresund,--</p> <p>25. Twelve hundred faithful men; Though in Hatun there is more than half Of the king's host—We are to war inured."</p> <p>26. Then the steersman threw the ship's tents aside, That the princes' people might awake, And the noble chiefs the dawn might see; And the warriors hauled the sails up To the mast in Varinsfiord.</p> <p>27. There was a dash of oars, and clash of iron, Shield against shield resounded: the vikings rowed; Roaring went, under the chieftains The royal fleet far from the land.</p> <p>28. So might be heard, when together came The tempest's sister³ and the long keels, As when rock and surge on each other break.</p> <p>29. Higher still bade Helgi the deep sail be hauled. No port gave shelter to the crews; When Oegir's terrific daughter The chieftains' vessels would o'erwhelm,</p> <p>30. But from above Sigrun intrepid, Saved them and their fleet also; From the hand of Ran powerfully was wrested The royal ship at Gnipalund.</p>	<p>Before unwilling thou fare with the knave;]⁴⁵ Weapons will clash, if to death I come not."</p> <p>22. Messengers sent the mighty one then, By land and by sea, a host to seek, Store of wealth of the water's gleam,⁴⁶ And men to summon, and sons of men.</p> <p>23. "Bid them straightway seek the ships, And off Brandey⁴⁷ ready to be!" There the chief waited till thither were come Men by hundreds from Hethinsey.⁴⁸</p> <p>24. Soon off Stafnsnes⁴⁹ stood the ships, Fair⁵⁰ they glided and gay with gold; Then Helgi spake to Hjorleif⁵¹ asking: "Hast thou counted the gallant host?"</p> <p>25. The young king answered the other then: "Long were it to tell from Tronueyr⁵² The long-stemmed⁵³ ships with warriors laden That come from without into Orvasund.⁵⁴</p> <p>26.⁵⁵ "There are hundreds twelve of trusty men, But in Hotun⁵⁶ lies the host of the king, Greater by half; I have hope of battle."</p> <p>27. The ship's-tents⁵⁷ soon the chieftain struck, And waked the throng of warriors all; (The heroes the red of dawn beheld;)⁵⁸ And on the masts the gallant men Made fast the sails in Varinsfjord.⁵⁹</p> <p>28. There was beat of oars and clash of iron, Shield smote shield as the ships'-folk rowed; ⁶⁰Swiftly went the warrior-laden Fleet of the ruler forth from the land.</p> <p>29. So did it sound, when together the sisters Of Kolga⁶¹ struck with the keels full long, As if cliffs were broken with beating surf,⁶²</p> <p>30. Helgi bade higher hoist the sails,⁶³ Nor did the ships'-folk shun the waves, Though dreadfully did Aegir's daughters⁶⁴ Seek the steeds of the sea to sink.</p> <p>31. But from above did Sigrun⁶⁵ brave Aid the men and all their faring; Mightily came from the claws of Ron⁶⁶ The leader's sea-beast off Gnipalund.⁶⁷</p>	<p>Who Hogni's daughter's husband shall be)¹⁵⁷ —will be din of fight—ere dead I lie."</p> <p>21. Over land and sea the lord did send, To gather together his goodly hosts: Rich meed pledged he of the river-hoard¹⁵⁸ As reward to warriors and warriors' sons.</p> <p>22. "Bid them swiftly to board their ships, To set sail then to sea from Brand Isle!" There he waited till thither came Many hundred heroes from Hethin's Isle.¹⁵⁹</p> <p>23. Straightway also¹⁶⁰ from Stave Ness thither Rode dark warships, all decked with gold. Then asked Helgi of Hjorleif¹⁶¹ this: "Hast thou mustered the mighty host?"</p> <p>24. The young sea king said to the other: "‘Twere lengthy to tell the long-necked ships From Tronu Strand, teeming with men, Which in Orva Sound¹⁶² outbound hovered.</p> <p>25. "Are there twelve hundred trusty warriors; Yet more by half in Hátún stand 'neath the king's banner—battle I wait me."</p> <p>26. Off the awnings the atheling drew, So that awaked the warrior host, His doughty men, and saw the dawn; Then hoisted the heroes high on mast-tree The woven sails in Varinsfirth.¹⁶³</p> <p>27. Rose the din of oars, of iron clashing,¹⁶⁴ Crashed shield 'gainst shield with shock of rowing, As dashed through the waves the warrior's fleet; The stanch wave-steeds¹⁶⁵ stood out to sea.</p> <p>28. It burst on the ears when, buffeting, The long ship keels met Kolga's sister,¹⁶⁶ As if surf with cliff did clash in storm.</p> <p>29. Then higher Helgi bade hoist the topsails— The crews shunned not the shock of billows— When the dreadful daughter of Ægir Would overwhelm the hawser-steeds.</p> <p>30. But Sigrún on high hovering above Did shield them stoutly, and their ships also; The king's brine-hogs out of Rán's¹⁶⁷ clutches Glided safely at Gnipa Grove.</p>
