THE MOUNTAIN TROLL

A prose translation by Per Pippin Aspaas¹

See northern lights glow with flames red on the black bow.
Hear storms howl and trunks of spruce trees 5 creak as they bend.

The sons of Niord are rising.

Niord: the lord of the winds
Flocks of snow, stars

10

are shimmering, dimly bright.

And nothing protects against the might of the storm

on the mountains of Norway.

Svanhild the White 13 wanders around lost, 17 around midnight, 15 alone and desperate, 14 in fearful thoughts 19 amongst brushes and branches 16 in the fog of the night 18 where spirits are awake. 20

Suddenly the storm ends.

Spruces creak no more.

However, stones rumble
and the mountain's armour
bursts with a horrible sound.

And ugly and grim
26
a Finn rises
28
out of the dark cave
27

to shiver with sighs.

causing the nightly Thule 29 Thule: the far North

30

¹ This translation follows the first printed version of Adam Oehlenschläger's *Biergtrolden*, as published in *Digte* (Poems, 1803). Comments in the margin have been kept to a minimum. For further commentary, see the modern editions by Povl Ingerslev-Jensen (Oehlenschläger, *Digte*, Oehlenschläger Selskabet, 1979) and Johan de Mylius (Oehlenschläger, *Digte*, Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab, 2019). For a succinct overview of the

of Oehlenschläger's Poetiske Skrifter (Poetic Texts, vol. 24, 1861, Anmærkninger, pp. 367-68).

Finn: here, a master of black magic

slight variations in punctuation and wording across the various nineteenth-century editions, see the collection

'Who dares	31
in dark nights	32
when the cock crows	35
to enter black forests	33
where tall giants	34
hiss in the dark,	36
like when monstrous whales	37
fizz underneath the Arctic Ocean;	
when urns shiver	
in the hour of death;	40
when spirits are rising;	
when wolves in the grove	
swallow their prey;	
when old dragons	
are alert in the pitch darkness;	45
when bad consciousness is gnawing;	
when innocents are crying;	
when the murderer is acting;	
and the night is throwing its clothing	
upon the damp blood?'	50
With red eyes	
in the frightening forehead	
he peers piercingly	
amongst masses of spruce;	
his gaze turns in all directions	55
except for the direction of the sky,	00
where the northern lights sparkle.	
•	
With cunning glances	
he sets forth	59
with his hairy feet	61
from the sinuosity of the rock.	60
'A drink would please me!'	62
his voice declares,	
'I smell, I smell	0.5
human blood!'	65
And he hastens towards	
the shivering young woman.	
His eye, shimmering	
of wrath, throws a glance	
on the graceful,	70
but immediately it turns milder;	
her gracefulness makes	
his eye suddenly confused;	
and flames of lust	
rise from their sleep.	75
They ignite in full force -	
and Svanhild shakes from fear.	

'Fear not, o Beauty!'		
Thus he cunningly speaks,	78	
'I am the uncontested overlord	80	
of all trolls.	79	
Come, join me in my cave	81	
where a hundred dwarves		
forge yellow bracelets		
as well as the armour of giants;	85	
where red-coloured gold		
in the veins of the mountain		
glitteringly greets you,		
come, forget your tears!'		
'Thou strong giant!	90	
If indeed you possess power,		
then show your might		
through the victory of piety;		
and kill my pain		
by bringing me, wretched that I am,	95	
to the heart of Harald;		
stifle the wrath of the night.		
Darkness led us apart.		
Like me, the Brave One		
has gone astray	100	
amongst the trolls of the dark'.		
'I possess treasures!		
This you shall witness yourself.		
I shall wreathe in gold		
the forehead of your Harald;	105	
of that we shall drink	100	of that: namely, of his skull, wreathed in gold
our festive beer,		or that marrey, or me sman, wreather in sort
in accordance with the ancient		
customs of the mountain trolls'.		
X 0 1211.	110	
Young Svanhild turns pale	110	
and shivers sorely;		
stoops to the ground		
with heavy tears.		
With loathsome glance and lips smiling	115	
he drags the pale woman	117	
with him down into the cave.	117	
with filli down into the cave.	110	
She shivers, falters,	118	
and fear rises.		
In dark grooves	120	
with cheerful tones,		
she hears the songs		
of female giants.		
And behold, ten beautiful	10-	
girls with torches in their hands	125	

draw closer with a smile, with golden locks and a white skin; each of them smiling gracefully, while darkness swiftly flees.

