

VÖLUNDARKVIÐA (*Völundr's poem, The Lay of Völund*)

Bellows' Introduction (1936)

Between the *Thrymskvitha* and the *Alvissmol* in the *Codex Regius* stands the *Volundarkvitha*. It was also included in the *Arnarnagnaean Codex*, but unluckily it begins at the very end of the fragment which has been preserved, and thus only a few lines of the opening prose remain. This is doubly regrettable because the text in *Regius* is unquestionably in very bad shape, and the other manuscript would doubtless have been of great assistance in the reconstruction of the poem.

There has been a vast amount written regarding the Weland tradition as a whole, discussing particularly the relations between the *Volundarkvitha* and the Weland passage in *Deor's Lament*. There can be little question that the story came to the North from Saxon regions, along with many of the other early hero tales. In stanza 16 the Rhine is specifically mentioned as the home of treasure; and the presence of the story in Anglo-Saxon poetry probably as early as the first part of the eighth century proves beyond a doubt that the legend cannot have been a native product of Scandinavia. In one form or another, however, the legend of the smith persisted for centuries throughout all the Teutonic lands, and the name of Wayland Smith is familiar to all readers of Walter Scott, and even of Rudyard Kipling's tales of England.

In what form this story reached the North is uncertain. Sundry striking parallels between the diction of the *Volundarkvitha* and that of the Weland passage in *Deor's Lament* make it distinctly probable that a Saxon song on this subject had found its way to Scandinavia or Iceland. But the prose introduction to the poem mentions the "old sagas" in which Volund was celebrated, and in the *Thithrekssaga* we have definite evidence of the existence of such prose narrative in the form of the *Velentssaga* (Velent, Volund, Weland, and Wayland all being, of course, identical), which gives a long story for which the *Volundarkvitha* can have supplied relatively little, if any, of the material. It is probable, then, that Weland stories were current in both prose and verse in Scandinavia as early as the latter part of the ninth century.

Once let a figure become popular in oral tradition, and the number and variety of the incidents connected with his name will increase very rapidly. Doubtless there were scores of Weland stories current in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, many of them with very little if any traditional authority. The main one, however, the story of the laming of the smith by King Nithuth (or by some other enemy) and of Weland's terrible revenge, forms the basis of the *Volundarkvitha*. To this, by way of introduction, has been added the story of Volund and the swan-maiden, who, to make things even more complex, is likewise said to be a Valkyrie. Some critics maintain that these two sections were originally two distinct poems, merely strung together by the compiler with the help of narrative prose links; but the poem as a whole has a kind of dramatic unity which suggests rather than an early poet—for linguistically the poem belongs among the oldest of the Eddic collection—used two distinct legends, whether in prose or verse, as the basis for the composition of a new and homogeneous poem.

The swan-maiden story appears, of course, in many places quite distinct from the Weland tradition, and, in another form, became one of the most popular of German folk tales. Like the story of Weland, however, it is of German rather than Scandinavian origin, and the identification of the swan-maidens as Valkyries, which may have taken place before the legend reached the North, may, on the other hand, have been simply an attempt to connect southern tradition with figures well known in northern mythology.

The *Volundarkvitha* is full of prose narrative links, including an introduction. The nature of such prose links has already been discussed in the introductory note to the *Grimnismol*; the *Volundarkvitha* is a striking illustration of the way in which the function of the earlier Eddic verse was limited chiefly to dialogue or description, the narrative outline being provided, if at all, in prose. This prose was put in by each reciter according to his fancy and knowledge, and his estimate of his hearers' need for such explanations; some of it, as in this instance, eventually found its way into the written record.

The manuscript of the *Volundarkvitha* is in such bad shape, and the conjectural emendations have been so numerous, that in the notes I have attempted to record only the most important of them.

Hollander's Introduction (1962)

Stark and powerful, as are few others in the collection, is "The Lay of Volund the Smith." If, as has been said, revenge is the ecstasy of Germanic antiquity, then this lay is its glorification. It stands by itself in richness of invention, in grim compactness. Limned with a few bold strokes, the characters stand before us indelibly: the tragic figure of the captive artificer, the greedy but weak king, his cruel queen, the lads with their childlike curiosity, Princess Bothvild in her helpless despair.

The motif belongs essentially to Germanic hero lore; although it is difficult to deny some ancient connection with the Greek story of Daidalos, who, held prisoner by the evil king Minos, fashions for himself and his son wings to escape, and with the limping smith of the gods, Hephaistos. Our poem gives the Germanic tradition its most authentic expression. It is antedated, however, by the Anglo-Saxon lay of *Deor's Lament*¹ and by the scene on the Franks Casket, generally referred to the seventh century. Far later, and with many new details, is the novelistic account of the *Piðreks saga*.

The brief glimpses of nature vouchsafed us in the poem leave little doubt that the poem originated in Norway—Southern (German) origin of the lay (or at least of the legend) has been claimed, but on insufficient evidence. Both metre—a free *fornyrðislag*—and treatment place it among the earliest in *The Edda*; that is, perhaps the ninth century. And this may account also in some degree for the sad condition of the text (only the most important emendations have been referred to in the notes). It is preserved only in the *Codex Regius*.