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<p>31. At eve they halted in Unavagar; The splendid ships might into port have floated, But the crews, from Svarinshaug, In hostile mood, espied the host.</p> <p>32. Then demanded the god-born Gudmund: "Who is the chieftain that commands the fleet, And that formidable force brings to our land?"</p> <p>33. Sinfiotli said, slinging up on the yard A red-hued shield with golden rim;-- He at the strait kept watch, and able was to answer, And with nobles words exchange--</p> <p>34. "Tell it at eve, when you feed your pigs, And your dogs lead to their food, That the Ylfings from the east are come, Ready to fight at Gnipalund.</p> <p>35. Hodbrodd will Helgi find in the fleet's midst, A king hard to make flee, Who has oft the eagles sated, While thou wast at the mills, kissing the thrall-wenches.</p> <p>Gudmund 36. Little dost thou remember of ancient saws, When of the noble thou falsehoods utterest. Thou hast been eating wolves' dainties, And of thy brother wast the slayer; Wounds hast thou often sucked with cold mouth; Everywhere loathed, thou hast crawled in caverns.</p> <p>Sinfiotli 37. Thou wast a Valacrone in Varinsey, Cunning as a fox, a spreader of lies. Thou saidst thou no man wouldst ever marry, No corsleted warrior, save Sinfiotli.</p> <p>38. A mischievous crone wast thou, a giantess, a Valkyria, Insolent, monstrous, in Alfather's hall. All the Einheriar fought with each other, Deceitful woman! for thy sake. Nine wolves we begat in Sagunes; I alone was father of them all.</p> <p>Gudmund 39. Father thou wast not of Fenriswolves, Older than all, as far as I remember; Since by Gnipalund, the Thurs-maidens thee Emasculated upon Thorsnes.</p>	<p>32. At evening there in Unavagar⁶⁸ Floated the fleet bedecked full fair; But they who saw from Svarin's hill,⁶⁹ Bitter at heart the host beheld.</p> <p>33. Then Gothmund asked, goodly of birth, "Who is the monarch who guides the host, And to the land the warriors leads?"⁷⁰</p> <p>34. Sinfjotli answered, and up on an oar Raised a shield all red⁷¹ with golden rim; A sea-sentry was he, skilled to speak, And in words with princes well to strive.</p> <p>35. "Say tonight when you feed the swine, And send your bitches to seek their swill, That out of the East have the Ylfings come, Greedy for battle, to Gnipalund.</p> <p>36. "There will Hothbrodd Helgi find, In the midst of the fleet, and flight he scorns; Often has he the eagles gorged, Whilst thou at the quern⁷² wert slave-girls kissing."</p> <p>Gothmund spake:⁷³ 37. "Hero, the ancient sayings heed, And bring not lies to the nobly born."⁷⁴</p> <p>38. "Thou hast eaten the entrails of wolves,⁷⁵ And of thy brothers⁷⁶ the slayer been; ⁷⁷Oft wounds to suck thy cold mouth sought, And loathed in rocky dens didst lurk."</p> <p>Sinfjotli spake: 39. "A witch in Varin's isle thou wast,⁷⁸ A woman false, and lies didst fashion; Of the mail-clad heroes thou wouldst have No other, thou saidst, save Sinfjotli only.</p> <p>40.⁷⁹ "A Valkyrie wast thou, loathly Witch, Evil and base, in Alfather's home;⁸⁰ The warriors all must ever fight, Woman subtle, for sake of thee.</p> <p>41.⁸¹ "Nine did we in Sogunes⁸² Of wolf-cubs have; I their father was."</p> <p>Gothmund spake: 42. "Thou didst not father Fenrir's-wolves,⁸³ Though older thou art than all I know; For they gelded thee in Gnipalund, The giant-women at Thorsnes⁸⁴ once.</p>	<p>31. Floated the fair-dight fleet at ease then In Una Bay, at eventide; Suddenly saw them from Svarins Hill The sons of Granmar, and sorrowfully.</p> <p>32. Asked then Guthmund, of goodly kin: "Who the highborn hero, leading These hosts hither to harry on us?"</p> <p>33. Said Sinfjotli¹⁶⁸—to the sailyard hoisted The red warshield,¹⁶⁹ with rim of gold— In the stem standing to strive with words, To athelings who could answer make:</p> <p>34. "Tonight say thou, when the swine thou feedest, And givest to hungry hounds their meat,¹⁷⁰ That the Ylfing hosts from the East have come, Girded for war, from Gnipa Grove:</p> <p>35. "Here may Hothbrodd find Helgi now, In the midst of his fleet, the fearless hero Who sated eagles oft and anon, By the quern whilst thou didst kiss bondmaids."</p> <p>(Guthmund said:) 36. "Thou speakest rashly nor reck'st old tales, When untruth thou of atheling tellest.</p> <p>37. Thou hast made thy meal of the meat of wolves, And been the bane of thy brothers twain; With thy cold snout hast oft sucked men's wounds, And hateful to all hast hid in the waste."¹⁷¹</p> <p>(Sinfjotli said:) 38. "A witch wast thou on Varins Isle, Didst fashion falsehoods and fawn on me, hag: To no wight would'st thou be wed but to me, To no sword-wielding swain but to Sinfjotli.</p> <p>39. "Thou wast, witch-hag, a Valkyrie fierce In Alfather's hall, hateful and grim: All Valholl's warriors had well-nigh battled, Willful woman, to win they hand. On Saga Ness full nine wolves we Had together—I gat them all."</p> <p>(Gothmund said:) 40. "The father wast not to Fenris-Wolves,¹⁷² Though older thou than all of them; For gelded wast thou near Gnipa Grove By thurs maidens on Thor's Ness, before.</p>