And proudly the high halls
lift themselves;
in crevices of the cliffs
rubies brag;
the gold shimmers strongly
in the hillside of the mountain,
silver glints palely
in the white marble.

And the light blazes
and darkness makes way,
and in a chamber
three other girls
are weaving a dress,
utterly splendid and wonderful,
but Svanhild shivers.

140

'Behold', the giant shouts, 'your wedding dress! Forget the one on the heath. How can you cry? Soon it will be ready. 150 Let us hasten. You are worthy of me; join me to the rest place! Where roses smell, where harps chirp, 155 where ethers breathe, there shall you adorn the proud bed. My heart is raging! I want to possess you 160 in spite of all Æsir'.

What power seethes?
What boulders alarmingly?
Behold, lightning fizzes!
Listen, thunder roars!
And the storm is crying
as it whiningly makes way,
the night departs in haste,
and the sun is smiling.

170

From the bow in the sky by the glow of Hlidskialf the god Odin caught sight of the tears of the Noble One. Æsir: the gods in Norse mythology

Hlidskialf: the high seat of Odin

Aurorae Borealis Studia Classica, Vol. IX : Supplementum - 5 -

He seized his sceptre, and pitied sorely, and cried: 'Aukathor! take your hammer.	175	Aukathor: a nickname of Thor
Kill the darkness of the night with the flames of the day, and slay your enemy! And cool my wrath! Save him and her, by the hands of a God!'	180	
And Thor obeys. Turn pale, thou Monster! With his he-goats he breaks the cloud; and his reins he guides towards the sighs of Innocence.	185	he-goats: Thor's draught animals
Then he sees Harald among the trunks of spruce, in search of Svanhild, with wails of passion. His heart shivering,	190	
his eye ablaze, his voice rises: 'Where are you, Svanhild? O answer me, Svanhild! In vain he shouts,	195	
In vain he hopes, the wanderer at midnight'.	200	
'Here, take my hammer! Go, save your girl yourself! When it hits where it should,		
life gives up.	205	
Go down into the cave where the rock arches, in the cave of the robber.		
But shiver not.		
When the heart shakes	210	
and seethes from fear,		
Miølner rises		Miølner: the hammer of Thor
and breaks the skull.	01.4	
The hammer demands to be soaked in the blood	$\begin{array}{c} 214 \\ 216 \end{array}$	
of trolls' hearts	217	
without any fear whatsoever'.	215	
'Thank you!' shouts Harald,	218	
'I cool down my anger'.	210	
And swiftly he seizes	220	
the great Miølner,		

and unafraid hastens to the places where trolls find their rest and Syanhild sobs.	225
In dark grooves he hears the songs	228
of female giants	229
with their ugly tones.	227
And without fear he beholds trolls	230
banging their swords on shields of flint	
that emit sparks so great that the cave every once in a while loses its darkness.	235
The walls squeeze him rough and narrow as they are. Bits of rock, hanging from the ceiling above, shiver. And the red blood	240
of the unavenged dead trickle out from the crevices; and lightning blinds him and dragons in the thickets of thistles rush past him.	245
Yet, unafraid Harald with the hammer of the god hastens to his goal, he knows it will not fail.	250
And lightning shimmers with bloodlike flames, and in a chamber where darkness gives way, he beholds without fear three female giants.	255
Without bones in their spine they shiver as they stoop on iron chairs, and spool and weave with skinny arms a wedding dress made from the intestines of humans.	260
Yet, unafraid Harald with the hammer of the god hastens to his goal, he knows it will not fail.	265

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And the barking of a dog drowns the song! He walks on the skin of the Midgard Serpent. Light fades, torches blaze,	270	Midgard Serpent: a giant snake, encircling the earth
the mouth of Fenris is gaping -	275	Fenris: a monstrous wolf, kept in check by the Æsir
The giants faint!		
Yet, unafraid Harald with the hammer of the god hastens to his goal, he knows it will not fail.	280	
And indeed it does not!		
In the crevices of the rock where the night never switches places with the day; see how the giant bleeds!	285	
But behold, on the mountain in the red of dawn by the silver ore the Loved Ones smile. And with arms woven together	290	
and bosoms tightly bound		

they hasten towards the rustic barn.