Völund's smithy in the centre, Nidud's daughter to the left, and Nidud's dead sons hidden to the right of the smithy. Between the girl and the smithy, Völund can be seen in an eagle fetch flying away.

From the Ardre image stone VIII.

The scene depicts stanza 24.
(Bellows / Hollander editions)



Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Hollander (1962)
<p>There was a king in Sweden named Nidud: he had two sons and a daughter, whose name was Bodvild. There were three brothers, sons of a king of the Finns, one was called Slagfid, the second Egil, the third Volund. They went on snow-shoes and hunted wild-beasts. They came to Ulfdal, and there made themselves a house, where there is a water called Ulfsiar. Early one morning they found on the border of the lake three females sitting and spinning flax. Near them lay their swan-plumages: they were Valkyriur. Two of them, Hladgud-Svanhvit and Hervor-Alvit, were daughters of King Hlodver; the third was Orlun, a daughter of Kiar of Valland. They took them home with them to their dwelling. Egil had Orlun, Slagfid Svanhvit, and Volund Alvit. They lived there seven years, when they flew away seeking conflicts, and did not return. Egil then went on snow-shoes in search of Orlun, and Slagfid in search of Svanhvit, but Volund remained in Ulfdal. He was a most skilful man, as we learn from old traditions. King Nidud ordered him to be seized, so as it is here related.</p> <p>1. Maids flew from the south, through the murky wood, / Alvit the young, fate to fulfil. On the lake's margin they sat to repose, The southern damsels; precious flax they spun.</p> <p>2. One of them, of maidens fairest, To his comely breast Egil clasped. Svanhvit was the second, she a swan's plumage bore; But the third, their sister, The white neck clasped of Volund.</p> <p>3. There they stayed seven winters through; But all the eighth were with longing seized; And in the ninth fate parted them. The maidens yearned for the murky wood, The young Alvit, fate to fulfil.</p> <p>4. From the chase came the ardent hunters, Slagfid and Egil, found their house deserted, Went out and in, and looked around. Egil went east after Orlun, And Slagfid west after Svanhvit;</p> <p>5. But Volund alone remained in Ulfdal. He the red gold set with the hard gem, Well fastened all the rings on linden bast, And so awaited his bright consort, If to him she would return.</p> <p>6. It was told to Nidud, the Niarars' lord, That Volund alone remained in Ulfdal. In the night went men, in studded corslets, Their shields glistened in the waning moon.</p> <p>7. From their saddles they alighted at the house's gable, / Thence went in through the house. On the bast they saw the rings all drawn, Seven hundred, which the warrior owned.</p> <p>8. And they took them off, and they put them on, All save one, which they bore away.</p>	<p>There was a king in Sweden named Nithuth.⁵ He had two sons and one daughter; her name was Bothvild.⁶ There were three brothers, sons of a king of the Finns:⁷ one was called Slagfith, another Egil,⁸ the third Volund. They went on snowshoes and hunted wild beasts. They came into Ulfdalir and there they built themselves a house; there was a lake there which is called Ulfsjar.⁹ Early one morning they found on the shore of the lake three women, who were spinning flax. Near them were their swan garments, for they were Valkyries.¹⁰ Two of them were daughters of King Hlothver,¹¹ Hlathguth the Swan-White and Hervor the All-Wise, and the third was Orlun, daughter of Kjar from Valland. These did they bring home to their hall with them. Egil took Orlun, and Slagfith Swan-White, and Volund All-Wise. There they dwelt seven winters; but then they flew away to find battles, and came back no more. Then Egil set forth on his snowshoes to follow Orlun, and Slagfith followed Swan White, but Volund stayed in Ulfdalir. He was a most skillful man, as men know from old tales. King Nithuth had him taken by force, as the poem here tells.</p> <p>1. Maids from the south through Myrkwood¹² flew, / Fair and young, their fate to follow; On the shore of the sea to rest them they sat,¹³ The maids of the south, and flax they spun.</p> <p>2.¹⁴ Hlathguth and Hervor, Hlothver's children, And Orlun the Wise Kjar's daughter was.</p> <p>3.¹⁵ One in her arms took Egil then To her bosom white, the woman fair.</p> <p>4. Swan-White second,-- swan-feathers she wore, [Then to her breast Slagfith embraced.]¹⁶ And her arms the third of the sisters threw Next round Volund's neck so white.</p> <p>5. There did they sit for seven winters, In the eighth at last came their longing again, (And in the ninth did need divide them).¹⁷ The maidens yearned for the murky wood, The fair young maids, their fate to follow.</p> <p>6. Volund home from his hunting came, From a weary way,¹⁸ the weather-wise Bowman, Slagfith and Egil the hall found empty, Out and in went they, everywhere seeking.</p> <p>7.¹⁹ East fared Egil after Orlun, And Slagfith south to seek for Swan-White; Volund alone in Ulfdalir lay, [Till back the maiden bright should come]</p> <p>8.²⁰ Red gold he fashioned with fairest gems, And rings he strung on ropes of bast; So for his wife he waited long, If the fair one home might come to him.</p> <p>9.²¹ This Nithuth learned, the lord of the Njars,²² That Volund alone in Ulfdalir lay; By night went his men, their mail-coats were studded, Their shields in the waning moonlight shone.</p> <p>10. From their saddles the gable wall they sought, And in they went at the end of the hall; Rings they saw there on ropes of bast, Seven hundred the hero had.²³</p> <p>11.²⁴ Off they took them, but all they left Save one alone²⁵ which they bore away.</p>	<p>There was a king in Sweden hight Níthoth.⁶⁸ He had two sons and a daughter whose name was Bothvild.⁶⁹ There were three brothers, sons of a Finnish king. Was one hight Slagfith,⁷⁰ the second, Egil, and the third, Volund.⁷¹ They ran on snowshoes, hunting game. They came to the Wolfdales and made them a house there by a water called Wolf Lake. Early one morn they found by the shore three women who were spinning flax. By them lay their swanskins, for they were Valkyries.⁷² They were the two daughters of King Hlothvér,⁷³ Hlathguth the Swanwhite, and Hervor the Allwise; and the third was Orlún,⁷⁴ the daughter of King Kíar of Valland. The brothers took them home with them. Egil took Orlún to wife; Slagfith, Hlathguth; and Volund, Hervor. Thus dwelled they seven years. Then flew they away to be at battles, and did not return. Then went forth Egil on his snowshoes to search for Orlún, and Slagfith, to look for Swanwhite; but Volund stayed behind in the Wolfdales. He was the most skillful of men of whom olden tales tell. King Níthoth had him taken captive, as is told in this lay.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Of Volund and Níthoth</p> <p>1. Three maidens flew through Myrkvith from Southland, / young Valkyries, in wars to try them; They sate by the lake, their limbs to rest, Fair southron maids, precious flax spinning;</p> <p>2. ⁷⁵Hlathguth and Hervor, Hlothvér's daughters, And wise Orlún, Kíar's offspring. Did one of them wind her white arms About Egil, to her bosom held him;</p> <p>3. (and Hlathguth fair, enfolded Slagfith);⁷⁶ But Hervor, the third of these sisters, Winded her arms 'round Volund's neck.</p> <p>4. Thus dwelled the sisters seven winters, But on the eighth ay in yearning, But on the ninth they needs must part: Longed the maidens through Myrkvith to fly, The young Valkyries, in wars to try them.</p> <p>5. Came the weather-wise from the woods striding, (from hunting weary, Volund the Smith);⁷⁷ Slagfith and Egil, found empty the hall, Went out and in, looking after them.</p> <p>6. Fared Egil eastward, Orlún to seek, Fared southward Slagfith, Swanwhite to find; But Volund alone in Wolfdales stayed— (bided till back his bride would come);⁷⁸</p> <p>7. With red gold rimmed richest jewels, With bast his rings then bound together; For the white-armed woman he waited long, Biding if back his bride would come.</p> <p>8. This heard Níthoth, the Njára King,⁷⁹ That Volund alone in Wolfdales dwelled: At night fared the men, were their mail coats studded,⁸⁰ Their shields did shine by the moon-sickle's sheen.</p> <p>9. From their horses leapt, at the hall's gable-end, And in they went from end to end; Saw on bast the rings bound together, Full seven hundred which the smith did own. Off they took all, put them on again; But one ring they away did take.⁸¹</p>