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<p>40. Thou wast Siggeir's stepson, at home under the benches layest, / Accustomed to the wolf's howl out in the forests: Calamity of every kind came over thee, When thou didst lacerate thy brother's breast. Notorious thou mad'st thyself by thy atrocious works.</p> <p>Sinfjotli 41. Thou wast Grani's bride at Bravollr, Hadst a golden bit, ready for the course. Many a time have I ridden thee tired, hungry and saddled, Through the fells, thou hag!</p> <p>Gudmund 42. A graceless lad thou wast thought to be, When Gulnir's goats thou didst milk. Another time thou wast a giantess's daughter, A tattered wretch. Wilt thou a longer chat?</p> <p>Sinfjotli 43. I rather would at Frekastein The ravens cram with thy carcase, Than thy dogs lead to their meat, or thy hogs feed. May the fiend deal with thee!</p> <p>Helgi 44. "Much more seemly, Sinfjotli! would it be For you both in battle to engage, and the eagles gladden, Than with useless words to contend, However princes⁴ may foster hate.</p> <p>45. Not good to me appear Granmar's sons, Yet 'tis right that princes should speak the truth: They have shown, at Moinsheimar, That they have courage to draw the sword."--</p> <p>46. Rapidly they their horses made to run, Svipud and Svegiud, to Solheimar, Over dewy dales, dark mountain-sides; Trembled the sea of mist, where the men went.</p> <p>47. The king they met at the burgh's gate, To the prince announced the hostile advent. Without stood Hothbrodd with helmet decked: He the speed noticed of his kinsmen. "Why have ye Hniflungs such wrathful countenances?"</p> <p>48. "Hither to the shore are come rapid keels, Towering masts, and long yards, Shields many, and smooth-shaven oars, A king's noble host, joyous Ylfings.</p>	<p>43. "Under houses⁸⁵ the stepson of Siggeir lay, Fain of the wolf's cry out in the woods; Evil came then all to thy hands, When thy brothers' breasts thou didst redden, Fame didst thou win for foulest deeds."⁸⁶</p> <p>⁸⁷</p> <p>44. "In Bravoll⁸⁸ wast thou Grani's bride,⁸⁹ Golden-bitted and ready to gallop; I rode thee many a mile, and down Didst sink, thou giantess, under the saddle."⁹⁰</p> <p>Sinfjotli spake:⁹¹ 45. "A brainless fellow didst seem to be, When once for Gollnir⁹² goats didst milk, And another time when as Imth's⁹³ daughter In rags thou wentest; wilt longer wrangle?"</p> <p>Gothmund spake:⁹⁴ 46. "Sooner would I at Frekastein⁹⁵ Feed the ravens with flesh of thine Than send your bitches to seek their swill, Or feed the swine; may the fiends take you!"⁹⁶</p> <p>Helgi spake: 47. "Better, Sinfjotli, thee 'twould beseem Battle to give and eagles to gladden, Than vain and empty words to utter, Though ring-breakers⁹⁷ oft in speech do wrangle.</p> <p>48. "Good I find not the sons of Granmar, But for heroes 'tis seemly the truth to speak; At Moinsheimar⁹⁸ proved the men That hearts for the wielding of swords they had."</p> <p>49. Mightily then they made to run Sviputh and Sveggjuth to Solheimar;⁹⁹ (By dewy dales and chasms dark, Mist's horse¹⁰⁰ shook where the men went by;)¹⁰¹ The king they found at his courtyard gate, And told him the foeman fierce was come.</p> <p>50. Forth stood Hothbrodd, helmed for battle, Watched the riding of his warriors;¹⁰² "Why are the Hniflungs¹⁰³ white with fear?"</p> <p>Gothmund spake:¹⁰⁴ 51. "Swift keels lie hard by the land, (Mast-ring harts¹⁰⁵ and mighty yards, Wealth of shields and well-planed oars;)¹⁰⁶ The king's fair host, the Ylfings¹⁰⁷ haughty;</p>	<p>41. "As Siggeir's stepson¹⁷³ 'neath stones didst dwell¹⁷⁴ In woody wastes, with the wolves howling; 'twas ever they share to do shameful deeds: They own brother's breast thou torest,¹⁷⁵ And mad'st thee known by nameless deeds.</p> <p>42. "Wast Grani's¹⁷⁶ bride on Brávoll Field,¹⁷⁷ For the race ready with reins all golden; Full many a space I spurred thee on, Slender 'neath saddle, till thou slunk'st downhill."¹⁷⁸</p> <p>(Sinfjotli said:) 43. "A foul-mouthed fellow I found thee to be, The time thou Gollnir's she-goats didst milk; Another time, as Imth's daughter, A tattered troll-wench.¹⁷⁹ Wilt taunt me longer?"</p> <p>(Gothmund said:) 44. "At Freka Stone would I feed, rather, Ravening ravens on thy riddled body, Than give thine hungry hounds their meat, Or the swine their swill: go snarl with the trolls!"</p> <p>Helgi said: 45. "'Twere, Sinfjotli, more seeming far To wield your swords and sate eagles, Than with words to wage war between you, Though the ring-breakers' wrath is kindled.</p> <p>46. "No good I wait me from Granmar's sons, Yet befits it kings no falsehood to say; At Móinsheim¹⁸⁰ right manfully Their wands-of-wounds¹⁸¹ they wielded boldly."</p> <p>47. They spurred the steeds to speed amain, Sviputh and Sveggjuth, to Sólheim castle— Through dewy dales and darksome glens; The earth did quake where the king's sons¹⁸² rode. At the gate met they the mighty ruler, Said that foemen were faring hither.</p> <p>48. Without stood Hothbrodd, in helmet dight— Had cast his eyes on his kinsmen's riding: ("Say ye, kinsmen, whom seen ye have;")¹⁸³ What rouses, Niflungs,¹⁸⁴ your wrath so sore?"</p> <p>(Guthmund said:) 49. "Are swiftly swimming to sandy shore Mast-stags¹⁸⁵ many with mighty sailyards, With shining shields and shaven oars, A goodly host of gladsome warriors;</p>