<p>folk, nor to any one, that ye have been with me." Early called one the other, brother, brother: "Let us go see the rings."</p> <p>22. To the chest they came, for the keys asked; Manifest was their grudge, when therein they looked. / Of those children he the heads cut off, And under the prison's mixen laid their bodies.</p> <p>23. But their skulls beneath the hair He in silver set, and to Nidud gave; And of their eyes precious stones he formed, Which to Nidud's wily wife he sent.</p> <p>24. But of the teeth of the two Breast-ornaments he made, and to Bodvild sent.</p> <p>Then did Bodvild praise the ring: To Volund brought it, when she had broken it: "I dare to no tell it, save alone to thee."</p> <p>Volund 25. "I will so repair the fractured gold, That to thy father it shall fairer seem, And to thy mother much more beautiful, And to thyself, in the same degree."</p> <p>26. He then brought her beer, that he might succeed the better, / As on her seat she fell asleep. "Now have I my wrongs avenged, All save one in the wood perpetrated."⁴</p> <p>27. "I wish," said Volund, "that on my feet I were, Of the use of which Nidud's men have deprived me." / Laughing Volund rose in air: Bodvild weeping from the isle departed. She mourned her lover's absence, and for her father's wrath.</p> <p>28. Stood without Nidud's wily wife; Then she went in through the hall; But he on the enclosure sat down to rest. "Art thou awake Niarars' lord!"</p> <p>29. "Ever am I awake, joyless I lie to rest, When I call to mind my children's death: My head is chilled, cold are to me thy counsels. Now with Volund I desire to speak."</p> <p>30. "Tell me, Volund, Alfars' chief! Of my brave boys what is become?"</p> <p>31. "Oaths shalt thou first to me swear, By board of ship, by rim of shield, By shoulder of steed, by edge of sword, That thou wilt not slay the wife of Volund, Nor of my bride cause the death; Although a wife I have whom ye know, Or offspring within thy court.</p> <p>32. To the smithy go, which thou hast made, There wilt thou the bellows find with blood besprinkled. / The heads I severed of thy boys, And under the prison's mixen laid their bodies.</p> <p>33. But their skulls beneath the hair I in silver set, and to Nidud gave; And of their eyes precious stones I formed, Which to Nidud's wily wife I sent.</p>	<p>To no one say that me you have sought."⁴³</p> <p>23.⁴⁴ Early did brother to brother call: "Swift let us go the rings to see."</p> <p>24. They came to the chest, and they craved the keys, / The evil was open when in they looked; ⁴⁵He smote off their heads, and their feet he hid Under the sooty straps of the bellows.</p> <p>25. Their skulls, once hid by their hair, he took, Set them in silver and sent them to Nithuth; ⁴⁶Gems full fair from their eyes he fashioned, To Nithuth's wife so wise he gave them.</p> <p>26. And from the teeth of the twain he wrought A brooch for the breast, to Bothvild he sent it;⁴⁷</p> <p>27. Bothvild then of her ring did boast, ⁴⁸[But soon it broke, and swiftly to Volund She bore it and said—] "The ring I have broken, I dare not say it save to thee."</p> <p>Volund spake: 28. 'I shall weld the break in the gold so well That fairer than ever thy father shall find it, And better much thy mother shall think it, And thou no worse than ever it was."</p> <p>29. Beer he brought, he was better in cunning, Until in her seat full soon she slept.</p> <p>[Volund spake:]⁴⁹ "Now vengeance I have for all my hurts, Save one alone, on the evil woman."⁵⁰</p> <p>30. Quoth Volund: "Would that well were the sinews Maimed in my feet by Nithuth's men."⁵¹</p> <p>31.⁵² Laughing Volund rose aloft, Weeping Bothvild went from the isle, For her lover's flight and her father's wrath.</p> <p>32. Without stood the wife of Nithuth wise, And in she came from the end of the hall; But he by the wall in weariness sat: "Wakest thou, Nithuth, lord of the Njars?"⁵³</p> <p>[Nithuth spake:]⁵⁴ 33. "Always I wake, and ever joyless, Little I sleep since my sons were slain; Cold is my head, cold was thy counsel, One thing, with Volund to speak, I wish.</p> <p>34.⁵⁵ "Answer me, Volund, greatest of elves, What happed with my boys that hale once were?"</p> <p>[Volund spake:]⁵⁶ 35. "First shalt thou all the oaths now swear, By the rail of ship, and the rim of shield, By the shoulder of steed, and the edge of sword, That to Volund's wife⁵⁷ thou wilt work no ill, Nor yet my bride to her death wilt bring, / Though a wife I should have that well thou knowest, And a child I should have within thy hall.</p> <p>36. "Seek the smithy that thou didst set, Thou shalt find the bellows sprinkled with blood; I smote off the heads of both thy sons, And their feet 'neath the sooty straps I hid."⁵⁸</p> <p>37. "Their skulls, once hid by their hair, I took, Set them in silver and sent them to Nithuth; Gems full fair from their eyes I fashioned, To Nithuth's wife so wise I gave them."⁵⁹</p>	<p>From every wight, that ye wended to me."⁸⁹</p> <p>23. Full soon one brother said to the other, And lad to lad: "Let us look at the rings!"</p> <p>24. For the keys called they to the chest when they came—/ Was their ill fate sealed when in they looked. / He hewed off the heads of the hapless lads, / Their bodies buried 'neath the bellows' pit.