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<p>49. Fifteen bands are come to land; But there are out at sea, before Gnipalund, Seven thousand blue-black ocean-beasts with gold adorned; There is by far their greatest multitude. Now will Helgi not delay the conflict."</p> <p>Hothbrodd 50. "Let a bridled steed to the chief assembly run, But Sporvitnir to Sparinsheid; Melnir and Mylnir to Myrkvid; Let no man stay behind Of those who swords can brandish.</p> <p>51. Summon to you Hogni, and the sons of Hring, Atli and Yngvi, Alf the old; They will gladly engage in conflict. We will let the Volsungs find resistance."</p> <p>52. It was a whirlwind, when together came The fallow⁵ blades at Frekastein: Ever was Helgi Hundingsbani foremost in the host, Where men together fought: Ardent for battle, disdainful flight; The chieftain had a valiant heart.</p> <p>53. Then came a maid from heaven, helmed, from above— The clash of arms increased—for the king's protection. Then said Sigrun—well skilled to fly To the host of heroes from Hugin's grove—⁶</p> <p>54. "Unscathed shalt thou, prince! possess thy people, Pillar of Yngvi's race! and life enjoy; Thou hast laid low the slow of flight, The chief who caused the dread warrior's death. And thee, O king! Well beseem Both red-gold rings and a powerful maid: Unscathed shalt thou, prince! both enjoy, Hogni's daughter, and Hringstadir, Victory and lands: then is conflict ended."</p>	<p>Fifteen bands to land have fared, But out in Sogn¹⁰⁸ are seven thousand.¹⁰⁹</p> <p>52. "At anchor lying off Gnipalund Are fire-beasts¹¹⁰ black, all fitted with gold; ¹¹¹There wait most of the foeman's men, Nor will Helgi long the battle delay."</p> <p>Hothbrodd spake:¹¹² 53. "Bid the horses run to the Reginthing,¹¹³ Melnir and Mylnir to Myrkwood¹¹⁴ now, (And Sporvitnir¹¹⁵ to Sparinsheith;¹¹⁶)¹¹⁷ Let no man seek henceforth to sit Who the flame of wounds¹¹⁸ knows well to wield.</p> <p>54. "Summon Hogni,¹¹⁹ the sons of Hring,¹²⁰ Atli and Yngvi and Alf the Old; Glad they are of battle ever; Against the Volsungs¹²¹ let us go."</p> <p>55. Swift as a storm there smote together The flashing blades at Frekastein; Ever was Helgi, Hunding's slayer, First in the throng where warriors fought; (Fierce in battle, slow to fly, Hard the heart of the hero was.)¹²²</p> <p>56. From heaven there came the maidens helmed,— The weapon-clang grew,— who watched o'er the king; Spake Sigrun fair,— the wound-givers¹²³ flew, And the horse of the giantess raven's-food had:—¹²⁴</p> <p>57. "Hail to thee, hero! full happy with men, Offspring of Yngvi,¹²⁵ shalt ever live, For thou hast slain the fearless foe hast slain Who to many the dread of death had brought.</p> <p>58.¹²⁶ "Warrior, well for thyself hast won Red rings bright and the noble bride; Both now, warrior, thine shall be, Hogni's daughter and Hringstathir,¹²⁷ Wealth and triumph; the battle wanes."</p>	<p>Fifteen thousand set foot on land, But seven thousand more in Sogn are waiting.</p> <p>50. "Foregathered lie before Gnipa Grove Blue-black brine-hogs, ablaze with gold: By far the most of the foes are there— Will Helgi haste the hail-of-arrows."¹⁸⁶</p> <p>(Hothbrodd said:) 51. "Let the reined steeds run to Regin Thing, Melnir and Mylnir, to Myrkvith dark, And Sporvitnir to Sparins Heath. Each man bestir him, nor stay behind Who the wand-of-wounds can wield in battle.</p> <p>52. Bid Hogni come, and Hring's sons eke, Atli and Yngvi, and Álf the Hoary, Athelings ever eager for war; Let us warmly welcome the Volsung's sons!"</p> <p>53. With swift swoop then smote together The flashing swords at Freka Stone: Was ay Helgi, the Hunding's Slayer, Foremost in fray where fought heroes; Fierce in fighting, to fly unready, Stouthearted hero was Helgi ever.</p> <p>54. From high heaven came helmeted maidens— Waxed the shafts' shrilling—who shielded the king; Then said Sigrún—sang the arrows, The ogresses' horse ate the eagles' food—¹⁸⁷</p> <p>55. "Hail to thee, hero! In happiness live, Yngvi's¹⁸⁸ scion, hold sway over men: Unfleeing foe felled now hast thou, In swordplay who slew sea kings many.</p> <p>56. "Now, folk-warder, befit thee well The red-gold rings and the ruler's daughter; Hale shalt, hero, hold these twain: Hogni's daughter and Hringstead eke, Victory and wealth: is the war ended."</p>
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¹ That is, when they came to spin that period of his destiny.