⁹⁰</p> <p>25. With skill their skulls 'neath the scalp that lay In silver he set⁹¹ and sent them to Nithoth; Of the bairns' eyeballs shining beads he wrought And gave to the cunning queen of Nithoth.</p> <p>26. But out of the twain's teeth made Volund Beauteous brooches which to Bothvild he sent.</p> <p>27. Did proud Bothvild then praise the ring—⁹² To Volund bore it as broken it was: "I durst not tell this but to thee only."</p> <p>Volund said: 28. "Whate'er harm it has taken, I shall heal the ring / That to thy father 'twill fairer seem, And to thy mother be much better, And to thyself the same as before."</p> <p>29. Did wily Volund outwit her with drink, So that on settle asleep she fell.</p> <p>(Volund said:) 30. "Are avenged the deeds which were done to me, / Save one only, (on the wicked queen)."⁹³</p> <p>31. "Fain would I fare on my feet," quoth Volund, "Whose might from me Nithoth's men have taken."⁹⁴</p> <p>32. Laughing, aloft lifted him Volund, Weeping, Bothvild went from the isle, His flight fearing, and her father's wrath.</p> <p>33. Stood Nithoth's cunning queen without; In now went she to endmost gable; But on house wall high awhile he⁹⁵ rested: "Art waking, Nithoth, thou Njára King?"⁹⁶</p> <p>(Nithoth said:) 34. "I am wakeful ever, nor wait me joy, Ever since my sons' death I slept but little: Cold was thy counsel,⁹⁷ cold is my head;⁹⁸ Now wish I this of Volund to ask:</p> <p>35. "Make answer, Volund, thou alf's leader! What hath become of my hapless boys?"</p> <p>(Volund said:) 36. "Ere shalt thou swear all oaths to me, By ship's bulwark and shield's border, By swift steed's shoulder and sharpest sword: That to Volund's wife thou work no harm, Nor brew for my bride baleful counsel, Though wife I have whom well ye know, Or child I have thy hall within.</p> <p>37. "To the smithy wend, for Volund builded, There the bellows shalt all bloody find: I hewed off the heads of thy hapless boys, And their bodies buried 'neath the bellows' pit.</p> <p>38. "With skill their skulls 'neath the scalp which lay / In silver I set and sent them to thee; Of the bairns' eyeballs shining beads I wrought And gave to the cunning queen of Nithoth.</p>
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<p>34. Of the teeth of the two, Breast-ornaments I made, and to Bodvild sent. Now Bodvild goes big with child, The only daughter of you both."</p> <p>35. "Word didst thou never speak that more afflicted me, / Or for which I would more severely punish thee. / There is no man so tall that he from thy horse can take thee, / Or so skilful that he can shoot thee down, Thence where thou floatest up in the sky."</p> <p>36. Laughing Volund rose in air, But Nidud sad remained sitting.</p> <p>37. "Rise up Thakrad, my best of thralls! Bid Bodvild, my fair-browed daughter, In bright attire come, with her sire to speak.</p> <p>38. Is it, Bodvild! true what has been told to me, That thou and Volund in the isle together sat?"</p> <p>39. "True it is, Nidud! what has been told to thee, That Volund and I in the isle together sat, In an unlucky hour: would it had never been! I could not against him strive, I might not against him prevail."</p>	<p>38. "And from the teeth of the twain I wrought A brooch for the breast, to Bothvild I gave it;⁶⁰ Now big with child does Bothvild go, The only daughter ye two had ever."</p> <p>[Nithuth spake:]⁶¹ 39. "Never spakest thou word that worse could hurt me, / Nor that made me, Volund, more bitter for vengeance; / There is no man so high from thy horse to take thee, Or so doughty an archer as down to shoot thee, While high in the clouds thy course thou takest."</p> <p>40.⁶² Laughing Volund rose aloft, But left in sadness Nithuth sat.</p> <p>41. [Then spake Nithuth, lord of the Njars:]⁶³ "Rise up, Thakkrath,⁶⁴ best of my thralls, Bid Bothvild come, the bright-browed maid, Bedecked so fair, with her father to speak."</p> <p>42.⁶⁵ "Is it true, Bothvild, that which was told me; Once in the isle with Volund wert thou?"</p> <p>[Bothvild spake:]⁶⁶ 43. "True is it, Nithuth, that which was told thee, Once in the isle with Volund was I, An hour of lust, alas it should be! Nought was my might with such a man, Nor from his strength could I save myself."⁶⁷</p>	<p>39. "But out of the twain's teeth made Volund Beauteous brooches and to Bothvild sent them; And now Bothvild is big with child, Your only daughter, dear to you both."</p> <p>(Níthoth said:) 40. "Ne'er said'st thou word which saddened me more Nor I wished, Volund, worse to avenge: But so high no one, to haul thee down, Nor so strong, belike, from below to shoot thee, So high since hoverest 'neat very heaven."</p> <p>41. Laughing, aloft lifted him Volund, In sorrow Níthoth sate behind, then.</p> <p>42. (Then spake Níthoth, the Njára King:) "Rise up, Thakkráth,⁹⁹ of my thralls thou best, And bid Bothvild, the brow-white maiden Fairly dight, go with her father to speak."</p> <p>43. "Is it true, Bothvild, as told I am, That Volund with thee was on the isle?"</p> <p>(Bothvild said:) 44. "'Tis true, Níthoth, as told thou art: Volund with me was on the isle (an hour of shame):¹⁰⁰ it should not have been. No strength had I to strive against him, Naught availed it 'gainst Volund to strive."</p>
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¹ *Deor's Lament* begins as follows:

Wayland learned bitterly | banishment's way, /
Earl right resolute; | ills endured; /
Had for comrades | Care and Longing, /
Winter-cold wanderings; | woe oft suffered /
When Nidhad forged | the fetters on him, /
Bending bonds | on a better man. /
That he surmounted: / so this may I!
Beadhild mourned | her brother's death, /
Less sore in soul | than herself dismayed /
When her plight was plainly | placed before her— /
Birth of a bairn. | No brave resolve /
Might she ever make, | what the end should be. /
That she surmounted: | so this may I!

The poem is preserved in a manuscript of the eleventh century, but is manifestly much older.

² On snow-shoes.

³ The designation of Alfars' chief, or prince, applied to Volund, who, as we learn from the prose introduction, was a son of a king of the Finns, may perhaps be accounted for by the circumstance that the poem itself hardly belongs to the Odinic Mythology, and was probably composed when that system was in its decline and giving place to the heroic or romantic.

⁴ The translation of this line is founded solely on a conjectural emendation of the text. The wrong alluded to may be the hamstringing.

⁵ Nithuth ("Bitter Hater"): here identified as a king of Sweden, is in the poem (stanzas 9, 15 and 32) called lord of the Njars, which may refer to the people of the Swedish district of Nerike. In any case, the scene of the story has moved from Saxon lands into the Northeast. The first and last sentences of the introduction refer to the second part of the poem; the rest of it concerns the swan-maidens episode.

⁶ Bothvild ("Warlike Maid"): Volund's victim in the latter part of the poem.

⁷ King of the Finns: this notion, clearly later than the poem, which calls Volund an elf, may perhaps be ascribed to the annotator who composed the prose introduction. The Finns, meaning the dwellers in Lapland, were generally credited with magic powers.

⁸ Egil appears in the *Thithrekssaga* as Volund's brother, but Slagfith is not elsewhere mentioned.

⁹ Ulfdalir ("Wolf-Dale"), Ulfjar ("Wolf-Sea"), and Valland ("Slaughter-Land"): mythical, places without historical identification.

¹⁰ Valkyries: cf. *Voluspo*, 31 and note; there is nothing in the poem to identify the three swan maidens as Valkyries except one obscure word in line 2 of stanza 1 and again in line 5 of stanza 5, which may mean, as Gering translates it, "helmed," or else "fair and wise." I suspect that the annotator, anxious to give the Saxon legend as much northern local color as possible, was mistaken in his mythology, and that the poet never conceived of his swan-maidens as Valkyries at all. However, this identification of swan-maidens with Valkyries was not uncommon; cf. *Helreith Brynhildar*, 7. The three maidens' names, Hlathguth, Hervor, and Olrun, do not appear in the lists of Valkyries.

¹¹ King Hlothver: this name suggests the southern origin of the story, as it is the northern form of Ludwig; the name appears again in *Guthrunarkvitha* II, 26, and that of Kjar is found in *Atlakvitha*, 7, both of these poems being based on German stories. It is worth noting that the composer of this introductory note seems to have had little or no information beyond what was actually contained in the poem as it has come down to us; he refers to the "old stories" about Volund, but either he was unfamiliar with them in detail or else he thought it needless to make use of them. His note simply puts in clear and connected form what the verse tells somewhat obscurely; his only additions are making Nithuth a king of Sweden and Volund's father a king of the Finns, supplying the name Ulfjar for the lake, identifying the swan-maidens as Valkyries, and giving Kjar a home in Valland.

¹² Myrkwood: a stock name for a magic, dark forest; cf. *Lokasenna*, 42.

¹³ The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza; two lines may have been lost before or after lines 1-2, and two more, or even six, with the additional stanza describing the theft of the swan-garments, after line 4.

¹⁴ In the manuscript these two lines stand after stanza 16; editors have tried to fit them into various places, but the prose indicates that they belong here, with a gap assumed.

- ¹⁵ In the manuscript these two lines follow stanza 1, with no gap indicated, and the first line marked as the beginning of a stanza. Many editors have combined them with stanza 4.
- ¹⁶ No lacuna indicated in the manuscript; one editor fills the stanza out with the line given in brackets.
- ¹⁷ Line 3 looks like an interpolation, but line 5, identical with line 2 of stanza 1, may be the superfluous one.
- ¹⁸ The phrase "Volund home from a weary way" is an emendation of Bugge's, accepted by many editors. Some of those who do not include it reject line 4, and combine the remainder of the stanza with all or part of stanza 7.
- ¹⁹ The manuscript marks the second, and not the first, line as the beginning of a stanza. Some editors combine lines 2-3 with all or part of stanza 8. No gap is indicated in the manuscript, but many editors have assumed one, some of them accepting Bugge's suggestion (given in brackets).
- ²⁰ No line in this stanza is indicated in the manuscript as beginning a new stanza; editors have tried all sorts of experiments in regrouping the lines into stanzas with those of stanzas 7 and 9. In line 3 the word *long* is sheer guesswork, as the line in the manuscript contains a metrical error.
- ²¹ Some editors combine the first two lines with parts of stanza 8, and the last two with the first half of stanza 10.
- ²² Njars: there has been much, and inconclusive, discussion as to what this name means; probably it applies to a semi-mythical people somewhere vaguely in "the East."
- ²³ Some editors combine lines 3-4 with the fragmentary stanza 11.
- ²⁴ No gap indicated in the manuscript; some editors combine these lines with lines 3-4 of stanza 10, while others combine them with the first two lines of stanza 12.
- ²⁵ The one ring which Nithuth's men steal is given to Bothvild, and proves the cause of her undoing.
- ²⁶ The manuscript indicates line 3, and not line 1, as the beginning of a stanza, which has given rise to a large amount of conjectural rearrangement. Line 2 of the original is identical with the phrase added by Bugge in stanza 6. Line 5 may be spurious, or lines 4-5 may have been expanded out of a single line running "The wind-dried wood for | Volund burned well."
- ²⁷ Elves: the poem here identifies Volund as belonging to the race of the elves.
- ²⁸ Hlothver's daughter: Hervor; many editors treat the adjective "all-wise" here as a proper name.
- ²⁹ In this poem the manuscript indicates the speakers.
- ³⁰ Some editors make lines 1-2 into a separate stanza, linking lines 3-5 (or 4-5) with stanza 16.
- ³¹ Line 3 is very possibly spurious, a mere expansion of "Nithuth spake." Nithuth, of course, has come with his men to capture Volund, and now charges him with having stolen his treasure.
- ³² The manuscript definitely assigns this stanza to Volund, but many editors give the first two lines to Nithuth. In the manuscript stanza 16 is followed by the two lines of stanza 2, and many editions make of lines 3-4 of stanza 16 and stanza 2 a single speech by Volund.
- ³³ Grani's way: Grani was Sigurth's horse, on which he rode to slay Fafnir and win Andvari's hoard; this and the reference to the Rhine as the home of wealth betray the southern source of the story. If lines 1-2 belong to Volund, they mean that Nithuth got his wealth in the Rhine country, and that Volund's hoard has nothing to do with it; if the speaker is Nithuth, they mean that Volund presumably has not killed a dragon, and that he is far from the wealth of the Rhine, so that he must have stolen his treasure from Nithuth himself.
- ³⁴ Line 1 is lacking in the manuscript, lines 2-4 following immediately after the two lines here given as stanza 2. Line 1, borrowed from line 1 of stanza 32, is placed here by many editors, following Bugge's suggestion. Certainly it is Nithuth's wife who utters line 4.
- ³⁵ Who comes from the wood: Volund, noted as a hunter. Gering assumes that with the entrance of Nithuth's wife the scene has changed from Volund's house to Nithuth's, but I cannot see that this is necessary.
- ³⁶ The annotator inserted this note rather clumsily in the midst of the speech of Nithuth's wife.
- ³⁷ In the manuscript lines 2-3 stand before line 1; many editors have made the transposition here indicated. Some editors reject line 3 as spurious.
- ³⁸ Saevarstath: "Sea-Stead."