² [Compare with *Helgikviða Hjörvarðssonar*, 6-7, where Helgi is left unnamed until the Valkyrie Svava names him. – Compiler's note]

³ Kolga Systir. Kolga was one of the daughters of Oeigr and Ran; they were the waves.

⁴ Literally *ring-breakers*, or *-dispensers*.

⁵ It would appear that their swords were of bronze.

⁶ Hugin's grove: the raven's grove, i.e., the battlefield, strewed with corpses, the raven's food.

⁷ The manuscript contains the superscription: "Here begins the lay of Helgi Hundingsbane and h. (Hothbrodd?) The lay of the Volsungs."

⁸ Eagles, etc.: the screaming of eagles and water pouring from heaven were portents of the birth of a hero.

⁹ Borghild: Sigmund's first wife; Bralund was her home, not Sigmund's.

¹⁰ Norns: cf. *Voluspo*, 20 and note. Here it is the Norns who preside over Helgi's early destiny, and not a Valkyrie, as in *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*.

¹¹ Line 2 is largely guesswork, the manuscript being obscure.

¹² Moon's hall: the [night] sky.

¹³ East, etc.: the Norns give Helgi fame in the East, West, and North; in the North his renown is particularly to endure. This suggests that the poet was aware of the spread of the Helgi story over many lands.

¹⁴ Neri's kinswoman: evidently one of the Norns, but nothing further is known of Neri, and the word may not be a proper name at all.

¹⁵ Ylfings' son: Sigmund is evidently meant, though calling him an Ylfing (cf. *Hyndluljoth*, 11 and note) is a manifest error. Helgi, in the tradition as it came from Denmark, was undoubtedly an Ylfing, and the poet, in order to combine the two legends, has to treat the Ylfings and Volsungs as if they were the same family.

¹⁶ The manuscript indicates no gap, but it looks as though something had been lost after line 2.

¹⁷ Sigmund: the chief link between the Helgi and Sigurth stories. He was the son of Volsung, great-grandson of Othin. His children by his first wife, Borghild, were Helgi and Hamund (belonging to the Helgi cycle); his son by his second wife, Hjordis, was Sigurth. An incestuous connection with his sister, Signy (cf. Wagner's Siegmund and Sieglinde) resulted in the birth of Sinfjotli (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note).

¹⁸ The king: Sigmund, who gives his son a symbol of the lands which he bestows on him.

¹⁹ Regarding the leek, cf. *Voluspo*, 4; *Guthrunarkvitha* I, 17, and *Sigrdrifumol*, 7.

²⁰ Hringstathir ("Ring-Stead"): quite possibly the historical Ringsted, long a possession of the Danish kings, and thus a relic of the old Helgi tradition. Hringstoth may be another form of the same name.

²¹ Solfjoll ("Sun-Mountain") and Snaefjoll ("Snow-Mountain") are fictitious names.

²² Regarding Sigarsvoll cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarðssonar*, stanzas 8 and 35. Saxo mentions a Danish king named Sigar, and the frequency with which the name appears in the Helgi poems may be taken as a reminiscence of Denmark.

²³ Hotun ("High Place"): possibly the village of Tune in Seeland.

²⁴ Himinyangar ("Heaven's Field"): an imaginary place.

²⁵ Blood-snake: a sword.

²⁶ [Sinfjotli, of course, is not yet born]

²⁷ Elm: a not uncommon word for "man."

²⁸ Blood-flecked: i.e., won in battle.

²⁹ Fifteen: until early in the eleventh century a Norwegian or Icelandic boy became "of age" at twelve, and Maurer cites this passage as added proof of the poem's lateness.

³⁰ Hunding: the annotator (introductory prose to *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*) calls him king of Hundland, which shows no great originality. Saxo mentions a Hunding who was a Saxon king ruling in Jutland, probably the origin of Helgi's traditional foe.

³¹ Storm, etc.: war.

³² Logafjoll ("Flame-Mountain"): a mythical name.

³³ Frothi: a traditional king of Denmark, whose peaceful reign was so famous that "Frothi's peace" became a by-word for peace of any kind.

³⁴ Vithrir's hounds: wolves; Vithrir is Othin, and his hounds are the wolves Freki and Geri.

³⁵ In this poem Helgi kills all the sons of Hunding, but in the poems of the Sigurth cycle, and the prose notes attached thereto, Sigmund and his father-in-law, Eylimi, are killed by Hunding's sons, on whom Sigurth subsequently takes vengeance (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and *Reginismol*).

³⁶ No gap indicated in the manuscript, but almost certainly something has been lost mentioning more specifically the coming of the Valkyries. The lightning which accompanies them suggests again their identification with the clouds (cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 28).

³⁷ Some editions fill out the first line as given in brackets.

³⁸ The manuscript indicates line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza.

³⁹ Wolf-wood: dark forest; the original word is not altogether clear.

⁴⁰ Southern: this variety of Valkyrie, like the swan maidens of the *Volundarkvitha*, was clearly regarded as of southern (i.e., German) origin. Here again there is a confusion of traditions; the Valkyries of the *Voluspo* were as essentially Norse as any part of the older mythology. I doubt if a poet much earlier than the author of the first *Helgi Hundingsbane* lay would have made his Sigrun, daughter of Hogni, a Valkyrie. It is to be noted that the same complication appears in the Sigurth story, where the undoubted Valkyrie, Brynhild-Sigrdrifa (the latter name is really only an epithet) is hopelessly mixed up with the quite human Brynhild, daughter of Buthli.

⁴¹ Breaker of rings: generous prince, because the breaking of rings was the customary form of distributing gold.

⁴² Granmar: the annotator gives an account of him and his family in the prose following stanza 12 of *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*.

⁴³ No gap indicated in the manuscript; some editors combine the stanza with the fragmentary stanza 21, and others fill in as given in brackets.

⁴⁴ Isung: nothing is known of him beyond the fact, here indicated, that Hothbrodd killed him.

⁴⁵ The manuscript has only lines 1 and 4 with the word "first" of line 2, and does not indicate Helgi as the speaker. The *Volsungasaga*, which follows this poem pretty closely, expands Helgi's speech, and lines 2-3 are conjectural versifications of the saga's prose.

⁴⁶ Water's gleam: gold.

⁴⁷ Brandey ("Brand-Isle"): not mentioned elsewhere.