- ³⁹ This stanza is obviously in bad shape. Vigfusson makes two stanzas of it by adding a first line: "Then did Volund speak, | sagest of elves." Editors have rejected various lines, and some have regrouped the last lines with the first two of stanza 20. The elimination of the passages in parenthesis produces a four-line stanza which is metrically correct, but it has little more than guesswork to support it.
- ⁴⁰ The editions vary radically in combining the lines of this stanza with those of stanzas 19 and 21, particularly as the manuscript indicates the third line as the beginning of a stanza. Several editions make one stanza out of lines 1-4 of stanza 20 and lines 1-2 of stanza 21, and another out of the next four lines. The meaning, however, remains unchanged.
- ⁴¹ The evil was open: i.e., the gold in the chest was destined to be their undoing.
- ⁴² The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza, and several editors have adopted this grouping.
- ⁴³ In the *Thithrekssaga* Volund sends the boys away with instructions not to come back until just after a fall of snow, and then to approach his dwelling walking backward. The boys do this, and when, after he has killed them, Volund is questioned regarding them, he points to the tracks in the snow as evidence that they had left his house.
- ⁴⁴ No gap indicated in the manuscript. Some editors assume one before these lines; some group the lines with lines 3-4 of stanza 22, and some with lines 1-2 of stanza 24.
- ⁴⁵ Some editions begin a new stanza with line 3.
- ⁴⁶ The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza, and many editors have adopted this grouping.
- ⁴⁷ These two lines have been grouped in various ways, either with lines 3-4 of stanza 25 or with the fragmentary stanza 27. No gap is indicated in the manuscript, but the loss of something is so obvious that practically all editors have noted it, although they have differed as to the number of lines lost.
- ⁴⁸ No gap indicated in the manuscript; the line and a half might be filled out (partly with the aid of late paper manuscripts) as given in brackets.
- ⁴⁹ The manuscript does not name Volund as the speaker before line 3; Vigfusson again inserts his convenient line, "Then Volund spake, sagest of elves."
- ⁵⁰ A few editions combine lines 3-4 with the two lines of stanza 30.
- ⁵¹ No gap indicated in the manuscript; some editors combine the two lines with lines 3-4 of stanza 29, and many with the three lines of stanza 31.
- ⁵² Something has probably been lost before this stanza, explaining how Volund made himself wings, as otherwise, owing to his lameness, he could not leave the island. The *Thithrekssaga* tells the story of how Volund's brother, Egil, shot birds and gave him the feathers, out of which he made a feather-garment. This break in the narrative illustrates the lack of knowledge apparently possessed by the compiler who was responsible for the prose notes; had he known the story told in the *Thithrekssaga*, it is hardly conceivable that he would have failed to indicate the necessary connecting link at this point. Some editors reject line 3 as spurious. The manuscript does not indicate any lacuna.
- ⁵³ The manuscript indicates line 4 as the beginning of a stanza, and many editors have followed this arrangement.
- ⁵⁴ The manuscript does not name the speaker. It indicates line 3 as the beginning of a new stanza. Vigfusson adds before line 1, "Then spake Nithuth, lord of the Njars."
- ⁵⁵ No gap indicated in the manuscript, but it seems clear that something has been lost. Some editors combine these two lines with lines 3-4 of stanza 33. Volund is now flying over Nithuth's hall.
- ⁵⁶ The manuscript does not name the speaker; Vigfusson again makes two full stanzas with the line, "Then did Volund speak, sagest of elves." Some editors begin a new stanza with line 4, while others reject as interpolations lines 2-3 or 5-7.
- ⁵⁷ Volund's wife: the reference is to Bothvild, as Volund wishes to have his vengeance fall more heavily on her father than on her.
- ⁵⁸ Lines 3-4 are nearly identical with lines 3-4 of stanza 24.
- ⁵⁹ Identical, except for the pronouns, with stanza 25.
- ⁶⁰ Lines 1-2: cf. stanza 26.
- ⁶¹ The manuscript does not name the speaker. Either line 4 or line 5 may be an interpolation; two editions reject lines 3-5, combining lines 1-2 with stanza 40. In the *Thithrekssaga* Nithuth actually compels Egil, Volund's brother, to shoot at Volund. The latter has concealed a bladder full of blood under his left arm, and when his