⁴⁸ Hethinsey ("Hethin's Isle"): possibly the island of Hiddensee, east of Rugen.

⁴⁹ Stafnsnes ("Steersman's Cape"): an unidentifiable promontory.

⁵⁰ Fair: a guess, as the adjective in the manuscript is obscure.

⁵¹ HJORLEIF does not appear elsewhere, and seems to be simply one of Helgi's lieutenants.

⁵² Tronueyr: "Crane-Strand."

⁵³ Long-stemmed: literally "long-headed," as the high, curving stem of a Norse ship was often carved to represent a head and neck.

⁵⁴ Orvasund: almost certainly the Danish Oresund, off Seeland. Such bits of geography as this followed Helgi persistently.

⁵⁵ No gap indicated in the manuscript.

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- ⁵⁶ Hotun: cf. stanza 8 and note.
- ⁵⁷ Ship's-tents: the awnings spread over the deck to shelter the crews from sun and rain when the ships were at anchor.
- ⁵⁸ Line 3 seems to have been interpolated from line 4 of *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*, 42.
- ⁵⁹ Varinsfjord: cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 22 and note.
- ⁶⁰ The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a new stanza, and some editions follow this arrangement, making lines 1-2 a separate stanza.
- ⁶¹ Sisters of Kolga: the waves, Kolga ("The Gold") being one of the daughters of the sea-god, Aegir. As the *Volsungasaga* says, "Now there was a great storm."
- ⁶² The manuscript indicates no gap, and some editions combine the stanza with lines 3-4 of stanza 28.
- ⁶³ Helgi demonstrates his courage, whatever one may think of his seamanship.
- ⁶⁴ Aegir's daughters: the waves; cf. stanza 29 and note.
- ⁶⁵ Sigrun here appears again as a Valkyrie.
- ⁶⁶ Ron: Aegir's wife; cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 18 and note.
- ⁶⁷ Sea-beast: ship. Gnipalund: "Crag-Wood."
- ⁶⁸ Unavagar: "Friendly Waves."
- ⁶⁹ Svarin's hill: the hill where Granmar had his dwelling.
- ⁷⁰ Here begins the long dialogue between Gothmund, one of Gramnar's sons, and Sinfjotli, Helgi's half-brother. Two lines (stanza 33, lines 2-3) are quoted by the annotator in the prose note following stanza 16 of the second *Helgi Hundingsbane* lay, and the dialogue, in much abbreviated form, together with Helgi's admonition to Sinfjotli to cease talking, is closely paralleled in stanzas 22-27 of that poem. It has been suggested that this whole passage (stanzas 33-48) is an interpolation, perhaps from "the Old Volsung lay." This may be, but it seems more probable that the poet used an older poem simply as the basis for this passage, borrowing a little but making up a great deal more. The manuscript indicates no gap in stanza 33.
- ⁷¹ Red: raising a red shield was the signal for war.
- ⁷² Quern: turning the hand mill was, throughout antiquity, the task of slaves.
- ⁷³ The manuscript does not name the speakers in this dialogue.
- ⁷⁴ No gap indicated in the manuscript, and editors have attempted various combinations of stanzas 37 and 38.
- ⁷⁵ Wolves: the *Volsungasaga* tells that Sigmund and Sinfjotli lived in the woods for a time as werewolves.
- ⁷⁶ Brothers: Sinfjotli killed the two sons of his mother, Signy, and her husband, Siggeir, as part of the vengeance wreaked on Siggeir for the treacherous murder of Sigmund's father, Volsung, and nine of his brothers (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note).
- ⁷⁷ The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a new stanza.
- ⁷⁸ Varin's isle: cf. stanza 27 and note, and *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 22. Reproaching a man with having been a woman and borne children was not uncommon.
- ⁷⁹ This stanza may be an interpolation in the dialogue passage.
- ⁸⁰ Allfather: Othin. We have no information regarding Gothmund's career, but it looks as though Sinfjotli were drawing solely on his imagination for his taunts, whereas Gothmund's insults have a basis in Sinfjotli's previous life.
- ⁸¹ No gap indicated in the manuscript; some editors combine the two lines with stanza 40, some regard them as the first instead of the last lines of a separate stanza, and some assume a lacuna here.
- ⁸² Sogunes ("Saga's Cape"): of the goddess Saga little is known; cf. *Grimnismol*, 7.
- ⁸³ Fenrir's-wolves: wolves in general.
- ⁸⁴ Thorsnes: "Thor's Cape."
- ⁸⁵ The phrase "under houses," which follows the manuscript, may be an error for "in wolf-caves."
- ⁸⁶ Line 3 (or 4) may be an interpolation. The manuscript indicates line 5 as the beginning of a new stanza.
- ⁸⁷ Several editions assign this stanza to Sinfjotli instead of to Gothmund.
- ⁸⁸ Bravoll ("Field of the Brow"): not elsewhere mentioned in the poems.
- ⁸⁹ Grani: Sigurth's horse (cf. *Volundarkvitha*, 16 and note); Gothmund means that Sinfjotli had turned into a mare, after the fashion of Loki (cf. *Grimnismol*, 44, note).
- ⁹⁰ The meaning of line 4 in the original is uncertain.
- ⁹¹ A few editions give this stanza to Gothmund.
- ⁹² Gollnir: possibly a giant.
- ⁹³ Imth: nothing is known of him or his daughter.
- ⁹⁴ A few editions give this stanza to Sinfjotli.
- ⁹⁵ Frekastein: cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 39 and note.
- ⁹⁶ A stanza may have been lost after stanza 46, parallel to stanza 25 of the second *Helgi Hundingsbane* lay.
- ⁹⁷ Ring-breakers: cf. stanza 18 and note.
- ⁹⁸ Moinsheimar: a battlefield of which nothing is known, where, however, the sons of Granmar appear to have fought bravely.
- ⁹⁹ Here the scene shifts to the shore among Hothbrodd's followers. Sviputh and Sveggjuth ("Swift" and "Lithe"): horses' names.
- ¹⁰⁰ Mist's horse: the Valkyrie's name is the same as the English word "mist," and the "horse" on which the mist rides is the earth.
- ¹⁰¹ The two lines in parenthesis may be interpolated, or line 5 may begin a new stanza, as the manuscript indicates.
- ¹⁰² No gap indicated in the manuscript.
- ¹⁰³ Hniflungs: cf. introductory note.
- ¹⁰⁴ Possibly Gothmund is not the speaker.
- ¹⁰⁵ Mast-ring harts: ships, so called from the ring attaching the yard to the mast.
- ¹⁰⁶ Lines 2-3 may be interpolated, or a new stanza may begin, as the manuscript indicates, with line 5. Many editors combine lines 5-6 with all or part of stanza 52.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ylfings: cf. stanza 5 and note.