brother's arrow pierces this, Nithuth assumes that his enemy has been killed. This episode likewise appears among the scenes from Volund's career rudely carved on an ancient casket of ivory, bearing an Anglo-Saxon inscription in runic letters, which has been preserved.

⁶² Line 1: cf. stanza 3 1. The manuscript indicates no lacuna.

⁶³ The first line is a conjectural addition.

⁶⁴ Thakkrath is probably the northern form of the Middle High German name Dancrat.

⁶⁵ The manuscript indicates no gap, but indicates line 2 as the beginning of a stanza; Vigfusson's added "Then Nithuth spake, lord of the Njars" seems plausible enough.

⁶⁶ The manuscript does not name the speaker.

⁶⁷ Different editors have rejected one or another of the last three lines, and as the manuscript indicates line 4 as the beginning of a new stanza, the loss of two or three lines has likewise been suggested. According to the *Thithrekssaga*, the son of Volund and Bothvild was Vithga, or Witege, one of the heroes of Dietrich of Bern.

⁶⁸ "Grim Warrior."

⁶⁹ "War-Maiden." [OE. *Beaduhild*]

⁷⁰ "Finn-Smith."

⁷¹ [OE. *Weland*; OHG. *Walunt*, *Wēlant*] The name has not yet received a satisfactory explanation. It may be connected with Old Norse *vél*, "craft."

⁷² The motif of the swanskins (see *Helreið Brynhildar*, St.7) is but faintly stressed here. By taking the skins away, the brothers obtain possession of the maidens; but their departure is due, here, not to their regaining the swanskins, as one might expect, but to the inborn longing to be Valkyries again.

⁷³ Corresponding to the Frankish King, Chlodowech, as *Kíar* may correspond to King *Kiarval* [Cearhall] of Valland (here meaning "Wales"); or, possibly, it may be derived from *Cæsar*.

⁷⁴ The names of the maidens signify, in order, "the Necklace-Adorned Warrior-Maiden," "the Warder of the Host," and "the One Knowing Ale Runes." See *Sigrdrífumál*, St.8.

⁷⁵ The next two lines, in the original after St. 14, unquestionably belong here.

⁷⁶ Accepting Grundtvig's emendation.

⁷⁷ Supplied from St.10.

⁷⁸ Supplied by Grundtvig.

⁷⁹ It is not understood what people is referred to.

⁸⁰ With bosses of metal.

⁸¹ They take no more than one ring (which probably had magic power) in order not to arouse suspicion. Fearing the supernatural strength of Volund—he is termed a lord of the alfs (Sts. 11, 14, 35)—they mean to overcome him sleeping, and so lie in wait for him until he returns weary from the chase.

⁸² The king implies that it was stolen from him; for the hills of the Rhine are distant where the dragon brooded over the Niflung gold (see *Reginsmál*). After slaying him, Sigurth laid the burden on his horse Grani's back.

⁸³ That is, in his father's hall (?).

⁸⁴ Supplied from St.33. The scene is shifted, as it frequently is, without indication, here to the king's hall.

⁸⁵ She speaks in a low voice, not to be overheard by Volund.

⁸⁶ "Stead by the Sea."

⁸⁷ Compare the Old English expression *Wēlondes geweorc*, used for all skillful work in metals; but *vél* in the original may also mean "wile."

⁸⁸ For in that moment Volund conceives his plan of revenge.

⁸⁹ In the *Direks saga*, Ch.73, Volund tells the boys to return when fresh snow has fallen, and to walk backwards to the door. After their disappearance, Volund is suspected but clears himself by showing the tracks leading from his door.

⁹⁰ This is the scene pictured on the Franks Casket.

⁹¹ As drinking vessels.

⁹² The text is defective here.

⁹³ Conjectural.

⁹⁴ Here, no doubt, several lines have dropped out: "but lacking them, I must take to the wings I have fashioned me" (?).

⁹⁵ Volund.

⁹⁶ Probably the queen's speech: she calls attention to Volund's presence.

⁹⁷ In the Old Norse proverb, "women's counsel is cold," that is, cruel.

⁹⁸ With despair?

⁹⁹ "He Who Gives Pleasant Counsel" [OE. And Norman *Thankrēd*, MHG. *Dancrāt*].

¹⁰⁰ Conjectural.