- ¹⁰⁸ Sogn: this name, which actually belongs in western Norway, seems to have been used here with no particular significance.
- ¹⁰⁹ [Compare with stanza 26, where 1200 men plus another 1800 are numbered among Helgi's warband. – Compiler's note]
- ¹¹⁰ Fire-beasts: dragons, i.e., ships. The Norse ships of war, as distinguished from merchant vessels, were often called dragons because of their shape and the carving of their stems.
- ¹¹¹ The manuscript indicates line 3 as beginning a new stanza; some editors combine lines 3-4 with all or part of stanza 53, while others assume the loss of two lines following line 4.
- ¹¹² The manuscript does not indicate the speaker, and a few editors assume the loss of one or two lines embodying the phrase "Hothbrodd spake."
- ¹¹³ Reginthing ("The Great Council"): apparently the council-place for the whole country, as distinct from the local council, or "herathsting."
- ¹¹⁴ Myrkwood: a not uncommon name for a dark forest; cf. *Lokasenna*, 42, and *Atlakviða*, 3.
- ¹¹⁵ Melnir ("Bit-Bearer"), Mylnir ("The Biter") and Spornvitnir {sic: Sporvitnir above} ("Spur-Wolf"): horses' names.
- ¹¹⁶ Sparinsheith ("Sparin's Heath"): nothing more is known of Sparin or his heath.
- ¹¹⁷ In the manuscript line 3, which many editors have suspected of being spurious, stands before line 2. Possibly lines 4-5 are the remains of a separate stanza.
- ¹¹⁸ Flame of wounds: sword.
- ¹¹⁹ Hogni: the father of Sigrun; cf. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II, 18. [Hogni fights for Hothbrodd, to whom he has promised his daughter, Sigrún – Compiler's note]
- ¹²⁰ Of Hring and his sons nothing further is known.
- ¹²¹ Volsungs: here for the first time the poet gives Helgi and Sinfjotli the family name to which, as sons of Sigmund Volsungsson, they are entitled.
- ¹²² The manuscript indicates line 5 as the beginning of a new stanza, but many editors have rejected lines 5-6 as spurious, while others regard them as the first half of a stanza the last two lines of which have been lost.
- ¹²³ Wound-givers: probably this means "Valkyries," but there is considerable doubt as to the original word.
- ¹²⁴ Horse, etc.: i.e., the wolf (because giantesses customarily had wolves for their steeds) ate corpses (the food of birds of prey).
- ¹²⁵ Yngvi: one of the sons of Halfdan the Old, and traditional ancestor of the Ynglings, with whom the Ylfings seem to have been confused (cf. *Hyndluljóth*, {sic} 11 and note). The confusion between the Ylfings (or Ynglings) and Volsungs was carried far enough so that Sigurth himself is once called a descendant of Yngvi (*Reginismól*, 14). Gering identifies the name of Yngvi with the god Freyr, but the Volsungs certainly claimed descent from Othin, not Freyr, and there is nothing to indicate that Helgi in the Danish tradition was supposed to be descended from Freyr, whereas his descent from Yngvi Halfdansson fits well with the rest of his story. However, cf. *Sigurtharkviða en skamma*, 24 and note.
- ¹²⁶ This entire stanza may be an interpolation; nearly every edition has a different way of dealing with it.
- ¹²⁷ Hringstathir: as this place had been given to Helgi by his father (cf. stanza 8 and note), the poet has apparently made a mistake in naming it here as a conquest from Granmar's sons, unless, indeed, they had previously captured it from Helgi, which seems unlikely.
- ¹²⁸ The hero child is born in a tempestuous hour—eagles screaming (in anticipation of carnage) and rain pouring down from the "fells of heaven." The names seem symbolic. See also *Helgakviða Hjórvarthssonar*, St.6 and note.
- ¹²⁹ King Sigmund's wife. See St.6 below and *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II, Introductory Prose.
- ¹³⁰ The fate-thread spinning of the norns is here taken literally.
- ¹³¹ Accepting Grundtvig's emendation.
- ¹³² Kenning for "the heavens," similar to those given in *Alvissmál*, St.12.
- ¹³³ Evidently one of the norns.
- ¹³⁴ See *Hyndluljóð*, St.11, and *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II, Introductory Prose.
- ¹³⁵ No gap is indicated in the manuscript (but one is apparent). Did the missing lines, or stanzas, contain the curse of one of the weird sisters, as is the case with Olaf, the son of Frithleif (Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, liber VI, 4). The impending evil certainly does not refer to the wars foretold by the raven: only by fighting can glory be won.
- ¹³⁶ This is, probably, to be interpreted, not literally, but as meaning that on Helgi from his tenderest childhood is imposed the duty to avenge his father.
- ¹³⁷ Ravens, wolves, and eagles rejoice at the birth of a hero who will feed them on the carcasses of his slain foes—a standard conceit in Old Germanic poetry.
- ¹³⁸ It is one of the attributes of a great king to bring to his land good harvest years. A housecarl is a member of the king's bodyguard.
- ¹³⁹ A kenning for "battle."
- ¹⁴⁰ As a fast-growing plant the leek seems symbolic of rapid access in royal power. Compare with the virga ("rod") used, beside the scepter, in the coronation of early English kings.
- ¹⁴¹ "Heaven-Meadows"; some of these and other place names in the poem must be symbolic.
- ¹⁴² According to the *Volsunga saga*, Sinfjotli is Sigmund's son by his own sister, Signy. Another half-brother of Helgi's is Sigurth. See *Frá dauða Sinfjotla*.
- ¹⁴³ A *heiti*, or synonym, for "man," "warrior."
- ¹⁴⁴ As gained by warfare.
- ¹⁴⁵ According to ancient laws of Norway a lad was of age when he had reached his fifteenth year.
- ¹⁴⁶ Kennings for "battle."
- ¹⁴⁷ This is the standing poetic phrase for the beginning of hostilities. See *Grottasöngur*, Introductory Prose.
- ¹⁴⁸ The wolves, as scavengers after battle.
- ¹⁴⁹ Supplied after Bugge.
- ¹⁵⁰ Doubtful; possibly a kenning for "battle-field" (as the abode of wolves).
- ¹⁵¹ Sigrún. See St.54 below and the Prose before Part II of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II.
- ¹⁵² Kenning for "(generous) ruler," "hero." Before the use of coins became general in the Germanic North, the ponderous spiral armrings of gold and silver were cut or broken in pieces, which served as payment and reward.
- ¹⁵³ Concerning Granmar and his sons Hothbrodd, Guthmund, and Starkath, see *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II, Prose after St.13.
- ¹⁵⁴ The line is doubtful.
- ¹⁵⁵ Supplied, following Grundtvig.
- ¹⁵⁶ Hothbrodd. We know nothing about his antagonist.
- ¹⁵⁷ Supplied, following Grundtvig.
- ¹⁵⁸ Kenning for "gold": the Niflung treasure, the treasure par excellence, was thrown into the Rhine.

¹⁵⁹ Probably, the island of Hiddense, north of Rügen.

¹⁶⁰ Accepting Bugge's emendation.

¹⁶¹ Some follower of Helgi's.

¹⁶² "Arrow Sound." Compare with the German *Stralsund* of the same meaning.

¹⁶³ For this as well as Svarins Hill, see St.31. Compare with the modern *Schwerin*.

¹⁶⁴ See *Helgakviða Hjorvarþssonar*, St.13 and note.

¹⁶⁵ Kenning for "ships," as at stanza 29, line 4, and 30, line 3.

¹⁶⁶ One of Ægir's daughters, hence "the wave."

¹⁶⁷ See *Helgakviða Hjorvarþssonar*, St.18 and note.

¹⁶⁸ "The Stained (Piebald) One" (?), perhaps referring to his illegitimate origin (compare with the Anglo-Saxon *Fitela*). He is Helgi's brother and forecastleman, like Atli (*Helgakviða Hjorvarþssonar*, St.14 and note).

¹⁶⁹ A red shield indicated warlike intentions, a white one, peace.

¹⁷⁰ That is, when made a slave?

¹⁷¹ According to the *Volsunga saga*, both Sigmund and Sinfjotli roam the woods as werewolves until they see their chance to avenge themselves on King Siggeir, who had slain Sigmund's and Signy's father, Eylimi [Volsung?]. Coming to Siggeir's hall, Sinfjotli slays the two boys whom his mother Signy has borne to Siggeir and who, hence, are his half-brothers. The imputations which the two speakers otherwise heap on each other cannot be verified.

¹⁷² That is, to wolves as fierce as the wolf Fenrir; see *Völuspá*, St.39 and note.

¹⁷³ Since his mother Signy was married to Siggeir.

¹⁷⁴ Conjectural.

¹⁷⁵ Perhaps an allusion to combat between Sigmund and Sinfjotli in their werewolf condition, when Sigmund bit Sinfjotli's throat (*Volsunga saga*, Ch.8).

¹⁷⁶ The name of Sigurth's horse.

¹⁷⁷ A plain in eastern Sweden. It is the scene of the great (legendary) battle between the kings Sigurth Ring and Harald Wartooth.

¹⁷⁸ Conjectural.

¹⁷⁹ The two events referred to are unknown elsewhere.

¹⁸⁰ Possibly, the Danish island of Møen.

¹⁸¹ Kenning for "swords."

¹⁸² That is, Hothbrodd's sons.

¹⁸³ Supplied here by the Translator.

¹⁸⁴ Here, used as honorific epithet for "warriors."

¹⁸⁵ Kenning for "ships," as at stanza 50, line 2.

¹⁸⁶ Kenning for "battle."

¹⁸⁷ That is, "the wolf ate the slain." See *Hyndluljóð*, St.5 and note, and *Helgakviða Hjorvarþssonar*, prose before Fragment IV.

¹⁸⁸ Yng is the mythical progenitor of the earliest Swedish kings. Here, only an honorific epithet.